

COURIER

DELIVERING BUSINESS ESSENTIALS TO NTA MEMBERS

OCTOBER 2017

Noted!

MUSIC DESTINATIONS PAGE 25

NASHVILLE: EVERYBODY PLAYS PAGE 29

GUIDE TO THEATERS, PERFORMANCE VENUES PAGE 41

TWO TAKES ON CANADA
PAGE 21

TRAVEL EXCHANGE BFFS
PAGE 56

Songwriters at Nashville's Bluebird Café



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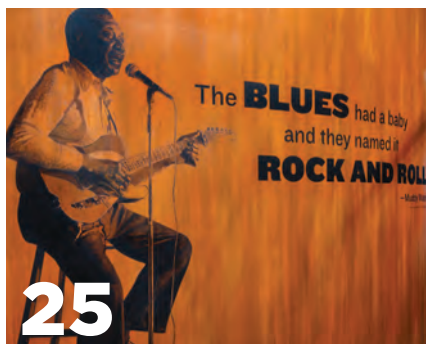
Not your typical barn dance: Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival takes place each summer in western Massachusetts' Berkshires region. This celebration of dance and movement includes hundreds of free performances and master classes that showcase the talents of world-class performers. Turn to page 37 to read about the event, as well as other tour options in the New England states.

Features



Two takes on Canada

Courier's Gabe Webb and Pat Henderson offer their thoughts on their respective recent trips to Ottawa and Winnipeg.



Move to the music

Travelers journey to destinations across the U.S. to experience the music they love; see what's there to greet them.



City Spotlight: Nashville

Visitors to this Tennessee town have as much fun with music's past as they do with its present—and presence.

Compass

34 Great Plains

A heap of history in North Dakota
Good things in the Badlands
Zip lining and festivals and dining, oh my!
Country star opens attraction in Tishomingo
The must-see sites of Kearney

37 New England

All about the arts in the Berkshires
Seafood tops Connecticut, Rhode Island culinary scene
Hotels go beyond 'quaint' in northern New England

40 China

On the UNESCO trail in Beijing
Cirque heads to China

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► DECEMBER ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

Gulf Coast

Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas

The Rockies

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

Scandinavia

Portugal and Spain

City Spotlight: Las Vegas

SPECIAL COVERAGE

2018 Distinguished Dozen

Beach Destinations and Attractions

DEADLINES

Space: Oct. 6 | Material: Oct. 16

► JANUARY ISSUE

DESTINATIONS

West U.S.

Alaska, California, Nevada, Oregon, Washington

Belgium, France and the Netherlands

Ireland and the United Kingdom

City Spotlight: Toronto

SPECIAL COVERAGE

Preview to Charleston (Contact '18)

Casinos and Gaming

Guide: Casinos and Gaming

DEADLINES

Space: Nov. 3 | Material: Nov. 13

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PUBLISHED BY NTA SERVICES, INC. Email: kami.risk@ntaservicesinc.com

COURIER (USPS 602270, ISSN 0279-4489)(Vol. 44, Issue 8) published 10 times a year by NTA Services, Inc., 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509. Periodicals Postage Paid at Lexington, Kentucky, and additional mailing offices. Subscription rate is \$60 per year.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Courier*, 101 Prosperous Place, Suite 350, Lexington, KY 40509.

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Advertising rates are available upon request. For a change of address, subscribers may notify *Courier* directly, by email or letter.

COURIER'S MISSION STATEMENT

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



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4 From the Editor

6 Voices of Leadership

Business

8 InBrief

Are you request-ready? | Advance your industry knowledge through NTA's CTP program | A busy October is on tap for NTA staff, members

10 Relating to Government

Officials in Washington, D.C., continue to discuss security issues, tourism promotion and infrastructure modernization, and those talks could lead to positive results for the travel industry.

12 2016 international visitation, spending in the U.S. revealed

The U.S. National Travel and Tourism Office released the final 2016 inbound tourism numbers, and, while spending and visitation saw slight declines, travel continues to be the largest services export in America.

14 'Star Trek' was right

Social media expert Beth Ziesenis recommends four tools that have taken language translation well beyond the Universal Translator from the famous TV show.

15 NTA Working for You

Jennifer Aiken of the Charleston Area CVB offers a primer to get you ready for Contact '18, which will take place in the coastal South Carolina city from April 18 to 21.

16 The Interview

Terry Soto, an expert on multiculturalism, shares insights and offers suggestions to help travel professionals better understand and reach this rapidly expanding market.

18 NTA Working for You

NTA's Anna Pettus reflects on three of the favorite things she experienced on her recent trip to San Antonio.

20 What's On

A mecca for marine life
If you like Via Ferrata
Putting the new in New York City

Resources

41 *Courier's* Guide to Theaters

Community

50 Meet the Members

Belize Nature Getaway | Plimoth Plantation | Pikes Peak Cog Railway | Explore Asheville

52 Community News

54 New Members

55 Ad Index/NTA Events Calendar

56 AfterWords

A Travel Exchange-kindled friendship yields idea-sharing and inspiration between two New England members.

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THAT'S ME IN THE PHOTO at right. Not literally, of course, as I'm neither 20 feet tall nor bronze nor naked.

But "Musica," the fantastic sculpture near Music Row in Nashville, embodies my enthusiasm for music. And Nashville. And, maybe, being bronze.

One of the top hits of my visit to Nashville (see City Spotlight, pages 29–32), was meeting Alan LeQuire, the sculptor of the famous piece that was unveiled in 2003. When our group of journalists visited his studio, he was gracious and genuine—and talented, like so many people in Music City.

What made my four fun days in Nashville especially memorable was exploring its artistic heritage and expression with other people. With a group. We came from Canada, California, Oklahoma, Alabama, Indiana, Florida and (ahem) Kentucky. What we shared was an interest in Nashville and in writing. *We discussed punctuation at dinner.*

I discovered not only Nashville, but a new appreciation for group travel.

As luck would have it, this issue of *Courier* features group travel. And music! See Gabe Webb's feature on finding music in the cities where it was (and is) made (page 25).

Gabe and Pat Henderson also experienced group travel, although not with the same group. Gabe encountered giant mechanical creatures in Ottawa, and Pat focused on festivals,



LEQUIRE GALLERY

Freemasons and bison in Winnipeg. Read about their excellent adventures on pages 21–24.

I think you'll get a kick out of reading about a friendship that started at Travel Exchange in St. Louis (page 56). That story, along with solid examples of business relationships originating at NTA events (page 6), should serve as good reminders of why we belong to an association of like-minded professionals.

It's cool to be part of a group. Even if you never discuss punctuation over dinner.

Read on,

October *Courier* Destination Index

Alberta 19	Nebraska 36
Belize 50	New Hampshire 39
China 40	New York 20, 28
Colorado 51	North Carolina 51
Connecticut 38	North Dakota 34
Florida 19	Oklahoma 36
Kansas 34	Ontario 21–22
Maine 39	Rhode Island 38
Manitoba 23–24	South Dakota 34
Massachusetts 37, 50	Tennessee 26–28
Missouri 25–26	Vermont 39
Nashville 29–32	

On the cover:
Songwriters perform in an intimate setting at Nashville's Bluebird Café
Photo: Nashville Convention and Visitors Corp





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IT'S HARD TO BELIEVE that I recently started my fourth year with NTA! During that time, my list of industry friends has grown, along with my list of interesting stories about connections that have been made. I expect each of you has a similar list, and the longer you've been with NTA, the better the stories! One thing I do know is that there are three degrees of separation, no matter who you start with.

With Travel Exchange on the horizon, I asked members of the executive committee of the NTA Board of Directors to give an example of how a connection they made at an NTA resulted in new partnerships. Some of the responses were long, so I'll share half of them now and half next month.

I hope these stories will remind you of the importance—and the fun—of networking at Travel Exchange and Contact. I'll be eager to hear your story when I see you in San Antonio.



Paul Larsen
Ed-Ventures Inc.

A travel agent client of mine once called and said, "I know you take wine groups to Europe, but can you do Oregon? The Willamette Valley, to be specific. And I don't want tourist wine tastings; I want high-end, authentic wine tastings! Can you do it?"

I had just come back from Contact in Portland, and I knew Lisa Ite of Travel Oregon. As soon as I hung up the phone—after telling the client "yes"—I called Lisa, and she sent me amazing ideas and contacts.

I talked the client into offering an optional beer and food tour extension to Portland. All but two of the 30 travelers opted for it, and afterwards the travel agent talked up this tour to her peers. Next year I'll have multiple groups departing on this itinerary that Travel Oregon helped me put together.

In another instance, we received a request that a donor with deep pockets wanted to pay for a trip for a group of 30 girls to travel south and learn more about their heritage and opportunities, including visits to historically black colleges. I had no doubt this could be done with help from NTA friends.

The Memphis and Nashville CVBs were amazing partners in setting up this experience. Some of the girls applied for scholarships during the college visits, and all came back with a better understanding of what could be. When Patty Culp of the Alabama Tourism Council heard this story, she and a friend gave me great suggestions. Now the state of Alabama has the inside track for the 2019 trip.

Those are just two stories. Ed-Ventures' international outbound business is steadily growing, but the amazing thing is 20 percent of our groups in 2016 were within North America. It was not that way a few years ago. Our NTA friends are a big part of our growth, because "Together, we go further!"



Justin Osbon
Image Tours Inc.

It was Spring Meet in Louisville, and we were sitting in Millionaire's Row during a reception at Churchill Downs. I was just taking in the scene and wondering what it must be like during the Derby, and a nice gentleman sat down and asked me about my company. After a 15- or 20-minute conversation we parted ways and continued to have a great night. About three weeks later I received an email from Dan Dipert about putting a group together for Europe the following year.

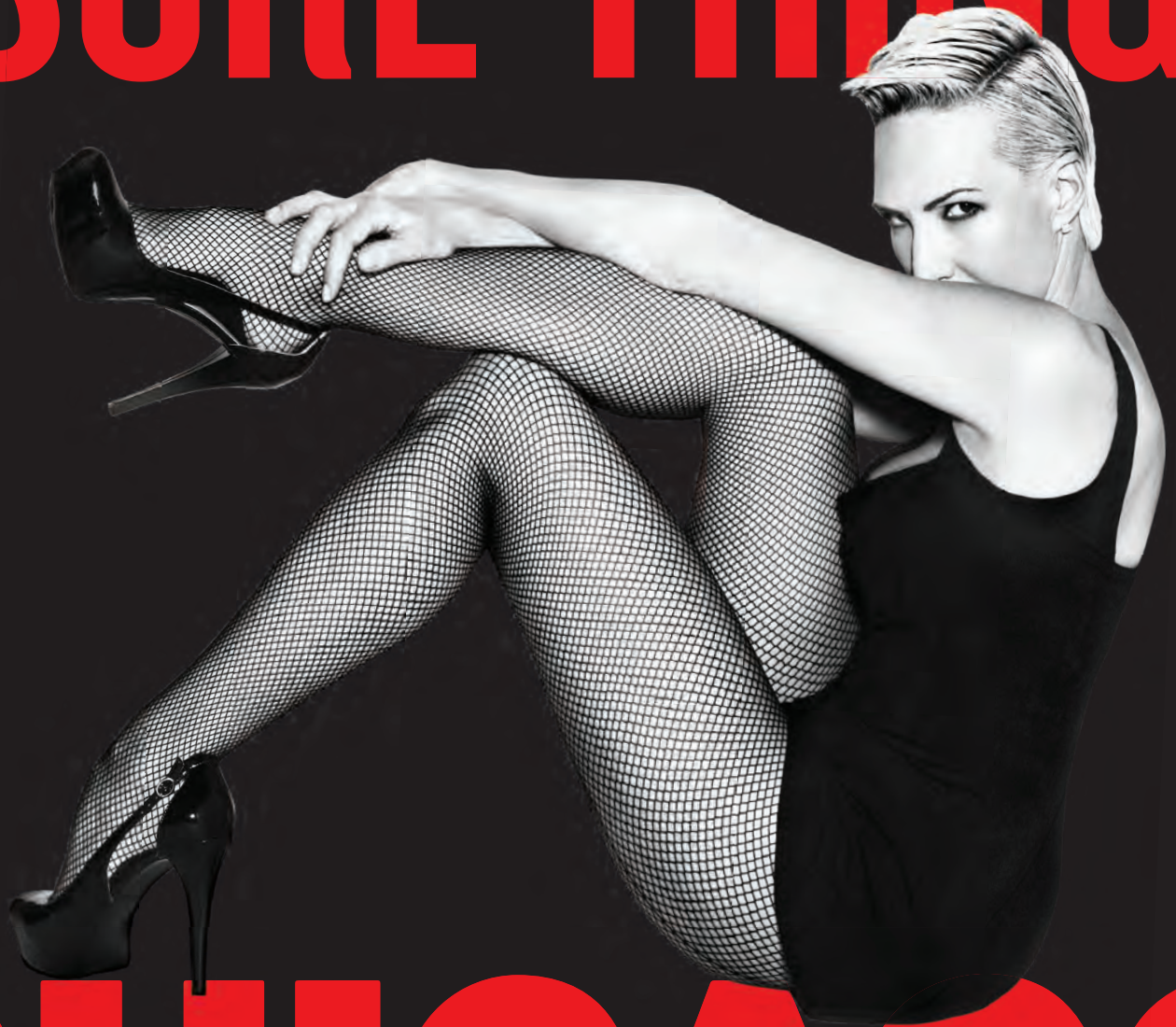


Jodi Danyluk
Norwegian Cruise Line

Chris and Ping Lee, owners of ChinaPlus Tours not only welcomed me into the NTA family, but they also opened my eyes and stirred my deep desire to embrace the China inbound market. It was August 2013 and I was attending Contact in Hawaii, along with Chris and Ping.

NCL agreed to sponsor the dinner for the Chinese speakers from top travel companies from Beijing. In preparation for this dinner, I approached Chris and Ping and asked that they share best practices, traditions and etiquette when dealing with the China market. What started out with a handshake has turned into a rich friendship and a collection of partners across the globe that stays in contact via WeChat.

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Are you request-ready?

Appointment scheduling for Travel Exchange '17 in San Antonio (Dec. 14–18) is set to open Wednesday, Oct. 11. Are you ready? Not sure? An easy way to find out is to ask yourself ...

Have I registered? The earlier you sign up for the event, the better matched your appointments will be. So if you're planning on registering, now's the time.

Is my profile up to date? Your online profile is one of your best tools during the appointment scheduling process. Never forget that people are viewing it and sizing you up as a possible business partner. Make sure you have it looking spick and span before Oct. 11.

Have I done my research? The key to a good appointment is a good match, and knowing exactly what you're looking for can help you move quickly through the process. The appointment request system is the place to go to research companies before you submit your final request list.

Once you can answer "yes" to all of the above, you're good to go. We'll see you in San Antonio for a successful show! Registration is open at NTAonline.com/convention.



A busy October is on tap for NTA staff, members

Your association will be represented at a number of key industry events in October, including the following six:

WeChat Meet Up

Toronto (Oct. 12)

Association members and prospects will come together to hear what's new with NTA from Morgan Maravich and learn more about the industry. The event will take place from 9:30 to noon at the CN Tower's Maple Leaf Cinema, and you can RSVP by emailing headquarters@ntastaff.com.

Greater Nashville Hospitality Association

Nashville (Oct. 18)

NTA President Pam Inman will be one of the presenters at the association's upcoming meeting.

Buffalo Niagara Travel Industry Summit

Buffalo (Oct. 18–19)

NTA's Catherine Prather will be on hand for this event, which is geared toward educating state and local elected officials about the value of tourism and highlighting what's new across the region.

China International Travel Mart

Kunming (Oct. 20–22)

NTA's Lin Wang will join association members and other travel representatives focused on the China market in Kunming for Asia's largest professional travel event.

Market Outlook Forum

Baltimore (Oct. 23–25)

This learning-focused conference, organized by the Travel and Tourism Research Association, provides the latest forecasts and information on travel trends. NTA will be represented by Pam Inman.

Tourism Cares for Toronto

Toronto (Oct. 26–27)

Tourism Cares will bring together more than 200 industry professionals—including a number of NTA members, as well as staffers Catherine Prather, Bob Rouse and Mary Catherine Dorsett—for its first Canadian work project. ☺

Advance your industry knowledge through NTA's CTP program

During the 30 years that NTA has offered its Certified Tour Professional program, more than 330 individuals have become graduates. Your association recently worked with The Travel Institute to update the curriculum, which you must go through to earn this valuable industry designation.

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NTA will recognize the 2017 graduates as part of a luncheon at Travel Exchange in San Antonio, Dec. 14–18.

You can begin your CTP journey today by contacting NTA Education and Research Manager Phillip Strunk at phillip.strunk@ntastaff.com or by visiting ntaonline.com/education/ctp.



NTA President Pam Inman recognizes a recent group of NTA members who earned their Certified Tour Program designation.

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RELATING TO GOVERNMENT

INSIGHTS ON U.S. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES AND INDUSTRY TOPICS

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Pro-travel issues advance from Congress and the White House

WHILE CONGRESS and the Trump administration often appear at odds with one another, issues important to the travel and tourism sector have recently advanced. Congress has clearly made travel security, travel modernization and tourism promotion a priority as part of its funding plan for fiscal year 2018. The White House is also looking for ways to improve and enhance infrastructure spending, an issue important to the travel and tourism industry.

As NTA has remained engaged with the U.S. federal government on its priorities, the House, the Senate and even the

White House have remained responsive to the needs of the tourism sector.

In July both the House and Senate appropriations committees marked up their respective Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriations bills for fiscal year 2018. The Senate bill proposes an increase to the Passenger Facility Charge, a fee charged by airports to passengers to fund airport infrastructure.

PFCs enable airports to fund modernization projects that can reduce congestion and enhance the overall traveling experience. PFCs are currently capped

at \$4.50, and the Senate bill would increase this cap to \$8.50 at the point of origin. The House bill does not include this increase. It is likely, however, that airlines and others will vehemently oppose this increase during the THUD appropriations conference committee later this year.

The Trump administration's proposed FY2018 budget, which was presented to Congress in May, included the elimination of Brand USA, a public-private partnership that was established by the Travel Promotion Act of 2009. Brand USA markets the U.S. abroad as a top travel



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destination and communicates U.S. visa and entry policies.

Brand USA's federal funding comes from \$10 of each \$14 Electronic System for Travel Authorization fee paid by travelers entering the U.S. from Visa Waiver Program nations. These funds are then matched by private-sector contributors.

The House FY2018 bill for the Department of Homeland Security appropriations, which funds the U.S. Customs and Border Protection—and, thus, VWP—did not include funding redirected from Brand USA. This is a clear win for the industry and shows just how much Congress supports the travel and tourism sector.

On Sept. 30, the Federal Aviation Administration's spending authority was set to expire, unless Congress passed new legislation. At press time, it appeared that the House and Senate would not be able to both pass their

Congress has clearly made travel security, travel modernization and tourism promotion a priority as part of its funding plan for fiscal year 2018.

respective legislation and then come together for a conference committee in time to meet that deadline. It is likely that the House and Senate will pass a short-term extension for the FAA, possibly through December.

In the House, the fight is over the proposed privatization of air traffic control. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster, a Republican from Pennsylvania, is pushing hard to get the votes to pass his bill. Action on the bill was rumored to occur in September. In the Senate, the FAA bill faces a number of obstacles, including a fight over changes to the 1,500-hour pilot training rule and limited time to consider the bill. (Senate rules make it harder than it is in the House to take up

and simply pass legislation.)

Ever since President Trump's inauguration, there has been near-constant talk of an infrastructure package coming from both Congress and the White House. While Congress failed to repeal or replace the Affordable Care Act, even with a Republican-controlled Congress and White House, the GOP is looking for a legislative win.

They are currently pivoting their attention towards major tax reform, something that has not been accomplished since 1986. While dialogue on infrastructure has persisted, a timeline has never been established. The administration's proposal, though largely devoid of details, does flag repatriating corporate profits held overseas. Many have asserted that these funds should go toward infrastructure.

At the end of August, the White House held an event with the Office of Management and Budget Director Mick Mulvaney, Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao and other senior members of the administration's infrastructure team to brief state, local and tribal leaders on the president's rebuilding initiative.

The current infrastructure plan begins with providing federal funding for projects that are already partially funded through local or private means. The plan will then shift to rural areas and will use the rest of the \$200 billion federal funding goal to emphasize transformative infrastructure technology, such as new ways of building roads, tunnels and bridges. In the Senate, the Democrats have proposed a trillion dollar infrastructure package.

While an exact infrastructure plan and its timing remain relatively unclear, it is clear that both Congress and the White House are focused on improving and enhancing the manner in which citizens and visitors travel around the United States. These pro-travel advancements are a success for NTA, and they indicate that elected officials are aware of the importance of the tourism industry. 📍

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

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2016 international visitation, spending in the U.S. revealed

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

TRAVEL IS THE LARGEST services export of the United States, accounting for 33 percent of all services exports and 11 percent of goods and services exports. As an export, travel and tourism totals exceeded receipts from the sales of automobiles, U.S. agricultural products and consumer goods.

International spending

2016 travel and tourism exports totaled \$244.7 billion, which was down 1 percent from record spending in 2015. This is the first decline in total travel and tourism exports since 2009.

The travel export total comprised \$205.9 billion in travel exports (the money spent by international visitors within the United States) and \$38.8 billion in passenger air transport exports (the money paid by non-resident visitors to the country for their flights). The decline in total travel exports was largely due to the 8 percent drop in passenger air transport receipts, as travel exports were at almost the same as level as 2015.

Again in 2016, the top total travel export market was the People's Republic of China (excluding Hong Kong), posting a record \$33 billion. The remaining top five travel export markets were Canada (\$20.9 billion), Mexico (\$20.2 billion), Japan (\$16.1 billion) and the United Kingdom (\$16 billion).

With the overall decline in travel exports in 2016, there were dramatic differences in the rates of change by market. Only four of the top 10 travel markets posted increases in 2016. They were China (up 9 percent), Mexico (3 percent), India (14 percent) and South Korea (4 percent). Those same countries were the only ones in the top 10 to post record highs in 2016. The top 10 nations accounted for 64 percent of all travel export markets for the country, the same as in the previous year. Information for the top 10 travel export markets can be seen in Table 1.

International arrivals

The United States welcomed 75.6 million international visitors in 2016, nearly 1.9 million (2 percent) fewer than the previous year. As with international spending, 2016's arrivals to the United

States also saw the first decline since 2009, after setting records for six consecutive years. Only three of the top 10 arrivals markets posted growth in 2016. They were Mexico (up 2 percent), China (15 percent) and South Korea (12 percent). The top 10 international arrivals markets are highlighted in Table 2.

In 2016 Canada and Mexico continued as the top inbound markets. Overnight volume from Canada was 19.3 million travelers in 2016, a 7 percent decline from 2015. At the same time, Mexico continued to set records for arrivals when the U.S. hosted 18.7 million visits, an increase of 2 percent.

The United Kingdom (-7 percent), Japan (-5 percent) and China (+15 percent) rounded out the top five inbound markets. In 2016, only seven of the top 20 inbound visitor markets posted increases in visits; of those, three generated double-digit increases and six set records. The top 20 markets accounted for 88 percent of all international visits to the United States, which is the same as the year before.

Annual overseas arrivals (a statistic that excludes Canada and Mexico) totaled 37.6 million in 2016. Overseas travel also declined by 2 percent for the year. Travel from these markets accounted for nearly 50 percent of total arrivals to the United States. Watch the NTTO website—travel.trade.gov—for the Top 50 Arrivals Report, which will be released after this issue goes to press.

City arrivals and visitation

In 2016 the different rates for arrivals at the top ports of entry for inbound travel had a significant impact on the destinations within the United States. The top five overseas ports of entry were New York's JFK Airport (6.4 million), Miami (4.9 million), Los Angeles (4.1 million), Honolulu (2.3 million) and San Francisco (2.2 million).

Only seven of the top 15 reported single-digit growth, whereas two of the top 15 ports of entry posted double-digit declines. Each destination within the U.S. is dependent upon a mix of ports that generate travelers to their state, territory or city. It's the shifts in this mix from year-to-year that determine the volume and rate of change in the

Table 1 Spending: Top 10 markets for 2016 spending in the U.S.

Rank	Country	Spending (billions)	Change from 2015
1	China	33	+9%
2	Canada	20.9	-8%
3	Mexico	20.2	+3%
4	Japan	16.1	-7%
5	United Kingdom	16	-4%
6	India	13.6	+14%
7	Brazil	11	-20%
8	Australia	8.7	-7%
9	South Korea	8.6	+4%
10	Germany	8	-9%

Table 2 Arrivals: Top 10 markets for 2016 visitation to the U.S.

Rank	Country	Arrivals (millions)	Change from 2015
1	Canada	19.3	-7%
2	Mexico	18.7	+2%
3	United Kingdom	4.6	-7%
4	Japan	3.6	-5%
5	China	3	+15%
6	Germany	2	-10%
7	South Korea	2	+12%
8	Brazil	1.7	-24%
9	France	1.6	-7%
10	Australia	1.4	-7%

number of travelers hosted.

Rankings for the top 10 cities visited by overseas travelers (not necessarily their port of entry) in 2016 remain almost identical to 2015. Los Angeles/Long Beach (No. 3) and Honolulu/Oahu (No. 7) saw slight increases in visitation; all other cities in the top 10 recorded declines. The market share of the top 10 cities is detailed in Table 3.

To see additional information on the top arrivals and spending markets for the U.S., go to the Inbound Travel to the U.S. page on the NTTO website, bit.ly/2xResAv.

About NTTO

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

**Table 3
U.S. cities 2016 market
share of overseas visitors**

Rank	City	2016 market share
1	New York City	26%
2	Miami	14.3%
3	Los Angeles/Long Beach	13.2%
4	Orlando	11.9%
5	San Francisco	9.5%
6	Las Vegas	8.9%
7	Honolulu/Oahu	6.4%
8	Washington, D.C.	5.6%
9	Boston	4.1%
10	Chicago	3.9%

Table 3:
Totals exceed
100 percent because
travelers can list up to
eight destinations visited.

Source for all charts:
U.S. Department of
Commerce, National
Travel and Tourism Office

'Star Trek' was right

Translation tools you can use today

BY BETH ZIESENIS



IN "STAR TREK," intergalactic travelers used the Universal Translator gadget to communicate with Klingons and other beings that didn't speak the Federation Standard Language (which happened to be English—lucky for us).

Today's translation technology represents science fiction come to life. Check out these four translation apps to discover why it's a good time to be a nerd in the tour industry.

Microsoft Translator

Translation tool with instant translation for multiple languages

Translator.microsoft.com and in app stores

An American, a German and a Russian walk into a bar. The American says, "Let's all be friends. I'll buy the next round!"

Perplexed, the German and the Russian smile and go back to their phones. They don't speak English, so ... awkward.

But then the German yells out a happy "Ich habe eine Idee!" and starts pointing to an app on his phone. He gestures for everyone to download Microsoft Translator, and within seconds, the three are all using the instant translation feature. The German repeats again, "Ich habe eine Idee!" and the American and Russian cheer because his words, "I have an idea," are now instantly translated on their phones.

Microsoft Translator has been around for a while, but recently they made game-changing

improvements that will help all of us immediately. Nerdy tech folks call this technology "deep learning" and "neural networks," but they're just making those terms up. It just means that technology is becoming smarter than we are.

The conversation feature lets someone set up a "room" for chatting. You just put your first name and choose the language you speak. The app offers instant speech-to-text translations for some languages, such as English, Russian, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and others, and it translates text (but not speech) in dozens of additional languages.

To interact, you press the microphone and start talking. As many as 100 of your tour participants can see what you're saying—instantly translated on their screens—and they can respond in their own languages, which will be translated on your device.

Google Translate

Translation tool with augmented-reality tools

translate.google.com and in app stores

Just like Microsoft's option, Google

Translate can handle audio and written translation jobs. But Google's best party trick is its use of augmented reality on printed material. The mobile app lets you scan words and watch them magically transform to another language in real time on your screen. The feature will help you read menus at exotic restaurants.

Skype

Instant chat tool with simultaneous translations

Skype.com and in app stores

We all know Skype as the instant video chat tool that started a revolution in long-distance relationships, but its newest features help keep it relevant and helpful for tour professionals. The Windows app offers instant translation in eight languages and text translations for more than 50 more.

TextGrabber

Translator app with optical character recognition, which converts images of text into digitized characters.

Textgrabber.pro and in app stores

Abbyy, the maker of FineScanner, uses its exceptional OCR tools in TextGrabber to digitize printed material and translate it instantly. What's more, the work happens without an internet connection. ☞

Beth Ziesenis is Your Nerdy Best Friend. She is the author of several books on technology including "The Big Book of Apps: Your Nerdy BFF's Guide to (Almost) Every App in the Universe." Join Beth for her sessions at Travel Exchange '17.



An example of Google Translate in action

Something old, new, borrowed and blue

Recently engaged Contact '18 chair shares her passion for Charleston



EARLIER THIS YEAR, Jennifer Aiken, destination services manager for Explore Charleston, was appointed chair of Contact '18. But being named the face of NTA's buyer retreat in South Carolina this April isn't the only cool thing happening for her—she recently became engaged.

Courier met with Aiken and asked her to share insights on our 2018 host city using the traditional advice for what a bride should wear on her wedding day: *something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue.*

Something old: In Charleston, everything from the cobblestones to the iron gates has a story to tell. We were one of the first American colonies, founded in 1670. Be sure to tour Magnolia Plantation, which is the oldest plantation site on the Ashley River, and climb aboard the World War II aircraft carrier USS Yorktown. You also can visit the Charleston Tea Plantation, a true working tea farm that's a living piece of American history.

Something new: At the South Carolina Aquarium, overlooking the Charleston Harbor, you can connect with more than 5,000 amazing animals and learn how to play a part in protecting them. And while there, come face-to-face with injured sea turtles undergoing rehabilitation at the aquarium's newest addition, Zucker Family Sea Turtle Recovery. You can follow the turtles' journeys from rescue to rehab to release.

Something borrowed: In the tradition of the cities that have played host to Contact, we're looking forward to welcoming everyone to the Charleston area with sincere hospitality. I've been able to attend Contact as a sponsor, and I know the level of planning that goes into hosting an event such as this. We'll do all we can to make Contact '18 fun and memorable, just like the gracious NTA destinations that came before us.

Something blue: Set sail aboard the *Carolina Queen* with Charleston Harbor Tours on its Blues & BBQ harbor cruise. You'll enjoy a beautiful sunset, delicious food and fun music, while taking in close-up views of Charleston's most famous and charming sights. Blues & BBQ runs through October.



The Battery at Charleston Harbor



Magnolia Plantation



USS Yorktown



South Carolina Aquarium



Charleston, SC | April 18–21, 2018

**Contact
at a Glance**

What: Contact '18

When: April 18–21

Where: Embassy Suites by Hilton Charleston Airport Hotel & Convention Center
5055 International Blvd., North Charleston, SC 29418

Web: NTAonline.com/contact; #NTAcontact

Who: NTA tour operators and travel planners. Suppliers and DMOs can attend through sponsorship. Reach Laura Scott at sponsor@ntastaff.com or +1.859.264.6577 to get your spot.

Why: Contact's practical, hands-on education encompasses the topics and issues you need to tackle to move your business forward. Its intimate setting will make it easy to connect, create and collaborate in one of America's most charming, historical cities.

Registration: Opens Oct. 31 at NTAonline.com/contact
Early-bird rates available through Jan. 12



Make contact with NTA buyers

Contact is a buyer-exclusive retreat, but it's also open to tour suppliers and DMOs who sponsor at the event. To connect with nearly 100 key decision-makers from April 18 to 21, join us in Charleston for four days of casual networking, education and good times. Suppliers, DMOs and associates, reach out to your account executive at advertising@ntastaff.com and get on board. Or you can contact Laura Scott at sponsor@ntastaff.com or +1.859.264.6577. We'll see y'all in Charleston!

The Interview

INDUSTRY INSIGHTS FOR NTA MEMBERS

Making the most of the multicultural market

The United States' steady march to multiculturalism is what experts are calling the defining demographic force of our era. By 2044, the country's population is projected by the U.S. Census Bureau to be a plurality of racial and ethnic groups, with no single group in the majority.

Terry Soto, CEO of Burbank, California-based About Marketing Solutions Inc., helps clients deepen their understanding of the Hispanic market, and, in the process, boost their sales. *Courier* asked Soto to share her market insights and offer suggestions to leaders in the travel industry.



Terry Soto, CEO of About Marketing Solutions Inc.

Courier: Why is it important to understand multiculturalism?

Soto: America's population is rapidly becoming majority multicultural, by which I mean people with a heritage other than European. The fact that this dynamic has continued to unfold at such a rapid pace has huge social,

political, economic and business implications for the travel industry. The U.S. multicultural population is over 120 million strong and increases by 2.3 million people each year, 191,932 each month, 6,310 every day and 263 every hour. The multicultural population represents 38 percent of the U.S. population and controls \$3.4 trillion in buying power.

This market's growing size, clout and buying power require thoughtful understanding of what they represent to an organization's bottom line. The need for a culturally focused and strategic roadmap to this consumer has never been greater.

Courier: How does multiculturalism affect consumer trends?

Soto: The multicultural population is not only driving growth for dozens of products and services, but it's exerting unprecedented influence on the attitudes and consumption habits of non-Hispanic white consumers, upending outdated assumptions and expanding the multicultural market opportunity.

While some worry about the effect that foreign cultures have on American culture, the truth is that America's

culture has always evolved and continues to change. America has its roots in divergent sets of immigrants whose cultures continue to make an indelible mark in modern society.

Courier: Can you give some examples?

Soto: When a multiculturally casted and messaged Broadway show like "Hamilton: An American Musical" can command \$800 and up for one ticket—and be sold out for months—it becomes a leading indicator of change and multicultural influence.

Another example of cultural influence on an even broader market is Justin Bieber reaching out to Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee, two of the most celebrated artists in Latin America and among U.S. Hispanics, because he wants to be a part of their hit record, "Despacito." On that recording, Bieber sang in Spanish for the first time in his career. Last spring the "Despacito" video reached one billion YouTube views in 97 days, becoming the second-fastest video to reach the milestone (behind Adele's "Hello.")

Keep in mind that a song in Spanish achieved such spectacular fame at a time when nativism is at an all-time high, and there is much concern over protection of borders.

Courier: What about influences outside of entertainment?

Soto: Food is another critical area in which multiculturalism has considerable influence. U.S. consumers have never been so curious about—and adventurous with—their food choices. Hispanic foods, the most ubiquitous in the U.S., is a \$17.5 billion industry that is projected to grow to over \$21 billion by 2020.

Consumers also can't get enough of Asian foods, and demand for foods from Japan, Korea, Thailand and Vietnam catapulted to new heights in the past five years.

Younger consumers hunger for diversity in their everyday experiences, including their friends, their music and the countries they travel to—all in search of greater authenticity.

Courier: Does that put older leaders at a disadvantage for keeping an organization vibrant and relevant?

Soto: Many corporate leaders and business owners, including those in the travel and tour industry, are older boomer- and senior-aged non-Hispanic white individuals. Meanwhile, younger consumers make up a sizeable proportion of today's economically vibrant consumer base, and they are considerably more diverse. This age and cultural gap creates challenges between older marketers and younger consumers.

Older generations often have a challenging time relating to and connecting with younger ideals, many of which are shaped and influenced by multiculturalism. They are set in their ways and have insulated themselves in homogeneity, which is reflected in where they live and with whom they socialize. This can hurt their businesses, though.

Younger generations, the most racially and ethnically diverse in history, see the world much differently. This population is comfortable with diversity and relishes cultural differences. In fact, it's common for younger generations to choose where they live, shop, go to school, and travel and play based on their ability to access and enjoy diversity.

Courier: How, then, do older tourism professionals tap into younger markets?

Soto: Executives who engage me are typically challenged by multiple priorities and growth objectives, and they are asked to accomplish much with limited time, people and budgets. Many are keenly aware of demographic changes and expanded buying power among multicultural consumers, but their unfamiliarity with multicultural segments—and their own mindset constraints—often affects their willingness to build the internal capabilities necessary to understand and capture multicultural sales.

Many leaders find themselves in this predicament. They simply do not understand why or how they must align their organizations to accelerate sales among multicultural segments. As a result, they continue to ignore consumers in the very segments where growth requires attention and change.

Courier: What are some steps these execs can take?

Soto: Fear of the unknown and risk aversion are common distractors, especially when other priorities are tugging at them, but this is counterproductive. By the time a company asks for my help, they're already feeling the impact on sales and can't afford ignore market realities any longer.

Capitalizing on the multicultural market opportunity isn't easy. It's disruptive. It requires effort and an investment of resources, and it doesn't happen overnight.

—Terry Soto

I advise my members to work through the same exercise I offer clients who are truly interested in understanding their potential with multicultural segments—and in accelerating sales:

- Think about your company's goals, your strategies and the profile of your typical customer.
- Determine if that type of customer is growing or declining in the markets where your company does business, and ask how that growth or decline will impact business if you do nothing to capture new customers.
- Identify which segments of multicultural populations are most like the customers you target.
- Define the size of high-potential segments and take steps to understand their attitudes, values and buying behavior regarding travel.
- Estimate the potential for new business and work to integrate

promising multicultural segments into your planning, strategy development and execution.

At the very least, these steps should help you find out what the market is worth and what you can gain or lose by tapping—or ignoring—it.

Courier: How do people increase their understanding of other cultures?

Soto: Delivering value to customers requires a deep understanding of their needs and wants. Then it becomes easier to give customers what they value. I often tell my clients that we only do well by those people we take the time to get to know, and we don't do well by people we know nothing about.

I encourage my clients to develop a "cultural sixth sense" to heighten their understanding of what would make their products and services relevant to and valued by multicultural consumers. This means taking the time to get to know those high-potential multicultural segments. They must do the homework.

As with any initiative that requires change, capitalizing on the multicultural market opportunity isn't easy. It's disruptive. It requires effort and an investment of resources (people, time and money), and it doesn't happen overnight. It can take months and sometimes years, but once you're on the right path, the results are often significant sales growth, high customer satisfaction and fierce loyalty.

Challenge your co-workers to overcome their hesitation and to take an objective look at the demographic, societal and economic impact of multicultural America on your business. It can catapult you into capturing the greatest sales growth accelerator of the 21st century. 📍

Terry Soto is the author of "Marketing to Hispanics: A Strategic Approach to Assessing and Planning Your Initiative" and "Grow With America: Best Practices in Ethnic Marketing and Merchandising." Her next book, "Finding Growth in Multicultural America: A Certainty for Global Businesses" is due out in spring 2018. For more information, visit her company's website, aboutmarketingolutions.com.

My San Antonio walkabout

NTA's Anna Pettus shares 3 city favorites from her first visit



Down by the riverside: Anna Pettus, communication and marketing manager at NTA, placed the River Walk atop her list of favorites during a recent trip to San Antonio. Travel Exchange attendees will experience this iconic attraction at the Deep in the Heart of Texas party, Friday, Dec. 15.



Meet me in SAT: Visit San Antonio's Francisco Gallegos (second from left) and NTA Board of Directors Secretary Paul Larsen of Ed-Ventures (second from right) joined NTA's Anna Pettus (left), Dawn Pettus (middle) and Katey Pease at the August Meet-up event.

I WAS LUCKY enough to be sent on a “work” trip to San Antonio in August. My task was to interview local members, get footage of our Travel Exchange '17 host city and attend the association's Meet-up event, which brought together area tourism professionals to meet and mingle. Sure, I was there in preparation for our December convention, but the good people of San Antonio made sure that my trip felt like anything but a job.

With barely three days to spend in the city, I laced up my best walking shoes and hit the pavement. Here are three of my favorite experiences from the time I spent deep in the heart of Texas.

1. River Walk, of course

This being my first time visiting San Antonio, I definitely wanted to spend some time wandering up and down the famous River Walk. It was both charming and lively (as expected) in the summertime, but I'm sure we'll be in for a treat in December, when it's decorated with 100,000 lights to celebrate the holiday season. I found my own treat on the River Walk in the form of Café Olé, home of the 60-ounce margarita. Don't worry, I didn't partake in this tequila-filled concoction, but my guess is we'll have a few TREX attendees go for it.

2. San Fernando Cathedral

Situated downtown, the gorgeous and gothic San Fernando Cathedral towers above the city's Main Plaza. With a quaint setup of tables and chairs, and water bubbling up from fountains, the plaza seemed the perfect spot to stop and kick my feet up for a while. So I did. I sat in a pure, peaceful bliss and stared in awe at the cathedral. It truly was one of those “life is good” moments. You can check it out for yourself on the Travel Exchange Iconic Sites of San Antonio sightseeing tour.

3. The locals

For me, trips are made special because of the people I'm with rather than where I am. And for the most part, I was on my own in a new city. But that proved to be a non-issue with San Antonio. Everyone I came across was helpful and friendly, and I can't describe how comforting that was for 1) a people-person and 2) someone who's prone to getting lost on the way to the mailbox. Thanks to Francisco Gallegos of Visit San Antonio, who recommended I check out Pearl Brewery. The name is deceiving, as it's no longer a brewery but a neighborhood bustling with restaurants, shops and cafés. Thanks to my cab driver, who, on the way to Pearl Brewery, told me I needed to stop in Bakery Lorraine. And thanks to the folks at Bakery Lorraine for hooking me up with the best pastry/coffee combo I've maybe ever had. San Antonio locals truly love to show off their city, and that'll be no different when you arrive this December for Travel Exchange '17. 📍



What: Travel Exchange '17 | Where: San Antonio, Texas | When: Dec. 14-18
Register: NTAonline.com/convention

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON AND GABE WEBB



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Dry Tortugas National Park

A mecca for marine life

Dry Tortugas National Park, about 70 miles west of Key West, appeals to both history lovers and nature enthusiasts. Its 100 square miles are mostly open water, interrupted only by seven small islands. Despite its relatively remote location, it is the site of the well-preserved Fort Jefferson, coral reefs, clear blue waters and marine life. There is no automobile access to the park, so visitors must arrive by regular ferry service, chartered boat or seaplane.

At snorkeling sites throughout the park, divers can observe shipwrecks and wildlife. The most popular dive is at the site of the sunken *Avanti*, a three-masted, iron-hulled sailing ship. The hull of the wreckage has become an artificial reef that attracts small tropical fish and 200-pound grouper. Laminated

maps available at visitor centers provide the necessary information for a self-guided tour of the site.

Fort Jefferson is located on Garden Key, the largest island in Dry Tortugas and the place where boats and seaplanes land. Ranger-led tours cover the fort's history, ecology and preservation, and living-history demonstrations and night-sky presentations also are regular parts of the park's programming. Campgrounds are available for travelers staying overnight, and snorkeling excursions along the exterior walls of Fort Jefferson are popular.

Call [+1.305.242.7700](tel:+13052427700) or visit nps.gov/dрто to find out more. —G.W.

If you like Via Ferrata

One of the most unique ways to explore the beauty of Banff, Alberta, is on a Via Ferrata tour at Mount Norquay. Located just north of downtown Banff, the mountainous area in Banff National Park is highlighted by forests and limestone cliffs.

Via Ferrata is a European route-making method that includes the installation of steel steps, handles, ladder rungs and cables into the mountains at places where the trail gets steeper. Hikers taking part in assisted climbs are outfitted with harnesses that attach to the sequence of cables, making for a safe experience.

At Mount Norquay, guides take groups along one of the routes, where they can hike the rocky paths, climb ladders, walk across suspension bridges and view Banff and the Bow Valley. Guests can choose from the 2.5-hour Explorer route, the 4-hour Ridgewalker experience, the 5-hour Skyline excursion or the 6-hour Summitter tour that reaches the mountain's 8,050-foot east peak. Necessary equipment such as harnesses, helmets and hiking boots are provided.

Less adventurous types can enjoy a chairlift ride that whisks them above natural grizzly and black bear habitats to a 7,000-foot landing. Overlooks and short hiking trails are available, or visitors can enjoy food and drink at the Cliffhouse Bistro. The café, which has the same June-to-early-October operating



PAT HENDERSON

season as the Via Ferrata tours, is a good place to relax, grab a bite to eat and take in the sights.

Each winter, Mount Norquay, which is the oldest ski resort in the Canadian Rockies, becomes a popular spot for skiing, snowboarding, tubing, snowshoeing and more.

To learn more, call [+1.403.762.4421](tel:+14037624421) or go to banffnorquay.com. —P.H.

Putting the new in New York City

New York City, known as The City that Never Sleeps, is living up to its moniker, especially in Midtown Manhattan. In addition to its always-changing lineup of Broadway shows and museum exhibitions, that area of the city is welcoming new attractions this year, including the following three NTA members.

Gulliver's Gate, which opened in May, features more than 300 miniature buildings and 1,000 model train cars

representing locations around the world. The attraction covers more than 23,000 square feet on the ground floor of the former New York Times building, and visitors can get a giant's-eye view as they check out 3D-printed replicas of Times Square and Grand Central Terminal. gulliversgate.com

The National Geographic ENCOUNTER: Ocean Odyssey will also add to the new New York when it debuts in Times Square

Oct. 6. The walk-through experience uses virtual reality technologies to show visitors breathtaking undersea locations. The immersive journey includes face-to-face encounters with great white sharks, humpback whales, Humboldt squids and sea lions.

natgeoencounter.com

Slated to open Nov. 1, the NFL Experience Times Square will offer fans a glimpse into the life of a professional football player and the history of the game. Interactive touch-screen displays will test visitors' knowledge of their favorite teams and contain information on all 32 current NFL franchises. nflexperience.com

To learn more, contact Reagan Stulbaum of NYC & Company at rstulbaum@nycgo.com.

—G.W. 📍



GULLIVER'S GATE

U.S. Civil Rights Trail Alabama Student Tour

Sweet Home
Alabama

The U.S. Civil Rights Trail is "ground zero" for the Modern Day Civil Rights Movement. The Alabama educational tour will take students on a journey through living history in Birmingham, Selma, and Montgomery and teaches them one of the most important lessons of the 20th century. Alabama is the state to visit if you are serious about learning more about the U.S. Civil Rights Movement.



The Alabama Tourism Department is proud to welcome all student groups and other tours teaching them about our history where the many brave and courageous citizens risked their lives to reshape America.

**For More Information, contact Rosemary Judkins, Group Tour Sales Manager,
Alabama Tourism Department, 334-242-4493**

Rosemary.Judkins@Tourism.Alabama.Gov • www.Alabama.Travel

Two
takes
on
Canada

OTTAWA AND WINNIPEG



Centre Block at Parliament Hill in Ottawa

Two of your *Courier* writers headed north for some summer touring to check out Canada during its 150th anniversary celebration. Gabe Webb was in Ottawa and Pat Henderson explored Winnipeg.

In addition to connecting with some very friendly Fam trip hosts and diving into each destination's rich history, they were able to experience unique aspects of local culture. Read on to learn more about a giant mechanical spider and a fire-breathing dragon that roamed the Ottawa streets, a city-wide celebration that shined a light on Winnipeg's multiethnic heritage, a "Da Vinci Code"-esque tour at the Manitoba Legislative Building and much more.

A place to stand, a place to grow (and go)

BY GABE WEBB

PROVINCIAL PRIDE was in full swing at Expo 67, a World's Fair held in Montréal during the 100th anniversary year of Canada's confederation. At the Ontario Pavilion, a film showing scenes of the province's natural beauty and man-made industry was accompanied by a rollicking song: "Give us a place to stand and a place to grow, and call this land Ontario. A place to live for you and me, with hopes as high as the tallest tree."

In late July, I visited Ottawa for a Fam organized by Ottawa Tourism. Fifty years removed from that song beckoning the world with a chorus of "Ontari-ari-ari-o," I saw a city and country marking another milestone. Throughout 2017, the nation's capital has welcomed special events as part of the Canada 150 celebrations.

The impetus for my visit was one such celebration, the arrival of La Machine, a French "street theater" company making its North American debut. The group is most famous for building enormous, mechanical creatures, which are piloted by teams of performers. From when I arrived on Thursday through the weekend, La Machine's two-story-tall dragon and spider (named Long Ma and Kumo, respectively) paraded through the streets, accompanied by thousands of captivated onlookers.

When I landed in Ottawa, I was surprised to learn that Kumo was "sleeping" about a block from my hotel, in advance of his debut procession later that night. I was staying at the Lord Elgin Hotel, and I was greeted by Amber Van Der Hoeven, the property's tour and travel sales manager, at check-in.

"Tour groups are an important part of our business, and we take pride in that," says Van Der Hoeven. "Our guests come from all corners of the world, and we are proud Ottawa ambassadors."

For tour groups, the hotel offers special menus, buffets or boxed breakfasts for early departures, as well as complimentary on-site parking for up to four motorcoaches. City parking passes are available for purchase at the front desk, which also has maps to nearby lots.

"The Lord Elgin is a well-oiled machine that has hosting motorcoach groups down to a science," says Van Der Hoeven. "We make it fast and simple because we have been doing it for 76 years."

The 355-room chateausque hotel is located in the heart of downtown, across the street from Confederation Park. From my room, I had a view of that green space and Long Ma's resting spot in front of city hall. However, my date with the dragon would have to wait.

Catch up on the first 150—fast

My exploration of Ottawa began in earnest with a tour of Parliament Hill and Centre Block, where Parliament convenes. The guide who led our group of visitors from across Canada and the U.S. showed us the symbolic details of the building's architecture, explained parliamentary procedure and shared stories from the current building's century-long history.

The original Centre Block, as I learned, was built in the 1860s, and it was almost totally destroyed in a fire in 1916. The only part that was saved, having been sealed behind a set of iron doors, was the Library of Parliament, and its salvation spared a national treasure. The library's rotunda contains rows of elaborately carved shelves of leather-bound volumes and ornate wood floors with inlaid designs.

Public Services and Procurement Canada has been undertaking a massive restoration of Parliament Hill since 2002. During my visit, the West Block building was quite literally under wraps—scaffolding and tarps—while it received

much-needed modernizations and meticulous repairs to its exterior masonry. The completion of the current phase of the project will also add a new welcome center for groups touring Parliament. The renovations to all of Parliament Hill's buildings are expected to continue for several more years.

From Parliament, I headed to the Bytown Museum, which sits on the Rideau Canal and one of the many sets of locks. On the walk from Wellington Street to the museum's entrance on a paved pedestrian path, I watched boats descend from the canal into the Ottawa River. Then I went into the museum for a lesson in Ottawa's history and the construction of the Rideau Canal.

The historic building is Ottawa's oldest stone structure, and it originally served as a commissariat for the construction crews working on the canal. While its compact three floors are less encyclopedic than the nearby national museums and more modest than the ornate centers of government, the Bytown Museum is an essential site for understanding the area's history.

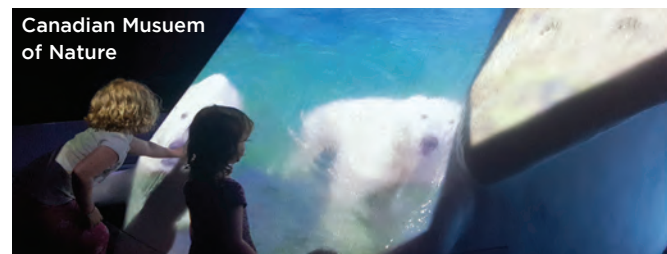
Art, nature and history

The Canadian Museum of Nature was my next stop. The museum's striking facade consists of the stone Victoria Memorial Museum building from the, well, Victorian era, and a multi-story glass atrium that was added to its entrance in 2010.

The museum's interior incorporates the historical and contemporary, too. Some galleries maintain original, massive dioramas of creatures posed in highly detailed environments against gorgeous hand-painted backdrops. A more recent addition, the Canada Goose Arctic Gallery, uses wall-spanning timelines, video screens and projections onto large, touchable sheets of ice to show visitors the ecosystem of the frozen north and educate them about forces threatening it.

The National Gallery of Canada features works of Canadian artists and places special importance on the historical and modern creativity of First Nations, Inuit and Metis pieces. The museum also includes a reconstructed Ottawa church wherein visitors can walk among a chorus of individual speakers broadcasting the parts of a hymn.

The Canadian Museum of History also places great emphasis on the heritage of Canada's aboriginal peoples. Just off the museum's entrance is the Grand Hall, where totem poles stand alongside re-creations of entrances to structures representative of indigenous groups.



GABE WEBB

"You can find the largest collection of indoor totem poles in the world here and learn about the First People of the Northwest Coast," says Stephanie Fortin, tourism and marketing officer for the Canadian Museum of History and the Canadian War Museum. The museum's newest attraction is its Canadian History Hall, which covers 40,000 square feet and showcases more than 1,500 artifacts.

"This new signature exhibition is the largest and most comprehensive exhibition ever done on Canadian history," says Fortin, "covering 15,000 years, in chronological order, from the dawn of human habitation until today."

"We can accommodate both adult and student groups," says Fortin. "We offer advantageous group rates, including combos with the Canadian War Museum."

The Canadian Museum of History also has a dedicated motorcoach entrance, cafeteria and restaurant spaces for group meals, and visitor guides in multiple languages.

My final night in Ottawa, I was among the thousands of people packing the streets for a view of the meeting between Long Ma and Kumo. As the spider stretched its massive, articulated legs and the dragon raised its head for a fiery breath, I thought about how I might describe these two machines. The truly fascinating part, for me, was the elegance with which the artists and designers of La Machine had incorporated thousands of moving parts.

And that's an apt description of Ottawa at large. Look closely, and you'll find a destination with a complex mix of people, sites and ideas. Then step back and you'll see how the city is working to bring them all together to make something grand.



GABE WEBB

The journey to Winnipeg

BY PAT HENDERSON

DURING MY VISIT to Winnipeg, Manitoba, this August, I heard a lot about Churchill. Heck, one of the attractions we visited, Assiniboine Park Zoo, even has an exhibit called “The Journey to Churchill.” Apparently, lots of travelers spend a couple of days in Winnipeg before heading up to Churchill to see the polar bears and belugas.

While I have no doubt that Churchill is outstanding—clearly taking a ride out onto the tundra with long-time NTA member Frontiers North and doing a whale-watching cruise around the Hudson Bay is bucket-list stuff—I’d caution tour operators about cutting their time in Winnipeg short.

You see, there is just too much good stuff to see and do in Manitoba’s capital city.

The three-day itinerary was packed with visits to a range of interesting attractions and plenty of cultural experiences that left me feeling as if I’d only scratched the surface.

Our group, which also included four Canadian tour operators, was led by two of the friendliest, funniest and most accommodating hosts you could ask for, Sarah Robinson and Michelle Gervais. Sarah is the business development manager for Tourism Winnipeg’s travel trade department, and Michelle is the director of Ô TOURS, a local receptive company.



PAT HENDERSON

Hart Jacob (Folklorama), NTA’s Pat Henderson and Sarah Robinson (Tourism Winnipeg) at Folklorama’s Cuban Pavilion



PAT HENDERSON

Traditional dance performance at Folklorama’s Irish Pavilion

Getting Folk-sy

One of the highlights for me was getting to experience Folklorama, which I had written about many times in *Courier*.

The festival, which will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2019, showcases the multiethnic heritage of the dozens of cultural groups that call Winnipeg home. More than 30 international cultures are represented in the various pavilions that are spread across the city, and each pavilion offers live music and dance performances, as well as traditional food and drink.

Folklorama’s group tour manager, Hart Jacob, was our guide, and he had lined up evening visits to the Cuban and Irish pavilions. Both venues were abuzz with activity, and from my perspective, there was no downside to mojitos and Latin rhythms, and talented river dancers and a large dose of Irish festiveness, at the respective stops.

The performances take place three times a night, and the typical group VIP package includes visits to three pavilions. While the festival runs for two weeks each August, Hart says he regularly organizes live performances and meals for groups visiting during other times of the year.

In addition to seeing the entertainment at Folklorama, we also took in a production of “MAMMA MIA” at Winnipeg’s Rainbow Stage the previous night. I have a soft spot for musicals—thanks, Mom—and, while I’m not a big Abba fan, the show was wonderful.

To learn more about tourism product in Ottawa, reach out to Kelly Dean of Ottawa Tourism at kdean@ottawatourism.ca or go to ottawatourism.ca. To learn more about tourism product in Winnipeg, reach out to Sarah Robinson of Winnipeg Tourism at sarah@tourismwinnipeg.com or go to winnipeggroups.com.

Museums and Freemasons

The bulk of the itinerary was devoted to museums and historical attractions, a category in which Winnipeg excels.

Two of the city's top destinations are the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and the Manitoba Museum. The former is a dazzling glass and stone building that opened in 2014, and the latter is a sprawling downtown attraction that is part history museum, part science museum and part planetarium.

The world's only museum dedicated to the exploration of human rights presents stories of violation, resistance, resilience and tolerance from Canada and around the world. There are a number of interactive components throughout the 12 galleries, and groups could easily devote far more than the two hours we spent to ensure they have time to fully explore it.

The themed galleries at the Manitoba Museum provided a wide-ranging look at different aspects of the province's history—both human and natural. While our guide provided good snapshots of key moments in Manitoba's development, including the major roles the Hudson Bay Company and the North West Company played in making the area a trading hub, I felt we only scratched the surface of all that the museum offers.



Canadian Museum for Human Rights

PAT HENDERSON

One of the most fascinating things we did was take a Hermetic Code Tour at the Manitoba Legislative Building. Our knowledgeable guide regaled us with facts and stories about Frank Albo, an architectural historian and expert on Freemasonry, and the decade's worth of research he did on

the symbols, secrets and significance of the neoclassical building.

As we saw examples of numerical symbolism and learned the importance of the angles of certain statues and windows throughout the capitol, it felt like we'd walked on to the movie set of the Winnipeg version of "The Da Vinci Code." I came away fascinated and slightly puzzled, and mostly feeling that the Freemasons may rival the ancient Egyptians regarding the amount of attention they pay to architectural detail.

We also stopped at Lower Fort Garry National Historic Site, where re-enactor programs and period buildings offer a look at what life was like for the trappers and traders of the Hudson's Bay Company during the 1850s. And we toured the Royal Canadian Mint, which has produced coins for dozens of countries around the world.

Bison and birds and other natural things

We left the city behind one morning to pay a visit to Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre, which is located 30 minutes north of Winnipeg. This bird-watching hot spot is home to more than 300 species and welcomes up to 100,000 waterfowl a day during migration months.

One of Oak Hammock's research projects is a bird tracking program. We met with the coordinator, who showed us the steps that volunteers take to evaluate the health of the birds and tag them before releasing them back into the wild—presuming everything checks out OK. While I've never had much interest in birding, getting to hold one of the tiny creatures in my hand before she flew off was cool.

We also took a 30-minute paddling tour around a small wetland near the visitor center. Our guide said he'd never had anyone fall overboard and, although you'd only plummet four feet, I was happy we kept that string intact.



Bird releasing program at Oak Hammock Marsh Interpretive Centre

KAREN ALLEN

On the final day during our breakfast at the Fort Garry Hotel, Spa and Conference Centre, I ask Sarah about getting a ride to FortWhyteAlive to do one of their bison safaris, as I had a few hours before I needed to head to the airport. While we were



Bison at FortWhyteAlive

PAT HENDERSON

discussing the details, the tour operators in the group decided they had time and would like to come along.

Sarah worked it out with the motorcoach company for us to keep the bus for a couple more hours and texted the attraction's Kalyn Murdock, who said it was no problem for more people to join the tour. The main activity once we arrived was riding out to a pond, where we got an up-close look at a herd of around 20 grazing bison. The 90-minute visit at FortWhyteAlive—during which I found it hard to stop snapping pictures of the playful giants—seemed like a perfect way to close the trip.

As I headed to the airport and was reflecting on that unexpected, cherry-on-the-top stop to see the bison, I couldn't help but wonder what other memorable Winnipeg experiences I missed.

Guess I'll find out the next time I visit the city. Who knows, I might even try and schedule in a couple of days to go to Churchill. 📍



The **BLUES** had a baby
and they named it
ROCK AND ROLL.
—Muddy Waters

Move to the music

Musical tours and attractions hit all the right notes

BY GABE WEBB

APPRECIATING MUSIC and appreciating travel aren't so different, and sometimes we might even turn to music and travel for the same reasons. Putting on a record or popping in your earbuds and listening to your favorite songs offers comfort—just like returning to a familiar place. And when a new song on the radio catches your ear, or when you go off the beaten path to see someplace new, you're seeking to add a little bit to the edges of your map of experience. It's comfort, but with a little something extra.

That's also the story of countless generations of music makers; they build on the sounds they grew up with.

Read on to discover (or rediscover) the places travelers can hear the songs they loved. The following pages take a look at the Blues, from the birth of rock 'n' roll and soul to the hip-hop radio hits of recent decades.

The Blues and St. Louis

"Two places in St. Louis you need to look into are the National Blues Museum and the Delmar Loop," says Anthony Paraino of Explore St. Louis.

The **National Blues Museum** opened in St. Louis in April of 2016, and the attraction's 15,000 square feet of exhibition space is dedicated to telling the story of the genre's legendary performers and drawing connections between the Blues and today's popular music.

In addition to housing a permanent collection of artifacts and multimedia exhibits, the museum regularly welcomes traveling exhibitions and hosts live performances. "Kirk West, Photography" will open next month, displaying images taken by West, a photographer for the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Sun-Times* whose subjects included James Brown, B.B. King,

Etta James and other household names of rock and the Blues. Regular music events include the Howlin' Fridays and Soulful Sundays concert series. Special pricing and interpreter-guided tours are available for groups of 20 or more.

The Delmar Loop is a six-block neighborhood packed with restaurants, live music venues and the St. Louis Walk of Fame.

"The Loop has some historic performance venues, including Delmar Hall, the Pageant and Blueberry Hill, an eclectic restaurant where Chuck Berry used to play gigs in the basement performance hall," says Paraino.

Many more musical attractions and performance venues are included in *Courier's* Guide to Theaters, which begins on page 41.

Attractions listed in bold type are NTA members.



Suitcase wall at the National Blues Museum

When visitors aren't listening to live music in the Loop, they can see the names of some of St. Louis' most notable natives on bronze plaques embedded in the sidewalk. The St. Louis Walk of Fame includes musical luminaries such as T Bone Burnett and Tina Turner, as well as Maya Angelou and T.S. Eliot, among many others.

For more on these and other St. Louis attractions, contact Renee Eichelberger of Explore St. Louis at reichelberger@explorestlouis.com or go to explorestlouis.com. To learn more about the National Blues Museum, reach out to Casey Jolley at cjolley@nationalbluesmuseum.org or visit nationalbluesmuseum.org.

The King and his castle

Memphis is the realm of the King, and fans of Elvis Presley—and rock 'n' roll, soul and the Blues—will find no shortage of

tour stops in the western Tennessee city.

Graceland was Presley's home, and millions of his fans have toured the mansion since it opened to the public in 1982. Tours of the home include the Jungle Room, pool room, Trophy Building, meditation garden and Racquetball Building. Fans wanting to see the King's full glitz and splendor (the rhinestone-studded jumpsuits, pink Cadillac and gold records) will require a ticket that adds Elvis Presley's Memphis, a 200,000-square-foot complex that includes exhibit and entertainment space.

The Guest House at Graceland, a new hotel adjacent to the music-note-graced gates of the mansion, opened earlier this year. The property offers AAA Four Diamond-rated accommodations, 450 rooms, meeting and event space, and a 464-seat theater for performances and movies.

Group bookings are available for the Guest House, and groups of 15 or more can access special pricing on tour tickets. Student groups are also eligible for discounted rates, and performance opportunities are available.

The Stax Museum of American Soul Music features another part of Memphis' musical history. With no prior knowledge of production, but hoping to capitalize on the success of Elvis, a banker and fiddle player named Jim Stewart founded Satellite Records in 1957. The name was changed to Stax Records four years later, and the studio would go on to produce some of soul's most recognizable classics.

The museum's collection traces the origins of soul to its roots in Southern gospel music, and guests can walk through a



Stage costume display at Graceland



Graceland's Hall of Gold



Isaac Hayes display at the Stax Museum

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reassembled Mississippi Delta church that dates to 1906. They can see a replica of Studio A, the movie theater turned studio where Stax artists recorded, and see period gear. And they can bust a move on a dance floor in front of a projection of a vintage episode of "Soul Train."

For more rock, Blues and soul attractions in Memphis, reach out to Colleen Palmertree of the Memphis CVB at colleenpalmertree@memphistravel.com or go to memphistravel.com. To learn more about Graceland, contact Shirley Davis Conner at sdconner@graceland.com or visit graceland.com.

The birthplace of hip-hop

New York City performers and musicians have made significant contributions to just about every conceivable genre of music, and the city's hip-hop MCs are major figures among its recent musical innovators.

On Hush Hip Hop Tours, groups can see the neighborhoods and places where the genre was created, developed and grew to

Hush's Birthplace of Hip Hop tour



HUSH TOURS

become a major force in popular culture. The company offers bus and walking tours lasting three or four hours and can also include dance instruction and the opportunity to interact with guides and locals who are well-acquainted with the city's hip-hop culture.

During Hush's Birthplace of Hip Hop tour, groups ride from Midtown Manhattan, through Harlem and to the Bronx. Along the way, they see the site of the first-ever hip-hop party, other important venues, music video locations and murals dedicated to musical legends. Tour guides will freestyle, and guests have the chance to watch a dance

session and try their own moves.

The Dancer's Delight tour is designed to appeal to body movers of all abilities. Tour guides also serve as dance instructors, and they show groups Central Park, Rock Steady Park and the dance studios that elevated hip-hop movements from the streets to the stage and screen. There also are opportunities for each group member to jump into the center of a dance circle and put what they've learned to use.

For more information about New York City attractions and tour ideas, reach out to Reagan Stulbaum of NYC & Company at rstulbaum@nycgo.com or visit nycgo.com.

OUTLAWS AND ARMADILLOS

EXHIBIT OPENS MAY 2018

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

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CountryMusicHallOfFame.org/Groups





For more information about Nashville, contact LouAnna Henton of the Nashville CVC at louanna@visitmusiccity.com or go to visitmusiccity.com.

CITY SPOTLIGHT

'This is Nashville. Everybody plays.'

BY BOB ROUSE

NASHVILLE IS HOT. And happening. Nearly 14 million visitors tuned into Music City last year, up 45 percent in the past decade.

I became another one of those Nashville visitors this summer, when I toured the town with a dozen or so travel writers. And we weren't the only ones experiencing group travel in Music City.

"Nashville has become a premier destination for our company and our clients," says Joey Spellerberg, president of Moostash Joe Tours, an NTA member based in Fremont, Nebraska. "We started running Nashville programs over 15 years ago, and it is truly amazing to see the growth and excitement that is happening there. Its mixture of entertainment, attractions and country music history make it a truly unique place."

Yeah, about that country music. I'm really more of a pop music guy—a child of the disco '70s—but I figured I could still enjoy Nashville. I don't have to write about country music. Right?

Wrong. Within 48 hours of arriving in Music City, I had written a country song.

We were touring Ryman Auditorium, known as the "mother church of country music," and it got to me. The National Historic Landmark, which turned 125 years old this year,



was the home of the "Grand Ole Opry" radio show from 1943 to 1974, and it remains a vibrant venue for live music. After watching a sensational orientation film, perusing the exhibits and soaking up the vibe, I sat down in the second row and wrote "Nothin' Makes Me Happy When You're Right."

It's a horrible song but clear evidence that Nashville can flat out grab you. ryman.com

My country roots—exposed

It turns out that I'm more of a country music fan than I thought. We visited three museums dedicated to legendary performers—Johnny Cash, Patsy Cline and George Jones—and each struck a chord within me.

The NTA-member Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline Museums are housed in the same building. The ground floor holds an impressive assortment of The Man in Black's stage costumes, gold and platinum records, guitars, and memorabilia. I especially like the postcard that a young Cash wrote to his parents in Arkansas during a high school trip to Nashville. "Having a good time" was his entire message.

Upstairs, I was fascinated by Patsy Cline's personal items—knickknacks on her dining room cupboard and her sketches of stage costumes. Mark Logsdon, our host at the museum explained the difference in the two collections: "Patsy Cline's career lasted only six years, compared to Johnny Cash's six decades."

Exhibits at both museums cover the feature films that elevated the public awareness of each artist: "Walk the Line" (Cash) and "Sweet Dreams" (Cline). I've seen both movies several times, and I know their greatest hits; that's why I appreciated seeing the tangible tokens of their lives. johnnycashmuseum.com

I'm not as familiar with Jones, but I still enjoyed learning about his life and, well, hard times. Opened in 2015 and curated by his wife, The George Jones features his outlandish costumes and a sing-along room. My favorite, "He Stopped Loving Her Today," is not one of the sing-along songs, but that didn't stop me from singing it to myself as I viewed the exhibits. georgejones.com



BOB ROUSE

But the granddaddy of Nashville's music museums—the paramount portrayer—is the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum. This multi-level attraction gives visitors the full history of country music while providing intimate portraits of its most accomplished stars. The NTA-member museum draws more than a million visitors a year.

"We get lots of student groups—bands, choruses and orchestras—along with adult groups," says Dana Romanello, museum sales manager. "We offer exclusive tours, and we can also bring in a Nashville songwriter who will write a song with the group, and they record it before they leave."

The collaborative program, called "Sharing the Art of Songwriting," is available for groups of 30 or more. countrymusichalloffame.org

More music and museums

We visited three other attractions that spotlight Nashville as the middle-C center of not only country music, but just music.

The tag line of the Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum is "Come see what you've heard," and the attraction showcases the artists who created music across America in Los Angeles; Memphis; Muscle Shoals, Alabama; New York; and Detroit, along with Nashville.

"When you buy a song, you think of the person who's singing, but there might have been 500 people that went into the making of that recording," says Jay McDowell, the museum's multimedia curator. I would advise any tour operator to make

sure it's McDowell who leads their group through the facility; his industry background and acquisition acumen lend an incredible authenticity to the experience. musicianshalloffame.com

The Gallery of Iconic Guitars, jauntily referred to as The GIG, opened just this spring on the campus of Belmont University. The collection's 500 historically significant instruments, worth an estimated \$10 million, were donated to the college by the late Steven Kern Shaw. Displayed on a rotating basis, the instruments include a 1939 Martin acoustic guitar, valued at \$350,000; a mandolin from the 1920s considered to be more rare than a Stradivarius violin; and a 1960 Gibson Les Paul electric guitar valued at \$225,000.

"The collection celebrates the instrument, not the star who played it," says George Gruh, a vintage instrument expert and friend of Shaw. "The real stars are the makers of the instruments." thegigatbelmont.com

Tours of Historic RCA Studio B start with a shuttle ride from the Country Music Hall of Fame & Museum. Our guide shared stories about Nashville's oldest surviving studio and the hit-makers who recorded there, starting in 1957. One thousand of the 35,000 songs recorded in Studio B charted. The guide spun magical music tales, throwing us into total darkness to reenact Elvis' "Are You Lonesome Tonight." She also gave us an insider fact that reveals the little-known truth about the song's ending. studiob.org



RCA Studio B

NASHVILLE CONVENTION AND VISITORS CORP

Don't miss the live music



LAURASUTHERLAND.NET

Of course, any tour of Nashville will include seeing a performance. It's unavoidable, really. On the short walk down Broadway from the Cash/Cline museums to Ryman Auditorium, we passed no fewer than five venues blaring live music—at 11 a.m.

Broadway at night offers even more opportunities to get an earful. The street holds 53 honky-tonks, with new venues under construction. It's a loud scene, crowded but safe, and if a tour operator doesn't want to turn a group loose to go honky-tonking, there are other options for live music.

I absolutely loved my evening at Bluebird Café, an unassuming venue that seats four songwriters in the middle of the room and surrounds them with 75 or so eager listeners. The performers take turns playing and singing, while the others strum along and even sing back-up. It's intimate and intense. Engaging and enthralling.

I heard Danny Flowers sing "Living on Tulsa Time," a tune I knew from decades ago. Gordon Kennedy performed his Grammy-winning "Change the World," and Brady Seals sang fun and familiar songs. Karla Davis, the youngest of the four, slayed me with her total honesty and her song "A Boy Like You."

It sounds kind of crazy now, but being so close to those songwriters inspired me to write yet another song as soon as I had a chance: "Eatin' into My Sleepin' Time." It, too, is horrible, but I had to try.

The Bluebird is a tough ticket, but LouAnna Henton of the Nashville CVC has a work-around for tour operators: "The authentic Nashville experience is summarized no better than a 'writers in the round' show, and if you're not lucky enough to score tickets at the Bluebird, I suggest going to the City Winery or the Listening Room," she says. "These are both large venues that can accommodate groups and showcase the same type of entertainment."

Rounding out our live music showcase was a trip to the Grand Ole Opry, the world's longest-running radio show, now performed in a modern theater. It's a fast-moving event featuring several acts. The night we were there, I not only got to see a performance by John Conlee, a country music legend who graduated from the same high school as me, but I also heard Exile sing "Kiss You All Over," a No. 1 song I had heard them perform once before ... in 1978. opry.com/groups



BOB ROUSE

Houses of history

Nashville's historical threads are not confined to music museums (and my personal timeline of tunes). Three NTA member attractions paint profound pictures of the past—local, regional and national. Some 20 minutes from Nashville is Andrew Jackson's Hermitage, the impressive home of the seventh U.S. president. A visit to the 1,120-acre estate can include a guided walk through 1837 mansion and self-guided tours of the gardens, cemetery, slave quarters and the original farmhouse. Groups can write their own ticket, according to Jason Nelson, vice president of marketing and sales.



NASHVILLE CONVENTION AND VISITORS CORP.

"This place is like a blank canvas," he says. "Tour operators can tell us what they want, and we'll make it happen—anything from Instagram scavenger hunts to ghost tours."

Groups we saw on-site included a family reunion, a school group from North Dakota and a Corvette club doing volunteer work in the gardens. thehermitage.com

Located in another part of town is Cheekwood Estate & Gardens. Constructed during a time of rising aristocracy in America and first occupied in 1932, Cheekwood represents the Country Place Era. Estates from that time are rarely open to the public. The property features exquisite gardens, but we spent our time in the 36-room mansion, which has been meticulously preserved and restored. Much of the furniture was bought by Leslie and Mabel Cheek during a 1929 trip to Europe, where they purchased antiques from failing estates. cheekwood.org

Our group did not visit Fontanel, an enormous log home that was once occupied by Country Music Hall of Fame member Barbara Mandrell. Open to groups and offering family-style meals, the mansion (20 rooms and 13 bathrooms) features an array of music memorabilia, and tour guides tell stories about the stars who visited the home. The property also has a winery, distillery, zip line adventure, hiking trails and shops. fontanel.com

Not just notes

As much as music plays a central role in Nashville, the city is also flush with other types of artists. We visited neighborhoods, streets and studios where talented people showcase the work—the art—they are proud to express.

We were exploring 12 South, an area loaded with high-end, hip stores and eateries. (The not-so-hip might call it 12th Avenue.) We visited the jewelry studio and showroom of Judith Bright and the luxury leather goods studio of Peter Nappi. As we strolled past more studios and boutiques, one of my fellow journalists declared, “Nashville is a place where people make their dreams come true.”

I agreed with him. His statement is different than a more common phrase, “where dreams come true.” People here make it happen.

And it's not all high falutin' goods in 12 South. We had a great time sampling popsicles at Las Paletas, owned by two sisters who grew up in Guadalajara, Mexico, and want to share a cool part of their culture. We also learned about Nashville's craft beers at Filling Station, where owner Brandi Soda gave us samples of Bearded Iris, TailGate and Yazoo.

“This is the real Nashville,” she says. “We're like one ginormous neighborhood here in 12 South.”

On another day, we spent the morning visiting galleries on 5th Avenue of the Arts. The owners of each business described

the art—and the artists—they have chosen to work with.

My most memorable artist encounter was at Alan LeQuire Studio, located in a nearby neighborhood. He is the creator of “Musica,” the 40-foot tall bronze sculpture of nine nude, dancing figures that's located near Music Row.

“People can tour the gallery and, often, go to the studio and see Alan working on a sculpture. To meet the artist and be a witness to a work in progress is a unique experience,” says studio manager Elizabeth Cave.

During our visit, a student was working beside the famous sculptor, who views teaching as his obligation. “You work a lifetime developing a craft, and then you pass it along,” LeQuire says.



Alan LeQuire with “Musica” model

BOB ROUSE

He talked about the fountain that will soon be added to “Musica,” joking that the constantly moving water will become clothing for the dancers.

Then he told about his other form of artistic expression: The same hands that can mold metal also strum a guitar and pick banjo strings.

“This is Nashville,” he says. “Everybody plays.” 🎸

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COMPASS

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Good day, sunshine: During a visit to South Dakota's Badlands National Park, travelers can see buttes, pinnacles and spires that are the result of millions of years of erosion. Turn the page to read more about the U.S. Great Plains states.

Great Plains **34**
New England **37**
China **40**

BLACKHILLSBADLANDS.COM

Great Plains

COMPILED BY KENDALL FLETCHER

A heap of history in North Dakota

North Dakota is home to a plethora of attractions for history lovers, ranging from trails to national parks, which can be explored on The North Dakota Heritage and Heroes Tour.

"North Dakota is where you can retrace the footsteps of Lewis, Clark, Sakakawea, Sitting Bull, Theodore Roosevelt, Sheheke and George Custer," says Deanne Cunningham, group travel marketing manager with North Dakota Tourism Division.

If travelers choose to begin the tour in the Bismarck-Mandan area, they can make a stop at Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park and see, along the river, the earth lodges of a village that was home to a thriving Mandan Indian population in the mid-1600s. They can tour the home of George and Libbie Custer; it was from there the general and his 7th Cavalry rode into the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Found in Washburn are the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center; Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, the ruins of an ancient Indian village; and a museum preserving the heritage of the Plains Indians.

Also included on the tour is Lake Sakakawea, the largest lake in North Dakota, named from the young Native American woman who accompanied Lewis and Clark on their journey.

For more information on the tour and additional North Dakota sites, contact Cunningham at decunningham@nd.gov or visit ndtourism.com.



Dancers at Knife River Indian Villages

NDTOURISM.COM

Good things in the Badlands

Landscapes of fossil beds, historical mountainside carvings and unique wildlife are some of the features groups can visit in the Black Hills and Badlands of South Dakota.

The buttes, pinnacles and spires of the Badlands were formed millions of years ago by sediment deposition and erosion. Badlands National Park is spread across 244,000 acres, where visitors can see the astounding scenery and learn about the various plants and animals that inhabit the area.

"Badlands National Park is a beautiful moonscape-looking scenic drive. There are many scenic overlooks and walks and hikes for the adventurous," says Michelle Thomson, president and CEO of Black Hills & Badlands Tourism Association.

Tucked in the Black Hills is Mount Rushmore National Memorial, a large-scale mountain sculpture of four former U.S. presidents. Groups can take an audio tour and experience the nightly lighting ceremony in the summer.

The Crazy Horse Memorial, carved from pegmatite granite on a mountain that stands over 6,500 feet tall, is another striking sculpture in the heart of the Black Hills. The entire carving, which is 563 feet high and depicts Lakota warrior Crazy Horse, is the world's largest mountain carving in progress.

Other attractions include Devils Tower National Monument, Black Hills Gold Factory Tour and Custer State Park, where visitors can take Buffalo Jeep Safari tours to see herds of South Dakota's numerous buffalo.

For more information, contact Michelle Thomson at michelle@blackhillsbadlands.com or visit blackhillsbadlands.com.



Mount Rushmore

SDTOURISM.COM

Zip lining and festivals and dining, oh my!

Manhattan, Kansas, called "The Little Apple," is a small city with a big appetite and lots of cool things to do.

"Downtown Manhattan has fabulously unique destinations that are unparalleled," says Michael Goens, communications coordinator for the Manhattan Chamber of Commerce. "Harry's Manhattan is a three-time Wine Spectator Award of Excellence winner, and has been named multiple times as best restaurant in Kansas in *Midwest Living* magazine's Best of the Midwest selection."

Each year on the Friday following Thanksgiving is the Festival of Lights, which illuminates several blocks of downtown Manhattan and includes the state's largest Christmas tree, which stands more than 60 feet high.

The current season of the McCain Performance Series, which runs September through May, will include "Cabaret," The Temptations, "Jersey Boys," "The Sound of Music" and Kenny G.

Springtime in Manhattan has prime weather for hiking, biking and off-roading. Visitors to Tuttle Creek Reservoir can do some kayaking, practice their archery, play disc golf, go boating and skiing, and rent cabins.

The Flint Hill Discovery Center will host the Rainforest Adventure and Be the Dinosaur exhibits in 2018; its immersive theater experience will tell the story of the Great Plains and the ever-dwindling tallgrass prairie.

For more information, contact Goens at michael@manhattan.org or go to visitmanhattanks.org.

MONUMENTAL

Come See . . .

The Black Hills are home to both the nation's first national monument – Devils Tower – and also one of its most famous – Mount Rushmore, now celebrating over 75 years since its completion. They are just two of six national parks, eight state parks, Crazy Horse Memorial, gaming, and more! Discover what monumental really is!



Al's Oasis

Your one stop. Restaurant with full menu, fresh salad bar, homemade pie, 5-cent coffee & Last Chance Saloon. Buses welcome! Supermarket, gift shop & clothing.

605/234-6054; AlsOasis.com



Spearfish Canyon Lodge & Latchstring Restaurant

Enjoy an amazing stay in the Canyon! Well-appointed rooms, lounge, gift shop & dining all nestled in a National Scenic Byway. Call to book your group today!

605/584-3435; SPFCanyon.com



Rapid City

Epic tours begin in Rapid City where presidents soar and heart swelling inspiration hits hard. Discover group friendly dining, attractions, lodging assistance and sample itineraries at TourRapidCity.com

800/487-3223; TourRapidCity.com



Best Western Ramkota

Upscale AAA hotel with free high-speed internet. Guests enjoy the free Waterpark and huge indoor pool. Relax at Minervas Restaurant & Bar. 267 rooms and 36,000 square feet of meeting rooms.

605/343-8550; RapidCity.Ramkota.com



Mammoth Site

An indoor working paleontological dig site. The only accredited museum in the Black Hills. Activities for children and educational for the entire family. Groups are welcome. Bus and RV parking available. A Great Service Star.

605/745-6017; MammothSite.org



Black Hills Playhouse

Historic playhouse delights audiences in Custer State Park with excellent theatre productions. Beautiful location with concessions, Bus and RV parking. Covered log picnic structure for groups. Tour operators & bus drivers free!

605/255-4910; BlackHillsPlayhouse.com

BLACK HILLS
& BADLANDS
South Dakota

BLACK HILLS & BADLANDS TOURISM ASSOCIATION
605/355-3600 | SEETHEBLACKHILLS.COM

Country star opens attraction in Tishomingo

One of the Sooner state's newest attractions is straight out of Blake Shelton's 2001 hit song "Ol' Red."

The country singer opened the restaurant and bar of the same name (spelled Ole Red, though) last month in his hometown of Tishomingo, and he plans to open a second location in Nashville in 2018.

The venue on Main Street is trimmed in red and white and features an image of a hound dog. Inside is a 4,700-square-foot restaurant and live music area and a 1,400-square-foot retail space.

"Experiencing the second celebrity-based business opening in a year, communities in Oklahoma are enjoying the increased traffic to their cities and towns," says Todd Stallbaumer, consumer and trade marketing director with Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department. "Pawhuska, home of Ree Drummond's Mercantile, is seeing thousands of new visitors every week, and Ole Red is gearing up for massive crowds to enjoy Blake Shelton's latest endeavor."

The menu at Ole Red restaurant includes items that are a little different, like hot chicken and waffles and Lucky Charms cookies.

For more information, contact Todd Stallbaumer at todd@travelok.com or visit travelok.com.



OLE RED.COM

The must-see sites of Kearney

Groups visiting the small Midwest city of Kearney, Nebraska, should follow the advice of the Kearney CVB and check out these must-see destinations:

Classic car museum Kearney's classic car collection includes more than 200 vintage cars ranging in age from the early 20th century to modern day. The attraction is open year-round and offers special group rates.



VISITKEARNEY.ORG

The Archway Spanning an impressive 310 feet over Interstate 80, the Archway is both a monument and a museum, and visitors can travel back 170 years to learn the stories of the early pioneers in America's westward movement.

Kearney Water Trail Beginners and expert kayakers can enjoy the Kearney Water Trail, which stretches 2.3 miles down the Kearney Canal. Traveling along the trail is free, and visitors can rent canoes or kayaks from Kearney Paddle Sports.



CC FLICKR/USFWS MOUNTAIN-PRAIRIE: bt.ly/2eZdYf

Sandhill Crane Migration From February through mid-April, visitors can see 600,000 sandhill cranes forage the croplands during the day, and at night, watch them come together to roost in the shallows of the Platte River. Audubon's Nebraska Crane Festival will take place March 22-25, 2018, and include environmental speakers and birding expeditions.

For more information, contact Roger Jasnoch at rjasnoch@visitkearney.org or go to visitkearney.org.

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Book your group tour
by calling 913.971.5111
1200 E. Kansas City Rd. Olathe, KS 66061
mahaffie.org  



New England

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

All about the arts in the Berkshires

"Less than three hours from New York City and Boston, the Berkshires offer culture and adventure year-round," says Lindsey Schmid, director of marketing for 1Berkshire. "If you are a lover of theater, music, dance, fine arts and more, the Berkshires should be on your vacation bucket list."

She highlights the following five cultural attractions across the region in western Massachusetts:

Tanglewood

One of the world's premier summer music festivals, Tanglewood also has been the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra since 1937. The typical season, which goes from mid-June to early September, includes dozens of performances by the famous orchestra, chamber ensembles and the Tanglewood Festival Choir, as well as concerts by top rock and folk artists. Plans are in the works for a new four-building complex that is slated to open in the summer of 2019.

Norman Rockwell Museum

Founded in 1969, this Stockbridge attraction contains the largest and most significant collection of original art from its eponymous artist, including his enduringly popular *Saturday Evening Post* covers. Groups can explore 10 galleries, a gift shop and the beautiful 36-acre campus that features Rockwell's original studio and sculptures by his son Peter.

The Clark Art Institute

Located in Williamstown, the museum is home to an expansive collection of European and American paintings, sculpture, prints, drawings, and decorative arts from the Renaissance to the early 20th century. Groups can take guided tours, enjoy gallery talks, see traveling exhibits and take part in special events.

Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival

Time magazine called Jacob's Pillow Dance, which is visited annually by thousands of cultural enthusiasts from across the globe, the "hub and mecca of dancing." Each summer the festival—and its outstanding list of dancers—presents more than 200 free performances, talks, tours, master classes and other community events. The 2018 edition of America's longest-running international dance event will take place June 20–Aug. 26.

Hancock Shaker Village

The village houses an extensive collection of furniture, household objects, art, textiles, tools, photographs and manuscripts that document life in this New England Shaker community. In addition to tours, groups can enjoy performances during the Shaker Barn Music summer concert series, take part in the County Fair each September or book a hands-on workshop covering weaving, spinning or basic woodworking.

For more information, contact Schmid at lschmid@1berkshire.com or visit berkshires.org.



Tanglewood



Rodin sculpture at the Clark Art Institute

Seafood tops Connecticut, Rhode Island culinary scene

There is no shortage of wonderful dining experiences awaiting travelers throughout the Northeast. Two NTA DMOs in Connecticut and Rhode Island shed light on what their states have to offer for culinarily curious travelers.



Connecticut's bounty of culinary festivals

"Celebrating food is easy in Connecticut, which is known for fresh seafood, being the birthplace of the hamburger sandwich (at Louie's Lunch) and top-rated New Haven Pizza," says Susan Henrique, director of group/international sales for the Connecticut Convention & Sports Bureau.

She recommends the following culinary events for those seeking to sample a cross-section of the state's diverse foodie scene:

The Sun Wine & Food Fest (Jan. 26-28, 2018)

Mohegan Sun in Uncasville plays host to this world-class celebration of food and drink. Popular events include the signature Grand Tasting, Bourbon Tasting, Elite Cru Tasting and the Celebrity Chef Dine Around.

Harbor Brew Fest (September)

Craft beer lovers have taken to this six-year-old event, which is held at the Ballpark at Harbor Yard in Bridgeport. Limited releases and hard-to-find brews are available in the exclusive-access Brewer's Beer Garden.

Mystic Eats Food Festival (September)

Festival-goers can taste culinary delights from more than 25 of the Mystic area's premier restaurants. The event, which takes place in the city's historical downtown, also includes live entertainment.

The New England Food Truck Festival (September)

Connecticut has witnessed the recent rise of many food truck-centered events, including this regional favorite that's held at Mohegan Sun. The 2017 event brought together 30 of the area's top trucks.

New England Chowdafest (October)

Held at Sherwood Island State Park in Westport, this festival showcases the talents of chefs from New England and as far away as Seattle, who compete for best-in-show honors in various chowder and soup categories.

To learn more, contact Henrique at susanh@ctcsb.org or go to ctvisit.com.



Lots to savor in South County, Rhode Island

Located 80 miles south of Boston and 160 miles from New York City, South County, Rhode Island, boasts a burgeoning culinary scene that keeps the focus on local products.

Oysters amore Louise Bishop, president of the South County Tourism Council, says there's no better way to experience Rhode Island farm-to-table cuisine than to visit the Matunuck Oyster Bar. "Guests can begin with a pontoon boat tour of the oyster farm with owner Perry Raso, who explains how oysters are 'grown' and educates visitors on the importance of aquaculture," she says. "After visiting the farm where Raso grows all the vegetables, they return to the restaurant for a sumptuous meal that starts with chilled oysters and champagne before moving on to a main dish featuring some of the local, fresh vegetables."

What's brewing While oysters may be the area's calling card, South County also is home to a thriving craft beer culture. At pastoral Tilted Barn Brewery, travelers can tour the hops farm then sample seasonal beers. Grey Sail Brewery in Westerly, which is the region's largest brewery, offers tours that are followed by a visit to the tasting room that is located next door in a historical home. Bishop says another popular stop is Whaler's Brewing Company, which is known for its homey atmosphere and variety of board games.

A spirited stop Guided tours at award-winning Sons of Liberty Spirits provide insights on how its whiskeys, vodkas and other limited edition liquors are made. The tasting room offers whiskey and beer flights and has a menu of craft cocktails featuring Sons' spirits.

To learn more, contact Bishop at vacations@southcountyrhode.com or go to southcountyrhode.com.

Hotels go beyond ‘quaint’ in northern New England

When travelers think of lodging in Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont, the word quaint probably springs to mind; as in, “We want to stay at that quaint hotel nestled in the mountains/overlooking the water.” And why not? There are plenty of properties that deliver that experience plus a whole lot more, including the following two individual NTA-member resorts, as well as four supplier members that manage multiple properties throughout New England:



ESSEXRESORTSPA.COM

The Essex Resort & Spa

Essex, Vermont
NTA contact: Keith McManis
keithm@vtculinaryresort.com
essexresortspa.com

The resort's 120 luxury rooms provide guests with a haven of relaxation in the picturesque village of Essex. Travelers can take part in a number of cooking classes, which give them a chance to work with renowned chefs during low-pressure, hands-on culinary experiences. Guests can book massages, body treatments, facials, manicures, pedicures and more at the property's full-service spa, which is the largest in the Burlington area.

Giri Hotels

Cathi Tingley
ctingley@girihotels.com
girihotels.com

Giri Hotel Management has been operating hotels in New England since 2004, and its extensive portfolio includes Marriott, Hilton, Starwood, Choice, Wyndham and Best Western brands. The highest concentration of its resorts is in Maine—it has multiple properties in the cities of Bangor, Augusta and Waterville—but it also owns and manages locations in New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Lafayette Hotels

Donald Haggett
dhaggett@merrymansion.com
lafayettehotels.biz

Lafayette Hotels is a family-owned hotel group that manages 24 properties in Maine and three in New Hampshire. Its extensive portfolio covers waterfront locations—Bar Harbor, Ogunquit Beach, Boothbay Harbor and more—along Maine's Atlantic coast, as well as resorts in major cities such as Augusta, Bangor and Portland. Among the company's New Hampshire portfolio are hotels located in Jackson, Gilford and West Lebanon.

Larkin Hospitality

Ed Sanders
ed@innvermont.com
larkinhospitality.com

The Larkin family opened their first hotel in 1987: the Howard Johnson in South Burlington, Vermont. The hospitality group

has expanded its reach across the state in the ensuing years and now has six in the Burlington area, two in White River and one in Waterbury. In addition to its nine hotels in the Green Mountain State, Larkin Hospitality has added one property in North Adams, Massachusetts.



MEADOWMERE.COM

The Meadowmere Resort

Ogunquit, Maine
Allyson Cavaretta
allyson@meadowmere.com
meadowmere.com

Located in the heart of seaside Ogunquit just a 10-minute walk from the beach, the Meadowmere Resort debuted in 1983. Over the next five years, the property's number of rooms doubled to more than 80, and it was on its way to becoming a four-season destination. Today, groups can choose from 144 rooms in five different sections of the resort, as well as enjoy treatments in its award-winning spa and meals in the West Meadow Pub.



WITHAMHOTELS.COM

Witham Family Properties/Acadia Area Hotels

Dede Daigle
dede@aobarharbor.com
withamhotels.com

Witham Family Properties was founded in 1987, and, over the past three decades, the company has expanded to include 13 hotels in coastal Maine. Headquartered near Acadia National Park, the company offers accommodations for a range of price points. Whether travel planners book one of the luxury resorts or a more budget-friendly inn, they can expect the same attention to detail and high-quality amenities. ☺

China

COMPILED BY PAT HENDERSON

On the UNESCO trail in Beijing

This July, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee inscribed two more sites in China on its popular list. The addition of the Kulangsu Historic International Settlement and Qinghai Hoh Xil brings the country's number of UNESCO-recognized places to 52, which ties China with Italy for the top spot.

The following UNESCO sites in Beijing are three of the country's most well-known attractions:



CC FLICKR/RICHARD THOMAS: bi.ly/2H5B48G

The Summer Palace

Originally constructed in 1750, the Summer Palace was decimated during the war in 1860 before being restored 25 years later. The site is an outstanding example of the ornate style that is typical of China's landscape garden design. Groups can enjoy taking in the area's natural beauty as they tour the temples, pagodas, bridges and shrines.



CC FLICKR/DIMITRY B.: bi.ly/2wbgGH0

The Imperial Palaces of the Ming and Qing Dynasties

The palaces in Beijing and Shenyang served as the residences of the Ming and Qing Dynasty emperors from the 15th to the 20th century. As such, they became the central locations of royal power, which is on display throughout the complexes. The centerpiece of the Beijing site is the Forbidden City, where visitors can discover how its architecture reflected Chinese hierarchical culture.



CC FLICKR/ANITA RITENOUR: bi.ly/2vPNJD

The Temple of Heaven

Founded in the first half of the 15th century, the temple complex is set among gardens and surrounded by pine trees. The layout of the buildings is meant to symbolize the connection between earth and heaven, which played a significant part in the lives of many early Chinese emperors.

To learn more, contact Yanjie Wang of the China National Tourist Office at yjwang@cnto.org or go to cnto.org.



Cirque du Soleil's "Kooza"

OWEN CAREY

Cirque heads to China

Cirque du Soleil will bring its renowned brand of entertainment to China in the form of touring shows and a permanent show that will be based in Hangzhou in the Zhejiang Province.

The traveling production of "Kooza" kicks off its Chinese tour in Shanghai this month, before heading to Beijing in December and then on to five other cities after the first of the year. This will be the beginning of Cirque bringing at least one of its touring shows to the country annually.

The resident show in Hangzhou is slated to debut in late 2018. The theater in Hangzhou is currently in the latter stages of construction, and, when it's completed, it will seat 1,440 people. This marks the first time Cirque du Soleil has built a theater outside of North America to host a permanent show.

The popular entertainment company, which has created 43 shows since it was formed by a group of street performers in Québec in 1984, also recently announced that it acquired Blue Man Group.

For more information, contact Jacinta Jose of the Cirque du Soleil at jacinta.jose@cirquedusoleil.com or go to cirquedusoleil.com.

Courier's GUIDE TO THEATERS

Seeing a theatrical performance live is a thrill for many a traveler, and tour operators know it. A lot of itineraries include some sort of show component, ranging from first-run productions in New York City to touring Broadway shows or dinner theater performances across North America. Throw in NTA members who also represent ballet companies and symphonies, as well as ticket sales organizations, and travel planners have a number of options for adding performances and tours at top theatrical/musical attractions to their itineraries.

** Listings in this guide are based on a company's membership category and profile selections. The information was provided by the member contact and was current as of Aug. 23. Please check NTAonline.com for updated information on association members offering theater product.*

THEATERS, PERFORMANCE VENUES AND PRODUCTION COMPANIES

UNITED STATES

ARIZONA

Blazin' M Ranch

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

ARKANSAS

Ozark Folk Center State Park

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

CALIFORNIA

PIER 39

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

Pirate's Dinner Adventure—California

Richard Cartaciano
7600 Beach Blvd.
Buena Park, CA 90620-1838
+1.714.232.8213
salesmanager@pirates-ca.com
piratesdinneradventure.com

COLORADO

Bard D Chuckwagon Suppers

Krystal Scarborough
8080 County Road #250
Durango, CO 81301
+1.970.335.9805
groups@bardchuckwagon.com
bardchuckwagon.com

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Arena Stage

Alvin Ford
1101 6th St. SW
Washington, DC 20024-2605
+1.202.488.4380
aford@arenastage.org
arenastage.org

FLORIDA

Sleuths Mystery Dinner Shows

Jim Lyons
8267 International Drive
Orlando, FL 32819-9326
+1.407.363.1985
jiml@sleuths.com
sleuths.com

ILLINOIS

Arcada Theatre

Gabrielle Fink
105 E. Main St.
St. Charles, IL 60174
+1.630.962.7000
gabrielle@oshows.com
oshows.com

Broadway in Chicago Group Sales

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

Lyric Opera of Chicago

Brittany Gonzalez
20 N. Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60606
+1.312.827.5927
bgonzalez@lyricopera.org
lyricopera.org

INDIANA

Amish Acres—Red Barn Theatre

Janis Logsdon
1600 W. Market St.
Nappanee, IN 46550-1731
+1.574.773.4188
janislogsdon@amishacres.com
amishacres.com

Derby Dinner Playhouse

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

MASSACHUSETTS

Boston Ballet

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

Boston Pops Orchestra/ Boston Symphony Orchestra/Tanglewood

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

Shear Madness

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

MISSOURI

Albert E. Brumley & Sons

Betsy Brumley
5067 Route E
Powell, MO 65730
+1.417.435.2225
brumleyinfo@gmail.com
brumleymusic.com

Clay Cooper Theatre

Pat Veach
3216 W. 76 Country Blvd.
Branson, MO 65714
+1.417.337.7123
pat@claycooper.biz
claycoopertheatre.com

Dutton Family Theater Complex

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

Hughes Brothers Entertainment

Lena Hughes
3425 W. Highway 76
Branson, MO 65616
+1.417.334.0076
lenah@hughes-brothers.com
hughes-brothers.com

National Blues Museum

Casey Jolley
615 Washington Ave.
St. Louis, MO 63101
+1.314.925.0016
cjolley@nationalbluesmuseum.org
nationalbluesmuseum.org

Presleys' Country Jubilee

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

Silver Dollar City/Showboat Branson Belle

Joey Thorsen
399 Silver Dollar City Parkway
Branson, MO 65616
+1.417.338.8009
jthorsen@silverdollarcity.com
silverdollarcity.com

Welk Resort Branson

Tammy Slentz
1984 State Highway 165
Branson, MO 65616
+1.417.336.1227
tslentz@welkgroup.com
welkresorts.com

NEVADA

BASE Entertainment

Lindsey Hull
3667 Las Vegas Blvd. S
Las Vegas, NV 89109
+1.702.281.7796
lindsey@baseentertainment.com
baseentertainmentsales.com

Cirque du Soleil USA Inc.

Jacinta Jose
980 Kelly Johnson Drive, Suite 200
Las Vegas, NV 89119
+1.702.352.0036
jacinta.jose@cirquedusoleil.com
cirquedusoleil.com

NEW MEXICO

The Santa Fe Opera

Kathy Murphy
301 Opera Drive
Santa Fe, NM 87506
+1.505.986.5911
kmurphy@santafeopera.org
santafeopera.org

NEW YORK

Blue Man Group

Joe Tropia
599 Broadway, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10012
+1.212.226.6366
jtropia@blueman.com
blueman.com

Broadway Inbound

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

Carnegie Hall

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

Chicago The Musical- National Artists Management Company

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

Disney Theatrical Group

Nicholas Faranda
214 W. 42nd St.
New York, NY 10036-7202
+1.212.827.5412
nicholas.faranda@disney.com
disneyonbroadway.com

GreatWhiteWay.com Group Sales

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

Group Sales Box Office/Broadway.com

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

Jazz at Lincoln Center

Frances Howorth
3 Columbus Circle, 12th Floor
New York, NY 10019
+1.212.258.9875
fhoworth@jazz.org
jazz.org/groups

Madison Square Garden Group Sales

Benjamin Maddy
2 Penn Plaza, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10121-0101
+1.212.631.4354
ben.maddy@msg.com
msggroupsales.com

Nederlander Sales & Patron Services

Brian Harasek
1501 Broadway, Suite 1400
New York, NY 10036-5505
+1.212.840.3890
bharasek@nederlander.com
nederlandergroupsales.com

Roundabout Theatre Company

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

WICKED the Musical/321 Group Sales

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



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WAITRESS

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PENNSYLVANIA

American Music Theatre

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

Dutch Apple Dinner Theatre/Prather Entertainment Group

Denise Trupe
510 Centerville Road
Lancaster, PA 17601-1306
800.933.3759
dtrupe@pratherentertainmentgroup.com
dutchapple.com

Fulton Theatre

Adam Andrusky
12 North Prince St.
Lancaster, PA 17603
+1.717.397.7425
aandrusky@thefulton.org
thefulton.org

Sight & Sound Theatres (Lancaster and Branson, Mo.)

Nathan Claycomb
300 Hartman Bridge Road
P.O. Box 310
Strasburg, PA 17579-0310
+1.717.687.4220
nathan.claycomb@sight-sound.com
sight-sound.com

SOUTH CAROLINA

Alabama Theatre

Ellen Calhoun
4750 Highway 17 S
North Myrtle Beach, SC 29582-5355
+1.843.272.5758
ecalhoun@alabama-theatre.com
alabama-theatre.com

The Carolina Opry

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

TENNESSEE

Grand Ole Opry Entertainment Group

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

Hatfield & McCoy Dinner Show

Leslie Thomas
119 Music Road
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+1.865.429.5494
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COMMUNITY

NEWS AND UPDATES FROM THE NTA FAMILY



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. NTA Services President Kami Risk outside the Albertina in Vienna
2. NTA staffer Mary Catherine Dorsett with a Saturn rocket at the Alabama Welcome Center
3. Nicole Absher of Destination Gettysburg posing with statuesque heroes
4. NTA President Pam Inman with Phyllis Veale of the Grand Vista Hotel in Grand Junction, Colorado
5. Katarina Line's Iva Ciceran (left) with Captain Ante Franin in Opatija, Croatia
6. Barb Bowman of the Grand Junction VCB at Colorado National Monument

Meet the Members **50**

Community News **52**

New Members **54**

Ad Index/NTA Events Calendar **55**

AfterWords **56**

Meet the Members

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Belize Nature Getaway

SAN IGNACIO, BELIZE

NTA contact: Jackie Seanpaul,
CEO and founder

Office phone: +1.510.967.8570

Website: belizenaturegetaway.com

NTA member since: 2015

What make Belize such an outstanding place to visit?

Belize is a top vacation destination because of the unique and diverse experiences that only Belize can provide: our barrier reef, the Great Blue Hole, ancient Mayan temples, a lush untouched rainforest, 500-plus species of tropical birds and butterflies, and the warm, friendly people in this English-speaking country.

What are a couple of your company's most requested tours?

The bioluminescence lagoon nighttime boat ride is one of the most popular excursions, along with the Blue Hole tour and the Actun Tunichil Muknal

Cave tour that highlights the ancient Mayan underground portals to the deceased.

What are some other uniquely Belize experiences you provide?

Beside those tours, there are culinary options including freshly prepared organic food, organic wine, fresh organic juices, and a bounty of herbs and spices. Also, luxury accommodations at the San Ignacio Resort Hotel, which has its own iguana rescue project, are available.

What was your dream job when you were growing up?

I wanted to be a social justice lawyer so that I could be a champion for the less privileged.



Where is one place you've always wanted to visit?

I have done extensive traveling, but I still dream of spending time in Peru to compare the rainforest there with ours in Belize.

For more information, contact Seanpaul at belizenature@gmail.com.

Plimoth Plantation

PLYMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

NTA contact: Janet Young,
manager, group sales

Office phone: +1.508.503.2653

Website: plimoth.org

NTA member since: 1987

When did the museum open, and how has it evolved over the years?

The museum was founded in 1947 by Harry Hornblower; this year is our 70th anniversary. He turned his fascination with the story of the Pilgrims' journey and the Wampanoag people into a living museum. We have an extensive collection of artifacts from the period, and Hornblower's spirit of curiosity continues to inspire our work.

What are some of the learning experiences available to travelers?

Rather than reading about history in a book, we offer the unique opportunity

to be part of history, whether it's talking to role-players portraying the Pilgrims or participating with them in the daily activities at the 17th-century English Village or watching a Native educator burn out a tree to make a mishoon (dug-out canoe).

Tell me about the *Mayflower II* and the restoration project.

Mayflower II is our full-size reproduction of the original ship that brought the pilgrims to New England's shore in 1620. The 60-year-old ship needed a substantial refit, so it is now at Mystic Seaport's shipyard, where our team and their expert shipwrights are working to restore her in keeping with traditional methods. Mark your calendars to come see the ship in her restored glory in 2019!

What's your favorite hobby?

I enjoy designing and applique quilting



Christmas tree skirts. The first one I made was for my son, who at the time was in the U.S. Navy. I wanted him to have something to remember the family during the holiday season.

For more information, contact Young at jyoung@plimoth.org.

Pikes Peak Cog Railway

MANITOU SPRINGS, COLORADO

NTA contact: Whitney Hedgpeth,
traffic manager

Office phone: +1.719.685.9662

Website: cograilway.com

NTA member since: 2006

How does booking your tour to the top of Pikes Peak help travelers learn more about your area?

It gives people that Colorado high they don't know they're looking for! And, it also provides a great view of the surrounding areas—from the flatlands to the east and the mountains to the west—while providing a history lesson on this amazing place.

What do they experience during the ride?

After they board the train, we take them on an hour-long trip to the summit of Pikes Peak. In addition to the views up top that they can't get anywhere else, they can take a short

guided tour and spend some time exploring the mountain before we bring them back down.

What other things in the Colorado Springs area do you recommend for groups?

Visiting Seven Falls, Cave of the Winds and Garden of the Gods (my personal favorite), and checking out some of the local craft beers (really my favorite).

My job is fun ...

Because of the people I work with.

What is your favorite TV show or movie?

I stinking love "American Ninja Warrior!" I always watch it hoping that it will motivate me to work out, but instead, I get worn out watching them compete.



What music would we find on your "Whitney's Favs" Spotify playlist?

Anything acoustic or alternative, like Mumford and Sons, with the occasional dose of Swedish House Mafia.

For more information, contact Hedgpeth at whedgpeth@broadmoor.com.

Explore Asheville

ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

NTA contact: Beth McKinney,
sales manager

Office phone: +1.828.258.6139

Website: exploreasheville.com

NTA member since: 1976

What are the must-see attractions in Asheville?

Asheville is a thriving mountain city that features a funky and eclectic downtown, hundreds of studios and art galleries, a world-class culinary and craft beer culture, a thriving live music scene and the awe-inspiring scenery of the Blue Ridge Mountains. With so much to do, I always encourage groups to pick a theme!

What's new in Asheville?

We've got several new hotels that have opened or will open soon. Biltmore will showcase the monumental glass sculptures of world-renowned artist Dale Chihuly as part of a new exhibition set to

open on the estate in 2018. Also, fun new student attractions will be completed, including the new Asheville Museum of Science and LaZoom's part-comedy, part-history bus tour of Asheville.

What brought you to the area?

When John Muir spoke the words, "The mountains are calling, and I must go," he was speaking for me, too. I spent my last summer semester of college working for a festival in Western North Carolina and fell in love with the mountain life—the sunny days, cool evenings, miles of skyline, and the laid-back and welcoming community of people who called the area home. I haven't left since!

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

I just became a mom this summer, so my new favorite hobby is snuggling my sweet baby girl. I also enjoy camping in our beautiful mountainous "backyard,"



taking care of my flock of chickens, catching a Broadway show and working on renovations of our fixer-upper home.

For more information, contact McKinney at bmckinney@exploreasheville.com.

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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.



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Norwegian Cruise Line christens Norwegian Joy

Norwegian Cruise Line christened a new ship, the Norwegian Joy, the first ship to be specifically crafted for the China market. The new ship can accommodate 3,883 guests, and its design and interior finishes are tailored to the expectations of Chinese guests.

"After years spent carefully designing this amazing vessel, my team and I are both proud and thrilled to finally christen the world's first cruise ship custom-designed for the wonderful people of China," said **Frank Del Rio**, president and CEO.

The hull's artwork was designed by renowned Chinese artist Tan Ping and depicts a phoenix. Musician and film director Wang Leehom will be the ship's godfather, and he was on hand to christen the vessel with Norwegian Cruise Line executives at a ceremony in Shanghai.

The celebration marked the end of a month-long inaugural tour for the ship, which included events in Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Singapore and Qingdao.



Chattanooga CVB CEO announces retirement

Bob Doak announced his retirement as CEO of the Chattanooga CVB. He will continue to lead

the organization until February and assist in its transition. Doak has served in his position for 15 years, and he has been in the tourism industry for 35 years.

"For the last 15 years while leading the CVB, I have had the opportunity to

work with an excellent team, tourism partners, supportive mayors and county, and city and civic leaders in making tourism a vital component in elevating Chattanooga as a place to visit, work and live," Doak said in a prepared statement.

"Chattanooga has become a thriving, vibrant city, and I am humbled to be part of that process. It has been a pleasure bringing millions of visitors from around the world to Chattanooga," he said.

"We are fortunate to have great natural resources and the vision of those involved in selling Chattanooga and Hamilton County," said Mayor **Jim Coppinger**. "With the leadership of Bob Doak, the CVB has invested in telling and selling our message and has generated over \$1 billion in return on the investment."

Doak was recognized in 2016 as the Tennessee Tourism Professional of the Year at the Governor's Conference on Hospitality and Tourism. The award is given after a vote of industry peers.



Atlanta CVB promotes Dyson and Childers

The Atlanta CVB announced the promotion of **Amanda Dyson** (above, left) and **Kristen Childers**. Dyson is now the manager, membership events, and Childers is sales manager, domestic tourism.

Dyson plans and oversees the CVB's events, such as its Connect networking meetings and the bureau's hospitality industry briefings. She also builds partner engagement and manages customer relationships. Dyson joined the CVB in 2004, spending seven years in the tourism and sales departments before leaving. She rejoined the organization in 2015 as a sales manager focused on domestic tourism, small meetings and reunions.

Childers works to bring domestic groups and meetings to the city. She is also responsible for marketing to these groups and connecting them with CVB services once they arrive. She previously worked as the organization's marketing specialist, a role in which she helped implement the 360ATL virtual reality tool and developed content for the website. Childers began as an intern for the CVB in 2014 before joining the sales team and then the marketing department.



NYC & Company appoints Cole

NYC & Company appointed **Elan Cole** as its new creative director in July. Cole brings more than two decades

of design and marketing experiences, and most recently he led his own consulting company, The Future is Forever, for the past three years.

"We are pleased to welcome Elan to the NYC & Company team," said President and CEO **Fred Dixon**. "His outstanding design and creative experience across a broad range of industries will be a tremendous asset to us as we look to evolve our work and continue to position NYC's five boroughs as must-see, visit-now destinations."

"I couldn't be happier to join the NYC & Company family," said Cole. "Both design and New York City are so deep in my DNA. I'm thrilled to be helping the organization continue to build and amplify the presence of the five boroughs in the imagination of visitors and locals alike."

Cole also gives his time as a founding instructor of branding at New York's School of Visual Art's GroundFloor Incubator Program. 📍

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TREX BFFs

A Convention-kindled friendship yields ideas, inspiration



TRAVEL EXCHANGE is a living, breathing networking system, and there's an opportunity to shake a new hand at every booth and lunch table, and on every shuttle bus and elevator. Sometimes a new connection will become a valuable business partner; other encounters will lead to lasting friendships. And often, it's both.

Laura Harty, with the New Hampshire Division of Travel and Tourism Development, and Ed Sanders of Larkin Hospitality in South Burlington, Vermont, became acquainted at Travel Exchange '17 in St. Louis. Since then, they have maintained their professional connection—and their friendship. *Courier* asked a few questions, and we found out they really see eye-to-eye.

How did you meet?

Harty: We met at the networking event held at City Museum. It was my first NTA, but I did know a few of the New England delegates from previous conferences I had attended. Ed and I are from different states, but the region of New England does a lot of cross-marketing, and delegates from each state form really wonderful working relationships. Our mentality is this: "If you're going to spend time in one New England state, it makes sense to visit the others, too."

Sanders: New England is a very close-knit area, and we know some of the same people. We were introduced by Karen Ballard from the Vermont Tourism Network. The three of us had an absolute blast at the City Museum event, and that was the start of a great friendship that Laura and I now share.

Had you crossed paths before?

Harty: We had not met before, but since Travel Exchange, Ed and I have attended the New England Travel Showcase together, and we are already looking forward to connecting again at NTA in San Antonio.

Sanders: I have known Laura's co-worker Michele Cota for quite a few years, and when I reached out to see if she would be at Travel Exchange, she told me that Laura would be attending. I was excited to meet someone new from the region, but didn't know that we would become such great friends!

How have you stayed in touch since St. Louis?

Harty: Besides forming a good working relationship, Ed and I are also great friends now. It's great to have contacts outside my state who can give me new ideas about things for tour operators to do in New England.

Sanders: Laura and I have kept in touch via Facebook and have attended another conference together since returning from St. Louis. It's always nice to have someone I can reach out to when I have a question about New Hampshire.

Tell us how you've collaborated.

Harty: I have only been in this industry for a year, and Ed has a lot of experience in travel and trade. He has introduced me to other contacts and also has given me great advice.

Sanders: Living in New England, we always work together to plan itineraries that will benefit tour groups. Laura and I know a lot of the same people, and the potential is definitely there to work together.

How can other NTA members form a similar friendship?

Harty: Everyone at the NTA convention is so nice and outgoing—we're in the travel industry, after all! So don't be afraid to go up and introduce yourself. You never know; you might start with a simple hello and walk away with a lifelong friend.

Sanders: Some of the best people I know have been connections I met when attending shows like Travel Exchange. It can definitely be overwhelming for a new attendee to see so many people. But we are all there for the same reason, so just be open to everyone that you talk to.



Slice of life

You might already know Laura Harty. She achieved celebrity status on the Travel Exchange floor in St. Louis when she shared a hot pizza with fellow delegates.

Harty's phone had slipped out of her coat pocket during an Uber ride the night before. When she contacted the driver, who also works at a pizza parlor, he not only returned the phone, but he threw in a free pizza, too. "He just wanted me to try authentic St. Louis pizza," Harty says. "The hospitality he showcased was amazing. I still tell people about it." 🍕



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