



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,

This was a big event weekend for Arizona!

This past Sunday, an estimated 40,000 people participated in the 2012 P.F. Chang's Rock 'n' Roll Arizona Marathon and ½ Marathon! Congratulations to **everyone** that either ran or walked the exciting and entertaining courses. What a marvelous accomplishment!

Also, the Barrett Jackson Car Auction in Scottsdale kicked off this weekend, which brings thousands of people to the state. Other events on the horizon include the Waste Management Open, the Lake Havasu Hot air Balloon Festival, the Quartzsite Gem & Mineral Show, the Tucson Dillinger Days and the Accenture Matchplay event.

Events of this caliber are always a great benefit to our state. Not only is the immediate economic impact felt by the money spent by the attendees, but many visitors travel back to the Grand Canyon State to experience Arizona's diverse travel offers and extend that financial impact. For a listing of all the great events happening throughout the state, visit www.arizonaguide.com.

In other industry related news, the Arizona Tourism Alliance and the Arizona Hotel & Lodging Association have officially merged into one organization, the Arizona Lodging & Tourism Association (AzLTA). Congratulations on the merger! We look forward to continuing our great partnership with the AzLTA and the work they do to help promote the importance of the Arizona travel and tourism industry to our state's economy.

Have a great week!

Sherry Henry
Director, Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News

Don't Miss the 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.

SAVE the DATE: Governor's Conference on Tourism, July 11-13, 2012

The Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism provides valuable networking opportunities, professional development sessions, nationally recognized speakers, a dedicated sponsor exhibit area and the Governor's Tourism Awards Luncheon. The conference, which will be held at the Arizona Biltmore in Phoenix, is consistently attended by more than 500 Arizona tourism industry professionals. It is one of our industry's most significant opportunities to attain information on the latest trends affecting tourism. Look toward future editions of AOT in Action for registration information.

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

Industry News

Jerome has chance at being 2012 ‘America’s Coolest Smallest Towns’

Budget Travel Magazine released their 2012 “America’s Coolest Smallest Towns” contest, and in the top 10 is Arizona’s very own, Jerome. Readers nominated a record 647 towns this year – and now Budget Travel narrowed that list down to just 10 standout communities across the country. You can vote once daily, so be sure to get all your votes in before the contest closes on January 31st. Read more: <http://www.budgettravel.com/contest/americas-coolest-small-towns-2012,11/#ixzz1jduEFtEp>

Survey Shows Luxury Travel Consumers Primed to Spend More

Affluent consumers are primed to spend more on memorable experiences as opposed to material things. Over half of all luxury consumers report that the source of their greatest personal satisfaction and happiness comes from experiences, as opposed to luxury goods, according to the *Luxury Consumers and Their Luxury Travel Plans 2012*. The report, produced by Unity Marketing, which surveyed 1,498 luxury consumers with an average income \$279,100, found that 40 percent expect to spend more on luxury travel than they did last year. Twelve percent expect to spend significantly more.

“Clearly, the affluent consumer is poised to spend more in the coming year, and this spending will be directed at those experiences that will give them the most pleasure,” said Pam Danziger, president of Unity Marketing and author of “Putting the Luxe Back in Luxury.” “However, it is not enough for marketers in the luxury travel space to simply target the affluent. They need to understand who is most likely to travel in the coming year, when these consumers make their travel plans, where they want to travel, and the features they crave.”

The report covers what influences travelers, how far in advance they plan, how they use travel agents, how they use loyalty points, their favorite hotel brands and total travel spending. Results of affluent consumers planning to travel in 2012 are compared to data from those who traveled in the past to see how planned behavior differs from actual travel plans and how affluent travel behavior is changing over time. (*Travel Pulse, January 9*)

More Meetings Being Booked

Most meeting experts agree that overall 2011 was pretty good and 2012 should prove to be a little bit better, according to [Meetings and Conventions magazine](#) (M&C). The recently released [American Express Meetings & Events Global Meetings Forecast](#) reports that companies plan to book more meetings in 2012. Forty-two percent of North American, 50 percent of Latin

American, 51 percent of European and 57 percent of Asian meeting planners surveyed see signs of increased activity from their clients. Additionally, 60 percent of meeting suppliers also expect the number of meetings planned to increase.

While companies expect to increase their overall meeting budgets, spending per meeting is likely to decrease or stay flat compared to 2011 as meetings become smaller in terms of attendees and shorter, according to 40 percent and 33 percent of hotel suppliers, respectively. Suppliers also indicated that planners are asking to have meetings closer to their businesses. The [Meetings Forecast](#) also reveals a shift away from bookings in luxury or resort properties.

The strong demand for mid-price hotels and the interest in meeting in large cities is also likely to continue. For example, Las Vegas projects it enjoyed a three to four percent increase in the number of conventions it hosted in 2011 and a ten percent gain in attendance, trends that will continue to 2012. Also, industries whose meetings were curtailed by the recession – such as financial services, banking, insurance, automotive and technology – began holding them again in late 2009, a trend that strengthened in subsequent years and [will likely](#) continue in 2012.

According to M&C, other [trends likely to gain traction](#) in the meetings arena include: (1) the use of value-measurement tools to calculate ROI; (2) acceptance of the growth in virtual events, as well as the ability to plan and integrate them into an overall marketing plan; and (3) longer lead times for booking events as availability again is at a premium. (*U.S. Travel Outlook Newsletter, January*)

Amadeus-Backed Study Examines How Technology Will Transform Travel

A new industry study commissioned by travel technology company Amadeus details how new technologies and social change will combine to transform travel by 2020. “From Chaos to Collaboration,” a new research study commissioned by Amadeus, challenges the travel industry to overcome the uncertainty and stress of modern-day travel through the application of new technologies and innovations.

The report also urges increased partnership across the travel industry, in turn removing the stress, uncertainty and chaos that is usually associated with traveling in the 21st century, as well as providing much richer, deeper and more personal travel experiences at the same time.

The report, prepared by The Futures Company, a global foresight and futures consultancy, details a clear qualitative shift where service-users become partners rather than customers and where context is as important as the transaction. At the heart of this new era of collaboration, the report says, is a set of discrete “enabling” technologies and innovations. The study explores six key areas in which future technology and innovation could be deployed:

The next generation of experience: Travel is increasingly about depth rather than breadth of experience. Technologies such as augmented reality, “gamification” mechanisms and smart mobile devices will transform the travel experience.

Automatic transit: Checking in could become the exception rather than the norm, with the rise of faster and more efficient identity management systems. Chips, biometrics, long-range fingerprinting and near-field communications (NFC) can be deployed in a more integrated way to fast-forward how people move around.

Payment with memory: All data on payments made before and during a trip will be integrated, acting as a digital memory of expenditure and activity for individuals, groups and travel industry operators. Intelligent passenger records, “digital breadcrumbs” and contactless technologies could be used to personalize and bundle services, delivering higher value and more profitable relationships.

Intelligent recommendation: As technologies make it easier for people to tag and review all aspects of travel experiences, travelers will be more influenced by peer groups and expert curators. The prospect of personal travel guides and mobile tour representatives will give travelers the tools they need to enrich their experience.

Taking the stress out of travel: The wellbeing agenda and changing demographics will place greater emphasis on removing travel stress. Intelligent luggage tags and tickets will give greater reassurance while m-health (mobile-health) applications will allow travelers to manage and monitor their health and wellbeing as if they were at home. The full report is available to download at the [Amadeus blog](#). (*Travel Pulse, January 11*)

STR Reports Slight Increase in U.S. Hotel Rooms for 2011

The U.S. hotel industry opened 373 new properties with 38,409 rooms during 2011, which resulted in a 0.5 percent increase in existing room supply, according to data from STR/McGraw Hill Construction Dodge Pipeline Report.

“In December 2010, there were 75,747 rooms projected to open in the United States in 2011,” said Duane Vinson, vice president, database content and integrity at STR. “At the conclusion of the year, 38,449 have opened, or 50.8 percent of those expected, which resulted in net supply increase of 0.5 percent.”

Among the Chain Scale segments, the Upper Midscale segment opened the most rooms in 2011 with 172 projects and 15,579 rooms. The segment reported a 36.6 percent decrease in the number of rooms that opened in 2011 compared to 2010. The Upper Midscale segment was followed by the Upscale segment, which opened 64 properties with 8,557 rooms in 2011, and the Midscale segment, which opened 45 properties with 4,051 rooms. The Luxury segment opened the smallest number of new rooms in 2011 -- two properties with 1,261 rooms.

“As we bring an end to 2011, there are 70,291 rooms on schedule to open in 2012, of which 40,371 are currently under construction,” Vinson said. “With a significant number of rooms in Final Planning (110,836) and a 7.9 percent increase in Pre Planning rooms from last month, we continue to closely monitor overall development for a pickup in supply in the next few years.”

In 2012, the U.S. hotel industry is expecting 649 properties to open with 70,291 rooms. Among the Chain Scale segments, the Upper Midscale segment is expected to open the largest number of rooms in 2012 with 249 properties and 24,269 rooms. The Midscale segment (169 properties with 13,179 rooms) and the Upscale segment (129 properties with 18,276 rooms) also are expected to open a significant number of new rooms in 2012. The total active U.S. hotel development pipeline comprises 2,855 projects totaling 307,664 rooms, according to the December 2011 STR/McGraw Hill Construction Dodge Pipeline Report released this week. This

represents a 3.1 percent decrease in the number of rooms in the total active pipeline compared to December 2010. (*Travel Pulse, January 12*)

U.S. Travel Exports Up 13 Percent, Leading Export Recovery

U.S. travel exports increased 13 percent in the first 11 months of 2011, according to the latest Commerce Department figures on international trade. Travel exports totaled \$139.4 billion in 2011. "With travel imports totaling \$101 billion through November, the travel trade surplus in 2011 has so far increased to \$38.4 billion, which is up 33 percent from the \$28.8 billion surplus through the first 11 months of 2010," said David Huether, senior vice president of economics and research at the U.S. Travel Association.

Huether said that travel and tourism exports edged down \$283 million to \$12.7 billion in November. Meanwhile, imports of travel and tourism also edged down in November to \$9.2 billion. The drop in November travel exports was mirrored by declines in other major export categories, such as agricultural products, industrial supplies and capital goods. Overall, U.S. exports slipped \$1.5 billion in November while imports rose by \$2.9 billion, which together increased the overall trade deficit to a five-month high of \$47.8 billion.

"While many associate U.S. exports with agricultural or industrial products shipped abroad, the fact is that international visitation to the U.S. is a major source of exports," Huether said. "In fact, year-to-date 2011 travel and tourism exports surpassed agricultural exports as well as exports of civilian aircraft, semiconductors, telecommunications equipment and computers combined."

Huether called travel the "unsung hero" of the current export recovery. However, he said that an "inefficient and taxing" U.S. visa system is hindering travel's ability to grow because it inhibits inbound travel. The U.S. Travel Association has been lobbying for improving the visa process to generate more travel to the U.S.

"Increasing foreign visitors to the U.S., who in 2010 generated \$241 billion in economic output and supported 1.8 million American jobs that cannot be outsourced, is one of the most efficient, fast-acting and least costly job programs that the government could promote," Huether said. (*Travel Pulse, January 16*)

Oracle State Park Re-opening on Limited Schedule

Arizona State Parks and the Friends of Oracle State Park invite you to celebrate the re-opening of Oracle State Park to the public beginning in February. Bring your own picnic to the park for the "Grand Re-opening" on **Saturday, February 4, 2012**. It's a FREE DAY for the public and gates will be open from 8am to 5pm.

Oracle State Park has been closed since October 2009 due to a severe state budget crisis, but will open on a limited basis, Saturdays-only to the public, from February 4 through April 28. Current funding will allow the park to be open again in the Fall of 2012, September through November on Saturdays from 8am-5pm.

During the months of February, March, April, September, October and November, Oracle State Park will again offer environmental education school programs for local elementary schools and

scout groups. Programs are offered on weekdays by reservation. For more information, visit www.AZStateparks.com.

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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