



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,

Congratulations to the White Mountain Apache Tribe for establishing the **first** Local Visitor Information Center (LVIC) on Tribal Land! The **Grand Opening** was held this past weekend.

Officially designated through AOT's LVIC program, the White Mountain Apache Tribe Local Visitor Information Center joins 62 other AOT designated centers across Arizona. Each center helps to promote local and regional attractions; recreation opportunities; and hospitality amenities.

Visitors often utilize these information centers as their first stop, giving communities the opportunity to provide a positive first impression of the community and Arizona. Last year, statewide LVICs welcomed more than one million visitors to Arizona.

The White Mountain Apache Tribe Local Visitor Information Center is located in the Nohwike' Bagowa, the White Mountain Apache Cultural Center and Museum. For more information, please contact Dawn Melvin at 602-364-3707 or via e-mail at dmelvin@azot.gov.

On an appetizing note... it's [Arizona Spring Restaurant Week](#)! Now through Sunday May 22 diners will be given the opportunity to take advantage of restaurant week pricing on a three course prix-fixe meal for either \$30 or \$40 per person (excluding tax and gratuity). For more information and a list of participating restaurants visit, www.arizonarestaurantweek.com.

Have a great week.

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Register for the 2011 Governor's Conference on Tourism!

Registration is now open for the 2011 [Governor's Conference on Tourism!](#) This event is the premier educational and networking gathering for the travel and tourism industry. It is filled with practical ideas from the industry's top experts that you can take back to your community and immediately apply to your program of work. You'll get the latest hospitality and tourism information, network with more than 500 of your colleagues, learn about products and services from exhibiting sponsors, and get the latest industry research available. To register, visit www.aztourismconference.com.

Calling all 2012 Events

AOT is collecting all 2012 event dates for the Arizona Calendar of Events. Please identify the exact dates of your events, details can be sent at a later date if not yet confirmed. Submit your items by **Wednesday, June 1**. If you have not sent your calendar information for the rest of 2011, please send this as well. For more information, contact Marjorie Magnusson at 602-364-3695 or via e-mail at mmagnusson@azot.gov.

Arizona Calling – Share Something Amazing!

AOT, in collaboration with the Governor's Task Force on Tourism and Economic Vitality, has launched "[Arizona Calling – Share Something Amazing](#)," an ePostcard campaign featuring iconic Arizona images. The ePostcard campaign features vibrant imagery of the Grand Canyon State that gives residents and travelers the opportunity to share Arizona's beauty with others. With customizable messages, email ePostcards can be sent to friends and family around the globe at no cost. Built to be an on-going campaign, the images of the ePostcard will change periodically to reflect Arizona's seasons and activities. The ePostcard is available through Arizonaguide.com.

Get your Summer Travel Packages and Deals on Value AZ.com

The new landing page is up for [Value AZ.com](http://ValueAZ.com), but we still need your travel packages and deals! The campaign has officially launched this week with the placement of radio ads and traditional media. The ads showcase the amazing summer travel opportunities found throughout Arizona in addition to promoting the economic benefits of the travel and tourism industry. **To celebrate the Arizona Centennial, coming up February 14, 2012, we're also asking that deals and packages supplied use the Centennial theme whenever possible.**

If you want your summer travel packages or deals promoted through ValueAZ.com, this is your chance! Upload your travel deals and packages to the Travel Deals section of AOT's consumer Web site, <http://www.arizonaguide.com/arizona-tourism-partners>. You must first sign up to be a Travel Partner on www.Arizonaguide.com before you can list a travel package or deal. There is no charge to list a package on the Travel Deals section. If you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact Sandy Pederson at 602-364-3698 or via email at spederson@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

Arizona Restaurant Week

Dates: May 13 – 22

Locations: Various

US Travel Association's International Pow Wow

Dates: May 21 – 25

Location: San Francisco, California

Governor's Conference on Tourism

Dates: July 13-15

Location: Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort, Scottsdale

Industry News

Looking to Speed Security for Frequent Fliers

In what would be a major shift in procedures, the Transportation Security Administration is working on a concept that could let "trusted travelers" keep their shoes on, leave laptops in bags and avoid body scanners altogether—one of the biggest improvements at the airport since 2001.

Drawing data from airline frequent-flier programs, the TSA plans to identify trusted travelers and indicate their status with a bar code on their boarding passes, said the agency's administrator, John Pistole. When the boarding pass and valid identification are presented at the security checkpoint, a trusted flier will be directed to the expedited screening line.

There would, as with any program, be some exceptions. For example, expedited screening might not be offered to passengers on a flight that has bookings for people on the government's "watch list" of those believed to be associated with terrorism. Also, the program likely will be tailored to specific flights or routes. Expedited screening would be easily available on flights considered low risk, such as regional jet trips to a small city or flights with air marshals on board, Mr. Pistole said.

"We still want to keep some randomness and unpredictability in there so terrorists can't game the system," Mr. Pistole said.

An initial program to give pilots and flight attendants separate screening without body scanners or pat-downs will start this summer. Tests at different airports will follow, TSA said. If the concept moves forward, full implementation of the trusted-traveler program will take much longer, however, officials say. For full article, [click here](#). (*Wall Street Journal*, May 5, 2011)

Fly or Drive? More Travelers Staying on the Ground

As the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) looks to speed up security lines for “trusted travelers,” airline passengers tired of the hassle and fed up with fees are more inclined than ever to find alternative transportation. A TripAdvisor survey found that one-third of respondents said as a result of rising airfares they are planning to drive for one or more of their trips in 2011, when they would have previously flown.

The survey found that fees are the biggest passenger issue, beating out the former major complaint: the hassle of security. Another study from Mandala Research/Solutionz found that three-quarters of travelers still want to drive to their destinations -- despite higher gas prices. Only 17 percent said they would choose air travel instead.

“With the continued accumulation of ancillary airline fees, tighter seat configurations, baggage restrictions and airport security delays, it’s not surprising that Americans are asserting more control over their travel plans by opting to drive themselves,” said Chicke Fitzgerald, CEO of Solutionz, a travel industry strategic consulting firm based in Tampa, Fla.

The security complaints may be lessened by reports that the TSA is working on a “trusted traveler” concept that is sometimes termed a “major” shift in procedures. It would let these travelers keep their shoes on and leave laptops in their bags. It would also allow them to avoid body scanners. Drawing data from airline frequent-flier programs, the TSA plans to identify trusted travelers and indicate their status with a bar code on their boarding passes, said the agency's administrator, John Pistole.

When the boarding pass and valid identification are presented at the security checkpoint, a trusted flier will be directed to the expedited screening line, he added. There would be some exceptions. Expedited screening, for example, would not be offered to passengers on the government’s “watch list.”

"We still want to keep some randomness and unpredictability in there so terrorists can't game the system," Pistole told The New York Times.

An initial program to give pilots and flight attendants separate screening without body scanners or pat-downs will start this summer, the newspaper reported. Tests at different airports will follow, TSA said. But if the concept goes ahead, it will take much longer. The newspaper reported the move was “welcome news” for travelers. A previous private enterprise “Clear” program that users had to pay annual fees to be included ended in failure last year after the company went bankrupt. (*Travel Mole, May 9*)

Travel Jobs Brighten US Unemployment Picture

The US Labor Department’s just-released jobs report found the travel industry added 14,900 jobs in April. It also expanded employment payrolls by 59,300 in the first four months of 2011, accounting for eight percent of all new jobs created so far this year. Jobs in the travel industry have grown 38 percent faster than in the rest of the economy, according to the government.

"The travel industry is a major job creator for the US economy," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the US Travel Association. "Travel has added more jobs than mining, construction, utilities, information and finance combined in 2011."

US Travel later this month will release a comprehensive report with recommendations to add 1.3 million jobs through a series of visa policy recommendations to help the United States achieve its goal of becoming more competitive in the global travel market. (*Travel Mole, May 9*)

What's Behind Growth of Vacation Rentals?

Despite traveler's economic woes, there's been a huge growth in vacation rental homes, condos and villas. Backers of the trend say there are good reasons. "Travelers' motivations toward vacation rental hospitality are compelling. More than just reasons, they're inherent to people's core values," said Alex Risser, President of the Vacation Rental Managers Association and its Discover Vacation Homes Awareness campaign, the official public resource on vacation rental travel. He added:

The "Ypartnership/Harrison Group 2010 Portrait of American Travelers" cites various reasons that include value for the price and privacy.

Full kitchen facilities and more overall space are also incentives. Nine out of ten travelers choose vacation rentals to have full kitchens. Vacation rentals also provide "homes away from home" with anywhere from 1,000 to more than 4,000 square feet of space. Amenities such as fresh linens, game rooms and private swimming pools are also cited by 85 percent of travelers as top features. Another factor is family "togetherness," with more than two-thirds of travelers saying rentals allow them to have quality time with their families. (*Travel Mole, May 9*)

Biz Travel is Back: Good News for Meetings and Airline Industry

There are several signs that business travel has certainly made a comeback -- good news for hotels, airlines, meeting planners and even car rental agencies. The latest GetThere study, for example, shows biz travel is on the upswing. "In 2011, the industry should see a greater increase in business travel," said the GetThere Corporate Travel Benchmark Survey.

It added, however, that corporations are still heavily focused on reducing travel expenses. "Even though the economy is rebounding and business travel is growing, corporations are using the lessons learned during the recession to continue to push for cost savings in their travel programs," explains Suzanne Neufang, general manager of GetThere.

The GetThere survey of corporate travel managers at top businesses and organizations around the globe finds that 61 percent of those who responded expect their travel spending to grow from one to ten percent this year over 2010.

That's a big difference compared with 2010, when roughly a third of managers reported only a slight increase in their travel budgets over 2009. In addition to being good news for all providers of business-related travel, the trend also shows that corporations realize they need to travel more to increase business.

GetThere is an online corporate booking tool used by companies around the world that is part of Sabre Travel Network. That company's findings mirror estimates earlier this year by the Global Business Travel Association that indicated corporate travel has bounced back.

Last year, corporate travelers accounted for 36 percent of the domestic travel market, according to PhoCusWright. That includes revenue from airlines, hotels, car rental agencies, trains and cruises.

There's no doubt that a recovery is underway in business travel that will help the overall industry but some observers wonder if higher fuel prices will severely limit the recovery. (*Travel Mole, May 12*)

U.S. Travel Industry Reveals Plan to Create 1.3 Million American Jobs

Last week, the U.S. Travel Association unveiled a plan to create 1.3 million U.S. jobs and add \$859 billion to the U.S. economy by 2020 by reforming an antiquated visa process that often drives international travelers to other countries. The heart of U.S. Travel's plan is to increase staffing, reduce visa interview wait times and expand the Visa Waiver Program.

"As a nation, we're putting up a 'keep out' sign," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "The United States imposes unnecessary barriers on international visitors, and that inhibits our economic growth. If we institute a smarter visa policy, we can create 1.3 million U.S. jobs."

By failing to keep pace with the growth in global long-haul international travel between 2000 and 2010, the United States lost the opportunity to welcome 78 million more visitors and generate \$606 billion in direct and downstream spending – enough to support more than 467,000 additional U.S. jobs annually over these years.

U.S. Travel's report, "Ready for Takeoff: A Plan to Create 1.3 Million U.S. Jobs by Welcoming Millions of International Travelers," is the first comprehensive review of the negative impact that inefficient and unpredictable U.S. visitor visa and entry processes have on U.S. jobs, economic growth and exports. The report documents that travel is America's largest industry export sector, and the easiest export sector to expand, since the barriers to increased international visitation to the United States are largely self-imposed. Additionally, the report shows how common-sense reforms that are relatively easy to implement could create 1.3 million more U.S. jobs and add \$859 billion to the U.S. economy by 2020 – all with little or no cost to taxpayers.

The report's comprehensive, four-step plan will help the United States achieve its goal of becoming more competitive in the global travel market, which in turn will expand U.S. exports, create new jobs and drive economic growth. The report recommends:

- * America must align U.S. State Department resources with market demands;
- * America must reduce visa interview wait times to 10 days or fewer;
- * The U.S. State Department must improve planning, measurement and transparency; and
- * America must expand the Visa Waiver Program.

"Increasing travel to the United States is the most effective form of economic stimulus," said Dow. "Travel supports communities, injecting billions into the U.S. economy and creating millions of new jobs."

Coinciding with the release of the report, U.S. Travel will reactivate the Discover America Partnership to unite a diverse group of stakeholders behind a focused and intensive campaign to advance the report's recommendations. Joining the new Partnership at the leadership level are the American Hotel and Lodging Association, National Restaurant Association, National Retail Federation and U.S. Chamber of Commerce, with U.S. Travel serving as chair. To download the report, visit smartervisapolicy.org. (*Travel Industry Wire, May 12*)

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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