



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,

As the firefighters work tirelessly to contain more and more of the Wallow Fire in northeastern Arizona, the Monument Fire in southern Arizona is taking its toll. For the latest on these and other fires throughout the state, visit www.azein.gov. This site does contain information on closures. We are monitoring this closely.

On a lighter note, today we launched the mobile version of our consumer Website, www.arizonaguide.com. Mobile-savvy travel consumers can now access Arizona visitor information at mobi.arizonaguide.com on DROID and iPhone mobile devices.

With travel information delivered straight to your phone, users of the mobile site can be guided to Arizona travel destinations with GPS tracking and turn-by-turn directions; discover event listings that are updated daily; explore attractions, golf courses, restaurants, resorts, and spas throughout the state; and search destination cities for special offers and package deals.

We want to thank our vendor, [Madden Media](#) for their work on this project. The site has been strategically integrated within AOT's overall marketing efforts and plays a key role along with the agency's traditional and digital advertising initiatives, social media activities, and the Official State Visitor's Guide. Additionally, the site is supported entirely by advertising dollars, therefore exists at no cost to the state agency.

Be sure to check it out at Mobi.arizonaguide.com!

Have a great week!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Register for Governor's Conference on Tourism!

Register now 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.

This year's theme will celebrate Arizona's Centennial allowing us to celebrate our state's development along with our own industry's growth. To register, visit www.aztourismconference.com.

Meet Canadian Media Representatives at the Inaugural Vancouver Media Marketplace

AOT is pleased to invite Arizona DMOs, CVBs, and Chambers to participate in our inaugural Vancouver Media Marketplace. The event will take place at the Hawksworth Restaurant, Tuesday, August 16th. We anticipate approximately 15 to 20 key media representatives from this market to attend. Delegates will have a small table for displaying materials, distributing press kits, and meeting with media. Registration cost is \$600 per delegate, with participation limited to one delegate per organization. Cost is not inclusive of travel expenses, shipping costs or similar. For more information contact Kara Woroniec at kworoniec@azot.gov or 602-364-3715.

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 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

[GCOT](#)

Dates: July 13-15

Location: Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort

[GCOT Award Winners Announced](#)

Dates: July 14

Location: Doubletree Paradise Valley Resort

Vancouver Media Marketplace

Dates: August 16

Location: Hawksworth Restaurant, Vancouver

Industry News

How "Airline" Got Southwest Blogging

Southwest Airlines' involvement in the A&E reality show "Airline" inspired the company to get involved in social media marketing and customer service, says Christi McNeil, a social media specialist with the company. "Airline" taught Southwest the value of surrendering control to tell engaging stories, and that's an insight the company carried forward into its early social media campaigns. "We really tried to take some of those stories ... and share them with our customers," McNeil says. (*SocialMediaExaminer.com (6/10)*; *ATA Smart Briefs (6/13)*)

U.S. Travel Association Says Visa Reform Will Create New Jobs

Roger Dow, president of the U.S. Travel Association, said that making it easier for foreigners who want to visit the U.S. to get visas could create 1.3 million new jobs. Dow was responding to recommendations made by President Barack Obama's Jobs and Competitiveness Council to improve America's visa process for foreign visitors. Dow said that last year foreign travel in the United States supported 931,000 jobs directly in the U.S. travel industry and another 856,000 jobs in other industries. He pointed out that a U.S. Travel report finds that cost-effective reforms could create 1.3 million new jobs.

"On behalf of the 14 million workers whose jobs are supported by travel in America, we applaud President Obama's Jobs and Competitiveness Council for recognizing the importance of welcoming millions of new visitors to America's shores. Overseas travelers to the United States spend in excess of \$4,000, and every 35 visitors creates one new job," Dow said.

U.S Travel has relaunched the Discover America Partnership, a coalition dedicated to welcoming more visitors to the United States through reforms that enhance America's security and streamline the visa process. Other partners in the campaign include the President's Jobs Council, the Service Employees International Union, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Retail Federation, Consumer Electronics Association, American Hotel and Lodging Association and National Restaurant Association. For more information, visit www.ustravel.org. (*Travel Pulse, June 14*)

Summer Outlook for Travel is Strong

The summer outlook for North American travel: more. The same word can be used for international visitors, according to most predictors of this summer's travel patterns. More again. That was the consensus of AAA officials, US Travel Association members and Best Western International executives at a recent Leisure Travel Summit in New York City.

"As the economy continues to improve, we are seeing more people planning summer family getaways than in the past few years," said Travel Guard Vice President, Carol Mueller. One example: Advanced travel reservations for this summer are up more than four percent at Best Western hotels.

"Americans who made the decision to cut back on spending last year in order to save more, which meant postponing a vacation, are now actively planning and booking summer travel this year, which we believe will translate to a strong summer for our Member hoteliers," said Dorothy Dowling, senior vice president of marketing and sales for Best Western.

Will rising gas prices discourage auto travelers? The consensus answer: no. Despite gas prices more than \$1 per gallon higher than the same time last year, Gary Oster, U.S. Travel's senior vice president of business development, remains optimistic that travelers won't divert from their travel plans.

Along with millions of Americans on the road, a growing number of international travelers, especially those from Asia and Europe, are expected to vacation this summer at popular US destinations.

Among destinations, cultural and educational experiences top the list of popular places. A Travelguard poll found almost one third planned a trip of this nature. Sunny destinations trailed only slightly. Surveys show the appetite for weekend getaways has grown. The American Express Spending & Saving Tracker says 59 percent of Americans plan to travel this summer, compared to 51 percent last year. Early summer traffic reflects recent reports that indicate workers are more inclined to take vacations this year because they feel more secure.

"Job security is the strongest it has been in several years, as corporate job cutting shrinks to pre-recession lows," said John Challenger, chief executive officer of global outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. in a prepared statement. "But stagnant wages and soaring gasoline prices are likely to limit the amount of money people are willing to spend on vacations." (*Travel Mole, June 14*)

End to Higher Airline Ticket Prices?

There's increasing evidence the airlines will have to call a halt to rising prices, travel observers say. Why? Because the economy is again slowing. The stock market is sputtering. And high oil prices are cutting into household budgets.

"The airlines may be harder pressed to keep their fares up and planes packed, at least without resorting to significant cuts in capacity when the summer vacation season is over," says The New York Times.

Most airlines have failed to raise rates since March because, it appears, some passengers are passing on the higher prices. "Airlines have overreached," said George Hobica, the founder of AirFareWatchdog.com. But so far, at least, the airlines have squeezed revenue out of passengers through higher fares and a growing number of fees.

"It has not hurt that mergers have left fewer airlines and that they have taken a more disciplined approach to controlling capacity," says the Times. So far this summer, air demand remains high. There's an increase of 1.5 percent over last year, according to the Air Transport Association. The airline group predicts international passenger traffic this summer to break last year's record. *(Travel Mole, June 14)*

Phoenix-area Hotels Continue to Improve Numbers

The Valley's hospitality sector continues to climb out of the Great Recession and posted relatively stable numbers as the spring tourist season drew to a close. According to data from Smith Travel ResearchbizWatch Smith Travel Research Follow this company , a leading hospitality and research firm based in Hendersonville, Tennessee, visitors continued to fill metro Phoenix properties during the month of April.

Figures show that occupancy in both Phoenix and Scottsdale properties rose from the same time last year, but Glendale's occupancy dropped by a small amount. Occupancy in Phoenix stood at 63.2 percent for April, an increase of 2.2 percent from April 2010. Occupancy at Scottsdale properties was up 2.1 percent to reach 70.9 percent in April. Meanwhile, occupancy at Glendale properties was 61.1 percent, a 1.8 percent drop compared to April 2010.

The average daily rate (ADR) held relatively steady year over year. It was down 0.6 percent to \$115.33 in Phoenix. The ADR was \$166.56 in Scottsdale, an increase of 1.1 percent. In Glendale, the ADR was \$101.95, a larger drop of 10.4 percent from April 2010. Similarly, Glendale's revenue per available room declined by about 12 percent to \$62.26 in April 2011. However, RevPar at Phoenix properties reached \$72.87 in April 2011, an increase of 1.6 percent while the figure increased year-over-year by 3.3 percent to reach \$118.14 in Scottsdale.

RevPar is key industry metric that is a measure of a visitor's total room spend. The 2010 Glendale figures reached relative highs because of several key tourism events. In addition to baseball crowds during the 2010 spring training season, Glendale was also host to Wrestlemania the last weekend in March, which helped bring crowds to the community. Paul McCartney also played at Jobing.com Arena to a sold-out crowd that same weekend.

Scottsdale is home to a number of luxury resorts, while Phoenix and Glendale have a higher number of more moderately priced properties, which contributes to the financial differences in rates and revenue per room. *(Phoenix Business Journal, June 15)*

Grand Canyon to Waive Entrance Fees on the First Day of Summer, June 21

On Tuesday, June 21, Grand Canyon National Park will be joining national park units around the country in welcoming summer with a fee-free day. The National Park Service will be waiving entrance fees on June 21, 2011.

Visitors who arrive on Tuesday, the 21st will be allowed to enter the park free of charge. Those who plan to spend time in the park beyond the 21st will need to pay the regular entrance fee for the remainder of their stay.

"The longest day of the year is the perfect time to take a short trip. Celebrate an extended Father's Day with Dad, the start of summer break with the kids, or a job well done with your favorite graduate," said National

Park Service Director Jonathan B. Jarvis of the June fee-free day. Acting Superintendent Barclay Trimble encourages park visitors to think beyond the "day." "As it happens, this fee-free day is happening during the week of the Grand Canyon Star Party. So, I hope visitors will be thinking about more than just the daytime activities when they are contemplating their plans for this fee-free day."

Park visitors are reminded that the fee-free designation applies to entrance fees only and does not affect fees for camping, reservations, tours, or use of concessions. Park entrance stations will have Interagency Senior and Annual Passes available for those who wish to purchase them. Additional fee-free days in 2011 will be National Public Lands Day (September 24) and Veteran's Day weekend (November 11 – 13.) For more on what there is to see and do in Grand Canyon National Park, please visit the park's web site at www.nps.gov/grca.

Nearly a Quarter of Hotels not Using Social Media

Almost a quarter of hotels are not utilizing social media to increase occupancy and revenue per available room (RevPAR), according to the latest poll by TravelClick. Only 20 percent of the poll's respondents cited using Twitter, ten percent cited using Groupon or other forms of online couponing, and a miniscule eight percent utilize FourSquare promotions. Facebook was by far the most preferred social media channel for hoteliers, with 65 percent of respondents using it to increase bookings and revenue. Analysts concluded that instead of running cost-efficient promotions on social media channels like Twitter and Facebook, hotels are electing to increase their advertising spend through online advertisements (57 percent) and paid search advertising (20 percent). Source: Travel Click; (*Travel Smart News, June 15*)

New Fiesta Bowl Director Aims to Fix Organization's Image

Saying it's time to look forward, incoming Fiesta Bowl Executive Director Robert Shelton vowed to restore the image of the troubled organization and improve its charitable giving. But no major overhauls were planned when the departing University of Arizona president officially takes the bowl's helm Aug. 1, according to bowl Chairman Duane Woods.

"We have been through enough sweeping changes," Woods said. "It's about executing our plan."

Shelton, who soon will leave his collegiate post in Tucson, is being brought in to rehabilitate an organization rocked by an internal investigation that found widespread corruption and mismanagement of funds. He replaces John Junker, who was fired in late March after the public release of many of the investigation's findings, which ranged from bowl-paid strip-club trips to potentially illegal reimbursement of employee donations to political campaigns.

Two other bowl executives also were forced to resign in the report's wake, and the bowl has begun to implement a series of reforms.

Shelton, who was entering the final year of his UA contract, said the Fiesta Bowl job offered him an important challenge.

"If you look at the long term, this is an organization that really is integral to what is happening in Maricopa County, and by extension, the state," Shelton said in an interview. "They have a terrific reputation. They have fallen from grace, but they are putting things back together. It looked like a wonderful opportunity for someone who has been in higher education and college athletics to come on board and make a difference."

Read more: <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2011/06/15/20110615fiesta-bowl-director-robert-shelton.html#ixzz1PprzFB3J> (*Arizona Republic, June 15*)

Calendar of Events

Visit www.ArizonaGuide.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>

Follow us on Twitter! <http://twitter.com/ArizonaTourism>