

COURIER

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

DECEMBER 2017

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See the 2018 medalists

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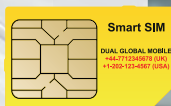
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The Portland (Oregon) Aerial Tram





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December 2017

Shell game: Scientists at Padre Island National Seashore near Corpus Christi, Texas, release newly hatched sea turtles into the wild from mid-June to August. Go to page 28 to read more about the unique program and 19 other signature experiences that are available at U.S. beach communities.

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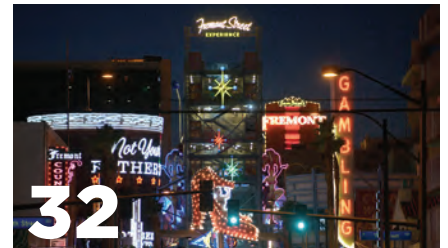
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► FEBRUARY ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

Atlantic Coast

Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia

Great Frontier U.S.

Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

Western Canada

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Sightseeing, River and Big Ship Cruises
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Greece, Italy and Turkey

City Spotlight: New York City

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Historical Homes and Gardens
Guide: Sightseeing Rail

DEADLINES

Space: Jan. 5 | Material: Jan. 15

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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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EXPERTS' CHOICE

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WHAT DO YOU WANT FIRST—the good news or the bad news?

Life doesn't always fall into neat piles of positive or negative notifications, but the question is a familiar one. I usually opt for the bad news first, and maybe that's because we watch a lot of "House Hunters" at my home.

Starting in late summer, the bad news for many destinations was a hurricane. And for other beautiful spots in North America, it was wildfires. Natural disasters are not new to our lives, but the rapid succession and intensity of Harvey, Irma and Nate—and the seriousness of fires in California and other western states and provinces—were, well, bad news.

We checked in with our Caribbean members in last month's issue, and on pages 38 to 44 of this *Courier*, you'll get updates on Gulf Coast destinations in terms of both tour product and hurricane consequences. Some of our coastal DMO members reported zero damage, while others are in the middle of a months-long recovery.

The destinations we spotlight all have good news to share—make no mistake—and there's also heartening words and helpful advice from three destinations that went through natural disasters of their own in the past few years. Read about them starting on page 12. And don't miss Kristian Sonnier's essay about his New Orleans experience—both personal and

professional—with Hurricane Katrina. It's on page 72.

And there's more good destination news: Pat Henderson takes us on a multipage trek through the Rockies (pages 45–52) and shares details on 20 beach experiences across the U.S. (starting on page 28), Gabe Webb shines the city spotlight on Las Vegas (pages 32–36) and profiles Scandinavia (page 53), and Kendall Fletcher showcases Spain and Portugal on page 54.

I'm not ignoring our Distinguished Dozen winners. (Remember, we started with the bad news.) Our gorgeous cover shot of the Portland Aerial Tram in Portland, Oregon, which won gold for North American City/Region DMO Partner, is the first of a batch of beautiful photos. Get the gold, silver and bronze report for all 12 categories on pages 19 through 27. Congratulations to every medalist!

The last bit of good news I want you to see is not breaking news; it's been a long, steady stream of straight-up positivity. NTA is recognizing its most steadfast members by creating a legacy program. Starting on page 56, you can view the list of 383 (!) organizations that have maintained membership for 30 or more consecutive years.

Occupants of the last two lists I mentioned—Distinguished Dozeners and Legacy Members—will be recognized during luncheons at Travel Exchange in San Antonio.

San Antonio. Getting together with you ... during a festive holiday season ... beside the famed River Walk ... is almost too much goodness for one page. So I'll resume in the next issue, which we'll wrap up on our way out the door to Texas.

That's great news. See you there!

Write on,

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On the cover:
The Portland Aerial Tram gives commuters and visitors in Portland, Oregon, an elevated view of Mount Hood.
Photo: Bruce Forster





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DECEMBER SEEMS TO come around faster than any other month, doesn't it? And this year we've added another Travel Exchange to the mix, which makes this holiday season even more exciting.

Just as all of us on staff enjoy seeing you at Travel Exchange, we also like to welcome visitors to our headquarters in Lexington. Your chair, Jay Smith, and vice chair, Chris Babb, came to town in November to catch up on staff initiatives and to give input on all that you will see at Travel Exchange. Let us know what you think about the new features of our convention, which will include more networking opportunities to do business.

The India market is beginning to surge, just like the China market did many years ago, and NTA will be ready to help members understand and capitalize on it. I traveled to India last month for the Tour Operator Roundtable hosted by the India Ministry of Tourism and the U.S. Department of Commerce.

This meeting included government officials from both countries and representatives of U.S. and India tour companies who came together to discuss ways that we can make travel—and doing business—easier. Key participants included Isabel Hill, director of the National Travel and Tourism Office, and Patrick Santillo, minister counselor for commercial affairs with Commercial Service India; both are with the U.S. Department of Commerce. And representing India's Ministry of Tourism was Suman Billa, joint secretary.

Joining me on the panel of U.S. tour operators were Akarsh Kolaparth, director, 7M Tours; Tony Marwah, CEO of the India



Before he assumes the role of NTA chair this month, Chris Babb makes sure he is current with *Courier*.

office of SITA World Tours; Sanjith Mukund, Tauck's product manager, Asia and North Africa; and Prabha Raghava, CEO of Tours Limited.

Brand USA held a marketing briefing and a tour of the Visa Waiting Room to show their "Market the Welcome" materials. Visit California was in town on a sales mission and capped off the day's events by sponsoring a lovely dinner at the Imperial Hotel.

Jim Magrath also attended and hosted my trip to India because Delta Air Lines has opened up new service with Jet Airways, which offers connections to 40 destinations in India (and awards Delta SkyMiles in the process).

Jim and I met with Pronab Sarkar, president of the India Association of Tour Operators—an NTA Strategic Partner—to discuss opportunities for his involvement with Contact and others ways we can enhance our partnership. I also met with representatives of the Adventure Sports & Ecotourism Expo that will be held in New Delhi in January.

I spent my Thanksgiving with family in the beautiful city of Paris (my first visit) and counted my many blessings—not the least of which is the opportunity to work with you and have you as part of the NTA community!

I hope your holiday season is going well, and I look forward to enjoying it with hundreds of NTA members in San Antonio.

See you soon,

Pam



NTA chair Jay Smith (left) and vice chair Chris Babb met with Pam Inman and the NTA headquarters staff in Lexington in November.



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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Tourism Cares projects for 2018 revealed

Fresh off successful fall work projects in Providence, Rhode Island, in September and Toronto in October, Tourism Cares has announced the sites for its 2018 volunteer events. NTA's official philanthropic organization will provide the tourism community with a very tangible way to help out with disaster assistance next year, as its North American projects will include continuing efforts months—and years—later.



GROUP TRAVEL VIDEOS

Tourism Cares for South Florida (May 10–11) Hurricane Irma devastated Florida this fall, and volunteers will be able to help keep the recovery going in this popular region.

Tourism Cares for New Orleans (Sept. 20–21) Thirteen years after Hurricane Katrina struck the city, and 15 years after the first Tourism Cares volunteer program, industry professionals will head back to the Crescent City.

Tourism Cares' first event of the year will take industry professionals to Jordan from February 23 to 28. In addition to the volunteer project, the event will include other social impact experiences, as well as educational programs and networking opportunities with local tourism professionals.

To learn more about any of the projects or to register, go to tourismcares.org.

During Travel Exchange, visit the Tourism Cares booth Thursday–Sunday to give back to San Antonio. Through Tourism Cares' partnership with Clean the World, TREX attendees can help assemble personal hygiene kits that will be given to area homeless shelters and food pantries. The donation of 1,000 kits will provide more than \$15,000 in charitable time and value to our host city.

'Tis the season to renew your NTA membership

As we take time this month to gather with friends and family, remember to keep the NTA community with you year-round by renewing your membership. You should've received your invoice in the mail last month, and dues payments must be returned by Jan. 31.

Your membership includes a range of benefits, including:

- Online access to a database of trusted partners
- Travel Exchange, Contact, product development trips and Meet-ups
- Education and market insights to keep you on top of your game
- *Courier*, *Trip Planner* and *Tuesday* e-newsletter
- Discounts on Corporate Partner products and services
- Inclusion in printed and online member directories
- Options to serve on a leadership advisory group

"There are many ways to make your membership work for you, and I'm here to help you do it," said Todd Probus, NTA's member solutions manager. "It's more than just attending convention; your NTA membership really is a valuable, yearlong resource."

To learn more about how to use your membership to its fullest, flip to page 15. If you have any questions and would like to hear from Todd about your member benefits, email him at todd.probus@ntastaff.com or call +1.859.264.6578.



Todd Probus,
NTA Member
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Destination Capitol Hill registration opening Dec. 1

Join your NTA cohorts, as well as other travel colleagues, in Washington, D.C., March 21–22 for the 2018 edition of Destination Capitol Hill. Registration for the industry's premier legislative fly-in opens Dec. 1. At the event, you can:

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—Martha Sheridan, president & CEO,
Providence Warwick CVB

RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS



Real ID just got real

FOLLOWING THE TERRORIST ATTACKS on Sept. 11, 2001, recommendations from the subsequent 9/11 Commission Report directed the U.S. federal government to set standards for “the issuance of sources of identification, such as driver’s licenses.”

The Real ID Act, enacted on May 11, 2005, created requirements for state-issued driver’s licenses and identification cards to be recognized by the federal government for official purposes. Defined by the U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security, “official purposes” include boarding commercially-operated flights and entering federal facilities and nuclear power plants.

The act requires that all driver’s licenses and IDs must include the person’s full legal name, residential address, birth date, gender, photograph, signature and an ID number. Most IDs already meet these requirements.

Added security measures of the Real ID Act, though, include having a barcode and security devices meant to prevent tampering or counterfeiting on all IDs. And all information—including ID card data and driving records—must be entered into a national database of driver’s license and ID card holders from all states.

After several years of postponements and extensions, the final deadlines for Real ID implementation are quickly

approaching. Phases 1 through 3 of the planned Real ID implementation process primarily involve access to federal facilities, the Department of Homeland Security headquarters and nuclear power plants. But the traveling public should focus on Phase 4, which deals with access to domestic commercial air travel.

Beginning Jan. 22, 2018, all driver’s licenses or ID cards used at airports to gain access to a commercial airline must be issued by a state that either is compliant with Real ID requirements or has been granted an exception or extension. U.S. passengers who have noncompliant state-issued driver’s licenses or IDs—and come from states that have not been granted an extension—will need to have an alternate form of acceptable ID for domestic air travel, such as a U.S. passport. Travelers whose states have been granted an extension will be able to use their regular driver’s licenses or IDs.


As of Oct. 31, the Department of Homeland Security had granted 17 states an extension on Real ID implementation and enforcement through Oct. 10, 2018. This means that residents in those 17 states will not have ID problems when boarding a commercial domestic aircraft or when entering a federal facility through next October.

DHS is currently reviewing extension requests from six other noncompliant

states. In the meantime, DHS says there will be no change in Real ID enforcement status for these states. So unless those states are granted extensions, driver’s licenses and IDs issued by those states will not be considered Real ID-compliant beginning Jan. 22.

And by Oct. 1, 2020, every U.S. passenger on a domestic commercial flight must be able to present a Real ID-compliant form of ID or another form of acceptable ID, such as a U.S. passport.

NTA appreciates the added travel and aviation security that will come with full implementation of Real ID. To ensure that the traveling public does not have issues at the airport, though, NTA asks that travel planners pay close attention to the Department of Homeland Security’s webpage on Real ID for updates on extensions granted to states: dhs.gov/real-id. Another helpful resource is the full list of the Transportation Security Administration’s acceptable forms of ID, which is found on the TSA webpage: tsa.gov/travel/security-screening/identification.

Check the list at the bottom for compliance status of states as of Oct. 31. 

Signal Group is a Washington, D.C., lobbying firm retained by NTA to advise members about travel-related issues and legislation.

Compliant states: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Noncompliant states with an extension: Alaska, California, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, Washington

States still under review: Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, Missouri, New York, Rhode Island

Overseas visitation estimates for U.S. states and cities in 2016

BY RON ERDMANN AND JULIE HEIZER,
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE,
NATIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM OFFICE

THE STATE AND CITY visitation estimates reported here are based on weighted results of NTTO's Survey of International Air Travelers and data collected from the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's arrival/departure forms. Survey results are expanded to represent the travel population, which starts with developing estimates for the states and cities based upon the ports generating visitors to those destinations.

Increases or declines in overseas or specific-country visitation estimates from NTTO can be explained by reviewing the data from the SIAT. Port-of-entry data between any two years for visitation is the first place to start when looking at changes in year-to-year visitation. Examples of this impact are illustrated below. But first, let's look at the top destinations visited in 2016.

Top states and territories visited by overseas travelers

New York was the most-visited state by overseas travelers in 2016, a position it has held for 16 consecutive years. Visitation to the state (10.01 million) declined by 4 percent last year, and New York's share of all overseas travelers slipped from 27.1 percent to 26.6. Florida remained in second position, with a 1 percent decline in visitation, bringing it to 9.5 million. California visitation (8.2 million) increased 1 percent from 2015 and maintained its No. 3 position for the third straight year.

Nevada, Hawaii, Texas, Massachusetts, Guam, Illinois and Arizona rounded out

the top 10 states/territories visited in 2016. Both Texas and Guam moved up one position in the rankings last year. Of the 24 states/territories for which estimates are available, double-digit increases were recorded for two states. Arizona and New Jersey posted the highest growth rate, each tied at 11 percent. In contrast, five states posted double-digit declines in 2016.

Top cities visited by overseas travelers

The cities most visited by overseas travelers in 2016 were New York City (9.8 million); Miami (5.4 million); Los Angeles (5.0 million); Orlando, Florida (4.5 million); San Francisco (3.6 million); Las Vegas; Honolulu; Washington, D.C.; Boston and Chicago. Of the 25 city visitation estimates issued, 11 posted increased percentages, four of which were double-digit. The largest visitation increases were posted by West Palm Beach, Florida (25 percent); Flagstaff/Sedona/Grand Canyon, Arizona (15 percent); Anaheim, California (14 percent); and Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (12 percent).

In 2016, seven of the top 15 U.S. ports of entry posted increases in overseas volume; however, not all the "host" cities necessarily reflected the same growth in visitation. For example, let's look at Chicago and Fort Lauderdale. Comparing 2015 data with 2016 data of NTTO overseas visitation estimates, we see how changes in the top ports of entry generating travelers to these two cities shifted between the two years and had a very dramatic effect on both.

Overseas visitor arrivals who cleared customs at Chicago O'Hare International Airport (ORD) totaled 1.633 million, down 11 percent from 2015, while total international air traffic at O'Hare was up in 2016. The difference is that the growth came from the 54 percent of U.S. citizens who arrived at ORD. The number of overseas arrivals who visited the Chicago area was estimated to be 1.47 million, down 10 percent.

Chicago is a major hub for overseas visitors, as 50 percent of the arrivals at the airport visited the city, which was up from 2015. The city relies on O'Hare, as 58 percent of all overseas visitors to Chicago (850,000) entered via ORD, which was down seven percent.

Overseas visitors to U.S. states/territories in 2016

RANK	STATE/TERRITORY	VISITORS (000)	2015/2016 CHANGE
1	NEW YORK	10,014	-4%
2	FLORIDA	9,540	-1%
3	CALIFORNIA	8,221	1%
4	NEVADA	3,417	-3%
5	HAWAII	3,146	4%
6	TEXAS	1,692	-5%
7	MASSACHUSETTS	1,643	-8%
8	GUAM	1,583	5%
9	ILLINOIS	1,567	-8%
10	ARIZONA	1,158	11%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, ITA, Industry & Analysis, National Travel and Tourism Office
See the full list at bit.ly/2j4vFDP

New York's JFK, Miami, Los Angeles and San Francisco were the other top ports generating visitors to Chicago in 2016, and all four were down when compared to 2015. With the top five ports generating fewer visitors to Chicago in 2016, the city posted its third decline since 2009.

Overseas visitor arrivals at Fort Lauderdale's International Airport (FLL) totaled 904,000, up 3 percent from 2015. However, the number of overseas arrivals visiting the Fort Lauderdale area was estimated at 1.02 million, up 12 percent.

Fort Lauderdale saw more visitors who entered via Miami's International Airport and subsequently visited the city in both 2015 (429,000) and 2016 (480,000), than it did from those who entered through FLL, although the growth in visits in 2015 from Miami was only 12 percent. FLL generated 292,000 visitors in 2015 and 351,000 in 2016, a 20 percent increase. Newark (EWR), New York's JFK and Orlando (MCO) were the next largest ports generating visitors to Fort Lauderdale in 2016. EWR and JFK posted growth in 2016 whereas MCO posted a decline.

This type of analysis can be performed for each of the top states and cities. In addition to the changes in arrivals and visits at the ports of entry that generate visitation to U.S. destinations, NTTO also provides additional data that can be used to explain the shifts in visitation from year to year. An analysis of other visitor characteristics can also help pinpoint reasons for visitation changes; they can include purpose of trip, first time/repeat, package travel, number of destinations visited, transportation used within the U.S. and trip-party size.

This information is unique to the SIAT, and no other data source providing visitation estimates can provide as accurate a justification for the changes in visits as NTTO can through this

About NTTO

The National Travel and Tourism Office of the U.S. Department of Commerce International Trade Administration manages the Travel and Tourism Statistical System for the U.S. For more information and the latest data, market research, news releases and policy information, visit travel.trade.gov.

Overseas visitors to U.S. cities in 2016

RANK	CITY	VISITORS (000)	2015/2016 CHANGE
1	NEW YORK CITY	9,800	-3%
2	MIAMI	5,379	-2%
3	LOS ANGELES	4,977	2%
4	ORLANDO	4,473	-5%
5	SAN FRANCISCO	3,571	-2%
6	LAS VEGAS	3,327	-2%
7	HONOLULU	2,394	1%
8	WASHINGTON, D.C.	2,090	-2%
9	BOSTON	1,526	-5%
10	CHICAGO	1,466	-10%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, ITA, Industry & Analysis, National Travel and Tourism Office
See the full list at bit.ly/2j1NUK

program. When used to understand visitors to a destination year over year, the SIAT is a powerful tool in guiding the travel industry to explain the changes—and in providing data to expand overseas travel to the area. This type of analysis does not stop at the overseas

level, but can also be done at the country and individual-sector level.

If your destination shows an increase or decline that you do not understand, please contact NTTO, and a staff member can explain how visitation estimates are derived through the SIAT data. 📍

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The Interview

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS FROM NTA MEMBERS

When disaster strikes a destination

BY BOB ROUSE

In May 2011, an EF-5 tornado struck Joplin, Missouri, causing 158 deaths and \$2.8 billion in property damage to the community of 50,150 people. In late October 2012, Superstorm Sandy hit New York City, and the storm surge caused power outages and unprecedented flooding to the city's transit systems, airports, seaports, roads and tunnels. And last November, a group of wildfires in and around Gatlinburg and Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, claimed 14 lives, burned 16,000 acres and damaged or destroyed more than 2,000 buildings.

Whenever disaster strikes a destination, local leaders—including tourism professionals—face countless concerns related to safety, infrastructure and recovery.

Following a season of hurricanes in the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico, along with wildfires in California's Napa Valley and in Oregon, *Courier* reached out to three NTA members that have dealt with disaster, and these DMOs share their experiences and advice here.



Lori Simms
Deputy director of marketing
Missouri Division of Tourism



Chris Heywood
Senior vice president
NYC & Company



Marci Claude
Public relations manager
Gatlinburg (Tennessee) CVB

Courier: From a travel and tourism perspective, just how bad was the damage?

Simms: More than 2,000 hotel rooms were occupied by residents as well as rescue and recovery personnel, and three events planned for later in the month had to be rescheduled. Of the town's 23 hotel properties, though, only one was still off-line after four months. (Simms consulted with Patrick Tuttle, director of the Joplin CVB, for this article.)

Heywood: In New York, you just don't expect hurricanes. Lower Manhattan took quite a beating and was without power, and there was devastation to several residential areas.

Claude: The greatest impact of the wildfires was predominantly on the borders of town, where fire damaged or destroyed private residential properties, rental cabins and condominiums. The

downtown business district was largely untouched by the wildfires.

Courier: How long did it take to get back to (mostly) full operation?

Claude: December is a high visitation period for Gatlinburg, so it was a top priority to get the city cleared and back open for holiday visitors. The city opened to the public just 10 days after the devastating wildfires. Some hotels and businesses needed extra time for cleaning up the smoke damage, but most of the downtown business district was open and operational for visitors by Christmas.

Simms: More than 9,000 residents were displaced, and Joplin hotels housed the majority of them for nearly six months. As the residents transitioned out of the hotels into other permanent and temporary housing, FEMA workers, insurance adjusters and contractors moved in. Joplin hotels benefitted from the latter for nearly three years.

Heywood: We came back pretty quickly. It took a long time to get residential areas back up, but most tourism areas were up and running in time to prepare for the holiday season.

Courier: What did you do to convince travelers you were up and running?

Heywood: We assessed what was open and then communicated it. We worked with the travel media, used social media and continually updated the website. When we came out and said we were open for business—in coordination with the mayor's office—it was an important step for getting our story out and managing our message.

Simms: Historic Route 66 runs through the northern portion of Joplin, and it was untouched. The CVB communicated with Route 66 partners and travel planners that Joplin was open for business. None of the city's attractions were impacted, but the CVB needed to communicate that lodging was limited.

Claude: It's important to understand that our visitors are loyal. Families have

Tornado aftermath in Joplin, Missouri, 2011



CC FLICKR/TAYMOUR MATIN: bit.ly/2ivdJGa

traveled to the Smoky Mountains for generations, often more than once a year. We saw an immediate influx of visitors in town, not just to gawk, but to spend money and support their favorite mountain town. The CVB launched an aggressive marketing and PR campaign within our top feeder markets, featuring a new testimonial commercial filmed in Gatlinburg. The campaign also included well-placed digital advertising, social media and media blitzes.

Courier: Were there any silver linings?

Claude: Unity has been the hallmark of our recovery. We had an outpouring of support that created a neighbor-helping-neighbor dynamic when those most affected were reeling from their losses. That unity continues to be evident as tourism officials in Gatlinburg, Sevier County, Sevierville and Pigeon Forge have worked closely together in the past year to overcome the perception that this area was destroyed.

Simms: Joplin has had positive infrastructure improvements, new facilities, new restaurants and a state-of-art hospital to replace the one that was destroyed, plus a first-class high school. The CVB and the city are proud of how the community and the region came together in the aftermath.

Heywood: It could have been much worse. Also, we were able to get more eyeballs on the destination, and we got a lot of attention. There were a lot of stories that wouldn't have been written otherwise, and there were improvements to the World Trade Center that would never have been done were it not for the storm. Our organization is better prepared now for any crisis in the future.

Don't think you're immune to these storms. Be proactive. Have a plan, have a crisis task force, and practice so you'll be ready to respond.

—Chris Heywood, NYC and Company

Courier: What advice would you give to other communities?

Heywood: Don't think you're immune to these storms. Be proactive. Have a plan, have a crisis task force, and practice so you'll be ready to respond. It's important to have backups for your website and email servers; ours are in another part of the country. Communicate effectively

and in real time, and make sure everyone knows you're open. We work with other destinations, and we advise them to have a crisis plan with checklists and contact information for their board of directors, members and media.

Claude: Never doubt the goodness of people. You are not in it alone, and if you need help, ask.

Simms: Preparation can never be underestimated. Joplin continues to look at what other communities have faced—and learn from them. The city shares best practices and has held recovery summits and seminars through the local university. When applying this to tourism, Patrick and the Joplin CVB staff can point out the differences between people facing an event in their hometown and travelers who are dealing with disaster while in unfamiliar surroundings. Following the tornado, the CVB worked to help find hotel rooms for residents who were displaced. Now, the CVB would also consider the impact on guests in the community and look for ways to assist them. ☪

You can connect with these members by email: lori.simms@ded.mo.gov, cheywood@nycgo.com and marci@gatlinburg.com.

Students right here in River City

AMONG THE HUNDREDS of tourism professionals attending Travel Exchange in San Antonio will be a baker's dozen of Tourism Cares scholarship recipients just getting a start in the industry. As part of the Bruce Beckham Scholarship Fund/NTA Mentoring Program, these students will participate in educational sessions and networking events, plus they'll be paired with mentors who they shadow during business appointments. But you don't have to be an official mentor to welcome them into the NTA community.


Kyle Anderson

Home state: Ohio
College: University of Kentucky

Career aspiration:

Work in the cruise industry while making an impact in the travel industry worldwide


Keison Arnold

Georgia
Roosevelt University

Career aspiration:

Change the world through better education and recruitment in hospitality


Genesea Black-Lanouette

California
Humboldt State University

Career aspiration:

Work in special event planning and community development


Lewis Crary

Massachusetts
University of North Texas

Career aspiration:

Apply coursework in sustainability toward my career in wildlife tourism


Hannah Hiler

Florida
University of Central Florida

Career aspiration:

Work as an entertainment executive for a major theme park


Laura Kissane

Massachusetts
University of Kentucky

Career aspiration:

Event planning and development at a company that has a passion for helping others


Linden Pohland

Wisconsin
Rochester Institute of Technology

Career aspiration:

Enter the hotel industry in accounting or revenue management and someday become a college professor


Anne M. Smith

Pennsylvania
Howard Community College

Career aspiration:

Foster tourism education and awareness—locally and globally—while encouraging diversity within the industry


Annette Spencer

Texas
Tarrant County College

Career aspiration:

Become an event planner, own an event center and continue to further my education


Elizabeth Ventura

Texas
Tarrant County College

Career aspiration:

Earn a bachelor's degree in hospitality management, then own and operate my own restaurant business


Nicole Vetti

North Carolina
Appalachian State University

Career aspiration:

Make a significant impact as a contributing member of the hospitality and tourism industry


Ian Wallis

New Jersey
Johnson & Wales University

Career aspiration:

Work with Royal Caribbean Cruises in Miami


Rachel Wilson

Texas
University of North Texas & CATIE Costa Rica

Career aspiration:

Grow my company, Las Olas Travel, in a way that is aligned with the goals of sustainability

For more information about the Tourism Cares scholarship programs, visit tourismcares.org/academic-scholarships. ☎

10 Ways **NTA**[®]

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2 Make plans to attend Travel Exchange. Join us at Travel Exchange '17 in San Antonio, Dec. 14-18, and mark your calendars for



Nov. 4-8 for TREX18 in Milwaukee. Visit NTAonline.com/convention to get all the details on NTA's annual convention. Use #TREX17 and #TREX18 on social media.

3 Register for Contact '18. Travel buyers, this is your chance to gather in historical Charleston, South Carolina, April 18-21, for three days of partnering and education. Suppliers and DMOs can attend as sponsors. Registration is open at NTAonline.com/contact.



4 Join us on Capitol Hill. Join NTA, U.S. Travel and Destinations International in Washington, D.C., March 21-22, 2018, for Destination Capitol Hill. Meet your colleagues from across the U.S., visit with members of Congress and learn about key travel legislation.

5 Connect with NTA on social media. Tap into NTA's social media and watch your professional network grow. Follow NTA on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+ and YouTube.



6 Save money with Corporate Partners. The dollars saved with our Corporate Partners could pay for your membership! Get great rates on everything from insurance to office supplies.

7 Get educated. Get your Certified Tour Professional credentials with NTA, and while you're at it, stay on top of industry trends with our education and research in *Courier* magazine, *Tuesday* e-newsletter and NTA Online.

8 Join FTA. NTA members can add a suite of Faith Travel Association benefits focused on the faith-based travel segment to their annual membership. You'll get access to exclusive content, programs and events.

9 Be an NTA leader. Leadership advisory groups give you the chance to shape NTA's future and make a difference. Current groups include: Member Solutions, Advocacy, Young Professionals and Faith Travel.

10 Stand out from the crowd. Take advantage of your membership by advertising and sponsoring with NTA. We'll help you drive revenue by putting your message directly in the hands of qualified buyers. Get noticed at events and on NTA Online as well as in *Courier* and other print and digital pubs.

Questions? Reach out to NTA Member Solutions at headquarters@ntastaff.com or 800.682.8886 (U.S. & Canada) or +1.859.264.6540. ☎



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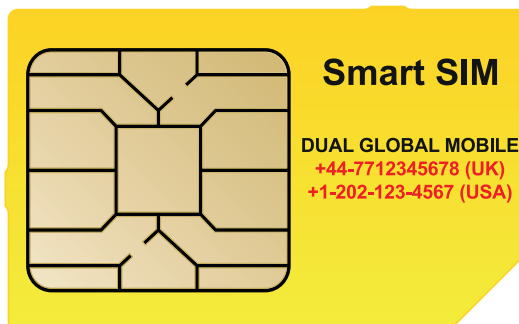


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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

Explore Branson's natural side

Known for its indoor entertainment, Branson, Missouri, also includes a number of outdoor offerings that give visitors diverse, up-close encounters with nature. The city, which is located in the Ozark Mountains, provides easy access to lakes, hiking trails, climbing sites and other recreational activities.

One of the most popular sites is Dogwood Canyon Nature Park. At the 10,000-acre park, set among the mountainous Missouri landscape, groups can stroll the banks of trout streams and see dozens of waterfalls and ancient burial caves. The streams hold many rainbow trout, and the park offers guided catch-and-release fishing, fly-casting clinics and self-guided fishing excursions.

As part of the guided Wildlife Tram Tour, visitors board an open-air tram that takes them through bluffs, stone arches and canyon walls. The two-hour ride includes a brief stop to feed the resident trout, and it showcases the area's wildlife, which ranges from bison and longhorn steers to deer and elk.

Dogwood Canyon now has a working mill, and its Canyon Grill Restaurant along Indian Creek offers a venue for private functions. Groups also can see a treehouse built by the experts on Animal Planet's show "Treehouse Masters" and make a stop at the nearby conservation and education center.

Reach out to Lenni Neimeyer of Branson/Lakes Area CVB at [+1.417.243.2105](tel:+14172432105) or go to explorebranson.com to find out more.



Treehouse at Dogwood Canyon Nature Park

BRANSON CVB

On a mission in New Mexico

Groups heading to central New Mexico can learn about the Native American settlements in the area during a visit to Salinas Pueblo Missions National Monument. Spanish explorers reached the region in the early 1600s and set up three Franciscan missions: Abó, Quarai and Gran Quivira.


Those sites are located in the mountains near the Cibola National Forest, southeast of Albuquerque. The main visitor center is situated between the three missions in the town of

Mountainair. A 14-minute orientation film, a museum and a bookstore are highlights at the center, which is the starting point for exploration.

The focus of a visit to the Abó site is seeing the Mission of San Gregorio de Abó. This structure, which dates back to the 1600s, was the hub of everyday life and a major trading post. Specialty tours showcasing the petroglyphs in the area are available, and they must be booked in advance.

A hiking trail at Quarai takes visitors to Nuestra Señora de La Purísima Concepción de Cuarcac. This house of worship was completed in 1632 and is the best preserved of the Franciscan-built churches in the area. The site also is a top spot for birding enthusiasts.

Gran Quivira was a vast city with multiple pueblos and kivas. A half-mile walking path leads to an excavated pueblo mound and the ruins of a mission church site. A small museum includes artifacts, jewelry and tools used by the Las Humanas people.

To learn more, call [+1.505.847.2585](tel:+15058472585) or visit nps.gov/sapu. 



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Mission of San Gregorio de Abó



COURIER'S 2018 DISTINGUISHED DOZEN

THIS MARKS THE EIGHTH YEAR of *Courier's* Distinguished Dozen program, and the tour suppliers and destination marketing organizations that are honored by NTA tour operators in 2018 are prouder than ever.

On the pages that follow you'll see the gold, silver and bronze winners of the program's 12 categories. These members gained the votes of tour operators because of their quality of product, level of customer service and dedication to relationship-building. Gold winners include Norwegian Cruise Line, earning its fifth consecutive such recognition; Cracker Barrel Old Country Store, another five-time gold winner; Broadway Inbound (Shubert) and Hilton Worldwide, both with a third consecutive gold; and the Pacific Northwest duo of Travel Oregon and Travel Portland, both repeat winners from 2017.

We've got first-time gold winners, too, including Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry, from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.



SIGHTSEEING CRUISE COMPANY



Gold: Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry

"Shepler's has been the No. 1 provider of group travel to Mackinac Island for the past 72 years, and with the help of the NTA tour operators, we'll be able to continue to lead the market for generations to come. We are humbled to accept this honor from such a great organization."

—Chris Shepler, president



Silver: Boston Duck Tours



Bronze: San Juan Cruises



SIGHTSEEING RAIL COMPANY



Gold: Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad

"We have been dedicated to NTA year after year because we benefit greatly from NTA's reputable tour professional members. Our NTA relationships encourage us to do better because we see the investment that tour operators make in their clients' happiness and satisfaction. Our goal is for every client on our train adventure to depart with a positive lifelong memory of Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad, Durango and Colorado."

—Carrie Whitley, director of sales



Silver: Grand Canyon Railway



Bronze: The Mount Washington Cog Railway



OUTLAWS & ARMADILLOS

EXHIBIT OPENS MAY 2018

The Outlaw phenomenon greatly enlarged country music's audience in the 1970s. Led by pacesetters such as Willie Nelson, Waylon Jennings, Kris Kristofferson, and Bobby Bare, artists in Nashville and Austin demanded the creative freedom to make their own country music, different from the pop-oriented sound that prevailed at the time. The major exhibition at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, *Outlaws and Armadillos*, examines the 1970s cultures of corporate-leaning Nashville and fiercely independent Austin, and the complicated, surprising relationships between the two.

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CASINO/GAMING PROPERTY



TULALIP RESORT CASINO



Gold: Tulalip Resort Casino

"Tulalip Resort is honored to be named a gold winner of the 2018 Distinguished Dozen. Our partnership with NTA started before Tulalip Resort opened. What a benefit it has been for us being a member, not only from the business that we receive, but also from the connections, friendships, growth and knowledge. We look forward to continuing our partnership."

—Ashlee Gobin, leisure tour and travel services manager



Silver: Mohegan Sun



Bronze: Hard Rock International



MUSEUM FOR GROUPS



DO V WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY



Gold: Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

"We value the diverse relationships that are continually built through our NTA membership and Travel Exchange. It is with tremendous pride that we receive this honor. We strive to provide unique Nashville experiences through our museum, Historic RCA Studio B and Hatch Show Print. With the help of NTA, the circle remains unbroken."

—Dana Romanello, museum sales manager



Silver: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum



Bronze: Crazy Horse Memorial

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NORTH AMERICAN DMO PARTNER (STATE/PROVINCE)



Gold: Travel Oregon

"Travel Oregon is privileged to be receiving the Distinguished Dozen award. As DMOs we need to take initiative to make advancements in our tourism communities. With the support of NTA tour operators, Team Oregon has been able to steer our destination in the direction of growth, to uniquely leverage partnerships and, best of all, to dream the impossible."

—Lisa Itel, global sales manager, the Americas & Oceania



Silver: Maryland Office of Tourism Development



Bronze: Georgia Department of Tourism



OVERSEAS DMO PARTNER



Gold: VisitScotland

"NTA provides us with a fantastic platform to showcase Scotland, and we are delighted to receive gold this year. With a spectacular 38 percent increase in visits to Scotland from the North America market from July 2016 to June this year, it is essential we work closely with NTA and its members to create new and exciting experiences that make Scotland a must-visit destination"

—Christina Bruns, senior market manager, Americas



Silver: Mexico Tourism Board



Bronze: Italian National Tourist Board



GROUP-FRIENDLY RESTAURANT



Gold: Cracker Barrel Old Country Store

"No one knows the importance of finding comfort on the road more than the folks at NTA and its tour operators. We work very hard to be a welcoming home-away-from-home for every guest who walks through our doors, so being recognized as a 2018 Distinguished Dozen winner is an incredible honor for us."

—Breeanna Straessle, corporate communications manager



Silver: Hard Rock International



Bronze: Applebee's Restaurants NYC



CORPORATE HOTEL CHAIN



Gold: Hilton Worldwide

"Hilton and NTA partners work great together, as both align in sharing the same vision of providing guests memorable travel experiences. From focused service to luxury, Hilton's 14 unique brands have an adventure for every traveler."

—Maya Tamim and Janice Weinman



Silver: Drury Inns



Bronze: Best Western Hotels & Resorts



NORTH AMERICAN DMO PARTNER (CITY/REGION)



WAYNE WILLIAMS



Gold: Travel Portland

"Coming together each year to meet with NTA operators has helped both parties create fresh and interactive tour experiences to share with our visitors. We have no doubt that NTA and its loyal membership have had a positive impact on our city's success. The relationships are invaluable, and that's why it's a huge honor to be recognized by NTA tour operators as one of *Courier's* Distinguished Dozen."

—Ashley Kingman, tourism manager



Silver: Greater Boston CVB



Bronze: Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board



INDEPENDENT/BOUTIQUE HOTEL PROPERTY



B HOTELS AND RESORTS



Gold: B Historic Savannah

"As a boutique hotel that sits in the jewel of the Hostess City of the South—Savannah, Georgia—B Historic strives daily to exemplify the blueprint of travel experiences set by NTA. It's an honor to partner with such a force in the industry. We welcome all to come and explore the many facets of Savannah. B Adventurous!"

—Kai Williams, director of sales and marketing



Silver: Elizabeth Oceanfront Suites (formerly Elizabeth Street Inn)



Bronze: Lord Elgin Hotel



BIG-SHIP OR RIVER CRUISING COMPANY



Gold: Norwegian Cruise Line

"NCL loves working with NTA tour operators. More and more tour operators are adding NCL cruises to their land programs, and we offer an attractive program to help them be successful, and their groups get to enjoy an outstanding cruise tour program. It's a great partnership. We know tour operators have choices when it comes to cruises, and we are grateful they chose NCL for their customers."

—Jodi Danyluk, program manager



Silver: Globus Family of Brands' Avalon Waterways



Bronze: Holland America Line



THEATER/SHOW VENUE



Gold: Broadway Inbound (Shubert)

"Broadway Inbound and NTA have been connected for decades, with the mutual goal of improving one another. Because NTA operators know us and trust us to get them to Broadway, we have been able to grow and give back via service and sponsorship to strengthen and diversify the association. We plan to continue on this path for years to come."

—Peter Waugh, domestic sales manager



Silver: Cirque du Soleil



Bronze: Sight & Sound Theatres

BEYOND THE BEACH

20 great experiences at U.S. coastal destinations

BY PAT HENDERSON

You'd be hard pressed to find anyone, spare maybe a few folks who are allergic to sand or extremely fair-skinned, that don't relish the thought of a spending quality time at the beach. Even the most Type-A types can be swayed by the relaxing rhythm of the ocean and the gentle coastal breezes—or at least an umbrella drink or beer or four, right?

While relaxing in the sand and working on a tan may be top priorities, there are plenty of other things that go into a well-rounded week at the beach. The following pages focus on 20 unique beyond-the-beach experiences at coastal destinations across the United States. The list includes enjoying fish tacos in San Diego, taking a stroll along Atlantic City's famous boardwalk and kayaking through an estuary in Miami.

If it's San Diego, it must be fish tacos

One of the most enduring parts of coastal life is the cuisine. In San Diego, the equation is simple: beach food = fish tacos. While Mexico was the birthplace of the fish taco, the tasty treat was first introduced in the U.S. in San Diego by Ralph Rubio in 1983. Across the last three decades the city has taken the traditional fried and grilled fish tacos to another level by offering more experimental versions at restaurants, food trucks and roadside stands.



CC BY/2ZUS/SHY

How many hot dogs can you eat in 10 minutes?

Ever since it became a popular seaside getaway for the growing New York City population in the early 1800s, Coney Island has carved out a place in the city's lore. From the legendary 1927 Cyclone roller coaster and the 1918 Wonder Wheel to Nathan's Famous Hot Dogs and its can't-look-away 4th of July eating competition, the amusement park on the sands of the Atlantic Ocean offers up a true slice of Americana.

Close to South Beach, but a world away

While chic South Beach remains a top draw in downtown Miami, the area also is home to one of America's most unique NPS sites, Biscayne National Park. The park's four ecosystems are popular spots for snorkeling, kayaking and glass-bottom boat tours, which reveal coral reefs, manatees, sharks, rays, crocodiles and more.

Coney Island



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NO 45

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ELIZABETH OCEANFRONT SUITES

S'more, s'more, s'more, how do you like it, how do you like it?

What started off as a way for Jennifer Morkert to do something special for an NTA tour operator has turned into a popular ongoing activity for groups staying at the Elizabeth Oceanfront Suites in Newport, Oregon. A few years back, Morkert put together a beach bonfire—a traditional activity enjoyed by locals—that included toasting s'mores, and she's been doing it ever since.

"Our beaches are not overly crowded, but on a nice night you will see couples, families and visitors watching the sunset and hearing the waves crash. Now, you also see tour groups there relaxing and roasting marshmallows for s'mores on the beach. Some clients have never done this, and others say it brings up childhood memories."

Goin' mobile for Mardi Gras

Mobile, Alabama, stakes claim to having hosted America's first Mardi Gras celebration back in 1703. The tradition continues each year during the two weeks that culminate on Fat Tuesday. The event fills the seaside city's downtown with the sights and sounds of marching bands and decorative floats, from which masked krewe members throw beads, doubloons and confections to eager onlookers.



ALABAMA TOURISM DEPARTMENT

Surf's up, dude

The sunny sands of L.A.'s Redondo Beach get pretty crowded each summer during the five-day International Surf Festival. In addition to its signature lifeguard competitions, the popular August event includes surfing contests, paddleboard races, volleyball tournaments and a pier-to-pier swim.

The shrimp boat soon will be making another run

Abundant fresh seafood and more than 60 miles of sandy beaches make Mississippi's Gulf Coast popular with groups. In addition to sampling the catch of the day at local restaurants, travelers can take a behind-the-scenes look at the seafood industry during a cruise with a shrimp boat captain or as part of a visit to a catfish farm.

So much more in southern Maine

The southern part of Maine has 30 miles of white sand beaches and seaside towns with all the classic New England amenities: locally owned inns, lobster shacks and lighthouses. Between the popular coastal cities of Ogunquit and Kennebunkport is Wells Reserve at Laudholm. This 2,250-acre nature sanctuary includes hiking and walking trails that pass through mature forests and barrier islands en route to Laudholm Beach.

Hawaii delivers black sand, big surf and Papa's favorite beach

When it comes to diversity in its beach culture, Hawaii stands alone. Oahu boasts calling-card Wakai and the surfer's favorite, North Beach. On Oahu, you'll find Hamoa Beach, which Ernest Hemingway once called the world's best beach. The Big Island includes the iconic black-sand beaches, and Kauai is known for hidden beaches that rest below the jagged peaks of the Na Pali Coast.



HAWAII TOURISM AUTHORITY

A grand time at the Grand Strand

Thanks to its wide-open stretches of sand, kitschy boardwalk, renowned amusement parks and championship golf courses, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, remains a top draw for sun seekers. Groups craving live entertainment can enjoy a show at NTA-member attractions, the Alabama Theatre and The Carolina Opry.



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Channel your inner inventor and the Outer Banks

Wilbur and Orville Wright made history in 1903 when their glider took flight in Kitty Hawk, a coastal city in North Carolina's Outer Banks. Groups visiting Wright Brothers National Memorial can see the hill where that famous flight took place, view exhibits on the brothers' early experiments and see replicas of test gliders.

Come for the view, stay for the food

The NTA membership includes two seaside dining spots on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts that blend regional cuisine with great ocean views.

The Original Benjamin's Calabash Seafood restaurant has been serving ocean-fresh fish for more than 30 years in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. Groups can enjoy crab legs, shrimp, oysters and more as part of the 170-item seafood buffet. The 1,000-seat restaurant has 11 dining rooms, each decorated with historical nautical items, that can accommodate both large and small groups. originalbenjamins.com

Rusty's Surf Ranch is situated on one of Los Angeles' top beach attractions, the Santa Monica Pier. Patrons can choose from a wide selection of traditional American food and Baja cuisine—seafood appetizers, beach burgers and daily fish specials—and sample one of Rusty's specialty "shark bite" cocktails. The restaurant began a major expansion project last month, so call for details. rustyssurfranch.com



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BRITT REINTS: bit.ly/2m56u54

Never bored at this boardwalk

Among the many famous boardwalks found along the U.S. east and west coasts, Atlantic City's stands above the rest. Forever immortalized by the board game Monopoly, the oceanside city is home to dozens of confection and taffy shops, amusement rides, luxury hotels and glitzy casinos.

Two of Southern California's finest

A drive down the Pacific Coast Highway in California takes travelers past some of North America's most beautiful parcels of land. Along the scenic byway, groups can visit two NTA-member attractions to learn more about unique aspects of local culture.

The grounds at Flower Fields at Carlsbad Ranch in northern San Diego County are covered each year from early March through early May with thousands of Giant Tecolote Ranunculus flowers. In addition to seeing the colorful buds, groups can enjoy a range of tours, special events and themed activities. theflowerfields.com



A visit to Hearst Castle in the coastal city of San Simeon provides a firsthand look at what life was like for newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst. Guests can see priceless works of art—all part of the Hearst's vast collection—which are highlighted on themed tours to the various buildings, gardens, terraces and pools. hearstcastle.org



Whatever floats your boat

Each September, a section of the Rhode Island coast along Newport's America's Cup Avenue is filled with more than 600 boats and nearly 800 exhibitor booths during the Newport International Boat Show. In addition to seeing new and vintage boats, attendees can take part in educational sessions led by boating industry experts. The 48th installment of this popular event will take place Sept. 13–16, 2018.



NEWPORTBOATSHOW.COM

Where to go to see sea turtles

Corpus Christi boasts more than 100 miles of beaches along the Texas Gulf Coast, and the city is home to Padre Island National Seashore, which is one of only a few nesting grounds in the world for Kemp's ridley sea turtles. From mid-June through August, visitors can watch as scientists release newly hatched sea turtles into the wild at Malaquite Beach.



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Scenery that's par excellent

The gorgeous stretch of California coast that runs through Monterey and Carmel is a hot spot for golfers. The area is home to Pebble Beach and Spyglass Hill, both of which are staples on the bucket list of any self-respecting golf enthusiast. As players tackle these challenging courses, they can take in sweeping views of the picture-perfect coastline.

A salute to sand sculpting

Each November, thousands of people descend on Fort Myers, Florida, for the American Sand Sculpting Championships. The local beaches become the canvas for the creations of the some of the world's best sand artists, who take part in juried competitions. In addition to watching the artists create their masterpieces, festival-goers can enjoy live music throughout the 10-day event. 🎵



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Las Vegas

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For more information about Las Vegas, contact John Meyer of the Las Vegas CVA at jmeyer@lvcva.com or go to lvcva.com.

Headed to Vegas? You're in luck.

The number seven has been seen as auspicious across time and cultures. A survey of 30,000 Brits once overwhelmingly showed seven as people's favorite number, and that country's most notable super spy is neither 006 nor 008. Studies have shown that seven is the largest quantity of an item that humans can determine without counting. Many religions regard seven as highly symbolic.

And there's one place you can put all that good fortune to use: Las Vegas. You're in luck, too. The NTA membership includes top-notch entertainment venues, sightseeing tour providers, casinos and resorts in the Las Vegas area.

We've compiled seven ways your fellow NTA members can help you round out a Vegas visit.

Cirque is a sure bet

Cirque du Soleil's imaginative combination of theatrics, acrobatics and artistry have earned its shows recognition around the world. At its Las Vegas venues, audiences can choose from one of seven productions: "KÀ," "Michael Jackson ONE," "Mystère," "O," "The Beatles LOVE," "Zumanity" and "Criss Angel MINDFREAK LIVE." In addition to group rates and packages, Cirque du Soleil can also tailor programs to student groups, with curriculum assistance and opportunities for a Q&A with one of the organization's professionals.



BILL HUGHES/LAS VEGAS NEW BUREAU

TOP: SAM MORRIS/LAS VEGAS NEW BUREAU



THE MOB MUSEUM



Bullet hole from the St. Valentine's Day Massacre

A mob mentality

The Mob Museum, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, chronicles more than 100 years of organized crime in America.

"The Mob Museum provides an engaging and immersive experience through the stories of mobsters and the lawmen pursuing them," says Ashley Miller, the museum's senior director of marketing and sales. "Stories are told through high-tech theater presentations, hundreds of one-of-a-kind artifacts and interactive exhibits." According to Miller, the museum covers provocative topics, including bootlegging, betting, drug trafficking and racketeering.

"Visiting the meticulously restored courtroom, which is the centerpiece of the Mob Museum's historic building, is a must for every visitor," says Miller. In 1950, the U.S. Senate's Special Committee to Investigate Crime in Interstate Commerce

conducted hearings in the room. "The courtroom's interactive presentation explores the history and drama behind these public hearings, which changed the way Americans thought about the Mob and led to the development of Las Vegas as a gaming and entertainment mecca."

In 2018 the museum will debut several new exhibits and experiences. The Underground exhibit will capture life during the Prohibition era, and guests will be able to make cocktails and moonshine. The Use of Force Experience will look at the challenges law enforcement officers face when responding to emergencies, and a multi-sensory crime lab will provide hands-on activities to simulate forensic crime scene investigation.

To learn more, contact Sabine von Henning, director of sales for the museum, at svonhenning@themobmuseum.org or go to themobmuseum.org.

BASE is wild

BASE Entertainment specializes in inventive live productions, and its current offerings include four Las Vegas shows at three venues: "Absinthe" at Caesars Palace, "Magic Mike Live" and "The Voice: Neon Dreams" at the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, and magician Mat Franco at the Linq.

"The Voice: Neon Dreams," the company's newest production, features performances of popular music by former contestants from the hit NBC singing competition, and the live show will star a rotating cast of fan favorites from the series.

For more, contact Lindsey Hull at lindsey@baseentertainment.com or go to baseentertainmentsales.com.



CC FLICKR/PAUL HUDSON: bit.ly/2AxJGy0

"Absinthe," a BASE Entertainment show, at Caesars Palace

A different perspective

Travelers who want to see the lights of Las Vegas from a new angle, as well as the area's natural scenery and man-made wonders, can climb aboard a flightseeing tour or Jeep excursion with these outfitters:



MAVERICK HELICOPTER.COM

Maverick Aviation Group

maverickhelicopter.com

Since 1995, Maverick has been offering helicopter tours of Las Vegas. Groups can enjoy flightseeing rides that showcase Hoover Dam and the neon lights along the Vegas Strip or red rock canyons in Nevada and Arizona. The company also offers departures from Phoenix and the Grand Canyon.



PAPILLON HELICOPTERS

Papillon Helicopters/ Grand Canyon Scenic Airline

papillon.com

For groups wanting to take in the desert landscape from the air, Papillon Helicopters provides a variety of flightseeing packages from its base in Las Vegas. The longtime NTA member soars above the Hoover Dam and the Strip on its daytime and evening tours.



PINK JEEP TOURS

Pink Jeep Tours

pinkjeptours.com

Pink Jeep Tours welcomes guests aboard its eponymous vehicles for on-road and off-road adventures in Nevada's Valley of Fire State Park and trips to the Hoover Dam. Tour options in the city also cover the neon lights of the Strip with narration about its history and urban legends.

Visit Mr. Vegas himself

Singer Wayne Newton purchased five acres of undeveloped land four miles from the Las Vegas Strip in 1966, and he spent the next decades transforming that property into a 52-acre estate, including eight homes, two barns, 60 horses and many exotic animals.

Groups can tour the opulent estate, and packages include access to the grounds, Newton's collection of luxury cars and the 13,800-square-foot Entertainment Museum, and a seat on board the singer's private Fokker F-28 jet. Specialty tours include more in-depth access to Newton's mansion, art collection, horse barns and animal sanctuary.

To learn more, email Kourtney Buck at kbuck@casadeshenandoah.com or go to casadeshenandoah.com.



GLENN PINKERTON/LAS VEGAS NEW BUREAU



GLENN PINKERTON/LAS VEGAS NEW BUREAU

Where to sleep ... or not


These two NTA-member gaming and resort companies are unique to Las Vegas, and for corporate members who operate in the city, go to NTA Online's member searches.

Four Queens Hotel & Casino

NTA Contact: Pamela Dreyer
pdreyer@tlccasinos.com
fourqueens.com

Station Casinos

Joni Peru
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LAS VEGAS NEW BUREAU

A bigger, better “Hangover”

Madame Tussauds offers a chance for its guests to brush elbows with famous figures from history, politics, sports, music, TV and film. “For some, our attractions are the best opportunity they might have to relive a part of history or have fun interacting with our incredibly life-like wax replicas of their favorite celebrities,” says Amirah John, trade sales coordinator for Merlin Entertainments, which operates Madame Tussauds.

The Las Vegas location will be debuting two new wax figures in 2018, and guests will also be able to enter the comic world of “The

Hangover” movie series. “They will be doubling the size of their popular Hangover Experience and creating a truly transformative space, taking guests into the heart of the movie,” says John.

Madame Tussauds welcomes groups with dedicated reservation times and guaranteed entry. All of the locations provide scavenger hunts and behind-the-scenes educational workshops about the history of Madame Tussauds and the making of its wax figures.

For more information, contact John at amirah.john@merlinentertainments.biz or go to madametussauds.com.

Bring Your Mob to the Museum

Mob Museum in downtown Las Vegas offers a provocative, contemporary journey through the fascinating topic of the battle between organized crime and the law with high-tech theater presentations, hundreds of one-of-a-kind artifacts and interactive exhibits.

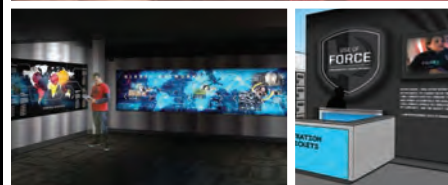
The Museum provides an array of special offerings designed to enhance the guest experience, including self-guided and audio tours in seven languages, scavenger hunts, group downtown Las Vegas walking tours or group Mob Mystery games.

Coming in spring 2018: New exhibits and experiences including Prohibition exhibit with a working speakeasy and working distillery, Crime Lab, interactive International Organized Crime exhibit, Use of Force experience, cafe space and more!

THE MOB MUSEUM

National Museum of Organized Crime & Law Enforcement®

Downtown Las Vegas | 300 Stewart Ave
themobmuseum.org | 702.229.2734





GRAND JUNCTION VCB

Lavender fields forever: The countryside around Grand Junction, Colorado, includes hundreds of acres of colorful lavender. Groups can tour lavender farms, such as Sprigs and Sprouts of Western Colorado, and learn about the range of products that come from the purple plants. Turn to page 45 to find out about Grand Junction, as well as other destinations across the Rockies region.

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Gulf Coast

COMPILED BY BOB ROUSE

Caring for Gulf Coast neighbors

As we pointed out in last month's focus on Caribbean members, the 2017 hurricane season was a difficult one. While many destinations along the U.S. Gulf Coast were spared the ravages of Harvey, Irma and Nate, others suffered damage—from slight to significant.

As usual, Tourism Cares, NTA's official philanthropy, is providing help for communities in need. Along with establishing a recovery fund, Tourism Cares is organizing volunteer work projects for 2018 in South Florida and New Orleans. For more information, see the article on page 8 or visit tourismcares.org.



PETE BACHELER

Recovering, relaxing and reveling in the Keys

Anyone who has ever enjoyed fishing, snorkeling, dining or sunning in the Florida Keys was likely watching weather forecasts in early September with dread. Their concerns were justified, says Judy Hull, executive director of the Islamorada Chamber of Commerce.

"Most of our luxury resorts are located on the ocean, and Irma was definitely an ocean event," she says. "Our resorts suffered major wind and water damage."

While some of the resorts might take up to a year to reopen, Hull anticipates about half the island's lodging rooms being online when the calendar turns to 2018. "By January we should be back to normal. Every day we are making progress towards cleaning up the Keys."

That means groups will be able to enjoy sightseeing excursions, dining, shopping, fishing and water sports. "All of these will be back to normal and just fine for 2018," she says.

A special group of residents is already looking for visitors. "The dolphins at Theater of the Sea are missing the interaction with their fans," Hull says. The marine mammal park, an Islamorada mainstay for more than 75 years, suffered storm damage to the landscaping but reopened in October.

Hull says that most tour groups visit Islamorada while exploring the entire chain of islands, from Key Largo to Key West. "They are typically doing one week with their final destination being Key West," she says. "Fall is always the best bargain for visiting the Keys, and groups often schedule their tours in conjunction with an event like Fantasy Fest."

That annual event, set for Oct. 19–28 in 2018, attracts up to 75,000 people in celebration of the Key West culture.

For further updates and information, email Hull at director@islamoradachamber.com or visit islamoradachamber.com.



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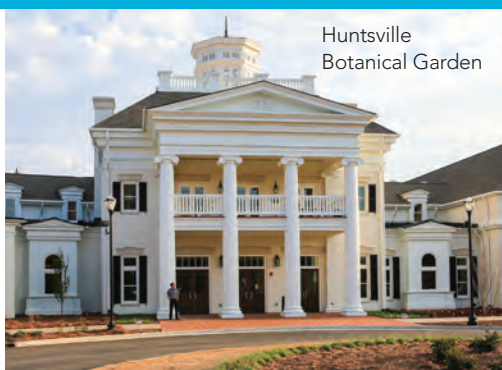
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Concerts on the Dock
at Lowe Mill



Huntsville
Botanical Garden



Campus No. 805



Because it's 'a very Mobile experience'

Mobile, Alabama, was one of the Gulf Coast destinations that dodged damage from the 2017 hurricanes. "We had a little flooding in our downtown area but it drained within hours," says Stacy Hamilton of Visit Mobile. "There was no real damage, and everything was back to business as usual the next morning."

For Mobile, that means the business of tourism. The destination boasts mild winters, warm shoulder seasons, sizzlin' summers and a boatload of things to do, starting with ... boats!

"Our historical downtown entertainment district is just

minutes away from the Mobile Tensaw Delta, the country's second largest waterway," Hamilton says. "Group sightseeing tours are available by duck boats, which take you through three splashes on a memorable land and water experience."

And back on dry land, visitors can spend time in any of the city's 17 museums, with installations and exhibits ranging from maritime history and colonial life to Mardi Gras.

"We're the home of America's original Mardi Gras, so a parade or two, combined with a visit to the Mobile Carnival Museum and a walking tour led by a Mardi Gras expert is a very Mobile experience," Hamilton says.

And even though Mobile lies on the southern edge of Alabama, it's a perfect piece of a tour package.

"If you're coming from the north, a great multi-day itinerary can include an Alabama trip from Huntsville, through Muscle Shoals, Birmingham, Montgomery and ending with a stay at our beautiful beaches in Gulf Shores or Orange Beach," says Hamilton. "Or if you're heading west to east, New Orleans, Biloxi/Ocean Springs, Mobile to Pensacola is a great Gulf Coast trip with seafood, water activities and lots of history."

For more details, contact Patty Kieffer at pkieffer@mobile.org or visit mobile.org.



VISIT MOBILE

Creole, cranes and costumes

In Lake Charles, Louisiana, it wasn't tourism that was halted by hurricanes. Instead, it was the storm itself.

"Thank goodness, Hurricane Harvey basically stopped about 25 miles west of us," says Anne Klenke of the Lake Charles/Southwest Louisiana CVB. "While we did have several residential subdivisions flood in the area, none of our tourism product was impacted by flooding from Harvey."

Klenke says she was full of sorrow for friends in neighboring Texas communities.

"We in Southwest Louisiana sent prayers, assistance and supplies, as we know the whole country and world did."

Lake Charles, located two hours from Houston, offers visitors a multicultural experience that bridges Texas and Louisiana. "We can give your clients Cajun, Creole, cowboy, casino gaming, the great outdoors, seafood, steak, barbecue, king cake—the list goes on and on," Klenke says.

Motorcoach tours that visit the area focus on two activities: following the Creole Nature Trail and visiting the Mardi Gras Museum of Imperial Calcasieu.

The Creole Nature Trail is one of 43 scenic byways in the U.S. designated as an All-American Road. "It really connects people of all abilities with nature in its most elemental form," Klenke says. "Right from the vehicle window they will see alligators—not in cages, this is where the alligators live—as well as birds galore. Over 400 different bird species are spotted in our area each year; it's birding nirvana!"



VISIT LAKE CHARLES

She adds that step-on guides who know and love the trail are available to explain what visitors are seeing and to regale them with local stories.

The Mardi Gras Museum showcases the largest collection of Mardi Gras costumes in the world. "And it's not a behind-glass museum. You can get right up to the pieces to take photos, see the amazing amount of handwork that goes into them and even try on a headdress or two—with the docent's permission, of course," Klenke says. "My favorite thing about this museum is that people really get an understanding that Mardi Gras is not just a party; it is actually the celebration before repenting on Ash Wednesday, in preparation for Easter."

Klenke says groups need at least a day and a half to tour the area, and that the best rates for accommodations are on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday nights—"Mardi Gras week excluded."

For more information, contact Klenke at aklenke@visitlakecharles.org or go to visitlakecharles.org.



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Uninterrupted fun on the coast

Mississippi destinations dodged hurricanes Harvey and Irma, but another storm stalked its friendly shores.

"Hurricane Nate's impact wasn't as severe as anticipated, and we were extremely grateful for that," says Kristen Parker, leisure group sales manager for Visit Mississippi Gulf Coast. "Our coastal communities saw a minimal amount of damage."

However, area beaches and barrier islands were closed for debris removal and analysis, and a number of fishing piers, boardwalks and overlooks in national parks were temporarily closed for assessment and restoration. Parker hopes all will soon be reopened.



Biloxi Schooner

ALEX NORTH

"Thanks to a high level of preparedness, the hard work of our public officials, and the dedication of our incredible hospitality employees, our destination rebounded quickly, and we did not experience a significant interruption in tourism to our area," she says. "Mississippi Gulf Coast hotels, casinos, attractions and restaurants have resumed business as usual."

Because of the temperate climate, groups enjoy kayaking, paddle boarding, eco-tours, fishing and boating along Mississippi's Gulf shores. Parker says that area sightseeing ships are back in action. "The Ship Island Excursions ferry has closed for the remainder of the season, but they are running dolphin-watching cruises every Saturday and Sunday. The Biloxi Schooner continues to offer walk-on sails and group charters, and the Biloxi Shrimping Trip is still welcoming passengers aboard their 70-minute Living Marine Adventure Cruise."

Destinations along the Mississippi Gulf Coast appeal to a wide range of groups, as the area offers gaming options, student performance venues, kid-friendly attractions, museums, tours and branded hotels. "We're always celebrating something on the coast, with lots of festivals and holiday events," Parker says, adding that coastal communities also offer an easy drive to other popular destinations, such as New Orleans and Mobile, Alabama.

For more details, go to gulfcoast.org or email Parker at kristenl@gulfcoast.org.

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Catch you on the rebound, Port A

One of the Texas destinations hit hard by Hurricane Harvey was Port Aransas. The community endured winds of over 132 mph with nearly six feet of storm surge on Aug. 25.

It's a tough town, though.

"While Hurricane Harvey caused tremendous damage to Port Aransas and Mustang Island, the residents and businesses of Port A are a strong and resilient community," says Jeff Hentz, president and CEO of the Port Aransas/Mustang Island Chamber of Commerce & Tourism Bureau, a new NTA member. "As this destination is rebuilt over the coming weeks and months, our organization will stand united with city officials, residents and the business community to help return Port A to the beloved vacation destination that millions of visitors choose."

Although the area is perceived as a low-key getaway, it boasts some high-energy festivals and events, including BeachtoberFest, the Whooping Crane Festival and Texas SandFest.

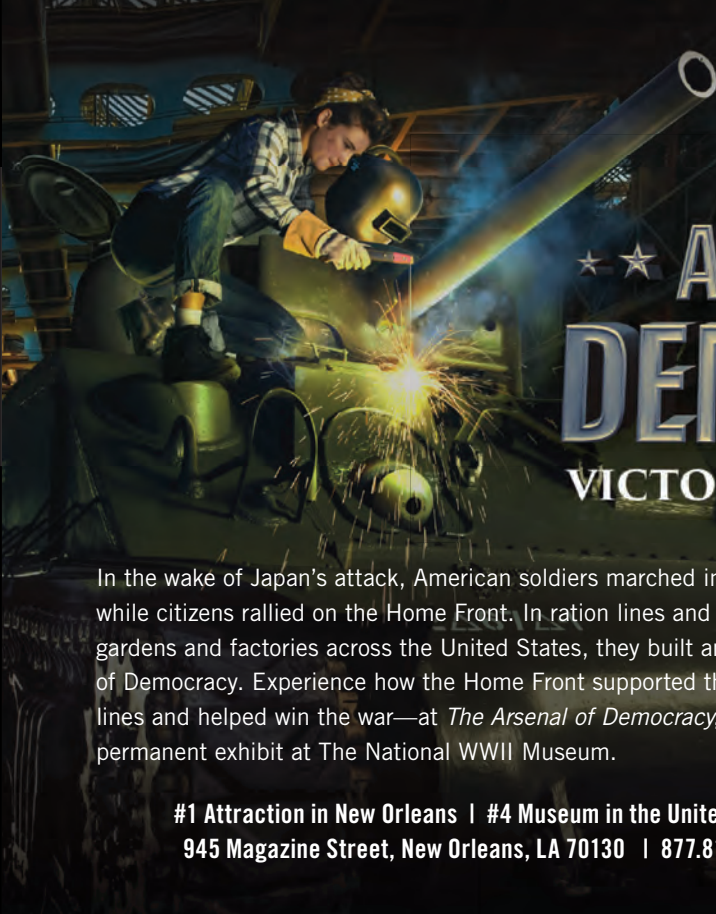
Visitors to the island enjoy year-round outdoor activities, including sport fishing, parasailing, golf, birding and dolphin watching. Tourists often rent golf carts to explore the town's shops, galleries and restaurants.

A few weeks after the hurricane, Hentz told a local newspaper reporter that the storm had a significant short-term impact, "but long-term, there's going to be an unbelievable rebound."

To keep tabs on the area's progress, email Hentz at jhentz@portaransas.org or go to visitportaransas.com.




PORT ARANSAS & MUSTANG ISLAND TOURISM BUREAU



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Lafayette Museum/Alexandre Mouton House



Festivals Acadiens et Créole

LAFAYETTE TRAVEL

Spicy and special in Louisiana

Located close to the Gulf of Mexico (and a short drive from New Orleans), Lafayette, Louisiana, was spared from any hurricane damage this fall.

"There has been no interruption in tourism, and it's been business as usual for all of our attractions, restaurants and tours," says Eugenie Mitchell of the Lafayette CVC.

Visitors—and groups in particular—will find a variety of

ways to explore Louisiana's Cajun and Creole country, starting with a trip to Martin Accordions, a family-owned shop where hand-built instruments are made. A visit to the store can include a presentation on Cajun culture and music.

"Lafayette's historic and eclectic downtown is increasingly popular," Mitchell says. "It's a place where groups can discover Lafayette's history, then enjoy its contemporary, artsy vibe

with public art, unique shops, museums and galleries, plus a variety of restaurants, music venues and events."

To add a little spice to a visit, groups can visit nearby Avery Island, the only place in the world where peppery Tabasco Sauce is made. The company has recently expanded its visitor experience.

"You can view artifacts from Tabasco Sauce's founding family, see pepper plants from seedlings to full-grown, visit the mash warehouse for a peek at the aging process and smell the aromas arising from the stirring vats," Mitchell says, adding that Tabasco will celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2018.

The southern town has a wide window for scheduling visits, and Mitchell advises tour operators to consult the events and festivals calendar on the CVC's website, lafayettettravel.com.

"There are many festivals in the spring and fall, as well as a free concert series that will add value—as well as fun—to any itinerary," Mitchell says. "In fact, Lafayette's Mardi Gras is the second-largest Mardi Gras in Louisiana, and Lafayette Travel offers a covered grandstand that groups can reserve for parade viewing."

To get more information, email Mitchell at eugenie@lafayettettravel.com. 



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The Rockies

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Colorado National Monument

Having a grand time in Grand Junction

Situated in western Colorado where the Rockies meet the high desert, Grand Junction offers a mix of activities for travelers.

"You can savor your adventure each day with culinary experiences that include our produce and locally crafted wines, beers and spirits," says Barb Bowman of the Grand Junction VCB. "Take a stroll in Downtown Grand Junction to view Art on the Corner, with its 100 mixed-media works along our tree-lined Main Street."

Groups typically flock to the Colorado National Monument, which boasts steep cliffs and red rock canyons. As they follow the 23-mile historical Rim Rock Drive loop, they can see monoliths and other unusual rock formations that are spread across the park.

Another way for visitors to relax and take in the sweeping views is by having a gourmet meal on a patio overlooking

the canyons. "This culinary adventure has become one of our most sought-after options," says Bowman. "There's something surprising about the beauty of the red rocks, coupled with a wonderful meal, that just makes it the perfect combination."

Guests also can mix sightseeing and culinary options at Sprigs and Sprouts of Western Colorado. This lavender farm is located in nearby Palisade, a town known as Colorado's Napa Valley based on its numerous orchards and vineyards. During tours, the farm's owners—Ruth and Linda—educate visitors on how they distill essential oils and hydrosols, propagate lavender and grow vegetables in a closed irrigation system via aquaponics.

To learn more, contact Bowman at barbarab@gjcity.org or go to visitgrandjunction.com.



"Chrome on the Range II" is part of the city's Art on the Corner project.

Where to stay in Alberta

Tour operators taking groups to the Canadian Rockies have three individual properties among the NTA membership they can turn to for lodging assistance in Alberta. Each of the following hotels provides well-appointed accommodations, high-end amenities, discounted rates and a number of special touches for groups.



THECROSSINGRESORT.COM

The Crossing (Lake Louise)

NTA contact: Mike Fikowski
mike@thecrossingresort.com
thecrossingresort.com

Located on the Icefields Parkway, The Crossing has been the region's major service center for more than 70 years. The resort features 66 deluxe lodge accommodations, three dining options, a large gift shop and a general store. Its Hike & Attraction Central program highlights popular hikes in area parks.

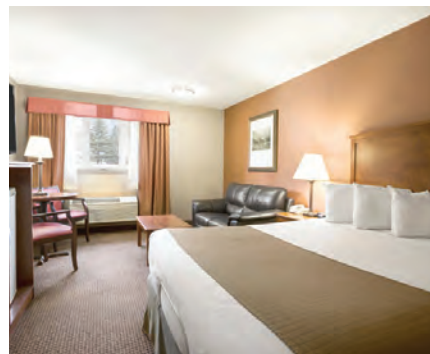


MPLJASPER.COM

Mountain Park Lodges (Jasper)

NTA contact: Bernhard Schneider
bernhard.schneider@mpljasper.com
mpljasper.com

This longtime NTA member has six properties located in the mountains around Jasper that offer a range of room styles and a variety of amenities. Groups can choose between The Crimson, Chateau Jasper, Lobstick Lodge, Marmot Lodge, Pocahontas Cabins and Pyramid Lake Resort.



RAMADACANMORE.COM

Ramada Inn & Suites (Canmore)

NTA contact: Rose Chobaniuk
sales@ramadacanmore.com
ramadacanmore.com

Offering a combination of great value and service, this Ramada property in Canmore is well suited for leisure groups, business travelers and families. The resort has 189 rooms and suites, a three-story water slide, an indoor pool, a fitness room and conference facilities.



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Southfork Ranch, TX
Tour: **800.989.7800**
Scenic Safaris, WY
Winter Tours: **888.734.8898**

LODGING: 877.386.4383

Rock Harbor Lodge, MI
Cedar Pass Lodge / Badlands Inn, SD
Big Bend Resort and Adventures, TX
Chisos Mountains Lodge, TX
Parry Lodge / Denny's Wigwam, UT

ForeverResorts.com



/travelforeverresorts



Forever Resorts is an Authorized Concessioner of the National Park Service.

PHI Hotel Group covers BC, Alberta

Since 2002, PHI Hotel Group has specialized in the ownership, management and development of hotels in British Columbia and Alberta. The new NTA member has 12 properties in the two provinces.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Best Western Pacific Inn Vernon
Best Western Plus
Sunrise Inn Osoyoos
Comfort Inn & Suites Kamloops
Fairfield Inn & Suites
by Marriott Kamloops
Hampton Inn by Hilton Kamloops
Holiday Inn & Suites Kamloops
Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites
Vernon
Pacific Inn & Suites Kamloops

ALBERTA

Candlewood Suites West Edmonton
Four Points by Sheraton
Edmonton Gateway
Hampton Inn by Hilton
Edmonton South
Holiday Inn Express & Suites
West Edmonton



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Peak experiences at Sun Peaks

The magic of the rugged Canadian Rockies can be discovered at Sun Peaks Resort. This mountain community, located just north of Kamloops in British Columbia's Thompson Okanagan region, offers a comprehensive set of nature-based activities year-round.

Sun Peaks, which is Canada's second-largest ski hub, is modeled after the traditional European ski-in, ski-out villages. From November to April, thousands of downhill enthusiasts and snowboarders head out on 135 trails—ranging from beginner hills to double-black diamond runs—that are spread across 4,270 acres. Thanks to more than 25 miles of cross-country trails, the area is becoming popular with Nordic skiers, too. During the warmer months, visitors can stay active by going mountain biking, enjoying a hike on one of the alpine trails or playing 18 holes at the Graham Cooke-designed championship golf course.

At the center of Sun Peaks is a quaint, walkable downtown featuring a variety of locally owned shops, restaurants and lodging options. The village's calling-card property is the Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre. An NTA member, the resort provides guests with an upscale experience that keeps the focus on the area's natural beauty.

A variety of room types is available, including suites and ones with kitchenettes. Travelers seeking a more luxurious stay can book the one- and two-bedroom condos that are part of the Residences at Sun Peaks.

Guests can enjoy gourmet cuisine at the resort's three on-site restaurants. Mantles is a full-service restaurant offering traditional dishes made with regionally sourced ingredients. A more casual lunch or dinner experience is available in the adjacent Mantles Lounge, which also features local wines and craft cocktails. Morrissey's Public House provides classic pub fare in a more intimate setting.

To learn more, contact Tourism Sun Peaks' Colin Brost at colin@sunpeakstourism.com or reach out to Sun Peaks Grand Hotel & Conference Centre's Valerie Hunter at vhunter@sunpeaksgrand.com.



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Genealogical buffs unite!

Founded in 1894, Salt Lake City's FamilySearch seeks to help people discover their ancestry by preserving and organizing billions of records. The longtime NTA member has the world's largest genealogical library, and it manages an extensive online database that includes even more historical documents.

During a visit to the Family History Library, visitors can take guided tours to help them become familiar with the facility and resources, which include records from more than 100 countries. Those wanting to spend time developing a family tree can meet with one of the library's individual consultants, who can familiarize them with the tools and technological resources at their disposal.

This year, the library began offering a series of new discovery experiences. As part of these interactive programs, families and individuals can find out the meaning of their names, learn what famous people they might be related to and discover what events took place the year they were born. Other high-tech areas allow guests to record family memories or stories, digitally dress in period costumes and more.

Classes also are offered daily and cover a range of topics, such as how to start the research process and navigating advanced, country-specific records.

To learn more, contact FamilySearch's Cherie Bush at bushcd@familysearch.org or go to familysearch.org.



FAMILYSEARCH.ORG

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All that glitters is silver

Thanks to hundreds of mountain peaks, thousands of miles of rivers and abundant wildlife, Idaho is an outdoor lover's paradise. Among many gems in the Gem State, Silver Mountain Resort shines brightly.

The year-round resort, which is located in Kellogg in the Idaho Panhandle, is renowned for its challenging ski runs. In addition to skiing and snowboarding, visitors can enjoy snowshoeing and snow tubing during the winter months. The mountain is the center of activity the rest of the year, too, thanks to its extensive system of well-developed biking and hiking trails.

Two of the most popular options are the Trail of the Coeur D'alenes and the Trail of the Hiawatha. The former is a 72-mile paved, flat path that winds beside its namesake river and through rolling farmlands. Along Hiawatha, which is the result of a rails-to-trails project, cyclists follow the crest of the Bitterroot Mountains and go through 10 train tunnels during the 15-mile downhill ride.

After a day of adventure, travelers can spend the night at the Morning Star Lodge. The property includes spacious rooms, large public gathering areas, a rooftop hot tub and more. A night's stay also gives guests access to Silver Rapids, Idaho's largest indoor waterpark.

To learn more, contact Silver Mountain's Cathryn Jerome at cathij@silvermt.com or go to silvermt.com.



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Say hello to Helena

Located between Yellowstone and Glacier national parks, Helena blends Old West history with quaint charm and the sophistication you'd expect to find in a state capital. The city DMO, Visit Helena Montana, offers a number of suggestions for only-in-Helena group experiences, including the following five:

Last Chance Tour Train From their seats on open-air trains or climate-controlled trolleys, visitors can see many of the city's top attractions during the narrated 60-minute ride.

Kleffner Ranch Chuckwagon BBQ

During a visit to the ranch, groups tour the property's famous barn, which dates back to the late 1800s, and then enjoy a scrumptious meal.

Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour This 120-minute cruise takes passengers between the same limestone canyon walls that Lewis and Clark saw more than two centuries ago.

Cathedral of St. Helena Tour This historical church, modeled after the Gothic-style cathedrals in Europe, is known for its 159 stained-glass windows and its 230-foot-tall twin spires.

Sidewalk Tour of Historic Helena A representative from the Lewis & Clark Preservation Office leads groups past Helena's mansions and shares insights into the lives of the early entrepreneurs that owned them.

Gates of the Mountains Boat Tour



VISITMT.COM

To learn more about those and other group-friendly programs, go to helenamt.com/category/group-travel or contact the DMO's Jennifer Davis at jdavis@helenamt.com.

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Scandinavia

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Glaciers, volcanoes and the Golden Circle

Iceland's capital, Reykjavik, is not a large city (population: 123,000), and its location just outside the Arctic Circle means the shortest winter days have only a few hours of sunlight. But what Reykjavik lacks in numbers, it makes up for with a fascinating history, vibrant nightlife, natural beauty and a creative spirit.

Reykjavik can serve as a hub for visitors looking to explore the island's unusual landscapes, volcanoes, glaciers and hot springs. NTA member and receptive tour operator GJ Travel Iceland is very experienced with immersing the city's visitors in the country's wonders (and in those hot springs). On the company's Northern Lights-themed evening tours, guides take into account cloud cover and the aurora forecast, and their guests are taken away from the city's light to maximize their chances of seeing the colorful streaks that light up the Arctic skies. Other popular day-trip options include whale-watching, puffin spotting and horseback riding tours.

GJ Travel also offers multi-day packages that focus on particular regions of Iceland. Its Best of South Iceland itinerary



Gullfoss waterfalls

includes the Golden Circle's Thingvellir National Park, the volcanic Reykjanes Peninsula and the powerful Gullfoss waterfalls, as well as glaciers and the black-sand beaches of the southern coast.

For more, email Renato Gruenenfelder at renato@gjtravel.is or go to gjtravel.is.

Get to know Norway with Scandinavia Tours

Scandinavia Tours, based in Vågå, Norway, custom designs all its itineraries that feature Norway, Sweden and Denmark. While the winters of the Nordic world might intimidate some, Managing Director Monique van Dijk-Seppola says she has seen increased interest.

"We have started to promote the winter season more—hunting, the Northern Lights, skiing, dog sledding and winter cruises," she says, attributing some of the interest to the Disney film "Frozen." The movie even serves as the inspiration for a high-end tour offering the company packages.

"Norway is the Scandinavian country with the highest peaks and the deepest fjords," she says. As groups travel through the Gudbrandsdalen region on one of the company's popular routes, they can see the network of valleys as they take in the culture, history and cuisine of Norway.

"We end our journey in the beautiful Hanseatic city of Bergen, or we prolong our journey with a cruise with the famous Hurtigruten." The passenger line has been ferrying people and cargo along the Norwegian coast since the 1890s, and ships depart Bergen daily.

To learn more about Norway and other destinations across Scandinavia, contact van Dijk-Seppola at monique@scandinaviatours.no or go to scandinaviatours.no.



Bergen, Norway

SKINFORMATIENL

Portugal and Spain

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A primer on Portugal's products

There are many trails to travel to discover some of Portugal's popular natural products. Here are three directions groups can take to learn about the production processes (and indulge a little):

Cork

Cork cultivation is a thousand-year-old industry, and Portugal is the No. 1 producer in the world. Visitors to Serra do Caldeirão can take the cork route, which showcases the steps in the process, from the oak groves to the extraction of the cork to the end products—shoes, purses, fishing rod handles, insulation and floor coatings. They can visit the cork museum and take walks to observe the flora and fauna of a cork forest.

Olive oil

Whether traveling by car, bike or on foot in Trás-os-Montes, visitors can choose from four roadmaps on the olive oil route in the northeast province. They'll visit the olive oil farms in each location and learn the manufacturing processes passed down through generations, as well as the most current production techniques. Guests can also taste the products and take home their favorites.

Wine

Portugal is home to numerous wineries and farms, each with vines unique to their areas. The L'AND Vineyards Resort in Alentejo is surrounded by views of a lake and the medieval castle of Montemor. Guests can experience grape-based beauty treatments in the resort's spa and take balloon rides over the vineyards. The oldest wine region in the world is in the Douro Valley, declared a UNESCO World Heritage site, and it can be toured by car, train or boat.

For more information, contact Enca Mello with the Portuguese National Tourist Office at enca.mello@turismodeportugal.pt or go to visitportugal.com.



Cork trees

ADOBE STOCK



L'AND Vineyards Resort

L-AND.COM

Happy 400th, Murillo

Visitors to Seville can take part in the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the birth of renowned Sevillian

painter, Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, during the Year of Murillo.

"It will be celebrated during 2018 with many cultural activities and events throughout the city, and it is a great opportunity to rediscover the unique treasures that are the rich cultural legacy of Seville," says Elisa Sainz with the Tourist Office of Spain.

Murillo, a Baroque artist known for his religious works, left a lasting legacy in Seville by defining an artistic style and largely influencing Andalusian art.

Through Dec. 8, 2018, the exhibit "Murillo at the Cathedral" will be open at the Cathedral of Seville. In addition to viewing 16 of his works, visitors can see documents from the Hermandad de la Santa Caridad and the cathedral archives related to Murillo's life and work.

The exhibit "Murillo y su estela en

Sevilla," hosted by the Convent of Santa Clara through April 8, 2018, will feature 62 works by Murillo, including some of his original paintings, as well as other artists' oil paintings, drawings, photographs and sculptures.

A third exhibit celebrates "El Jubileo de la Porciuncula," considered one of Murillo's masterpieces. The painting, which resides over the central altarpiece at a church in Germany, was returned to Seville for the celebration and will be displayed at the Museum of Fine Arts of Seville.

Visitors can also attend a symposium on Murillo in March featuring 50 speakers from all over the world.

An anthological exhibition, lectures and other cultural events are slated through January 2019. For more information, contact Sainz at newyork.trade@tourspain.es or visit spain.info. ☎



"The Annunciation" by Murillo

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Portugal *Fatima* faith lives at night

"In Fatima when night falls, thousands of people from all over the world get together at the Sanctuary of Fatima for a memorable experience."

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NTA Legacy Members

Since NTA was founded in 1951, thousands of travel companies have been part of the membership. This month, your association salutes organizations that have been NTA members for 30 or more consecutive years. These long-time members will be recognized at a luncheon during Travel Exchange in San Antonio, and the following pages include a list of them.

And it is a long list: 383 companies long, to be exact. That total includes 195 DMOs, 118 tour suppliers, 69 tour operators and one corporate partner. Of the 383, 113 of them have been with NTA for 40 or more years.

The list is based on the 2017 dues year, and information and contact names were current as of Oct. 23. To find out more about these companies, go to NTAonline.com.

40 OR MORE YEARS

DMOs

1000 Islands International Tourism Council 43 years

NTA contact: Tillie Youngs
Wellesley Island, NY
visit1000islands.com

Alabama Tourism Department 42

Rosemary Judkins
Montgomery, AL
alabama.travel

Amarillo CVC 42

Dan Quandt
Amarillo, TX
visitamarillo.com

Arizona Office of Tourism 40

Courtney Jones
Phoenix, AZ
visitarizona.com

Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism 43

Brant Collins
Little Rock, AR
arkansas.com

Asheville CVB 41

Beth McKinney
Asheville, NC
exploreasheville.com

Atlanta CVB 43

Amanda Dana Dyson
Atlanta, GA
atlanta.net

Bardstown Tourist Commission 40

Dawn Przystal
Bardstown, KY
visitbardstown.com

Chattanooga CVB 44

Shelda Spencer Rees, CTP
Chattanooga, TN
chattanooga.fun

Daytona Beach Area CVB 43

Leda Beever
Daytona Beach, FL
daytonabeach.com

Destination British Columbia 42

Sandy Reid
Vancouver, BC
hellobc.com

Destination Cleveland 46

Jane Rockwood Tougouma
Cleveland, OH
thisiscleveland.com/groups

Destination DC 49

Lindsay Hill
Washington, DC
washington.org

Discover Lancaster 44

Deirdre Kozma
Lancaster, PA
discoverlancaster.com

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Amy Krautt
Edmonton, AB
exploreedmonton.com

Experience Columbus 41

Roger Dudley
Columbus, OH
experiencecolumbus.com/tours

Explore Minnesota Tourism 42

Jessica Dodge
Saint Paul, MN
traveltrade.exploreminnesota.com

Explore St. Louis 40

Renee M. Eichelberger, CTP
St. Louis, MO
explorestlouis.com

Georgia Department of Tourism 44

Lacey Cameron
Atlanta, GA
exploregeorgia.org

Greater Birmingham CVB 40

Sara B. Hamlin
Birmingham, AL
birminghamal.org

Greater Palm Springs CVB 42

Robyn Gallegos
Rancho Mirage, CA
palmspringsoasis.com

Idaho Division of Tourism Development 40

Sarah Flick
Boise, ID
visitidaho.org

Kentucky Department of Travel & Tourism 43

Wayne Cusick
Frankfort, KY
grouptraveltokentucky.com

Louisiana Office of Tourism 46

Misty Shaw
Baton Rouge, LA
louisianatravel.com

Louisville CVB 44

Sandra Briggs-Robertson
Louisville, KY
gotolouisville.com

Maryland Office of Tourism Development 43

Rich Gilbert
Baltimore, MD
visitmaryland.org/groups

Missouri Division of Tourism 43

Donna Cordle-Gray
Kansas City, MO
visitmo.com

Montana Tourism Division 42

Marlee Iverson
Helena, MT
montanagroups.com

Nashville CVB 40

Laurel Bennett
Nashville, TN
visitmusiccity.com

New Brunswick Tourism, Heritage and Culture 43

Lynn Marie Meehan
Fredericton, NB
tourismnewbrunswick.ca

New Orleans CVB 42

Thu Tran
New Orleans, LA
neworleanscvb.com

New York State Division of Tourism/Empire State Development 42

Danae Jones-Persip
Albany, NY
iloveny.com

Newfoundland & Labrador Tourism 40

Cathy A. Anderson
St. Johns, NL
newfoundlandlabrador.com

Newport News Tourism Development Office 43

Barb Kleiss, CTP
Newport News, VA
newport-news.org

Niagara Falls Tourism 41

Christina Sarkis-Marcotte
Niagara Falls, ON
fallstraveltrade.com

Nova Scotia Tourism 41

Linda Murphy
Windsor, NS
novascotia.com

Oklahoma City CVB 41

Sandy Price
Oklahoma City, OK
okccvb.org

Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department 42

Todd Stallbaumer
Oklahoma City, OK
travelok.com

Ottawa Tourism 46

Kelly Dean
Ottawa, ON
ottawatourism.ca

Philadelphia CVB 44

Jim DePhilippo
Philadelphia, PA
discoverphl.com

Providence Warwick CVB 41

Elise Swearingen
Providence, RI
goprovidence.com

Richmond Region Tourism 44

Toni Bastian
Richmond, VA
visitrichmondva.com

San Diego**Tourism Authority 42**

Benjamin Eastman
San Diego, CA
sandiego.org

**Shreveport-Bossier Convention
& Tourist Bureau 40**

Erica Howard
Shreveport, LA
shreveport-bossier.org

Springfield CVB 43

Alison Warren
Springfield, IL
visitspringfieldillinois.com

**Tennessee Department of
Tourist Development 42**

Brian Wagner
Nashville, TN
tnvacation.com

Tourism PEI 40

Grant MacRae
Charlottetown, PE
tourismpei.com

Tourism Saskatchewan 40

Amy McInnis
Regina, SK
trade.tourismsaskatchewan.com

Tourism Toronto 43

Maxine Morrell-West
Toronto, ON
seetorontonow.com

Tourisme Montréal 40

Marisa Iaconelli
Montréal, QC
tourisme-montreal.org

Travel Alberta 40

Bart Donnelly
Calgary, AB
travelalberta.com

Travel Manitoba 40

Michel LaRivière
Winnipeg, MB
travelmanitoba.com

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King of Prussia, PA
valleyforge.org

**Virginia Tourism
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Richmond, VA
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Visit Albuquerque 40

Lindsey Seybert
Albuquerque, NM
itsatrip.org

Visit Denver, The CVB 40

Jenna VanOort
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Rochelle Miller-Hernandez
Las Cruces, NM
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VISIT Milwaukee 40

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Karen Matlock
Jackson, MS
visitmississippi.org

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Patty Kieffer
Mobile, AL
mobile.org

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Heidi Walters
Cary, NC
visitnc.com

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George Herrera
Phoenix, AZ
visitphoenix.com

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Mindy Shea
Savannah, GA
visitsavannah.com

Visit Tucson 41

Jackie Ludwig
Tucson, AZ
visittucson.org

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Gregory P. Marshall
Rochester, NY
visitrochester.com

**White Mountains
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Estlin Loparto
North Woodstock, NH
visitwhitemountains.com

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Will Miller
Charleston, WV
gotowv.com

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1000islandtours.com

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Marita Williams
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aaa.com

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Julio Soto
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aaasouth.com

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Hyannis, MA
capecodcustomtours.com

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Jim Edwards
Pawtucket, RI
gocollette.com

Dan Dipert Tours 41

Jessica Cree
Arlington, TX
dandipert.com

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Neil J. Amrine
Washington, DC
dctourguides.com

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Shannon Bauman, CTP
Souderton, PA
hagey.com

Idaho Tours 57

David Harmon
Boise, ID
harmontravel.com

Knoxville Tours Inc. 44

Joan Lusk
Knoxville, TN
knoxvilletours.com

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Debbie Tripp
Makanda, IL
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Tom Armstrong
Wilton, CT
tauck.com

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Rome, NY
thebeeches.com

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Cathy Handley
Eureka Springs, AR
innoftheozarks.com

Best Western Sutter House 40

Doris Gray
Sacramento, CA
thesutterhouse.com

Biltmore Estate 41

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Asheville, NC
biltmore.com

**Busch Gardens Williamsburg/
Water Country USA 43**

Candace Masengale
Williamsburg, VA
buschgardens.com/va

**Carlson Rezidor
Hotel Group 40**

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Rutherford, NJ
carlsonrezidor.com

Corning Museum of Glass 48

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Corning, NY
cmog.org/groups

**Country Music Hall of Fame
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countrymusichalloffame.org

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ganboatline.com

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hy-linecruises.com

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itmitourtraining.com

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theislandhouse.com

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Foundation 40**

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historyisfun.org

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luraycaverns.com

Maid of the Mist 43

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midtownhotel.com

Mystic Seaport 43

Margaret Milnes
Mystic, CT
mysticseaport.org

Newport Mansions - The Preservation Society 54

Daniel Fryer
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newportmansions.org

Niagara Parks, Restaurants, Attractions 41

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niagaraparkstraveltrade.com

Presleys' Country Jubilee 40

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gettysburgqualityinn.com

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medora.com

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Grand Canyon, AZ
grandcanyonsquire.com

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Debra Elwood
Cody, WY
centerofthewest.org

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lq.com/tours

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Kennett Square, PA
longwoodgardens.org

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Mackinac Island, MI
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Old Sturbridge Village 38
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Sturbridge, MA
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pstramway.com

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redjacketresorts.com

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Sault Sainte Marie, MI
soolocks.com

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ussalabama.com

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banfflakelouise.com

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fortmyers-sanibel.com

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beaumontcvb.com

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brandywinevalley.com

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yellowstonecountry.org

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eugenecascadescoast.org

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sftravel.com

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fortmagruderhotel.com

Gateway Arch Riverfront 32

Kelly Hutchison
St. Louis, MO
gatewayarch.com

**Gaylord Opryland Hotel &
Resort 30**

Tina Marie Abellanosa
Nashville, TN
gaylordhotels.com

Grand Hotel 32

Julia Luckey-Ottenwess
Mackinac Island, MI
grandhotel.com

**Grand Oaks Hotel/Edgewood
Receptive Service 34**

Marilyn Mahoney
Branson, MO
bransonvacationcompany.com

**Hermitage: Home of
President Andrew Jackson 33**

Jason Nelson
Hermitage, TN
thehermitage.com

**Hilton Ocean City Oceanfront
Suites 34**

Ruth Rhynalds Waters
Ocean City, MD
ocmdhotels.com

**Historic Temple Square LDS
Church 30**

Duane V. Cardall
Salt Lake City, UT
templesquare.com

Holiday Inn by the Falls 33

Teresa Adams
Niagara Falls, ON
holidayinnniagarafalls.com

**Hornblower Cruises
& Events 32**

Estelle Miller
San Francisco, CA
hornblower.com

**Indianapolis Zoo &
White River Gardens 31**

Kayli Cole
Indianapolis, IN
indianapoliszoo.com

**John F. Kennedy Presidential
Library & Museum 30**

Lee Statham
Boston, MA
jfklibrary.org

**Lookout Mountain
Attractions 32**

Sherry Harris
Chattanooga, TN
lookoutmountain.com

**Monarch Hotel &
Conference Center 32**

Tammy Thompson
Clackamas, OR
monarchhotel.cc

Monterey Bay Aquarium 32

Lisa Shipley, CTP
Monterey, CA
montereybayaquarium.org

**The Mount Washington
Cog Railway 33**

Susan Presby
Mt. Washington, NH
thecog.com

Murray Hotel 33

Marcella Pulte
Mackinac Island, MI
mymurrayhotel.com

Myer Hotels 32

Kathy Baltajy-Smith
Branson, MO
myerhotels.com

Niagara Skywheel 34

Jennifer McGregor
Niagara Falls, ON
cliftonhill.com

Ober Gatlinburg Inc. 34

Kate Barido
Gatlinburg, TN
obergatlinburg.com

**Ocean Properties Ltd. Hotels
& Resorts 34**

Linda C. Haserot
Portsmouth, NH
ophotels.com

**The Park Vista –
A DoubleTree Hotel 33**

Angela Quigley
Gatlinburg, TN
parkvista.com

Parks Canada 31

Jennifer Burnell
Winnipeg, MB
parksCanada.gc.ca

**Philadelphia
Museum of Art 32**

Shari Feldman
Philadelphia, PA
philamuseum.org

PIER 39 31

Jodi Cumming
San Francisco, CA
pier39.com

Plimoth Plantation Inc. 30

Janet Young
Plymouth, MA
plimoth.org

Prevost Car Inc. 34

Ste. Claire, QC
prevostcar.com

Quality Inn Mt. Vernon 33

Carmen Fierro
Alexandria, VA
choicehotels.com/virginia/
alexandria/quality-inn-hotels/
va423?hotel=va423

Red Lion Hotels 30

Chuck Carter
Spokane, WA
redlion.com

Royal Gorge Bridge and Park 33

Dona Basham
Canon City, CO
royalgorgebridge.com

Salem Cross Inn Restaurant 34

Heather Salem
West Brookfield, MA
salemcrossinn.com

**Salt Lake Plaza Hotel at
Temple Square 32**

Richard Williams
Salt Lake City, UT
plaza-hotel.com

**Sheraton New York Times
Square Hotel 30**

Valerie Dillon
New York, NY
sheraton.com/newyork

**Simon: Malls/
Premium Outlets/The Mills 31**

Nora Barboe
Indianapolis, IN
traveltrade.simon.com

Skylon Tower 32

Anita Pang Hrepic
Niagara Falls, ON
skylon.com

Smithsonian Dining 32

Karen Gardiner
Washington, DC
si.edu/groupsales

Triangle X Float Trips 31

James M. Hicks
Moose, WY
nationalparkfloattrips.com

VIA Rail Canada Inc. 30

Ryan Robutka
Vancouver, BC
viarail.ca

**Wyndham Hotel Group
USA 34**

Nancy Jepson
Parsippany, NJ
wyndhamworldwide.com

CORPORATE PARTNER**Aon Affinity Berkely Travel –
Professional Liability E&O 32**

Peter Maidhof
Garden City, NY
berkely.com



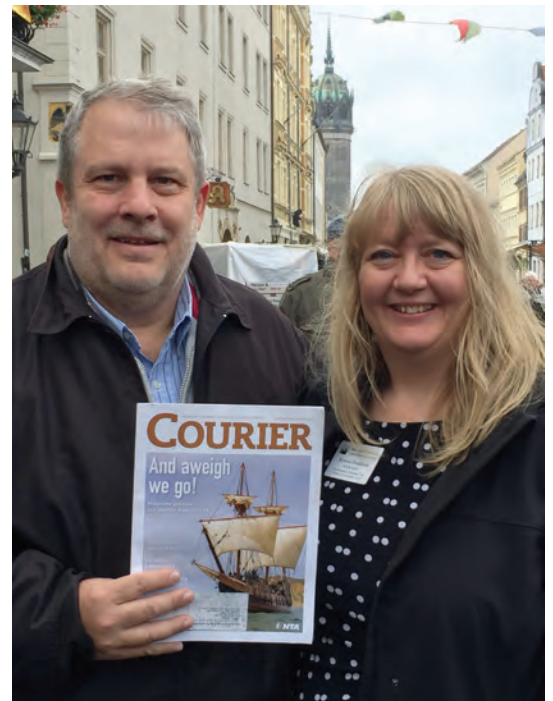
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COMMUNITY

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY



Where in the world is *Courier*? Clockwise from top left:

NTA Senior Vice President Catherine Prather shares a *Courier* with Patrick Kaler, president and CEO of Visit Buffalo Niagara.

Editor Bob Rouse casually mentioned his magazine to a group taking a progressive brunch tour in downtown Toronto.

NTA Board of Directors Secretary Paul Larsen (Ed-Ventures) and Rowena Drinkhouse (Reformation Tours) consulted a *Courier* in Wittenberg, Germany.

Sally Berry (Corning Museum of Glass), wearing sunglasses, organized a photo op for a group of NTA members and friends in Wuzhen, China, during a sales mission. Left to right: Estelle Miller (Hornblower Cruises), Jeanette Guire (Roaring Camp Railroads), Rose Hapanowich (Destiny USA), Liz Bittner (Travel South), Carolyn Petty (TaxFree Shopping), Brian Chuan (South Coast Plaza), Berry, Jeffrey Yau (Philadelphia CVB), Jun Watanabe (California Academy of Sciences) and Lisa Catron (Memphis CVB)

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Meet the Members

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Buffalo Bill Center of the West

CODY, WYOMING

NTA contact: Debra Elwood,
group tour coordinator

Office phone: +1.307.578.4114

Website: centerofthewest.org

NTA member since: 1982

What makes your attraction such a special place?

The Buffalo Bill Center of the West is the largest history, art and nature museum between Minneapolis and the West Coast, and it encompasses an area the size of five-and-a-quarter football fields. Our five museums (all under one roof for one admission price) boast thousands of priceless treasures related to the art, history, culture and natural science of the American West.

How does your attraction pay tribute to its namesake?

More than a hundred years ago, William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody was as captivated by the West and Yellowstone as visitors are today. Because of his days living and

working on the frontier—and his 30 years touring with the "Wild West" show—the name Buffalo Bill was synonymous with the West. Since 1917, the Buffalo Bill Center of the West has been dedicated to his mission of preserving the American West for all generations, a commitment that's reflected in our collections, programs and activities.

What are a couple of your more popular group programs?

Whether it's tasting chuckwagon fare, chatting with a curator, riding horses along the Shoshone River, learning how to rope, checking out our resident birds of prey or participating in a fun Treasures of the West Scavenger Hunt, there are plenty of great options for groups.

What is your favorite movie or TV program?



Debra Elwood (left) and her daughter Lindsay

My favorite show is "Longmire," a modern Western crime drama series. Based on the mystery novels by Craig Johnson, who lives in Ucross, Wyoming, the show centers on Walt Longmire, a sheriff in fictional Absaroka County, Wyoming. The final season is coming up, so to fill that void I am hoping for a Longmire movie!

For more information, contact Elwood at debrae@centerofthewest.org.

Jac Travel Ltd.

LONDON, ENGLAND

NTA contact: Gerry Lannigan,
senior sales manager

Office phone: +44.131.556.4500

Website: jactravel.co.uk

NTA member since: 2010

How long have you been in the travel industry?

26 years

Where are you based?

I'm located in the beautiful city of Edinburgh, Scotland. The city itself brought me here.

Tell me about some of the services your company provides.

We are one of the top three B2B wholesale, online hotel reservation systems worldwide. We provide full inbound DMC services to the U.K., Ireland and Europe, and we have FIT

touring programmers throughout the U.K. and Ireland. We have a MICE department with a staff of specialists and a sports department that can offer VIP packages to major events to go along with tickets. We also offer full pre- and post-cruise packages to all major European ports.

What are some of the growing travel trends you're seeing among groups?

I see smaller group numbers looking for unique touring programs. There's been a lot of recent interest in Eastern European touring, which is lovely to see.

What do you like to do when you're not hard at work?

I like to travel when I can, and I love to walk around Edinburgh and take in the beautiful and very old architecture. I am also a demon on "Words with Friends"!



What's your favorite vacation spot?

My cousin's villa in beautiful Javea, Spain. It's so very relaxing there.

For more information, contact Lannigan at gerry.lannigan@jactravel.com.

Ocean City MD CVB

OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND

NTA contact: Norma Dobrowolski, destination sales and marketing manager

Office phone: +1.410.289.2800

Website: ococean.com

NTA member since: 1979

What's new and exciting in Ocean City?

Our festivals continue to wow folks as does our new performing-arts center. We have had some great acts, and we hope to expand on that so planners can do trips to OC to see shows. Just near us is Salisbury, which is hosting the National Folk Art Festival for the next three years. We look forward to working with them on this unique event.

What are some of the must-see attractions in your area?

A new area attraction is the Harriet Tubman State and National Park Visitor Center, which is a short drive from

Ocean City near Blackwater Wildlife Refuge. It is a mecca of history and environmental learning, and a cultural treasure. It's so well done, it's free, and it's great for groups, family reunions, students ... just everyone. Also, our famous boardwalk, of course, and the iconic wild ponies of Assateague Island.

What destination is at the top of your travel bucket list?

I think Viking Cruises' long-boats in Europe would be a fabulous experience.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I have recently adopted two rescue horses whom I adore. It is a great feeling to help give these magnificent animals a



second chance at life and improve their conditions. I can see them on the way to work each day now, and I'm delighted I could bring them to the Ocean City area to retire and enjoy themselves.

For more information, contact Dobrowolski at ndobrowolski@ococean.com.

FIELDS TRIPS

KITCHENER, ONTARIO

NTA contact: Kelly Fields, owner

Office phone: +1.519.894.8687

Website: fieldstrips.ca

NTA member since: 2017

What led you to start your company?

After starting as a tour escort in the late 1980s during a college co-op, I worked for a few tour operators. Then, an excellent opportunity presented itself, and I purchased an existing tour operation in 2014 and rebranded it as FIELDS TRIPS.

Talk about your focus an agricultural tours.

With a name like FIELDS TRIPS, we are certainly in the same league as fellow agricultural tour operators. Our inbound ag tours differ from the outbound trips we offer due to the high level of technical visits that are included. With our ag tours we need to constantly strike a balance, though, between the technical visits and opportunities to see well-known tourist sites.

What are a couple of your most popular tours?

Farmers love a great rodeo, and we use it as a hook for tours, such as our "Texas & Oklahoma Loop," which highlights many ag sites in those states. Each July, the Calgary Stampede is a huge draw for those who want to see chuckwagon races and a world-class rodeo. The stampede, coupled with the Canadian Rockies as a backdrop, is a five-day staple.

What is your favorite vacation memory from growing up?

When I was 17, I got my skydiver's license—it was cheaper than a plane ticket and so much fun. The same year I convinced my parents and best friend to take a trip to Venezuela for March Break. This was the first time we'd flown, and while I'd taken off in a



handful of planes, landing in Caracas marked the first time I flew and *did not* jump out of the plane!

For more information, contact Fields at kfields@fieldstrips.ca.

Visit Clarksville
Frances Manzitto
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frances@visitclarksvilletn.com
visitclarksvilletn.com

From our picturesque and historic downtown to our rolling countryside, Clarksville welcomes you with open arms. Bringing your group to Clarksville means a trip full of Southern hospitality, unique attractions and shopping, great food and memories that will last a lifetime. Find out more at visitclarksvilletn.com.

COMMUNITY NEWS

NTA members are indicated in bold text. Do you have news you'd like to share with the NTA membership? Please send it to Gabe Webb, *Courier* writer, at gabe.webb@ntaservicesinc.com.



National Park Service reports record attendance for Glacier

Montana's Glacier National Park has welcomed 3.1 million visitors in 2017, setting an attendance record and breezing past its previous high of 2.9 million, according to the U.S. National Park Service. About 1 million visitors came during July.

Visitation to the West Entrance of the park was off 43 percent because of wildfires that closed portions of the Going-to-the-Sun Road. However, the entrances that are most accessible to visitors from Canada saw increases of more than 40 percent.

Vecchio named CEO of Sonoma County Tourism

Sonoma County Tourism announced Claudia Vecchio as its new CEO in late October, and she officially began with the organization Nov. 1. She replaced Ken Fischang, who stepped down in May.

Vecchio was previously director of the Nevada Tourism and Cultural Affairs Department, and has held multiple leadership positions in state tourism organizations. She was director of the Ohio Department of Development's Division of Travel and Tourism. She also worked as a senior vice president, overseeing tourism at Edelman PR in Chicago.

"Claudia has the energy and excitement to drive Sonoma County Tourism into record-breaking years," said Joe Bartolomei, board chair for Sonoma County Tourism. "Her forward-thinking approach, out-of-the-box ideas and passion for the county give us great confidence as we move forward and share the message that wine country is open for business and ready to deliver."

Visit Savannah, Golden Isles CVB receive industry honor

Visit Savannah, the Golden Isles CVB and Visit Tybee received the Bill Hardman Sr. Tourism Partnership Champion award at the Georgia Governor's Tourism Conference in November. The award is given to organizations that form an alliance to increase visitation to the state.

The three DMOs received the honor for working on a new welcome center along Interstate 95 that might serve as a future template for the state's visitors centers.

"We recognized that southbound travelers on I-95 are only in Georgia for about 116 miles, and we wanted to create an experience that will encourage people to visit Savannah, Tybee Island and the rest of the Georgia Coast," said Joseph Marinelli, president of Visit Savannah.

This is the second time Visit Savannah has received this award. It was also recognized in 2014.

Collette Cares celebrates 10 years of philanthropy

Tour operator Collette marked the 10th anniversary of Collette Cares—its philanthropic arm focused on hunger, education and volunteer programs—in October.

Collette Cares searches for charitable programs to partner with in the regions that the company's guests visit. It also organizes local volunteering experiences for Collette employees. Last year, the company's workers contributed 5,000 service hours through 1,400 individual volunteer engagements. It has partnered with programs in Ecuador, South Africa and Australia.

"Collette's employees are travelers who have given so much to the

world over the past ten years," said John Sutherland, manager of corporate social responsibility. "We're excited to share the work that we've accomplished with the hopes that our guests' continued support will enable us to reach the next goal."

Porthole magazine readers praise Holland America Line

Holland America Line won multiple honors in the annual Porthole Cruise Magazine's Readers Choice Awards. The cruise company was selected for eight awards that highlighted its itineraries, destinations and accessible facilities.

"As Holland America Line continues our journey of brand evolution and innovation, it is an incredible honor to be recognized by the readers of Porthole, who are the most discerning and well-experienced cruisers in the world," said Orlando Ashford, president of Holland America Line. "We're working hard to make sure that we excel in all areas of the cruise experience, and these recognitions tell us we're on the right path."

"Every year Holland America Line impresses our readers in a variety of categories, and by the number of awards, it's clear that the cruise line delivers and all-around fantastic experience," said Bill Panoff, publisher and editor-in-chief of the magazine.

UNESCO designates San Antonio a Creative City of Gastronomy

UNESCO added San Antonio to its Creative Cities network, highlighting the area's culinary history at the confluence of Mexican, Spanish, German and French cultures. It is the second city in the U.S. to receive the UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy designation.

"Travelers are increasingly seeking a destination with a robust culinary scene as a way to really get to know the heart of a city," said Casandra Matej, president and CEO of Visit San Antonio. "The UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy designation confirms what millions of visitors have known all along: San Antonio's cuisine is truly unique and authentic to our region." 🍷

The Battery, Charleston Harbor

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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

Dominican Republic Tourism Board

Raquel Ramirez
Winter Garden, FL 34787 USA
godominicanrepublic.com

Kilgore Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Bureau

Ryan Polk
Kilgore, TX 75662 USA
visitkilgore.com

Mackinac Island Convention and Visitors Bureau

Rick Peterson
Mackinac Island, MI 49757 USA
mackinacisland.org

Tourism Kamloops

Lisa Strachan
Kamloops, BC V2C 6R3 CANADA
tourismkamloops.com

TOUR OPERATORS

Malone Clan Expeditions LLC

Mike Malone
Jackson, MO 63755 USA
invitationtoconversation.org



Riviera River Cruises

Jana Tvedt
Fairfield, CT 06825 USA
rivieratours.com

VBR Tours LLC

Todd Powell
Chicago, IL 60606 USA
vacationsbyrail.com

Z Travel International Inc.

Mengmeng Zhou
New York, NY 11354 USA

TOUR SUPPLIERS

American Quilter's Society

Bonnie Browning
Paducah, KY 42002 USA
americanquilter.com

Boston Attractions Group

Bob Schwartz
Boston, MA 02116 USA
bostonattractionsgroup.com

City Segway Tours & Fat Tire Tours

John Voci
Austin, TX 78746 USA
citysegwaytours.com

The Cowboy Way Ranch

Kathy Tollefson
Ft. Laramie, WY 82212 USA
fortlaramiebedandbreakfast.com

Dolphin Beach Resort & Conference Center

Linda Rideout
St. Pete Beach, FL 33706 USA
dolphinbeach.com

Embassy Suites Seattle Downtown Pioneer Square

Wendy LeBlanc
Seattle, WA 98104 USA
seattledowntownpioneersquare.embassy-suitesbyhilton.com

Gray Line Tours of San Antonio & Austin

Anthony Perez
San Antonio, TX 78216 USA
graylinesa.com

Hampton Inn Brooklyn Downtown

Kaytlyn Powers
New York, NY 11201 USA
brooklyndowntown.hamptoninn.com

Hyatt Hotels Corporation

Cory Carlson
Omaha, NE 68135 USA
hyatt.com

Mariposa Cruises

Courtney Mayer
Toronto, ON M5J 1A7 Canada
mariposacruises.com

National Law Enforcement Memorial & Museum

Phillip Jaeger
Washington, DC 20004 USA
nleomf.org

Old Glory Distilling Co.

Matt Cunningham
Clarksville, TN 37040 USA
oldglorydistilling.com

Prestige Hotels & Resorts

Danielle Lister
Kelowna, BC V1Y 1A9 Canada
prestigehotelsandresorts.com

Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center – Billings

Jase Murri
Billings, MT 59101 USA
redlion.com/billings

Washington Nationals Baseball Club

Katie Suntum
Washington, DC 20003 USA
nationals.com

Water's Edge Resort at Bear Lake

Debbie Batt
Garden City, UT 84028 USA
thebearlakeresort.com

Your Broadway Genius

Chris Hillner
New York, NY 10036 USA
broadwaygeniusgroups.com

TRAVEL PLANNER

Travel Wallah

Maria Shepherd
Winchester, MA 01890 USA
travelwallah.org

ASSOCIATES

Travel Insured International

Sue Barbanel
Glastonbury, CT 06033 USA
travelinsured.com

Citcon

Evelyn Yang
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citcon-inc.com

Travel Composer

Yenedi Perez
Coral Gables, FL 33134 USA
travelcomposer.com

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c. Total Paid Distribution (Sum of b1, b2, b3, b4, b5, b6, b7, b8, b9, b10, b11, b12, b13, b14, b15, b16, b17, b18, b19, b20, b21, b22, b23, b24, b25, b26, b27, b28, b29, b30, b31, b32, b33, b34, b35, b36, b37, b38, b39, b40, b41, b42, b43, b44, b45, b46, b47, b48, b49, b50, b51, b52, b53, b54, b55, b56, b57, b58, b59, b60, b61, b62, b63, b64, b65, b66, b67, b68, b69, b70, b71, b72, b73, b74, b75, b76, b77, b78, b79, b80, b81, b82, b83, b84, b85, b86, b87, b88, b89, b90, b91, b92, b93, b94, b95, b96, b97, b98, b99, b100)	1,290	1,124
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e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of d1, d2, d3, d4, d5, d6, d7, d8, d9, d10, d11, d12, d13, d14, d15, d16, d17, d18, d19, d20, d21, d22, d23, d24, d25, d26, d27, d28, d29, d30, d31, d32, d33, d34, d35, d36, d37, d38, d39, d40, d41, d42, d43, d44, d45, d46, d47, d48, d49, d50, d51, d52, d53, d54, d55, d56, d57, d58, d59, d60, d61, d62, d63, d64, d65, d66, d67, d68, d69, d70, d71, d72, d73, d74, d75, d76, d77, d78, d79, d80, d81, d82, d83, d84, d85, d86, d87, d88, d89, d90, d91, d92, d93, d94, d95, d96, d97, d98, d99, d100)	3,520	3,727
f. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of e1, e2, e3, e4, e5, e6, e7, e8, e9, e10, e11, e12, e13, e14, e15, e16, e17, e18, e19, e20, e21, e22, e23, e24, e25, e26, e27, e28, e29, e30, e31, e32, e33, e34, e35, e36, e37, e38, e39, e40, e41, e42, e43, e44, e45, e46, e47, e48, e49, e50, e51, e52, e53, e54, e55, e56, e57, e58, e59, e60, e61, e62, e63, e64, e65, e66, e67, e68, e69, e70, e71, e72, e73, e74, e75, e76, e77, e78, e79, e80, e81, e82, e83, e84, e85, e86, e87, e88, e89, e90, e91, e92, e93, e94, e95, e96, e97, e98, e99, e100)	3,520	3,727
g. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of f1, f2, f3, f4, f5, f6, f7, f8, f9, f10, f11, f12, f13, f14, f15, f16, f17, f18, f19, f20, f21, f22, f23, f24, f25, f26, f27, f28, f29, f30, f31, f32, f33, f34, f35, f36, f37, f38, f39, f40, f41, f42, f43, f44, f45, f46, f47, f48, f49, f50, f51, f52, f53, f54, f55, f56, f57, f58, f59, f60, f61, f62, f63, f64, f65, f66, f67, f68, f69, f70, f71, f72, f73, f74, f75, f76, f77, f78, f79, f80, f81, f82, f83, f84, f85, f86, f87, f88, f89, f90, f91, f92, f93, f94, f95, f96, f97, f98, f99, f100)	3,520	3,727
h. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of g1, g2, g3, g4, g5, g6, g7, g8, g9, g10, g11, g12, g13, g14, g15, g16, g17, g18, g19, g20, g21, g22, g23, g24, g25, g26, g27, g28, g29, g30, g31, g32, g33, g34, g35, g36, g37, g38, g39, g40, g41, g42, g43, g44, g45, g46, g47, g48, g49, g50, g51, g52, g53, g54, g55, g56, g57, g58, g59, g60, g61, g62, g63, g64, g65, g66, g67, g68, g69, g70, g71, g72, g73, g74, g75, g76, g77, g78, g79, g80, g81, g82, g83, g84, g85, g86, g87, g88, g89, g90, g91, g92, g93, g94, g95, g96, g97, g98, g99, g100)	3,520	3,727
i. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of h1, h2, h3, h4, h5, h6, h7, h8, h9, h10, h11, h12, h13, h14, h15, h16, h17, h18, h19, h20, h21, h22, h23, h24, h25, h26, h27, h28, h29, h30, h31, h32, h33, h34, h35, h36, h37, h38, h39, h40, h41, h42, h43, h44, h45, h46, h47, h48, h49, h50, h51, h52, h53, h54, h55, h56, h57, h58, h59, h60, h61, h62, h63, h64, h65, h66, h67, h68, h69, h70, h71, h72, h73, h74, h75, h76, h77, h78, h79, h80, h81, h82, h83, h84, h85, h86, h87, h88, h89, h90, h91, h92, h93, h94, h95, h96, h97, h98, h99, h100)	3,520	3,727
j. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of i1, i2, i3, i4, i5, i6, i7, i8, i9, i10, i11, i12, i13, i14, i15, i16, i17, i18, i19, i20, i21, i22, i23, i24, i25, i26, i27, i28, i29, i30, i31, i32, i33, i34, i35, i36, i37, i38, i39, i40, i41, i42, i43, i44, i45, i46, i47, i48, i49, i50, i51, i52, i53, i54, i55, i56, i57, i58, i59, i60, i61, i62, i63, i64, i65, i66, i67, i68, i69, i70, i71, i72, i73, i74, i75, i76, i77, i78, i79, i80, i81, i82, i83, i84, i85, i86, i87, i88, i89, i90, i91, i92, i93, i94, i95, i96, i97, i98, i99, i100)	3,520	3,727
k. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of j1, j2, j3, j4, j5, j6, j7, j8, j9, j10, j11, j12, j13, j14, j15, j16, j17, j18, j19, j20, j21, j22, j23, j24, j25, j26, j27, j28, j29, j30, j31, j32, j33, j34, j35, j36, j37, j38, j39, j40, j41, j42, j43, j44, j45, j46, j47, j48, j49, j50, j51, j52, j53, j54, j55, j56, j57, j58, j59, j60, j61, j62, j63, j64, j65, j66, j67, j68, j69, j70, j71, j72, j73, j74, j75, j76, j77, j78, j79, j80, j81, j82, j83, j84, j85, j86, j87, j88, j89, j90, j91, j92, j93, j94, j95, j96, j97, j98, j99, j100)	3,520	3,727
l. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of k1, k2, k3, k4, k5, k6, k7, k8, k9, k10, k11, k12, k13, k14, k15, k16, k17, k18, k19, k20, k21, k22, k23, k24, k25, k26, k27, k28, k29, k30, k31, k32, k33, k34, k35, k36, k37, k38, k39, k40, k41, k42, k43, k44, k45, k46, k47, k48, k49, k50, k51, k52, k53, k54, k55, k56, k57, k58, k59, k60, k61, k62, k63, k64, k65, k66, k67, k68, k69, k70, k71, k72, k73, k74, k75, k76, k77, k78, k79, k80, k81, k82, k83, k84, k85, k86, k87, k88, k89, k90, k91, k92, k93, k94, k95, k96, k97, k98, k99, k100)	3,520	3,727
m. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of l1, l2, l3, l4, l5, l6, l7, l8, l9, l10, l11, l12, l13, l14, l15, l16, l17, l18, l19, l20, l21, l22, l23, l24, l25, l26, l27, l28, l29, l30, l31, l32, l33, l34, l35, l36, l37, l38, l39, l40, l41, l42, l43, l44, l45, l46, l47, l48, l49, l50, l51, l52, l53, l54, l55, l56, l57, l58, l59, l60, l61, l62, l63, l64, l65, l66, l67, l68, l69, l70, l71, l72, l73, l74, l75, l76, l77, l78, l79, l80, l81, l82, l83, l84, l85, l86, l87, l88, l89, l90, l91, l92, l93, l94, l95, l96, l97, l98, l99, l100)	3,520	3,727
n. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of m1, m2, m3, m4, m5, m6, m7, m8, m9, m10, m11, m12, m13, m14, m15, m16, m17, m18, m19, m20, m21, m22, m23, m24, m25, m26, m27, m28, m29, m30, m31, m32, m33, m34, m35, m36, m37, m38, m39, m40, m41, m42, m43, m44, m45, m46, m47, m48, m49, m50, m51, m52, m53, m54, m55, m56, m57, m58, m59, m60, m61, m62, m63, m64, m65, m66, m67, m68, m69, m70, m71, m72, m73, m74, m75, m76, m77, m78, m79, m80, m81, m82, m83, m84, m85, m86, m87, m88, m89, m90, m91, m92, m93, m94, m95, m96, m97, m98, m99, m100)	3,520	3,727
o. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of n1, n2, n3, n4, n5, n6, n7, n8, n9, n10, n11, n12, n13, n14, n15, n16, n17, n18, n19, n20, n21, n22, n23, n24, n25, n26, n27, n28, n29, n30, n31, n32, n33, n34, n35, n36, n37, n38, n39, n40, n41, n42, n43, n44, n45, n46, n47, n48, n49, n50, n51, n52, n53, n54, n55, n56, n57, n58, n59, n60, n61, n62, n63, n64, n65, n66, n67, n68, n69, n70, n71, n72, n73, n74, n75, n76, n77, n78, n79, n80, n81, n82, n83, n84, n85, n86, n87, n88, n89, n90, n91, n92, n93, n94, n95, n96, n97, n98, n99, n100)	3,520	3,727
p. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of o1, o2, o3, o4, o5, o6, o7, o8, o9, o10, o11, o12, o13, o14, o15, o16, o17, o18, o19, o20, o21, o22, o23, o24, o25, o26, o27, o28, o29, o30, o31, o32, o33, o34, o35, o36, o37, o38, o39, o40, o41, o42, o43, o44, o45, o46, o47, o48, o49, o50, o51, o52, o53, o54, o55, o56, o57, o58, o59, o60, o61, o62, o63, o64, o65, o66, o67, o68, o69, o70, o71, o72, o73, o74, o75, o76, o77, o78, o79, o80, o81, o82, o83, o84, o85, o86, o87, o88, o89, o90, o91, o92, o93, o94, o95, o96, o97, o98, o99, o100)	3,520	3,727
q. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of p1, p2, p3, p4, p5, p6, p7, p8, p9, p10, p11, p12, p13, p14, p15, p16, p17, p18, p19, p20, p21, p22, p23, p24, p25, p26, p27, p28, p29, p30, p31, p32, p33, p34, p35, p36, p37, p38, p39, p40, p41, p42, p43, p44, p45, p46, p47, p48, p49, p50, p51, p52, p53, p54, p55, p56, p57, p58, p59, p60, p61, p62, p63, p64, p65, p66, p67, p68, p69, p70, p71, p72, p73, p74, p75, p76, p77, p78, p79, p80, p81, p82, p83, p84, p85, p86, p87, p88, p89, p90, p91, p92, p93, p94, p95, p96, p97, p98, p99, p100)	3,520	3,727
r. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of q1, q2, q3, q4, q5, q6, q7, q8, q9, q10, q11, q12, q13, q14, q15, q16, q17, q18, q19, q20, q21, q22, q23, q24, q25, q26, q27, q28, q29, q30, q31, q32, q33, q34, q35, q36, q37, q38, q39, q40, q41, q42, q43, q44, q45, q46, q47, q48, q49, q50, q51, q52, q53, q54, q55, q56, q57, q58, q59, q60, q61, q62, q63, q64, q65, q66, q67, q68, q69, q70, q71, q72, q73, q74, q75, q76, q77, q78, q79, q80, q81, q82, q83, q84, q85, q86, q87, q88, q89, q90, q91, q92, q93, q94, q95, q96, q97, q98, q99, q100)	3,520	3,727
s. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of r1, r2, r3, r4, r5, r6, r7, r8, r9, r10, r11, r12, r13, r14, r15, r16, r17, r18, r19, r20, r21, r22, r23, r24, r25, r26, r27, r28, r29, r30, r31, r32, r33, r34, r35, r36, r37, r38, r39, r40, r41, r42, r43, r44, r45, r46, r47, r48, r49, r50, r51, r52, r53, r54, r55, r56, r57, r58, r59, r60, r61, r62, r63, r64, r65, r66, r67, r68, r69, r70, r71, r72, r73, r74, r75, r76, r77, r78, r79, r80, r81, r82, r83, r84, r85, r86, r87, r88, r89, r90, r91, r92, r93, r94, r95, r96, r97, r98, r99, r100)	3,520	3,727
t. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of s1, s2, s3, s4, s5, s6, s7, s8, s9, s10, s11, s12, s13, s14, s15, s16, s17, s18, s19, s20, s21, s22, s23, s24, s25, s26, s27, s28, s29, s30, s31, s32, s33, s34, s35, s36, s37, s38, s39, s40, s41, s42, s43, s44, s45, s46, s47, s48, s49, s50, s51, s52, s53, s54, s55, s56, s57, s58, s59, s60, s61, s62, s63, s64, s65, s66, s67, s68, s69, s70, s71, s72, s73, s74, s75, s76, s77, s78, s79, s80, s81, s82, s83, s84, s85, s86, s87, s88, s89, s90, s91, s92, s93, s94, s95, s96, s97, s98, s99, s100)	3,520	3,727
u. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution (Sum of t1, t2, t3, t4, t5, t6, t7, t8, t9, t10, t11, t12, t13, t14, t15, t16, t17, t18, t19, t20, t21, t22, t23, t24, t25, t26, t27, t28, t29, t30, t31, t32, t33, t34, t35, t36, t37, t38, t39, t40, t41, t42, t43, t44, t45, t46, t47, t48, t49, t50, t51, t52, t53, t54, t55, t56, t57, t58, t59, t60, t61, t62, t63, t64, t65, t66, t67, t68, t69, t70, t71, t72, t73, t74, t75, t76, t77, t78, t79, t80, t81, t82, t83, t84, t85, t86,		

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After Katrina: Honesty and commitment

BY KRISTIAN SONNIER



LIKE MANY New Orleanians, I have a Katrina story.

As the hurricane neared New Orleans in August of 2005, I planned on staying. I didn't take it seriously. I didn't leave

town until the night before landfall, and I only went as far as Baton Rouge because my mom begged me to. Before I left, I packed a backpack with a change of shorts, two t-shirts and a toothbrush. In a couple of weeks, I would learn that those were among the only things I would keep from my little house in Broadmoor, the neighborhood in which I'd bought my first New Orleans home.

I learned many inconvenient truths in the aftermath of Katrina, and the first was that Broadmoor was the area where uptowners fished in the late 1800s. That was obvious when I returned and paddled a canoe down Napoleon Avenue to find water still standing in my house. Everything inside was in shambles. My house took in seven feet of water and soaked for more than two weeks. It's amazing what standing water can do to a home.

Opening that door is something I'll never forget. I had to hack it open with an axe because it was swollen shut. I wasn't ready for what I found inside. Everything I'd accumulated was worthless or gone; I'd been foolish to think that any of that stuff, including my house, was mine to keep. In the days that followed, I took stock and realized what was truly essential and what I could live without. There is a big difference. I also realized how adaptable we all were to such hardships.

In time I realized that I was pretty lucky. I survived, most of my friends survived and I still had a job. At the time, I worked for Peter A. Mayer Advertising, and among many other accounts, we represented the Louisiana Office of Tourism. We had work to do ... lots of work.

For months following Katrina, we saw terrible images of our devastated city.



An iconic streetcar like this one was taken around the U.S. by the New Orleans CVB to highlight the city's recovery from Hurricane Katrina.

One of our most iconic buildings, the Mercedes-Benz Superdome, became a symbol of despair and destruction. The world was watching us closely when we were at our worst. For a long time, the headlines were dreadful, and there was very little good news.

During the months following the storm, people decided to stay or go—and deciding to stay was the harder path. New Orleans' future was uncertain, and remaining there was a risky bet. Those who gambled on New Orleans worked extremely hard to ensure that the bet would pay off.

At first, we were not sure how to overcome the unprecedented challenges that lay before us. There was nobody on earth who had experience with rebuilding a city in this condition, and the scale of it was overwhelming.

In early 2007, the New Orleans CVB launched the Forever New Orleans campaign. We had to be honest about our condition: It was improving but it wasn't back 100 percent. We were operating in uncharted territory, and the world understood that. But we knew we had to quickly repair our tourism product, or the city's economy—and its recovery—would falter.

We had to convince visitors that our city was healthy enough to host them and show them that the core of New Orleans was intact. The people of New Orleans were still here and working harder than ever before to reclaim our

reputation as a world-class destination—even as many of us were also trying to rebuild our homes and personal lives. We simply invited people to come and be a part of rebuilding our city alongside us.

In addition to our paid advertising campaign, the CVB launched an aggressive public relations campaign aimed at restoring the image of New Orleans as a premiere leisure and convention destination. We did some interesting PR work in key markets. We commissioned an iconic New Orleans streetcar and took it around the country to use as a stage from which to tell about our comeback, drawing media attention everywhere we went.

We simultaneously did a lot of inbound PR, inviting journalists from around the world to come and see for themselves how New Orleans was doing, resulting in positive media coverage.

We are now 12 years beyond those hectic days, and in many ways, the city is better than it was in 2005. It took some time to find the right message after the destruction, but the message we found was universally understood.

It was a message of honesty about our condition, and we backed it up with an indefatigable commitment to staying, rebuilding and being hospitable to anyone who wanted to come and help us. 🍷

Kristian Sonnier is the vice president of communications and public relations of the New Orleans CVB.



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