



AOT in Action

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

A Message from Director:

Good afternoon,

After the success of our inaugural AOT World Tour last fall, we've invited our international representatives back for **AOT World Tour 2015**.

For three days in December, we'll be visiting Northern, Central and Southern Arizona providing you the opportunity to listen to and engage with our in-market representatives from Canada, China, France, Germany, Mexico, and the United Kingdom.

With global visitation on the rise, Arizona is poised to benefit from the value of increased international visitation. We are blessed to have travel assets such as our diverse cultural offerings, scenic beauty, unique local cuisines and statewide attractions that make our state a world-class, must see international destination.

In 2014, Arizona hosted more than 5.7 million international visitors, up 13.8 percent since 2008. Providing Arizona communities the opportunity to learn how to market to international visitors will help continue to boost tourism's economic impact to the community and the state.

I encourage you to join us for these informative sessions to learn about international travel trends and the benefits of investing in visitors who plan longer trips and travel to see more areas of the state. Details are available in the **AOT News** section below.

Have a great week,

Debbie Johnson
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Join Us for AOT's World Tour 2015 - December 8 (Flagstaff), 9 (Scottsdale) & 10 (Tucson)

To give statewide communities a more in-depth educational experience on the state's top international visitor markets, AOT will be bringing our in-market international representatives to you for a series of seminars in northern, central and southern Arizona. AOT will once again conduct the **AOT World Tour** program this December over three days – Dec. 8, 9 & 10 – in Flagstaff, Scottsdale and Tucson, respectively. This is an opportunity for DMOs, attractions and hotels to identify specific opportunities each area of the state has in attracting tourists from Arizona's six international markets (Canada, China, France, Germany, United Kingdom and Mexico).

New this year is the opportunity to interact with our in-market representatives directly in smaller breakout sessions.

Be sure to register online at www.aotworldtour.ezregister.com. Registration closes on Thursday, **December 3**. Visit tourism.az.gov/aots-world-tour-2015 for agenda details.

Join AOT and Tourism Cares for Grand Canyon and Williams!

AOT invites you to join us and Tourism Cares as we kick off the National Park Service Centennial Celebration with the Tourism Cares for the Grand Canyon National Park & Williams project on November 1–3, 2015!

Tourism Cares is a non-profit organization with a mission to preserve and enhance the travel experience for future generations through volunteerism. The group will bring volunteers from all over the country to give back to one of our most iconic tourism destinations and its gateway community, the Grand Canyon National Park & Williams. Hundreds will come to Williams on Sunday, November 1 for a welcome networking reception, will overnight and volunteer in the city on Monday, November 2. There, participants will provide a fresh coat of paint to the visitor's center, city hall and even the rodeo grounds building. Their work will help the city of Williams shine for present and future visitors. On Tuesday, November 3, volunteers will board the Grand Canyon Railway to give back once again – working alongside the National Park Service for a large scale litter clean-up along the South Rim.

This program provides a unique opportunity to channel our passion and commitment to protect and restore valuable destinations we all care about in our home state, while team-building and making connections with others in our industry.

Join us! For more program information, contact Jennifer Sutcliffe at jsutcliffe@tourism.az.gov. Registration information is available at www.tourismcares.org/nps-volunteer-program.

New Research Updates Available!

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

- [Arizona Lodging September 2015](#)

- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging 3rd Quarter 2015](#)
- [County Lodging 3rd Quarter 2015](#)
- [State Park Visitation July 2015](#)
- [State Park Visitation August 2015](#)
- [National Park Visitation June 2015](#) (revised)
- [Airport Passenger Volume August 2015](#)

For more information, please visit tourism.az.gov or contact Colleen Floyd at cfloyd@tourism.az.gov.

Arizona Delegation Makes Impact at Travel Classics West

AOT's media relations division, along with media relations representatives from Scottsdale, Phoenix, and Mesa, attended Travel Classics West in Vancouver, BC, Canada Oct. 8-11. The group was joined by media contacts from the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia, the Boulders Resort & Spa, Fairmont Scottsdale Princess, The Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch and Talking Stick Resort, giving Arizona an impressive presence with the 15 travel editors and 40 travel writers who attended the conference.

AOT and Visit Scottsdale sponsored a luncheon for the writers and editors, showcasing the Arizona delegation in advance of a return to Scottsdale for Travel Classic West 2016 next November at the Omni Scottsdale Resort & Spa at Montelucia. Scottsdale and Arizona traditionally host the conference every other year, welcoming top-tier travel editors and writers to the state. Travel Classics West 2016 will take place Nov. 17-20, 2016. For more information, contact Tony Alba at talba@tourism.az.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

World Travel Market

Date: November 2-5

Take a Small Bite out of Small Towns in Arizona AAA/CAA FAM Tour

Date: November 3-7

Toronto Media Marketplace

Date: November 18

Industry News

Rogers to Lead 2017 Phoenix NCAA Basketball Final Four

Longtime collegiate athletics administrator Dawn Rogers has been named Executive Director and CEO of the 2017 Phoenix NCAA Basketball Final Four.

Rogers, former Senior Associate Athletic Director at Arizona State University, was selected by the Phoenix Local Organizing Committee (PLOC), which will work with the NCAA to execute the Final Four, set for April 1 and April 3, 2017 at University of Phoenix Stadium. Rogers is responsible for overseeing PLOC operations and collaborating with the NCAA leading up to the Final Four, to be played in the West for the first time since 1995. The PLOC will collaborate with Arizona State University, the host institution, and community partners to support the Final Four's myriad ancillary events and to establish legacy projects that will ensure the lasting impact of the Final Four in the Valley.

"The PLOC search committee unanimously selected Dawn for her leadership skills and deep experience in college basketball," said Tom Sadler, President and CEO of the Arizona Sports and Tourism Authority. "As co-chair of the Phoenix Final Four bid, she was a natural choice. She did an excellent job of building widespread community support for Phoenix's bid and will ensure that Phoenix sets a new standard of excellence for the Final Four."

"I am honored to lead the effort to host the iconic NCAA Men's Final Four for the first time in Phoenix, the nation's premier destination for elite sporting events," Rogers said. "We have an outstanding team of professionals across the region who have dedicated their time and resources to bring the games to the desert, and together we will host a spectacular weekend of events in April 2017. I am excited to take my passion for student-athlete welfare and ensure that the student-athletes, coaches and fans will have an unforgettable experience in Phoenix."

Rogers has been a co-chair of the PLOC since 2007. She spent nine years at ASU as Senior Associate Athletics Director and Senior Women's Administrator after serving as Athletic Director at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has served on numerous NCAA cabinets and committees. During Rogers' tenure at Arizona State, the university hosted three NCAA Men's Basketball regionals in the past eight years. Rogers and her husband Rob have two children, Owen and Hazel and reside in Phoenix.

"We are delighted to have Dawn serve as executive director of the Phoenix Local Organizing Committee," said Dan Gavitt, the NCAA's vice president of men's basketball. "This is an important position responsible not only for the planning of the Final Four and the many activities that will take place in the area during that time, but also for the lasting impact this event leaves on host cities. Dawn's has the talent and determination to help make our inaugural Final Four in Phoenix one to remember."

The 2017 Phoenix Final Four will cap a three-year run of mega sporting events in Arizona, a key driver in the state's economy. Final Fours have generated hundreds of millions of dollars in economic impact for host cities; New Orleans reported \$135 million in economic impact in 2012 and Atlanta reported \$70 million in 2013. (*Oct., 2015*)

Renovations Dominate Upcoming Phoenix Development

Of the 35 million domestic overnight visitors Arizona saw in 2014, 19 million went to Phoenix and the central region, staying an average of 4.4 nights. As an urban hub with prime resort land nearby, Phoenix has a strong mix of city-center hotels and sprawling resorts in the suburbs. According to Lodging Econometrics' Phoenix Market Hotel Construction Pipeline report for the second quarter of 2015, the region has 42 hotel projects in its pipeline for a total of 5,370

rooms—nine more projects than the same quarter a year ago. Eight projects are under construction, and 23 are slated to start construction within the next year. A full 33 of the projects are in the suburbs.

Lodging Econometrics reports that Marriott International has 10 projects representing 1,326 rooms in the pipeline, Hilton Worldwide has eight for 975 rooms, IHG has 11 projects for 1,294 rooms and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has one 107-room hotel in the works. Combined, these 30 projects represent 71 percent of the Phoenix market pipeline.

OPENINGS UPDATE

In May, Starwood opened the Sheraton Mesa Hotel at Wrigleyville West in the Phoenix suburb of Mesa, Ariz., reportedly the first four-star resort-style property in Mesa. The property is owned by Arizona hotelier Bob Yost. The 180-room hotel has 34,000 square feet of meeting space and several restaurants.

The year-old Graduate Hotels brand has opened the Graduate Tempe across the street from the Arizona State University Tempe Campus in the former Twin Palms Hotel, part of a new brand of hotels by AJ Capital Partners. The brand operates only in college towns, and design details reflect the educational theme. The 140-room boutique hotel has two restaurants.

Marriott will get two brands in one in the downtown area next year. The Luhrs City Center Marriott is a 19-story, 320-room hotel scheduled for completion in 2016. The building will house two brands: a Courtyard by Marriott and a Residence Inn by Marriott, which will share a lobby and other amenities, such as the pool.

Westroc Hospitality and Woodbine Development Corporation are developing a new luxury resort on the former location of Paradise Valley's Marriott Mountain Shadows Resort. Construction is under way, with a projected opening in early 2017. The new Mountain Shadows Resort will have 175 guestrooms in two buildings, an adjacent building with 31 hotel-condominium units, a restaurant and market and the rehabilitated Mountain Shadows Golf Course.

RENOVATIONS

The former Scottsdale Resort & Conference Center closed in July for a summer-long renovation. The first phase of the \$10-million renovation included adding a new restaurant and bar, updating the main pool and adding outdoor meeting and event space. The hotel reopened in early September as The Scottsdale Resort at McCormick Ranch, A Destination Hotel, and is owned by Cornerstone Advisors.

The 648-room Fairmont Scottsdale Princess is planning to add 102 extra rooms for a total of 750. This expansion includes three luxury suites, a new pool, Great Lawn and a new event venue. The expansion, which broke ground over the summer, will take the place of the former tennis courts. The 6,900 square-foot pool will be a simulated beach with a swim-up bar, and the Great Lawn (just off the conference center) will provide extra space for events and groups.

Notably, the resort's original architects, Allen + Philp, along with contractor Balfour Beatty and designer Whitespace Interiors, are all involved in the project, which the hotel team expects to be completed by May 2016.

The Ritz-Carlton Phoenix closed for the summer to begin what has been described as “extensive renovations.” When it reopens in December, the hotel will be part of Marriott’s Autograph Collection. Destination Hotels and Resorts is expected to manage the hotel, which is owned by Host Hotels & Resorts. The hotel will introduce 277 revamped rooms, a new restaurant and two bars, a new boutique spa, an expanded fitness center, and additional meeting space.

The Wigwam recently completed a \$16-million, multiphase renovation that updated the interior décor and added a new pool complex, new restaurants and bars with al fresco dining and entertaining areas, as well as new social areas and event lawns.

The Boulders Resort & Spa also got a new name to kick off a significant renovation project. The \$8-million refresh included upgrades to the 160 casitas with an updated interior design, new finishes and furnishings. As of press time, the updates were scheduled to be completed by the end of September.

In late 2014, The Arizona Biltmore, A Waldorf Astoria Resort, renovated its guestrooms and suites, meeting spaces, ballrooms, prefunction rooms, spa and salon, as well as its Prohibition-era bar. The multimillion-dollar renovation added new interior décor and enhanced technology while preserving the historic Frank Lloyd Wright architectural style under the guidance of interior designer Smith Firestone Associates. (*Hotel Management, Oct., 2015*)

Hacienda Del Sol Guest Ranch Resort Unveils 32 New Room as part of a Multi-Million Dollar Expansion

Hacienda Del Sol Guest Ranch Resort, a beloved Tucson landmark frequented by visitors and locals, has more than doubled its room count ahead of the prime visitor season. This luxury boutique resort, also known for its award-winning restaurant The Grill, will complete construction of 32 additional guestrooms by the end of the month. The rooms are located on the north side of the property’s 34 acres, bringing the total guest room count to 60. The new rooms are identified as the Catalina rooms because of their stunning views of the Santa Catalina Mountains. They will be available for occupancy in mid-October.

Hacienda Del Sol’s local owners collaborated with Tucson’s Eglin + Bresler Architects and W.E. O’Neil on the property’s \$13 million expansion which began 12 months ago. The new luxury guest rooms and suites were designed and built to reflect the same Santa Fe style construction of the existing historic structures. The six new and unique buildings that house the rooms were built in a village-like setting with landscaped walking paths that lead guests to the Terraza Garden Patio, historic courtyard and negative edge swimming pool. Each building houses a different number of rooms and is adorned with hand-painted Mexican-tile murals, custom patio and walkway lighting and over 4,000 tons of Coronado brown stone.

The new Catalina rooms and suites rival the beauty and uniqueness of the existing historic rooms. Each room has a hand-painted border around the ceiling, Talavera tile, and custom made furniture with wood from Oregon that is handcrafted in Mexico. Light fixtures, headboards, wrought iron drapery rods along with wood floors and fabrics embody the spirit of the southwest. Walls are painted in rich earth tones with hints of desert sage, sunset melon and periwinkle to complement the Tucson sky. Every room has a patio with a spectacular view of the mountains or cityscape; most have both views and six have private, outdoor showers. The

two Catalina suites are double the room size and include a conference size dining table with conferencing abilities for smaller board meetings or for those guests who wish to have a parlor.

The previously completed phases of Hacienda Del Sol's expansion include a new circle drive, expanded Terraza Garden Patio and Lounge, paved parking lots and a 5,000-square-foot operations and administration building. A 2,900-square-foot ballroom with pre-function space and patio will be completed in early 2016.

To celebrate the unveiling of the Hacienda's new Catalina rooms, guests who book a Catalina room for three nights or more will receive an additional night on that same stay, with travel before December 16, 2015 at no extra charge. Call the resort at (800)728-6514 or (520)299-1501 or visit HaciendaDelSol.com. (Oct., 2015)

American Express Meetings & Events Forecasts Strong Growth in Meetings Activity Across All Regions in 2016

According to the American Express Meetings & Events 2016 Global Meetings Forecast, positive economic trends combined with the global expansion of companies will drive continued growth for the meetings industry in 2016. Across all regions, the number of training and internal meetings is expected to experience high levels of growth as companies continue to invest in bringing their employees together for face-to-face meetings.

Following a year of added capacity, an increased focus on compliance-related concerns and a growing need to manage risk across all meeting types, meeting owners are predicted to expand their budgets next year. In turn, hotels are expected to increase capacity in key cities, but lead times remain tight, so meeting owners who are able to plan farther ahead have the best chance of securing their first choice property and dates. The 2016 Forecast also provides a look at three key areas of interest among meetings professionals: compliance, incentives and using mobile and social media for events, all of which are expected to continue to shape the meetings industry in 2016.

"The resurgence of meetings and events over the past few years has allowed meetings professionals to demonstrate the strong value that face-to-face meetings continue to offer globally," said Issa Jouaneh, Senior Vice President and General Manager, American Express Meetings & Events. "Our customers recognize this value of interaction and seek opportunities to engage, reward and build meaningful experiences for meetings professionals through their managed programs. At the same time, we have seen our customers also place a greater focus on compliance as they design their programs to meet the evolving needs of meeting owners while also ensuring accountability and process discipline throughout their programs."

"2015 marked an exciting year for American Express Meetings & Events, as we continue to expand our footprint and work closely with our global customers to deliver improved program insights and enhanced meetings experiences. In 2016, we look forward to continuing this momentum to drive greater business results for our customers and enable them to positively impact the global economy and achieve strong growth in the year ahead."

In North America, 2016 points to continued increases in all meeting types across the region, further fueling the increased activity seen in 2015. Training and internal meetings are expected to continue to experience strong growth and rise more than any other meeting type next year.

As the number of meetings is predicted to increase, attendee levels in North America are also expected to trend upwards.

As a result of recent economic growth, companies are renewing their focus on employee-centric meetings by planning a greater number of incentive meetings and special events next year; however, meeting planners are also implementing processes to ensure the right audiences are in attendance to further maximize their returns on their meetings investments and increase compliance.

Although respondents are optimistic about growth, the length of meetings is predicted to remain largely unchanged in 2016. While overall program spend is expected to rise, marking the largest forecasted spend increase in three years, budgets remain tightly controlled as meeting planners increase their spend per attendee, where justified. (*Travel Industry Wire, Oct. 13*)

New Study Reveals Americans' Attitudes Towards Vacations

Isn't it time to make travel a priority? Time to trade in travel dreams for memories? Time to exchange "have-tos" for "must-sees?" Globus recently asked Americans these very questions (and more). The results? Surprising! Unlike similar studies that have placed a spotlight on Americans' vacation deficit, Globus' NEW "Time to Tour" survey* indicates that we favor travel over many other life experiences.

For instance, Globus asked survey respondents what life events have gotten in the way of wanderlust. While 24 percent (24%) said that finances are to blame for vacation deficits and 18 percent (18%) said health and family issues have gotten in the way of travel, 44 percent (44%) of respondents said nothing gets in the way of travel plans. Instead, they make travel their No. 1 priority.

Further, an astounding 97 percent (97%) of people said they feel like they deserve to vacation and 91 percent (91%) wish they vacationed more.

And while many people assume that we vacation to escape the rigors and stresses of life, Globus' "Time to Tour" survey indicated the opposite is true. A vast majority of people (93%) said they travel to experience the places they've only read about, new cultures, food and more while only 7 percent (7%) said they take a vacation to relax.

"Beach and resort vacations are relaxing but the vast majority of people want to experience life, not escape it when they take time off," said Steve Born, vice president of marketing for the Globus family of brands. "On a touring vacation, the world is delivered to travelers. They simply need to seize the moment. Capture the beauty. Grab hold of the flavors. Envelop the sounds and immerse themselves in the unforgettable. We make it easy – and fun – to travel the world."

So where do Americans want to travel to experience new places, people and cultures? According to the "Time to Tour" study, 56 percent (56%) of people place Europe on top of their list of places to go. Exotic destinations like South America, Africa and the South Pacific placed second (28%) and 16 percent (16%) of travelers said they'd prefer to stay a little closer to home, traveling through North America.

Regardless of where they go, there is an overwhelming consensus that Americans think travel is good:

- 85 percent (85%) of respondents said travel makes people happier
- 70 percent (70%) said vacations make us better people

"If there's any question that travel is an important priority in our lives, our study reveals the answer: Vacations are important. More important than many other life experiences," said Born. "In fact, people ages 55 and over told us that if they could do things differently in life, nearly half (47%) would travel more versus spending more time with family (31%) and making more 'me' time (20%)."

For more information about Globus' "Time to Tour" survey, visit <http://blog.globusjourneys.com/>. (*Travel Industry Wire, Oct. 14*)

Bicycle Route Through Arizona Gets Go-Ahead

The Arizona Department of Transportation has received approval to establish a 573-mile bicycle route through Arizona as part of a national bike-route system.

U.S. Bicycle Route 90 runs along existing state highways, local streets and shared-use paths, ADOT said in a news release. It begins along Interstate 10 at the Arizona-California border and ends along State Route 80 at the New Mexico state line. In between, it runs through the major metropolitan areas of Phoenix and Tucson.

Attractions along the new route include Bisbee, Tombstone, the San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area and Saguaro National Park, ADOT said. The bike route doesn't involve building new infrastructure, as it follows existing highways and streets.

ADOT got approval from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials to designate the route. It becomes part of the U.S. Bicycle Route System. For a [map of that system, click here](#). For more information on Arizona's new route, visit the [Adventure Cycling Association's website](#). And for more information on ADOT's Bicycle and Pedestrian Program, [click here](#). (*Oct. 20*)

Calendar of Events

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

Connect with the Arizona Office of Tourism!

Become a fan on Facebook! <http://www.facebook.com/arizonatravel>
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