



Tourism Tuesday

Welcome to Tourism Tuesday, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from Director:

Good afternoon,

The U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration recently announced that international visitors spent an estimated \$18.3 billion on travel to, and on tourism related activities within, the United States in January 2016. That is a significant financial contribution to our country's economy in just one month's time.

For Arizona, international visitation annually accounts for nearly 14 percent of our overall visitor count and 15 percent of direct visitor spending. Since these visitors tend to stay longer and see more of Arizona while they are here, we want to increase our state's share of international visitation.

To accomplish that, we are actively promoting Arizona in six international countries: Canada, China, Germany, France, Mexico and the United Kingdom. Reaching potential visitors in these markets is a coordinated effort. We implement multiple programs including advertising efforts through our relationship with Brand USA, media relations activities and travel trade efforts. All of which help us expand our outreach so that we can build the necessary infrastructure to promote and sell Arizona's travel offerings.

For instance, last week we conducted an Arizona FAM tour for 10 tour operators from China. Through this one effort the group gained a better understanding of how they can sell Arizona as a vibrant travel destination to potential travelers. We profile this FAM tour below in today's eNewsletter. This week we are in Mexico for our trade and media mission where we will meet with various journalists and travel trade contacts promoting Arizona as a vibrant destination. And next month we will be attending Travel Classics International, another great opportunity to inspire travel editors and journalists to write about travel related experiences throughout our state.

To see more about our international programs, visit tourism.az.gov. Also, you can find a link to the U.S. Departments report in our **Industry News** section below.

Enjoy the week,

Debbie Johnson

Director, Arizona Office of Tourism
#AZTourismTuesday

AOT in Action

AOT Introduces China Tour Operators to Statewide Travel Offerings

During the week of March 20-26, AOT escorted a product familiarization tour that included our new China market representative and 10 Chinese tour operators. Working with partners in Flagstaff, Sedona, Prescott, Mesa, and Scottsdale, we were able to showcase a variety of activities, restaurants and hotels that would appeal to both families and tour groups. The group experienced a bit of the Old West mixed in with agritourism as well as new and vibrant shopping destinations. The group commented that they had no idea there was so much to see in Arizona! This was the first trip south of the Grand Canyon National Park for all of them. Their only other experience had been flying into Las Vegas. The intention of this trip was to showcase the ease of flying into Phoenix Skyharbor International Airport and promote the diverse travel experiences visitors can enjoy in Arizona. Even if a Grand Canyon trip is on the itinerary – there's a lot to see and do along the way! For more information, contact Becky Blaine at 602-364-3696 or bblaine@tourism.az.gov.

We Want Your Summer Events!

As travelers plan their upcoming summer vacations, be sure your summer event is listed on our consumer website, VisitArizona.com. This webpage is one of our most popular pages and is where travelers go to find out what events to experience while in Arizona. If you don't see your event listed, please be sure to send it to Marjorie Magnusson, mmagnusson@tourism.az.gov.

New Resources Available in Arizona Travel and Tourism Toolkit - Website Banners

Planning is underway to celebrate National Travel and Tourism Week here in Arizona. What is your community doing? To help you and your community celebrate the impact of tourism, we have created a [toolkit full of resources](#) you can use such as press release templates, or samples of social media posts. We've also provided county specific research data so you can customize these resources to reflect how tourism impacts your area. The [toolkit](#) is available on our business site, tourism.az.gov. And be sure to tell us what you're doing! Send your plans to media-info@tourism.az.gov to keep us in the loop.

Check Out New Categories for Governor's Tourism Awards

AOT invites you to review the new Award Categories for the 2016 Governor's Tourism Awards. From innovative marketing programs to valuable tourism champions, astounding work is accomplished each and every day by our industry to promote the Grand Canyon State. The Governor's Tourism Awards is a wonderful way to recognize these efforts. We will begin accepting award nominations on **May 3**. Look to future editions of *Tourism Tuesday* for more information. And be sure to register for the 2016 Governor's Conference on Tourism! More information is available at aztourismconference.com.

Upcoming AOT Events & Activities

[Do You Know Navajo? AAA/CAA FAM Tour](#)

Dates: April 27 - May 1

Locations: The Navajo Nation and the Phoenix Area

Travel agents will travel throughout the state to better understand Arizona's travel offerings.

Upcoming Industry Events & Activities

[Arizona Restaurant Week](#)

Date: May 20 - 29

Location: Statewide participating restaurants

This statewide affair offers foodies a wealth of dining opportunities and the chance to get outside their own neighborhood and try something new. From sizzling Southwestern and soothing comfort foods to five-star dining and international fare – it's all on the table during Arizona Restaurant Week. So prepare your taste buds and dig in.

Arizona News

Arizona State Parks Accepting Grant Applications for the Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program

On March 9, 2016 the National Park Service (NPS) released guidelines for the "Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Program." The program is for projects that will create or reinvigorate parks and other outdoor recreation spaces in ways that will encourage people, especially youth, to connect or re-connect with the outdoors. Priority will be given to projects located in urbanized communities that are economically disadvantaged and are underserved in terms of outdoor recreation resources. Arizona State Parks (ASP) will choose from eligible submissions located in Arizona. A workshop will be held April 13. Grant deadline is May 6. For more information, visit <http://azstateparks.com/grants/index.html>

Governor Doug Ducey Appoints Marco Garay New Executive Director of the Arizona-Mexico Commission

Governor Doug Ducey announced the appointment of Marcos Garay as executive director of the Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC). "Strengthening Arizona's relationship with our largest trade partner, Mexico, is an important priority for my administration," said Governor Ducey. "With his extensive experience and expertise, Marcos will help us take Arizona's relationship with Mexico to new levels." Mr. Garay is an accomplished senior executive with a background in international business and operating success in financial services. He recently served as President & CEO of Nafinsa Securities in New York City as well as Managing Director at BBVA Bancomer in Mexico City. He also served as Chairman of the Board of Bancomer Financial Services in Houston. For more information, visit <http://www.azmc.org/>

Industry News

Starwood Confirms Anbang out, reaffirms Marriott deal

by HNN Newswire

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Inc. (NYSE:HOT) ("Starwood") announced that the consortium consisting of Anbang Insurance Group Co., Ltd., J.C. Flowers & Co. and Primavera Capital Limited (the "Consortium") has informed Starwood that, as a result of market considerations, it has withdrawn its non-binding proposal to acquire all of the outstanding shares of common stock of Starwood for \$82.75 per share in cash and does not intend to make another proposal.

Starwood's Board of Directors continues to unanimously support the existing merger with Marriott International, Inc. (NASDAQ: MAR) ("Marriott"), which will create the largest hospitality company in the world.

Bruce Duncan, Chairman of Starwood's Board, stated, "Throughout this process, we have been focused on maximizing stockholder value now and in the future. Our Board is confident this transaction offers superior value for Starwood's stockholders, can close quickly, and provides value-creation potential that will enable both sets of stockholders to benefit from future financial performance. We continue to be very excited about the combination of our two companies and are committed to completing this deal in an expeditious manner. We are confident Starwood stockholders will support a merger that will create the world's best and biggest hotel company and which offers significant long-term upside for not only our stockholders, but also our company and associates."

Thomas B. Mangas, Chief Executive Officer, continued, "We are excited to be part of the world's largest hotel company with an unparalleled platform for global growth. The existing merger agreement provides substantial value to our stockholders through significant upfront cash consideration and long-term upside potential from projected shared synergies, including \$250 million in cost synergies and significant revenue synergies, as well as ownership in one of the world's most respected companies."

Under the terms of the amended merger agreement, as announced on March 21, 2016, Starwood shareholders will receive \$21.00 in cash and 0.80 shares of Marriott Class A common stock for each share of Starwood common stock. Excluding Starwood's timeshare business, the transaction values Starwood at approximately \$13.3 billion (\$77.94 per share), consisting of \$9.7 billion of Marriott stock, based on the closing price of \$71.18 on March 31, 2016, and \$3.6 billion of cash, based on approximately 170 million outstanding Starwood shares. Starwood shareholders will own approximately 34 percent of the combined company's common stock after completion of the merger, based on current shares outstanding.

Starwood stockholders will separately receive consideration in the form of Interval Leisure Group (NASDAQ: IILG) ("ILG") common stock from the spin-off of the Starwood timeshare business and subsequent merger with ILG, currently valued at \$6.13 per Starwood share, based on ILG's share price as of market close on March 31, 2016 (the "ILG transaction"). The amended

agreement and the ILG transaction have a combined current value of \$84.07 per share of Starwood common stock.

The special meeting of Starwood stockholders to vote on and approve the Marriott-Starwood merger agreement will be held as scheduled on Friday, April 8, 2016 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern Time at the Sheraton Stamford Hotel, 700 East Main Street, Stamford, CT 06901. The Starwood Board of Directors unanimously recommends that Starwood stockholders vote their shares "FOR" the merger agreement with Marriott at the April 8, 2016 special meeting.

Lazard and Citigroup are serving as financial advisors and Cravath, Swaine & Moore LLP is serving as legal counsel to Starwood. <http://hotelnewsnow.com/Articles/35516/Starwood-confirms-Anbang-out-reaffirms-Marriott-deal>

International Visitor Numbers Outline Travel's Massive Economic Impact

by TravelPulse

The United States Department of Commerce's National Travel & Tourism Office has announced the results of gathered data from January 2016, with visitors spending over \$18 billion during the month.

According to the official website of the Department of Commerce, international visitors spent an estimated \$18.3 billion on travel and tourism in January 2016, which consisted of travel receipts, passenger fare receipts and travel revolving around medical, education or short-term work.

Under Secretary for International Trade, Stefan M. Selig, released a statement:

"Today's data show that the United States remains a desirable destination for international travelers. The travel and tourism industry remains important to the nation's economy and to American workers, annually generating nearly \$1.6 trillion of economic output that supports nearly 8.1 million U.S. jobs. The Commerce Department continues to introduce new initiatives like the recently launched 2016 U.S.-China Tourism Year to support President Obama's National Travel and Tourism Strategy goal of welcoming 100 million international visitors by 2021."

While the news about the travel industry's success in January 2016 is great news, the Department of Commerce also released overall statistics for 2015 which indicate a nearly \$4 billion drop in spending from international tourists.

In 2015, international travelers spent \$216.8 billion in the United States, which is a 1.8 percent decline from the previous year's total of \$220.7 billion. The numbers also indicated that tourists spent 11.1 percent less on airfare (\$5 billion) in 2015.

The amount of money being spent may be down, but the report suggests the number of travelers is up overall. Not only were there more people traveling within the United States in 2015, but there were also 7 percent more people who traveled overseas than the previous year, totaling 32.8 million.

For full results from the findings, check out the [National Travel & Tourism Office's official website](#).

http://www.travelpulse.com/news/features/international-visitor-numbers-outline-travels-massive-economic-impact.html?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=3-31-2016&u=34705F91-2320-4FD3-B96A-52B33FA5505E

Global Hotel Room Rates: Where Are The Best Deals?

by TravelPulse

Global travel management company HRG revealed the results of its biannual Hotel Survey Wednesday. The study, currently in its 23rd year, examines hotel room rates in important business destinations around the globe and the 2016 survey uncovered several key findings.

For the 12th straight year, Moscow was determined to be the most expensive city for business travelers with the average room rate climbing to \$366.69 in 2015.

Meanwhile, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City and Sydney also experienced notable rate increases in 2015, with rates ranging from 14.5 percent to 31.2 percent in terms of local currency.

The good news for travelers, though, is that fewer than two dozen cities saw an increase in average rate compared to 37 the previous year. However on the flip side, only 32 cities experienced a decrease in average room rate in 2015, compared to 42 the year before.

Aberdeen (Scotland), Rome, Houston, Dubai and Abu Dhabi experienced the greatest decrease in average room rate in 2015.

In Houston, the average room rate dropped more than \$20 to \$212.69.

Of the five regions HRG analyzed, only the Americas experienced an overall growth in average room rate in 2015.

"The survey shows that many hotel groups simply didn't achieve the rates or growth that they had been expecting," said HRG's director of global hotel relations Margaret Bowler in a statement. "This is primarily a result of soft demand, decreases in supply and a number of new products and categories of product, together with clients continuing to look for savings."

"When we look ahead to this year we can expect to enjoy a number of new rooms coming into the market. Brands will continue to diversify, delivering new price points for all travellers. The consolidation of hotel groups may bring both advantages and disadvantages to clients."

[Click here to view the complete 2016 HRG Hotel Survey.](#)

http://www.travelpulse.com/news/hotels-and-resorts/global-hotel-room-rates-where-are-the-best-deals.html?utm_source=daily&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=3-31-2016&u=34705F91-2320-4FD3-B96A-52B33FA5505E

Did you know?

The geographic center of Arizona is 55 miles southeast of Prescott near the community of Mayer.

Statewide Calendar of Events

Visit www.visitarizona.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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