



## ***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:**

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Good afternoon,

Congratulations to Oklahoma State University, winners of the 2011 Fiesta Bowl, and the University of Oklahoma, winners of the 2011 Insight Bowl! With both these teams, along with their opponents, the University of Iowa and Stanford University, more than 125,000 devoted college bowl fans were in Arizona for these exciting games, traveling throughout the state and spending visitor dollars on food, lodging and retail!

Congratulations are also in order to the Fiesta Bowl organization, the city of Glendale and the city of Tempe for their outstanding efforts in organizing and hosting these wonderful events.

In other news, AOT has just launched the [Arizona Adventure of a Lifetime Sweepstakes](#) for our **Arizona Calling – Share Something Amazing ePostcard** campaign. Please, help us spread the news about this fantastic sweepstakes opportunity. All the details can be found, by visiting [www.arizonaguide.com/experience-and-share/epostcard](http://www.arizonaguide.com/experience-and-share/epostcard).

From all of us at AOT, we wish everyone a healthy and prosperous 2012 and we look forward to working with our valued partners as we market Arizona's incredible travel experiences and adventures.

Have a great week!

Sherry Henry  
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

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**AOT News**

**Is your Community a Budding Cultural Destination? Find out through AOT's Next Workshop Series!**

Join AOT, along with the [Arizona Commission of the Arts](#), as we present the next Arizona Tourism University workshop series, ***Cultural Tourism: Connecting Arts, Parks and Communities***. This informative series focuses on how communities can identify their own unique cultural characteristics and further expand the visitor experience.

Experts from [Arizona State Parks](#), [Local First Arizona](#), and the [Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture](#) will discuss how to link businesses and organizations to create a system that supports and attracts cultural travelers.

Don't miss this opportunity to see how your community can become one of Arizona's vibrant cultural destinations!

This workshop session is the second series 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 reach out to new audiences and broaden workshop topic opportunities. Be sure to review the complete [FY12 ATU schedule](#).

***All workshops are complimentary!***

**January 10**

2:00 – 5:00 p.m.

[Coconino Center for the Arts](#)

2300 North Fort Valley Road  
Flagstaff, AZ 86001

**January 12**

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

[Tubac Golf Resort & Spa](#)

1 Avenue de Otero Road  
Tubac, AZ 85646

**January 17**

10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. (Noon)

[Webinar](#)

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

For more information, please contact Glenn Schlottman, Community Relations Manager, at 602-364-3727 or via email at [gschlottman@azot.gov](mailto:gschlottman@azot.gov).

**SAVE the DATE: Wildlife Viewing as a Tourism Attraction Workshop**

AOT, in collaboration with the Arizona Game and Fish Department, is offering a workshop geared toward developing wildlife viewing as a tourism attraction. More than 1.3 million people

participate in Arizona's wildlife viewing contributing nearly \$1.2 billion dollars annually to the state's economy.

The goal of this workshop is to become aware of statewide opportunities that the viewing customers brings, as well as how to meet their expectations and have them return for more. Also, there will be some discussion on the activities and collaborations behind the scenes that help communities and businesses capitalize on the interests of this large and growing segment of the population.

Topics include: Partnerships, Economic benefits, Benefits of wildlife/birder oriented programs, What makes a wildlife-watcher friendly attraction, Who are the customers and what are they looking for and more.

Registration information below:

**Title:** Wildlife Viewing as a Tourism Attraction

**Date:** Thursday, January 26, 2012

**Time:** 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. MST

<https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/199976625>

For more information, please contact Glenn Schlottman, Community Relations Manager, at 602-364-3727 or via email at [gschlottman@azot.gov](mailto:gschlottman@azot.gov).

### **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](http://www.azot.gov).

- [County Lodging November 2011](#)
- [National, Regional, Arizona Lodging November 2011](#)
- [Gross Sales & Tourism Taxes October 2011](#)
- [National Park Visitation October 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](mailto:melkins@azot.gov).

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## **Upcoming Events & Activities**

### **UK Media Mission**

Dates: January 30 – February 3

Location: United Kingdom

### **Go West Summit**

Date: February 6 – 9

Location: Las Vegas, NV

### **Authentic Arizona Southwest: Real Deal Ranches and the Rest Press Trip**

Date: February 27 – March 3

Location: Tubac, Sonoita, Elgin, Patagonia, Nogales and Sasabe

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## Industry News

### **The Bad News on Airline Fees and Other Top Travel Trends for 2012**

Deeper discounts and even higher airline fees are among top travel trends for 2012, observers say, with value continuing to be emphasized. The top trend, an emphasis on value, will lead the travel industry overall to see rising demand for discounted trips like package vacations, all-inclusives and cruises, according to Cheapflights.

Their other top five predictions:

(2) PetRelocation.com reported that almost one-third of pet owners planned to take their pets outside of the United States on an international retreat last year. "This comes just as countries worldwide rewrite travel requirements to lessen the burden and fees for passengers flying with animals," says Cheapflights.

(3) This New Year is set to see the introduction of a new vacation trend: athletic voluntourism. "Born out of the popular participation in famous world races such as the New York or London marathons, this trend is growing and spreading into other areas of sport including cycling, hiking, walking and even wheel chair racing for many worthy causes," the site says.

(4) Reality competitions like "Survivor" and "The Amazing Race" have long offered viewers around-the-world trips from the comfort of their own couches. Now other reality shows are stepping up the destination game, creating episodes and entire seasons around a single destination.

(5) Comfort, perks and new ways to upgrade will define the face of flying for 2012. Airlines are looking at inventive ways to sell upgrades.

Brett Synder, founder of the site Cranky Concierge, has some predictions for air travel. He tells CNN that while some travelers wish that fees would disappear, that's not going to happen.

"Some new rules from the federal government will make it a little easier to find fee information up front, but fees are proving to be a great way for the airlines to be able to offer lower base fares and then let people pay more if they want more," he writes for CNN.

Mobile devices will be even more important in airline travel this year, suggests Henry Harteveltdt, a travel industry analyst at Atmosphere Research Group. He expects that 2012 will be "the first year that airlines see a meaningful number of reservations made through mobile devices."

US airlines will continue this year to reduce capacity both domestically here and on international flights, predicts Holly Hegeman, founder of PlaneBusiness.com.

"Specifically, Southwest Airlines will be removing service in many AirTran markets as the airlines' merger moves forward, and American Airlines will cut back on its service in certain markets as part of its bankruptcy restructuring," she told CNN. (*Travel Mole, December 26*)

### **U.S. Travel Applauds Nomination of Taiwan to Visa Waiver Program**

The U.S. Travel Association applauded the nomination of Taiwan to the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Currently, 36 countries participate in the VWP, which allows leisure or business travel to the U.S. for stays of no more than 90 days without a visa.

"The U.S. will reap strong economic benefits by adding Taiwan to the Visa Waiver Program," said Roger Dow, president and CEO of the U.S. Travel Association. "Increasing travel, particularly business travel, between the two countries presents a great economic opportunity. Travel to the U.S. increased 49 percent from South Korea the year after it was admitted into the program, and we expect Taiwan to reflect that trend as well."

VWP countries are the largest source of inbound overseas travel to the United States. In 2010, more than 17 million VWP visitors, 65 percent of all visitors from overseas, traveled to the United States. While here, they spent nearly \$61 billion, including international airfares, supporting 433,000 American jobs along with \$12 billion in payroll, and generating \$9 billion in government tax revenues.

Countries in the VWP must agree to adopt strict security measures, strong travel document standards and enhanced information-sharing agreements with the United States. In addition, each traveler from a participating country must obtain pre-clearance to board a flight to the U.S. through the Electronic System for Travel Authorization.

"The U.S. government should continue expanding this program by forming bilateral working groups with countries like Brazil and Chile in order to outline specific actions they must take to meet the VWP requirements in the near future," said Dow. (*Travel Industry Wire, December 27*)

### **The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index® Improves Again**

The Conference Board Consumer Confidence Index®, which had improved in November, increased further in December. The Index now stands at 64.5 (1985=100), up from 55.2 in November. The Present Situation Index increased to 46.7 from 38.3. The Expectations Index rose to 76.4 from 66.4.

The monthly Consumer Confidence Survey®, based on a probability-design random sample, is conducted for The Conference Board by Nielsen, a leading global provider of information and analytics around what consumers buy and watch. The cutoff date for the preliminary results was December 14.

Consumers' assessment of current conditions improved in December. Those stating business conditions are "good" increased to 16.6 percent from 13.9 percent, while those stating business conditions are "bad" declined to 33.9 percent from 38.0 percent. Consumers' assessment of the job market was also more positive. Those claiming jobs are "plentiful" increased to 6.7 percent

from 5.6 percent, while those claiming jobs are "hard to get" decreased to 41.8 percent from 43.0 percent.

Consumers' short-term outlook also improved in December. The proportion of consumers expecting business conditions to improve over the next six months increased to 16.7 percent from 13.7 percent, while those expecting business conditions will worsen declined to 13.4 percent from 16.1 percent.

Consumers' outlook for the job market was also more favorable. Those anticipating more jobs in the months ahead increased to 13.3 percent from 12.4 percent, while those anticipating fewer jobs declined to 20.2 percent from 23.8 percent. The proportion of consumers expecting an increase in their incomes improved to 17.1 percent from 14.1 percent. (*The Conference Board, December 27; Travel Smart Briefs, December 28*)

### **Simple Solution to U.S. Economic Woes: More International Tourists**

International tourists are coming to the U.S. in record numbers, prompting some observers to say they are the solution to the continuing economic crisis. Typical reaction is an Atlantic article headlined "How Tourism Can Help Save the US Economy."

That was written last summer but Fortune Magazine and the Washington Post all agree this year that international tourism is an under-valued path to prosperity and jobs in the US. Senior Editor Derek Thompson in the Atlantic said there's been a "lost decade" in tourism because while it grew by 46 percent, the US actually lost 2.4 million visitors. That came at a close of 440,000 jobs and a half trillion dollars in travel spending.

Wrote Thompson:

"In February, 2010, the United States declared a lost decade. Not in jobs, or homes, or high-tech, but in tourism. Europe and Asia had come off a banner decade in foreign visits, with international travelers up more than 30 percent. But here was one global economic boom the US missed."

How did it happen? Three major reasons: 1. The 9-11 terrorist attack led to security policies that scared away families. 2. It became harder and more expensive to obtain visas. 3. The US over the decade was the only major country without a national tourism policy and travel promotion strategy. No surprise. International visitors were discouraged.

More recently, the AP said that more than a decade after the terrorist attacks, "foreign visitors say getting a temporary visa remains a daunting and sometimes insurmountable hurdle."

But the tourism industry hopes to change that with a campaign to persuade Congress to overhaul the State Department's tourist visa application process.

"After 9/11, we were all shaken and there was a real concern for security, and I still think that concern exists," said Jim Evans, a former hotel chain CEO heading a national effort to promote foreign travel to the US.

Anti-immigration proponents argue travel to the US is already too accessible and that allowing more visitors would put the nation at greater risk. The proposed immigration overhaul has

largely been driven by the US Travel Association. Lawmakers from both parties are backing changes through six bills in the US House and Senate.

For most foreigners, taking a last-minute business or leisure trip to New York, Los Angeles, Miami or other US travel hubs would be nearly impossible. The average wait time for a visa interview in Rio de Janeiro, for example, was 87 days, according to the US State Department.

The Government Accountability Office concluded that wait times are likely much longer than reported because some department employees artificially reduce the wait times by not scheduling interviews during high-demand periods.

In-person interviews that are now required were not the norm before 9/11, when consular officials had the authority to approve travelers based on an application alone. Since then, however, screenings have become more strenuous, with fingerprint checks and facial recognition screening of photographs.

Other proposed changes include granting more multi-entry visas and charging premium fees to tourists who want a visa immediately. The tourism industry also wants more visa processing officers and to allow travelers to submit applications in their native language.

To put out the welcome mat for visitors, the US, Congress last year approved a \$200 million annual marketing campaign.

In the meantime, international tourists are showing growing interest in the US as a destination. A monthly report by the federal agency, which is part of the Commerce Department, said international visitors spent \$13.1 billion on travel to the US and tourism-related activities while here in October, a 13 percent increase over the same month last year. (*Travel Mole, December 29*)

### **Spending by Visitors to U.S. On Pace to Set Record for 2011**

According to the latest U.S. Department of Commerce report, international visitors spent \$13.1 billion on travel to, and tourism-related activities within, the United States during the month of October -- nearly \$1.6 billion more (13 percent) than was spent in October 2010. Travel and tourism-related exports have increased, on average, more than \$1.5 billion a month in 2011 and are on pace to break the record previously set in 2008 before the onset of the global economic slowdown. The Office of Travel and Tourism Industries expects industry-related exports to surpass \$152 billion for 2011.

Purchases of travel and tourism-related goods and services by international visitors traveling in the United States totaled \$9.9 billion during October, an increase of nearly 12 percent when compared to last year. These goods and services include food, lodging, recreation, gifts, entertainment, local transportation in the United States, and other items incidental to foreign travel.

When compared to October 2010, U.S. passenger fare exports -- fares received by U.S. carriers and U.S. vessel operators from international visitors -- increased to \$3.2 billion for the month, an increase of 18 percent. International visitors have spent an estimated \$126.8 billion on U.S. travel and tourism-related goods and services year to date (January through October), an

increase of 14 percent when compared to the same period last year. Americans have spent nearly \$91.9 billion abroad year to date (up 8 percent), resulting in a \$34.9 billion trade surplus for travel and tourism through the first ten months of 2011. (*Travel Pulse, January 2*)

### **Grand Canyon National Park to Waive Entrance Fees for Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Weekend**

Grand Canyon National Park will be joining national park sites around the country in celebrating the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday with a fee free weekend.

Entrance fees will be waived for all visitors to Grand Canyon National Park January 14 – 16, 2012. Visitors arriving in the park on any one of those three days will be allowed to enter free of charge. Those who plan to spend time in the park beyond the 16th will need to pay the regular entrance fee for the remainder of their stay.

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.

Park visitors are reminded that Grand Canyon's South Rim sits at approximately 7,000 feet and that winter weather and driving conditions are always a possibility during the month of January.

The National Park Service will be offering additional fee free day throughout 2012, including 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](http://www.nps.gov/grca). For more on National Park Service fee free days, go to [www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm](http://www.nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparks.htm).

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### **Calendar of Events**

Visit [www.ArizonaGuide.com](http://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!**

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