



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 and Happy Halloween!

The Arizona Office of Tourism's is launching its [2011-2012 Arizona Tourism University](#) (ATU) workshop program! These informative sessions offer critical resources to statewide DMOs, tourism organizations and Tribal tourism entities on best practices, marketing tactics and the latest advertising techniques for tourism promotion.

The ATU program provides communities the tools they need to develop successful marketing plans and tourism programs. It is also an opportunity to work in partnership with AOT to attract visitors to the Grand Canyon State. Last year, more than 450 community representatives participated in our ATU workshops.

These sessions are complimentary. The first workshop series focuses on interactive marketing and social media efforts for business. Times and locations for this workshops will be announced next week. To view the entire 2011-12 ATU workshop series, <http://www.azot.gov/system/files/350/original/ATU%20Workshop%20Schedule.pdf?1320082056>

For more information about the workshops, past presentations, webinars and toolkits, please visit <http://www.azot.gov/marketing-programs/arizona-tourism-university>

We look forward to seeing you at the workshops!

Have a spooky evening,

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Reach the Mexican Visitor Market with AOT's Mission to Mexico

AOT invites Arizona tourism suppliers to join the agency in a sales mission to Mexico, November 28 through December 2. The sales mission will target tour operators, travel agents and media representatives during luncheon seminars in Mexico City and Guadalajara. Tour operator sales calls will also take place in Mexico City. Registration cost is \$900, all other expenses are extra. The deadline for participation is **Friday, October 28**. For more information please contact Kristin Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

Don't Miss AOT's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon Co-op Opportunity

AOT is offering booth space at the P.F Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon and 1/2 Marathon EXPO January 13-14, 2012. Space is available to those DMOs promoting a local race in 2012. Partners should provide collateral for distribution at the race EXPO and staff to work the EXPO for time slots allotted. Price per participant is \$750, and space is limited to three (3) slots. RSVP to Rebekah Bell at rbell@azot.gov by 5:00 p.m. MST on November 14, 2011.

New Update to AOT's Research Web site

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Arizona 2010 Year-End Tourism Facts](#)
- [County Lodging September 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging September 2011](#)
- [Gross Sales & Tourism Taxes August 2011](#)
- [National Park Visitation August 2011 Preliminary](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Melissa Elkins, Research Manager, at 602-364-3716 or via e-mail at melkins@azot.gov.

AOT's Capital Arizona Media Tour a Success!

In celebration of Arizona's 100th anniversary, AOT hosted seven international journalists as they explored the past and present capital cities of the Grand Canyon State on the **Capital Arizona Media Tour**. The participants included three journalists representing the United Kingdom, two from Germany, and one from each France and Quebec, Canada.

The group experienced the rich and dynamic history of the past territorial capitals, Prescott and Tucson, as well as the present-day capital city of Phoenix. The successful trip began last Monday. Highlights included a downtown historic Prescott visit including the Elks Opera House, and Sharlott Hall Museum, hiking the new Constellation Trail after visiting the Phippen Museum and Kayaking Watson Lake to experience the Granite Dells. The tour through Tucson included a walk back in time on a guided walking tour of downtown Tucson, a horse-back ride through the Tanque Verde Mountains, and a visit to the Tucson Museum of Art's new Rock n Roll Photography exhibition. The tour was concluded by lots of fun and food in Phoenix, explorations of downtown, the Desert Botanical Garden, and the Heard Museum.

AOT thanks our international visitors for their participation in the tour and a tremendous thank you to Wendy Bridges and Don Prince of Prescott, Jackie Ludwig and Jessica Stephens of Tucson, Trish Hendrickson, and Scott Dunn of Phoenix as well as Michelle Streeter of Mesa. For more information, contact Kara Woroniec at 602-364-3715 or via email at kworoniec@azot.gov.

Upcoming Events & Activities

[Celebrate Arizona 100 Years AAA/CAA FAM Tour](#)

Date: November 9 – 13

Location: Greater Phoenix Area, Prescott, Tucson

[New York Media Marketplace](#)

Date: November 15

Location: New York City, NY

[Toronto Media Marketplace](#)

Date: November 16

Location: Toronto, ON

Industry News

Grand Canyon National Park to Waive Entrance Fees for Veterans Day 2011

Grand Canyon National Park will be joining national park units across the country in celebrating Veterans Day with fee free entry into the park.

This year, the fee free designation will apply to the entire Veteran's Day weekend, Friday, Saturday and Sunday, November 11 – 13. Visitors who arrive on November 11, 12 or 13 will be allowed to enter the park free of charge. Those who plan to spend time in the park beyond November 13 will need to pay the regular entrance fee for the remainder of their stay.

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.

Although these will be the final fee free days for 2011, fee free days for 2012 have already been announced and include: January 14 – 16 (Martin Luther King, Jr. weekend), April 21 – 29 (National Parks Week), June 9 (Get Outdoors Day), September 29 (National Public Lands Day) and November 10 –12 (Veterans Day weekend.)

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. For more on national park fee free days, go to www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm.

STR Reports Strong September Gains for U.S. Hotel Industry

The U.S. hotel industry in September reported increases in all three key performance metrics, according to data from STR. Overall, the U.S. hotel industry's occupancy rose 5.7 percent to 63.3 percent, its average daily rate was up 4 percent to \$103.40, and its revenue per available room increased 10 percent to \$65.47.

"September's positive results were influenced by strong demand in both the transient and group segments," said Brad Garner, COO at STR. "The Luxury segment continues to outperform, and solid RevPAR increases were measured across all the Chain Scale Segments. Upper Upscale ADRs were muted because of business booked in 2009 and 2010 on pre-negotiated group rates. We anticipate positive performance momentum in markets focused on group business as those rooms sold in 2008, 2009 and 2010 go off the books."

Among the top 25 markets, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Fla., achieved the largest occupancy increase, rising 13.6 percent to 53.3 percent, followed by Miami-Hialeah, Fla. (up 12.6 percent to 67 percent), and Orlando, Fla. (up 12.2 percent to 56.4 percent). New Orleans reported the only occupancy decrease, falling 3 percent to 55 percent. Nashville, Tenn., jumped 11.1 percent in ADR to \$95.10, posting the largest increase in that metric, followed by Miami-Hialeah with a 10.5 percent increase to \$119.37. Washington, D.C. ended September virtually flat in ADR with a 0.6 percent decrease to \$151.45.

Five top markets experienced RevPAR increases of more than 15 percent -- Miami-Hialeah (up 24.4 percent to \$79.94); Nashville (up 19.5 percent to \$61.44); Orlando (up 18.5 percent to \$46.13); Tampa-St. Petersburg (up 17 percent to \$45.14); and Philadelphia, Penn.-N.J. (up 15.7 percent to \$82.99). None of the top markets reported RevPAR decreases for the month. For more information, visit www.strglobal.com. (*Travel Pulse, October 24*)

U.S. Bill would Require Health and Safety info for Travelers

Several US senators have introduced a far-reaching bill that would require web sites providing travel services to also add detailed information about the health services at advertised destinations. Sen. Mark Kirk (R-Ill.) the lead sponsor of the bipartisan International Travelers Bill of Rights act, said he introduced the bill after 8-year old Brent Midlock drowned in a hotel pool in Mexico.

"If Ms. Midlock had been aware that this particular hotel did not offer adequate emergency care, perhaps she would have chosen to stay at another location where such services were offered," Kirk told The Hill.

"Because of this, I feel strongly that websites must do their best to make sure travelers are aware of the available onsite health and safety services before they book," he said.

Passage of the measure could affect many travel providers. No estimates were available of the cost but it could potentially be high, said travel observers. Under the bill, web site operators must include State Department travel warnings that might relate to various destinations. Sites

would also have to include information on the extent to which each listed facility has on-site health and safety services.

The bill would require web site operators to request that on-site information if it is not readily available; and if no information is provided, they would have to say specifically. The bill would make website operators immune from any liability related to safety issues as long as they provide the information and have no reason to believe that the information is inaccurate. The Federal Trade Commission would enforce these rules, said The Hill. (*Travel Mole, October 26*)

Paradox in Luxury Hotels Charging for Internet

A must-have amenity at the top of every traveler's list: internet access. But in an apparent paradox, luxury hotels are far less likely to provide free internet than lower-priced ones. Three-quarters of luxury and "upper upscale" hotel chains -- segments that include brands such as Four Seasons, Hilton and Marriott -- charge for in-room Internet access, according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association 2010 Lodging Survey conducted by STR Global.

In comparison, just 2 percent of full-service mid-range hotel chains -- a segment that includes brands such as Holiday Inn -- ask guests to pay a fee for surfing the web, the survey found.

"It's something that drives me and a lot of my clients relatively insane," travel agent Janice Hough told CNN.

"If you're paying \$500 for a hotel room, you can probably afford \$15 or \$20 a day for the Internet. But it leaves a bad taste in people's mouth," she said.

Hough and many others are complaining that while some upscale hotel chains provide complimentary internet in their less expensive properties while charging for it at the upscale facilities. Guests can log on for free at any Marriott Courtyard, for example, but have to pay while staying at a JW Marriott, though the chain waives the fee for elite members of its loyalty program, according to CNN. Wireless Internet access is one of the top five "must-have" amenities for hotel guests, according to the J.D. Power and Associates 2010 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study.

So why do luxury hotels want to charge for it?

"The hotels charge for Internet because the customers continue to pay for it," answers Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst for Forrester Research.

He said the common assumption is that business travelers do not mind the added cost, which they simply charge to their expense accounts. But many guests have raised objections, surveys have found. (*Travel Mole, October 26*)

North American Leisure Travel Edges Ahead of Global Market

In the midst of the Euro debt crisis, Europe's leisure reservations actually declined slightly by -0.5% compared to September 2010. Globally, average daily rates (ADR) for leisure bookings increased by +3.0% over prior year, with North America jumping +5.0%, ahead of the +3.8% year-to-date pace. Outside North America, ADR stayed ahead of the prior year by +1.5%.

“The leisure market’s showing in September evidenced a move towards off-peak travel by consumers,” said Mike Kistner, chief executive officer of Pegasus Solutions. “It’s not a month we usually would expect to see leisure gains, but efforts to make travel dollars go farther by travelling during the traditional ‘off-season’ made bookings jump, especially in North America. Hoteliers for their part resisted deep discounting following the summer peak season, and as a result drove more revenue as leisure bookings poured in at more moderate, off-peak rates.”

The corporate market continued to grow over prior year, registering a +6.1% increase in global GDS channel bookings; this was slower than August’s uptick of +10.2%, but ahead of July’s +5.8% pace. Rates remained positive, rising by +3.5% globally over 2010. Looking forward, corporate bookings and rates are both expected to continue beating prior year figures through the fourth quarter, with the potential for slower booking growth combined with a rate uptick come January.

The Pegasus View reporting on September 2011 bookings is available online and by free subscription at www.pegs.com. Data reported in The Pegasus View comes from billions of transactions processed monthly by Pegasus Solutions, the world’s single largest global processor of hotel transactions. It is the only industry report to reflect data drawn from both GDS and ADS transactions, representing the business and leisure markets respectively for approximately 90,000 hotels worldwide. (*Travel Industry Wire, October 27*)

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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