

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2019

Courier

Up and over

**Ober Gatlinburg offers shopping ...
with a view**

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CLEARLY CLASSICAL

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FAITH IN FÁTIMA

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'I'M MOM ... AND BIG BROTHER'

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Gatlinburg, Tennessee





ABOVE: Waylon Jennings with Carter Robertson, c. 1980



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PLANNING AHEAD

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► DECEMBER ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

Gulf Coast

Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas

The Rockies

Alberta, British Columbia, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Utah, Wyoming

Scandinavia

Iceland, Norway

Portugal and Spain

SPECIAL COVERAGE

2020 Distinguished Dozen

Guide: Hotels and Lodging

DEADLINES

Space: Oct. 4 | Material: Oct. 14

► JANUARY ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

Midwest U.S.

Arkansas, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma

West U.S.

Alaska, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington

Belgium, France, and the Netherlands

England, Ireland, and Scotland

City Spotlight: Niagara Falls

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Preview to Anchorage (Contact '20)

Casinos and Gaming

Guide: Casinos and Gaming

DEADLINES

Space: Nov. 1 | Material: Nov. 11



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COURIER'S MISSION STATEMENT

Courier aims to facilitate member-to-member partnering by spotlighting member product and destinations worldwide, to provide information on current industry trends and issues, and to inform members about NTA initiatives, events and benefits.



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MY BOOTS ARE READY for Fort Worth.

Cowboy boots are not a requirement for Travel Exchange in December; I do like to be prepared, though. I'm not a country-western dancer by any stretch of the imagination, but if I visit Billy Bob's on Wednesday night, I might want to at least look the part and prop one boot on the brass rail at the bar.

I'm just thinking ahead, see.

Not everybody can pull off boots, and I mean that in two ways. One, it's a look—and a vibe—that not everyone is comfortable with. And two, literally pulling boots off can be a challenge. I recall one night I was at a hotel in Nashville, sometime in the '90s, when I had to call the front desk to see if they had a boot jack to help me remove mine.

Too much boot-scootin' boogie that night, I'm sure.

All of this does relate to the content of this issue of *Courier*, although it is a stretch of the imagination.

We have outstanding feature articles on music and shopping. And Travel Exchange is in Fort Worth. So if you want to go honky-tonking and listen to country *music*, you might need to *shop* for boots.

I told you it was a stretch.

In reality, starting on page 14, Pat Henderson's feature focuses on nine NTA-member destinations that showcase classical music at festivals each summer. And Kendall Fletcher checks out five NTA members that offer shopping experiences,



each one quite different from the others; that starts on page 17.

We're also featuring two cities that probably want nothing to do with my boots. Kay Saffari describes the summer product development trip to Fátima, Portugal. It was another successful Faith Travel Association PDT, and Kay's recap, pages 21–23, is enticing.

And on pages 24 and 25 we spotlight the city (and surrounding region) of Fredericksburg, Virginia. This is yet another NTA-member destination that, given what I've learned about it, is now on my list of places to visit.

I will also point you to some items that should be flat-out fun to read.

- Turn the page to see what NTA board members came up with when asked to imagine what a Museum of Packaged Travel would have on exhibit.
- On page 48, board member Angela Harness takes us down a road that should resonate with anyone who has ever parented a teenager. Or has been a teenager.
- And on page 10, Utah naturalist Phil Douglass shares tips for safely viewing and photographing wildlife, with a couple of cool pics of his own.

Of course, you can find these stories on NTAcourier.com, too, and you might want to share them with colleagues or with your social media audience.

I will not be sharing my boots in Fort Worth. I have owned them for decades, and they mean a lot to me. Plus ... I might not be able to pull them off.

Read on,

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On the cover:
At Ober Gatlinburg in Tennessee, the Aerial Tramway transports visitors to mountaintop shops.
Photo: Ober Gatlinburg



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WHEN THE NTA BOARD OF DIRECTORS gathered outside of the Twin Cities for two days of meetings in early August, members and staff kicked off the event at the Minnesota Vikings Museum in Eagan. Two days later, during its meeting at Mystic Lake Casino, the board ran a deep route into the future of the tour and travel industry.

While these seemingly diverse activities were fresh in the minds of NTA leaders, *Courier* suggested that they marry the two. We asked them to ... **Imagine there's a Museum of Packaged Travel.**

What relics of the past are you happy to see locked away in a case forever?

- A stagecoach, Telex, and fax machine —Chris Babb
- Stop watch. Back in the old days, developing new itineraries meant measuring drive time, rest stops, activities, meals, etc. —Jerry Varner
- Columned, green pages on a pad, where everything had to be logged, ticked, tied, and cross-referenced —Paul Larsen
- Printed and mailed marketing material —Cory Mace
- Traveler's checks and carbon paper —Jorge Cazenave
- Thick printed catalog directories, outdated the minute they were printed —Ashley Kingman

What would you see in an exhibit that showcases today's tools of the trade?

- The fill-and-sign PDF form: a gift from the gods for travel organizers. —Fraser Neave
- GPS, a cell phone, and a computer with NTA Online —Jerry Varner
- iPhone, iPad, and Whisper device —Chris Babb
- Smartphones, allowing people to make an impulsive purchase and book a vacation in minutes while they're out with friends —Ashley Kingman
- Wi-Fi router, physical passport and visas, credit cards —Jorge Cazenave
- Social media tools and email —Cory Mace

What's in this museum's Future of Travel exhibits?

- Self-driving vehicles that change the driving restrictions for bus drivers. And can artificial intelligence replace a tour operator? A travel agent? A seller? —Ashley Kingman
- Star Trek's computer-generated holodecks, recreating characters and experiences from throughout history. —Paul Larsen
- Airports, in the way we've known them for many decades, will no longer exist. Instead, we'll be traveling to destinations quicker, safer, and more efficiently. —Fraser Neave
- Anthropometric boarding passes and vouchers, along with virtual tours of sites that include sounds and smells. —Jorge Cazenave
- All-electric motorcoaches, solar planes, and hotel rooms that automatically customize color scheme, furniture, lighting, flowers, food, and beverages. —Chris Babb
- I'm not sure what the future looks like, but this is a people business—no matter where in the world we're going to or coming from. —Jerry Varner

NTA Board members and staff toured the Minnesota Vikings Museum in Eagan prior to two days of meetings in early August.



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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Tourism Cares announces upcoming projects

NTA's official philanthropic partner, Tourism Cares, recently released information regarding its 2020 and 2021 projects.

Lake Tahoe (May 2020); Colombia (Fall 2020); and Victoria, British Columbia (Spring 2021), will be the sites of the upcoming events. All three are part of the organization's Meaningful Travel Summit initiative.

"Meaningful Travel Summits are designed to collectively unite travel businesses with a common purpose: to use the power of our industry to tackle some of the seemingly unmanageable issues facing destinations worldwide," says Jessica Flores, Tourism Cares' director of programs and marketing. "Our summits provide not only immediate impact through volunteering, but they also help create lasting impact as we build community connections, share best practices through education, and introduce local businesses to the greater tourism trade."

The North Tahoe event takes place May 13–15 and will include educational sessions, a day of volunteering, an opening-night reception, and a recap breakfast. More specific details, including dates, will be available for Colombia and Victoria in the coming months.

To learn more, contact Flores at jessica.flores@tourismcares.org or go to tourismcares.org.



TOURISM CARES

2020–21 events

May 13–15, 2020 Tourism Cares for North Lake Tahoe

Fall 2020 Tourism Cares with Colombia

Spring 2021 Tourism Cares for Victoria

Need free legal advice?



Jeff Ment

Well, you're in luck. Thanks to NTA's newest corporate partner, the Ment Law Group, you can receive a free 15-minute consultation.

For close to 30 years, company founder Jeff Ment and his firm have been providing legal representation to companies and individuals in the tourism industry. His experience includes helping form new companies, defending lawsuits, and working to ensure companies are following best practices. He is well versed in a variety of tourism topics, ranging from risk management, regulatory compliance, seller of travel registration, and IATA/ARC issues to vendor selection, tour director training, and insurance coverage.

In addition to the free 15-minute consultation, the Ment Law Group will offer members 24/7 access as part of its NTA partnership.

Contact Ment at jment@mentlaw.com or go to mentlaw.com. To see the full list of NTA's Corporate Partners and learn more about the benefits they offer, go to ntaonline.com/partners.

Key dates for Travel Exchange 2019

Appointment scheduling for Travel Exchange '19 in Fort Worth (Dec. 8–12) is set to open Monday, Oct. 14. There are a number of other key dates coming up regarding NTA's convention, and here is a look at them:

- **Oct. 11** Deadline for tour operators to update their online profiles and register as an appointment-taking buyer to be eligible for the rebate.
- **Oct. 14–Nov. 4** Appointment request system is available.
- **Nov. 4** Last day to make hotel reservations and guarantee NTA rates (subject to availability).
- **Nov. 18** Customized appointment schedules are posted at NTAonline.com. Direct Request scheduling, available through the Appointment Request System, opens.
- **Dec. 5** Direct Request scheduling closes.

Go to ntatravelexchange.com to learn more or to register for the event. 📍

travel  exchange

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— DECEMBER 8-12, 2019 —

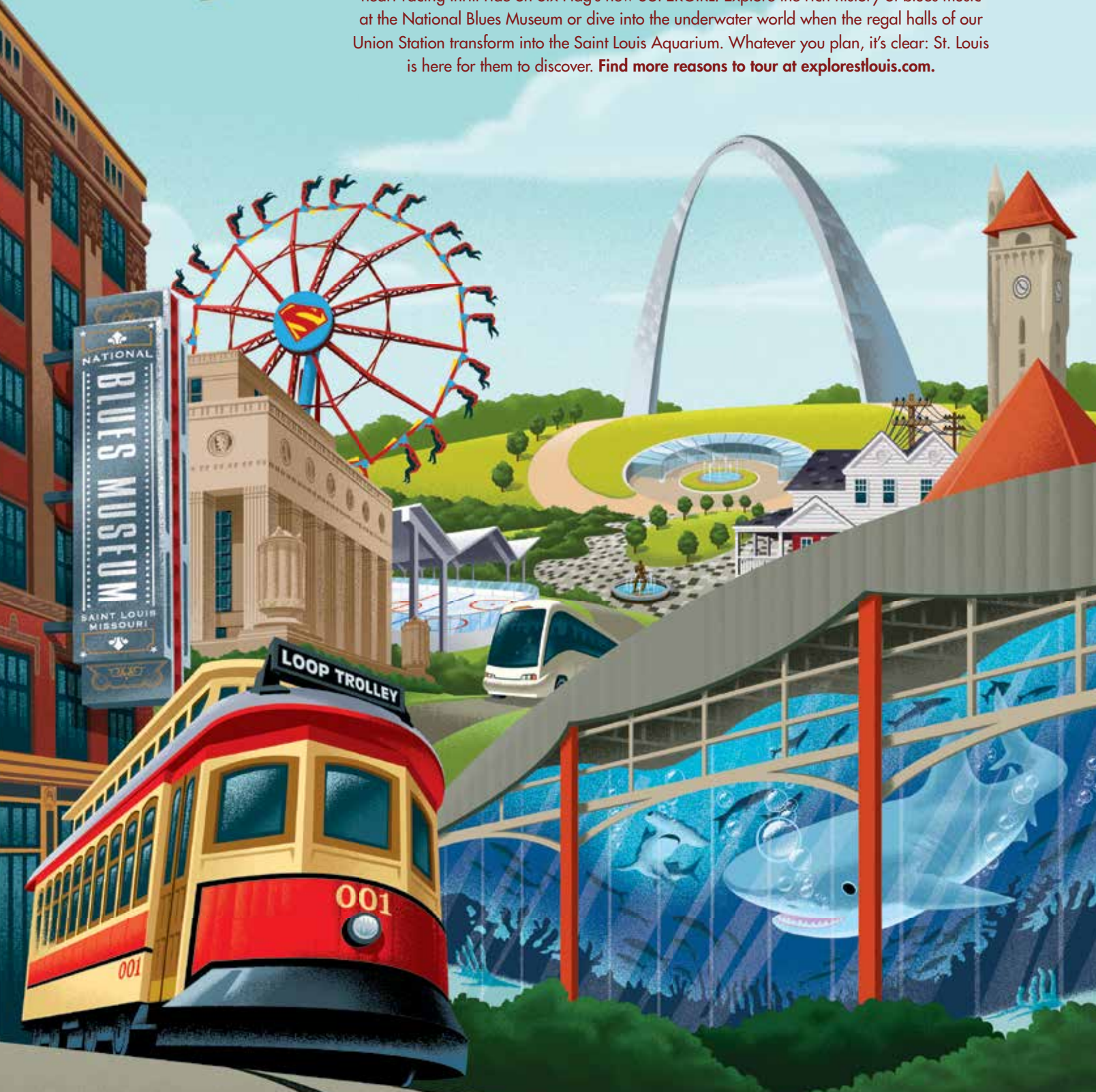


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To be touched by the wild

BY PHIL DOUGLASS

Tundra swans winging their way over marshes of the Great Salt Lake (with Arctic wilderness dripping from their wings)

IT IS A PROFOUND EXPERIENCE to have things wild touch our lives.

In the 32 years I spent working for the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, I had some truly amazing nature and wild lands experiences. I also had wonderful interactions with people on the “adventurers trail” about the things that they saw along the way. I hope this article will offer insights to help you safely and effectively enjoy natural wonders during your own outdoor adventures.

Just recently I met a nice couple at a Roosevelt elk viewing area in northern Oregon. They told me of an amazing experience they had while hiking on a trail just off the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park.

They said they had seen wild sheep and other animals along a very steep and rocky trail. On their way back the husband turned to his wife and said, “You know, it’s a good thing we haven’t run into a grizzly

bear on this trail because there would not be room for either one of us to get by.”

Those were fateful words, for in the next moment, a grizzly bear appeared on the trail! And truly there was no alternative path for either the couple or the bear to take. The man and woman began yelling and waving their arms to alert the bear, some 50 yards away, that they were there and to perhaps make it turn around.

It kept walking toward them, though, so they decided that their only option was to retreat—and to retreat quickly. They backtracked quite some distance till they found a place where they could get off the trail and let the big grizzly bear pass.

Even then their dilemma had not ended. As the grizzly bear came to the place where the couple had scrambled up the hillside to what they thought was safety, the bear stopped and sniffed ... and sniffed. This left my new friends

thinking they were going to be the next statistic in grizzly bear encounters.

But as luck would have it, the bear continued on the trail and they were free to continue their hike back to the trailhead, which was now, because of the unexpected bear, quite a distance away. This leaves a few questions to ask ourselves:

If we were in their shoes, would we be prepared to spend extra time on the trail?

Would we have enough food and water?

Would we have shelter and sufficient clothing to keep warm and dry in case the weather changed?

They described their encounter with the grizzly as both exhilarating and frightening, and that is the case with many wildlife experiences. What makes the difference is expecting the unexpected and preparing for it.

I’ve always said that luck favors the prepared mind, and my new friends were adequately prepared, so they came

out unscathed physically, but they had a harrowing and memorable story to tell.

During my time with the Utah Wildlife Department, we had a sign that read, “If you don’t go far enough, you don’t get the data. If you go too far, you don’t go home.” Exploring is exciting and exhilarating, but it is also dangerous.

My own ‘wild’ life

The experiences of others can be a useful tool, especially when it comes to safely exploring places where wild animals are the masters of their wild domains.

My own “wild” experiences came very early in my life. I will never forget the sights and sounds of wild swans winging their way across the northern Utah marshes over the Great Salt Lake. My dad told me they were flying south from their nesting grounds in the Arctic.

From that time on, whenever I see migrating Tundra or Trumpeter swans, it seems like they are dripping Arctic wilderness from their wingtips. For more on birds and swan sounds go to allaboutbirds.org/guide/tundra_swan/sounds.

From this early experience, seeing and hearing swans became a celebration in my life. My love of things wild fueled my

career choice, and when I became the outreach manager for the Utah Wildlife Department, I was excited for the opportunity to help others explore and experience nature through wildlife events. I was especially excited to create Utah’s Wild Swan Celebrations.

In northern Utah there are 60,000 wild swans that migrate, rest, and refuel at the marshes of the Great Salt Lake in November and March. Each year during those months I delighted in talking with people about these swans and to learn about their experiences with swans at these marshes and at other places throughout the world.

How, when, and where

If you’re looking for an initial experience to become excited about animals and their habitats, check with your local wildlife department and see what kind of events take place in your area. In Utah there are many good places to go for tours, and professionals in your area can provide information about how, when, and where to see and experience more wildlife.

It’s possible that your own yard is another great place to gather experience in seeing and discovering wildlife, especially

wild birds. Putting up bird feeders in your yard can allow you to learn more about the birds right from your window.

The book “Backyard Birds” by my late friend Bill Fenimore is a tremendous starting point for people who want to learn about the birds in their area. This series of books is available for many U.S. states, and I’m sure you can find helpful books if you live elsewhere.

Bill was passionate about giving people great tools to help them develop a love for birds, which starts with identifying and attracting birds to their yards.

The next step is to explore and gain experience and confidence.

My interactions with wild birds, animals, and lands have added richness to my life. These creatures and experiences have touched and expanded my soul, and I hope it can be the same for you. 🐾

Phil Douglass retired from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources in 2018, having served for 32 years as a wildlife and habitat biologist and wildlife programs educator. He is now a guide and tour director for Southwest Adventure Tours, specializing in photography and hiking tours of Grand Teton and Yellowstone national parks, northern Oregon, and Alaska.

Tips for safe and enjoyable exploring

- If you do not have experience, lean on a seasoned and prepared guide. Ask him or her questions about the laws and ethical practices of wildlife viewing.
- Do not seek the services of those who will put wildlife or you in danger by getting too close.
- Go hiking with groups from established organizations, such as a local chapter of the National Audubon Society.
- Modern photography equipment is amazing and more readily available than ever before, but do not be lulled into thinking you should sacrifice safety for a great photo.
- Being aware of unstable footing and unpredictable wildlife behaviors are rules to *live* by.
- You are responsible for your own safety. Remember: “If you go too far, you may not go home.”

Sunbathing seal on Vancouver Island, British Columbia



COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

New Mexico's national monuments

The U.S. National Park Service manages 419 individual sites, which are classified in 19 different categories ranging from national parks (Yosemite and Yellowstone, for example) to military parks (such as Gettysburg and Vicksburg) and national historical parks (e.g., Pennsylvania's Independence Hall and Valley Forge).

The largest category is the 84 national monuments, and New Mexico is home to 10 of them—only Arizona, with 13, has more. The following special places found throughout New Mexico represent the state's mix of cultural and natural history (city names in parentheses):

1 Aztec Ruins National Monument (Aztec)

This sacred Puebloan pilgrimage site includes a 900-year-old Great House that had 400-plus rooms.

early Spanish explorers are visible at El Morro.

2 Bandelier National Monument (Los Alamos)

The rugged canyons and mesas at Bandelier date back over 11,000 years.

6 Fort Union National Monument (Watrous) This adobe-style fort served as a military outpost between 1851 and 1891.

3 Capulin Volcano National Monument (Capulin)

This NPS site interprets an extinct cinder cone volcano and the surrounding landscape.

7 Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument (Silver City) The Mongollon people crafted temporary shelters in the caves around the Gila River.

4 El Malpais National Monument (Grants)

Visitors can hike along trails that showcase the park's forests, sandstone bluffs, and lava caves.

8 Petroglyph National Monument (Albuquerque) Well-preserved petroglyphs, dating back to the 14th century, are embedded in the park's rock formations.

5 El Morro National Monument (Ramah) More than 2,000 carvings by the Puebloans and

9 Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument (Mountainair) Three ruins sites offer a look at the lives of early tribes and missionaries.

10 White Sands National Monument (Alamogordo) The world's largest group of gypsum dunes are found at this sandy wonderland.

To learn more, go to nps.gov/nm.



BTHVN 2020



Beethoven statue in Bonn's Münsterplatz

Beethoven 250 jubilee set for 2020

Next year the world will celebrate the 250th birthday of one of its most renowned composers, Ludwig van Beethoven. The jubilee will be centered in Bonn, Germany, where Beethoven was born and raised, and Vienna, Austria, where he moved at age 22 to study and remained until his death.

BTHVN2020 will be a yearlong commemoration featuring an array of special events, concerts, theatrical performances, workshops, and exhibits across both cities and other European destinations. Tour packages that include significant sites related to the composer in Bonn and Vienna also will be offered.

The goal of the jubilee, which is being spearheaded by the Beethoven Anniversary Society, is to strengthen and promote projects related to the music of

Beethoven. He occasionally signed his letters and scores with the abbreviation BTHVN, and the organization is basing the main themes of the celebration on those letters: B (Bonn-born cosmopolitan), T (tonkünstler = composer), H (humanist), V (visionary) and N (nature lover). Different elements of the programming will represent these aspects of the musical genius' life and work.

Some of the featured events include Bonn's Beethovenfest in September, the Beethoven 250 Choral Festival from June 9 to 13 in Vienna, the Beethoven 250 Orchestral Festival on June 28 in Vienna, and the global premiere of renowned Chinese composer Tan Dun's Beethoven-inspired work "The Nine Project" on Aug. 8 in Bonn.

To learn more, go to bthvn2020.de/en.

San Diego's seadragons and seahorses

According to Sarah Weinberg-Scalo of the San Diego Tourism Authority, there is a lot going on at the city's nature-based attractions. Visitors can find new exhibits at the Birch Aquarium at Scripps; the San Diego Natural History Museum; and the San Elijo Lagoon Conservancy, which just rebranded to become the Nature Collective.

The Birch Aquarium recently debuted Seadragons & Seahorses, which will become one of the attraction's permanent displays. This immersive exhibit is set in an 18-by-9-foot tank that was specifically created to ensure the survival of these species. Visitors can see leafy and weedy Seadragons as well as several species of seahorses and pipefish.

The San Diego Natural History Museum is gearing up for Living Lab, which will open Nov. 23. This exhibition will feature creatures that won't fit many people's definition of cuddly—bees, rattlesnakes, a Gila monster, tarantulas, and more. All of them are an important part of the local ecosystem, though, and guests can learn about eating habits, survival tactics, and adaptability.

Located on the coastal San Elijo Lagoon near Solana Beach, the Nature Collective is a place Weinberg-Scalo highly recommends for visitors.

"It's a favorite of mine," she says. "I went on a birding tour there and spotted several interesting shore birds. There also is an easy, accessible mile-long loop to see lagoon life."



Desert Hairy Scorpion at the San Diego Natural History Museum's Living Lab

For more information, email Phil Hannes of the San Diego Tourism Authority or go to sandiego.org.

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Listening to the summer classics

Your guide to 9 classical music festivals across the globe

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

SUMMERTIME IS PRIME TIME for music festivals. Millions of fans flock to venues around the world to catch their favorite bands at smaller local shows, multi-day regional events, or mega-concerts such as Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza, and the Glastonbury Festival.

But, rock 'n' roll enthusiasts aren't the only fan base with a bevy of options when it comes to sold-out summer happenings, as a number of classical music events also crowd calendars in June, July, and August. They feature everything from shows based on specific composers to chamber recitals and orchestra performances.

Here is a look at nine events in NTA-member destinations that keep classical music buffs coming, well, Bach for more. (The dates included are for 2020.)

Tanglewood Festival of Contemporary Music

*Lenox, Massachusetts
August*

The Tanglewood Music Center welcomes thousands of music lovers for its highly anticipated August festival. The event showcases the talents of TMC's student performers and composers, who have spent the summer at the Boston Symphony Orchestra's training academy in western Massachusetts. Attendees can see up-and-coming musicians perform alongside BSO veterans, and can sit in on sessions to get answers to questions such as: How do composers develop their skills, how has music evolved over the years, and what does today's music tell us about everyday life?



NTA member: Boston Pops Orchestra/
Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood
Megan Cokely, mcokely@bso.org

MARCO BORGGREVE

TOP: EARTH TO ANDRE; BACKGROUND: UNSPLASH/STEFANY ANDRADE; btl.ly/2m7pYLz



MARCO BORGREVE

Chamber Music Northwest Summer Festival

Portland, Oregon

June and July

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Chamber Music Northwest, an organization dedicated to the preservation and promotion of classical music. The group offers more than 100 events annually, including its flagship Summer Festival that spans five weeks in June and July. Shows by top chamber performers are featured throughout the event, and attendees have a lot of options beyond just seeing a show. Pre-concert picnics take place three days a week, as do free Musical Conversations with an artist or composer. There also are try-an-instrument sessions for children.

NTA member: Travel Portland

Ashley Kingman, ashley@travelportland.com

led officials to expand beyond the classical music roots to include international dance and theater productions.

NTA member: NYC & Company

John Marshall, jmarshall@nycgo.com



COLORADOMUSICFESTIVAL.ORG

The Mostly Mozart Festival

New York City

July and August

What began in 1966 as a way to honor the legendary composer has evolved over the years into one of New York City's most diverse summer arts offerings. Most of the performances during the event, which is presented by the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra, take place at Lincoln Center venues, but places like Central Park and Brooklyn's Gelsey Kirkland Arts Center also host shows. The diversification has

Colorado Music Festival

Boulder, Colorado

June to August

Since it debuted in 1974, this event has brought six weeks of classical music to central Colorado. The concerts, held at the historical Chautauqua Auditorium, showcase the talents of the resident Colorado Music Festival Orchestra as well as acclaimed national and international musicians. Festival-goers can attend open rehearsal sessions at the venue to get a behind-the-scenes look at guest artists and the orchestra as they prepare for upcoming performances. CMF also

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includes Tiny Rock Concerts, a series of outdoor pop-up shows that utilize Boulder's Flatirons as a backdrop for two- to three-song sets by festival musicians.

NTA member: Tour Colorado
Julianne Fredrick, tourcolorado@gmail.com

Stratford Summer Music

Stratford, Ontario

July to August

This multi-week musical extravaganza has become a staple for classical music lovers. Venues in Stratford play host to more than 100 events and welcome the more than 300 artists heading to southwestern Ontario for the festival, which traces its roots to the 1950s. SSM also highlights the talents of upcoming national performers through programs such as the Maureen Forrester Young Canadian Artists series and opera dinners/brunches that feature some of the country's top student vocalists in lead roles.

NTA member: Destination Ontario
Sandra Rice, sandra.rice@ontario.ca



The Bayreuth Festival

Bayreuth, Germany

July and August

The works of 19th-century composer Richard Wagner are presented during the annual Bayreuth Festival, which just completed its 108th year. The annual event has helped the city in the northern part of Germany's Bavaria region become a pilgrimage destination for Wagner followers. Another bonus for festival-goers is getting to see the venue where the concerts take place: Bayreuth Festspielhaus. Wagner was heavily involved in both the design and construction of the theater, and he went to great lengths to make sure its spaces would accommodate large orchestras, such as the ones needed to perform his works.

NTA members:

Appina Travel, appina-travel.com
GTW-Grimm Touristik Wetzlar, europe-incoming.de
Terra Lu Travel, germany4groups.com



Edinburgh International Festival

Edinburgh, Scotland

Aug. 7-Aug. 31

August is a big month for the arts in the Scottish capital, and the Edinburgh International Festival is one of six major events in the city. EIF's namesake chorus, which includes more than 140 vocalists from across Scotland, performs alongside world-class conductors, orchestras, and soloists. To open the 2019 festival, members of the choir joined Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. The popular event reaches beyond classical music and also includes visual arts exhibits, theater and dance performances, and a number of salon sessions with artists and conductors.

NTA member: VisitScotland
Nicole Graham, nicole.graham@visitscotland.com

Ottawa Chamberfest

Ottawa, Ontario

July and August

This event, which is the largest chamber music festival in the world, is dedicated to presenting high-caliber chamber music by bringing internationally recognized artists to the Canadian capital. The festival's performances are held at a variety of indoor and outdoor venues across Ottawa, ranging from churches and heritage sites to museums and parks. In addition to the concerts held during the two-week event, Chamberfest organizes a year-round series of individual concerts that feature top classical music artists.

NTA member: Ottawa Tourism
Kelly Dean, kdean@ottawatourism.ca

Three Choirs Festival

Worcester, England

July 25-Aug. 1

Stately cathedrals in Worcester, Hereford, and Gloucester play host to this weeklong festival, which marked its 300th year in 2015. The event's signature offering is a group of evening performances featuring the Three Choirs Festival Chorus and Philharmonic Orchestra, and during the daytime, each of the English communities is abuzz with supplemental activities. In addition to choral and chamber concerts, attendees can enjoy classes, artist talkback sessions, plays, and exhibitions.

NTA member: VisitBritain
Tara Barnes, tara.barnes@visitbritain.org





Regional to runway

Shopping experiences tell an important part
of a destination's story

COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

Madison Avenue Business Improvement District

Shopping is a way for travelers to take a destination home. A piece of it, anyway.

Every shopping experience can have a local feel, whether it's a busy center with locations across the country, a specialty food production company, luxe boutiques, a collection of hometown shops, or outlets with both familiar stores and retailers exclusive to the area.

There's much to be said about discovering items created by Native American tribes whose rich heritage influences the region. There's also something special about visiting a shopping center with multiple locations; each one is different from the next as they claim an integral part of a destination's shopping experience.

These NTA-member shopping attractions offer up all things handcrafted, name brand, luxury, hard-to-find, and, well ... cheesy.

Madison Avenue Business Improvement District New York City

Madison Avenue, extending from East 57th Street to East 86th, is tell-tale NYC. From flagship stores of the most revered designers to art galleries and elegant five-star hotels, it's the largest shopping destination in North America—and one of the most lavish.

The Madison Avenue Business Improvement District is the not-for-profit public and private partnership representing the area's businesses. President Matthew Bauer says a visit to Madison Avenue can easily be included in any New York itinerary, as it's located just a short walk from the city's most popular attractions.

"Luxury brands have flocked to Madison Avenue because it's located at the center of the most affluent and desirable residential neighborhood in Manhattan: the Upper East Side," he says.

The district is home to boutiques housed in historical, mid-19th-century buildings that feature designers' full collections. Shoppers can find brands like Givenchy, Hermès, Prada, and Balenciaga, as well as more than 40 sidewalk cafés and restaurants with tastes from renowned chefs, from light fare to fine cuisine. The nightlife on Madison Avenue—a dazzling display of cabaret and jazz performances and cigar lounges—helps NYC live up to its reputation as the city that never sleeps.

For operators focusing on luxury stores, Madison Avenue BID recently launched exclusive shopping experiences titled 'Madison Avenue Preferred Privileges,' where shoppers can visit 75 participating boutiques and receive high-service amenities, including:

- » Personal greetings by store managers
- » Private shopping, before or after regular store hours
- » An appointment with an in-store personal shopper or stylist
- » Complimentary refreshments
- » In-hotel fashion consultations
- » Complimentary delivery of purchases to their Manhattan hotel

Some of the participating retailers are Barneys New York, Christian Louboutin, Marc Jacobs, and Stella McCartney.

"Madison Avenue is the exclusive NYC member of the USA Luxury Shopping Consortium, and tour operators can create and download a customizable voucher, the 'Luxe Pass,' for the Madison Avenue Preferred Privileges program via the consortium's website," Bauer says.

For more information, contact Bauer at mbauer@madisonavenuebid.org or go to madisonavenuebid.org.



Santa Monica Place

MACERICH

Macerich Shopping Centers

17 U.S. cities

Macerich Shopping Centers & Fashion Outlets are bustling hives of shops, restaurants, and entertainment venues situated in the hearts of major U.S. cities.

“We’re very focused on providing an all-inclusive experience with the most desired name-brand stores and chef-driven cuisine, as well as major art installations, exhibits, museums, and pop-up shops,” says Kate Birchler, assistant vice president of tourism marketing.

Each of Macerich’s 17 locations are welcoming to motorcoaches. Coordinated, complimentary meet-and-greets are standard, and groups get a savings pass with up to \$750 in offers from participating retailers and directional maps. At specific locations, operators can request the Motorcoach Driver & Guide Incentive Program that rewards loyal business, Birchler says.

The U.S. National Travel & Tourism Office research shows shopping is the No. 1 activity for international visitors, she says, which inspires the company to offer group programs that include wardrobe consultations, fashion shows, and dine-arounds, as well as other tailored experiences.

“We can customize a shopping experience based on the groups’ interest, whether that be a friendly meet-and-greet upon arrival, a behind-the-scenes tour, or private in-store shopping event,” Birchler says.

Here’s what’s new at Macerich Shopping Centers:

- » Opened on Sept. 19, Fashion District Philadelphia includes three blocks of shopping, art and culture, dining, and entertainment connected to Reading Terminal and the Pennsylvania Convention Center.
- » Chandler Fashion Center in Phoenix added the Crayola Experience, a hands-on art space designed for families.
- » Scottsdale Fashion Square has undergone a major redevelopment to its luxury wing with the addition of new retail space, and seven new restaurants will soon open there, including Nobu. Wonderspaces, an area with nationally recognized artists in rotating exhibits, also is new.
- » Recently opened at Santa Monica Place is Cayton Children’s Museum, an immersive play space with numerous exhibits and programs designed to teach children about core universal values.

For more information, contact Birchler at kate.birchler@macerich.com or go to macerichtourism.com.

Ober Gatlinburg

Gatlinburg, Tennessee

One of the most distinctive parts of the shopping experience at Ober Gatlinburg is how you get there—and the view going up.

The Aerial Tramway transports visitors to the mountaintop shops where they are surrounded by the incredible sights of the Smokies. The tram departs downtown Gatlinburg and ascends high above the city, landing at the amusement park and ski area.

Groups can find a blend of locally crafted items and commercial pro gear, all of which tell stories of the region and its people, according to Marketing Assistant Elissa Breitenstein.

“This area of the Smoky Mountains is known for the Appalachian and Cherokee heritage, moonshine, and hiking the Appalachian Trail through Great Smoky Mountains National Park. Many of the items in our shops reflect the cultures and heritage in the area, such as the moonshine candles found at Tramway Gifts and the Native American flutes and jewelry in The Silver Galleon,” she says. “Ober Gatlinburg has been here for more than 57 years and is a family-owned, family-friendly company. We offer shopping opportunities in a unique, historic setting as well as a variety of seasonal activities.”

Ober Gatlinburg is home to the state’s only ski area in the winter, and two of its shops, Slopeside Apparel & Gifts and Ski Mountain Outdoors, change inventory seasonally and carry names like Columbia, Under Armour, and Keen. The latter sells hiking and camping gear in the summer and carries skis, snowboards, and other winter gear in the colder months. Year-round, visitors can find an ice skating rink at the center of the mountain mall.

Breitenstein says they offer generous discounts for groups of 15 or more for the Aerial Tramway and for other activities. There’s also free bus parking at the downtown location. The company’s shops and the tram are ADA accessible.

Here’s a sampling of the shops to be found at Ober Gatlinburg:

Beer Necessities stocks collectible, authentic beer steins, mugs, pint glasses, and other festive, German-themed merchandise.

Pepper Palace is the hot spot to find salsas, spices, seasonings, hot sauces, dressings, dip mixes, rubs, and more.

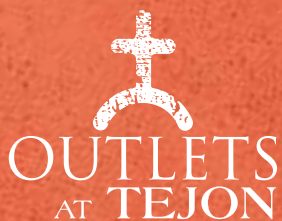
Chocolate Monkey serves up ice cream, giant candy and caramel apples, fudge, and truffles.

Green River Gallery offers nature photography; photos printed on slate, stone, and wood; and other keepsake items.



O’Bear’s Playhouse at Ober Gatlinburg

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A celebration of the region's German roots occurs each year during Ober Gatlinburg's OktOBER Fest. For more information, contact Breitenstein at ebreitenstein@obergatlinburg.com or go to obergatlinburg.com.

Great Lakes Crossing Outlets

Auburn Hills, Michigan

With an impressive 185 stores, restaurants, and attractions making up the Great Lakes Crossing Outlets, shoppers can discover things they can't find anywhere else in Michigan.

The largest enclosed outlet mall in the state, Great Lakes Crossing is packed with on-trend brands as well as 25 stores and attractions that shoppers can find only there, including the Shinola, Disney, and Swarovski outlets, and SEA LIFE Michigan Aquarium.

"A preferred retail destination among local and international travelers, the shopping center received the TripAdvisor 2018 Certificate of Excellence for earning outstanding consumer reviews," says Marketing and Tourism Specialist Kristen Old.

The center features stores like Steve Madden, H & M, T.J. Maxx, and dozens of others that offer men's and women's clothing, accessories and jewelry, health and beauty products, and electronics. Visitors can dine in Michigan's largest food court or in one of the four full-service restaurants. A fifth restaurant will open by the end of the year.

"We are easily accessible from the state's busiest freeway (I-75) and are located between two exits with a mile of freeway exposure. We are only 30 miles north of Detroit and 50 miles south of Frankenmuth, making Great Lakes Crossing Outlets an easy add-on experience," Old says.

Registered groups receive a Passport to Shopping discount booklet with coupons from more than 100 participating stores, eateries, and attractions. Group leaders and drivers receive a \$5 gift card to a participating restaurant of their choice.

For more information, contact Old at kold@taubman.com or go to greatlakescrossingoutlets.com.



Michigan's largest food court at Great Lakes Crossing Outlets



HILMAR CHEESE COMPANY VISITOR CENTER

A wide selection of cheeses is available at the Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center.

Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center

Hilmar, California

The Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center's Denise Skidmore has this advice to give: "No one should ever shop hungry!"

When groups visit the attraction in Hilmar, California, they can grab lunch at the café that serves up, of course, some delicious grilled cheese sandwiches as well as espresso, ice cream, and its famous cream cheese brownie and cheese pie—better than cheesecake, Skidmore says.

The gift shop is a treasure trove of cheeses: from Hilmar-made products to California Farmstead cheese and other unique cheeses from around the world. Visitors can discover local beers and wines that pair with their cheese selections and local gourmet foods like jams, crackers, and meats.

"We have farmhouse gifts and a wonderful kids section. We also offer a unique collection of items for the holidays," Skidmore says. "We have friendly staff ready for groups. And, for the non-shopper, there are exhibits and a movie about how cheese is made."

She says the visitor center is a unique comfort stop—as opposed to a chain location—for those traveling from the Bay Area to Yosemite, or along Highway 99 in California's Central Valley.

"We are a value-added stop, as there is no admission cost and tours are free. Every guest loves free cheese samples, especially 'squeakers,' which are fresh cheese curds. We are the only place in the world (where guests can) watch employees package the 'big cheese,' a 640-pound block of cheese, and we also have the largest hand-painted dairy mural in the world," Skidmore says.

And during the holidays, the company offers ready-to-purchase gift boxes and baskets in the store as well as online. Groups can book a gift-basket-making activity, too.

"We provide the basket, sizzle, cello, and bow. The guests fill the baskets, and our experts show them how to position items and wrap them up for the perfect gift. We also have beautiful holiday decorations up from Veteran's Day through Christmas. It looks like a winter wonderland," she says.

For more information, contact Skidmore at dskidmore@hilmarcheese.com or go to hilmarcheese.com. 📍

Faith and Fun in Fátima

FTA's product development trip in Portugal

BY KAY SAFFARI

FTA'S SECOND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TRIP was a journey to Fátima, Portugal, one of the most important Catholic pilgrimage sites in the world. Hosted by Isabel Machado of ACISO—Associação Empresarial Ourém-Fátima, the trip offered a group of six tour operators the opportunity to learn the story of Fátima and experience the culture, history, food, and hospitality of the region.

The origin of Fátima as a faith destination began with three peasant children from Aljustrel, a small hamlet near Fátima. While herding sheep in May 1917, the three cousins saw a vision of a woman dressed in white; she identified herself during six apparitions as the “Lady of the Rosary.”

Our tour included various sites directly related to the Fátima story, as well as other cultural and historical sites of interest in the area. On our final day, a tour of Lisbon provided a taste of the big city.



Left: Sanctuary of Fátima

Inset: Michelle Wiegand of Ed-Ventures (left) and Rebecca Stoker of Select International at Casa do Castelo in Ourém

Sites related to the Fátima story

Wax Museum of Fátima: Our first stop was a guided tour of this museum, the perfect way to get an overview of the Fátima story, with the added bonus of taking photos with a very realistic wax replica of Pope Francis. (Note: Do not touch the Pope, even if he is a wax figure.)

Shrine of Fátima: We next walked to the nearby religious center of town to visit the Basilica of Our Lady of the Rosary, completed in 1953; the Chapel of the Apparitions, built in 1919 on the site of one of the apparitions; the Basilica of the Most Holy Trinity, built in 2007; and the outdoor esplanade, where the famous candlelight procession is held at night.

Our guide pointed out that Fátima had the advantage of building the shrine area in a large open space to accommodate the increasing crowds that are drawn here. The ultra-modern basilica built in 2007 has a capacity of nearly 9,000, and the open esplanade area can accommodate up to one million people.

The Candlelight Procession: The procession is held nightly from May through October, and people from all over the world—of all ages and all faiths—join together in this spiritual tradition. It starts with mass at the Chapel of the Apparitions, followed by the priest-led procession in the large esplanade.



Jerry Varner and the pope at the Wax Museum of Fátima



Beach at Nazaré

Behind the priests, the statue of Our Lady of Fátima is carried atop a magnificent spray of white flowers, lifted high as the crowd slowly follows behind, singing and praying in various languages.

Be sure to get there early enough to purchase your candle, available in the covered area to the left of the open-air chapel. Everyone in our group participated at least once in this event, and some went multiple times. It's something worthwhile to experience, regardless of your faith.

Shrine Museum: We started our second day by visiting this museum, conveniently located steps away from the shrine area. We were met by Sister Kathleen, an American nun who helped our group learn of the many fascinating items given to honor Our Lady of Fátima.

Sister Kathleen highlighted important gifts, such as the spectacular gold crown that is placed on the statue of the Virgin Mary on special occasions for the Candlelight Procession. The pure-gold crown contains 2,600 precious stones as well as an unusual design element: the bullet that injured Pope John Paul in 1981. Because John Paul credited Our Lady of Fátima for saving his life on that fateful day, he donated the bullet for this purpose.

With each gift she explained, Sister Kathleen weaved in a connection to the story of the three shepherd children and their faith, her faith, and somehow, our faith—or lack thereof. We all agreed that she was the most gentle, intriguing, and thought-provoking tour guide we had ever had.

Aljustrel and Valinhos: These two small towns are a short bus ride from Fátima. In Aljustrel we visited one of the humble homes of the shepherd children. We

were able to go inside the home to observe how the family lived, and we saw sheep outside in a small paddock.

At Valinhos, we followed the original path the three children regularly walked from their homes to their sheep-tending work in Fátima. Now the path includes the 14 Stations of the Cross, culminating with the Hungarian Calvary, a magnificent sculpture (a gift from Hungarian Catholics) of Christ's crucifixion that sits atop the Chapel of the Via Crucis.

Cultural and historical sites

Museum of Sacred Art and Ethnology:

This museum is operated by an order of Consolata priests that originated in Italy. Here we viewed a large collection of Portuguese religious art dating from the 14th century that reflects the life of Jesus, along with folk art collected from Portuguese colonies in Africa, the Americas, and the Far East, where Portuguese priests traveled as missionaries. It's not every day that you encounter a room dedicated solely to sculptures of baby Jesus, and another to various crucifix designs.

Grutas da Moeda: A short drive from our hotel, the Grutas da Moeda, or "Coin Caves," are 1,150 feet in width and 147 feet in depth (350 meters by 45 meters), making them accessible for most. Guided tours are available, and they showcase the interesting underground limestone formations. Wondering about the cave's name? A legend says that a rich man carrying gold coins was being chased by robbers, fell into a sinkhole, and dropped

his bag of coins into what turned out to be this cave.

Nazaré: It was a misty day when we arrived in this charming seaside town just 45 minutes from Fátima, but we still enjoyed stunning views from the cliffs. We tried outstanding seafood at São Miguel Restaurant overlooking the ocean, and we had time to look into some of the appealing shops. There's a lot to like about Nazaré.

Monastery in Alcobaça: Alcobaça is the home of a massive 12th-century monastery and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. Considered a masterpiece of Cistercian Gothic art, this medieval monastery was one of the first Gothic

buildings constructed in Portugal and remains the largest church—with the largest cloister—in the country.

Monastery in Batalha: We traveled just 12.4 miles (20 kilometers) from Fátima to reach the small town of Batalha, where we visited a UNESCO World Heritage site from the 14th century, the Monastery of Santa Maria de Vitória. This magnificent structure is one of the best examples of Portuguese Gothic style with Manueline elements.

Olive Oil Museum: Portugal is the fourth-largest exporter of olive oil in the world, and we learned all about that process at the Olive Oil Museum. Located in the first olive-oil press room in Fátima, this



Dining room at the Convent of Christ in Tomar

museum tells the story of olive oil production in the area, including the equipment used in bygone days. A guided tour was followed by olive oil tasting and a visit to the gift shop, where we bought local products like cheese, handcrafted items, and of course, olive oil.

Tomar: A quick half-hour from Fátima lies the small city of Tomar, where we visited the Convent of Christ, a UNESCO World Heritage site. Built in the 13th century, this former convent and church is a combination of Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance, and Manueline architectural styles. Tomar also offers a quaint town where we enjoyed the small shops, and on the outskirts of town, stopped to view aqueducts built in the 15th century.

Lisbon: It's easy to take a day trip to Lisbon, which is just 79 miles (127 kilometers) to the south, to take in the sites that the capital offers. We visited the very ornate Jerónimos Monastery and Santa Maria de Belém Church, a UNESCO World Heritage site constructed in the Portuguese Gothic Manueline style, where the explorer Vasco de Gama is buried. We enjoyed a bus tour of the city to see iconic seaside parks and monuments, including Belém Tower, the 16th-century gateway to Lisbon, and the Padrão dos Descobrimentos monument, a tribute to Portugal's many explorers.

For information about visiting Fátima and the surrounding area, contact Isabel Machado of ACISO at isabel.machado@aciso.pt or visit aciso.pt. 📍

Our group at Monastery in Alcobaça: Alex Fuentes (Vacations for Less), our tour guide Carlos Carvalho, Jean Gallagher (Jean Faust Tours), Michelle Wiegand (Ed-Ventures), Rebecca Stoker (Select International), Jerry Varner (Making Memories Tours), Mete Gurel (TripOTour).





Costumed guides at the Rising Sun Tavern

CITY SPOTLIGHT

A sense of place ... and peace

Virginia's Fredericksburg, Stafford, and Spotsylvania are rich in history and heritage

WHEN TOURING VIRGINIA or driving along the Eastern seaboard, groups will discover that the Fredericksburg region, just off Interstate 95, 50 miles south of Washington, D.C., offers a long look back ... and forward.

"We have cornered the market on early American history, but visitors are often surprised at what else they find," says Victoria Matthews, tourism sales manager for the Fredericksburg Regional Tourism Partnership.

For information about Fredericksburg, Stafford, and Spotsylvania, email Victoria Matthews at vamatthews@fredericksburgva.gov or go to visitfred.com.

To fully appreciate this northern Virginia region, consisting of Stafford County, Spotsylvania County and the city of Fredericksburg, it helps to know its rich history—because there is plenty to explore today.

Fredericksburg, chartered in 1728, was named after Frederick, the Prince of Wales. The Washington family that moved to the area in 1725 arrived with a son named George who, it's fair to say, went on to make a name for himself.

"This is where George Washington's story begins. He didn't chop down the cherry tree and throw a dollar across the river at Mount Vernon; he did it here," Matthews says. "When he was a surly teenager, he was stomping around the

streets of Fredericksburg."

To see some of the homes of the first United States president and his relatives, put these four places on your itinerary:

Ferry Farm Guests can take a self-guided tour or an interactive iPad tour of the 80-acre property, which includes a replica of the Washington house overlooking the Rappahannock River.

Mary Washington House In the home that George bought for his mother, visitors can see her personal possessions, extensive gardens, and the original kitchen. "Mary Washington, who lived to the age of 81, was an incredible woman for her time," Matthews says.

Kenmore Plantation Built by George's sister, Betty, and her husband,

this Georgian-style mansion reflects the pre-Revolutionary War wealth and status of a Fredericksburg merchant.

Rising Sun Tavern The frame building that George's youngest brother, Charles, built around 1760 as his home became a tavern in 1793.

Washington wasn't the only future president to reside in Fredericksburg. James Monroe practiced law here, and the **James Monroe Museum and Memorial Library** houses a large collection of artifacts and documents related to the fifth president of the United States, including the Louis XVI desk where, according to family lore, he wrote what became the Monroe Doctrine.

During the Civil War, Fredericksburg sat midway between two capitals: Washington, D.C., and Richmond, Virginia. Travelers tour the area's many Civil War sites by driving along Virginia's Civil War Trails and visiting cemeteries or buildings that served as military headquarters and hospitals, such as Massaponax Church, Ellwood, and Christ Episcopal Church.

The Civil War reached a bloody climax in and around the region, and the Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania National Military Park contains four major battlefields—Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Wilderness, and Spotsylvania—and a number of historical buildings. These sites offer educational exhibits, driving and walking tours, and knowledgeable historians.

"People know us for being a Civil War site, but I want visitors to look beyond the battles," Matthews says. "I send them to the Fredericksburg Battlefield Visitors Center to learn about Richard Kirkland."

A Confederate soldier from South Carolina who survived the furious Battle of Fredericksburg, Kirkland left the safety of his side's fortification to give water and comfort to wounded Union soldiers.

"Amid all the death, it's that act of compassion that we remember today," Matthews says.

Today's peaceful Fredericksburg region is a bustling destination with a vibrant arts scene, boutique galleries, and a multitude of restaurants.

"A lot of my groups are looking for an independent restaurant, something special," Matthews says. "Well, we have

55 restaurants in our 40-block historic district. Groups will pull into our bus parking area, get dining guides, and then pick restaurants and explore the streets and shops."

Visitors stay to check out other attractions in the area:

- **Shannon Air Museum** houses a collection of rare aircraft, and guests learn about famous aviators, view historical artifacts, and discover the local roots of one of the first major airlines.
- **Gari Melchers' Home and Studio** in Belmont was a country retreat for the impressionist painter. Visitors can see the home exactly as Melchers' wife, Corrine, left it when she died in 1955. "Where she left her pen on the table, it's still there," Matthews says. "The only thing they've done to that house is dust it."
- Theater lovers spend lively afternoons or evenings at the **Riverside Center for the Performing Arts**, which brings popular Broadway shows and holiday spectacles to the region.
- Thirsty travelers can visit the area's wineries and breweries and get a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the production of hand-crafted spirits at **A. Smith Bowman Distillery**.
- Groups can learn about the region through trolley or horse-drawn carriage tours, and from step-on guides who provide city overviews or tours focused on battlefields, African-American history, ghosts, and architecture.

Along with a spirit of the past, Fredericksburg offers visitors a sense of place, according to Matthews.

"This is an active, vibrant city," she says. "Our residents are passionate about their home, and when you visit, you'll see them out walking the dog or getting ice cream downtown. ... You can take time to breathe here." 📍



From top:

Ferry Farm

Foode Restaurant

Chancellorsville Battlefield

A. Smith Bowman Distillery

New England

COMPILED BY KAY SAFFARI

Helium and history in Connecticut

Visitors to Connecticut can enjoy a range of activities, including family fun at Stamford's annual parade and a unique learning experience at the Mashantucket Pequot Museum in Ledyard.

Stamford Downtown Parade Spectacular

On the Sunday before Thanksgiving, travelers can head to downtown Stamford for this annual event, one of the largest helium balloon parades in the United States. They can see giant balloon characters, award-winning marching bands, and fabulous floats march down Stamford's Main Street, and then see some of these same balloons at Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade! This holiday event takes place rain or shine. Don't miss the inflation party the evening before as the parade participants come to life.

Mashantucket Pequot Museum

Tribally owned and operated since it opened in 1998, this museum brings the story of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation to life and serves as a major resource on the natural history of the region as well as the history and culture of Native Americans in the northeast U.S.

The museum, a 308,000-square-foot complex, includes permanent exhibits, the Mashantucket Gallery for temporary exhibits, classrooms, a 320-seat auditorium, a restaurant, a museum shop, and administrative offices. The Research Center houses collections and archives, as well as archaeology and conservation laboratories, where ongoing work from the field is evaluated and studied.



Multisensory dioramas and displays introduce visitors to the history of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribe and the natural history of the eastern woodlands. The exhibits feature films and videos, interactive programs, archival materials, ethnographic and archaeological collections, commissioned art, and traditional crafts by Native artisans.

For more information, contact Susan Henrique at the Connecticut Office of Tourism at susanh@ctcsb.org or go to ctvisit.com.

Massachusetts offers entertainment options

Looking for fun in the Boston area? Head to King's Dining & Entertainment for a variety of activities, or solve a murder mystery at the long-running theater production at the Charles Playhouse.

Kings Dining & Entertainment

Kings Dining & Entertainment is an award-winning gathering place for people to eat, drink, connect, play, dance, and laugh together. With five locations in Massachusetts and six

more across the country, Kings Dining provides a great entertainment option for the 11 communities where it operates.

Experiences include luxury bowling, live music, larger-than-life sports viewing, nostalgic retro video gaming, and over-the-top food and drinks. Kings is the perfect location for group outings, whether for birthday parties, bachelor/bachelorette celebrations, corporate outings, community fundraisers, engagements and more.

For more information, contact Ryan O'Sullivan at ryanosullivan@kingsbowlamerica.com or visit kings-de.com.



KING'S DINING & ENTERTAINMENT

Shear Madness

"Shear Madness" is America's longest running play, and it will celebrate 40 years at Boston's Charles Playhouse in January 2020. This murder mystery show remains popular with groups because of the audience participation, the clever plot, and the fact that the play ends differently each time due to ever-changing clues and last-minute improvisations by the actors.

Groups receive a special mention and can even wear a customized t-shirt during the performance.

For more information, contact Lisa Field at lisaf@shearmadness.com or visit shearmadness.com.



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Vermont: Big-time art in small-town Brattleboro

Looking for an artsy spot to stop with your group? Brattleboro, Vermont, blends small-town charm with a thriving downtown arts and culture scene that's been buzzing for years.

Miles of mountain roads converge in lively and eclectic downtown Brattleboro, where travelers will find cafes, galleries, breweries, live music, museums, boutiques, an Art Deco movie theater, and fantastic dining options. The city hosts special events as well, including the Winter Carnival in February and the Strolling of the Heifers festivities in June.

A new group destination in Brattleboro is the Retreat Farm, which hosts the unique Farm to Ballet event. A dance troupe wearing farm-oriented costumes performs a full ballet on the grass while an orchestra accompanies the dancers with the beautiful music of Vivaldi.

When it's time to book a hotel, planners can look to the Comfort Inn & Suites Brattleboro, highly rated on Tripadvisor. The hotel features an indoor heated pool, fitness center, free WiFi, and a free breakfast.

Says Amy Manning, general manager of the Comfort Inn, "Whether you're skiing at one of the nearby mountains, viewing the fall foliage, celebrating one of the area festivals, or looking for one of Vermont's famous covered bridges, we invite you to come see the true meaning of hospitality while becoming part of our family at the Comfort Inn & Suites Brattleboro."

For more information about the hotel, email Manning at gm.vt073@choicehotels.com or visit choicehotels.com. For more information about Vermont, contact Karen Ballard of the Vermont Tourism Network at kbballard@vtchamber.com or visit vermonttourismnetwork.com.

FARM TO BALLET AT THE RETREAT FARM, BRATTLEBORO

Special seafood events in Maine entice visitors

It's never too early to start planning a visit to Maine for one of the state's famous seafood-related festivals. Join the thousands of visitors who flock to the picturesque villages on Maine's coastline to take part in multi-day celebrations honoring the state's tasty trappings—clams and lobster.



Yarmouth Clam Festival, Yarmouth

The beloved Yarmouth Clam Festival, held the third weekend in July, is attended by more than 80,000 Maine residents, visitors, and groups who come to this charming harbor town to enjoy a parade, fireworks, live music, and fresh seafood. Over the course of the two-day festival, attendees devour more than 6,000 pounds of clams and 6,000 lobster rolls. As an extra reason to attend, all food booths at the festival are run by Yarmouth-based nonprofits that fund school groups, churches, and civic organizations.



Maine Lobster Festival, Rockland

Taking place the first weekend of August every year since 1947, the Maine Lobster Festival celebrates the state's most well-known crustacean with seafood cooking contests, the Great International Lobster Crate Race, a parade, road racing, and, of course, unforgettable lobster feasts. Over the five-day event, 30,000 people visit Rockland for a hearty helping of fresh seafood—including 20,000 pounds of the world-famous lobster—as well as to see renowned entertainers and local artisans.

VISIT MAINE

For more information, contact Hannah Collins at the Maine Office of Tourism at hannah.collins@maine.gov or go to visitmaine.com.



Here's your to-do list for Newport, Rhode Island

Newport, Rhode Island, is known as the sailing capital of the world, and the city offers outstanding seafood and rich Colonial history. Here are some highlights travelers shouldn't miss when visiting the area:

Cliff Walk Take this 3.5-mile walk to enjoy the breathtaking scenery of rocky coastline and crashing waves on one side, and stunning Gilded Age mansions on the other.

Ocean Drive Take a 10-mile drive on this winding road along the breathtaking coastline, and make sure to stop at Brenton Point State Park to admire the scenery.

International Tennis Hall of Fame The museum contains nearly 2,000 tennis artifacts, and visitors can step on the actual grass courts where the legends of the sport have played. Experience interactive exhibits and test your knowledge of the sport.

Redwood Library and Athenaeum Established in 1747, this is the oldest lending library in continuous operation in the country. It served as an officer's club for the occupying army during the Revolutionary War.

Newport Vineyards Visit the vineyard, Brix Restaurant overlooking the vineyard, an extensive tasting room, and a brewery on 60 acres of land in Middletown. During the weekends, enjoy live music.

Fort Adams Visit the largest fortress in the U.S. at Fort Adams State Park, which offers panoramic views of Newport Harbor and Narragansett Bay.

For more information, contact Tim Walsh of Discover Newport at twalsh@discovernewport.org or visit discovernewport.org.

New Hampshire: White Mountain-area museums

New Hampshire's White Mountain area offers a variety of attractions, and here is a sampling of three local museums:

Remick Country Doctor Museum and Farm Located in Tamworth, this living-history museum and working farm allows visitors to experience the lives of two country doctors, their homes, and their farms. Visitors can see farm animals, take a hike on the property, and participate in family-friendly, hands-on activities.

The Frost Place Located in Franconia, the former home of poet Robert Frost is now a museum. Travelers can tour the home, watch an informative video, take a Poetry Trail hike on the property, and enjoy the sweeping view from Frost's front porch.

Weeks State Park On the summit of Mt. Prospect in Lancaster is the summer estate of John Wingate Weeks, the U.S. Congressman who led the movement to establish the Weeks Act of 1911, which created the National Forest system. Visitors can enjoy the hiking trails year-round, and non-hikers can drive the state's first Scenic & Cultural Byway to experience the spectacular view from the summit.

The Frost Place



For more information, contact Kate Wetherell at the White Mountain Visitors Bureau at kwetherell@visitwhitemountains.com or go to visitwhitemountains.com.

South Central U.S. COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

The mountains are calling and I must go in a Pink Jeep

For the first time in its nearly 60 years in business, Pink Jeep Tours is heading east, expanding its unique tours from the desert Southwest to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in Tennessee. It's the first addition under the ownership of Herschend Enterprises, which acquired Pink Jeep Tours in 2018.

"The expansion offers a number of guided tour options in the most visited national park in the United States," says Group Sales Manager Leslie McLean.

The newest four excursions depart from Pigeon Forge aboard—what else—the company's signature pink, state-of-the-art vehicles that range from rugged to luxurious.

"Groups will learn of the history, geology, flora, and fauna from a Pink Jeep Tours certified interpretive guide," McLean says.

Here's a closer look at the company's journeys in the Smokies:

Newfound Gap The gap offers views for miles up the 3,000-foot peak, no matter the season. This adventure takes riders through an ecosystem that shifts as if you were driving from Georgia to Maine, McLean says.

Foothills Parkway "Groups will experience some of the most incredible views in the nation along Foothills Parkway, and they'll also learn the story of the decades-long project," McLean says. Riders can see the Smoky Mountains' highest points on this route.

Oconaluftee Farm This excursion includes a stop at an outdoor museum featuring a collection of 19th-century buildings, including a farmhouse, barn, apple house, and blacksmith shop. With a rolling stream nearby, the setting is perfect for photos—and there's a chance to see some wildlife.

Roaring Fork "The tour of Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail takes guests to places where tour buses can't go," McLean says. Guides discuss life on the American frontier as old log cabins and mills come into view, as well as rushing waterfalls.

The company offers group rates. For more information, contact McLean at leslie@pinkjeep.com or go to pinkjeep.com.



Roaring Fork tour



Foothills Parkway tour

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Dreamy rides and water slides at Dollywood

History. Thrill rides. Southern cooking. Live shows. Tucked into every square inch of Dollywood is something different, exciting, and new.

The award-winning theme park in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, stretches over 150 acres with more than 40 rides and attractions, including the world's fastest wood coaster, Lightning Rod, and the country's first wing coaster, Wild Eagle. Dollywood's Splash Country Water Park is also swimming with record-breaking rides, like Tennessee's tallest twin speed slides as well as its first and only water coaster.



The Butterfly at Splash Country Water Park

This spring the park opened Wildwood Grove, a \$37 million project—its largest-ever expansion. Inspired by Dolly Parton's childhood daydreams of butterflies, dragonflies, and the wild animals of the woods, the attraction features 11 family-friendly experiences, from the Treetop Tower and splash areas to its new restaurant, Till & Harvest, and unique shopping at Mountain Grove Merchants.

Woven into Dollywood's signature rides are its historical attractions, each telling the stories of those who inhabited the area in the 19th century. In Craftsman's Valley, groups can see blacksmiths, candle makers, woodcarvers, glassblowers, and leather smiths hard at work, and they can browse the products in the old-time shops. They can also see the Robert F. Thomas Chapel, a one-room country-style church that holds worship services each Sunday.

Other options include seeing a fully operating, historically accurate grist mill—built by the park's employees—that grinds corn and wheat into flour daily. And the Dollywood Express comprises two coal-fired steam trains built in the early 1900s; it holds up to 550 passengers for its picturesque five-mile journey through the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains.

Dollywood is also home to a resort and spa, mountainside cabins, live entertainment, and many festivals throughout the year. For more information, contact Brandi Salyers at bsalyers@dollywood.com or go to dollywood.com.

Wandering the wild and wonderful

U.S. Tours takes travelers to every corner of the country, but President Bob Cline crafts some unique packages right where the company is headquartered: in beautiful West Virginia.

"U.S. Tours is considerably more than just a receptive. But since West Virginia is home, we find ourselves managing many different groups looking to see the place John Denver sang about in the song 'Country Roads,'" he says.

The best-selling destination is Elkins, particularly for the three-day Music and Rails tour. Guests board a train and scour uninhabited mountains and return to Elkins for two music shows. The five-day Summer Trains of West Virginia, another of the company's popular packages, includes stops at the Greenbrier and at Patsy Cline's home in Winchester, Virginia, before heading back to Elkins for three music shows.

"In that area, we are able to offer the Gandy Dancer Dinner Theater and additional music from local mountain musicians at a variety of venues. This is one of those unique, off-the-beaten path destinations where wildflowers bloom in spring and brilliant autumn colors paint incredible vistas," he says. "(The tours') popularity is due to the high mountains and rugged terrain where they operate. They are truly remote mountaintop experiences."

Many of his packaged tours include the Greenbrier Resort as well as Oglebay's holiday lights display, but Cline says one of the most popular attractions his company includes is NTA-member Tamarack, the cultural center based in Beckley.

"We have groups stopping (at the Tamarack) as they travel

I-77 to and from other destinations, and it's a great comfort and lunch stop. It also provides us with a great evening for groups that overnight in Beckley," he says. "In addition to offering a marvelous meal at the food court and a little time for shopping, we use their theater for an evening of entertainment. My favorite show that we produce there is 'Coal Camp Memories,' which is a one-woman show about growing up and growing old in a Coal Camp."

For more information, contact Cline at bob@ustours.biz or go to ustours.biz.



Exploring West Virginia by rail

CC FLOKRY/DONNIE NUNLEY; BT/12/12/12



Red Mile goes the extra mile

When a plane lands in Lexington, passengers can look out their windows and see horses grazing and galloping between white fencing for miles. It's an unmistakable Kentucky landscape.

Lexington is home to several attractions that open the door to horse country. At Red Mile, patrons can step into the world of horseracing—and have fun while they're there.

"(Visitors) can play exciting games and hit it big on a jackpot, enjoy a meal from Frankie's Bar & Grill, grab a cocktail at Center Bar, boogie down to their favorite live band or late-night D.J., enjoy live harness horse racing, and see a gorgeous sunset view along the trackside," says Marketing Specialist Lindsey Adkins.

Red Mile is the second-oldest harness race track in the world, and it offers more than 900 gaming terminals, daily promotions on the gaming floor, full-service private event space for large groups, and a new-member winning guarantee.

"(Patrons can) sign up for a Winners' Circle Card and get up to \$200 with our Winning Guarantee program. Their special rebate offer will be based on their play the day they sign up," Adkins says.

The harness racing season is July through October, opening with the Kentucky Sire Stakes. The elite horses in Standardbred racing are displayed during the final two weeks of races, which include the Kentucky Filly Futurity, Tattersalls Pace, and the International Stallion Stakes.

Along with races, music, jackpots, and year-round events, groups can also play games on the new climate-controlled Smoky Joe's patio. The attraction has recently added more than 30 new

themed games, including Pac Man Wild Edition and Triple Action Dragons.

For more information, contact Adkins at lindsey.adkins@redmile.biz or go to redmileky.com.

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Asia and India

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON



The Bangkok skyline, as viewed from a rooftop bar

Traditional dancers (*ram thai*)
in Chiang Mai

Authentic Thai longboat on Railay Beach in Krabi

Thailand your way

For Jason Male, starting his own tour company was a case of a passion turning into a career.

“After relocating back to the U.S. after living in Thailand for seven years, I was becoming the de facto travel agent for everyone I knew—family, friends, colleagues, etc.—who was interested in traveling to Thailand,” he says. “A travel industry professional friend of mine suggested that I start a couture/boutique group tour company exclusively focused on luxury tours of Thailand, and I did.”

The company, Thailand Tourways, takes a unique approach to group travel. Its packages never include more than 30 people, and participants have plenty of flexibility once they arrive in Thailand.

“Thailand, if by reputation alone, can sometimes be intimidating to people traveling on their own, and our tours provide the perfect solution,” says Male. “We offer enough structure and activities to keep our groups busy and involved, but all things are optional. So if members of the group would rather sunbathe at the beach or pool ... that’s great.

“But, they don’t travel all the way to Thailand to spend every day swimming in a hotel pool; they want to experience this exciting place,” he continues. “All of our activities—whether it is a Thai cooking class, a deep-sea fishing excursion, or swimming with elephants—offer them a cultural connection to Thailand.”

Another way in which the company provides a deep dive into local culture is through food. While Male says many places in the U.S. have Thai restaurants, “rarely does the food served in those restaurants have anything to do with actual Thai cuisine. We strive to help our clients learn about and try authentic dishes, from street food to traditional Thai dishes to modern Thai fusion cuisine.”

For more information, reach out to Male at jason@thailandtourways.com or go to thailandtourways.com.

Two-wheeled adventure in India

Second-year NTA member Indo Asia Leisure Services offers a number of themed tours—culture and history, religion, wildlife, spa vacations, and adventure tours—that showcase India’s many sides. Under the latter category, the destination marketing company has specialized programs for both bicyclists and motorcyclists.

“Along mountain trails or going past cultural hot spots, the cycling and biking tours give a glimpse of India that no other mode of transportation can,” says Vinay Sharda, the company’s vice president. “The lure lies in the paced-out, indulgent time on the road, where you can stop and take in the beauty of the outdoors or interact with locals as you please.”

Indo Asia takes bicyclists along trails through mountainous areas in the Himalayas or to colorful destinations such as Rajasthan and Kerala. As part of the Rajasthan itinerary, participants pedal through the villages and deserts outside the city. Coffee, tea, and spice plantations are showcased during the rides around Kerala.

For those who prefer the motorized version of two-wheeled adventure, the company offers a tour through Madikeri in southern India. The well-maintained roads and mixed terrain in the area allow motorcyclists to take in the beautiful landscape. Plus, they can stay in small villages, where locals open



Motorcycle tour in India

their houses for tour participants.

“Sometimes it’s not about seeing the destination, but feeling it,” says Sharda. “Our cycling and biking trips allow travelers to take in the place, slowly, smoothly, and at a pace that they can choose.”

For more information, reach out to Sharda at vp@indoasia-tours.com or go to indoasia-tours.com.

Peeling back Japan’s layers with Samurai Tours



Samurai Tours’ Mike Roberts in Japan

Mike Roberts founded Samurai Tours, which specializes in packages to Japan, based on his love of the island nation’s culture. *Courier* spoke with him about his company and tourism in Japan.

Courier: What led you to focus on Japan?

Roberts: From the first time I visited Japan more than 25 years ago, I was fascinated by the people and culture. Even today, I am still impressed how they merge the old and new into their daily lives.

Courier: How do you connect your travelers to the local culture?

Roberts: It is not so much the places we visit, although we do include a number of very Japanese places other operators don’t go, but rather the way we travel. We use public transportation only, and we avoid the large tourist hotels and try to use Japanese-style inns called *ryokans* as much as possible.

Courier: What changes have you noticed in the Japanese market?

Roberts: In the last few years, the Japanese have been making Japan more tourist-friendly. There are more signs in English, and more people are willing and able to speak English. When it was announced that Japan would be hosting the 2020 Olympics, this process was accelerated. However, when you get off the beaten path, there is little English spoken, and you still can discover the old Japan.

Courier: What are a couple of your favorite only-in-Japan experiences?

Roberts: The Japanese have raised the art of [hot thermal] bathing to a whole new level, and visiting an *onsen* is a great way to experience this. Also, there are still active Geisha districts around Japan, but the best can be found in Kyoto. We include a “Meet a Maiko” session in many of our tours.

To learn more, contact Roberts at mike@samuraitours.com or go to samuraitours.com.

Buddhist history revealed in northwestern China

“China’s relatively conservative culture and Confucian good manners help make for a welcoming—and, on the whole, polite—society that is always fascinating to the outsider,” says Tim Han of Beijing-based TUI China Travel. “Perhaps, surprisingly, China also has a well-preserved religious past, as the nexus point of Islam and Buddhism can be found in Gansu Province.”

The province, located in northwestern China, is the featured destination on the company’s Gansu and Qinghai: Buddhist Monastery Tour.

“Aside from its famous hand-pulled soup noodles, Lanzhou is home to Baitashan White Pagoda Mountain Park,” says Han. “Move with the crowds of fellow tourists, both foreign and domestic, as you ascend to the sacred White Pagoda temple at the park’s peak.”

A short distance from Lanzhou in the village of Xia He is the Labrang Monastery. The facility, which is home to more than 1,700 Buddhist scripture wheels, was once known as the Vatican of the Orient. “Plus, there are more religious devotees

Baitashan White Pagoda



here than any place outside of Tibet,” adds Han.

A number of additional faith-based sites are visited during the tour, including the Longwu Monastery and the Wutong Monastery in the nearby Qinghai Province.

To learn more, email Han at tim.han@tui.cn or go to tui.cn.

Trekkies unite!

Nepal Vision Treks & Expedition Ltd., which was founded in 1992, creates adventure tours in its namesake nation as well as in Tibet and Bhutan.



Trek to Annapurna Base Camp

“Since the beginning, Nepal Vision has focused on promoting Himalayan climbing and trekking through natural landscapes and remote mountain regions,” says Chet Bhatta, the company’s executive director. “Our top Nepal adventure tours include incredible trekking at Everest Base Camp and in the most natural and scenic mountains by Annapurna.”

Those programs require a high level of fitness, especially the ones around Everest, but the Annapurna programs include a wider range of options. Bhatta says there are shorter, less-strenuous hikes—such as Ghandruk Trek and Poon Hill Trek—that stay below 10,500 feet, as well as intermediate tours that go to Annapurna Base Camp at over 13,500 feet.

“The landscapes in this region are amazing, and the views of Annapurna Himalayas are spectacular,” he says. “You will see a 360-degree panorama of the central Himalayan range in Nepal.”

The company also is diligent about giving back to the local communities where it takes its travelers.

“Nepal Vision uses local professionals in the regions on every tour, thus creating jobs opportunities for locals,” says Bhatta. “In addition, our partner charity, Pioneer Foundation Nepal, helps with children’s education in poor communities, organizes health projects in remote mountainous areas, and creates volunteer teaching opportunity in the rural schools.”

To learn more, email Bhatta at info@nepalvisiontreks.com or go to nepalvisiontreks.com.

Pro tips for TREX

With the first appoint-free Tuesday coming up in December at Travel Exchange '19 in Fort Worth, you need to be prepared. Use these pro tips to get a business-building edge.

Buyers

- Take part in all three of the new sessions—Sales Mission I, Sales Mission II, and Best Pitch—to get the most itinerary ideas (even if you back-burner some of them).
- Check out the sponsor booths, because buyers are judges for the TREXie awards—and one judge will win a crisp \$100 bill.

Suppliers

- Say yes if your DMO invites you to join your state or province's Sales Mission.
- Attend your state/province's caucus to pick up insights and leads.

North American DMOs

- To find out who's leading your Sales Mission—and it might be you!—email Dawn Pettus, NTA's director of events: dawn.pettus@ntastaff.com.
- There's no charge to be part of a Sales Mission with NTA buyers, but first you've got to register for Travel Exchange.

Overseas DMOs

- Get ready for your close-up. Best Pitch puts you in front of an audience of buyers to describe how to best package travel to your country.
- Think of it as a personal introduction to buyers who are considering adding—or expanding—a program to your country.

All sellers

- Presentations won't include projectors and big screens, so get creative with iPads, printed itineraries, and tchotchkes.
- Lunch takes place on the TREX Floor—buddy up with a buyer or two.
- To get a sponsor booth on the TREX Floor ... become a sponsor!

For more info email headquarters@ntastaff.com or visit NTAtravelexchange.com (and see the scrolling list of registrants).

Courier's Guide to NTA-member Theaters



"Chicago: The Musical," showing at New York City's Ambassador Theatre, is the longest-running American musical in Broadway history.

The following list includes theaters and performance venues, along with production companies and ticket providers, that belong to the National Tour Association. These organizations provide an array of services and benefits for travel planners and groups.

The listings below are based on a company's primary membership category or profile selections. The information was provided by the member contact and was current as of Aug. 23. Please check NTAonline.com for updated details on the following members. Additionally, with this and all other guides that appear in *Courier*, members can enhance their listing by contacting kendall@ntaservicesinc.com.

CANADA

ONTARIO

Greg Frewin Theatre

Serena Waldeck
5781 Ellen Ave.
Niagara Falls, ON L2G 3P8
+1.905.356.0777 (240)
serena@gregfrewintheatre.com
gregfrewintheatre.com

Mirvish Productions

Natasha Springett
284 King St. West, Suite 310
Toronto, ON M5V 1J2
+1.416.593.4142 (202)
nspringett@mirvish.com
mirvish.com

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

Blazin' M Ranch

Lori Mabery
1875 Mabery Ranch Road
Cottonwood, AZ 86326
+1.928.634.0334
lori@blazinm.com
blazinm.com

ARKANSAS

Ozark Folk Center State Park

Michalle Stevens
1032 Park Ave.
Mountain View, AR 72560
+1.870.269.3851
michalle.stevens@arkansas.gov
ozarkfolkcenter.com

CALIFORNIA

PIER 39

Jodi Cumming
Beach Street and The Embarcadero
Stairway 2, Level 3
San Francisco, CA 94133
+1.415.705.5500
jodi@pier39.com
pier39.com

Pirate's Dinner Adventure-California

Anna Castillo
7600 Beach Blvd.
Buena Park, CA 90620-1838
+1.714.690.1497 (212)
annac@pirates-ca.com
piratesdinneradventure.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

National Theatre

Ashley Birdsell
1321 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20004
+1.202.628.6161
abirdsell@thenationaldc.com
thenationaldc.com

ILLINOIS

Broadway in Chicago Group Sales

Gemma Mulvihill
17 N. State St., Suite 810
Chicago, IL 60602-3047
+1.312.977.1710
groupsales@broadwayinchicago.com
broadwayinchicago.com

The Second City

Heather Scholl
1616 N. Wells
Chicago, IL 60614
+1.312.337.3992
hscholl@secondcity.com
secondcity.com

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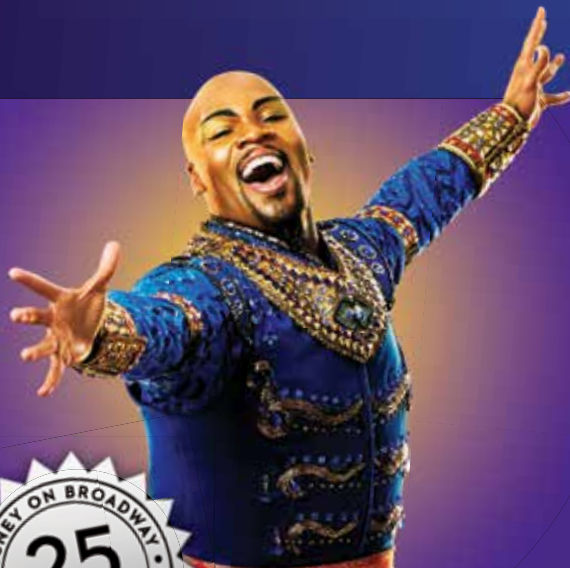
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VARIETY

Disney FROZEN

THE HIT BROADWAY MUSICAL



"BROADWAY MAGIC!"

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Disney Aladdin

THE HIT BROADWAY MUSICAL



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Contact a Group Sales Representative today to book your group!

INDIANA

Amish Acres–Red Barn Theater

Becky Cappert
1600 W. Market St.
Nappanee, IN 46550-1731
+1.574.773.4188
beckymaust@amishacres.com
amishacres.com

Derby Dinner Playhouse

Cindy Nevitt
525 Marriott Drive
Clarksville, IN 47129-3053
+1.812.288.2632
groups@derbydinner.com
derbydinner.com

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston Ballet

John Fernandes
19 Clarendon St.
Boston, MA 02116
+1.617.456.6343
jfernandes@bostonballet.org
bostonballet.org

Boston Pops Orchestra/Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood

Megan Cokely
301 Massachusetts Ave.
Boston, MA 02115-4557
+1.617.638.9345
mcokely@bso.org
bso.org

Shear Madness

Lisa Field
20 Park Plaza, Suite 1012
Boston, MA 02116-4315
+1.617.451.0195
lisaf@shearmadness.com
shearmadness.com

MISSOURI

Dutton Family Theater Complex

Debbie LeTourneau
3454 W. 76 Country Blvd.
Branson, MO 65616-3546
+1.417.332.2772
debbie.letourneau@gmail.com
theduttons.com

Presleys' Country Jubilee

Raeanne Presley
2920 W. 76 Country Blvd.
Branson, MO 65616-2172
+1.417.334.4874
raeanne@presleys.com
presleys.com

NEW MEXICO

The Santa Fe Opera

Aimee Adamek
301 Opera Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87506-2823
+1.505.986-5958
aadamek@santafeopera.org
santafeopera.org

NEW YORK

Broadway Inbound

Peter Waugh
520 8th Ave., 11th Floor
New York, NY 10018
+1.212.302.0995
peterw@broadwayinbound.com
broadwayinbound.com

Carnegie Hall

Rayna Bourke
881 7th Ave.
New York, NY 10019-8075
+1.212.903.9705
rbourke@carnegiehall.org
carnegiehall.org/events/group-sales

Chicago The Musical–National Artists Management Company

Ken Sperr
165 W. 46th St., Suite 1202
New York, NY 10036-2508
+1.212.575.1044
kens@namcousa.com
chicagothemusical.com

Disney Theatrical Group

Suzanne Gregory
214 W. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10036-7202
+1.212.827.5412
suzanne.gregory@disney.com
disneyonbroadway.com

GreatWhiteWay.com Group Sales

Scott Mallalieu
1776 Broadway, Suite 2020
New York, NY 10019
+1.212.757.9117
scottm@greatwhiteway.com
greatwhiteway.com

Group Sales Box Office at Broadway.com

Kendra Dolton
729 7th Ave., Floor 6
New York, NY 10019-6831
800.BROADWAY (2)
kdolton@broadway.com
broadway.com/groups

Harry Potter and the Cursed Child

Joe Tropia
214 West 43rd St.
New York, NY 10036
+1.212.556.4768
joetropia@soniafriedman.com
harrypottertheplay.com

Madison Square Garden Group Sales

Rob Lyons
2 Penn Plaza, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10121-0101
+1.212.631.4315
rob.lyons@msg.com
msggroupsales.com

The Offstage Group/Your VIP Pass

Beverly Sambrotto
1345 Avenue of the Americas, Floor 33
New York, NY 10105
+1.212.878.3620
bev@yourvippass.com
yourvippass.com

Roundabout Theatre Company

Madeline Hurley
231 W. 39th St. #1200
New York, NY 10018
+1.212.719.9393
madelineh@roundabouttheatre.org
roundabouttheatre.org

WICKED the Musical/ 321 Group Sales

Ellise Lesser
420 West 45th St., 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10036
+1.646.289.6885
elessers@321mgt.com
wickedthemusical.com

PENNSYLVANIA

American Music Theatre

Alyssa Keshel
2425 Lincoln Highway E
Lancaster, PA 17602-1423
+1.717.397.7700
sales@amtshows.com
amtshows.com

Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre/ Prather Productions

Myra Gromen
510 Centerville Road
Lancaster, PA 17601-1306
800.933.3759
mgromen@dutchapple.com
dutchapple.com

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THE STAGE



Fulton Theatre

Lisa Hall
12 North Prince St.
Lancaster, PA 17603
+1.717.397.7425 (103)
lhall@thefulton.org
thefulton.org

Sight & Sound Theatres (Lancaster and Branson)

Simi Telesco
300 Hartman Bridge Road
P.O. Box 310
Strasburg, PA 17579-0310
+1.717.687.4220 (2400)
simi.telesco@sight-sound.com
sight-sound.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Carolina Opry

Jordan Watkins
8901 A Highway 17
Myrtle Beach, SC 29577
+1.843.913.1450
gsales@cgp.net
carolinaopry.com

TENNESSEE

Dollywood

Brandi Salyers
2700 Dollywood Parks Blvd.
Pigeon Forge, TN 37863-4113
+1.865.428.9674
bsalyers@dollywood.com
dollywood.com

Grand Ole Opry Entertainment Group

Wayne Chandler
2804 Opryland Drive
Nashville, TN 37214-1209
+1.615.882.5435
wchandler@gaylordentertainment.com
opry.com/groups

Ray Stevens CabaRay Showroom

Amy Russell
5724 River Road
Nashville, TN 37209
+1.615.327.4630 (111)
sales@raystevenscabaray.com
raystevens.com

Smoky Mountain Opry (World Choice Investments)

John Scully
2046 Parkway
Pigeon Forge, TN 37863-2959
+1.865.505.0060
jscully@gcipc.com
smokymtnopry.com

TEXAS

Medieval Times Entertainment

Dayne Westbrook
5020 Riverside Drive, Bldg. 3, #400
Irving, TX 75039
+1.469.342.5055
dayne.westbrook@medievaltimes.com
medievaltimes.com

UTAH

Destination Cinema

Kimberly Allan-Sampson
4155 Harrison Blvd.
Ogden, UT 84403
+1.905.358.3611
kallan-sampson@imaxniagara.com
destinationcinema.com

WASHINGTON

Teatro ZinZanni

Virginia Tabbutt
14200 NE 145th St.
Woodinville, WA 98072
+1.206.802.0013
vtabbutt@zinzanni.com
zinzanni.com

WISCONSIN

The Fireside Dinner Theatre

Jean Flynn
1131 Janesville Ave.
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-2406
800.477.9505
jean@firesidetheatre.com
firesidetheatre.com

The Palace Theater

Kortnee Carroll
564 Wisconsin Dells Parkway S.
Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965
+1.608.253.9000
groupsdept@dellspalace.com
dellspalace.com

WYOMING

The Cody Cattle Company

Greg Pendley
1910 Demaris St.
Cody, WY 82414
+1.307.272.5770
greg@thecodycattlecompany.com
thecodycattlecompany.com



AMERICAN MUSIC THEATRE

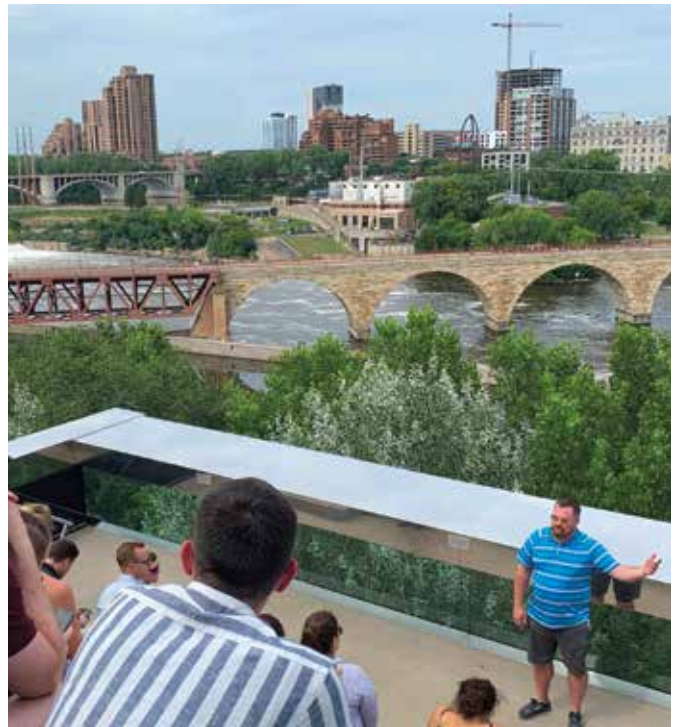
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Preview of coming attractions: *Courier* staffers took a little time this summer to visit four North American destinations that they'll be writing about in upcoming issues of NTA's flagship magazine. Pictured above are (clockwise from top left):

Elfreth's Alley offers the kind of Colonial appeal that Bob Rouse found irresistible when he came across the National Historic Landmark during a walkabout in Philadelphia.

Kendall Fletcher took a wet, sunny ride into the falls with NTA-member Hornblower Niagara Cruises during her FAM trip to Niagara Falls, Ontario, in June.

Bob Rouse found a group on the roof of the Mill City Museum in Minneapolis, learning about the industries that flourished beside the Mississippi River.

Pat Henderson's Arctic cruise with Adventure Canada included a stop at Beechey Island, Nunavut, where he spent a few minutes reflecting on life and large blocks of ice.



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Official NTA Corporate Partner

Meet the Members

Lowcountry Hotels of Charleston

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

NTA contact: Betsay Painter, area director of sales

Office phone: +1.843.576.5051

Website: lowcountryhotels.com

NTA member since: 2011

Tell us what makes your hotels special.

We have a hotel for every need across Charleston—full-service and limited service in North Charleston, extended stay in Mount Pleasant, and a boutique in historical downtown. We have flexible indoor and outdoor meeting space at each property, including a top floor event room that overlooks the Cooper River at our newest hotel, the Staybridge Suites Charleston-Mount Pleasant.

What are some services the company provides for groups?

We offer 30-day cutoff dates, complimentary bus parking, driver rates, portage, and complimentary breakfast buffets in a private room.

Is there anything new you'd like to tell NTA members about?

We have rolled out some experience menus, so we can do an on-site oyster roast, an

interactive shrimp and grits station, and some other Lowcountry specialties that can be shared on a small scale at an evening welcome reception or as a full-meal option.

Where would you love to travel to someday?

I took my dream trip to Austria, Switzerland, and Italy in August. Europe is such a magical place! I would also love to have a few days in London and then hop over to France to explore. With the new direct flight from Charleston to London, the doors might open again sooner than I had anticipated. Fingers crossed!

What are your hobbies?

I go to the beach as often as possible, and I love to be active outdoors in the various settings of Charleston's Lowcountry. In the fall, I coach a recreation department youth cheerleading squad and support Georgia football. You will also find me at the library pretty often.



For more information, contact Painter at bpainter@lowcountryhotels.com.

Fly My Group

BOZEMAN, MONTANA

NTA contact: Roy Peterson, president

Office phone: 866.374.5043

Website: flymygroup.com and flightsugar.com

NTA member since: 2015

Tell us a little bit about Fly My Group.

Fly My Group specializes in group and individual airfare for tour operators. We have discounted fares and proprietary technology that has changed the market on the air side. Of course, I can't take credit for this—I have to mention and am grateful for a wonderful team that truly believes in what we do.

What are a couple of things the company offers tour operators?

We offer special deals and favorable contract terms along with custom-built technology that provides discounts and time savings. We also offer our clients access to Flight Sugar, which is our internet booking engine with discounted fares available to the travel market.

What's something about the company that most might find surprising?

We love saving our clients "fat stacks of greenbacks" on air. This motto has become an internal slogan for our team, and we work hard to make it a reality for every ticket sold!

What tunes are you listening to these days?

I like all sorts of music, depending on the mood or time of year. Right now it's a mix between Ray Charles, Ratatat, pop, country, and some T Swift at times.

How do you like to spend your time off?

I love to be in the mountains of Montana when I am not working. It is a true blessing to get to live and work in such a beautiful location.



For more information, contact Peterson at roy.peterson@flymygroup.com. ☎

Introducing ... NTA's newest members

Cinderella Travel

REGO PARK, NEW YORK

Tour operator

Founded in 1995, Cinderella Travel specializes in travel to Russia and CIS countries: Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and the Baltic States. The company provides visa services, hotel accommodations, transportation, English-speaking tour guides, attraction tickets, translation services, assistance during conventions, and restaurant reservations. The staff's deep knowledge and understanding of the products help create an unforgettable experience.



Natalie Azarov

President

+1.718.275.8434

natalie@cinderellatravel.com

cinderellajourneys.com

"I grew up in Moscow and fulfilled my dreams in New York, where I love exploring the city, dancing the tango, trying new restaurants, and going to museums and movies. I have a never-ending list of places I want to visit."

Travel by Jim/ Memorable

Vacations LLC



JACKSON, TENNESSEE

Travel agent

The company is a full-service online travel agency, operating since 2018, that plans both escorted and independent cruise and land vacations for individuals and groups. It specializes in group faith-based and secular travel, from budget to luxury. With access to the best travel providers in the world, staff members pride themselves in providing a high level of personal service.



Jim Donnell

Travel consultant

+1.731.695.1954

jim@travelbyjim.com

travelsbyjim.com

"My favorite destinations are Europe, the Mediterranean, and the Caribbean. I love to travel and love to plan trips even more!"

Target Tours/ Target Tours Atlantic



STRATFORD, PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

Tour operator

Target Tours is a tour operator offering packaged tours departing from the Maritimes of Canada. Target Tours Atlantic provides inbound services for Atlantic Canada, including step-on guides, full tour packaging, and private touring services. The company combines attention to detail and organization to provide memorable experiences, from simple day tours on PEI to more extensive tours to Amish Country.



John Dunphy

President

+1.902.367.5500

jdunphy@targettours.ca

targettours.ca

"Happiness for me is being at the wheel of a 45-foot motorcoach on the open road. The smiles on the faces of our passengers when they see their travel dreams come true is the real reason I am in the travel business."

WeTravel

SAN FRANCISCO

Associate

WeTravel has built a payment platform that is used by travel companies that want to give their clients an easy booking experience for custom and group tours while also managing financials, the participant's information, and communications—all in one place.



Lucas Ennis

Head of sales

+1.415.794.7877

lucas@wetravel.com

wetravel.com

"My wife and I both love to travel and be outdoors whenever we can—camping, hiking, swimming, etc."

PROFILES ENCOURAGED

Think of your member profile on NTA Online as a digital elevator pitch that other members rely on when making business appointments or conducting online searches. Is your profile up to date? To find out, log in and click the "welcome" words in the upper right corner.



NEW MEMBERS

The following list shows organizations that joined NTA recently. Companies that also joined the Faith Travel Association have an FTA logo by their name. To access complete information on each of these new members, log on to NTAonline.com and go to the member searches.

DMOs

**Butler County
Tourism & Convention Bureau**
Amy Pack
Zelienople, PA 16063 USA
visitbutlercounty.com

**Carson City
Culture & Tourism Authority**
James Salanoa
Carson City, NV 89701-4514 USA
visitcarsoncity.com

**Colorful Québec/
Southern Regions**
Steve Derome
Sherbrooke, QC J1L 1W4 Canada
colorfulqc.ca

The Crystal Coast
Sandi Godfrey
Morehead City, NC 28557 USA
crystalcoastnc.org

**Grapevine
Convention & Visitors Bureau**
Heather Egan
Grapevine, TX 76051-5374 USA
grapevinetexasusa.com


Visit Kilgore
Ryan Polk
Kilgore, TX 75662 USA
visitkilgore.com

TOUR OPERATORS

Cinderella Travel
Natalie Azarov
Rego Park, NY 11374 USA
cinderellajourneys.com

Dan Dipert Tours & Coaches
Jessica Cree
Arlington, TX 76013-2802 USA
dandipert.com

**Horizon Travel Services LLC.
(dba ATP)**
Karin Omojola
New York, NY 10018 USA
atptravel.com

**Innovative Travel
Company** 
Robyn Galloway
Christchurch, 8013 New Zealand
innovativetravel.us

**Kibran Tours –
Ethiopia** 
Assefa Azene
Addis Ababa, 15475 Ethiopia
kibrantours.com

Lotto Global Service (USA) LLC
Hao Han
Seatac, WA 98188 USA
uslgs.com

Prelude Tours LLC
Sarah Bennett
Porter, TX 77365 USA
preludetours.com

Target Tours/Target Tours Atlantic
John Dunphy
Stratford, PE C1B 1P4 Canada
targettours.ca

Yankee Trails Inc.
Stephen Tobin
Rensselaer, NY 12144-5616 USA
yankeetrails.com

TOUR SUPPLIERS

Amish Experience
Lois Stoltzfus
Bird-in-Hand, PA 17505-0414 USA
amishexperience.com

Brewster's Mountain Lodge
Maureen VanMackelbergh
Banff, AB T1L 1C1 Canada
brewstermountainlodge.com

Caesars Entertainment
LaTanya Pritchett
Las Vegas, NV 89109 USA
caesars.com

Crescent Hotels and Resorts
Kiersty Kastner-Burr
Newington, CT 06111 USA

**DoubleTree Suites by Hilton
Disney Springs**
Dawn Moorman
Lake Buena Vista, FL 32830 USA
doubletreeguestsuites.com

The Florida Aquarium
C. Aimie Johnson
Tampa, FL 33602 USA
flaquarium.org

**Food On Foot Tours/
Gourmet NY Tasting/Intro to NY**
Corey Taylor
Wheatley Heights, NY 11798 USA
foodonfoottours.com

**Friends of San Felipe
de Austin SHS**
Toni Franklin
San Felipe, TX 77473 USA
thc.texas.gov/historic-sites/san-felipe-de-austin-state-historic-site

Galleria Palms Hotel
Laurinda Warczak
Kissimmee, FL 34747 USA
gphkissimmee.com

Great Lakes Crossing Outlets
Kristen Old
Auburn Hills, MI 48326-1221 USA
greatlakescrossingoutlets.com

Joe's Crab Shack
Kailyn Bates
Houston, TX 77027 USA
joescrabshack.com

**Medieval Times
Entertainment Inc.**
Dayne Westbrook
Irving, TX 75039 USA
medievaltimes.com

National Theatre
Ashley Birdsell
Washington, DC 20004 USA
thenationaldc.com

New Age Coach Inc.
Tina Liu
West Springfield, MA 01089 USA
newagec.com

Old Tucson
Joe Camarillo
Tucson, AZ 85735-9322 USA
oldtucson.com

Oregon Coast Aquarium
Jason King
Newport, OR 97365-5269 USA
aquarium.org

PHI Hotel Group
Cecilia Guerrero
Kamloops, BC V1S 1J3 Canada
phihotelgroup.com


Seaport District NYC
Shoshana Puccia
New York, NY 10038 USA
seaportdistrict.nyc

Sky Ute Casino Resort
Jeff Lyman
Ignacio, CO 81137 USA
skyutecasino.com

Staybridge Suites Times Square
Bianca Bresil
New York, NY 10018 USA

UnCruise Adventures
Yolanda Brown
Seattle, WA 98119 USA
uncruise.com

TRAVEL AGENT

**Travel By Jim/
Memorable
Vacations LLC** 
Jim Donnell
Jackson, TN 38305 USA
travelsbyjim.com

ASSOCIATES

Podium
Ashley Campbell
Lehi, UT 84043 USA
podium.com

WeTravel 
Lucas Ennis
San Francisco, CA 94107 USA
wetravel.com

NTA EVENTS

Save these dates in 2019 and beyond to connect with new partners and destinations. For more information on these events, click the EVENTS tab on NTAonline.com



travel 
FORT WORTH
— DECEMBER 8-12, 2019 —
Fort Worth | Dec. 8-12, 2019



travel 
RENO TAHOE
NOVEMBER 15-19
Reno Tahoe | Nov. 15-19, 2020



CONTACT 
Anchorage | March 18-21, 2020
Anchorage, Alaska
March 18-21, 2020



CONTACT 
Memphis | March 17-20, 2021
Memphis, Tennessee
March 17-20, 2021

I am Mom ... and Big Brother.

BY ANGELA HARNESS, CTP

I HAVE HAD A PROFOUND CHANGE in the last month, ever since my daughter turned Sweet 16. Ashton is now driving, and her world is wider than it has ever been. She is out burning gas, running to see her friends, off to cheerleading practice, and hopefully, she will soon get a j-o-b.

Her liberated adventures have led me to turn to unconventional ways to keep up with her whereabouts. (Well, they are unconventional compared to when I was 16.) My husband found a robust tool that will plug into the motherboard of Ashton's car that tells us everything we need to know about her driving habits: exactly where she is, how fast she drove to get there, and how much gas is left in her tank. It even tells us if she slammed on her brakes! We simply pull up the app on our phone, and it feeds us the information we seek.

Intrusive? Maybe, but it's a Big Brother world.

We're all feeding information to marketers. In retail it's crucial for brands to understand their customers. What motivates you as a shopper? Price? Convenience? A combination? (This is where I could discuss Big Brother analytics such as Visa VUE and Arrivalist, but let's move on.)

There are several ways marketers are tracking our every move. They monitor not just our online clicks, but also our physical movement—where we drive, walk, and wander. You can thank your smartphone and your credit card for this. When you surf the web on your smartphone, you are trackable. When you make a purchase, whether online or in person, you are being tracked.

So then what? What do trackers do with this information?

For starters, you are categorized demographically and geographically with other people that look like you. Your information is entered into a geographic information system, such as Tapestry Segment, and you are placed in a bucket based on income, education level, shopping preference, and even bill-paying preference.



16-year old Ashton, left, is steering herself down the road of freedom ... except that mother Angela, right, is tracking her every move—not unlike a world of unseen marketers.

Are you a “Southern Satellite” or a “Bright Young Professional”? Knowing this information—and your bucket—helps retailers make assumptions about what will lead you to visit a store, whether it's online or in person. And retail brands are even competing with themselves to drive you into their store. They vye for your business to help keep their brick-and-mortar stores open while growing their online business.

Now more than ever, the Big Brother approach to marketing is crucial for retail businesses. They know the importance of omnichannel marketing, another strategy that has been around for a few years. Omnichannel marketing is taking a multi-channel sales approach in order to give the end user (you and me) a seamless experience. Whether you are shopping from your phone or your laptop—or in a physical store—the omnichannel approach is smooth and continuous.

It is important for retailers to know their customers so they can speak specifically to them during the shopping process. Have you looked at an article of clothing on a website and then gone to,

say, Facebook, only to see that blouse or shirt follow you in a pop-up ad?

That approach helps marketers enhance the consumer experience. If their omnichannel strategy is effective, you can (and will) purchase that item with ease and not even know the magnitude of detail it took to lead you to click the “buy now” button.

For my daughter and her shopping habits, omnichannel marketing is all she has ever known. And as a new driver, Ashton has only known parental tracking on her phone and car. Does she really have newfound freedom? She would tell you she does. But to marketers, her journey toward being funneled into a specific Tapestry Segment has just begun.

And what does Ashton's recent independence and her every journey mean to her parents? Well, let's just say we're keeping an eye on it. 📍

Angela Harness is the travel and tourism partnership manager for Tanger Outlets. She lives with her husband and daughter—and her daughter's car—in Sevierville, Tennessee.

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