

Tahoe learning to attract international traveler

By Kathryn Reed

Catering to the international tourist means understanding their culture in order to show respect and to ensure they are not unintentionally insulted; it means being able to communicate with them via translation apps on phones or having an employee who speaks the language or material printed in their language; it means going a step beyond the day-to-day routines.

This was the message delivered April 18 by Daniel Crain, vice president of education and training at BRIC Marketing, a San Francisco-based strategy consulting firm.

Crain was the keynote speaker at Tuesday's annual tourism breakfast put on by the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce at Lake Tahoe Resort Hotel. Also speaking was Kristine Tsusaki-Reddick, Visit California's director of client relations for Northern California.



Lake Tahoe is a big draw for foreign travelers.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

Germany, Canada, United Kingdom and China represent the top countries where people are coming from to visit South Lake Tahoe.

California set a record in 2016 with 268 million visitors, a 2 percent increase from 2015. The forecast is for 287 million visitors in 2020 and to top 300 million in 2022. The economic impact was \$125.7 billion in 2016, a 2.8 percent increase from the prior year.

Forty-two percent of Visit California's budget focuses on the international traveler, with 13 countries being the main emphasis. This traveler stays longer and spends more.

Crain spent most of his time focused on China and its 1.4 billion inhabitants. And while only 7 percent of the population has a passport, more get them every day.

"The No. 1 complaint of the Chinese traveler is Wifi because

in China it's everywhere," Crain said. Being connected is important to them. They are constantly taking selfies and sending photos home – electronically.

One thing Tahoe can market is its air – the quality of it, Crain said. This is something Oregon has started to do. Most parts of China are socked in day-after-day with smog. Fresh air is a reason to visit someplace.

Chinese are also big shoppers because goods are 30 to 40 percent less expensive here. They are interested in clothing, footwear, fragrances and electronics. Their favorite places to shop – outlet malls, boutique stores, Costco, Apple, and tax free shopping.

"The visitor expects to be treated with respect and politeness," Crain said. Chinese are prideful people who don't interact in the same bullish, confrontational way Americans do.



With so much of China awash in bad air, touting Tahoe's clean air could be a selling point. Photo/Kathryn Reed

Having the ability to heat water and have tea in a room should

be standard for Chinese guests.

Knowing that the number 8 is a sign of luck and number 4 is dreaded in Chinese culture can help with which floor to place them on in a hotel and how to price goods. Paying attention to red meaning happiness and good luck, gold a symbol of prosperity and luxury, and black and white funeral colors are ways to further cater to this clientele.

Crain mentioned how few Chinese travel with cash. They like to use WeChat to pay via their smart phones. It's an application almost no one in the room had heard of. It's a way Crain said his company functions globally.

It was noted with Beijing hosting the 2022 Winter Olympics the Chinese government has launched an outdoor initiative to get people involved in outdoor sports and trained. That would seem to be a natural draw for Tahoe – right along with the pristine mountain air.

Opinion: More sleight of hand with gas tax hikes

By Jon Coupal, Orange County Register

If Gov. Jerry Brown and members of the California Legislature think that the backlash against the car and gas tax increases will subside any time soon, they are mistaken. The controversy continues to dominate both traditional and social media and, in fact, the more that taxpayers learn about these transportation tax hikes the angrier they get.

Our political elites are learning that taxes on cars and

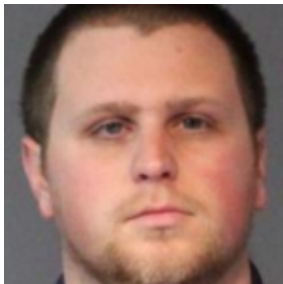
gasoline remain very unpopular because they fall disproportionately on the working Californians – which is where the majority of voters reside.

And the resentment might only grow when the taxes actually kick. Just wait until the bills from the DMV start showing up in the mail starting in January of next year and the gas tax increase starts even earlier in November of this year.

Read the whole story

No bail for ex-ski instructor in child porn case

By Scott Sonner, AP



**Stephan L.
DeGraffenreid**

A U.S. magistrate on Tuesday ordered a former Heavenly Mountain Resort children's ski instructor held without bail indefinitely pending his federal trial on child pornography charges.

Judge William Cobb refused to set any bail conditions during a hearing in federal court in Reno for the 26-year-old Gardnerville man accused of photographing children as young as

3 in a bathroom at a rural daycare center his mother manages inside a church.

Cobb said he feared Stephan DeGraffenreid might try to flee in the face of a potential life prison sentence, or more. But the judge said he was even more concerned about the potential danger he might pose to the public, especially children.

Read the whole story

Legal marijuana ends at airport security

By Julie Weed, New York Times

People in 29 states can legally use medical marijuana for a variety of problems, including the relief of pain, anxiety or stress. But what if they want to travel with it?

Secure airport areas beyond the Transportation Security Administration checkpoints are under federal control, and the federal government classifies marijuana as a Schedule 1 (most harmful) substance, even in states where it is legal for adults to consume it.

The laws conflict, but federal law trumps state law, making it illegal to fly with marijuana in carry-on or checked luggage. It is also illegal to transport marijuana across state lines, even if both states have legalized it.

Still, some passengers, especially on domestic flights, take the risk, because searching for marijuana is not on the T.S.A.'s to-do list.

Read the whole story

Tourism binds Tahoe and Cuba



Rafael Betancourt and Julie
Regan

By Julie Regan

International collaboration was alive and well recently at the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency where Cuban tourism expert Rafael Betancourt spoke to South Shore locals.

Betancourt's lecture, titled "The Cuba tourism engine revs up," included a discussion of Cuba's new wave of American tourists and the steps the Caribbean island nation is taking to accommodate what's projected to be steady growth in the coming years.

TPRA hosted the presentation in partnership with the Lake Tahoe Visitors Authority.

What Cuba and Lake Tahoe have in common is the need to grow our tourist-based economies while not loving the place the death.

Sustainable tourism is a matter of global concern. The United Nations declared 2017 as the year of sustainable tourism and published data that show that approximately 1.2 billion people travel internationally every year. That number has nearly doubled in the last 15 years.

Betancourt shared recent figures on Cuba's tourism, which is essential to growing the country's struggling economy. There has been an "explosion" in cruise ship visits to Cuba in the past three years, with four U.S.-based cruise ship companies bringing tours to the island. He said new procedures are being instituted by the Cuban government to manage this new form of tourism to the island.

Betancourt explained how environmental protection is included in Cuba's constitution and the government has established numerous national parks and marine protected areas. Cuba's biodiversity is known throughout the world and the island nation is often called the Galapagos of the Caribbean. While nature-based tourism is being advanced by Cuban officials, the need for economic development is urgent, Betancourt said.

Julie Regan is TRPA's external affairs chief. Regan met Betancourt in Havana on a trip as part of her doctorate research.

Plane missing after taking

off from Truckee

By KRXI-TV

Civil Air Patrol crews are helping with the search for an aircraft reported missing after it took off from Truckee on Monday, according to a CAP spokesperson.

Lt. Col. Crystal Housman, mission information officer for California Civil Air Patrol, said a Socata TB-20 Trinidad left the Truckee-Tahoe Airport just before 4pm April 17.

Two people were on board, and family members reported the plane was overdue when it did not arrive as scheduled at Petaluma Municipal Airport in Sonoma County.

Read the whole story

SLT council votes for 100% renewable energy

By Patricia Sussman

South Lake Tahoe on Tuesday became the 26th city in the United States and the first city in the Sierra Nevada to commit to transition to 100 percent renewable electricity, citywide.

The City Council unanimously passed the resolution to achieve 100 percent renewable energy by 2032 in chambers overflowing with community supporters sporting 100 percent renewable stickers.



“I have attended many City Council meetings and I have never seen such unified support for an agenda item,” said Rebecca Bryson, representing the local Small World Parent

Network. “This really demonstrates the importance of taking positive local action in an uncertain national political climate.”

Nick Exline, senior land use planner and chair of the South Lake Tahoe Climate Action Network, was among those who headed the coalition that brought the resolution before the council. Exline applauded the council for its leadership, and emphasized the marketing and branding potential associated with being among the first 30 cities in the United States to make such a commitment. He also noted its alignment with the city’s recently adopted vision statement: “We will reflect the national treasure in which we live.”

Support for the resolution was broad and included local residents associated with a variety of businesses and organizations. Among them, Joann Conner spoke on behalf of the South Tahoe Chamber of Commerce stating the chamber board voted unanimously to support the resolution.

Steve Teshara, representative of the Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce was, also present to express support of measure.

Arleen June Gordon spoke April 18 on behalf of the Senior Center and on the importance of this initiative to all generations.

Prior to the vote, the council was provided with a petition signed by nearly 1,000 individuals. The 100 percent South Lake Tahoe Coalition also organized letters of support from many local businesses and organizations.



Renewable energy proponents on April 18 surround the South Lake Tahoe City Council after the five unanimously approved the energy initiative. Photo/Provided

John Friedrich, recent participant in Tahoe's "Dancing with the Stars", wore his bright red stage jacket to the podium. In a speech reflective of the good humor of most presenters, Friedrich said, "I've never been more proud of or more excited about my hometown. I'm wearing this jacket today because I'm in the company of so many stars – here in the audience – and among council."

Executive director of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Jenny Hatch, spoke of the Alliance's plan to promote South Lake Tahoe's leadership on transitioning to renewable energy to other communities throughout the Sierra, hopeful of inspiring a regionwide trend. "If local communities are interested in joining this growing movement, we welcome them to contact us," she said.

Council members were appreciative that the initiative originated from within the community and of the community's commitment to stay engaged to make the goal a reality. Councilmember Tom Davis suggested that Coalition members more widely distribute the eye-catching 100 percent campaign stickers around town so that businesses can put them in their windows and people on their cars.

The Coalition that came together to create the 100 percent South Lake Tahoe campaign included multiple community

residents as well as active engagement of the Sierra Nevada Alliance, Climate Reality Project's I AM PRO SNOW, Tahoe Climate Change Action Network, the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Mountain Pact, Small World, and Climate Parents.

Patricia Sussman is a local resident and 100% South Lake Tahoe campaign coalition member.

Donors allow Truckee-Tahoe animal group to expand services

Adopting out the healthiest pets possible is of the utmost importance to the Humane Society of Truckee-Tahoe.

By providing a strong level of care and preventative medications/vaccinations to the pets released back into the community, HSTT also helps maintain the health and well being of other pets in the community.

Partners like the Lahontan Community Foundation Fund at Parasol Tahoe Community Foundation and community donors help HSTT meet its health goals.

It's HSTT's goal to facilitate and perform vaccinations, disease testing, medical treatment and safe sterilization surgeries on every pet that is stray, abandoned or relinquished within the community.

HSTT has expanded its community spay/neuter program by providing more low-cost surgeries to qualified limited-income, full-time residents of Truckee, Sierra County, eastern Placer

County and eastern Nevada County. They are also now offering free monthly surgery clinics for the community's pit bulls and Chihuahuas, and for pets owned by active and retired US military, with the help of area vets on World Spay Day.

Snippets about Lake Tahoe

- The Drug Free Coalition will be hosting a drug take back day at the Earth Day celebration on April 29 from 10am-3pm at Bijou Community Park in South Lake Tahoe.
- On May 6 at 10am Peter Mires will present Mark Twain on Architecture. He will share all he learned during his research fellowship at the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies. By pairing passages gleaned from Twain's work with examples of extant buildings, Mires illustrates Twain's comments, opinions, and tastes—humorous or otherwise—on the subject of American architecture. The free presentation will be at the South Lake Tahoe Library on Rufus Allen Boulevard.
- Comments are being sought until May 17 on the El Dorado County Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Division's fiscal year 2017-18 Mental Health Services Act. The draft plan is **online**.
- Lake Valley Fire Protection District on April 15 had an awards ceremony for employees and civilians. Recognized were: firefighter of the year – Ted Jackson; civilian award of merit – Jacob Zorn; civilian award of merit – Ian Whitmarsh; life saver award – Alex Vaughn, Wes Long, Mike Anderson, Luke Anderson and Joe McAvoy; medal of valor – Brad Zlendick.
- Each Wednesday in May from 5:30-7pm the master gardeners at the Truckee Demonstration Garden will provide a

history lesson on each plant, planting instructions, and attendees will receive free cultivars to take home. The cost to attend is based on a self-selecting sliding scale from \$10 to \$20. Tickets will be available **online** beginning two weeks prior to the event.

Gauging the Trump effect on land in the West

By Daniel Rothberg, Las Vegas Sun

On a brisk day in late February, we pulled off a one-way, unpaved loop and watched cattle dogs guide five cows across a flat basin. Weeks of heavy winter storms meant the Southern Nevada desert's iconic drive-by shrubbery appeared greener and fuller.

Two months after then-President Barack Obama designated this 300,000-acre expanse the Gold Butte National Monument, little else had changed. The cattle remained controversial. The Bureau of Land Management continued saying it had no immediate plans to round them up. In nearby Mesquite, the designation continued to inflame the question: Where does the federal government's power begin and end?

A BLM official explained that while the agency still had a court order to remove livestock grazing illegally on public land, it would wait for word from Washington, D.C.. The Trump administration was in charge.

President Trump promises to take a hard turn away from Obama's environmental policies, from the management of public lands to the direction of the energy industry. But what the Trump

administration means for the 11 contiguous Western states, in practical terms, is unclear.

Read the whole story