



AOT in Action

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director Sherry Henry:

Good afternoon,

We kick off our **AOT World Tour 2014** next week! Our international representatives will be here to share valuable insight about each of our international markets. For three days next week, we'll be visiting communities throughout Arizona so that you can hear first hand from the international reps about their markets and how best to reach international visitors. If you're interested you can still register for the event. Information is in the **AOT News** section below.

Happy Thanksgiving!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Arizona's Travel Industry Gets Audience With Key Local and National Media

AOT's media relations division conducted the 2014 Arizona Media Marketplace in conjunction with Travel Classics West (TCW) on Nov. 20, at The Boulders – A Waldorf Astoria Resort. AOT was one of 42 participating tourism partners that presented Arizona travel and tourism offerings to writers and editors attending the four-day TCW conference. More than 20 Arizona media members also attended the marketplace, which afforded Arizona tourism industry representatives from across the state the opportunity to provide the latest developments on tourist attractions and innovative story angles to media in attendance.

TCW is sponsored by AOT and the Scottsdale CVB, along with other supporters, and takes place in Scottsdale every two years. TCW featured 15 top national travel editors and 35 freelance writers for four days of educational sessions and one-on-one meetings.

Arizona is scheduled to host Travel Classics West again in 2016 at the Omni Scottsdale Resort and Spa at Montelucia. For more information, contact Tony Alba at 602-364-3715 or via email at talba@azot.gov.

AOT Announces World Tour 2014!

To give statewide communities a more in-depth educational experience on the state's top international visitor markets, AOT will be bringing our international representatives to you for a series of seminars in northern, central and southern Arizona. The AOT World Tour will take place over three days – **Dec. 2, 3 and 4** – in Flagstaff, Scottsdale and Tucson, respectively. This is an opportunity for DMOs, attractions and hotels to learn from AOT's seven in-market international representatives about the latest visitor trends and statistics to ensure that your promotional efforts are effectively reaching your target market. For more information, contact Kristin Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via email at kswanson@azot.gov.

New Updates on AOT's Research Website!

The AOT hosted a Research Roundtable on Monday, November 17. Topics included Canadian homeownership in Maricopa County, the Arizona Experience's Agritourism map, and how AOT's ad agency, Off Madison Ave, utilizes the nSight tool in its marketing campaigns. Canadians have been traveling internationally more (up 8.8% YTD August 2014) but not to the U.S. (down 1.1%) likely due to the exchange rate (Canadians are paying 12% more for hotel rooms than this time last year). Canadians made up 14.6% of international visitors to Arizona in 2013. For more information, contact Colleen Floyd at 602-364-3698 or via email at cfloyd@azot.gov.

The following reports are now available at www.tourism.az.gov:

- [Arizona Lodging October 2014](#)
 - State month-over-month occupancy rates showed solid growth in October 2014 – up 6.8%.
- [National Park Visitation September 2014 \(preliminary\)](#)
 - Visitation to Grand Canyon National Park was up nearly 11% in September compared to this time last year.
- [Airport Passenger Volume September 2014 \(preliminary\)](#)
- [2013 Arizona Domestic Visitation Profiles](#)
 - These one-page infographics detail share of business/leisure, resident/non-resident, average party size, average spend, share of visitors utilizing paid accommodations, length of stay, average household income, and average age.
- [2013 Regional Domestic Visitor Prospects](#)
 - Compilation summaries of several sources; historical economic impact data from Dean Runyan Associates, visitor volume from Longwoods, profile data from Tourism Economics, visitor Visa card spending from Buxton, and online travel search and book data from nSight.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[Chicago Media Mission](#)

Date: January 1
Locations: Chicago, IL

[China Sales and Media Mission](#)

Date: January 12 - 16
Locations: Beijing, Shanghai, PRC

[Los Angeles Media Marketplace](#)

Date: January 13
Locations: Los Angeles, CA

Industry News

State Route 67 to North Rim of Grand Canyon Closing for Winter Season

The Arizona Department of Transportation will close State Route 67 between Jacob Lake (US 89A) and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon National Park for the winter season beginning Monday, Dec. 1.

The road could be closed earlier if heavy snowfall occurs in the area prior to the closure date. ADOT does not clear snow from SR 67 during the winter since the visitor accommodations at the North Rim are closed. The highway reopens each spring, usually around mid-May. US 89A will remain open at the junction with SR 67.

Before heading out on the roads, drivers are encouraged to call 511 or visit ADOT's Traveler Information Center at az511.gov for the latest highway conditions around the state. The website features camera images along state highways that give drivers a glimpse of weather conditions in various regions.

Be prepared for winter driving by checking for weather conditions prior to your travels on Arizona roadways.

Email projects@azdot.gov or call the ADOT Project Hotline at 1-855-712-8530 if you have questions or comments. You may also contact Coralie Cole, Senior Community Relations Officer at ccole@azdot.gov or by phone at 602-501-4899.

AARP Unveils Top 2015 Trends for 50+ Travelers

According to the AARP 2015 Travel Trends survey, baby boomers will be active travelers in 2015, taking an average of four to five trips next year. The 50+ spend \$120 Billion every year in leisure travel and it is not slowing down. How they travel, where they travel and what they take with them might surprise you. Top reasons for 50+ travel include escape, relaxation and time with family and friends. The 50+ travelers are looking to mainly relax and rejuvenate during their travel next year as opposed to adventure travel.

“We are excited to see that compared to 2014, people 50+ plan to take more trips in 2015 despite the current political and health concerns abroad,” said Stephanie Miles, Vice President, Member Value, AARP. “We are pleased that boomers remain enthusiastic about travel and are planning for more multigenerational travel next year.”

“We also found that for the 50+ packing up doesn't mean totally unplugging, with 46 percent admitting they will probably need to stay connected to work while on vacation,” continued Miles.

Key highlights from the AARP 2015 Travel Trends Predictions include:

Will the 50+ Travel more in 2015 than 2014?

- 48% of the 50+ say, “Yes!” They plan to travel more next year than this year.
- 51% say they will save more of their money specifically for travel.

Domestic Versus International Travel

- 97% will take at least one domestic trip in 2015.
- 47% say they plan for more domestic travel in 2015 than 2014.
- 45% plan to take at least one international trip.
- 23% say they plan more international trips in 2015 than 2014.

What kind of trips are people 50+ planning for 2015?

Extended Family Trips: 33% of travelers 50+ will take at least one multigenerational trip. This trend is expected to increase for Generation X'ers who will begin to join the 50+ next year.

- Summer Vacations: 54% will take a summer vacation either domestically or abroad with 35% headed to the beach.
- Weekend Getaways: 26% will plan weekend getaways for a quick break or family event with the fall or spring being popular times for those trips.
- Romantic Travel: Love is in the air with 28% planning romantic travel either domestically or internationally.
- Solo Travel represents 28% of planned 2015 trips and could prove to be the ultimate in freedom and rejuvenation when travelers 50+ are in total control of their trips.
- Staycation: Four in ten boomers took a staycation this year and anticipate taking one again in 2015. Many find great opportunities to enjoy time in their own backyards.

Bucket List will be the Biggest Motivator for International 50+ Travel People 50+ plan to fulfill their travel dreams and are actively planning for trips on their personal bucket lists. AARP predicts that 32 percent of people 50+ that will travel internationally in 2015 will do so to check off a destination on their bucket list. Destinations include Paris, Italy, London, Caribbean Islands and other international spots.

Will recent changes in World Politics and Health Crises impact the 50+ Traveler in 2015? The political unrest and turmoil in certain key parts of the world and the Ebola health scare are not

projected to impact people 50+ who plan to travel both domestically and internationally next year. Of the survey respondents an overwhelming 82 percent said the current political and health landscape will not impact their travel plans next year.

So what are the projected barriers to 50+ Travel in 2015?

Cost, Health and Family Obligations will be Biggest Barriers to 50+Travel in 2015.

- 51 percent of 50+ cite cost as the number one barrier to traveling but are determined to plan well in advance for 2015 and take more trips for less.
- Those aged 70+ say health concerns prevent them from taking trips they want to, while those 50-59 are challenged to find the time for travel, primarily due to work and family commitments.

Despite these barriers, it is interesting to see 17 percent of survey respondents say, “Nothing can stop me from traveling,” next year. While there is an acknowledgment of their biggest challenges, in 2015 boomers by large seem determined to overcome these barriers to visit their favorite destinations be it just domestic or domestic and international.

There are several ways to overcome those barriers so you can dream, plan, book, and share your travel moments. AARP Travel Ambassador Samantha Brown says, “This is why it's important to start planning and therefore looking forward to a big trip now. When you're emotionally hooked on a place, you'll be more likely to find the time and money.”

AARP has been a leader in the field of travel for people 50+ and their families since 1958 and identifies emerging trends that influence how their members dream, plan and book vacations. AARP Travel provides information, tools, and gives access to discounts to help people 50+ plan, book, and experience trips they want to take – whether it is a quick getaway or a trip of a lifetime. For the full report on 2015 AARP Travel Trends, visit <http://www.aarp.org/2015TravelTrends>. (*Travel Industry Wire, Nov. 19*)

Boomer Winter Travel on the Rise While Other Generations Slow Down

Boomers plan to travel more this winter compared to last winter and the previous winter. Their younger counterparts are decreasing planned winter leisure travel according to a national survey by D.K. Shifflet & Associates. Boomer leisure travel has increased for the past two winters perhaps driven by the fact that Boomers are continuing to retire and find themselves with more time to travel.

“While many marketers are focused on the Millennial traveler, it is important to remember the value of the Boomer and their capacity for travel”, notes Chris Klauda, Vice President at D.K. Shifflet & Associates. As for the decline in Millennial travel, perhaps the economic reality is setting in for Millennials and they cannot afford to travel as much or they are now employed and have less time to travel. Gen X shows the fewest number of leisure travel days for this winter possibly due to family obligations and the difficulty of pulling children out of school for travel.

D. K. Shifflet & Associates has been producing quarterly travel intention reports to help marketers anticipate and plan for fluctuations in travel demand and spending. Spring 2015 intentions will be available in February.

Results based on a representative sample of the U.S. population (n=8092) interviewed in October 2014 for winter travel intentions by D.K. Shifflet & Associates Ltd. DKSA is located in McLean, VA and has, for the last 28 years, provided the Industry's most complete consumer based travel data on U.S. residents and their travel worldwide. For more information, visit www.dksa.com. (*Travel Industry Wire, Nov. 19*)

AAA: More Than 46 Million Americans to Celebrate Thanksgiving with a Holiday Getaway, Most Since 2007

AAA Travel projects 46.3 million Americans will journey 50 miles or more from home during the Thanksgiving weekend, the highest volume for the holiday since 2007 and a 4.2 percent increase over 2013. Almost 90 percent of travelers (41.3 million) will celebrate the holiday with a road trip and likely will enjoy the lowest Thanksgiving gas prices in five years. The Thanksgiving holiday travel period is defined as Wednesday, November 26 through Sunday, November 30.

Highlights from 2014 Thanksgiving Travel Forecast:

- Thanksgiving holiday travel volume is expected to reach the highest level since 2007, with 46.3 million Americans taking a trip.
- The 2014 forecast is 4.2 percent higher than the 44.4 million Americans who traveled last year and the greatest growth rate for any holiday since Independence Day 2012.
- Road trippers likely will pay the lowest Thanksgiving price for fuel in five years. Today's national average price of gas is \$2.85 per gallon, which is 43 cents lower than the average price for Thanksgiving a year ago (\$3.28 per gallon).
- More than 89 percent of travelers (41.3 million) will travel by automobile, a 4.3 percent increase from 39.6 million last year.
- Air travel for Thanksgiving is expected to be at the highest level since 2007, with 3.55 million Americans taking to the skies.
- Travelers will encounter moderately higher prices with airfares one percent higher, mid-range hotels up eight percent and car rentals costing 10 percent more.
- The average distance traveled this Thanksgiving will be 549 miles roundtrip and Americans will spend an average of \$573 during the holiday weekend.

"This year, more Americans will give thanks for the opportunity to travel to friends and family than any year since 2007," said Marshall L. Doney, AAA President and Chief Operating Officer. "Americans are more optimistic about the future as improvements in several key economic factors, including employment, GDP and disposable income, are boosting consumer confidence and the desire to travel."

"Holiday joy has come early this year with Americans likely to pay the lowest Thanksgiving gas prices since 2009. Lower prices are increasing disposable income and enabling families to carve out more money from household budgets for travel this Thanksgiving," continued Doney.

Impact of gasoline prices on travel plans

The national price of gasoline has fallen below \$3.00 per gallon for the first time since Dec. 22, 2010, a welcome gift for travelers as they head into the busy holiday travel season. AAA predicts most U.S. travelers likely will pay the cheapest Thanksgiving gas prices in five years. More than

89 percent (41.3 million) of holiday travelers will drive to their destination, a 4.3 percent increase from 2013.

Travel expenses rise modestly

According to AAA's Leisure Travel Index, hotel rates for AAA Three Diamond lodgings are expected to increase eight percent from one year ago with travelers spending an average of \$154 per night compared to \$142 last year. The average hotel rate for AAA Two Diamond hotels has risen nine percent with an average cost of \$114 per night.

Weekend daily car rental rates will average \$55, 10 percent higher than last year. Airfares will only increase one percent, with an average discounted round-trip rate of \$189 across 40 top domestic routes.

Most of travelers' budgets go toward transportation, food and shopping

Travelers are expected to spend an average of \$573 over the course of their holiday travels. Despite lower average gas prices, travelers are allocating 31 percent of their budgets to fuel transportation. Food and beverage and shopping will account for 22 percent and 20 percent of holiday travel budgets, respectively.

Travelers' spending plans mirror their intended activities this Thanksgiving, with 70 percent of travelers reporting they will enjoy dining during their vacation and 59 percent will go shopping. Eighty-nine percent of travelers plan to spend time with friends and family this Thanksgiving holiday. For more information about AAA Travel, visit www.AAA.com/Travel. (AAA, Nov. 20)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.com to find information on all the exciting [events, festivals and activities](#) held throughout the Grand Canyon State!

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