



AIANTA
American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

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Indian Country Brings New Tour Products and Businesses to World's Leading Travel Tradeshow

AIANTA, alongside five tribal entities, showcases Native tourism destinations to European Market at ITB 2016

Berlin, Germany (March 16, 2016) – The American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association (AIANTA) along with tribal nations and businesses from across the country, have concluded their eighth consecutive year showcasing Indian Country tourism at ITB Berlin, one of the world's largest travel tradeshows, this year taking place March 9-13.

New lodges, tours, exhibits and programs from the Navajo Nation, Monument Valley Simpson's Trailhandler Tours, the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, OPOS Tours and Travel and Keepers of the Sacred Tradition of Pipemakers were highlighted at AIANTA's award winning ITB pavilion, drawing in media attention and consumer interest from around the globe.

"Europeans, particularly Germans, are interested in our culture, but few know just how much native heritage there is to see across the entire USA," said Camille Ferguson, AIANTA executive director. "And on consumer days we also get to showcase our traditional regalia and dance," she added.

Attracting additional consumer attention to the United States, and especially Native America, AIANTA hosted weekend performances, where participants showcased their regalia and danced to the beat of a Navajo song and drum beat.

Anyone walking by the ITB pavilion was also able to explore AIANTA's new consumer-facing website, NativeAmerica.Travel on a 60" screen. The new site connects tribes directly to travelers, and gives all 567 federally recognized tribes a chance to tell the world their stories, in their own words. Most ITB visitors were drawn to the experiences section of the site, which offers trip ideas and an interactive map that allows users to choose particular activities, or areas, and assists users in planning a trip to Indian Country.

Travel and tourism is one of America's largest industries, accounting for \$927.9 billion spent directly by domestic and international travelers last year. These trends are also visible, in Indian Country, where visitation by overseas travelers grew by nearly one million from 2007 to 2014. According to the Department of Commerce, National Travel



AIANTA

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Tourism Association

& Tourism Office, of the 35 million total overseas visitors to the U.S. in 2014, a record 1.65 million visited Indian Country (5%).

Germany continues to be a top market for tourism to the United States and to American Indian and cultural destinations and it is important that Indian Country remains a strong presence in the consistently growing market.

Each year while in Berlin, the Tribes and tribal entities attending the show with AIANTA also participate in a high school outreach program, in which tribal representatives visit a local high school in Berlin to educate international students about their American Indian culture. This year, delegates from the Navajo Nation, the Chickasaw Nation, Monument Valley, and Keepers of the Sacred Tradition of Pipemakers spoke with 90 ninth and tenth grade students as a part of the MEET US program of the American Embassy in Germany.

Led by AIANTA Board President Sherry L. Rupert, of Paiute and Washoe heritage from Nevada and AIANTA Executive Director Camille Ferguson, Tlingit native from Sitka, Alaska, the tribal delegation attending ITB 2016 included:

The **Navajo Nation Hospitality Enterprise** returned to ITB this year to announce a new venture they have entered with the National Park Service. The tribe has undertaken a major renovation of the Sacred Canyon Lodge inside the towering, historical walls of the mighty Canyon de Chelly. Renamed the Thunderbird Lodge, the 69-room property is the only place to stay inside the enchanting canyon walls, and the early spring reopening offers visitors completely modernized rooms, a restaurant, trading post and the starting point for vehicle tours of the national monument.

Chickasaw Country represents 13 counties in south-central Oklahoma, and offers historical and modern attractions for visitors. The Chickasaw Cultural Center, the largest tribal cultural center in the United States, offers daily cultural demonstrations, exhibits and an amphitheater for Native singing, stomp dance demonstrations and concerts. The Center's theater shows films focused on Native American culture and tradition. Visitors can also experience the Traditional Village, which is a recreation of a historical Native American village. Recently, the Cultural Center added a beautiful butterfly garden to the facility, which allows the monarch butterfly population a location to stop and feed along their winter and spring migrations.

The Keepers of the Sacred Tradition of Pipemakers believe in preserving their tribal arts and culture by educating their own people and sharing it with the world. They are based near the home of the Great Pipestone Quarries of Minnesota, a place where tribal people have come to obtain the famous red stone for their prayer pipes for more than 1,000 years. The Pipemakers annual pow wow and culture camp are open to the public as is the new Pipestone Heritage Fest July each July, where wood working, bead making, basket making, hide tanning and many other arts and crafts are showcased.

Inside Monument Valley, Navajo people who know every crevasse, crater and canyon in their motherland lead **Monument Valley Simpson's Trailhandler Tours**. Simpson's native guides take visitors through this land of petroglyphs, pictographs, ancient dwellings and magical landscapes in open-air safari-like Jeep tours, or on foot. There are



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also opportunities to enjoy a traditional Navajo dinner and spend the night inside a Hogan, an igloo-like structure created for centuries out of juniper logs and red desert dirt.

First-time AIANTA exhibitor **OPOS (Our People Our Story) Tours** also comes from Minnesota and offers visitors rare looks into native culture. Their tours, all lead by local guides, feature a look at indigenous lands, language, food and history as seen through the eyes of the many generations who have lived on their lands. Travelers witness scenes and listen to messages OPOS has created with respected elders, tribal and spiritual leaders and community members. OPOS tours are primarily in the Midwest but do range across the USA and as far away as Hawaii.

About AIANTA:

AIANTA is a nonprofit association of Native American tribes and tribal businesses organized in 1999 to advance Indian Country tourism. The Association is made up of member tribes from six regions: Eastern, Plains, Midwest, Southwest, Pacific, and Alaska. The purpose of the Association is to serve as the voice and resource for its constituents in advancing tourism, assist tribes in creating infrastructure and capacity, provide technical assistance, training and educational resources to tribes, tribal organizations and tribal members.

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