



AIANTA

American Indian Alaska Native
Tourism Association

TRAVEL TRADE MANUAL

A PLANNER FOR INDIGENOUS TOURISM PROFESSIONALS



Choctaw Cultural Center

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A PLANNER FOR
INDIGENOUS TOURISM
PROFESSIONALS



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Letter from AIANTA CEO

Sherry L. Rupert
(Paiute/Washoe)

Dear Members and Friends,

Inspiration comes in many forms. It can take root and blossom after witnessing the opening of a new cultural center or it can take effect when experiencing a new tribal destination for the first time. It can even appear in the stories, dreams and hopes of the people you meet along your journeys.

At AIANTA, we find inspiration in the ongoing efforts of the indigenous hospitality community and your passion to build a better future for future generations. We know the steps in building a successful tourism program can be challenging and with greater success comes even more challenges.

Among those challenges is carefully growing your tourism offerings to attract more visitors. For hospitality businesses looking to welcome group travelers and overseas visitors, the best path to success is introducing a new business paradigm that involves working with an intricate network of external businesses collectively known as the travel trade.

These businesses, the retail travel agents, receptive operators, international wholesalers and other distribution partners, that make up the travel trade can help Native-owned organizations build a consistent flow of domestic and international visitors. The partnerships you develop on this path will allow you to better showcase your destinations to the world.

Working with the travel trade market can be an intimidating experience, especially for tribes and destinations used to managing their tourism with only an in-house team, but when done correctly, it can help open up new markets, attract more visitors to your destination and encourage them to spend more time and money exploring your culture and heritage.

It is also important to know that with the continual release of new and emerging technologies, the frequently shifting consumer demands and the ongoing changes in global policies, there is no one-size fits all path to success in working with the travel trade. Each journey is as individual as the destination looking to share their stories with this market.

Whether you have worked with the travel trade for years or are just beginning your journey, it is my pleasure to introduce the *Travel Trade Manual: A Planner for Indigenous Tourism Professionals*, produced by AIANTA.

This guide is designed as a learning tool to help you build your travel trade marketing plan and be inspired by Native businesses who have developed their own successful tour programs that respectfully highlight their culture and heritage.

It was also designed to demonstrate that building successful tour programs can be managed in a way that works for you and allows you to continue to manage your own stories and experiences.

We understand that welcoming the world into your home requires many steps, including the consent of tribal governments, elders and community members. We are grateful that you share your stories so willingly with other tribes so they may do the same.

As you read through these pages, we hope you'll find inspiration from your peers. You'll learn how Acoma Sky City, the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in North America, carefully controls tours and manages what visitors can and can't do when on site. Or how Ben Rupert (Duck Valley Shoshone Paiute and Washoe) of Warrior's Path Native Tours is skipping the traditional tour model by providing personalized, sustainable programs for serious hunters. Or see how Alger Swingley (Blackfeet) of Blackfeet Outfitters is blending culture and ecotourism for active outdoor visitors.

We hope you will find inspiration from the stories in this guide, and you are able to utilize the information provided to enhance your own tourism programming. And, as always, we thank the partners who have so willingly shared their experiences to help you in your journey.

With best wishes for your success,

Sherry L. Rupert (Paiute/Washoe)

Chief Executive Officer

American Indian Alaska Native Tourism Association, Inc.

Introduction to Working With the Travel Trade

Working With the Travel Trade

In 2019, the Intrepid Company, an adventure travel company known for its sustainable, experience-rich itineraries, employed 2,400 staff in more than 40 offices around the world. During that same year, the company sold 2,800 travel itineraries to some 431,000 global customers. Similarly, Canada-based G Adventures, an adventure travel company known for its small-group escorted tours, served some 200,000 customers through 28 global offices.

Global hospitality businesses who successfully navigated partnerships with these travel companies effectively increased their sales force to nearly 7,000 sales professionals who reach a global customer base of more than a half million travelers.

These numbers reflect an awesome opportunity for tribes and Native-owned businesses who are looking to attract a consistent flow of customers and generate new economic opportunities for their communities and area businesses.

Tourism as an Economic Driver

Tourism has consistently proven to be a driver of global economies. In 2019, the industry made up 10.4% of the entire global GDP. Tourism helped drive economies in urban and rural communities around the world, creating jobs, growing taxes and providing greater awareness of the arts, heritage, culture and peoples of these communities.

Tourism is an especially important driver of jobs across all economic demographics--from entry-level to senior management positions. One in nine American jobs rely directly or indirectly on the travel industry. Tourism is also a leading driver of sole proprietor and small business enterprises--from artisans to cultural guides to local mom-and-pop retail and restaurants. The relationship is symbiotic, as these businesses help define the uniqueness of their destinations, making it more appealing to domestic and international visitors.

When done correctly, tourism can bring stakeholders to the table. Awareness of the impact of tourism can drive conversations with local, regional, state and federal legislators. A demonstrated success in tourism programming can also serve as a foundation for new funding opportunities through economic development agencies, federal funding agencies and through private partnerships.

Working with the travel trade can significantly amplify the economic benefits of tourism. But working with the trade is also best navigated by businesses and hospitality professionals who understand and can meet the basic requirements needed to ensure a successful relationship between supplier, travel partner and consumer.

Create. Sell. Promote.

At a very early age, Americans learn the basic principles of sales through the lemonade stand model of business. Create a product (lemonade), promote it (cardboard sign), and sell it (customers). Eventually, however, growing the lemonade stand involves a deeper understanding of how each of these elements work.

This is where a business plan comes in. The most important elements of a business plan are: create/define the product (executive summary, business description, product description); market/promote the product (who will buy it, where are my

customers coming from, who else is selling this product); create/define an operational structure (what team and resources do I need to put these elements into place) and develop a financial plan (what are my income projections and do I need to raise capital to make my business a success).

Just like any business, a successful hospitality enterprise relies upon its valued partners to make sure things run smoothly. In the case of tribal and Native business, partnerships may vary. They might be the culture bearers who help define and interpret visitor offerings, they might be bank or funding sources who help raise capital or they might be the local and national tourism industry who help promote a product to a larger audience.

For an even larger audience, partnerships involve working with the travel trade.

Understanding the Travel Trade

This network of business intermediaries is an essential tool for any hospitality business looking to attract a larger volume of travelers, especially from international markets. Your "lemonade stand" may be listed as Best in the State but that just may not be enough to attract international attention.

Fortunately, building relationships with the travel trade significantly increases the chance of success in attracting these travelers.

The rapid-fire changes in technology means the travel trade is quickly redefining how it works, but in an oversimplified definition, the trade supply chain (see *"Tour & Travel Distribution Channels"* on page 5) usually includes a technology provider--usually a global distribution system (GDS), such as SABRE or Expedia; the retail arm of the trade, generally travel agents who sell directly to consumers; and the wholesale arm, generally called tour operators or wholesalers.

The roles and terms can be confusing and have a lot of crossover. Often travel agents build their own packages while many tour operators now sell directly to the public as well as through the travel agent intermediary. Expedia, while officially known as an online travel agent (OTA), operates one of the world's largest GDS platforms.

Commissions, Fees and More

Before any hospitality business begins negotiating business with the travel trade, it is important to understand how the commission and fee structure works. A general rule of thumb is a 10% commission to the retail trade, an additional 10% for the wholesale trade and an additional 10% for the international trade. Additionally, those amounts don't include add-on fees for additional marketing opportunities.

No doubt, the sticker shock of selling an experience for only 70% (at most) of its market rate, can be a deterrent for many hospitality businesses. This is especially true when factoring in that profits from trade-negotiated business may not be realized for two to three years after first starting outreach to this market.

For this reason, it is critical to understand how the distribution cycle works before expending time and energy on a product that just can't be fulfilled. A company not selling their product in some form of online tech platform, for example, stands very little chance of long-term success, especially in attracting international customers.



Akwesasne Travel: Thompson Island

For More Information

AIANTA has a robust Visitor Outreach program, which offers educational opportunities through webinars and brochures as well as attendance at some of the leading tourism trade shows around the world. This travel trade planner is designed to serve as a companion piece to the Visitor Outreach departmental tools, to help Native hospitality businesses in determining how best to work with the international trade.

For additional information, visit www.aianta.org/international

Who Are the Travel Trade?

The travel trade, a complex network of global travel providers, is an important market for travel suppliers looking to expand their reach, especially those hoping to attract group business and international travelers. The travel trade are the tourism industry organizations that operate as intermediaries and include: domestic tour operators, receptive tour operators (RTOs), international wholesalers, traditional travel agents and online travel agents (OTAs). These intermediaries promote your business, sell to global customers, and create an essential link between your destination/experience and incremental business.

Each company has traditionally played a distinct role by offering specific services, but in today's rapidly changing technological society, the boundaries between company types are shifting, with many operating at multiple levels across the supply chain.

TOUR OPERATORS (WHOLESALE TRADE)

Wholesalers operate as intermediaries between the travel product supplier (destinations, airlines, accommodations) and the retail travel agent. They collect and combine supplier components and package them into a single unit product that they then sell or supply to retail agents. While traditionally, tour operators have served as intermediaries between travel agents and consumers, today's wholesalers also frequently sell directly to the public.

Receptive Tour Operator (RTO)

Receptive tour operators, also referred to as inbound tour operators, specialize in packaging and/or handling ground arrangements for incoming visitors to a destination. They tend to be experts in the destination--or rely on their partners to provide that expertise--and they develop programs and itineraries for tour operators and travel agents which include elements such as sightseeing, airport transfers, restaurant reservations, accommodations and other components for groups, fully independent travelers (FIT) or both.

Inbound travel is their focus and they create a selection of group and/or independent travel packages by contracting the various components and packaging them into a "tour" that they resell, generally internationally, to tour operators or wholesalers around the world. The partnership provides a level of confidence for international tour operators who may not be familiar with the on-the-ground offerings at a local destination. It also reduces complexity for international tour operators in the contracting process, as they need only sign one contract with the RTO, rather than contracting all the individual components.

RTOs benefit the local tourism suppliers by collaborating on their behalf directly with overseas operators on logistics, including contracting with international markets, invoicing and collecting payments from foreign countries.

Outbound Tour Operators

Outbound tour operators are travel promoters who sell outbound tourism experiences. Outbound tour operators are located in the country where their clients are traveling from, they have knowledge of local demographics and their client's values and motivations, and they promote vacation products accordingly.

Outbound tour operators design and package tours for the needs of travelers in their home country and can purchase package components directly from the supplier, from the RTO or both.

Outbound tour operators sell their packages through travel agents and directly to consumers. They have digital capabilities, including websites, dynamic pricing and online booking and payment systems. Outbound tour operators use a variety of marketing tactics, including online channels (web, social media, etc.), print (ads, direct mail, etc.) as well as consumer and trade shows to build their customer base. These tour operators keep databases of consumers in their countries and some even have their own in-house reservation teams who work directly with consumers. The outbound tour operator works as a sales agent of sorts, not only packaging a destination, but also working hard to sell it on behalf of their supplier partners.

Domestic Tour Operators

Domestic tour operators put together travel packages and sell them to domestic travelers within a traveler's home country.

Domestic tour operators generally specialize in tours of national parks, scenic byways, urban getaways, train travel and more. They also frequently combine several packaged components into an inclusive itinerary and sell them as multi-destination getaways to travelers within their own country.

TRAVEL ADVISORS (RETAIL TRADE)

Travel advisors have a direct link to consumers and are relationship driven with their clients. These sellers of travel, also frequently called travel agents, retail agents or brick-and-mortar travel agents, make their revenue either through commissions or by offering a fee-based service. Travel agents may work independently or as part of a chain or consortia such as American Express, Virtuoso or Signature Network, for example.

Large tour operators sell most of their travel products through travel agents. Globus, for example, sells 85% of their business through travel agents. While many travelers erroneously believe the retail travel agent model is on the edge of extinction, it remains a thriving and valuable business model. Expedia, a well-known online travel agent, also relies on the retail model and includes 220 retail travel franchises and more than 4,000 vacation consultants within its network.

Retail travel agents are an especially important part of the distribution channel in long-haul markets where the trip is more complex or the consumer has less familiarity with the destination or language. Travel agents can access package rates from various tour operators so they can offer clients better value by incorporating extras like welcome gifts, meals or activities for the same rate a non-client may pay for a bare-bones experience.

Online Travel Agents (OTAs)

Online Travel Agents (OTAs), like Expedia and Priceline, sell products almost exclusively via the web and have a broad and vast reach. Expedia alone has a number of brands within their family as well as more than 220 retail travel franchises.

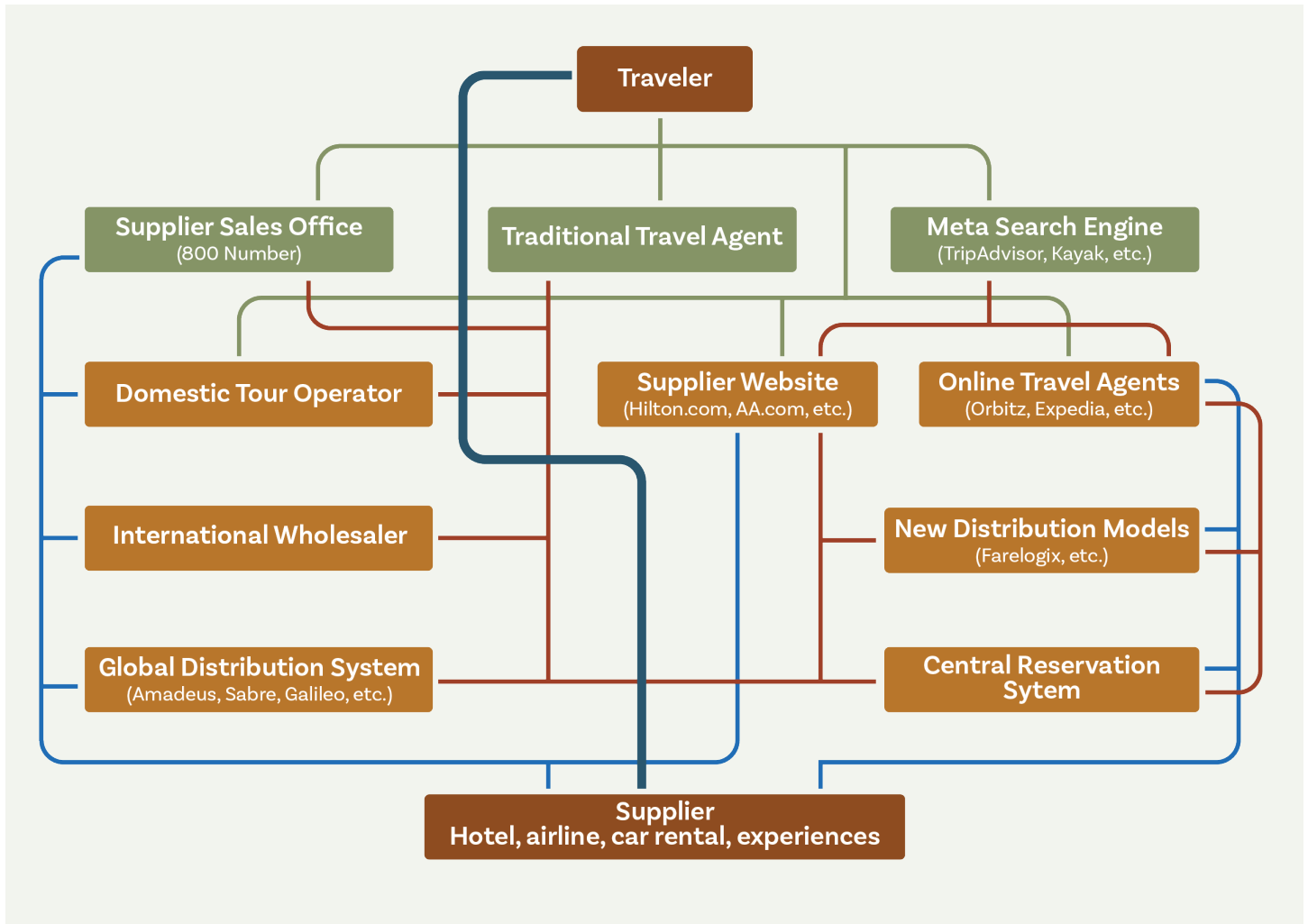
OTAs offer packaged travel for many destinations, but their main focus is on hotels, flights, activities in larger cities and some packaged options which can include anything from car rentals to cruise departures. A high percentage of fully independent travel (FIT) is booked through OTAs, however, OTAs also offer group bookings.

OTAs rely on technology and product innovation, combined with innovative marketing and deep marketing analytics, to help effectively target, attract and retain customers. The fees and commissions OTAs charge suppliers can be high, but their awareness is sharp and marketing reach is huge, generally making them an important step in the travel trade supply chain. Suppliers do not pay until a booking is made.

GLOBAL DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM (GDS)

While once upon a time the travel industry was operated strictly through personal relationships, telephone calls and fax machines, today's industry is almost exclusively powered by inter-connected digital technology. This technology and how it serves its customers is rapidly changing, but a significant amount of sales transactions between suppliers, wholesalers (tour operators), retailers (travel agents) and consumers (travelers) is powered by one of six global distribution systems known as the Global Distribution System (GDS). The oldest--and still in operation today--GDS is the Semi Automated Business Research Environment or SABRE, which started as a partnership between IBM and American Airlines, which was specifically designed to help American Airlines automate its reservations service. While Expedia is generally referred to as an online retail travel agent, it is also one of the world's six leading GDS companies. Travel suppliers looking to work with the travel trade must have the technological abilities to sell their product, whether individual components or packaged itineraries, through a GDS platform.

Tour & Travel Distribution Channels



How Native Companies are Debunking the Tours Stereotype

Group tours have been a popular form of travel for centuries. Today, however, group tourists often get a bad rap as they are erroneously lumped into a stereotypical image of a boisterous, ethnocentric quasi-bully, seeking quantity over quality as they try to cram ten cities into three days of travel.

So bad is the impression of this type of “tourist,” most of the world’s largest packaged travel companies include “Don’t Believe the Stereotype” disclaimers throughout their marketing materials.

In today’s travel climate, the group tour model is changing as consumers are increasingly ditching the mass market mentality in favor of more interactive, experiential programs. For this type of traveler, Native tour programs are perfectly poised to serve as the antidote to the mass tour program.

Here are just a few Native tour programs finding success in providing anti-tourist experiences.



Nez Perce Tourism

NEZ PERCE TOURISM

Nez Perce Tourism began as a vision in 2017 when CEO Stacia Morfin was hiking with her daughter. In her vision, one of her ancestors appeared to her and told her she was to open a tourism business on the reservation. Stacia said her ancestor told her the purpose of this cultural tourism company would be to have Nimiipuu (Nez Perce) people tell the story of the Nimiipuu themselves and to ensure the traditional knowledge of the people continue to be shared among future generations.

In researching her new company, Stacia found that there were 164 businesses in the Lewis & Clark Valley and 90% of them were telling the story of the Nez Perce. None of them were owned or operated by Nez Perce natives. Knowing that, Stacia knew there was a huge opportunity for her company.

“[Visitors] don’t want to go to a [National Park] and meet someone in a hat sharing the story of you. They want to meet you,” Stacia said. “They want to hear your songs and hear the drumbeat.”

Today, her business offers a variety of interactive tours created to connect visitors to Nimiipuu culture. Programs include boat

tours, Appaloosa horseback riding, rafting on the sacred river beds of the Nez Perce, as well as two-or-three day tours where visitors can encounter a comprehensive Nez Perce experience, including petroglyph viewing, wildlife/bird watching and cultural demonstrations.

PUEBLO OF ACOMA

Built atop a 367-foot sandstone bluff in a valley studded with sacred, towering monoliths, the Pueblo of Acoma is the oldest continuously inhabited community in North America. Acoma offers visitors the privilege of having an inside look at their people’s cultures and traditions that have been carried on through generations.

In doing so, the Pueblo has placed an extreme importance on visitors practicing proper etiquette and respect when visiting tribal land. To ensure that visitors adhere to these regulations, the Acoma Tribal Council put together a set of guidelines that all guests are to follow when visiting the Pueblo. The guidelines highlight visitor etiquette, photography guidelines and a dress code.

“...the Pueblo has placed an extreme importance on visitors practicing proper etiquette and respect when visiting tribal land.”

TATANKA REZ TOURS

Native-owned and operated Tatanka Rez Tourz is based on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in southwestern South Dakota. Run by father-daughter team Warren and Tianna Yellowhair, Tatanka Rez Tourz offers guided tours throughout the entire Pine Ridge Reservation. Rather than offering a standard “tourist” experience, the tours provide guests with the opportunity to learn the language, culture and history of the Lakota people.

Tatanka Rez often brings in presenters and artists from the community to give visitors multiple perspectives and to help promote their Lakota brothers and sisters. Each tour begins with a formal introduction about who the tour guides are, who their parents are and who their grandparents are. Tianna and Guss do this to make connections with their visitors, to see if they are related and to pay homage to their ancestors.

SITKA TRIBAL TOURS

Located in Sitka, Alaska, Sitka Tribal Tours offers tour packages that showcase Sitka’s rich history and culture. While the company provides visitors with a look at everything unique to Sitka, the tribally owned company focuses on Tlingit Native culture and Alaska Native experiences. The tours are targeted to cruise ship passengers as well as overnight visitors, with a variety of culturally oriented programs available.

All guides employed by Sitka Tribal Tours are residents of the community and participate in annual team training led by Tlingit elders and local historians to ensure cultural authenticity and historical accuracy. Sitka Tribal Tours stands out from other area

operators by ensuring all guides are Alaska Natives with a connection to Sitka's culture and history.

“All guides employed by Sitka Tribal Tours are residents of the community and participate in annual team training led by Tlingit elders and local historians...”



Totem from Sitka National Park

BE NATIVE TOURS, CHICKASAW NATION

Be Native Tours, owned by the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma, showcases local culture through various pre-built itineraries, including its one-day Chickasaw Legacy tour. Exploring south-central Oklahoma, the Chickasaw Legacy tour includes stops at the Chickasaw Nation Information Center, the Chickasaw White House, the National Capitol Building, Council House Museum and the Chickasaw Bank Museum. Guests can also add on local stops at the Chickasaw Cultural Center, the Chickasaw National Recreation Area and overnight at the Chickasaw Retreat and Conference Center or Artesian Hotel.

Be Native Tours augments its revenue model by providing fully customizable tours in Oklahoma and the surrounding states, allowing travelers and tour operators to build the exact itinerary they want.

Be Native Tours also provides step-on guide service for travelers and travel companies requiring on-the-ground assistance. The company has a team of local experts who share insider information about events, dining, landmarks and must-see attractions so each guest has a personalized experience.



Chickasaw National Capitol Building

NAVAJO NATION PARKS & RECREATION

Covering more than 25,000 miles and four states, the Navajo Nation is home to some of the world's most iconic visitor destinations. Governing these private lands, the Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation department was formed to “protect, preserve and manage tribal parks, monuments and recreation areas for the perpetual enjoyment and benefit of the Navajo Nation.”

Fortunately Navajo Nation shares these private lands with visitors, albeit through a strict set of guidelines that warn, “All areas on the Navajo Nation are closed to non-Navajos unless you have a valid camping, hiking, or backcountry permit issued by Navajo Nation Parks and Recreation Department or other duly delegated tribal authority. Failure to have a permit is considered Trespassing on a Federal Indian Land.”

Guided tour companies operating on Navajo lands are also strictly regulated through the Navajo Nation Parks & Recreation Department as well as by policies set by the Department of Economic Development.

Today, a dozen or so Navajo-owned companies operate tours on Navajo Park lands, including Antelope Canyon Navajo Tours. Jaslynn Begay, the company's marketing manager, believes tribal tourism is poised to be an incredibly popular tourism segment in the very near future.

Her advice to other tribes and Native-owned businesses looking to start a tour company?

“[Anybody] can create a tour operation and be successful as long as they stay true to what they're doing.”

“[Anybody] can create a tour operation and be successful as long as they stay true to what they're doing.”

— Jaslynn Begay, Antelope Canyon Navajo Tours

More Resources

AIANTA maintains a list of Native American tour companies in the US and what makes them each unique. Visit www.aianta.org/native-american-tours/ to get some ideas in developing your own Native tourism businesses. Or view AIANTA's free Interpreting Culture: How to Run a Successful Tour Business webinar at www.aianta.org/interpreting-culture/

Working with International Travel Companies

Global travel company Destination America has been a consistent innovator in guided tours and vacations since its inception in 1990 and is known for developing immersive travel experiences. The key to the company's success, according to CEO & President Richard Launder, is building partnerships.

Without partnerships, he said, the company wouldn't have anywhere to send travelers.

Richard, along with Destination America Travel Experiences Developer Anand Vieira Nachtajler, spoke with Aianta to offer tips for Indigenous communities looking to build stronger travel trade relationships.

Both Richard and Anand agree that travelers around the world are increasingly looking for ways to connect with communities. "They are looking to learn," said Anand, and he emphasizes this trend will continue to grow.

Cultural tourism, especially, he said, will grow even more.

As travel sentiment shifts its focus towards local experiences, many of the world's largest travel companies are taking notice, and adjusting their travel offerings accordingly. For indigenous communities, being included in travel programs like the ones Destination America offers, can result in big benefits, including increased exposure and access to new markets.

When working with travel suppliers, Anand says Destination America relies upon a three-prong framework.

STEP ONE:

Understanding What Works and What Doesn't to Develop and Deliver Successful Experiences

For Anand, a successful partnership starts with an engaged, passionate partner.

"A lot of travelers are looking for 'experiences'," he said. "For us, the experience starts with someone who is a storyteller." He also identified knowledge, charisma, consistency and reliability as ideal character traits. "We want to know that someone can cover if something goes wrong," he said.

He also relies upon partners who are flexible when it comes to accommodating traveler needs.

STEP TWO:

Understanding the Guests

The Travel Corporation, Destination America's parent company, encompasses 40 global brands, who collectively serve more than a million travelers every year. These clients come from all parts of the world and all walks of life, so Destination America needs partners that are flexible and able to build packages with varying experiences at different price points.

"Our partners understand that and can adapt," he said. He also encourages partners to assess whether all programs are suitable for all demographics. Older travelers, for example, might not be suited for long, outdoor programs or those that require a lot of walking or hiking.

When planning any tour itinerary, he recommends suppliers ask these questions:

- **Where are your guests from?**
- **Where have they already been on this trip/what have they already seen?**
 - » You don't want to share the same information as the last tour they were on or the same as their next tour. Be original.
- **What are they interested in?**
 - » What might seem mundane to one person, might be interesting to someone else.
- **How mobile or active are they?**
 - » You never want to put anyone in a situation where they are physically uncomfortable.
- **How old are they? Interests will vary largely depending on age range.**
 - » Tailor your tours to age or ensure your tours will be intriguing to everyone, no matter their age.

STEP THREE:

The Six Stages of Development

When developing partnerships, Destination America follows a “six stages of development” model.

Stage One: Define the Experience Together

Prior to this step it is important that Native communities have a plan in place of what they can and want to share with visitors. Some things to consider are how much of your community you are willing (or allowed) to share, how much time is required for a visit, how does seasonality impact the experience, do you have access to passionate storytellers or elders, and do you have the ability to create a variety of experiences for your visitors?

Stage Two: Understanding Delivery of the Experience

Something Destination America makes sure to highlight in this step is to be aware of long lead times. It can take 12-14 months from the first discussion of the partnership to the actual delivery of travelers. As far as the actual experience, Destination America especially values authenticity, meaningfulness, variety, reliability and consistency when selecting partners. Similarly, Destination America encourages Native businesses to be selective in who they partner with.

Stage Three: Understanding Infrastructure

When it comes to infrastructure, be clear about what you expect from visitors to your lands and make sure those expectations are explicitly written into your contract. It is also important to highlight logistics about parking, bathrooms, accommodations etc. so your guests and travel partners are not surprised when they arrive.

Stage Four: Pricing

Pricing can be a make-or-break proposition for both your partners and your guests -- not everyone can afford the same things. Be willing to negotiate with partners and offer different tours with different price options for a variety of traveler types.

Stage Five: Contracting

Most good tour operators will want a signed contract before including your destination in their program, as they have a responsibility to deliver the experience they promised to their clients. It is important to tour operators that their partners understand and support that. Before signing any contract, be sure that everything is clearly and accurately outlined in order to prevent conflicts with your partners in the future. In the meantime, when problems arise, keep an open line of communication with your partners.

Destination America, says Anand, has created a simple one-page contract that usually doesn't require a lawyer to review, but explicitly defines dates, number of passengers, rates and what's included in the experience.

Stage Six: Provide Marketing Support

Lastly, be willing to provide your partners with marketing support before and after the trip. When working with tour operators, marketing is a mutually beneficial tool, so be willing to invest the time in outreach and promotion. A marketing team isn't necessarily critical, but being able to provide great images to showcase your experience is. Also being willing and prepared to do interviews or share your content helps Destination America educate its internal sales agents so they can better sell your experience.

DIVERSITY IN TOUR DIRECTORS

The TreadRight Foundation, a not-for-profit organization created as a joint initiative between The Travel Corporation's (TTC) family of brands, has supported more than 50 sustainable tourism projects around the world. The organization's mission is to “have a positive impact on the people and communities we visit, to protect wildlife and marine life, and to care for the planet we call home.”

A critical need in tourism, identified by the Treadright Foundation, is greater representation in tourism employment, especially as tour directors, who not only guide global tour programs but also serve as ambassadors for the tour operators they work for.

To create a more diverse workforce, the Treadright Foundation has teamed up with Tourism Cares, the TRIP School and the Media Arts Institute of Alabama to create the Pathways Project which recruits, trains and places individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in positions as tour directors, interpreters, cultural heritage tour guides and storytellers.

Each individual who completes the Pathways Project program will receive online training through TripSchool, active mentorship, an in-person training boot camp and employment assistance.

Anand, who develops tours throughout the southwestern U.S., lamented the lack of professional Indigenous tour guides leading programs throughout the region.

Indigenous individuals are underrepresented in tour guiding, he said, and this program was designed to help even the field.

www.treadright.org/projects/pathways-project/

Checklist: Are You Ready to Welcome International Travelers?

Welcoming travelers from international markets frequently involves building strong relationships within the travel trade network. Additionally, this negotiated business often requires multi-year planning, the signing of multiple legal documents and contracts and at least a year before you welcome your first visitor. A casual approach to attracting this business can quickly lead to frustration and failure. Check all below that apply to see how ready you are to welcome international business.

Business Operations

- ☐ My tribal tourism business has been in operation for two or more years.
- ☐ My business has an updated business plan.
- ☐ My business can guarantee price and capacity up to 18 months ahead of visitor arrival.
- ☐ My business has sufficient operating capital to cover the 18-month to five-year period before we receive payments from contracted travel trade business.

Legal and Operations

- ☐ My business understands and follows international consumer protection laws.
- ☐ My business has and communicates alternate plans for variations in schedule, such as tribal closures, weather disruptions, global crises, and/or loss of a guide or key cultural work, etc.
- ☐ Our contracts are reviewed by legal counsel with expertise in contracts and our tribal jurisdiction.
- ☐ My tribal tourism business holds required and valid operating licenses, permits and insurance.
- ☐ We understand that the insurance needs of our international trade partners may vary and are able to accommodate their individual requests.

Rates

- ☐ Our general rates and/or admission fees are printed and publicly available.
- ☐ We offer rack rates (generally the advertised rate of a room or package, but the price factors in/allows for discounting by the travel trade).
- ☐ We can accommodate net rates and commission payments in our posted rates.
- ☐ We offer travel agency (net) rates, commissions or fees.

Visitor Infrastructure

- ☐ We have directional signage for visitors to locations and events.
- ☐ We have adequate parking for visitors and access for motor coaches.
- ☐ We have handicap-accessible facilities that meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards (i.e. exhibit aisles wide enough for wheelchair access, grab bars in restrooms, in/out ramps, roll-in showers, etc.).
- ☐ We have restroom facilities available and accessible for use by visitors.
- ☐ Our restroom facilities are regularly attended with assigned staff and schedules.
- ☐ Our business/event has emergency supplies and/or access to medical care.

Travel Trade Marketing & Materials

- ☐ We have a marketing plan for targeted international markets.
- ☐ We work with receptive/inbound operator(s) and international wholesalers.
- ☐ We attend international trade shows.
- ☐ We have the capacity to host group tours (60 or more per tour).
- ☐ We have professional marketing staff and/or consultants to identify key markets and conduct outreach in these markets.
- ☐ The staff is authorized to sign contracts and negotiate rates with industry representatives and receptive/inbound operators.
- ☐ We work with the Department of Commerce, U.S. Commercial Service offices, and/or federal trade representatives in our region.
- ☐ We can accommodate/host familiarization tours to promote our tribal tourism product during peak seasons.
- ☐ We can accommodate/host familiarization tours to promote our tribal tourism product during the off-season.

Multilingual Marketing Materials

- ☐ We offer marketing materials translated for our targeted international markets.
 - ☐ Multilingual brochures and guides.
 - ☐ Multilingual website and social media information.
 - ☐ Multilingual proofreaders and editors to check the above materials.
 - ☐ Multilingual guides and docents.
 - ☐ Multilingual marketing staff to handle outreach to these markets.

Itineraries vs. Packaging

When it comes to building the perfect tourism itinerary, the mechanics are fairly simple. Travelers need something to see and do, somewhere to eat and, if the schedule calls for it, a place to spend the night. For tribes and businesses taking their first steps in visitor outreach, marketing can be as simple as building a tourism website that highlights these activities.

Before any decisions should be made, however, hospitality businesses should understand the difference between creating an itinerary and creating a package.

Building an Itinerary: Crafting an itinerary is as simple as formally outlining a suggested activity list, usually encompassing anywhere from one to five days. This list can limit itself to just activities offered by one business or, when not built into a formal package, it can create suggestions that include nearby communities as well.

Itinerary Planner	
Early Morning Activity: List suggestions of what people can do before breakfast. Light physical activities like a sunrise walk or morning yoga are especially popular with travelers.	
Breakfast: Suggestions of where (and what) to eat. Generally breakfast is in the same location as the previous evening's overnight location, but if there is an area restaurant specializing in breakfast/brunch, include it here. Be sure to include specialties or favorite menu items from the restaurant.	
Morning Activity: For the first day, consider including an introductory area tour to give participants an overview of the destination. Point out the highlights during this tour, even if they aren't included on the main itinerary. This is also an excellent time to include the most physical activities before people become too tired. Tours of museums and cultural centers are also best when attention levels are high. Don't forget to include a mention of famed area art or other notable activities to help drive sales at area businesses.	
Lunch: Lunch can be incorporated into the morning or afternoon activity, like a picnic or meal at a museum or cultural center. Schedule permitting, this is generally lighter than the evening meal, but remember to include a unique area specialty, farm-to-table experience or other distinctive dining opportunity.	
Afternoon Activity: Traveler attention spans may start to wane during the afternoon, so this is a good time for a hands-on activity, like an arts or crafts lesson, visiting a local school for a language lesson, enjoying a treasure hunt or bingo-style activity in a local outdoor area and/or a meeting with a local culture bearer or tribal elder.	
Dinner: This is the time to celebrate your tribe's culinary heritage. A buffet in a local casino can work, but include specialty stations or items that celebrate the talents of your Native culinary team. You can also bring in a visiting chef to share the delicacies of your region or community and the history behind those delicacies.	
Evening Activity: An evening program need not be overly active, but it is a great time for some star gazing or storytelling. Perhaps tribal leaders might share a drum performance or school children can perform a Native dance. Not all visitors will participate in this activity, especially if it is their first night after a long international flight, so plan accordingly.	
Overnight Stay: Where will your guests be staying? Remember to describe the unique and cultural aspects of the property or overnight spot. An overnight stay doesn't always require a hotel. RV parks, campgrounds, ranch stays, airbnb/VRBO properties are all excellent overnight options.	

PACKAGING YOUR DESTINATION

What's the difference between an itinerary and a package?

The difference is nothing more than the saleability of the collective items on an itinerary. Selling a package on a site like Expedia.com to FIT (fully independent travelers), for example, may only include overnight accommodations, breakfast and admission passes to a local museum or attraction. For larger groups or seasonal travelers, it might be possible to “sell” more exclusive experiences such as passes to a powwow or an evening with tribal elders. No matter what can and can't be sold, always give guests suggested ideas of other activities to help drive awareness and sales for area businesses.

When working with the wholesale market, especially with group travel, packages usually need to include many more elements than just hotel stays and meals. This involves much greater planning on the part of the supplier.

For example, how can the services of a culture bearer be included in the package? Are their fees based on an hourly rate or a per-visitor rate? What steps do suppliers need to take to ensure the culture bearer is available when the group is in town, so travelers aren't left disappointed? This type of arrangement may be made easier when working in tandem with a local

museum, who has these services already built in. But when promising a drum performance from tribal elders, be sure you can deliver, and that the package pricing you create includes compensation for this service, even if it doesn't exist as a public offering.

Packaging is not always a viable option for suppliers as it requires considerably more behind-the-scenes work and planning than selling a hotel stay online. Either a tribe or a hotel or a destination marketing organization (DMO) will need to manage and control the inventory to ensure travelers get the right meal tickets, attraction passes and other activities promised, complete with validity dates that match their travel dates.

Suppliers with especially low admission fees may not find value in pursuing this type of relationship unless they can partner with an area hotel or activity. If you're not sure if you're ready to package your program, review AIANATA's readiness worksheet *Are You Ready to Welcome International Travelers* on page 10. Or reach out to AIANATA's Visitor Outreach Department for free guidance and counseling on next steps you should be taking.

Whether or not you're ready for packaging, endeavor to include suggested itineraries on all your outreach materials to continue to build awareness for your area businesses.



Yurok Canoe



Sculpture on south side of the Sky City Cultural Center

Controlling Tourism Through Guided Interpretation

Sharing cultural heritage and building a robust tribal tourism program requires thorough organization and planning. It also requires a lot of hard work to market the destination and the hard work doesn't end once visitors start arriving on tribal lands.

The success of Acoma Sky City in New Mexico is built on a foundation of extensive planning. The Sky City Cultural Center & Haak'u Museum, rich in cultural architecture, serves as the reception center and museum for visitors and is the gateway to the Pueblo of Acoma.

So popular is the destination, Tripadvisor awarded the Sky City Cultural Center & Haak'u Museum with its Travelers' Choice designation, ranking it among the top 10% of attractions worldwide.

Emerson R. Vallo, Pueblo of Acoma Tribal Citizen and AIANTA Board President works diligently to provide economic development opportunities for his Pueblo, and to promote cultural tourism in New Mexico and all of Indian Country. He has served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for Acoma Business Enterprises, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Haak'u Museum and Director for Sky City Cultural Center and Haak'u Museum.

“Acoma Sky City represents beauty, culture, and art. It's been a testament of our people's heritage for more than two thousand years. Proper interpretation and protection is our main goal at Haak'u Museum and Sky City Cultural Center and Museum.”

— Emerson R. Vallo

Vallo emphasizes that Acoma Pueblo, which sits atop a 365-foot mesa, is more than just a visitor destination. As the oldest continuously inhabited settlement in North America and the 28th Historic Site designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Acoma is a part of New Mexico's cultural heritage.

In order to assure the preservation of the site, certain guidelines needed to be established to mitigate the adverse effects of tourism.

“Acoma Sky City represents beauty, culture, and art. It's been a testament of our people's heritage for more than two thousand years. Proper interpretation and protection is our main goal at Haak'u Museum and Sky City Cultural Center and Museum,” said Vallo.

In fact, guided tours at the Pueblo of Acoma are privileges granted by the Acoma Tribal Council, and participation in these tours means adhering to all laws, rules and regulations of the Pueblo. When traveling on Pueblo lands, visitors must stay on the highway— off-road sightseeing, camping and rock climbing are strictly prohibited.

Guests must also register for a guided tour in order to visit the Pueblo. They are instructed to stay with their tour guide at all times and not wander off the designated tour route and they must always stay on the path when descending the mesa top. Additionally, children must always remain controlled, and pets are not allowed on tour. Permits for cameras must be purchased at the Sky City Cultural Center prior to photographing on the Acoma lands.

Further restrictions apply during the Pueblo's popular feast day, during which dancers symbolize a special honor for the occasion. Visitors are asked to stay clear of the dancers and provide them plenty of room. Photography and/or recording of any sort is not authorized.

These restrictions might appear to be overwhelming to visitors at first glance, but most are based on common sense and common etiquette. If they are not clearly defined however, this can lead to confusion and even resentment among visitors seeking a less structured experience.

However, Acoma makes its expectations clear through a variety of mediums, including brochures, an easy-to-read website and distributed materials in advance of the tour. The guidelines are even available in four languages (plus English) to ensure even international travelers are aware of what's expected of them.

Acoma's clear and easy-to-read guidelines can serve as a template for other tribes striving to articulate just what visitors can and can't do while visiting tribal lands.

www.acomaskycity.org/page/guidelines

Guided Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife Tours

The first step in destination marketing is developing something unique for visitors. Sometimes existing resources can be taken for granted. While it's easy to overlook things in one's own backyard, the things that are truly unique can often be the most appealing to travelers.

Guided fishing, hunting and wildlife tours are viable tribal enterprises that are often underutilized in tourism programming. In particular, they provide an opportunity to share tribal stories, cultural beliefs and teach respect for the natural world and tribal lands.

A Native guide definitely provides an insightful experience. Ben Rupert, a descendant of Duck Valley Shoshone Paiute and Washoe, has taken people out to hunt Nevada's high mountain desert, and has hunted in the far northern reaches of Alaska. His attention to spirituality and respectful hunting provides a truly distinctive experience that is highly valued by serious and ethical hunters.

Ben prepares for a hunt in a very traditional way, including fasting, prayers and offerings for honoring the harvest of an animal. When he takes people out on a guided hunt, he teaches them how to listen to Mother Earth and asks for spiritual guidance for a successful hunt. Other spiritual techniques are taught to respect the circle of life. Once an animal is harvested, prayers of respect are given to the spirit of the animal and Mother Earth. The knowledge Ben shares provides for a much greater understanding, respect and connection to the natural world.

Similarly, Alger Swingley, an enrolled Blackfeet tribal citizen, owns and manages Blackfeet Outfitters. He is also a governor-appointed board member of the Montana Tourism Advisory Council, a member of Montana Outfitter and Guides Association and a member of AIANTA. In addition, he's a certified interpretive guide under the National Association for Interpretation (NAI). Alger supports the promotion of sustainable tourism and state-tribal economic development in Montana.

Blackfeet Outfitters is a full-service hunting, fly-fishing, packing, outfitting and eco-tours business. The company provides a unique experience for clients who want to discover unspoiled regions of Montana and gain insight into the Blackfeet people and culture. In addition to the core fly-fishing and hunting services, Blackfeet Outfitters welcomes the opportunity to create tailored experiences. These adventures range from teaching kids to fish, to exploring the vastness of the unspoiled ancestral lands of the Blackfeet Indians.

“ Our mission is to provide an exclusive, knowledgeable, and culturally rich experience through Native first-voice recreational and interpretive guiding while promoting wilderness ethics and protecting Montana's natural resources. ”

— Alger Swingley

Blackfeet Outfitters also offers ecotours as an alternative to guided hunting and fishing. Customers experience an authentic Native cultural experience, while learning about the history and geography of the region.

Alger promotes the essential understanding of the Blackfeet's distinct and unique cultural heritage throughout all his tours. Honoring Native traditional beliefs including preserving the language and spirituality are the guiding principles Alger brings to his business.



Alaska Native Heritage Center Tour Guide

Why Hire Professionally Trained Guides

Ensuring Native guides are professionally trained can make all the difference in the quality of your tour program and the experience guests have at your site. This is especially important for Native destinations to ensure guests (and site owners) know their guides have been trained and educated on what can and can't be shared. Hiring professionally trained tour guides also ensures consistency throughout your program, which is especially important in tours that interpret Native culture and traditions. Having professionally trained tour guides not only provides uniform knowledge among guides, but it also works to help establish your guides as professionals and raise their value with the public.

To address the need for training, Professor Miles Phillips of Oregon Sea Grant & Oregon State University (OSU) Extension worked with professional guides and visitor associations to create the Guide & Outfitter Recognized Professional Program (GORP). This is a free educational service provided by Oregon Sea Grant/ OSU Extension Services faculty that allows industry professionals to work directly with communities and organizations

on topics related to sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation. The program is set up to integrate online knowledge and testing, but Sea Grant also recommends destinations organize in-person, on-the-ground skills training done by local experts. Phillips says that experience along with expert training is needed to be a high-quality guide.

The GORP program is a four-part, self-paced, online training program that covers the basics of how to be a professional guide; provides knowledge on local species of plants, animals and ecology; the tourism industry, shares group management ethics, highlights customer service; and provides training on international standards for best practices. GORP supplements other technical skills training and certification programs.

The four-part program includes a global course, which introduces methods and standards, shaped by the Adventure Travel Trade Association (ATTA), the largest global network of adventure travel leaders who have spent years perfecting adventure travel

guiding. Next is a national course, followed by a state course and then a local course. All four can be completed in approximately 12 hours.

These courses are designed to make students knowledgeable about a destination on each scale (national, state, local), providing knowledge on everything from the state flower to the ecology of the land to the animals and plants that inhabit them. Currently, the program is available internationally and for each state in the US. Locally specific content courses are currently offered in four states; Hawai'i, Wisconsin, Oregon and South Carolina, but OSU's Miles Phillips states that they are excited to work with tribal destinations to help them build a customized course. In fact, their Hawai'i course was developed in partnership with the Native Hawaiian Hospitality Association (NaHHA).

For more information on the Guide & Outfitter Recognized Professional Program, visit www.gorpguide.org/.

WORKING WITH U.S. COMMERCIAL SERVICE

Travel and tourism is America's largest services export, accounting for 32% of U.S. service exports and 11% of all U.S. exports overall (goods and services combined). According to the Department of Commerce, [International Trade Administration](#), this number will continue to grow and tribes are increasingly taking advantage of this opportunity.

Interest among international travelers visiting Indian Country has grown significantly over the last decade and resources that can help market your tribal destinations to overseas travelers are more accessible than you might think.

The U.S. Commercial Service, an agency under the U.S. Department of Commerce, is a global network of experienced trade professionals located throughout the U.S. and in U.S. Embassies and Consulates worldwide. They work to help domestic businesses market their products overseas as well as to promote international visitation to the U.S. Whether businesses are looking to market their destination internationally for the first time or expand to additional markets, the U.S. Commercial Service has the expertise to connect you with international tourism buyers and media to help attract international travelers.

Aron Davidson, Global Teams Leader for Travel & Tourism for U.S. Commercial Service, explains how simple it is to begin working with U.S. Commercial Service to market your destination overseas.

"It is literally as simple as just reaching out to me or my colleagues, in say, Albuquerque, or in the Bay Area, and just saying, 'Hey, this is who we are, can you help us talk this through?' and we take it from there," Davidson says. "Although we are a government agency, we really try to make all of this very simple."

AIANTA partners can also contact a member of the AIANTA team or Aron to help connect you with the right local office.

Once in touch with your [local Commercial Service office](#), there are several ways they can assist in attracting international visitors, including but not limited to:

- **Developing Promotional & Educational Events**

- » U.S. Commercial Service can help plan and manage a high-profile event featuring your destination or service at one of its international facilities, including creating awareness parties at international embassies.

- **Increasing Traffic at Your Trade Show Booth**

- » The event services team members can help with arranging appointments with international buyers, developing press awareness, assisting with booth logistics and translation services.

- **Providing Access to Trade and Consumer Media**

- » Host an event, and U.S. Commercial Service representatives can help by inviting their vetted international media contacts to attend.

- **Creating Awareness Programs with Local Partners**

- » The Commercial Service office in [California's North Bay region](#) has worked closely with AIANTA to develop a series of webinars on how tribes and Native-owned businesses can better generate awareness in global markets. Similarly, other regional offices may also be looking for partnership opportunities.

- **Finding Travel Distribution Partners**

- » U.S. Commercial Service can provide you with a vetted list of up to five qualified overseas contacts.

Most of the services the U.S. Commercial Service offer are free of charge, but they also provide paid services, including some of those referenced above, as well as their Gold Key Service. This service provides appointments for U.S. companies with up to five interested partners in foreign markets. Service includes identification and outreach, a dedicated trade team member who will attend appointments with you and reports with profiles and contact information for interested firms.

For more information visit www.trade.gov/travel-tourism-industry or www.aianta.org/international

Working with Aianta

For Native-owned hospitality businesses and tribal enterprises, Aianta offers a variety of promotional, marketing and education programs, many for no charge. Below are just a few programs that might be of interest.

Annual American Indian Tourism Conference

The American Indian Tourism Conference is the only tourism conference in the U.S. dedicated to Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian tourism.

www.aianta.org/aits

Education, Technical Assistance & Training

Aianta works closely with the hospitality industry to provide educational opportunities to help tribes and Native-owned businesses build authentic cultural tourism experiences.

Cultural Heritage Certificate Programs

Aianta partners with several universities to offer professional certificates in Cultural Heritage Tourism.

www.aianta.org/cultural-heritage-certificate/

Aianta Webinar Series

Aianta produces robust training webinars on a variety of topics, in partnership with tribal and tourism industry experts.

www.aianta.org/webinar-series

Visitor Outreach

Aianta has been connecting tribal tourism destinations and experiences with overseas buyers and media since 2009.

www.aianta.org/international

Go International

For Indian Country destinations and enterprises looking to attract an international audience, Aianta produces the annual Go International training every spring.

www.aianta.org/go-international

Marketing & Public Relations

Aianta provides a strong voice for tribes by sharing Indian Country's unique tourism stories and experiences to media audiences in the U.S. and abroad.

NativeAmerica.travel

NativeAmerica.travel, Aianta's consumer-facing destination website provides ideas and inspiration for visiting Indigenous communities and businesses in the U.S. Federally recognized tribes, state-recognized tribes and Native-owned hospitality businesses can claim a page on the website and contribute their experiences, accommodations, attractions, annual events and destinations.

www.nativeamerica.travel

Aianta Funding Opportunities

A monthly newsletter produced by Aianta features available grant and funding opportunities that may support funding for cultural, heritage, recreation, tourism and related programs.

www.aianta.org/funding-for-cultural-tourism/

What's New in Indian Country Tourism

An Aianta press release featuring any new Native tourism industry developments.

www.aianta.org/whats-new-in-indian-country/

Native American Tours

A regularly updated list of Native-owned tour companies or Native guides who can be hired to lead group tours and share their culture.

www.aianta.org/native-american-tours/

Tribal Relations & Outreach

Need assistance navigating Aianta's resources? The Tribal Relations & Outreach team are available to assist. Start with an email or a Zoom call to learn more about Aianta programming.

info@aianta.org



NativeAmerica.travel connects travelers to indigenous destinations and experiences throughout the country. One of the fastest-growing segments of the travel industry, cultural heritage tourism is booming, resulting in an appetite for authentic, local experiences. Shine the light on your vibrant indigenous heritage, culture, history and agritourism experiences. Sharing your story is as easy as creating a listing.

www.NativeAmerica.travel



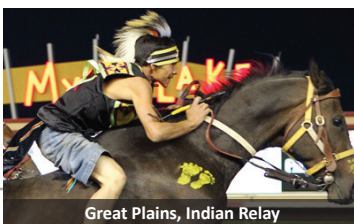
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Alaska Native Heritage Center



Cachini Dancers of Zuni Pueblo



Great Plains, Indian Relay



Southeast Arts and Crafts



Spirit of Aloha

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