



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 Oklahoma State, Stanford, Oklahoma, and Iowa college football teams! We're looking forward to hosting them along with all of their dedicated fans for the [Tostitos Fiesta Bowl](#) and [Insight Bowl](#)!

All four college teams have devoted fans that are sure to follow their teams to Arizona and cheer them on to the championship! And we know from hosting such games in the past, that many of these fans extend their stay to visit tourist attractions throughout the state.

This year, we've launched some public relations initiatives to encourage college bowl sports fans to follow their teams for the big games and extend their stay.

These games are a wonderful, time-honored tradition that gives our industry a great opportunity to promote Arizona as the premier travel destination that it is. What's more is that vibrant images of Arizona's warm weather, unforgettable scenery and exciting attractions will be broadcasted to millions of people throughout the nation enticing them to experience our amazing destination.

Congratulations to the Fiesta Bowl for what should be incredible games! Be sure to check out the complete listing of Fiesta Bowl events at www.fiestabowl.org.

Have a great week,

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

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.

- [County Lodging October 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging October 2011](#)
- [Gross Sales & Tourism Taxes September 2011](#)

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

Learn How to optimize your Social Media Presence at AOT's Next Arizona Tourism Workshop!

AOT is proud to present the Arizona Tourism University (ATU) workshop series, ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses***.

Whether you have just started or you are a social media expert that just wants to learn more, the ATU complimentary workshop ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses*** offers insider information on how to optimize your social media's performance and become more strategic in your efforts.

Workshop presenters [Off Madison Ave](#) will cover the basics of the top platforms – Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogs – and how you can utilize each one in a manner that will help you reach key business objectives.

Based on social media work with the City of Palm Desert, Arizona Highways Magazine and the Arizona Office of Tourism, the ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses*** presentation is tailored to the tourism industry and will help you gain an understanding of how to strategically approach social media.

Register now for any one of the available ***Interactive Marketing: Social Media Basics for Tourism Businesses*** workshops below!

This workshop session is the first in a series of workshops produced by AOT and scheduled for FY12. This fiscal year, AOT has collaborated with the [Arizona Commission of the Arts](#) in a unique partnership to broaden workshop opportunities. Be sure to review the complete [FY12 ATU schedule](#).

Workshops are all complimentary!

December 7

1:00 – 4:00 p.m.

[Cochise College - Benson](#)

1025 State Route 90

Benson, AZ 85602

To register, visit <http://www.azot.gov/marketing-programs/arizona-tourism-university/workshop-registration>

December 9

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

[Webinar](#)

To register, visit: <https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/641509616>

Upcoming Events & Activities

[Golf Shootout Press Trip](#)

Date: December 5 – 9

Location: Tucson and Southern Arizona

[National Tour Association Marketplace](#)

Date: December 5 – 10

Location: Las Vegas, NV

[UK Media Mission](#)

Dates: January 30 – February 3, 2012

Location: United Kingdom

Industry News

Cyber Monday Sales Promotions Pay Off for Hotel Industry

Cyber Monday has gone well beyond the retail industry as hotel companies get in on the holiday shopping craze with promotions available for just a day after the holiday weekend. Trump Hotel Collection announced a 30 percent discount on suite accommodations booked on Monday, Nov. 28, 2012, while Gaylord Hotels launched a 48-hour sale on Cyber Monday, with room rates starting at \$109 or a Dream Works Value package with rates beginning at \$179 per person.

AMResorts announced a 24-hour sale on a total of 50 rooms at its Secrets Marquis Los Cabos and Secrets Huatulco Resorts & Spas. “We saw a significant increase in traffic to the websites, as well as a spike in bookings for travelers looking to take advantage of these great deals,” said Director of Marketing Erica Doyne.

Palace Resorts offered 20 percent off bookings of three nights or more for travel between Jan. 4 and Dec. 23, 2012, inclusive of the company’s \$1,500 resort credit valid on stays of five nights or

longer and applicable towards spa, golf and even room upgrades. "Palace Resorts Cyber Monday definitely accomplished both, driving traffic and closing sales. Since we are not known to discount our product, anytime we have a legitimate sale it generates a lot of traffic in addition to closing business quickly with travel agents and consumers," said Frank Maduro, vice president of marketing. (*Travel Pulse, November 28*)

IATA Reports Rise in Air Passenger Traffic, Decline in Cargo

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reported a 3.6 percent increase in air passenger traffic in October, but with very distinct regional differences. Despite the deepening economic crisis, European carriers have showed strong demand growth of 6.4 percent. "With Europe accounting for 29.2 percent of global air travel, this suggests that the current overall strength in air travel is based on fragile foundations," said Tony Tyler, IATA's director general and CEO.

Demand for cargo, however, was down 4.7 percent. "Since mid-year, the market has shrunk by almost 5 percent and this is far greater than the 1 percent fall in world trade," said Tyler. "Air freight is among the first sectors to suffer when businesses confidence declines."

While business confidence has declined considerably in recent months, industrial output has not. But in anticipation of weaker economic activity, there is a shift to cheaper and slower modes of transport.

North American carriers saw international passenger traffic decline by 1.9 percent while capacity was almost the same levels compared to the previous October. One of the main drivers for the decline in traffic is capacity cuts by U.S. carriers. International load factors stood at 80.1 percent, second only to Europe at 80.2 percent.

Domestic passenger markets grew by 2 percent compared to October 2010. Capacity growth in domestic markets outstripped this rise, showing a 2.4 percent increase over the previous year. This is in line with the long-term growth trend for domestic markets of 2 percent, however it is well below the 8 percent growth experienced during the post-recession recovery.

U.S. airlines cut capacity on domestic markets by 1.1 percent. Weak consumer confidence saw demand decline by 0.9 percent. U.S. airlines reported the strong load factors of 83.6 percent. (*Travel Pulse, November 28*)

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index® Improves

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index®, which had declined in October, improved in November. The Index now stands at 56.0 (1985=100), up from 40.9 in October. The Present Situation Index increased to 38.3 from 27.1. The Expectations Index rose to 67.8 from 50.0.

Says Lynn Franco, Director of The Conference Board Consumer Research Center: "Confidence has bounced back to levels last seen during the summer (July 2011, 59.2). Consumers' assessment of current conditions finally improved, after six months of steady declines. Consumers' apprehension regarding the short-term outlook for business conditions, jobs and income prospects eased considerably. Consumers appear to be entering the holiday season in better spirits, though overall readings remain historically weak."

Consumers' appraisal of present-day conditions improved in November. Those stating business conditions are "good" increased to 13.3 percent from 11.2 percent, while those stating business conditions are "bad" declined to 38.2 percent from 43.7 percent. Consumers' appraisal of the labor market was also more upbeat. Those claiming jobs are "plentiful" increased to 5.8 percent from 3.6 percent, while those saying jobs are "hard to get" decreased to 42.1 percent from 46.9 percent.

Consumers' short-term outlook, which had declined last month, was less negative in November. The proportion of consumers anticipating business conditions to improve over the next six months increased to 13.6 percent from 10.2 percent, while those anticipating business conditions will worsen declined to 15.8 percent from 21.3 percent.

Consumers' outlook for the job market also improved. Those expecting more jobs in the months ahead rose to 12.9 percent from 10.8 percent, while those expecting fewer jobs decreased to 24.1 percent from 27.6 percent. The proportion of consumers anticipating an increase in their incomes rose to 14.9 percent from 11.1 percent. (*Travel Smart News, November 30; Conference Board, November 29*)

Expedia Study Shows Americans Still Lag in Taking Vacations

The new Expedia 2011 Vacation Deprivation study finds that Europeans lead the world in vacationing. On the whole, European workers enjoy considerably more vacation time, as measured by days given and days taken, than their peers elsewhere. The average employed European earns 25-30 vacation days in a given year, and, with some exceptions, tends to use them all. Brazilians treat vacation as the Europeans do -- as a vital part of being employed, rather than a luxury. Expedia's study showed that Brazilian workers receive 30 vacation days and enjoy every one of them.

Americans, on the other hand, treat vacation as a luxury. They receive roughly half the Europeans' allotment of vacation time. In 2011, employed Americans earned 14 vacation days and took 12, a decrease from 2010. The median number of vacation days U.S. workers earned in 2010 was 15, but the number actually taken was only 12. In comparison, the French earned 30 vacation days and took all 30 in 2011. In 2010, the average French worker used all but one of their vacation days.

"Europeans work to live, feeling vacation is a right rather than a privilege," said Scott Durchslag, president of Expedia Worldwide. "Americans can often live to work, viewing vacations as a guilty privilege to be downplayed around the workplace - especially if they are worried about their jobs."

American vacation habits are more like Asian than European. Asia represents the most vacation-deprived region in the 2011 Vacation Deprivation study. Japanese workers trailed the field, taking a mere five vacation days out of 11 available, while South Korean respondents enjoyed seven out of a possible ten days of vacation. Last year, Japanese workers left six vacation days on the table, trailing only the Italians. Italian respondents reported that they left seven vacation days unused in the past year, more than any other nation, though Italians are not precisely vacation-deprived, having 28 days at their disposal.

Overall, 22 percent of respondents said they believed they could not afford a vacation, and 20 percent said they did not take a vacation due to a "lack of planning." The U.S. leads the world in money worries: one out of three Americans said they can't afford vacation. However, almost 50 percent of U.S. workers describe their financial situation as "solid" or "good," which reinforces the notion that Americans view vacation as a luxury. Brazilian respondents, on the other hand, were least likely to see money as a vacation impediment (6 percent). Brazilians chose "lack of planning" as their top reason for not taking a vacation.

Most vacationers find it difficult to disconnect from work. The Danish find it easiest -- only one in seven respondents from Denmark report that they check email and voicemail regularly while on break, with more than 50 percent refusing to check in even once. Americans also prefer to disconnect when on vacation, with only 25 percent checking in regularly and 75 percent checking in sometimes or never. More than 50 percent of French, Japanese, Indian and Italian workers remain tightly connected to the office while on vacation.

In their vacation preferences, according to the study, most people prefer beaches to romance. Twice as many respondents cited beach vacations as their preference compared with "romantic holidays with spouse" -- except South Koreans, who overwhelmingly chose "romantic holidays" (45 percent versus 27 percent favoring the beach). Romance was the preferred option for the Japanese as well, unlike Argentineans and Mexicans, who were four or five times as likely to select beach vacations as they were to choose a romantic holiday, a city getaway or an outdoor adventure. The Dutch preferred vacations in the outdoors, while Singaporeans prefer the city. Expedia's study was conducted online by Harris Interactive in September and October among 7,803 employed adults worldwide. (*Travel Pulse, November 30*)

Here's an Early Glimpse of Next Year's Travel Trends

The year is running out and already travel predictors are looking at 2012. What can you expect from travel in the various markets including hotels, luxury and market segments? And what's the outlook on meetings?

Overall, the latest TravelClick's report finds business, leisure and group business travel all showing moderate demand improvement with gains expected to escalate through the third quarter of next year. "Throughout 2011, business travel has been the primary driver for hotel demand and that trend continues in 2012," said Tim Hart, executive vice president, business intelligence, TravelClick.

The US hotel industry will see less growth in 2012 than previously predicted but at least one of the reasons is good news: a stellar 2011. The other reason is "continuing economic headwinds," says STR. The industry-wide occupancy rate now is expected to average 60 percent next year, an increase of 0.2 percent, says the travel consulting and research firm. It previously forecast a 2 percent increase. Average room rates now are forecast to rise by 3.7 percent, to US\$105.29, in 2012, STR said. It previously predicted a 4.9 percent gain. STR said it lowered its 2012 expectations because of continued economic uncertainty and the industry's better-than-expected 2011 performance.

"Our revised forecast reflects an industry posting record levels of demand, operating in an environment where the economic fundamentals cannot be ignored," said Amanda Hite, STR's president.

Luxury travel looks strong next year, says Travcoa. Reservations are more than 50 percent ahead of the same time last year, "a clear indicator that the luxury travel segment is rebounding as consumer confidence continues to increase," the site says.

"Even with an average selling price of \$10,000 per person, we are experiencing growth and expect bookings to continue to accelerate as the economy improves and people return to traveling more frequently," said Jerre Fuqua, president.

Asia, including India, is Travcoa's most popular region for travel in 2012, making up almost 40 percent of the reservations since June 1, 2011. Popular itineraries to the continent include Enlightened India, Intriguing Indochina, and Legendary China, all of which showcase culture, unique history, and distinguishing architecture.

Europe is also showing robust results, contributing to 25 percent of Travcoa's reservations since June 1, 2011. Itineraries of interest include Along the Dalmatian Coast, an in-depth look at Croatia, Montenegro, and Slovenia; Undiscovered Italy, an itinerary filled with little-known Italian villages and an abundance of food and wine; and Resplendent Russia, an exploration in the style of the czars.

However, the Middle East, which is traditionally Travcoa's most popular region, makes up just 5 percent of future bookings. "This signals that consumer confidence in this region is still low following last spring's political instability," the company says.

The majority of global event suppliers are predicting an increase in meetings activity in 2012, but only 7 percent are anticipating a growth in budgets, according to research conducted by American Express Meetings & Events. AmEx said that 60 percent of global suppliers had seen an increase in planned and booked meetings for 2012.

The research revealed that the majority (60 percent) of suppliers are forecasting budgets will remain static in 2012, with 33 percent anticipating an increase. 40 percent are expecting a decrease in the number of attendees at meetings, with only 20 percent expecting growth.

"There is a lot of uncertainty in the financial environment, but we are still seeing this increase. Companies need to continue to meet because there is value in [doing so]." Said Michael Schuller, vp. (*Travel Mole, December 1*)

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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