

This issue

Book Direct: Online booking is making it easier for travelers to line up lodging in advance (Page 1)



Real-time media: State Fair used the latest in real-time media to promote its events (Page 3)

Stakeholders meeting:

North Dakota Tourism's annual stakeholders meeting will be October 8 at Century Center in Bismarck (Page 1)



Where's Scooter:

He headed east this month to CCC what he could CCC. (Page 4)



In the News: North Dakota was in the news in July (Page 3)

Put it on the ...

Calendar



October 8 - North Dakota Tourism Stakeholders Meeting at Bismarck

Tool makes travel easier

Online booking benefits travelers

In June, North Dakota Tourism began offering online accommodation booking to visitors of NDtourism.com. This effort was possible through a new partnership and service called

BOOK DIRECT
Guiding Travelers Straight To Hotels

jackrabbit 
www.jackrabbitsystems.com

JackRabbit BookDirect. JackRabbit reported through August 5 that 88% of people searching accommodations on NDtourism.com clicked-through from the state site to the actual reservation page of one of the lodgers.

Although the free trial of BookDirect has expired, this service is still available to accommodation providers in North Dakota. Many hoteliers are currently taking advantage of the service.

JackRabbit Systems BookDirect™ Engine works by allowing visitors to enter their travel dates and preview rate and availability information from participating accommodations. Web site visitors may then click a "BookDirect with Hotel" button, which redirects them to the accommodation's own Web site, where they complete their reservation.

Some of the advantages:

- Drives qualified traffic from the host site to the accommodation's reservation page
- Increases bookings and conversions - 3-6 times higher conversions than third-party booking engines and destination Web site hotel directories

- No keeping track of a separate room inventory.
- Costs 33-60% less than third-party booking engines, with better rate integrity - no discounted room rates sold to third party booking engines.
- Charges a flat 12% of the reservation's amount versus 18-30% (or more) via third parties
- NO travel agency commissions or GDS/ADS fees
- Will include an online reservation engine for free to North Dakota Tourism members who sign up for BookDirect and currently do not have their own proprietary or third party reservation system.
- Can work with 100% of lodgers (Free online reservation available to members of the DMO who do not have an online inventory system.)

For more information on BookDirect, or to register your property, contact Jenny Kollander at 952-933-2549 or jenny.kollander@rickertmedia.com.

Stakeholders Meeting October 8

Mark your calendar for the annual Tourism Division Stakeholders Meeting October 8 at Century Center in Bismarck.

The meeting marks the unveiling of the 2010 media plan, cooperative advertising efforts and will feature important information on research from the 2008 visitor profile study and Tourism Satellite Account (economic impact).

Any tourism partner can participate. Information discussed at this meeting can be helpful for CVBs, chambers and businesses planning their own advertising buy and promotional efforts in 2010. RSVP your attendance to Tammy Backhaus at tbackhaus@nd.gov or call 701-328-2526.

North Dakota Tourism produced the "Lewis & Clark Audio Adventure" CD during the Lewis & Clark Bicentennial. We are offering a



special deal to gifts shops or any other entity with an interest in them. The CD normally retails for \$4.95 and wholesales for \$2.50. Our special offer is \$1 each and we will pay shipping. Contact Jessica Fretty at North Dakota Tourism to purchase (800-435-5663 or 701-328-2525 or jfretty@nd.gov)

What the Numbers are Telling Us

This year's Canadian border crossing reports haven't been making anyone jump up and down. Comparing auto crossings from Canadian ports of entry into North Dakota, the year-to-date total is down 24% from 2008. This sad reality made us dig a little deeper into the data to look at five-year averages and exchange-rate information.

In June and July, the U.S. dollar was equal to \$1.12 Canadian. This is comparable to the exchange rate in 2006 and coincidentally, border crossing numbers in 2009 would also be comparable to border crossings in 2006. Likewise, when comparing 2009 crossings to a five-year average (2004-2008), we are holding steady.

In contrast, commercial airline boardings are up 4% over 2008 (through June) and the hotel occupancy rate is up 2.5% (through May). Total inquiries through the Tourism Division are flat with the previous year, which isn't necessarily a bad thing given the state of the worldwide economy over the past year.

New Industry ListServes

You've asked for them – we've listened.

There's a new way to network with your tourism colleagues across the state: ListServes.

Have a question on hotel staffing issues? Want to use colleagues as a focus group on a new brochure? Need to find out if an advertising solicitor is legit? Register for the ListServes of your choice (there are three of them) and you can instantly tap into the network of colleagues.

Register at: <http://web.apps.state.nd.us/itd/listserv/maint.htm?reqid=COM&request=AgencyListServEnterEmail>.

If you have questions, contact Heather LeMoine at hlemoine@nd.gov or Tricia Miller at tamiller@nd.gov.

Tourism Quarterly Report

Area of Travel	2009 Second Quarter	2008 Second Quarter	Percent Change 09-08	2009 Year to Date	Percent Change YTD 09-08
State Park Visitors	311,510	293,684	6%	365,998	4%
National Park Visitors	189,906	160,596	18%	196,397	17%
Web Views (www.ndtourism.com)	612,476	731,111	-16%	1,007,078	-19%
Unique Web Visits	99,671	102,237	-3%	165,788	-2%
Major Attractions	1,028,760	1,043,741	-1%	1,741,307	-6%
Local Visitor Centers	21,016	21,736	-3%	27,020	-4%
Cumulative Lodging Tax	\$985,383.85	\$954,952.20	3%	\$1,819,078.92	5%
Canadian Border Crossings	145,290	201,030	-28%	260,690	-24%
N.D. Airport Passengers	171,466	165,419	4%	343,669	4%
Statewide Hotel Occupancy Rate	April: 65.4% May: 68.6% June 76.9%	April: 65.9% May: 67.0% June: 73.1%	April: -0.8% May: 2.5% June: 5.2%	63.8%	2.5%
Statewide Average Room Rate	April: \$68.65 May: \$69.89 June: \$70.88	April: \$66.47 May: \$65.57 June: \$67.46	April: 3.3% May: 6.6% June: 5.1%	\$68.94	4.0%
Taxable Sales and Purchases	Arts, Entertainment Recreation \$12,414,113 1st Quarter 2009 Food Services, Accommodations \$264,325,562 1st Quarter 2009	Arts, Entertainment Recreation \$12,136,594 1st Quarter 2008 Food Services, Accommodations \$257,376,025 1st Quarter 2008	2% 3%		

State Parks: Cross Ranch, Ft. Ransom, Ft. Stevenson, Grahams Island, Icelandic, Lake Metigoshe, Lake Sakakawea, Lewis & Clark, Turtle River, Ft. Lincoln, Beaver Lake, Indian Hills, Sully Creek and Little Missouri.

National Parks: Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Knife River Indian Villages, Fort Union.

Major Attractions: Alerus Center, Bike the Border, Bismarck Civic Center, Bison Sports Arena, Bonanzaville USA, Bully Pulpit Golf Course, Camp Hancock State Historic Site, Chahinkapa Zoo, Chateau de Mores, Missouri Yellowstone Confluence Center/Fort Buford, Custer House/Indian Villages, Dakota Dinosaur Museum, Fargo Air Museum, Dakota Gasification, Antelope Valley, Coteau, Leland Olds Station, Dakota Territory Air Museum, Edgewood Municipal Golf Course, Rose Creek Golf Course, El Zagal Golf Course, Osgood Golf Course, Prairiewood Municipal Golf Course, Des Lacs NWR, Fargo Civic Center, Fargodome, Fargo Marathon, Former Governor's Mansion, Fort Abercrombie, Fort Clark, Gateway to Science Center, Gingras Trading Post State Historic Site, Heritage Center, Historical and Cultural Society of Clay County, International Peace Garden, L&C Interpretive Center/Fort Mandan, Lawrence Welk Home, Medora Musical, National Buffalo Museum, ND State Capitol, Painted Canyon Overlook, Pembina State Museum, Pioneer Trails Regional Museum, Plains Art Museum, North Dakota State Fair Center, Prairie Fire Pottery, Ralph Engelstad Arena, Red River Valley Bike Ride, Red River Valley Fairgrounds, Red River Zoo, Red Trail Vineyard, Three Affiliated Tribes Museum, Toy Farmer Museum, Trestle Valley Marathon, Whitestone Hill Battlefield State Historic Site, Childrens Museum at Yunker Farm.

Local Visitor Centers: Beach Information Center, Bismarck, Bowman Information Center, Buffalo City Tourism, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo/Moorhead, Grand Forks, McKenzie County, Minot, Rosebud Visitor Center, Rugby, Wahpeton, and Williston.

The statewide hotel occupancy rate is measured by Smith Travel Research. North Dakota Tourism uses Google Analytics to gather visitor data from www.ndtourism.com (ITD, State of North Dakota Information Technology Dept.) has recently selected Google Analytics as its new web analytics tool. Google uses cookies to track users where Webtrends utilized log file, causing the numbers and percentages to change in our reporting method. If you have any questions, or would like to be included in the survey, please contact Tricia Miller, Data Coordinator, North Dakota Tourism, 1-800-435-5663.

Tech Talk

Each month, the Tourism Division Newsletter will feature technology tips or best-practices for utilizing new tools and Web 2.0. Please share your success stories, or your questions and suggestions, via e-mail to hlemoine@nd.gov.



Get your PR online

The North Dakota State Fair had record-breaking attendance this year and while it can't attribute that success to online promotional efforts, it certainly did take advantage of real-time media.

"It helped us get our message out a lot more efficiently and quickly," says Shannon Pearson, marketing director for the ND State Fair.

The State Fair maintained active presence on Facebook, MySpace, Twitter and Blogger, and also used YouTube videos to promote. Most of the effort was in promotional "status updates" and "tweets" about upcoming concerts, events, activities and more. There were also contests, and the State Fair took advantage of free RSS feeds through the ND Tourism Web site.

The State Fair is one of a handful of North Dakota entities pushing more public relations online. In fact, research is showing that more media organizations are using "tweets" and online or e-mailed press releases as their preferred means of receiving communication.

North Dakota tourism organizations can take advantage of the free RSS feed option through the Tourism Division. All you have to do is sign up for partner access and post your press releases to the NDtourism.com site. This automatically blasts the release to subscribers and filters to the tourism blog at <http://legendarynd.wordpress.com>.

There also are businesses that make a job of sending out press releases. One service is called PR Web. <http://www.prwebdirect.com/> You still have to write your press release, but after you open an account you can post your release online and selectively target the state and types of people/journalists that might like to read what you have to offer. Cost is between \$80 and \$360 per release, however.

Utilizing the Internet and online technology to grow business is essential in today's world. Online PR is one more way to spread the word.

In the News

(Go to the links below each item for a complete news release)



North Dakota Tourism in the news in July

July 1: Kick off July by celebrating the nation's 236th birthday at the many events across North Dakota. Don the old red, white and blue, and kick up your heels at the many rodeos, parades and fairs. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=313>

July 2: When's the last time you went to a museum, a rodeo or an outdoor summer theater performance? Or, have you yet checked out North Dakota's newest historic site, dating back to the Cold War? North Dakota is bursting at the seams with adventure, music, sports and history this summer. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=314>

July 14: Deanne Felchle, North Dakota Tourism's Group Travel marketing director, recently attended the Travel Alliance Partners LLC conference in Rapid City, SD. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=315>

July 15: The Fourth of July has come and gone, but that doesn't mean the end of celebrations in North Dakota. The state's varied culture lends itself to exciting summer festivals, heralding everything from Icelandic and Ukrainian heritage to horses to fish. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=316>

July 29: There's still plenty of time and lots of things to do before you ship the kids back to school. Join in as Casselton tries to set a record for the most fire trucks in a parade. Or hoof it to Sentinel Butte where some of the best pro rodeo bronc riders go head-to-head with some of the best rodeo stock at the Champions Ride. Don't let summer get away without one last wild ride. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=318>

July 30: Don't send the kids back to school without exercising their learning muscles at one or more of the "education vacations" offered in North Dakota. Play in the dirt, step back in time or even lend a hand in the kitchen. <http://www.ndtourism.com/smartmail/news-releases/detail.asp?newsID=319>

States tax travelers to balance budgets

According to USA Today, some states are using traveler taxes as a means for new revenue.

Hotel taxes, car rental fees and other charges are being applied in an effort to balance budgets. Some of the most popular visitor destinations are hitting hardest:

- Hawaii. The hotel room tax increased from 7.25% to 8.25% and will rise to 9.25% in July 2010.
- Nevada. The room tax will increase 3%, to a maximum of 12%. In Las Vegas, the hotel tax jumps from 9% to 12%.
- New Hampshire. The tax on rooms and restaurant meals rose from 8% to 9% and was extended to include recreational vehicles at campgrounds.
- Massachusetts. Cities were given authority to raise the hotel tax from 4% to 6%, in addition to the state tax of 5.7%. Taxes on eating out will rise from 5% to 6.25% statewide, plus another 0.75% if cities choose.
- New York City. The city, which raised its hotel tax March 1 to 14.25%, not counting other fees, will start charging more for Internet reservations.

Read the complete article at http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/taxes/2009-07-05-traveltax_N.htm

What they're saying

North Dakota's vibrant economy continues to earn national publicity.

The Wall Street Journal shadowed the Commerce Department last week, and joined TIME.com, FOX News and Forbes as some of the latest publications reporting on North Dakota. See archived news at <http://www.experience.nd.gov/communications/latestnews/>

Where Am I?



Amy Krueger of Williston knew that man in the grass was me and I was at the North Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in July. This month, I went east to see what I could CCC. Where am I? Send your answers to jpursley@nd.gov by August 25. In the event of a tie, a drawing will be held to determine who receives the North Dakota item.

Rest area caretakers get look at Medora

On June 16-17, the Theodore Roosevelt Medora Foundation treated the state's rest area caretakers to a day in Medora. Tammy Backhaus of North Dakota Tourism accompanied the group on a tour of its distribution facility at Presort



Plus in Bismarck, explaining how inventory works and showing them how the brochures

are stored at the warehouse. Then it was off to Medora for a day of shopping, a golf cart tour around Bully Pulpit Golf Course, the pitchfork fondue and the Medora Musical. After an evening at the Bunkhouse and breakfast at the Chuckwagon, it was

off to Bismarck with a short detour up the Enchanted Highway.