

# COURIER

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

JANUARY 2018

## Charleston in charge

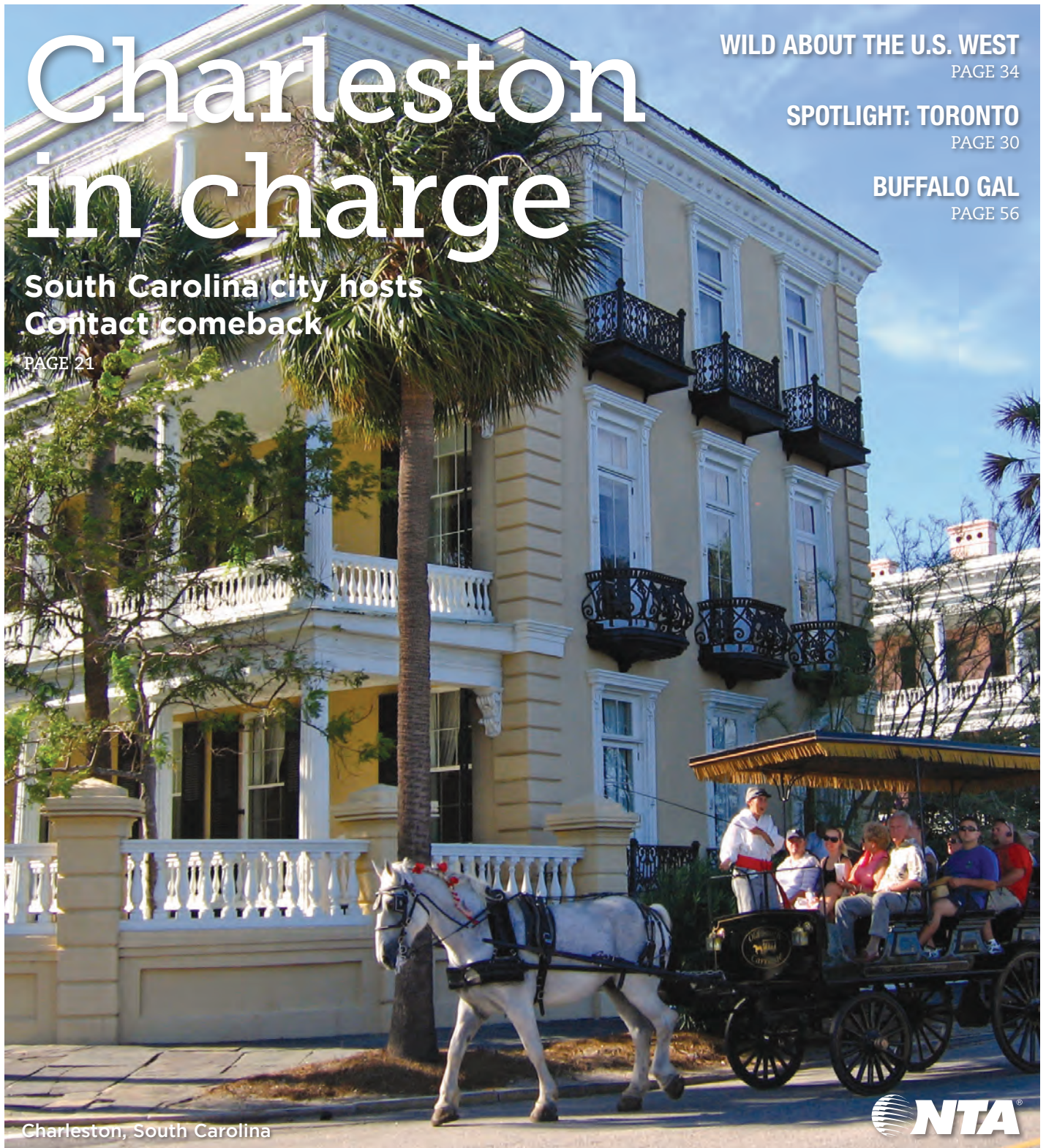
South Carolina city hosts  
Contact comeback

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Charleston, South Carolina





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**See sea lion, feed sea lion:** The Oregon Coast Aquarium in Newport offers a range of animal encounter programs and behind-the-scenes tours that feature its more than 5,000 animals. To read more about the aquarium's programs, as well as other tour offerings in the U.S. West, see page 34.

## Features



### Lowcountry, high returns

Following a year of two NTA conventions, Contact makes its return in Charleston, April 18-21.



### Odds-on favorites

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### Toronto: Different and diverse

Editor Bob Rouse spotlights the Canadian city that features a variety of attractions, experiences, cultures—and pizza—that made him forget the reason he went there.

## Compass

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### ► MARCH ISSUE

#### DESTINATIONS

Four Corners U.S.

Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah

Ontario, Québec and Niagara Falls

Canada and U.S.

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

### ► APRIL/MAY ISSUE

#### DESTINATIONS

Midwest U.S.

Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

West South Central U.S.

Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas

Latin America

South Pacific

Australia, Guam, Hawaii

City Spotlight: Atlantic City

#### SPECIAL COVERAGE

Faith-based Travel

Culinary Tourism

#### DEADLINES

Space: Feb. 2 | Material: Feb. 12

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ON BEHALF of humans everywhere, I welcome you to 2018.

Wouldn't you know, I made a resolution to be less flippant in the new year ... and it's not going well.

I do understand the appeal of New Year's resolutions: Putting a promise into words can stiffen your resolve to see it through.

I prefer to back into resolutions, and I'll give you an example: I published a collection of short stories in 2017, just in time for Christmas. (They were, as it turned out, Christmas stories.) A reporter from my local weekly newspaper asked why I did it, and I told him I was determined to publish a book before I reached the age of 60, and boy, am I cutting it close.

I'm not sure why I said that. I can blame it on inexperience with being interviewed, or with being published ... or with staring into the eyes of, um, that age.

(And in case you're wondering, the book ranks on Amazon's Best Sellers list! Granted, it's No. 547,298—literally—but that's not the point.)

All this is to say that as *Courier* enters its 45th year (a mere babe), we're developing a plan to make the magazine more accessible and responsive. This isn't a resolution, mind you; it's just a plan. I'll let you know later what our resolution was. 😊

I can promise, though, you'll be satisfied with this first issue of the year.

Coming off a 2017 with two conventions and no Contact, NTA is rolling out a revitalized retreat for tour operators and

sponsors: Now held in the spring, Contact will feature more mixers, a double dose of dine-arounds and experiential education. (Note: We do not charge extra for alliteration.) See Gabe Webb's preview, starting on page 21.

This month's City Spotlight turns to Toronto, which I explored for a few days following a Tourism Cares volunteer project. My Canadian episode starts on page 30. (psst ... there's pizza.)

Our Compass points include the western U.S. states; Pat Henderson gives us a nice, long look that begins on page 34. Kendall Fletcher makes a few nautical connections with Ireland and the U.K. (pages 43 and 44), and Gabe updates tour product in Belgium, France and the Netherlands. And don't miss his personal note on page 46.

Two more of my NTA HQ colleagues contributed to this issue. Catherine Prather represented the association on a high-level industry summit/Fam trip in Buffalo, New York, and her reflections in *AfterWords* (page 56) should inspire other DMOs to cook up similar events. And Mary Catherine Dorsett added to the City Spotlight feature on page 32.

I could go on and on about additional highlights in the January *Courier*, but it's better that you start turning pages. Also, I'm trying to not ramble so much this year.

It's like a resolution. But I'll finalize it later.

Read on,

## January *Courier* Destination Index

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### On the cover:

You can feel at home among Charleston's historical houses on a carriage tour of the city during NTA's Contact. Turn to page 21 to learn more about the event.

*Photo: Courtesy of Explore Charleston*





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**Pam Inman**

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AS A CHILD, I was very rambunctious and always wanted to be in the middle of everything. (Some of you might not find that very surprising.) Long before FOMO entered our language, I had a fear of missing out; I didn't want to miss anything or be left behind. When the adults thought I was in bed, I was secretly listening to every word they said. I can still hear my mother saying over and over again: "You should be minding your own business."

Life comes full circle sometimes. It's only appropriate that, when deciding on a research firm to improve the value of Travel Exchange, your board of directors hired a company called Minding Your Business.

Chicago-based MYB, led by John Folks, has a very successful history of updating and reshaping conventions and trade shows. Sue Tinnish of MYB attended Travel Exchange, both to experience our convention and to talk with members, so you might have already shared your ideas and opinions with her.

And soon, everyone will have that chance. Members, select nonmembers, loyal Travel Exchange attendees, never-attendees and every other category you can think of will receive a survey from MYB. The NTA members I know have never been reticent about expressing opinions ... so don't hold back now!

You probably know that NTA revolutionized appointment-based shows in the travel industry by developing the software for a matching program that was widely copied by other groups. It's time that we innovate again.

With the help of MYB, we will look to the future and determine how to best help you and other members gain more business and make more rewarding connections. You don't do business the same way you did 30 years ago, and your association should be no different.

As we enter 2018, your board and staff pledge to find ways to help you improve your business and establish reliable relationships within the industry.

Together, we go further, so here's to a healthy and successful new year ... for all of us.

Happy New Year!

## Who's Minding Your Business?

Minding Your Business is a research agency that specializes in assessing and improving association events. NTA is partnering with MYB to examine every aspect of Travel Exchange and to invigorate the convention so that it delivers even more value. Here are the steps in the MYB process:



Steps 1, 2 and 3 are behind us, and after the survey is collected and analyzed, MYB will, near the end of the first quarter, present its recommendations to the NTA board.



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COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

## Jan. 31 is deadline to renew your NTA membership

Get your new year started off right by keeping your member benefits intact. By renewing before the Jan. 31 deadline, you can stay connected to the NTA community throughout 2018 with no lapse in your membership. Among your member benefits are:

- Online access to a database of trusted partners
- Travel Exchange, Contact, Meet-ups and other association events
- Discounts on Corporate Partner products and services
- Education and research to keep you on top of your game
- Informative publications, including *Courier* magazine, the *NTA Trip Planners* and the *Tuesday* e-newsletter
- Inclusion in printed and online member directories
- Opportunity to serve on a leadership advisory group

To learn more about how to use your membership to its fullest, flip to page 16, or contact Todd Probus, NTA's member solutions manager, at [todd.probus@ntastaff.com](mailto:todd.probus@ntastaff.com) or call +1.859.264.6578.

### How do I submit my dues?

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## 2018 is the Canada-China Year of Tourism

This month marks the beginning of the Canada-China Year of Tourism, which will highlight travel and commerce, as well as the cultural bonds the countries share.

"Canada and China are united by strong people-to-people ties and a long history of cooperation," says the Hon. Bardish Chagger, minister of small business and tourism, and the leader of the government in Canada's House of Commons. "The Canada-China Year of Tourism will offer a unique opportunity to share our respective rich cultures, amazing attractions and unforgettable experiences."

A number of events and special programs that showcase Canadian and Chinese culture will be held throughout the year in both countries. China will host the opening ceremonies this spring, and Canada will host the closing ceremonies in the autumn.



2018  
YEAR OF TOURISM  
L'ANNÉE DU TOURISME  
中加旅游年

### NTA ready to help Canadian members

NTA has been working with U.S. and China governmental and tourism officials since the association was chosen by both countries' governments to develop a China Inbound Program in 2007. Through the program, the association has gained expertise in helping U.S. destinations reach the booming China market.

As Canadian members focus their efforts on welcoming Chinese travelers during the Year of Tourism—and beyond—NTA stands ready to help. Here are some of the types of assistance your association can provide:

- "China-ready" workshops and tool kits
- Seminars at NTA events
- Trade show promotion
- One-stop translation services
- Special events and Fam tours

NTA also has corporate and associate partners who offer additional services related to the China market. To learn more, contact NTA's Director of China Market Services Lin Wang at [lin.wang@ntastaff.com](mailto:lin.wang@ntastaff.com) or go to [ntaonline.com/chinainbound](http://ntaonline.com/chinainbound).

## Partners you can count on

NTA's Corporate Partner program has one specific purpose: to save you money on the business-related expenses you need most. NTA has alliances with many companies—AFEX, Aon, Avis-Budget, Centaur, Chase, Global Rescue, Luggage Forward, The Momentum Group, Naylor Association Solutions, Rezgo, Staples, TourConnect, UATP and UPS—that offer you a range of products and services. To learn more about the specific ways these trusted partners can help your organization, contact NTA's Morgan Maravich at [morgan.maravich@ntastaff.com](mailto:morgan.maravich@ntastaff.com) or go to [ntaonline.com/partners](http://ntaonline.com/partners). ☎

# RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS

**signal**  
— GROUP

## Travel to Cuba has changed

ON JUNE 16, 2017, U.S. President Donald Trump released his National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba. This executive order directed the secretaries of Treasury and Commerce, working in coordination with the secretaries of State and Transportation, to adjust regulations and end economic practices that disproportionately benefit the Cuban government and its military. With this memorandum, the president also sought to ensure adherence to the statutory ban on tourism to Cuba, among other policy goals.

Following months of planning, the departments of Treasury, Commerce and State announced in November the implementation of changes to the Cuba trade and travel sanctions. The Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control and the Commerce Department's Bureau of Industry and Security crafted these changes, which took effect on Nov. 9.

For the travel and tourism industry, the most relevant changes to Cuba regulations focus on where Americans can spend money—or with whom they do business while in Cuba—and on the manner in which Americans can travel to the country.

Regarding financial transactions with Cuban businesses, the State Department has published a list of businesses and agencies controlled by the Cuban military, intelligence or security services. Americans are now prohibited from engaging in direct financial transactions with the entities on this list, many of which are hotels, tourist agencies, marinas and shops, along with other Cuban businesses.

The Cuba Restricted List, which will be periodically updated when necessary,

can be viewed on the State Department's website (see box). Commercial engagements or contracts with these newly prohibited entities that were signed prior to the administration's regulatory changes will still be authorized.



United States citizens visiting Cuba will need to comply with new rules for people-to-people travel.

As for travel to Cuba, individual people-to-people nonacademic travel will no longer be authorized under these new regulations. OFAC now requires that all travel in that category be guided by an organization subject to U.S. jurisdiction, such as a tour operator, and that travelers must be accompanied by a representative of the organization. Educational travel must also occur through an organization subject to U.S. jurisdiction, and those groups, too, must be accompanied by an organization's representative.

OFAC added a "grandfathering" provision for tourists who had already booked people-to-people travel. Their trips will still be authorized if they had already completed at least one travel-related transaction, such as purchasing a flight or reserving a hotel room, prior to June 16, 2017.

While the tightening of travel and trade restrictions with Cuba has created some confusion for the tourism community, the administration has set some limitations that travel professionals will be able to work with. Americans

are still able to travel to Cuba through groups or operators licensed by the Treasury Department for that purpose. These changes create some level of certainty for travelers and tour operators alike.

While NTA will continue to lobby Congress and the administration for more open travel between the United States and Cuba, the industry will be able to continue providing service to Cuba within these new parameters. As tour companies shift their business to align with these regulatory changes, NTA looks forward to continuing engagement on this issue. ☎

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

### For more information

Follow the abbreviated web addresses for additional details:

- The full text of the National Security Presidential Memorandum on Strengthening the Policy of the United States Toward Cuba: [bit.ly/2zEDONO](https://bit.ly/2zEDONO)
- The State Department's list of restricted entities and subsidiaries associated with Cuba: [bit.ly/2zGdDhZ](https://bit.ly/2zGdDhZ)
- Frequently asked questions about the list: [bit.ly/2Au7Uw0](https://bit.ly/2Au7Uw0)
- Fact sheet: [bit.ly/2iE39VA](https://bit.ly/2iE39VA)



# A united voice

NTA forms coalition that responds to rising fees at U.S. national parks.

ON OCT. 24, the U.S. National Park Service proposed to increase fee schedules, mandate commercial use authorization permits and establish seasonal peak pricing on commercial tour operator entry fees at 17 of America's most visited national parks. Its goal is to address the nearly \$12 billion in maintenance projects that have been delayed due to budget constraints.

These adjustments to entry and permit fees—including CUA application and management fees—will have a serious impact on the many NTA tour companies that package the parks and on area concessionaires.

NTA President Pam Inman immediately contacted NPS officials to express concerns. And to amplify NTA's voice, Inman organized a coalition of industry associations, which collaborated on a Nov. 13 letter to Secretary of the Interior Ryan Zinke. Here are excerpts from that letter:

The travel and tourism industry, which includes a range of organizations that represent the business interests of commercial tour operators and motor-coach travel, is concerned about the U.S. National Park Service's recent proposal to increase fee schedules, mandate commercial use authorization permits and establish seasonal peak pricing on commercial entry fees at 17 national parks.

We recognize the need to maintain and improve America's national parks. However, we believe the NPS goals can

be achieved through more thoughtful measures that will not jeopardize the role the travel and tourism industry plays in promoting the enjoyment of our national parks and creating jobs. We want to work with your department to enhance the experiences these treasures offer travelers. As a starting point, we need to consider how best to meet the objectives, in terms of setting reasonable price increases and, specifically, the timing of any sort of increase.

National parks are among America's top destinations, and our industry has consistently advocated for park funding. While we recognize that additional fees are needed to preserve our nation's natural treasures, we are concerned the lack of a more staged implementation period to fairly and equitably implement the fee increase into tour packages will be burdensome on users of the parks and tour companies.

Our organizations help to ensure that the movement of people through our parks is as efficient as possible. For example, just one bus can take up to 55 cars off the road, providing congestion [reduction] and environmental benefits to all park users. Commercial buses and tour groups are critical to the economic health of the NPS. In FY 2012, commercial bus fees were the third highest revenue-related source for the parks. That standing only has increased in recent years behind record-breaking visits from the travel and tourism industry, due in part to the support from the listed associations.

The associations represented on this letter have had a longstanding agreement with the NPS that we would be notified 18 months ahead of any entrance-fee increases to enable pricing adjustments. This is critical for our members and their customers, as many companies book tour groups months, if not years, in advance. With the recent announcement, we are concerned about how this will impact not only our tour companies and their customers, but also the area concessionaires and the local destination attractions that serve these visitors near the parks.



MICHAEL QUINN/NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Last year the NPS recorded a whopping 330 million recreational visits, up significantly from what had been a record-breaking 307 million visits in 2015. If the currently proposed fee increases are implemented, those record numbers will not continue to climb.

The solution to our great parks' needs cannot and should not be shouldered by its visitors—we can fix this together. As you know, these issues are very important to our organizations, and we would very much like to further discuss these contemplated policy changes. We look forward to working with you and your team in the near future.

DAVEY PHOTOGRAPHY



### Voices of concern

These are the travel industry associations that joined to register concern about proposed adjustments to U.S. National Park Service entry and permit fees:

- American Bus Association
- International Inbound Travel Association
- International Motorcoach Group
- National Tour Association
- Ontario Motor Coach Association
- Student & Youth Travel Association
- United Motorcoach Association
- United States Tour Operators Association

To read the Oct. 24 announcement about proposed fee increases, see the news release on the NPS website: [bit.ly/2xkdSL1](http://bit.ly/2xkdSL1)

### Comments count

Due in part to the urging of NTA and other industry associations—and also to the large number of comments (nearly 80,000 at press time) that citizens submitted to the National Park Service website—NPS extended the comment period by several weeks, ending in late December. However, NTA is continuing to collect reactions and opinions from members, who can email their concerns to Executive Vice President Catherine Prather at [catherine.prather@ntastaff.com](mailto:catherine.prather@ntastaff.com).

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# 5 magnetic ways to strengthen your email list

BY CATHERINE HEEG



IS YOUR EMAIL list a bit skinny? Does it lack the strength to bring new leads? Love it or hate it, email is part of our culture, and it's a workhorse when it comes to marketing.

Did you know that 44 percent of email recipients made at least one purchase last year based on a promotional email?\*

Let's think about this from a tourism perspective. Imagine a consumer opening an email from you about an upcoming tour. They not only see the trip info, but they're also reminded of their wanderlust, and maybe they'll recall fond memories of their last tour with you. They get excited and pass along your email to a friend. You've hit the mark with an emotional spark and inspired them to take some action.

Email is a cost-effective way to:

1. Build stronger relationships
2. Rekindle fond memories and emotions
3. Grow your brand awareness
4. Inspire top-of-mind recognition
5. Increase web traffic and SEO

## Growing your list

Lengthening your email list doesn't have to be a tug-of-war. Earning the right to email people can be simple with these easy tactics—and a downloadable lead magnet (a giveaway in exchange for an email address). Here's where to start:

### No. 1 Call-to-action buttons

Choosing the "Sign Up" or "Learn More" button enables you to direct people to your website or landing page so they can sign up for your newsletter or free lead magnet. Facebook provides you the opportunity to edit the call-to-action button on your business page and insert your own website URL.

### No. 2 Social posts

No matter where your social fans hang out, you can easily create a social post that drives people to your website sign-up form. Craft a graphic that tells

people what they'll get and has a call to action. Then write some text inviting them to sign up or download. Here's an example of what I use:



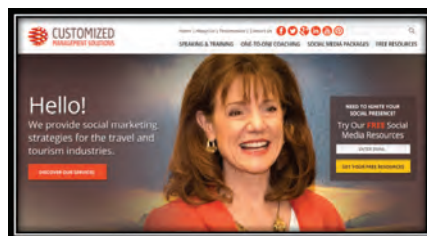
### No. 3 Your blog

We all know the SEO value of writing a blog, but what about the opportunity to build stronger ties with your readers? Give this a whirl: At the end of each blog post, insert a graphic (maybe the same one you've used in your social posts) inviting readers to sign up or download your lead magnet.

### No. 4 Your website

We've all seen pop-up boxes on websites inviting you to download a free e-book or to sign up for a newsletter. Do you have one on your website? Your web design team can create this, or you can check out [supsystic.com](http://supsystic.com) for suggestions. You can customize the pop-up box appearance, timing and location.

You may want to also have your email magnet live right on your home page. Here's an example of how to place your sign-up box front and center:



### No. 5 Paid ads

Lead generation ads on Facebook are relatively easy to set up and can be a powerhouse in your email list growth strategy. The Facebook template walks through each step and even provides

sample questions. While you can have up to 21 questions (yikes!), research shows that one to three questions lead to the highest conversion rates.

**Tip:** You will need a privacy policy on your website to use this tool.

## Lead magnet ideas

Armed with these strategies to grow your valuable email list with interested and intrigued potential clients, you'll need to give away a valuable resource: content. Think about the kind of questions your clients ask and the types of visual content that can help you stay top-of-mind.

Your evergreen content might include:

- Top 10 lists
- Destination guides
- Dining guides
- Packing lists
- Travel tips
- Before-you-go checklists

These downloadable lead magnets may take the form of infographics, e-books or simply a checklist. Here are some tools to create these visual wonders:

[bit.ly/1jCh8bU](http://bit.ly/1jCh8bU)

## Maximize your leads

Now that you've added all these potential new clients to your e-blast lists, you'll need to keep in touch with them. Creating a Custom Audience for your Facebook ads is an easy step you can take to stay top-of-mind and to build brand awareness.

When you're ready to increase your market share and your bottom line, remember this: People who make purchases marketed through emails spend 138 percent more than people who do not receive emails.\* Get ready for your sales to skyrocket. ☞

\* Source: [convinceandconvert.com](http://convinceandconvert.com)

*Catherine Heeg, international speaker and trainer, focuses on social media marketing strategies for the tourism and hospitality industry. An NTA presenter since 2009, she understands members and their businesses. Connect with her socially and at [cmsspeaking.com](http://cmsspeaking.com).*

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# The Interview

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS FROM NTA MEMBERS

## Part of a DMO team

BY BOB ROUSE

Greg Edevane is the director of global development for Brandywine Valley, the official tourism agency for Chester County, located in the southeast corner of Pennsylvania. The DMO represents more than 500 tourism-related businesses in the county and also has members in other parts of Pennsylvania and in other states. *Courier* caught up with Edevane to learn more about how DMOs orchestrate the effort to bring more visitors to an area.



**Greg Edevane**  
Director of global development  
Brandywine Valley

**Courier:** How do local suppliers benefit from the work your office performs?

**Edevane:** All of our sales and marketing efforts drive visitors and planners to our website, [brandywinevalley.com](http://brandywinevalley.com). The site is pretty dynamic and not only lists our partners, but it also has a rather extensive calendar of events. There are suggested itineraries, partner packages and tools for planning, such as images and other resources. And of course, there is also lead generation for our partners.

**Courier:** What does success look like for you?

**Edevane:** Anything that moves the needle—whether it's increased occupancy or

a higher average daily rate for our lodging partners, increased visitation for our attractions, etc. A positive economic impact for our destination is the goal.

**Courier:** With so many partners to promote, how do you spread the love?

**Edevane:** Chester County's Brandywine Valley has a big story to tell, and the story is enhanced by all of our tourism partners. Each one has a part, and working together allows us to offer our visitors a full experience. Spreading the love from there is easy. We have a top-notch sales, marketing and PR team that keeps our story relevant for domestic and international visitors.

**Courier:** Does your office ever develop or encourage new tour product to fill any gaps?

**Edevane:** Of course! Product development is an ongoing strategy for our destination. We work with a visitor base that has constantly changing demographics and interests, and if you don't keep your story fresh, it will soon be over. We have very strong, traditional itinerary suggestions, and customers love them. And we're fortunate to be able to offer many enhancements or suggest entirely new concepts.

**Courier:** Can you give some examples?

**Edevane:** We are America's Garden Capital: That includes 30 public gardens

within 30 miles, which are enhanced with special exhibits and events. With our wineries and breweries, we have a really big beverage tourism product. We also are increasing our equine tourism and our history-focused itinerary suggestions. And to appeal to a younger, more adventurous group of travelers, we promote golf courses, canoeing, hot air balloon rides and other outdoor experiences.

**Courier:** You're in the shadow of some big cities. How do you make your destination stand out?

**Edevane:** Shadow? It is a level playing field. We are perfectly positioned in the countryside of Philadelphia, and we work very closely with Philadelphia, Greater Wilmington, our neighboring destinations and all of the Pennsylvania destinations to give our visitors and planners options.

**We work with a visitor base that has constantly changing demographics and interests, and if you don't keep your story fresh, it will soon be over.**

—Greg Edevane, Brandywine Valley

**Courier:** We just completed another Travel Exchange. How do you work the convention?

**Edevane:** The appointments—and pre-appointment research—are very important, but they're just a small part of it. Taking advantage of every event, including dine-around opportunities, and following up are paramount for success.

**Courier:** What type of regional teamwork should DMOs engage prior to Travel Exchange?

**Edevane:** Meet with your tourism

partners before leaving for TREX, so you can better understand what everyone is promoting. It gives your entire destination a cohesive story for your appointments and interactions with the operators. This also allows you to help your partners be prepared for their appointments.

**Courier:** When working with local and regional partners, what's your common goal?

**Edevane:** To increase a visitor's stay in our region and state. All of our destination partners understand the importance of true partnerships, and we realize that visitors aren't aware of or concerned about county or state lines. Plus we have amazing partnerships with attractions and hotels in and around the region, which allow us to enhance our already intriguing story. 📍

*For more insight on how Edevane works with local and regional partners, contact him at [greg@brandywinevalley.com](mailto:greg@brandywinevalley.com).*



To prepare for talks he'll have with tour operators at Travel Exchange, Greg Edevane meets with Brandywine Valley's tourism partners to develop a cohesive story for the destination.



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# 10 Ways **NTA**<sup>®</sup>

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## Membership Works for You



### Renew by Jan. 31 to keep your benefits for 2018

**1 Search the member database.** Accessible 24/7 on [NTAonline.com](http://NTAonline.com), this feature is used 8,000 times a month to find valuable business partners. Remember, your NTA Online profile is what members see year-round, so make sure it's updated for maximum results.

**2 Make plans to attend Travel Exchange.** Join us in Brew City USA Nov. 4–8 as Milwaukee, Wisconsin, plays host to Travel Exchange '18. Visit [NTAonline.com/convention](http://NTAonline.com/convention) to get all the details on NTA's annual convention. Use #TREX18 to join the conversation 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](http://NTAonline.com/contact).



**4 Join us on Capitol Hill.** Join NTA, U.S. Travel and Destinations International in Washington, D.C., March 21–22, 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.

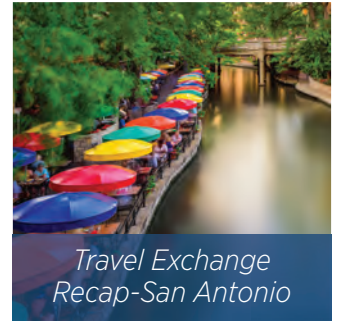
**9 Be an NTA leader.** Leadership advisory groups give you the chance to shape NTA's future and make a difference. Current groups include: Member Solutions, Advocacy, Young Professionals and Faith Travel.

**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](mailto:headquarters@ntastaff.com) or 800.682.8886 (U.S. & Canada) or +1.859.264.6540. ☎

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COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER AND PAT HENDERSON

## Vienna's masters of Modernism

This year the city of Vienna will commemorate four of its favorite artists—Gustav Klimt, Otto Wagner, Koloman Moser and Egon Schiele—who each passed away in 1918. Beauty and the Abyss, the name of the year-long celebration of the four artists, will include a number of exhibits and programs showcasing the impact these Modernism masters had during a transformative period in Austrian history. Here is a look at some of the special exhibits coming up as 2018 progresses:

### “Egon Schiele. Expression and Lyricism”

Leopold Museum, Feb. 3–Nov. 4

A group of Schiele's paintings and graphic artworks will be presented for the first time in a dialog with various handwritten pieces, poems and photographs.

### “Klimt is Not the End. Awakening in Central Europe”

Lower Belvedere, March 22–Aug. 26

Around 80 works by Klimt, Schiele, Wagner and Moser will be displayed to mark the artists' deaths, which signaled the end of an era in Viennese culture.

### “Post Otto Wagner: From the Austrian Post Savings Bank to the Post-Modern”

MAK, May 30–Sept. 30

The exhibition looks at Wagner's interactions with other protagonists of early Modernism, as well as the influence he had on other architects and designers.

### “Koloman Moser Uncovered”

The Wiener Werkstätte Archives, Dec. 19–April 22, 2019

This exhibition highlights Moser's extensive output during his days as a painter, graphic artist, craftsman and teacher.

For more information on these exhibits, as well as other programs that are part of Beauty and the Abyss, call +43.1.211.140 or visit [wien.info](http://wien.info). —P.H.



CC FLICKR/NICK: bit.ly/A16Uje

## Gauley, Gauley, Gauley, get your rapids here

The Gauley River National Recreation Area is a mecca for whitewater enthusiasts. Located near Summersville, West Virginia, this U.S. National Park Service site is home Class III to V-plus rapids in the 25 miles of the Gauley River and the six miles of the Meadow River.

Around 60,000 people head to central West Virginia each year to face the Gauley's wild waters. The official whitewater season last six weeks—from early September to mid-October—during which paddlers test their skills against the challenging rapids. The river's upper section features vertical drops at Sweet's Falls, Pillow Rock and Iron Ring, a trio of turbulent chutes. The 12 miles of the Lower Gauley offer an undulating, more consistent path.

Two other nearby NPS sites, the New River Gorge National River and Bluestone National Scenic River, provide additional outdoor activities. The New River's lower section includes the more advanced rapids, while its upper section offers milder currents that allow any level of paddler to enjoy a rafting trip during the main April-to-October season.

Call +1.304.465.0508 or visit [nps.gov/gari](http://nps.gov/gari) to learn more. —P.H.



## Take a write in downtown Chicago

The American Writers Museum opened earlier this year as the first of its kind in the United States. The 11,000-square-foot attraction is filled with permanent and temporary exhibits designed to engage visitors with the work of America's most celebrated writers.

Chicago is one of the birthplaces of realism, and in the museum's Wintrust Chicago Gallery, groups learn about famous Chicago writers and their contributions to this bold movement.

Stead Family Foundation Writers Hall features interactive kiosks, where visitors can discover which American authors lived near them. "The Mind of a Writer" exhibit houses an interactive space where aspiring writers can use pencil and paper, a vintage typewriter or digital media to write their own stories and add to the museum's story of the day, which stems from an opening line from a memorable American book, poem or essay.

On through Spring 2018, "Laura Ingalls Wilder: From Prairie to Page" features the longhand manuscript of Wilder's autobiographical novel "The Long Winter," including handwritten notes by Wilder. Museum-goers will also learn about Wilder's writing over her lifetime and how her education formed her writing style and the values she wove into the Little House series.



AMERICANWRITERSMUSEUM.ORG

In addition to state-of-the-art exhibits, the American Writers Museum offers educational programming and special events, including book signings and author talk series that change from month to month.

Group rates are \$9 per person for a minimum of 15 people. Seniors and students with a valid school identification are admitted for \$6.

For more information, go to [americanwritersmuseum.org](http://americanwritersmuseum.org) or call +1.312.374.8790. —K.F. 📍

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# Lowcountry, high returns

Contact comes to Charleston, April 18-21

BY GABE WEBB

Charleston, South Carolina, should be on your radar for many, many reasons: excellent food, deep historical roots and beautiful beaches, to name a few. And when NTA's Contact tour operator retreat comes to town, you'll have one more. Join fellow representatives from NTA tour companies and sponsoring DMO and supplier members for three-plus days, when you'll expand your network and your sense of possibility.

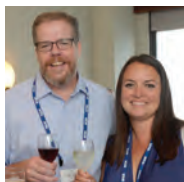
Read on to learn more. To see the most up-to-date schedule and to register for the event, visit [NTAonline.com/contact](http://NTAonline.com/contact).



Charleston, SC | April 18-21, 2018

## See what's new for Contact '18

Each year, NTA makes changes to its events based on member feedback. Look for the following changes to Contact in Charleston that are meant to offer you more opportunities for professional development and networking.



### All-member Mixer

Taking place before Wednesday's Icebreaker, this event allows you to reconnect with your NTA friends and make new connections in preparation for a productive few days in Charleston.

### Opening Session

The opening session was an annual favorite, and this year it's being revamped into an interactive discussion for all attendees—buyers and sponsors.

### Doubling up on Dine-arounds, and a Grab & Go Breakfast on Friday

Charleston is known for its seafood, barbecue and Lowcountry fare, and this year at Contact, you'll have two nights—Thursday and Friday—to enjoy the city's restaurants. Also, before Friday's sightseeing tours, you'll be able to grab a quick bite before seeing more of Charleston.

### Educational outings

In addition to the sightseeing tours, we've added educational sightseeing tours based on specialty market interests.

### Government Relations Silent Auction

Be sure to check out the selection of silent auction items donated by your fellow NTA members. Funds raised will benefit the association's government relations efforts.



## Schedule at a Glance

### Tuesday, April 17

Shuttle Service from the Airport to Embassy Suites

### Wednesday, April 18

Shuttle Service from the Airport to Embassy Suites

Exhibitor Move-in

Registration & NTA Information Desk Open

All-member Mixer

*Sponsored by Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum*

Icebreaker at the Legare Waring House

*Sponsored by Explore Charleston*

### Thursday, April 19

Registration & NTA Information Desk Open

Breakfast *Sponsored by Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority and Maverick Helicopters*

Opening Session: The Three Cs of Networking

Luncheon *Sponsored by Norwegian Cruise Line*

General Session: Finding the Funny in Change

Breakout Educational Sessions

Networking Reception

*Sponsored by Best Western Hotels & Resorts*

Chinese Inbound Operator Dinner (by invitation only)

*Sponsored by Delta Air Lines, Norwegian Cruise Line and Tanger Outlets*

Dine-around

### Friday, April 20

Grab & Go Breakfast

Breakout Educational Sessions

Sightseeing Tours

Dine-around

### Saturday, April 21

Breakfast *Sponsored by Visit Tucson*

Tour Operator Power Hour,

Tour Supplier & DMO

Power Hour, All-member

Power Hour

Luncheon

Educational

Sightseeing Outings -

Choose one market:

Agritourism, Historic/  
Heritage or Faith

Closing Event aboard the  
USS Yorktown

*Sponsored by Explore Charleston*

### Sunday, April 22

Shuttle Service from  
Embassy Suites to the  
Airport

Post-event Fam Tour  
Departures



## Get to know your host city

On Friday morning, you'll be able to join one of five sightseeing tours to local attractions.

### If these gardens could talk ...

On this tour, you'll see some of Charleston's top outdoor attractions. The first stop is Middleton Place, a National Historic Landmark and the home of America's oldest

landscaped gardens. The house on the property was built in 1775, and it is now a museum filled with the Middleton family's furniture, possessions and artwork. You'll have a picnic and stroll through the gardens before heading to Magnolia Plantation and Gardens for your second stop. This plantation was founded in 1676, and on a tour of the estate, you'll see the home, wetlands, lakes, forests and marshes.



### Time to hit the fairways

Patriots Point Links is a favorite place for golfers—from Charleston locals to guests of the area's resorts. Patriots Point is located in nearby Mount Pleasant, five minutes from downtown Charleston, and the course offers spectacular views of Charleston Harbor, Fort Sumter and the city.

### Some would say Charleston tastes as good as it looks

This culinary trek through Charleston starts at Fatty's Beer Works, one of the city's new breweries. You'll learn about the history of brewing from a time-traveling brewmaster and enjoy a boxed lunch before heading out for a culinary walking tour with Savor the Flavors of Charleston. Your walk will introduce the history and flavors of the city's Lowcountry cuisine, with samples from local markets, restaurants and bakeries.

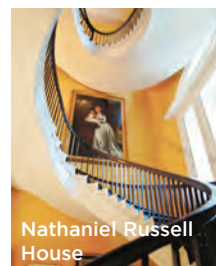


### Cue the dolphins

On a kayak tour of Shem Creek with Coastal Expeditions, you'll paddle past shrimp boats on Charleston Harbor, get unmatched views of the city, see a bird rookery and, yes, potentially spot dolphins.

### Visiting the cultural heart of Charleston

This tour will provide a detailed look at the cultural history of Charleston. You'll take a carriage ride to the Nathaniel Russell House and the Heyward Washington House for tours of both, then you'll walk to the Old Exchange & Provost Dungeon, which served significant roles from the American Revolution forward. Your tour will wrap up with some free time to shop at City Market.





## Social meets networking

In addition to the business-building activities planned for your mornings and afternoons, you can get to know your fellow NTA members and the city of Charleston at evening social events.



Legare Waring House gate



USS Yorktown

### Icebreaker

*Sponsored by Explore Charleston*

Welcome to the Lowcountry! Wednesday night's Icebreaker will be at the charming Legare Waring House (circa 1840s). Steeped in history, this beautiful property is located in the heart of Charles Towne Landing, the site of the first European settlement in the Carolinas. A moss-laden ancient avenue of oaks, crystal lagoons and brilliant spring flowers surround this historic house.

### Closing Event

*Sponsored by Explore Charleston*

Walk in the steps of heroes aboard the USS Yorktown at Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum. Enjoy a Southern supper with live music and unmatched views of the Charleston skyline. While aboard the ship, you can explore a priceless collection of more than two dozen historical aircraft.





## Educational sessions build your knowledge base and get you into the field

This year at Contact, in addition to sessions on-site, you'll have the opportunity to go out into Charleston and take part in a site visit focused on developing a specialty market. Here are some of the sessions in store.



Thom Singer

### Opening Session: The Three Cs of Networking

Speaker: Thom Singer, The Conference Catalyst

You'll network in a brand new way at this all-attendee, interactive, thought-provoking session. Thom Singer, the Conference Catalyst, will moderate, and participants will share information and proven solutions, discuss industry trends, communicate ideas for tour product and create partnerships. You'll leave this session with ideas to benefit your company and with a network of new industry contacts.

### General Session: Finding the Funny in Change

Speaker: Jan McInnis, The Work Lady

Whether it's going green or myriad new rules that govern the industry, we are constantly reacting to a new playing field. Changes in industry rules and regulations routinely have professionals reassessing and re-evaluating their practices. All of this change causes fear, tension and miscommunications. Using humor, Jan will show you how to diffuse tension instantly, kick off tough conversations and facilitate communications. Additionally, she will share with you the latest research linking laughter and health—yes they're actually studying this stuff!

### Public Relations in the Digital Age

Speakers: Gina Stouffer and Melanie Mathos, Lou Hammond Group  
Join a team from the Lou Hammond Group, an award-winning marketing communications firm headquartered in New York, as they discuss how the internet has changed the travel PR industry. Explore the traditional media landscape and find out if communication tools like press releases are still important. Discuss the importance of working with bloggers and social media influencers and leave with tools for creating content that increases awareness and drives business.

### Education on the go!

Sponsored by Explore Charleston

#### Historical/ Heritage: Boone Hall Plantation

Boone Hall Plantation is the only site in the South Carolina Lowcountry to offer a live presentation



of the area's Gullah culture. The tour allows guests to see how this Colonial Revival home blends recovered materials and antique furnishings to re-create a 19th-century rural atmosphere.

#### Agritourism: Charleston Tea Plantation

Hop on the trolley for a tour of the many acres of tea plants and the NTA member's state-of-the-art greenhouse. You'll walk through the entire tea production building and see all the equipment it takes to get fresh tea leaves ready for your cup. Your final stop will include a sampling of tea flavors and the chance to shop for tea-related paraphernalia at the gift shop.



#### Faith: Why Charleston is called the Holy City

Jeff Caplinger with All About Charleston Tours will lead this tour to St. Michael's Episcopal Church, the oldest church in the city. It was built in 1761 and has welcomed George Washington. Also featured on this tour are Historical Circular Congregational Church and Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue, the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the U.S. and the birthplace of American Reform Judaism. 📍



To see a complete list of educational sessions and descriptions, go to [NTAonline.com/contact/education](http://NTAonline.com/contact/education). The website will be updated as more seminars are finalized.

# Join us in thanking our Contact '18 sponsors! <sup>so far</sup>

## HOST DESTINATION AND HOST CITY CO-PARTNERS



### Explore Charleston

Host Destination, Icebreaker  
and Closing Event



### Charleston Tea Plantation

Host City Co-partner



### Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

Host City Co-partner

## GOLD



### Alabama Theatre

Relaxation Station  
and Caricature Artist



### The Carolina Opry

Relaxation Station  
and Caricature Artist



### Hampton Inn & Suites By Hilton Myrtle Beach Oceanfront

Relaxation Station  
and Caricature Artist



### Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority

Thursday Breakfast



### Maverick Helicopters

Thursday Breakfast



### Myrtle Beach Area Convention & Visitors Bureau

Relaxation Station  
and Caricature Artist



### Norwegian Cruise Line

Thursday Luncheon and China  
Inbound Program Dinner



### Tanger Outlets

Registration Bags and China  
Inbound Program Dinner



### Visit Tucson

Saturday Breakfast

## SILVER



### Best Western

Hotels & Resorts  
Networking Reception  
and Contact Program



### Explore St. Louis

Convenience Station



### Georgia Department of Tourism

Contact Program



### Graceland & Guest House at Graceland

Notebooks



### Lake Charles, Louisiana

Opening Session



### Lowcountry Hotels of Charleston

Board of Directors Meeting and  
Silent Auction Finale Reception



### Major Marine Tours & Harbor 360 Hotel

Contact Program



### Memphis Convention & Visitors Bureau

Name Badges



### Patriots Point Naval & Maritime Museum

Member Mixer



### Tour Colorado

Contact Program



### Travel Oregon

Hotel Key Cards



### Travel Portland

Hotel Key Cards



### Tulalip Tribes/Tulalip Resort Casino

Tour Operator Power Hour



### U.S. Space & Rocket Center

Contact Program



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### Visit Clarksville

Board of Directors Dinner



### Visit Savannah

Event Pens



# NTA-member casino and gaming properties

TRAVELERS CONTINUE TO ENJOY myriad amenities and experiences when they visit casinos and gaming destinations. The NTA membership includes a number of properties across North America that offer slots and table games, luxurious accommodations, gourmet restaurants, live entertainment, spa treatments, shopping and recreational activities, as well as many discounts and perks for tour operators.

On these pages, you will see expanded information on resorts in New Jersey and Mississippi followed by a complete list of member properties that feature gaming.

With this and all other guides that appear in *Courier*, members can enhance their presence. Contact [sales@ntaservicesinc.com](mailto:sales@ntaservicesinc.com) for details.

## Atlantic City abounds with coastal charm, casinos

Few destinations in the United States are as quintessentially associated with the beach lifestyle as Atlantic City, New Jersey. The coastal city in southern New Jersey is renowned for its famous

boardwalk, its high-end gaming venues and its local properties that were immortalized thanks to the game of Monopoly.

Groups heading to the city can sample much of what it has to offer when they visit two of its oceanside attractions, the Tropicana Casino and Resort and the Resorts Casino Hotel.

The Tropicana, which underwent \$90 million in renovations from 2014 to 2016, features more than 2,000 rooms; 42 restaurants, bars and lounges; 25 shops; two pools; a spa; and an IMAX theater. A visitor favorite is the resort's signature

entertainment complex, The Quarter.

This year, Resorts Casino Hotel is celebrating its 40th anniversary. The property, situated on 11 acres along the city's famous boardwalk, boasts a massive gaming floor and has 942 rooms and suites between its 15-story Ocean Tower and the new 27-story Rendezvous Tower.

To learn more about the Tropicana, reach out to Wanda Sosa at [wsosa@tropicana.net](mailto:wsosa@tropicana.net) or go to [tropicana.net](http://tropicana.net). For more information on Resorts Casino Hotel, contact Meg Lewis at [mlewis@resortsac.com](mailto:mlewis@resortsac.com) or go to [resortsac.com](http://resortsac.com).



RESORTS CASINO HOTEL

### CANADA

#### BRITISH COLUMBIA

##### River Rock Casino Resort

Janice Mak  
8811 River Road  
Richmond, BC V6X 3P8  
+1.604.247.4161  
[jmak@riverrock.com](mailto:jmak@riverrock.com)  
[riverrock.com](http://riverrock.com)

#### QUÉBEC

##### Québec's Casinos

Anie Beauchamp  
500 Sherbrooke Street West, 15th Floor  
Montreal, QC H3A 3G6  
+1.514.392.0909 (2629)  
[anie.beauchamp@casino.qc.ca](mailto:anie.beauchamp@casino.qc.ca)  
[casinos.lotoquebec.com](http://casinos.lotoquebec.com)

### UNITED STATES

#### ARIZONA

##### Cliff Castle Casino Hotel

Nita Neasbitt  
333 Middle Verde Road  
Camp Verde, AZ 86322-8560  
+1.928.567.7900 (7738)  
[jneasbitt@cliffcastlecasino.net](mailto:jneasbitt@cliffcastlecasino.net)  
[cliffcastlecasinohotel.com](http://cliffcastlecasinohotel.com)

##### Desert Diamond Casino Hotel

Denys Marquez  
7350 South Nogales Highway  
Tucson, AZ 85756  
+1.520.342.3025  
[dmarquez@ddcaz.com](mailto:dmarquez@ddcaz.com)  
[ddcaz.com](http://ddcaz.com)

#### CALIFORNIA

##### Fantasy Springs Resort Casino

Juliett Valencia  
84-245 Indio Springs Parkway  
Indio, CA 92203-3405  
+1.760.238.5613  
[jvalencia@fantasysprings.net](mailto:jvalencia@fantasysprings.net)  
[fantasyspringsresort.com](http://fantasyspringsresort.com)

##### Pechanga Resort & Casino

Freddy Bi  
45000 Pechanga Parkway  
Temecula, CA 92592-5810  
+1.951.365.9077  
[fbi@pechanga.com](mailto:fbi@pechanga.com)  
[pechanga.com](http://pechanga.com)

##### Soboba Casino

Gene Stachowski  
2333 Soboba Rd.  
San Jacinto, CA 92583  
+1.951.665.1309  
[gstachowski@soboba.net](mailto:gstachowski@soboba.net)  
[soboba.com](http://soboba.com)

##### The Hotel at Black Oak Casino Resort

Amanda Short  
19398 Tuolumne Road North  
Tuolumne, CA 95379  
+1.209.928.9520  
[msullivan@blackoakcasino.com](mailto:msullivan@blackoakcasino.com)  
[blackoakcasino.com](http://blackoakcasino.com)

#### CONNECTICUT

##### Foxwoods Resort Casino

George Yerger  
Route 2, P.O. Box 3777  
Mashantucket, CT 06338  
+1.860.312.7010  
[gyerger@foxwoods.com](mailto:gyerger@foxwoods.com)  
[foxwoods.com](http://foxwoods.com)

##### Mohegan Sun

Stephen Olender  
1 Mohegan Sun Blvd.  
Uncasville, CT 06382-1355  
+1.860.862.8988  
[solender@mohegansun.com](mailto:solender@mohegansun.com)  
[mohegansun.com](http://mohegansun.com)

#### DELAWARE

##### Dover Downs Hotel & Casino

Gordon Basht  
1131 North DuPont Highway  
Dover, DE 19903  
+1.302.857.2104  
[gbasht@doverdowns.com](mailto:gbasht@doverdowns.com)  
[doverdowns.com](http://doverdowns.com)

#### IDAHO

##### Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort

Dee Dee McGowan  
37914 S. Nukwalqw  
Worley, ID 83876  
+1.208.769.2663  
[wmcgowan@cdacasinom.com](mailto:wmcgowan@cdacasinom.com)  
[cdacasinom.com](http://cdacasinom.com)

#### ILLINOIS

##### Jumer's Casino & Hotel

Hollie Myers  
777 Jumers Drive  
Rock Island, IL 61201-7606  
+1.309.756.4679  
[holliem@jumerscri.com](mailto:holliem@jumerscri.com)  
[jumerscasinohotel.com](http://jumerscasinohotel.com)

## Raising the stakes (and steaks)

Situated along the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts International combines luxurious amenities with Southern charm. The Biloxi-based property has 1,740 rooms and suites, an 85,000-square-foot casino floor, 10 restaurants, four bars and lounges, a dozen retail venues, a 1,550-seat entertainment venue, an award-winning spa, a championship golf course and 50,000 square feet of meeting and convention space.

Travelers have plenty of options when it comes to gourmet dining at Beau Rivage. Its four main restaurants serve everything from steaks and Southern favorites to exotic international cuisine.

The newest of Beau Rivage's dining venues, Coast Seafood & Brew, is known for its dock-to-table dishes. Patrons can enjoy Gulf-fresh seafood, such as shrimp and oysters on the half-shell that have been caught in local waters, as well as



BEAU RIVAGE RESORT CASINO

Teppanyaki grill at Jia

more than 40 craft beers. BR Prime is a classic steakhouse that features a 3,500-bottle wine cellar. Visitors can sample a range of entrees—dry-aged beef, lobster tails, stone crab and bay shrimp—in the restaurant's relaxed dining room.

The other two restaurants, Stalla and Jia, offer delicious international fare.

Stalla specializes in northern Italian favorites that are served in an Old World-style trattoria, and Jia features regional specialties from Thailand, Japan, China, Vietnam and Hong Kong.

To learn more, contact Linda Spruill at [lspruill@beaurivage.com](mailto:lspruill@beaurivage.com) or go to [beaurivage.com](http://beaurivage.com).

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To learn more, call the resort or visit [cdacasino.com](http://cdacasino.com).



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# NTA-member casino and gaming properties

## IOWA

### Meskwaki Bingo Casino Hotel

Diane Blomme  
1504 305th St.  
Tama, IA 52339-9697  
+1.641.484.1494  
dblomme@meskwaki.com  
meskwaki.com

## LOUISIANA

### Cypress Bayou Casino Hotel

Germaine Yarber  
832 Martin Luther King Road  
Charenton, LA 70523  
+1.337.923.7284  
germaineyarber@cypressbayou.com  
cypressbayou.com

## MICHIGAN

### Island Resort & Casino

Kara Pasco  
W399 Highway 2 & 41  
P.O. Box 351  
Harris, MI 49845  
+1.906.723.2121  
kpasco@islandresortandcasino.com  
islandresortandcasino.com

### Kewadin Casino Hotel & Convention Center

Gloria Kemp  
2186 Shunk Road  
Sault Sainte Marie, MI 49783-9467  
+1.906.632.0530  
gkemp@saulttribe.net  
kewadin.com

### Soaring Eagle Casino & Resort

Melisa Brown  
6800 E. Soaring Eagle Blvd.  
Mount Pleasant, MI 48858-8432  
+1.989.775.5498 (55498)  
mbrown@sagchip.org  
soaringeaglecasino.com

## MINNESOTA

### Treasure Island Resort & Casino

Carla Nygaard  
P.O. Box 75  
Red Wing, MN 55066-0075  
+1.651.385.2716  
carla.nygaard@ticasino.com  
treasureislandcasino.com

## MISSISSIPPI

### Beau Rivage by MGM Resorts International

Linda Spruill  
875 Beach Blvd.  
Biloxi, MS 39530-4241  
+1.228.386.7171  
lspruill@beaurivage.com  
beaurivage.com

### Scarlet Pearl Casino Resort

Rita Blenman-Green  
9380 Central Ave.  
D'Iberville, MS 39540  
+1.228.271.3515  
rita.blenman@scarletpearlcasino.com  
scarletpearlcasino.com

## NEVADA

### Four Queens Hotel & Casino

Pamela Dreyer  
202 Fremont St.  
Las Vegas, NV 89101-5606  
+1.702.385.4011 (3070)  
pdreyer@tlccasinos.com  
fourqueens.com

### Mesquite Gaming

Petra Jones  
950 West Mesquite Blvd.  
Mesquite, NV 89027-5204  
+1.702.346.6800 (6890)  
pjones@mesquitegaming.com  
mesquitegaming.com

### Montbleu Resort Casino & Spa

Carol McClintock  
55 U.S. Highway 50  
Lake Tahoe, NV 89449  
+1.775.586.2077  
cmmclintock@montbleuresort.com  
montbleuresort.com

### Silver Legacy Resort Casino

Kimberley Thorndike  
407 N. Virginia St.  
Reno, NV 89501-1138  
+1.775.325.7414  
kthorndike@silverlegacy.com

### Station Casinos

Joni Peru  
Sales Department  
2411 W. Sahara Ave.  
Las Vegas, NV 89102-4343  
+1.702.367.2444  
joni.peru@stationcasinos.com  
stationcasinos.com

## NEW JERSEY

### Resorts Casino Hotel

Meg Lewis  
1133 Boardwalk  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-7329  
+1.609.340.7715  
mlewis@resortsac.com  
resortsac.com

### Tropicana Casino and Resort

Wanda Sosa  
Brighton & The Boardwalk  
Atlantic City, NJ 08401-6390  
+1.609.340.4366  
wsosa@tropicana.net  
tropicana.net

## NEW MEXICO

### Inn of the Mountain Gods Resort & Casino

Charles Meeks  
287 Carizzo Canyon  
Mescalero, NM 88340  
+1.575.464.7059  
carla@foundryideas.com  
innofthemountainingods.com

## NEW YORK

### Akwesasne Mohawk Casino

Michael Gleason  
873 State Route 37  
Akwesasne, NY 13655  
+1.518.358.2222 (1103)  
mgleason@mohawkcasino.com  
mohawkcasino.com

### Turning Stone Resort Casino

Jeremy Cadrette  
Tour & Travel Sales Department  
5218 Patrick Road  
Verona, NY 13478  
+1.315.361.8270  
jeremy.cadrette@turningstone.com  
turningstone.com

## NORTH CAROLINA

### Harrah's Cherokee Casino & Hotel

Matthew Pegg  
777 Casino Drive  
Cherokee, NC 28719-9761  
+1.828.497.8229  
mpegg@cherokee.harrah.com  
harrahsherokee.com

## OKLAHOMA

### Choctaw Casino Resort

Erika Davis  
4416 S. Highway 69/75  
Durant, OK 74701  
+1.580.920.0160 (1235)  
erika.davis@choctawcasinos.com  
choctawcasinos.com

## OREGON

### The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park

Lucinda DiNovo  
3201 Tremont Ave.  
North Bend, OR 97459  
+1.541.756.8800 (2288)  
ldinovo@themillcasino.com  
themillcasino.com

## SOUTH DAKOTA

### Deadwood Gulch Gaming Resort

Michelle Patino  
304 Cliff St.  
Deadwood, SD 57732  
+1.605.578.1294 (456)  
outsidesales@deadwoodgulch.com  
deadwoodgulchresort.com

## WASHINGTON

### Emerald Queen Hotel & Casinos

Marty Youngren  
5700 Pacific Highway East  
Fife, WA 98424  
+1.253.922.2000 (3428)  
martin\_youngren@emeraldqueen.com  
emeraldqueen.com

### Tulalip Resort Casino/Quil Ceda Village

Tracy Banfield  
10200 Quil Ceda Blvd.  
Tulalip, WA 98271  
+1.360.716.6600  
tracyb@tulalipresort.com  
tulalipresort.com

## WISCONSIN

### Potawatomi Hotel and Casino

Lisa Pederson  
1721 W. Canal St.  
Milwaukee, WI 53233  
+1.414.847.7982  
lpederson@paysbig.com  
paysbig.com

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The Battery, Charleston Harbor

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CITY SPOTLIGHT

# Toronto: Deliciously diverse

BY BOB ROUSE

To get additional details about Toronto, contact Tourism Toronto's Maxine Morrell-West at [mmorrellwest@torcvb.com](mailto:mmorrellwest@torcvb.com) or visit [seetorontonow.com](http://seetorontonow.com).

## I FORGOT ALL ABOUT BASEBALL.

Last May, when Tourism Cares announced Toronto as one of its “cares-for” cities, I elbowed out my NTA colleagues to claim a spot. It was scheduled for late October, see, and that’s World Series time. I’m a big fan of the Toronto Blue Jays, and I was certain they’d be playing in the Series.

The fact that the Blue Jays finished well shy of the playoffs nearly dampened my enthusiasm for my visit (from, like, 100 percent to about 98). But after spending a few days exploring the city, I didn’t give the World Series a second thought.

I would venture to guess that a visit to Toronto is what every traveler needs. There is so much variety, in so many ways: attractions, activities, cultures, neighborhoods, sports, food, people, hangouts ... and on and on. I had visited the city several years before, but it just feels different now.

“The city is constantly changing, which makes our job easier. We can always tell new stories,” Vanessa Somarriba told me during lunch at a downtown pizzeria (where even the pizza seemed new and different—see page 32 for evidence). Somarriba is the media relations manager for **Tourism Toronto**, and she said that in a city of neighborhoods, even the streets change. “As you walk down Queen Street, for example, it can go from grainy to Saks.”



MARY CATHERINE DORSETT

PHOTOS: As part of Team NTA attending Tourism Cares for Toronto (with Mary Catherine Dorsett [center] and Catherine Prather), I explored the city at street level with a graffiti tour showcasing Toronto's prolific street artists, and I enjoyed a bird's eye view—and dinner—atop the CN Tower.



*NTA members are in bold type.*

TOP: BOB ROUSE



## Bring on the brunch

And I know Queen Street.

I joined a local couple on a brunch tour led by Francisco Tejada of Culinary Adventures. Cisco said a foodie tour is the best way to dive into a city's soul, as the diversity of cuisines indicates the multicultural makeup of a destination. And Toronto is multiculturally amazing.

Our deconstructed brunch took us along the trendy streets of Queen and King, and the menu included chocolate chip cookies (our starter), Brooklynesque pizza, a Mexican main course of eggs and chorizo, a *bombolone* (Italian filled doughnut), seaweed chips at a Japanese grocery and a fresh croissant from a French bakery.

The city's multiculturalism extends well past brunch.

"Our diversity is a real asset," Somarriba said. "When you come to Toronto you really see it, and you hear the different languages."

More than 160 languages are spoken within the metropolitan area, and Tourism Toronto provides materials in 100



TOURISM TORONTO

different languages. English is the most common mother tongue, spoken by 55 percent of Torontonians, followed by the Chinese languages, Italian, Punjabi, Tagalog (Filipino) and Spanish. Canada's other official language, French, ranks 14th.

## A diverse destination

Groups appreciate Toronto's diversity of tour product, said Maxine Morrell-West, North America leisure trade manager for Tourism Toronto. "We truly have something every visitor can enjoy: theater, museums, galleries, festivals, tours, shopping and group dining."

I did stop eating long enough to hop on a bus for a city tour, and an attraction I really enjoyed was Casa Loma, a 98-room castle built in 1911–14 by industrialist Sir Henry Mill Pellatt on a hill overlooking Toronto.

Pellatt was innovative and extravagant in the design of his lavish dwelling: It includes 30 bathrooms, a built-in vacuum system, secret passageways, a steam-heated greenhouse and several accessible towers. Toured with an audio guide, the historical home and gardens offer a fascinating look into the ostentatious world of the ultra-rich. Spoiler alert: Sir Henry luxuriated in Casa Loma for less than 10 years before he lost his fortune and his castle.

A short way from Casa Loma is Kensington Market, the neighborhood that both Somarriba and Morrell-West tabbed as their favorite.



MARY CATHERINE DORSETT



CLIFTON LI

"I'll go there on a Saturday afternoon by myself and just walk around," Somarriba said. "It's sort of hippie and colorful, with fusion food and vintage shopping. It's just a very different vibe from the downtown financial center."

I hear "hippie" and expect a '60s sit-in. But I came to understand Kensington Market as Bohemian, on an international tableau. Nearby is the Art Gallery of Toronto and a very authentic Chinatown.

The Chelsea Hotel was my headquarters, close to shopping neighborhoods as well as Eaton Centre, a 1,200-store mall that attracts nearly 50 million visitors a year.

"Our location is a huge asset. All the shopping you'd want is within walking distance," said Tracy Ford, the hotel's PR director, who described the Chelsea as a middle-of-the-road hotel with some nice offerings: free Wi-Fi and a family fun zone. "The tour market is extremely important to this hotel. As large as we are, groups can stay under one roof."

I also toured The Distillery Historic District, a collection of restaurants, shops and galleries housed in 47 restored Victorian-era industrial buildings that once composed the Gooderham & Worts Distillery. On my guided tour I sampled cheese, chocolate and beer—yummy.



Another high point of my visit was dinner atop the CN Tower at 360 Restaurant. The food is fabulous—entrees include Atlantic salmon, Alberta prime rib, roasted Ontario chicken and Perth County pork belly—but experiencing the view is all-consuming.

Towers are great places for contemplation. The day had been rainy, but the clouds cleared as the sun set. And as darkness fell, lines of traffic lit up in angry red streaks below ... while I quietly devoured my carrot and quinoa cake. [cntower.ca](http://cntower.ca)

Morrell-West told me that operators often package Toronto with Niagara Falls as a day trip. In other cases, she said, Toronto is booked as a multi-city tour that can include Ottawa, Montréal and Newfoundland.

And Somarriba was eager to tout Toronto's professional sports teams. "The fandemonium here is awesome, and you can get your sports fix all year 'round," she said. The teams

360 Restaurant in the CN Tower



TOURISM TORONTO

she cited are the basketball Raptors, hockey Maple Leafs, football Argonauts, soccer Toronto FC and baseball Blue Jays.

Oh yeah, the Blue Jays. I almost forgot.

## Missed the boat

Due to my tight schedule, I was unable to experience something I had enjoyed during a visit to Toronto years earlier: a harbor cruise. Courtney Mayer of **Mariposa Cruises** was willing to hold the boat for me, and she can help tour operators hold a special event aboard one of the company's six ships.

"Along with regularly scheduled 45-minute harbor tours, we have lunch, dinner and weekend cruises for groups," she said. "Tour operators book directly with us."



MARIPOSA CRUISES

Operating from April to Dec. 31, Mariposa Cruises also offers private events for visiting school groups and can assist with event planning for as many as 575 guests.

[mariposacruises.com](http://mariposacruises.com)



BOB ROUSE

## Pie, please

I had pizza in Toronto I had never before entertained (and I entertain a lot of pizza): a marinara pie with no meat or cheese, pizza with double-smoked bacon and kale, and a sushi pizza. All were memorable.

## Tanks for the memories

BY MARY CATHERINE DORSETT, NTA STAFF

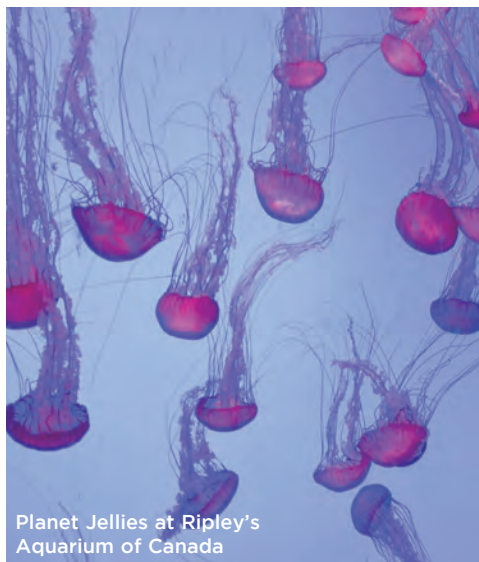
While visiting Toronto for Tourism Cares in late October, I had the pleasure of touring **Ripley's Aquarium of Canada**. I rank this as a must-see on any visit.

The aquarium includes four touch tanks, the largest horseshoe crab tank in the world, an enormous jellyfish tank, Ray Bay (with four species of stingray) and the Dangerous Lagoon, an action-packed exhibit that features a tunnel with a moving sidewalk. You can hop on and off to admire stingrays, sea turtles and fish as they swish over your head.

For the more adventurous visitor, the aquarium gives you the chance to suit up and swim with the sharks. Reservations are required for this popular program.

While I strolled through the galleries, I saw staff divers swimming about, cleaning the tanks, feeding and checking up on the aquatic life. (One diver was carving a jack-o-lantern underwater!)

While you're there, be sure to check out my favorites: the scarlet cleaner shrimp in one of the touch tanks and Planet Jellies, an otherworldly gallery of backlit jellyfish. [ripleysaquariumofcanada.com](http://ripleysaquariumofcanada.com)



Planet Jellies at Ripley's Aquarium of Canada

MARY CATHERINE DORSETT



ABBIE IRELAND & U.K.

**Near, far, wherever you are:** NTA-member Abbey Ireland & U.K. showcases a number of sites across Northern Ireland, including *Titanic*-related attractions and exhibits in Belfast, as part of its Jewels of the North itinerary. Turn to page 43 to read more about that tour and other product in Ireland and the United Kingdom.

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# West U.S.

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

## Six Golden State gems

While California's big cities—Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego—remain top draws for visitors, there are a number of intriguing destinations along the way to those iconic places that deliver their own set of A-list experiences. *Courier* reached out to DMO representatives who promote the following six Golden State gems to learn more about their offerings:

### Fairfield

Responses provided by Anand Patel of Fairfield CVB

#### Why is Fairfield such a great place?

Fairfield is an ideal location for groups because of our proximity to major destinations such as Napa, San Francisco and Sonoma—all within a short distance—to go with the wonderful attractions right here in Fairfield.

#### What are three popular local attractions?

Jelly Belly Candy Company, Anheuser-Busch Brewery and the Suisun Valley Wine region

#### What is a must-do culinary experience in your area?

Fairfield is home to several great culinary experiences. Il Fiorello Olive Oil Company is an award-winning olive oil producer with a tasting room and professional kitchen that offers cooking classes.

#### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

Ideally, three to five days would be perfect for a stay here. That'd allow visitors to explore surrounding destinations and visit Fairfield's many attractions.

To learn more contact Patel at [anand@visitfairfieldca.com](mailto:anand@visitfairfieldca.com) or go to [visitfairfieldca.com](http://visitfairfieldca.com).



VISIT FAIRFIELD

### Gilroy

Responses provided by Jane Howard of Visit Gilroy

#### Tell us why Gilroy is such a great destination.

Gilroy is a great area for groups, in part because we are located just 30 miles from San Jose International Airport and close to Silicon Valley, the San Francisco Bay Area and the Monterey Peninsula.

#### If I have friends visiting from out of town, I always take them ...

Shopping at the Gilroy Premium Outlets. Another must-do is Gilroy Gardens.

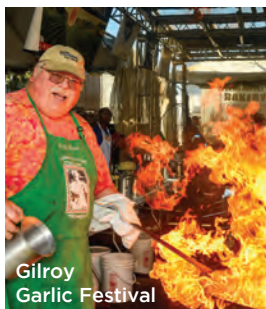
#### What are a couple of your top annual festivals?

The Gilroy Garlic Festival (July 27-29, 2018) and Wineries of Santa Clara Valley Passport Weekend (March 16-18, 2018)

#### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

Gilroy's central location at the crossroads of Northern California means you can settle down here for a few days, enjoy a budget friendly hotel room and easily explore other regional attractions.

To learn more contact Howard at [director@gilroywelcomecenter.org](mailto:director@gilroywelcomecenter.org) or go to [visitsimivalley.com](http://visitsimivalley.com).



CC FLICKR/MING-YEN HSU: bit.ly/2itScdJ

### Mammoth Lakes

Responses provided by Michael Vanderhurst of Mammoth Lakes Tourism

#### What makes Mammoth Lakes a great destination?

Folks can experience the beauty of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, stay in luxury at a fine mountain lodge and enjoy fantastic meals.

#### What are some of your top nature-based experiences?

Hiking in the Mammoth Lakes Basin, spotting the rainbows that make up Rainbow Falls and catching the best fall colors in California.

#### If I have friends visiting from out of town, I always take them to ...

The Top of California via the scenic gondola. It is any easy 10-minute ride up, and the views are out of this world.

#### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

Fall is the best time of year to visit, as lodging rates are low, restaurants are quiet and the colors are just amazing. Mammoth Lakes is also an ideal base to explore Yosemite National Park.

To learn more contact Vanderhurst at [mvanderhurst@visitmammoth.com](mailto:mvanderhurst@visitmammoth.com) or go to [visitmammoth.com](http://visitmammoth.com).



MAMMOTH RESORTS

### Simi Valley

Responses provided by Layma Askarzoi of the Simi Valley Chamber Tourism Alliance

#### Why is Simi Valley such a great destination?

Simi Valley has the charm of a small town—yet benefits from the sophisticated influence of being located just a short drive from Southern California's most famous cities and attractions such as Hollywood and Los Angeles.

#### What are three popular local attractions?

The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum, Strathearn Historical Park and Museum, and the Skateboarding Hall of Fame and Museum.

#### What is one can't-miss local culinary experience?

Green Acres Market. Family owned and operated since 1968, the market blends an old-fashioned atmosphere with an upscale, modern twist and many gourmet items.

#### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

Simi Valley is a great option for places to stay for a Los Angeles visit. It is home to over 20 hotels and meeting facilities and also offers nearly 50 ethnic restaurants and a variety of attractions.

To learn more contact Askarzoi at [svcta@simichamber.org](mailto:svcta@simichamber.org) or go to [visitsimivalley.com](http://visitsimivalley.com).



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## Solvang

Responses provided by Greg Corso of the Solvang CVB

### Why is Solvang such a great place?

Solvang, which was recently named by *USA Today* readers as one of America's 10 Best Historic Small Towns, is a walkable village that welcomes groups with unique Danish culture and experiences, all in the heart of Santa Ynez Valley Wine Country.

### What are the must-dos around Solvang?

Visiting Cachuma Lake Recreation Area for kayaking, canoeing, fishing and guided nature cruises. Also the Museum of History & Art, horse-drawn trolley tours, our five authentic Danish bakeries and the self-guided Solvang Heritage Walk Audio Tour.

### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

We are close to Santa Barbara, but we give groups access to lower midweek rates. You can combine a two-night stay in Solvang with team-building options, wine-blending workshops, painting in a vineyard or learning how to bake like the pros.

To learn more contact Corso at [greg.corso@solvangusa.com](mailto:greg.corso@solvangusa.com) or go to [solvangusa.com](http://solvangusa.com).



SOLVANG CVB

## Temecula Valley

Responses provided by Annette Brown of Visit Temecula Valley

### What makes Temecula such a great place?

Temecula Valley is an ideal destination for groups looking for experiential activities, ranging from cooking classes, behind-the-scenes winery and microbrewery tours, and grape stomping to hot air balloon flights, bicycling and horseback riding through wine country.

### What are some of your area's can't-miss attractions?

Our historical Old Town features specialty shops, museums, art galleries, a theater, tasting rooms, nightclubs and great dining options. Other options include Pechanga Resort & Casino, the largest casino on the West Coast; olive oil tastings with Temecula Olive Oil; and hiking and bird-watching at Santa Rosa Plateau.

### What advice would you give a tour operator regarding packaging your area?

Everything there is to do and see in Southern California is just about an hour away, which makes the Temecula Valley a great hub for day trips to San Diego, Orange County, Palm Springs and Los Angeles.

To learn more contact Brown at [annette@visittemeculavalley.com](mailto:annette@visittemeculavalley.com) or go to [visittemeculavalley.com](http://visittemeculavalley.com).



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Independence Mine State Historical Park

## The magic of Mat-Su

Tucked between Anchorage and Denali National Park, Alaska's Mat-Su Valley is home to nature-based attractions, historical sites and quaint cities.

"The Mat-Su Valley is a region the size of West Virginia, and we're just 35 miles north of Anchorage," says Casey Ressler, marketing and communications manager for the CVB. "[The area] is filled with Denali adventures like flight-seeing and riverboat trips in Talkeetna, Matanuska Glacier (Alaska's largest road-accessible glacier), fishing, outdoor recreation and more."

One of Ressler's must-dos for groups heading to his region is Hatcher Pass Road. The 50-mile road winds its way from Wasilla and Palmer through the Talkeetna Mountains to the town of

Willow. Originally used by Alaska gold-rush miners in the 1930s and 1940s, the area is now a popular recreational spot.

"Hatcher Pass Road is one of the most scenic drives you'll ever take," he says. "You are surrounded by alpine meadows, the Little Susitna River, granite peaks and vast wilderness. It's the Alaska people dream of, and it's extremely accessible."

In addition to taking in the great views along the way, groups can visit Independence Mine and do some hiking. Positioned at the 3,886-foot summit of Hatcher Pass, the mine was Alaska's largest source of gold until it was closed prior to World War II. The buildings remain today, and daily tours of the mine's facilities are offered in the summer.

Along Hatcher Pass Road, visitors can find some of the best hiking trails in Alaska, including the Gold Mint Trail and Reed Lakes Trail. Gold Mint follows the glacial-fed Little Susitna River and goes past a number of waterfalls. Reed Lakes takes hikers to two high-altitude lakes, including its namesake, and offers spectacular views of jagged mountains and the Mat-Su Valley below.

For more information, reach out to Ressler at [casey@alaskavisit.com](mailto:casey@alaskavisit.com) or go to [alaskavisit.com](http://alaskavisit.com).



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Reed Lakes Trail

TOM BOL/MAT-SU CVB



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Circles in the Sand

PAMELA HANSEN

## The coast with the most

"Bring your blanket, binoculars and camera to make sure you will see our migrating whales and sea birds; all the marine mammals, like otters, harbor seals and sea lions; or maybe just the herds of elk casually hanging out on just another day of life on the magnificent Oregon Coast," says Marcus Hinz of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association. He recommends the following three group-friendly attractions for travelers heading to the beach towns along the state's stunning Pacific coastline.

**Circles in the Sand** Local artists have been creating sand labyrinths along the beaches near the city of Bandon since 2015. The unique walking paths have become a sensation, as more than 6,000 people have followed the trails, and countless others have seen them from the Face Rock Wayside overlook.

**Oregon Coast Aquarium** This world-class educational attraction, nestled on Newport's Yaquina Bay, offers many ways for visitors to connect with and learn about the more than 250 marine species in the local waters. Groups can take part in a number of daily activities, ranging from guided tours and special exhibits to animal feedings and keeper-for-a-day programs.

**Tillamook Cheese Factory** Guests can learn more about this renowned cheese-production facility along Oregon's north coast during self-guided tours. This summer the attraction is slated to open a new visitors center with expanded offerings. "Be sure to enjoy one of the Tillamook Cheese Factory ice cream cones and grilled cheese sandwiches while you are there," says Hinz.

To learn more, contact Marcus Hinz of the Oregon Coast Visitors Association at [director@thepeoplescoast.com](mailto:director@thepeoplescoast.com) or go to [visittheoregoncoast.com](http://visittheoregoncoast.com).



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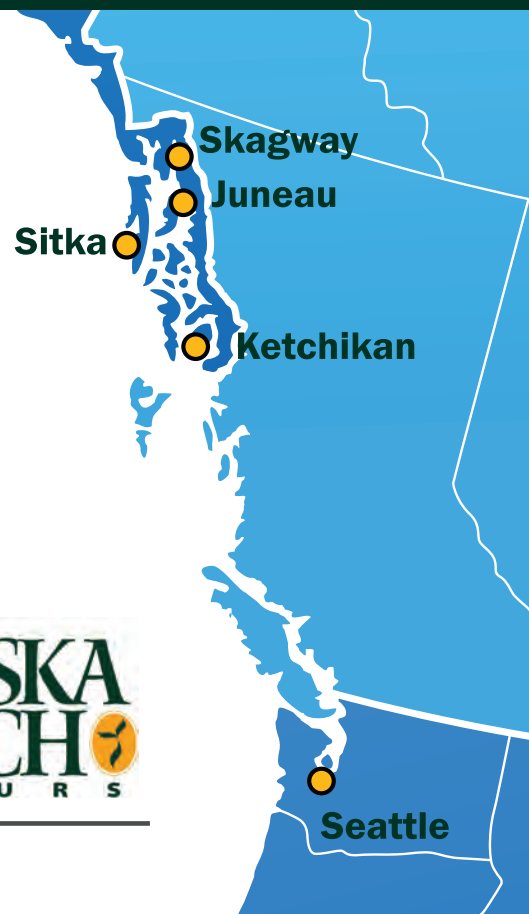
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The Spark Museum of Electrical Invention



North Cascades Environmental Learning Center

LEFT: BELLINGHAM WHATCOM COUNTY TOURISM, RIGHT: NCASCADES.ORG

## What's up in Whatcom County, Washington

Bellingham, Washington, provides a range of nature-based activities for travelers of all ages. Situated between the pristine waters of the Salish Sea and the snow-capped peak of Mount Baker, the destination is part of Whatcom County, which stretches north to the Canadian Border and east into North Cascades National Park.

Annette Bagley, director of marketing for Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, says her area in the far north-

western corner of the state includes plenty of places where student groups can blend learning and fun.

"Visiting student groups find a wealth of discoveries and outdoor learning opportunities in nature's classroom here, as they observe lightning, pick an apple off the tree, haul a 12-story sail, connect with millennial landscapes or just have old-fashioned fun," she says.

Two attractions in Bellingham, Schooner Zodiac Sailing Adventure and the Spark Museum of Electrical Invention, provide unique takes on learning. On board the circa 1924 Schooner Zodiac, students learn what goes into keeping the ship moving along.

True to its name, the Spark Museum chronicles significant discoveries in electricity from 1600 to the 1930s. A number of tours and workshops have been created specifically for school groups, including the popular Megazapper Electrical Show that features one of the largest Tesla coil "lightning machines" in the U.S.

North of the city near Rockport, the North Cascades Environmental Learning Center is a hub of discovery. Students get hands-on education through nature-based adventures, ranger-led activities, guided hikes and paddles, and a variety of summer camps that cover different areas of the national park.

Bagley said additional options in Whatcom County include BelleWood Acres Farm in Lynden and three attractions in Birch Bay: Miniature World, Birch Bay Waterslides and The C Shop.

To learn more, contact Bagley at [annette@bellingham.org](mailto:annette@bellingham.org) or go to [bellingham.org](http://bellingham.org).

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# ALASKA

RAILROAD



## Arts, culinary experiences highlight a Reno renaissance

The Reno-Tahoe area is a four-season destination that blends outdoor recreation and authentic Western heritage with its signature luxury resorts and gaming attractions. “The Biggest Little City in the World” also boasts booming art and culinary scenes. Jamie Lokan, tourism sales manager for Reno Tahoe, recommends the following tours, festivals and new attractions to experience those aspects of the city’s culture.

### Two top tours

**Midtown Mural Tour** ArtSpot Reno presents a tour that highlights the city’s vibrant street art. More than 60 murals can be discovered as visitors follow an interactive map that details the locations of the works.

**Reno Food Tours** The company introduces travelers to some of the delicious culinary creations that local restaurants offer. The main tour covers places in Reno’s Downtown and Midtown districts.

### Feeling festive?

**Artown** Now in its 22nd year, the festival brings more than 500 arts-centered events—including exhibits in a variety of mediums, musical performances and interactive workshops—to Reno throughout the month of July.

**Off Beat Music Festival** More than 100 performances take place in the Downtown and Midtown districts at venues ranging from large theaters to small galleries and breweries during this November event.

### New for you

**The Eddy** One of the city’s newest hot spots, The Eddy is a former container park that is now home to bars and food trucks. Patrons can relax in the beer garden while sampling local microbrews, craft cocktails and a range of food. The space also features art exhibits and concerts.

**The Loop** This new recreation complex will debut in South Reno this year. The 20-acre indoor sports facility will include bowling, a ropes course, roller skating and arcade games, as well as multiple restaurants.

For more information, contact Lokan at [jlukan@renotahoeusa.com](mailto:jlukan@renotahoeusa.com) or go to [visitrenotahoe.com](http://visitrenotahoe.com).

Midtown Mural Tour



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## Cruises, trains hit Alaskan highlights

One of the best ways to experience Alaska's majestic natural beauty is on sightseeing cruises and rail tours. Here is a look at the six NTA members in the state that take travelers deep into wildlife-rich forests, through rugged mountains and out on pristine, glacially fed waters.

### Alaska Railroad Corporation

Alaska Railroad's packages are the ticket to memorable day trips and longer tours. The company's excursions connect the state's most popular cities and provide access to a range of activities.

NTA contact: Heather Dudick | [dudickh@akrr.com](mailto:dudickh@akrr.com)  
[alaskarailroad.com](http://alaskarailroad.com)

### Mahay's Jet Boat Adventures

From its base in Talkeetna in Denali country, Mahay's offers nature-based tours including the Three Rivers Tour, the Wilderness Jet Boat Adventure and the Devil's Canyon Adventure.

Sharon Heim Mahay | [mahays@mahaysjetboat.com](mailto:mahays@mahaysjetboat.com)  
[mahaysjetboat.com](http://mahaysjetboat.com)

### Major Marine Tours & Harbor 360 Hotel

Cruise tours range in length from 3.5 hours to 8.5 hours and cover the pristine beauty of either Kenai Fjords National Park's Resurrection Bay or the Prince William Sound.

Jara Haas | [jara@majormarine.com](mailto:jara@majormarine.com)  
[majormarine.com](http://majormarine.com)

### Phillips Cruises & Tours

Passengers can experience Alaska's spectacular tidewater glaciers, abundant wildlife and stunning scenery on board a speedy catamaran on one of the company's signature sightseeing excursions.

Lisa Kruse | [lkruse@26glaciers.com](mailto:lkruse@26glaciers.com)  
[26glaciers.com](http://26glaciers.com)


### Stan Stephens Glacier and Wildlife Cruises

The family-owned company, which started in 1971, features the glaciers of Prince William Sound as the focal point of its tours. Cruises depart from Valdez, Whittier and Cordova.

Colleen Stephens | [colleen@stephenscruises.com](mailto:colleen@stephenscruises.com)  
[stanstephenscruises.com](http://stanstephenscruises.com)

### White Pass & Yukon Route Railroad

Passengers can learn about the famous gold rush that gripped southern Alaska and Yukon and take in sweeping views as they ride the rails on one of the company's tours.

Jacqueline Taylor-Rose | [jtaylor-rose@wpyr.com](mailto:jtaylor-rose@wpyr.com)  
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# Ireland and the United Kingdom

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## Hop aboard with Great Rail Journeys

With more than 290 individual tours visiting 50-plus countries, Great Rail Journeys has spent 44 years becoming the largest operator of escorted-group rail tours in the world.

The company offers a variety of railway excursions through the United Kingdom.

"It's an incredibly diverse group of islands with so much history and natural beauty to uncover," says Group Marketing and Sales Director Alex Roberts. "From rolling coastlines to cosmopolitan cities to stunning mountain ranges, there is something to suit every taste. Discovering the U.K. by rail is easy and the rail network is vast, allowing you to travel effortlessly through the country whilst experiencing some of the most spectacular scenery."

Roberts says there's a trend emerging among American travelers toward rail holidays in Scotland, where the famous Jacobite train, also known as Harry Potter's Hogwarts Express, is just one of the available rail options in the region.

Two of the other tours include the following:

**Vintage Railways of the Isle of Man:** The destination is famous for its stunning coastline, superb sandy beaches, spectacular scenery and gentle pace of life. This charming island also boasts some of the most impressive heritage railways found anywhere in the British Isles, not to mention the historic horse-drawn trams.



N. MCNAB

The Loch nan Uamh Viaduct in Scotland carries the West Highland Line.

**Yorkshire and Northumberland:** Rail journeys bring to life the history and wild, natural beauty of Yorkshire and Northumbria on this eight-day tour. Passengers follow in Viking and Roman footsteps visiting historical York, Chester's Roman Fort, Bamburgh Castle, Lindisfarne and Alnwick Gardens.

For more information, contact Roberts at alexroberts@greatrail.com or visit [greatrail.com](http://greatrail.com).

## Celebrate the Mayflower's quadricentennial with Select Travel Service

As an endorsed partner in the Mayflower 400 project, Select Travel Service is offering tours to England designed around the 400th anniversary of the sailing of the *Mayflower*.

"This is a story of adversity and welcome, the Pilgrim fathers, the origins of Thanksgiving and lots more," says Manager of Business Development Keith Somers.



SELECTTRAVEL.COM

The Pilgrim Roots group tour includes an eight-day itinerary designed to lead travelers in the footsteps of Pilgrim ancestors with a visit to Stratford-upon-Avon (Shakespeare's hometown); a stop in Lincoln to see the Magna Carta of 1215; a stay in Nottinghamshire, where groups can tour Pilgrim villages; and a free day in London.

The Mayflower Explorer is an 11-day group tour that mixes stops on the Pilgrim Roots tour with a guided tour of Southampton, a river cruise in Dartmouth, a stay in Plymouth (which was the final departure point of the *Mayflower*), and a visit to Harwich, the hometown of the ship's captain Christopher Jones.

Select Travel Service also offers tailor-made tours to fit a group's specifications.

"We are keen to work with adult leisure groups and those specifically interested in following the origins of a particular family, plus special interest student groups and special groups interested in anything from ship building to textiles to theater to faith," Somers says.

He also says travelers should start their *Mayflower*-related expeditions now, not only in the anniversary year of 2020, as Plymouth is a small city with limited accommodations.

For more information on the Mayflower 400 project, contact Somers at keiths@asla-select.co.uk or go to [selecttravel.com](http://selecttravel.com).





## Céad Míle Fáilte, as the Irish say

One of Abbey Ireland & U.K.'s newest tours, Jewels of the North, is a seven-day excursion of Northern Ireland.

"(The tour) immerses visitors from North America in the culture and history of this rugged region, weaving a story stretching from thousands of years ago right up to modern day," says Jennifer McGuire, the company's sales and marketing executive.


On this tour, visitors will explore the wild and romantic beauty of Connemara, unspoiled by the passage of time. At St. Patrick's resting place in Downpatrick, they follow in the patron saint's footsteps and discover the roots of Christianity in Ireland. They also take a famous Black Cab tour, where they engage in the history of Belfast, the now-peaceful capital of the north that was once ensnared in a divisive civil war.

When groups travel to Ireland, they can find extensive air

access from major cities, and the United States preclearance program makes travel simpler. They're also greeted cordially by locals.

"Wherever they go, visitors can expect to travel safely, be received warmly, and experience the inimitable Irish 'craic,' or fun and banter," McGuire says. "Ireland's famed hospitality is matched by the beauty of its unique landscapes and the depth of the thousands of years of history it has lived through, making it a wonderfully interesting place to visit with a vast range of attractions and activities."

Celebrating 40 years in business in 2018, Abbey Ireland & U.K. provides guaranteed hotel space, on-the-ground account handling, quick responses to all queries and customized itineraries.

To gather "a hundred thousand welcomes," contact McGuire at [jenniferm@abbey.ie](mailto:jenniferm@abbey.ie) or visit [abbey.ie](http://abbey.ie). 

## Scotland honors youth in 2018

VisitScotland's themed years are designed with the very best of the country and its people in mind, with lots of events to celebrate history, architecture, food and drink, and, in 2018, Scotland's young people.

The Year of Young People 2018 will highlight the talents and contributions of Scotland's youth.

EventScotland, part of VisitScotland's event department, has developed a program covering the year's events. In July, the Tíree Music Festival will introduce the Elevate Stage program, designed by youth to showcase new talent on the Scottish music scene. One of the country's most iconic landmarks, Edinburgh Castle, will house Knight at the Castle in October, a one-of-a-kind after-hours experience for young adults. Other events in the program include the Highland Youth Art Festival Showcase in August, a Scottish youth poetry slam in September and October, and the Sunday Mail Young Scot Awards in November.

"2018 provides us with a special opportunity to showcase both our rich annual events program and a host of brand new events, which will bring the theme of the year alive," says VisitScotland's Director of Events Paul Bush. "The program, which is entirely co-designed with young people, will further reinforce Scotland's


Music festivals are part of Scotland's Year of Young People 2018.



KENNY LAM WITH VISITSCOTLAND

position as the perfect stage for events, putting young people in the driving seat and giving them a wonderful opportunity to show the world what they are made of."

Scotland's annual events that will receive special programming for the Year of Young People 2018 include Glasgow Comic Con and the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

For a full list of events and activities, contact Keith Campbell with VisitScotland at [keith.campbell@visitscotland.com](mailto:keith.campbell@visitscotland.com) or go to [visitscotland.com](http://visitscotland.com). 



# Belgium, France and the Netherlands

COMPILED BY GABE WEBB

## A cultural haul awaits in Holland

Corné Ruijs, owner of Ruijs Travel, points to the company's long history as one source of the operator's expertise. "Our company was founded in 1919, which makes us a reliable partner with an extensive knowledge of destinations, events and venues," says Ruijs. "We can draw on a vast European network of service-minded and bilingual co-operators, restaurant owners, drivers and tour managers."

Ruijs Travel is based in Lith, the Netherlands, and its most-requested tour destinations are in that country as well as France and Belgium.

On one popular tour of Holland and Belgium, travelers visit Amsterdam, Maastricht, Ghent and Bruges. In Amsterdam, travelers can see masterpieces of art at the Rijksmuseum by painters such as Vermeer and Rembrandt, and there are many, many more museums to be seen among the city's 70 islands.

In Maastricht, originally settled by the Romans, tour-goers will be introduced to one of the oldest cities in the Netherlands.

"You start with a guided walking tour to see the Church of Our Beloved Lady, the ancient city walls and the churches at the Vrijthof," says Ruijs.

From Holland, visitors go to Belgium. In Megchelen, near Ghent, they'll see the Gaspard de Wit Royal Tapestry Works and learn about the traditional artform and the restoration of old tapestries.



Bruges is another popular stop on the tour. "The town seems to come straight out of the Middle Ages," says Ruijs, "with beautifully decorated houses, old guild halls and churches."

In addition to providing destination expertise, Ruijs Travel's staff can provide logistical guidance and support.

"For our tours, we have 22 deluxe vehicles at our disposal, owned and operated by Ruijs Travel," says Ruijs. "The professional and enthusiastic sales team will be happy to create a custom tour or to help you develop new itineraries for a specific group." The company has catered tours to special interests such as gardens, agriculture, castles and battlefields.

"During the tours that we run, we have a 24/7 service, and we will always be at your service out and about."

For more, contact Ruijs at [c.ruijs@ruijstravel.com](mailto:c.ruijs@ruijstravel.com) or go to [ruijstravel.com](http://ruijstravel.com).



Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam





## Food meets art in Flanders

"An eclectic mix of experiences makes Flanders, Belgium, unique: gastronomy; art, architecture and heritage; cycling; fashion and design," says Marco Frank, trade manager for Visit Flanders.

According to Frank, the region, which covers much of the northern part of Belgium, offers affordable lodging compared to other European destinations, easy communication for North American visitors (English is widely spoken) and excellent connections to the rest of the continent. But he especially emphasizes Flanders' culinary and artistic offerings.

"Culinary experiences are always on the top of the list when you are trying to immerse yourself in local cultures," says Frank. "We have the highest number of Michelin-starred restaurants per capita anywhere in Europe."

In addition to its high-end eateries, Flanders' culinary scene is populated by talented chefs running zero-waste kitchens, emerging microbrewers and purveyors of classic street foods.

In the coming years, the Flemish masters of Renaissance, Primitive and Baroque painting will be in the spotlight as Visit Flanders encourages visitors to explore the towns in which these artists lived and worked.

"The tourist office is putting a lot of emphasis on our Flemish Masters campaign, which will run from 2018 to 2020," says Frank. "We will highlight three different painters: Rubens (Antwerp) in 2018, Bruegel (Brussels) in 2019 and van Eyck (Ghent) in 2020."

"The focus will not only be on the old painters, but we will mix in our new Flemish masters as well. So, it will be an eclectic mix of old and new."

For more information, contact Frank at [marco.frank@visitflanders.com](mailto:marco.frank@visitflanders.com) or go to [visitflanders.com](http://visitflanders.com).



LAYLA AERTS/VISIT FLANDERS

## Your NTA river cruise partners

NTA's membership includes several river cruise companies that showcase Belgium, France and the Netherlands—among many other European options. You'll find a sampling below, and you can go to the NTA Online member searches for a complete list.

### Abercrombie & Kent

NTA Contact: Phil Otterson | [potterson@abercrombiekent.com](mailto:potterson@abercrombiekent.com)  
[abercrombiekent.com](http://abercrombiekent.com)

### CroisiEurope America

John McGlade | [jmcglade@croisieurope.com](mailto:jmcglade@croisieurope.com)  
[croisieurope.com](http://croisieurope.com)

### Euro River Cruises

Leslie Bailey | [eurorivercruises.com](http://eurorivercruises.com)

### Globus Family of Brands' Avalon Waterways

Pam Hoffee | [phoffee@globusfamily.com](mailto:phoffee@globusfamily.com)  
[globusfamily.com](http://globusfamily.com)


### Scenic Cruises

Joe Maloney | [joe.maloney@scenictours.com](mailto:joe.maloney@scenictours.com)  
[scenicusa.com](http://scenicusa.com)

### Tauck

Tom Armstrong | [tarmstrong@tauck.com](mailto:tarmstrong@tauck.com)  
[tauck.com](http://tauck.com)

### Uniworld

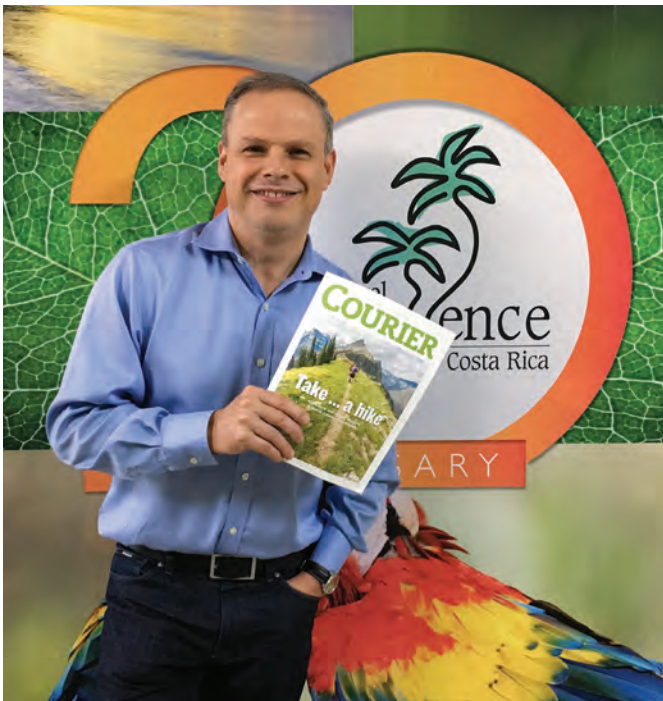
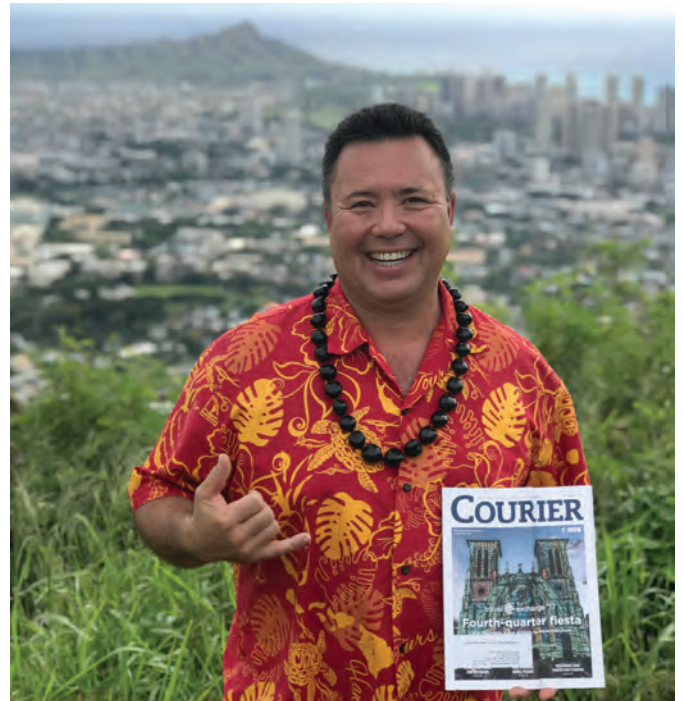
Wesley Bosnic | [wbosnic@uniworld.com](mailto:wbosnic@uniworld.com)  
[uniworld.com](http://uniworld.com) 

*Author's note: It's fitting that I would be the Courier writer charged with our coverage of Belgium, France and the Netherlands. Shortly before press time, I sent out the last forms to apply for Dutch residency. Based on how persuasive my application seems to a group of faraway bureaucrats, I will be packing up and shipping out for a graduate program I've been accepted to in the city of Leiden. So, with some qualifiers (I'm still waiting for an official welkom), this is my last issue as a full-time writer for this magazine.*

*When I interviewed here late in 2013, fresh out of college, our former editor Penny Whitman asked if I liked to travel. I'm sure I said yes. But now I would say I love travel, and many NTA-ers had a part in that.*

# COMMUNITY

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY



## Where in the (warm) world is *Courier*?

As winter tightens its grip on much of the northern hemisphere, the sun still shines on NTA members located in warmer climates. *Courier* reached out to several of those members and requested a reminder of what a warm, sunny day looks like. Clockwise from top left:

Caitlan Etchevers; Greater Fort Lauderdale CVB; Fort Lauderdale, Florida ✨ David Lopaka Millwood; Hawaii State Tours; Honolulu ✨ Patty Kieffer; Visit Mobile; Mobile, Alabama ✨ Carlos Blanco; Costa Rica Travel Excellence; San Jose, Costa Rica

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# Meet the Members

PRESENTED BY **VISIT Clarksville™**

## Idaho Tourism

BOISE, IDAHO

**NTA contact:** Sarah Flick,  
tourism specialist

**Office phone:** +1.208.334.2470

**Website:** visitidaho.org

**NTA member since:** 1977

### What's something new you're promoting?

We're currently working on developing our second year of Idaho Craft Beer Month in April. Idaho leads the nation in barley production and is the No. 3 producer of hops, so our beers are farm-to-table. I'm more excited for this year because of the partnerships we've been working on and the events that are being planned across the state.

### What are some must-see sites for groups traveling to Idaho?

Craters of the Moon National Monument is an incredibly unique

landscape—perfect for hiking—and Sun Valley Resort has a distinguished and intriguing history. As a state, Idaho has a rich Native American culture to explore. And of course, there's all the amazing outdoor recreation available: whitewater rafting, skiing, hiking, climbing, biking, jet boating and more.

### What brought you to the area?

When my husband called to tell me his company was offering him a position in Boise, he said, "Before you say no, just Google it." It worked. Four months later I was packing boxes and driving cross-country with a cat and a dog. Life's an adventure, and so is Idaho.

### What's on your iPod right now (or in your Spotify library, CD collection, mix tape, vinyl LP, etc.)?

Currently listening to Jason Isbell and the 400 Unit on Spotify, First Aid Kit



is on my record player, and I'm really excited to start playing Johnnyswim's Christmas album.

For more information, contact Flick at [sarah.flick@tourism.idaho.gov](mailto:sarah.flick@tourism.idaho.gov).

## Catalina Express

SAN PEDRO, CALIFORNIA

**NTA contact:** Carol Elliott,  
director of sales

**Office phone:** +1.310.519.7971

**Website:** catalinaexpress.com

**NTA member since:** 1987

### What services do you offer for tour operators?

Catalina Express provides the most frequent departures to Catalina Island with [the cruise] taking about an hour from Southern California. With three ports of departure on the mainland—Long Beach, San Pedro and Dana Point—and up to 30 daily departures year-round, it helps us to better serve individuals and groups. We can identify where their travels will take them next and allow reservations to be made to depart from one location and return to another, if needed.

### What makes Catalina Island such a special place?

Catalina Island is a Southern California gem with hidden treasures around every

corner that fulfill a variety of interests. Upon arrival into Avalon, you feel like you are a million miles away from the hustle and bustle of the LA scene.

### What special touches do you add for tour groups?

We look forward to meeting groups as they depart, and we can offer them catering packages. What [tour operators] appreciate the most is the flexibility of changing their passenger counts even the day prior to travel.

### The thing I enjoy most about my job is...?

I travel a great deal for business and personal and enjoy the opportunity to share my love for Catalina Island.

### What do you do in your off time?

I enjoy baseball, running, traveling the world to see the band U2 in concert, and, of course, spending time with my family.

### What travel destination do you most want to visit?



I would love to travel to Germany and Prague, two places I have not yet been and have heard wonderful stories about.

For more information, contact Elliott at [carol@catalinaexpress.com](mailto:carol@catalinaexpress.com).

## Globetrotters Travel & Tours

HARROW, MIDDLESEX, ENGLAND

**NTA contact:** Peter Craddick, sales director, North America, Africa and Australasia

**Office phone:** +44.203.384.5172

**Website:** gttnt.com

**NTA member since:** 2012

### Tell us about Globetrotters Travel & Tours.

We're a small company based just outside of London, and because we're small, we're flexible. I have the freedom to get business wherever I find it. For example, I live in Kenya, and I often focus on North America outbound, but I'll soon be bringing a group of Australians to Alaska.

### How did you get started in the travel business?

Both my mom and dad were teachers in England, and in the summer months, we took big trips through Europe, and that's probably what inspired me. I

got my start selling packaged travel from the U.K. to Greece, and then I got into groups.

### You live in a country many people dream about visiting. What's it like?

One of the best beaches in the world is only a few minutes down the road. And I like seeing the wild animals in Kenya as well. I put a lot of value on retaining the culture of a country, whether it's the tribes of Kenya or the Native Americans in the U.S. The culture is what makes a place unique. Why travel if you can't get a new experience?

### What are your favorite destinations?

I like to see new places, so I don't have a favorite destination. In today's travel



Peter Craddick smashing bean pods in rural Kenya

market, people are always asking for new experiences, and I like exploring, so it works out. I look at it this way: If you've done it, you've got a better chance of selling it.

For more information, email Craddick at [peter.craddick@gttnt.com](mailto:peter.craddick@gttnt.com).

## The Court of Two Sisters

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

**NTA contact:** Sherry Constance, director of sales

**Office phone:** +1.504.522.7261 (ext. 24)

**Website:** [courtoftwosisters.com](http://courtoftwosisters.com)

**NTA member since:** 1993

### How does dining at your restaurant provide an authentic New Orleans experience?

The Court of Two Sisters truly has it all: food, music, history, and culture—everything that New Orleans is known for—all in one place. We are third generation, locally owned and operated, so there is that personal family touch.

### What are some of the options groups have when they stop by for a meal?

It is important to us that groups have the same experience that individual diners have. While we offer private rooms for up to 180 guests, we are also able to accommodate multiple groups in the main dining area including in our courtyard, which seats 250. During the day we offer a live

Jazz Brunch buffet, and at night we offer a four-course Table d'Hote dinner menu.

### What other group specials do you offer?

We have exclusive tour operator specials at the first seatings for brunch and dinner. They are our very best rates and are available only to operators. We also offer tiered pricing for later seatings and comps for escorts.

### What is your favorite thing on menu?

The best thing about brunch is that I don't have to narrow it down—I can have it all! For brunch, my favorite is the eggs Benedict, and for dinner you need to have the Bananas Foster, which is flambéed tableside.

### If you have guests visiting from out of town, where do you always take them?



The New Orleans School of Cooking. It offers a history lesson and a cooking demonstration all rolled into one.

### What was your dream job as a kid?

I always wanted to be a psychologist.

For more information, contact Constance at [sconstance@courtoftwosisters.com](mailto:sconstance@courtoftwosisters.com).

Visit Clarksville  
Frances Manzitto  
+1.931.245.4345 | 800.530.2487  
[frances@visitclarksvilletn.com](mailto:frances@visitclarksvilletn.com)  
[visitclarksvilletn.com](http://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](http://visitclarksvilletn.com).



# Introducing ... NTA's newest members

With this first issue of 2018, *Courier* is launching a page that does exactly what the title says. These professionals represent organizations that recently joined NTA, and along with the other newbies listed on page 54, they give you new business opportunities and broaden your network of industry colleagues.



## American Quilter's Society

PADUCAH, KENTUCKY

*Tour supplier*

AQS, the largest quilting membership organization in the world, produces six of the largest quilting events in the U.S. Each showcases hundreds of quilts and offers a large merchant mall, workshops and lectures. Check quilt-week.com for 2018 cities and dates.



**Bonnie Browning**  
Executive  
show director  
+1.270.898.7903, ext. 146  
bonnie.browning@  
americanquilter.com  
americanquilter.com

*"I have the dream job! I get to see thousands of quilts, enjoy my hobby as a photographer and talk to quilters around the world. When we are talking quilts, we speak the same language."*

## Mariposa Cruises

TORONTO, ONTARIO

*Tour supplier*

Mariposa Cruises is Toronto's largest hospitality cruise operator, with a first-rate fleet of six distinctive vessels. In addition to 45-minute harbor tours, five times daily from mid-May to September, Mariposa Cruises offers private charter operations, scenic dining programs and special event cruises.



**Courtney Mayer**  
Leisure sales manager  
+1.416.203.0178, ext. 206  
courtney@mariposa  
cruises.com  
mariposacruises.com

*"Passionate about the guest experience, I have been welcoming people aboard Mariposa since 2015. I enjoy travel, people and all the unique experiences along the way."*

## Prestige Hotels & Resorts

KELOWNA, BRITISH COLUMBIA

*Tour supplier*

Prestige Hotels & Resorts is one of BC's finest family-owned chain of resorts, hotels and inns. With a passion for excellence and an uncompromising commitment to superior service, Prestige invites visitors to experience beautiful British Columbia, complemented by its unique brand of hospitality.



**Danielle Lister**  
Director of  
tour and travel  
+1.250.860.5858, ext. 100  
dlister@  
prestigehotels.ca  
prestigehotelsand  
resorts.com

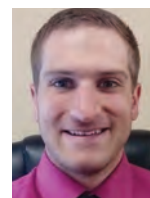
*"I've been in my role for four years, working my way up from coordinator to director. I love immersive travel!"*

## Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center Billings

BILLINGS, MONTANA

*Tour supplier*

Located halfway between Denver and Glacier National Park—and less than three hours from Yellowstone—the Red Lion Hotel and Convention Center Billings is a full-service hotel that includes an indoor pool, water slides, a hot tub, a fitness center, a lounge, a casino and a coffee shop.



**Jase Muri**  
Sales manager  
+1.406.248.7151  
jase.muri@redlion.com  
redlion.com/billings

*"I enjoying working in the fast-paced world of hospitality. In my free time I like to golf."*

## Riviera River Cruises

FAIRFIELD, CONNECTICUT

*Tour operator*

Riviera River Cruises, the United Kingdom's leading European river cruise operator, is known for its highly rated five-star product and exceptional value on 11 ships and 11 itineraries on Europe's finest waterways.



**Jana Tvedt**  
Vice president  
+1.203.916.1485  
jana.tvedt@riviera  
rivercruises.com  
rivierarivercruises.com

*"With 25-plus years' experience, I have worked in every aspect of the business and in almost every venue—ships, coaches, planes, hotels and the not-as-glamorous office." ☪*



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## 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](mailto:gabe.webb@ntaservicesinc.com).



### Katarina Line raises US\$35,000 for charity

Katarina Line-Incoming Croatia announced the conclusion of a successful fundraising campaign in late November. The Opatija-based tour operator raised nearly US \$35,000 to benefit the Down Syndrome Associations of Dubrovnik and Rijeka.

The money, split evenly between the two centers, will help those organizations connect people with better medical care, education and employment opportunities.

The company began its charity drive in early 2017 and pledged to donate one euro for every traveler who booked one of its cruises during the year. The nearly 30,000 guests who sailed with the company represent a record for its season.

"Down syndrome affects nearly one in 700 births ... so we all probably know someone who has been impacted by it," said **Daniel Hauptfeld**, marketing director for Katarina Line. "We felt that contributing to this worthy cause was one of the best ways for our company to celebrate 25 years of success."



### Celestyal names new president, vice president

Celestyal Cruises announced that **Leslie Peden** is its new president, North America. Peden builds on the work of his predecessor, **Nicolaos Filippidis**, who will remain with the company as a consultant during the leadership transition.

Peden has worked in the cruise, tour and transportation industries for more than 30 years. He has served in senior management roles for **Royal Caribbean**, **Celebrity Cruises**, **Virgin Holidays Cruises** and **Island Cruises**.

The company also appointed a new vice president, **Andrew Magowan**, in late September. He now leads the

company's commercial strategy and sales distribution in Europe, with particular emphasis on the U.K.

"Andrew's experience and in-depth knowledge of the travel industry will further strengthen the Celestyal brand as a cruise operator that offers immersion in local experience in both Greece and Cuba," said CEO **Kyriakos Anastassiadis**. "Andrew's appointment follows growth in the U.K. and European market, and we are delighted to have him on board as part of our expansion and development plans."



### Palma to lead Uniworld's North American field sales

**Michelle Palma** is the new vice president of field sales, North America, for **Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection**. In this role, she manages the company's district sales managers throughout the U.S. and Canada.

"Michelle is an incredible sales strategist whose consistent positive and affirming attitude serves our brand well," says **Kristian Anderson**, senior vice president of global sales. "She is ready for this position, and we look forward to the impact she will make."

Prior to her promotion, Palma was vice president of sales for Canada. She has been with Uniworld since 2010, and previously worked for **Signature Vacations**.

### Canvin joins Goway as new vice president

**Craig Canvin** joined **Goway Travel** as its new vice president, U.K. and Europe. In this newly created position, Canvin will develop the Canadian company's business in the region.

"We have been searching for six months for the right person," said **Goway President Bruce Hodge**. "In the process, we came to realize the potential for the U.K. and Europe to be as big as our Australia and South Pacific programs."

Canvin has more than 30 years of experience developing travel product. He previously held senior leadership positions with **Kensington Tours** and **Thomas Cook's** independent travel division.

### New York City announces record-setting year

**NYC & Company**, the official marketing organization for New York City, has estimated that 61.8 million visitors came to the city in 2017, an increase of about 2 percent from 2016 and the eighth straight year of record highs.

**NYC & Company President and CEO Fred Dixon** said that the record will be reached despite a decline in foreign visitation. The city expects to see a decrease of about 100,000 foreign visitors, the first drop since 2009. In a statement, he cited recent estimates by the National Travel and Tourism Office of overall declines in foreign visitation, and applauded industry-wide efforts to keep the U.S. from becoming less accessible to global travelers.

"In New York City, tourism is a big business, generating more than \$64 billion in economic impact and supporting 383,000 jobs," said **Dixon**.



### Barnes hired for U.S. Travel's government relations

**Tori Barnes** is the new senior vice president of government relations for the **U.S. Travel Association**. She leads the organization's policy outreach efforts on Capitol Hill.

"We're incredibly excited to add an advocate of Tori's caliber and character in this new role to lead our stellar team," said **Jonathan Grella**, executive vice president for public affairs. "As U.S. Travel continues to grow our industry's profile and influence, Tori will lead the charge to inform federal officials that travel and tourism is an irreplaceable engine of economic growth for this economy."

Barnes advocates for U.S. Travel's top priorities, which include upgrades to air travel infrastructure, effective security and preserving the **Open Skies** agreement.

She comes to U.S. Travel from the **General Motors Company**, where she was executive director of federal affairs. She has also been a congressional liaison for the **Republican National Committee** and a fundraising director for the **Cystic Fibrosis Foundation's** **National Capital Chapter**. ☘



## Don't let this be the end.

Packaging extraordinary travel experiences doesn't happen alone. It takes a network of professionals built on a relationship of trust, knowledge and experience.

**NTA is where it all begins.**

Renew your NTA membership by Jan. 31 to ensure your benefits for 2018.

### Choose how you'll renew your 2018 dues ...



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NTAonline.com



By mail  
National Tour Association  
101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350  
Lexington, KY 40409 USA



By scan and email  
headquarters@ntastaff.com



By phone or fax  
+1.859.264.6540 phone  
+1.859.264.6570 fax

You belong at 



## 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](http://NTAonline.com) and go to the member searches.

### DMOs

#### Brewster County Tourism Council- Visit Big Bend

Robert Alvarez  
Alpine, TX 79830 USA  
[visitbigbend.com](http://visitbigbend.com)

#### Conroe CVB

Shannon Overby  
Conroe, TX 77301 USA  
[playinconroe.com](http://playinconroe.com)

#### Finger Lakes Visitors Connection

Valerie Knoblauch  
Canandaigua, NY 14424-1850 USA  
[visitfingerlakes.com](http://visitfingerlakes.com)

#### Fond du Lac Convention & Visitors Bureau



Liz Engh  
Fond du Lac, WI 54935-2342 USA  
[fdl.com](http://fdl.com)

#### Middleton Tourism Commission

Julie Peterman  
Middleton, WI 53562 USA  
[visitmiddleton.com](http://visitmiddleton.com)

### TOUR OPERATORS

#### Groupe Spiritours Inc.

Laurence Maurin  
Montréal, QC H2S 1T4 Canada  
[spiritours.com](http://spiritours.com)

#### Voyages Inter-Missions

Valerie Massalaz  
Montréal, QC Canada  
[voyagesintermissions.com](http://voyagesintermissions.com)



### TOUR SUPPLIERS

#### Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Winette Jeffery  
Williamsburg, VA 23187-1776 USA  
[colonialwilliamsburg.com/groupstours](http://colonialwilliamsburg.com/groupstours)

#### Earth Bound Tours

Ian Reddekopp  
Paauilo, HI 96776-0383 USA  
[earthboundtours.com](http://earthboundtours.com)

#### Go Rio Cruises

Desiree Lancharic  
San Antonio, TX 78205 USA  
[goriocruises.com](http://goriocruises.com)

#### LBA Hospitality

Lauren Heldreth  
Savannah, GA 31401 USA  
[lbaproperties.com](http://lbaproperties.com)

#### Presidian Hotels & Resorts

Jaynie Zapata  
San Antonio, TX 78217 USA  
[presidian.com](http://presidian.com)

#### Soboba Casino

Gene Stachowski  
San Jacinto, CA 92583 USA  
[soboba.com](http://soboba.com)

#### Tejas Rodeo

Mark Hernandez  
San Antonio, TX 78201 USA  
[tejasrodeo.com](http://tejasrodeo.com)

### ASSOCIATES

#### Beijing Shi Dai Yi Feng Information Technology Co. Ltd. dba Dragon Trail Interactive

John Grayson  
Beijing, 100084 China  
[dragontrail.com](http://dragontrail.com)

#### ConnexPay

Caroline Perry  
Bonita Springs, FL 34134 USA  
[connexpay.com](http://connexpay.com)

#### Minding Your Business

Sue Tinnish  
Chicago, IL 60611 USA  
[myb.net](http://myb.net)

#### Silver, Golub & Teitell LLP

Jeffrey Ment  
Hartford, CT 06103 USA  
[sgtlaw.com](http://sgtlaw.com)



[afex.com](http://afex.com)



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★ <b>Alaska Railroad Corporation</b> ..... 40 alaskarailroad.com 800.895.7245	<b>Maid of the Mist</b> ..... 5 maidoftthemist.com +1.716.284.8897	<b>Space Needle &amp; Chihuly Garden and Glass</b> ..... 15 spaceneedle.com +1.206.905.2186
<b>Aon Affinity Berkely Travel</b> .....Inside Back Cover berkely.com 800.383.9617	<b>Major Marine Tours &amp; Harbor 360 Hotel</b> .... 39 majormarine.com +1.907.274.7300	<b>Staples</b> ..... 3 staples.com +1.603.223.2091
<b>Coeur d'Alene Casino Resort</b> ..... 27 cdacasino.com +1.208.769.2663	<b>Mohegan Sun</b> .....Inside Front Cover mohegansun.com +1.860.862.8988	<b>Tourism Cares</b> ..... 20 tourismcares.org +1.781.821.5990
<b>Delta Air Lines, Inc.</b> .....Back Cover delta.com +1.404.474.2501	<b>The Outlets at Tejon Ranch</b> ..... 13 tejonoutlets.com +1.609.397.4242 (124)	<b>Tulalip Tribes/Quil Ceda Village</b> ..... 7 tulalipresort.com +1.360.716.6600
<b>Fairbanks, Alaska—Explore Fairbanks</b> ..... 41 explorefairbanks.com +1.907.457.3282 (3783)	<b>Palm Springs Aerial Tramway</b> ..... 35 pstramway.com +1.760.325.1449 (121)	<b>UPS</b> ..... 51 savewithups.com/nta 800.636.2377
★ <b>Fairfield Conference &amp; Visitors Bureau</b> ... 11 visitfairfieldca.com +1.707.399.2445	<b>Redding Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau</b> ..... 19 visitredding.com +1.530.225.4010	<b>Visit Clarksville</b> .....48-49 clarksvillecvb.com +1.931.245.4345
<b>Grand Canyon Tour and Travel</b> ..... 42 grandcanyontourandtravel.com +1.702.655.6060	<b>Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum</b> ..... 37 reaganlibrary.com +1.805.522.2977	

## NTA EVENTS

Save these dates in 2018 and beyond to connect with new partners and destinations.

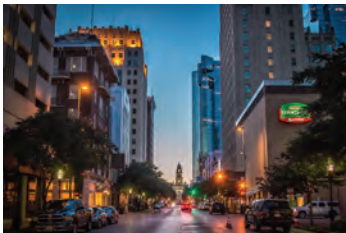
For more information on these events, click the EVENTS tab on NTAonline.com.

### travel exchange



VISIT MILWAUKEE

**Milwaukee**  
Nov. 4-8, 2018



FORT WORTH CVB

**Fort Worth**  
Dec. 8-12, 2019



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**Washington, D.C.**  
March 21-22, 2018

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# The Unexpected Buffalo

BY CATHERINE PRATHER

AS I READ invitation to the Buffalo Niagara Travel Industry Summit, the tagline jumped out at me: The Unexpected Buffalo. Yep, I thought, that's for certain. I had never been to that part of New York State and didn't know *what* to expect.

It turns out I wasn't alone. I was one of nine invited representatives from national travel and tourism associations, and only one of my fellow attendees had visited Buffalo (and that was decades earlier).

Longtime industry friend Patrick Kaler, president and CEO of Visit Buffalo Niagara, told me the city had experienced a transformation with billions of dollars of new tourism investment, including a redeveloped waterfront, restored architecture, and a boom in new hotels, restaurants, breweries and distilleries.

Through their 2014 strategic planning process, Visit Buffalo Niagara determined this renaissance provided an opportunity to reintroduce the destination—or introduce, as in my case. For the leadership of the associations at the summit, Patrick said they wanted to “shatter preconceived notions of our city and region and show them the unexpected Buffalo that our destination has become.”

That really was the strategic purpose of the summit ... and it worked brilliantly. Every single one of us went from having little or no expectations to having them blown away. The summit brought together a broad cross-section of travel and tourism industry professionals to



Participants in the Buffalo Niagara Travel Industry Summit (including NTA's Catherine Prather, far right) gathered in front of a mural by Buffalo artist and architect Casey Milbrand. The mural, inspired by vintage postcards, is a frequent photographic backdrop for visitors and for wedding parties.

tour the city, confer with local and state government officials, meet with media and share our thoughts with some 150 of Buffalo's local industry partners.

The result: Our eyes were opened, our perceptions were changed and our positive, constructive feedback not only reaffirmed the pride and enthusiasm that was evident with everyone I met, but also it helped the local industry leaders see that Visit Buffalo Niagara is involved and connected at the national tourism level. They saw that Patrick and his team—including the fabulous Judy Smith and Leah Mueller—are working diligently on the destination's behalf.

I encourage other DMOs to “borrow” the idea of this summit, so let me give a few more details. It was a whirlwind trip to Buffalo, and they packed in a lot for us. Our guided city tour included stops to visit examples of the amazing revitalization, including The Westin Buffalo, the Harborcenter Hotel and Ice Rinks, Hotel Henry and dinner at the Darwin Martin House, which was designed by

famed architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

The next morning we met with Mayor Byron Brown, U.S. Rep. Brian Higgins and Lt. Gov. Kathy Hochul and shared our thoughts about what we had experienced the previous day. We next had a media meet-and-greet, and finally, we had lunch with local tourism industry reps and, during a panel discussion, shared our insights on trends and opportunities for the different market segments each of our associations represented.

When I travel for work, there are two questions that always, immediately, come to mind as I'm experiencing a destination: Would I want to come back with my family? And what's here for an NTA operator? In Buffalo, the answers were Yes! ... *and so much!*

And now that I've been, I really encourage my friends there to rethink their tagline. To me, it's absolutely “Buffalo—Beyond Expectations.” ☺

*Catherine Prather is the executive vice president of NTA.*

## Together in Buffalo

Besides NTA, these organizations also participated in the Buffalo Niagara Travel Industry Summit:

- American Society of Association Executives
- Brand USA
- Destinations International
- International Association of Venue Managers
- National Association of Sports Commissions
- Religious Convention Management Association
- U.S. Travel Association





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