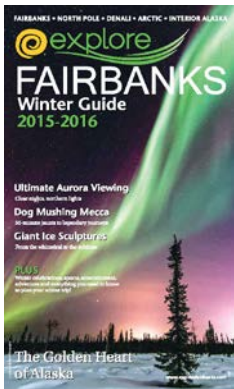


DATELINE: May 11, 2015



2016 hotel/motel tax collections off to great start after a record-breaking year in 2015 The hotel/motel tax collections increased to a record high in 2015 with total collections (combined total of the Fairbanks North Star Borough including the separate reports from the cities of Fairbanks and North Pole) of \$4.76 million, more than a 5% increase over 2014. Furthermore, this 2015 total is almost 2% over the previous high in 2012 of \$4.67 million in collections. January and February started 2016 with more than a 10% increase in collections over the same two months in 2015. Anecdotally, March was the best ever so Explore Fairbanks looks forward to seeing those figures soon. Note: the FNSB (excluding the cities) monthly reports use the accrual method, therefore, collection figures are not necessarily reflective of actual collections in the quarter.



Visitor Industry Walk for Charity is Friday, May 13th

Volunteers are still welcome. Sign up on-line here <https://www.volunteespot.com/login/entry/256795422024> or call 459-3758.



Explore Fairbanks hosts a record number of domestic international tours operators in the first quarter of 2016 The higher numbers of visiting tour operators are directly attributable to Visit Anchorage and the State of Alaska tourism hosting the GoWest Summit in Anchorage in February. Seven hundred tour operators from 32 countries convened in Anchorage for this meeting held annually in a western U.S. state. Explore Fairbanks attended the GoWest Summit where staff had more 92 appointments with international and domestic tour operators. Explore Fairbanks hosted a total of 55 tour operators, travel agents and media during seven pre- and post-Summit familiarization tours in the Fairbanks region. Participants hailed from the UK, China, South Korea, Costa Rica, Malaysia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Denmark, India, Canada, Switzerland and Italy as well as the U.S. In addition to the GoWest activity, Explore Fairbanks welcomed: Saturn Air with six participants from various travel companies in South Korea; State of Alaska-sponsored Delta Japan Winter with six travel agents and tour operators from Osaka and Tokyo participating along with one representative from the State of Alaska Office in Tokyo; Alaska Skylar Travel with 13 tour operators from American International Travel Services in China; Alaska Skylar Travel for the Spunk Tours with 17 travel agents from Taiwan; and two travel agents from LA-based DDC Holidays, specializing in the inbound China market.

Performance Metrics At-A-Glance for the 1st Quarter 2016 (January through March)

Facebook "Likes"	123,294 "Likes," up 79% from 2015
Inquiries	17,315 inquiries, up 28% from the same period in 2015
www.explorefairbanks.com website	87,278 unique visitors, about the same from the same period in 2015
Morris Thompson Cultural and Visitors Center	20,875 visitors, up 10% from the same period in 2015

Travel media is besotted with winter in region From January through March, Explore Fairbanks welcomed a steady stream of travel media with some overlapping visits, including but not limited to: two Australian bloggers who wrote for Expedia Australia; a photographer and a writer from Conde Nast Traveler, who were also partnering with Land's End; in conjunction with the State of Alaska tourism office, Joe Baur from the website Matador.com; a writer and photographer from Skyward Magazine, the inflight magazine for Japan Airlines for an article planned in the January 2017 issue; Jeff Greif and Thom Meintel from the upscale travel website TravelSquire.com; Eric Lucas from Alaska Airlines Magazine who returned to Fairbanks to experience some new activities; and Beth Hey with AAA Home & Away, combined circulation of 1.2 million print and 60,000 web.

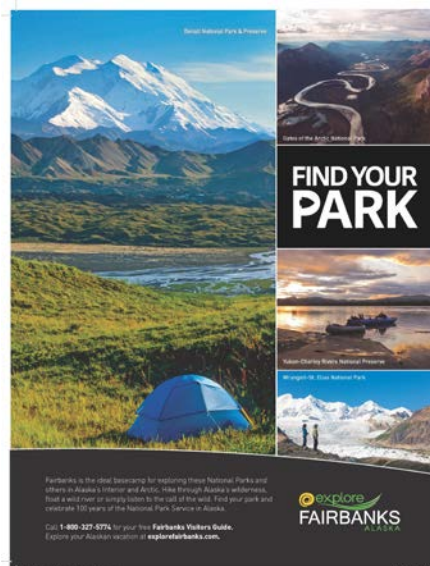


Explore Fairbanks Director of Tourism Scott McCrea was appointed to the NTA Education Advisory Group

Tourism Department takes the Fairbanks region on the road to travel marketplaces

Explore Fairbanks' German-based contractor attended the Visit USA Seminar Austria as well as the Mid-Atlantic Tradeshow in Reykjavik, Iceland, where she conducted 18 business meetings with tour operators from Northern Europe and North America that use Iceland Air. She also participated in the ITB Tradeshow in Berlin, meeting with 42 operators, eight media and one airline; and the Discover America Denmark sales mission to meet with 20 tour operators and six media. Staff attended the American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace in Louisville where they conducted 23 business-to-business meetings with tour operators, as well as hosting the breakfast program with the State of Alaska. ABA announced that Fairbanks is host to two of the Top 100 Events in North America for 2016. Nominated by Explore Fairbanks, ABA announced that the World Eskimo-Indian Olympics and Midnight Sun Festival offer excellent entertainment value to both tour groups and individual travelers from around the world. Only two events per state are selected. Staff also attended the National Tour Association

(NTA) Travel Exchange in Atlanta where they had 40 appointments with tour operators and travel agents. Explore Fairbanks, along with partners Northern Alaska Tour Company and 1st Alaska Outdoor School, participated in the Active America China Tradeshow in Fort Worth where they engaged with 24 tour operators and travel agents from mainland China.



Explore Fairbanks celebrates 100th Anniversary of NPS 2016 is an extraordinary year for those with a passion for the outdoors with the National Park Service celebrating 100 years. Knowing that Fairbanks is an ideal basecamp for park excursions, Explore Fairbanks featured "Find A Park" sections in the "2017 Fairbanks Official Visitors Guide" and in two ads placed in magazines. Copy points featured Denali National Park and other National Parks in the Interior and Arctic regions.

Explore Fairbanks coordinates the popular 9th Annual Interior Tourism Conference on January 27th which was attended by about 100 industry professionals and community members at the Westmark Fairbanks Hotel and Conference Center. Attendees heard presentations on topical subjects related to the visitor industry, including the state of cruise industry, how to manage your presence on TripAdvisor, China as an emerging market, marijuana, customer service skills, and more. The keynote speaker was Meg DePaoli on "Breakout Branding: How to Move Beyond Just Marketing" and "Mastering the Social Media Experience."



Golden Heart Gala on February 17th honors Golden Heart Greeters and Meeting Ambassadors In 2015, the Greeter volunteers collectively donated 217 hours of volunteer service at various community events. The 2015 Golden Heart Greeter Volunteer of the Year was awarded to Jutta Pence who also won the award in 2012. The 217 meetings brought to the Fairbanks community by Explore Fairbanks and their partners had a combined estimated direct attendee spending of more than \$6.84 million. In 2015, the 27 meetings that came to Fairbanks because of the efforts of Golden Heart Meeting Ambassadors contributed more than \$2.3 million in estimated direct attendee spending to the area. The 2015 Golden Heart Meeting Ambassadors of the Year was awarded to the Harley Owners Group Alaska State HOG Rally and the 2015 Golden Heart Sports Ambassadors of the Year award was presented to ASAA State Softball Championship.

Spotlight on Convention Centers

San Antonio expands the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center According to the “Rivard Report,” the center opened in January 2016: “...with all the pomp amid circumstance you might expect when celebrating the completion of a \$325 million project more than seven years in the making. Elected officials and community leaders gathered for brief remarks, a champagne toast, a tour through the biggest ballroom in Texas, and the dramatic curtain drop that revealed a large, shimmering sculpture in the cavernous lobby atrium. ‘We are proud to unveil the City’s single largest capital project to date, which was accomplished on time and on budget,’ said City Manager Sheryl Sculley.” <http://therivardreport.com/san-antonios-convention-center-unveiled-to-an-eager-market/> The article continued that the convention and visitors bureau for the City of San Antonio (population: 1.4 million) has been booking conventions, both large and small, for the expanded Convention Center for more than a year in advance of the official unveiling on Tuesday. The project, funded by the Hotel



Occupancy Tax, included technology and interior upgrades to large portions of the existing structure, all while continuing to host events during the 26-month construction process. It has secured 34 new group bookings which translates to at least 570,000 booked hotel nights. According to Roger Dow, president and CEO of the United States Travel Association, “The transformation of the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center is not just good news for the hundreds of thousands of people who will attend meetings and events there — it’s good news for the livelihoods of every citizen of San Antonio, because of the sheer economic benefits of bringing meetings and visitors to this great city.” <http://therivardreport.com/commentary-refurbished-convention-center-will-be-a-big-local-boon/>