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Important Dates

Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Commission Meeting
9:30 a.m.
June 16, 2005
Keystone State Park

Oklahoma Tourism Promotion Advisory Committee Meeting
10 a.m.
July 14, 2005
Location TBD



Tourism Momentum

NEWS FOR STAKEHOLDERS IN OKLAHOMA TOURISM

Summer Travel Season to Break Records



Tina Gilliland

As we move into the heaviest part of the travel season, attractions throughout the state should be thrilled by the summer travel forecast recently released by the Travel Industry Association of America. According to TIA, we are in for a record-breaking summer with every sector of the travel industry expected to be up.

It's obvious the momentum in travel recovery that began last year is continuing into the summer with a 2.3 percent increase in leisure travel expected this year. Many of the travel trends included in the TIA summer forecast are especially good for Oklahoma, such as:

- *American travelers will be looking for deals and ways to economize without giving up their summer vacation.* The Automobile Association of American recently named Oklahoma as one of the best travel values in the country. We continue to be a place where people can have a variety of experiences at a reasonable price.
- *Despite high gas prices, RV travel is expected to remain very strong this summer with 17% of summer travelers using an RV.* With one of the top state park systems in the nation, our central location along national interstate systems and hundreds of quality privately-owned RV parks, Oklahoma has much to offer these travelers.
- *The trend for people to take more trips of a shorter duration*

throughout the year also continues. So while spending per trip is down, the number of trips planned is up. Oklahoma is a great getaway or weekend trip destination, especially for large population areas like Dallas and Kansas City.

The top ten traveler activities planned this summer are visiting friends and relatives (75%); going to a beach or lake (70%); visiting small towns or rural areas (64%); visiting cities/urban areas (54%); visiting national or state parks (47%); visiting historic sites (41%); camping, hiking or climbing (38%); fishing (36%); attending a family reunion (35%); attending performing arts events (34%); and visiting museums (33%), theme parks (31%), casinos (26%) or attending cultural events (24%).

What does that mean for us? Oklahoma has attractions that fit into all of the activity categories travelers will be looking for this summer. As one unified, cohesive industry, we have the capability to make the most of these trends and ultimately extend the number and length of leisure trips in our state. We all stand to benefit from the increase in expenditures and sales tax revenue that will bring.

In the Travel and Tourism Division we will continue to spread the word through our marketing, sales and public relations efforts that Oklahoma is a "one-stop shop" for the perfect summer vacation. Please remember we are here to help your community or organization have the best summer ever.

I look forward to working with you to break some records of our own!

Tina Gilliland, CAE
Director, Travel and Tourism Division

State Parks Update

Alabaster Caverns State Park's popular lantern tours are drawing tourists once again to this popular northwest Oklahoma destination. The tours are conducted hourly between 7 p.m. and 9 p.m., until Sept. 3. The tours, using only lanterns, allow visitors to see the cavern the way early explorers saw it.

The nature center at Bernice State Park on Grand Lake continues toward a grand opening this fall. The building is completed and displays are being constructed. Exhibits will include an 800-gallon aquarium filled with native fish, flight cages, and a songbird rehabilitation facility to return injured birds to the wild. A classroom will provide a facility for educational nature programs for school and tour groups. The Bernice Nature Center will be the only state-operated nature center on Grand Lake.

Beavers Bend State Park hosts the Kiamichi Owa Chito Festival, June 16 - 18. This unique festival celebrates everything woodsy, from arts and crafts, to folk music and lumberjack competitions. Other activities include canoe races and children's games. The event draws as many as 20,000 visitors annually to the Broken Bow area.

Legislation Passes for F&MO

The Film & Music Office has had success with several bills during the recent state legislative session. Three bills designed to support the film and music industries in Oklahoma were passed.

HB 1716 establishes an income tax credit for the production of a film or music project or company.

HB 1756 secures funding of the Oklahoma Film Enhancement Rebate Program up to \$5 million per year to qualified productions.

SB 877 adds the development of film and music production facilities to the list of eligible facilities for tax credits under the existing Oklahoma Tourism Development Act.

These bills give Oklahoma a place at the table for being competitive in the marketplace. They provide a strong foundation on which to build.

Current/potential production in Oklahoma:

- Began filming *Wisteria: The True Story of Al-*

bert Fish in Guthrie and Pawhuska.

- Continuing conversations with a major studio regarding a \$40-\$50 million feature film planning to shoot in September. The script takes place in Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas, but producers want to shoot in one state.
- Supplying information to producers scouting for Toni Morrison's *Paradise*.
- To date, the office has provided more than 400 photos to those involved with *Lanza: The Mario Lanza Story*. This included photos from Ponca City, Tulsa and Miami.
- *Seasons of Dust*, the Tim Blake Nelson project, continues to move forward for summer filming. Kate Bosworth was recently cast as the lead, with Robin Williams attached as part of an ensemble cast assembled by re-
- A production company would like to shoot the \$10 million film, *A Shade of Grey*, a WWII era film, in Grove this winter.
- Working with producers of *Rune*, a low budget independent thriller that has some high profile people attached.
- Provided Radical Media with weather information and permit assistance for their upcoming severe weather documentary.
- Provided stock footage, location assistance and support for a PBS documentary about Woody Guthrie, scheduled to shoot in Seminole and Shawnee in June.

Wanted: Your Event Listings

OTRD is currently seeking statewide festival and event information for the 2006 Annual Event Guide, a chronological calendar of more than 1,200 Oklahoma events, beginning in October 2005 and continuing through December 2006.

Submissions should include, at a minimum, confirmed dates, location, a brief description of the

event, and a contact number for more information. All listings are free of charge.

The original entry deadline for the 2006 guide was June 10, however, it has been extended for a few days. Event submissions received after the deadline will still be considered for inclusion in the department's Web site calendar at www.TravelOK.com.

The guide is expected to be available by mid-September.

Call Rachael Nalliah at 405-522-4552 or fax 405-521-3992 to obtain 2006 event forms. The form can also be obtained from the department's web site at www.travelok.com/industry/pdf/2006-CALENDAR-OF-EVENTS-FORM.pdf.

Pawhuska, Nature Centers & Wedding Sites

What do Pawhuska, nature centers and wedding sites all have in common? The weekly *Discover Oklahoma* column, of course! Each Sunday, the *Destinations* section of *The Oklahoman* features OTRD's weekly "Discover Oklahoma" column, highlighting interesting places and events across Oklahoma.



Pawhuska Indian Taco

Want to know more about the rich history and culture of the town of Pawhuska, Capital of the Osage Nation? Pick up the June 12 edition.

This is a good time of year to get out and visit the many nature centers scattered across Oklahoma. Find out more in the June 19 edition of *Destinations*. Sunday, June 5, the *Destinations* section of *The Oklahoman* featured an article on



Wedding Site at Orr Family Farm

beautiful and unique wedding sites across the state. You can find more on that story, as well as the others listed, in the *Media Professionals* section of www.TravelOK.com.

Call for Entries—Redbud Awards

It's that time of year again when we invite all of you to share your successful attraction, event or promotional efforts during the past year with your colleagues and earn recognition for your outstanding work.

The Oklahoma Tourism & Recreation Department and the Oklahoma Travel Industry Association are proud to host the annual Redbud Awards, honoring

excellence in tourism attractions, events and promotional efforts across the state. These awards represent the highest honor given for tourism in the state of Oklahoma. They recognize the outstanding achievements of businesses, organizations and individuals that help promote and develop tourism within Oklahoma.

Please watch your email during the next few days for the Redbud Awards Call for En-

tries. If you do not receive an email in that timeframe, please notify Krista Townsend at Krista@TravelOK.com. Also, Call for Entries forms will be available on our Web site at TravelOK.com after they have been distributed via email.

The Redbud Awards ceremony and banquet will be held the evening of Oct. 3 during the Governor's Conference on Tourism.

Parks Golf Course Director Honored

Ryan Chapman, Oklahoma State Parks director of golf operations, has been named 2005 South Central Section PGA Merchandiser of the Year for Resorts. He was selected for the honor by a committee of PGA members, based on criteria such as merchandising philosophy, rounds of golf at facilities, and shop size.

Chapman directs the operations of Oklahoma State Parks' 10 golf courses and is the PGA pro and manager of Chickasaw Pointe Golf Resort and Lake Texoma Golf Course, both at Lake Texoma State Park in Kingston.

"I am truly honored to receive this award," Chapman said. "But it takes a great staff to make the operation work. Thanks to them and to

the Oklahoma State Park system."

The South Central Section of The PGA of America includes Oklahoma, Arkansas and southern Kansas.

For information on Oklahoma's state park golf courses or to book a tee time, visit TravelOK.com, or call toll-free, 1-866-602-4653.



Catch *Discover Oklahoma* at 6:30 p.m. Saturdays on KWTU-9 in Oklahoma City, KOTV-6 in Tulsa, and KSWO-7 in Lawton. Highlights for the June episodes of *Discover Oklahoma* include:

June 11

"Creative Energies"
City Arts Pottery Class—OKC

Percussive Museum—Lawton
Mural Program at UCO—Edmond
Public Murals—Statewide
Iris Festival—Ponca City
Museum of Art—OKC
Brady Street—Tulsa
Mayfair Arts Festival—Norman

June 18

"The Good Life"
American Family Vacations
Upscale RV Rentals—OKC
Upscale Shopping & Dining—Edmond
LaVille Inn & Coffee Shop—Davis
Tidal School Winery & Vineyard—Drumright
Frank Phillips Home—Bartlesville
Price Tower—Bartlesville

June 25

Outlaw Motor Speedway—Muskogee
Blue Stem Restaurant—Pawhuska
Boiling Springs State Park—Woodward
Zoo Adventure—Tulsa
Pontotoc Ridge Butterflies—OKC
Tallgrass Prairie Butterfly Count—Pawhuska
Hitching Post Ranch—Kenton

Please note all shows subject to change.

If you have story ideas for

Agency's Message Heard by State Legislature



May 27 marked the final day of the 2005 legislative session for the State of Oklahoma. When the legislative session began in February, there were many new legislators, changes in leadership and the potential for a budget reduction.

"To address these concerns, we undertook an intensive effort to educate our lawmakers about the mission, purpose and direction of our agency," said OTRD Executive Director Robb Gray. "In the end, our agency's message was heard and our critical needs have begun to be addressed."

The following highlight

some of our agency's major accomplishments:

- \$1 million in appropriations for state park capital maintenance;
- Full funding and retention of all money for base operations of the agency;
- Consolidating the State Parks, Resorts and Golf Divisions into a unified

state park system;

- Providing career progression opportunities for state park rangers;

For an update on the legislative bills regarding the Film & Music Office, please see article on p. 2 of this issue.

OTRD Welcomes New Staff Member, Intern

Rachael Nalliah is the Travel & Tourism Divisions' newest employee and will serve as data coordinator. Her primary responsibilities will be:

- Maintaining comprehensive databases of Oklahoma events, attractions, activities, lodging, restaurants and tourism contacts;
- Planning free trip contests and recruit industry partners;

- Maintaining the 'Hot Deals' section of TravelOK.com.



Rachael Nalliah
Nalliah is a Calumet native and has a Bachelors of Art degree in public relations from the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond. Her most recent position was as a warranty

administrator for a car dealership.

Courtney Hentges comes to the Public Relations Department as a summer intern through the end of July. Hentges, who will graduate in May 2006, is an agricultural communications major from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater. Hentges will assist with administrative tasks, press releases, writing and editing, and handling media requests. So far, Hentges

says she really likes working in the tourism industry and will be looking for employment once she graduates, so she asks that everyone keep her in mind!



Courtney Hentges

Welcome to both Rachael and Courtney.

OTRD Seeking Youth Travel Programs

Does your event or attraction have programs designed for youth? If so, we want to know!

For the first time, Oklahoma is marketing itself for student travel. OTRD recently became a member of the Student and Youth Travel Association, a non-profit association designed to promote and support quality student and youth travel services that enhance social, cultural and educational growth. As a member of SYTA, we are seeking out youth travel from across the nation.

Currently, OTRD is preparing for a travel show in September by compiling a list of attractions that would be of interest for youth travel programs. This includes educational field trip destinations, soft adventure or anywhere else youth would enjoy spending a day.

Additionally, we need locations that could be used as performance venues for bands and choirs. This can be any place that has a built-in audience. A mall, theme park or pre-show for another performance would

be ideal. The venue also needs to have access to risers and sound equipment. If you currently host a music competition, we would appreciate information about that, as well.

Please send information about your attraction or event to Todd Stallbaumer at Todd@TravelOK.com. Include a brief description, curriculum available, prices, hours, student and group rates, comp policies and any special programs. To learn more about SYTA, visit www.syta.org.

OTRD is on the Move

OTRD will be moving into its new office space at the end of June, with the official move-in date of July 5. The agency is moving just down the street to the First National Center, 120 N. Robinson Avenue in Oklahoma City, and will occupy the 6th floor. The zip code of 73102 for the street address will remain the same. The post office box 52002 will also remain the same.

Morning Buzz: Is There a Co-Op Clearinghouse?

This is the first in a regular series to answer questions generated by the Tourism Morning Buzz sessions held throughout the state this spring.

Is there a central clearinghouse for all tourism co-op marketing programs?

The Travel and Tourism Division can provide you with a complete list of the co-op marketing programs currently offered through the Oklahoma Tourism and Recreation Department – including paid and free opportunities. You can find program details on the industry page of www.TravelOK.com, or contact the staff listed below.

An overview of the most popular co-op marketing opportunities include:

Paid

- Advertising in the 2006 Travel Guide or the RV Parks, Lakes and Camping Guide. Contact: Lesly Pyle, Lesly@travelok.com
- Spring magazine advertising program in conjunction with the state's campaign, contact Tina Gilliland at Tina@TravelOK.com (Available again in late 2005.)
- OklaStrong co-op trade show program to Todd Stallbaumber at Todd@travelok.com
- Brochure distribution

program to Jennifer Kaulkman at Jennifer@travelok.com

- Advertising in *Oklahoma Today Magazine* to Kimberly Ryan at kim@oklahomatoday.com

Free

- Listings in department-produced brochures for qualified attractions, Lesly Pyle at Lesly@travelok.com
- Listings on the state's official tourism Web site TravelOK.com to Racheal Nalliah at Rachael@travelok.com
- Story pitches to the media and press releases to Krista Townsend at

Krista@travelok.com

- Possible story on the statewide television show, *Integrus Health's Discover Oklahoma*, to Becky King at Becky@travelok.com
- Qualified brochures are distributed from Oklahoma's 12 Tourism Information Centers to Jennifer Kalkman at Jennifer@travelok.com
- Presentations to Call Center Travel Counselors to Fonda Bean, Fonda@travelok.com
- Providing photos to the Oklahoma Film and Music Office, 1-800-766-FILM.

Series Offers Tips on Volunteer Management

Do you manage or organize a volunteer program for your organization? If so, you may want to attend an upcoming Volunteer Management Series.

The Oklahoma Center for Nonprofits has partnered with the Volunteer Center of Tulsa to present a six-part series on volunteerism.

In many instances, volunteers are the heart and soul of nonprofit organizations. This program will offer instruction on how to integrate a successful volunteer program into your organization.

Session topics include:

- Understanding Volunteering
- Planning a Volunteer Program
- Recruiting and Placement
- Orientation and Training
- Supervising Volunteers
- Program Evaluation

Sessions will be held from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Hardesty Library in Tulsa.

For more information, contact Karen Fraser at 918-579-1900 or kfraser@centerfor nonprofits.us.

Ad Campaign Gets Results

The summer travel season is officially underway and inquiries are up, including unique visitor sessions on the TravelOK.com Web site - the official site for Oklahoma tourism information. "Our "Okla Modern" spring ad campaign took Oklahoma's visibility to the next level," commented Tina Gilliland, T & T division director. "The idea behind the campaign was to expand Oklahoma's image to include not only outdoor recreation, but also highlight our cultural and art attractions as well."

Responses to the spring advertising campaign are up 18 percent and inquiries for the fiscal year to

date are up 26 percent.

Web site numbers support the national trend that travelers continue to go online to get information. Unique visitors on the TravelOK.com site are up 118 percent over last year, with total visitor sessions up by 21 percent and email inquiries up by 65 percent.

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