Chinese visitors eager to buy Calif. products

By Karen E. Klein, Bloomberg

California's tourism businesses are cashing in on growth across the Pacific: China became the state's No. 1 overseas visitor market last year, overtaking the U.K. In 2012 an estimated 677,000 Chinese tourists spent almost $2 billion in California, a 31 percent increase over 2011.

The numbers are on track to grow by double digits again this year, according to hospitality industry group Visit California.

Almost half of all Chinese visitors to the U.S. go to California, the group says. While large hotels, brand-name retailers, and theme parks such as Disneyland and Universal Studios attract the cross-Pacific visitors, an increasing number of small, largely immigrant-owned businesses are also vying to sell tours, meals, and merchandise to Chinese tourists.

Take Therese Liu, a Taiwanese native who arrived in the U.S. as a student in 1993. After working in marketing and as a hospital interpreter, she started a shopping tour business in 2010 that uses the tag line "Dim Sum and Then Some."

Liu is often called on to speak to retailers eager to capture the new tourists, who spend on average $6,000 each while in the state. She tells them to stock iconic American-made brands, particularly watches, gold jewelry, health supplements, and red wine – along with suitcases to carry the purchases home.

Read the whole story

El Dorado County electeds to receive pay raise

It pays well to be an El Dorado County elected official and in 2015 it’s going to be even more profitable.

The Board of Supervisors on Nov. 18 agreed to revise the salaries of seven elected officials. The changes are effective with the terms beginning January 2015 or thereafter.

These will be new salaries:

Position	Total salary
District Attorney	$184,431
Sheriff	$177,975
Auditor-Controller	$148,693
Treasurer/Tax Collector	$145,540
Assessor	$144,007
Recorder-Clerk	$135,575
Surveyor	$118,238

This pay chart lists current base salaries, future amount, actual compensation and comparison to other counties.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Black Friday not always the cheapest shopping day

By Tiffany Hsu, Los Angeles Times

As the hardiest of shoppers prepare for the annual Black Friday consumption frenzy, many are convinced it's their one shot at a great deal.

But "that's not even close to the truth," said Matthew Ong, senior retail analyst at online personal finance company NerdWallet Inc.

Bargain hunters can – and, in some cases, should – avoid the Black Friday weekend crush, several experts said.

Many characterize the shopping bonanza as an expertly marketed ploy to capitalize on shoppers' fear of missing out. By dangling a small batch of irresistible savings, stores land hordes of hopeful shoppers all scheming to score the retail version of Willy Wonka's golden ticket.

Yet only a tiny percentage of customers end up with the most desirable deals. The rest, unwilling to leave empty-handed, walk away with lesser bargains arranged appealingly nearby.

Read the whole story

Out-of-control fire puts

Nutting under spotlight

By CBS-13

SOMERSET -– There is more potential trouble for an El Dorado County supervisor who’s already facing several felony charges. Fire investigators are now looking into how the fire started last week on Ray Nutting’s property and burned out of control.

The blaze broke out Friday afternoon on land owned by Nutting, which is near Somerset. CalFire says extreme winds, with gusts up to 60 mph, helped spread the flames approximately 5 acres. And it took them four hours to get it under control.

In March, Nutting gave us a tour of his timber ranch and showed us how he used thousands of dollars in taxpayer money to reduce the threat of fires by burning off debris.

“The more we do this in the forest, the less catastrophic fires we have,” said Nutting.

But that kind of work is the suspected cause of the Nov. 22 fire. Nutting tells CBS13 he burned off several debris piles during a rainstorm early last week and blames Friday’s strong winds for re-igniting them.

El Dorado County DA Investigator Dave Stevenson says that’s no excuse.

Read the whole story

Tips for shopping safely online

The dramatic increase in online shopping for the holidays has led to the creation of Cyber Monday on the Monday following Thanksgiving.

While cyber shoppers are hoping to find some great deals on Cyber Monday, this is also an important time for shoppers to increase their awareness of the risks associated with shopping online.

Washoe County Sheriff’s Office offers the following safety tips for cyber shoppers:

- Read your credit card statements as soon as you get them to make sure there are no unauthorized charges. If there is a discrepancy, report it immediately.
- Always type a website address yourself or access it through trusted search engines.
- Never click on an email link, taking you to a purchase site. The link may take you to a fraudulent site.
- Don’t allow online sites to maintain your credit card information. Although it’s convenient, this is risky.
- When having items shipped to your residence, make sure they are taken inside timely, preventing thieves from taking them or realizing nobody is home and potentially leaving yourself exposed to a burglary.
- Always use a credit card instead of debit or check. Credit cards have an additional level of consumer protection in the event of a fraudulent purchase or disputed transactions.

STR clamps down on types of garbage cans

By Kathryn Reed

Garbage removal on the South Shore isn't like a lot of other places. Depending on the customer this is a good or bad thing.

This fall South Tahoe Refuse sent postcards to people saying, "Do not purchase totes." These are the receptacles that have handles that attach to a garbage truck and are then mechanically lifted and emptied.

STR doesn't have these types of trucks. Instead, human power is used to lift the can into the truck.



A South Tahoe Refuse customer is miffed about the company's policy on tote cans and even more perturbed his can is knocked over after being emptied. Photo/Provided

"They are high strength molded plastic designed specifically to be used with hydraulic systems," John Marchini with South

Tahoe Refuse told *Lake Tahoe News* of the totes. “Our biggest concern is that we do not want to subject our coworkers to lift these totes.”

The totes are usually larger because jurisdictions that allow them don’t have workers lifting them, plus customers are often limited to one can, though usually there are separate recycling and yard waste cans.

“Lifting sometimes heavy trash containers is a job description, not a basis for a campaign to downgrade the town’s trash containers,” one customer told *Lake Tahoe News*.

“What sticks in my craw is that this thing is a monopoly, that trash pick up is mandatory and that I’d like to see the town cleaned up and standardized trash containers with attached lids would go a long way. So it is especially annoying when I do more than my part and buy a nice wheeled container, like every other civilized town, and they actually try to forbid me from doing something so simple,” a 24-year resident told *Lake Tahoe News*. He is feeling put upon by STR, his tote trash can knocked over after it’s emptied and denied blue recycling bags, so he doesn’t want his name used for fear of serious retribution.

STR says it has come up with a compromise for people who want to use the tote cans. If garbage is in bags that can be lifted out and thrown into the truck, the garbagemen will service that container.

Totes, though, are not the typical 32- or 45-gallon can. Like other cans, some are designed to be animal resistant.

In general, cans should not be more than 50 pounds, and bags no more than 30 pounds.

The South Lake Tahoe-base company has no intention of changing its vehicles to accommodate the totes that are so widely used every place else. One reason is more jurisdictions are

requiring bear boxes. Totes don’t fit in bear boxes.

El Dorado County requires anyone building a new home or doing a remodel to put in a bear box.

If STR were to go to hydraulic trucks that could lift totes, the bear box issue would require some sort of hybrid system. And company officials say one day that is possible.

The thinking behind sending the postcard was also to let commercial customers know totes are not acceptable.

Opinion: California needs to pay attention to structural deficit

By Dan Walters, Sacramento Bee

When Jerry Brown departed from his first governorship in 1983, he left behind what later became known as a “structural deficit” in the state budget.

It’s a deficit that results from spending commitments that outstrip revenues even when the underlying economy is doing well, rather than one caused by recession.



Dan Walters

Brown’s structural deficit stemmed from two actions in the immediate aftermath of the 1978 voter approval of Proposition 13, the state’s iconic property tax limit.

Brown, then seeking a second term, famously morphed overnight from a Proposition 13 foe to a self-proclaimed “born-again tax cutter.” He and legislators cut state income taxes to align themselves with the mood of voters as they enacted a multibillion-dollar “bailout” of schools and local governments to cushion Proposition 13’s tax cut.

Raising spending while lowering taxes threw the budget into an immediate operational deficit, which was financed from reserves until they ran out as Brown ended his second term.

Read the whole story

Alpinist to give talk in Tahoe City

Alpenglow Sports second installment of the 2013-14 Winter Film Series involves world-famous alpinist Freddie Wilkinson.

Wilkinson is an adventure writer known for his original and substantive style. On Dec. 5 he will share his tale “Mountain/Story,” which focuses on the 2008 K2 tragedy. The New England native’s in-depth reporting on the issue changed the public perception of the tragedy by telling the story through the eyes of the climbing Sherpas.

Wilkinson will share tales from the tea houses of Khumbu

Himal, obscure glaciers of the Alaska Range, and storm-lashed Patagonian spires.

Wilkinson believes that any mountain adventure is only as valuable as the stories brought home.

The 7pm show at the Tahoe City shop is free and is designed to motivate, inspire, and educate.

For more info, call (530) 583.6917.

NYT reporter: Journalists need to 'surrender or fight'

By Savannah Luschei, Daily Californian

James Risen, the *New York Times* reporter facing imprisonment for refusing to disclose his sources, denounced the federal government's infringement on the press in a rare public appearance Thursday, saying it is time for journalists to "surrender or fight."

Risen spoke to a crowd of about 300 lawyers, journalists and others at Berdahl Auditorium in Stanley Hall on Thursday evening in a talk hosted by the UC Berkeley Graduate School of Journalism titled "Prosecuting the Press." He spoke alongside Lowell Bergman, director of the graduate school's Investigative Reporting Program.

The lack of protection for national security reporters, he said, has allowed the federal government to demand that journalists like him reveal their sources, which threatens the

integrity of the press.

“The basic issue is, can we continue as journalists to protect and offer the confidentiality to someone who knows something going on in the government but doesn’t want to go public?” he asked the audience, which included high-profile guests such as Daniel Ellsberg, the whistle-blower responsible for leaking the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times* in 1971.

Read the whole story

Study: Boredom can be dangerous

By Karen Kaplan, Los Angeles Times

Boredom is a lot more interesting than scientists had thought.

A study of students in Germany reveals that there are five distinct types of boredom. That’s one more than researchers had expected.

What’s more, the newly discovered category – which they labeled “apathetic boredom” – was quite common among high school students, according to the study, published this week in the journal Motivation and Emotion.

Boredom isn’t just boring. It can be dangerous, either for the person who is bored or for the people around him. For instance, people who are bored are more likely to smoke, drink or use drugs. Kids who are bored are more likely to drop out of school and become juvenile delinquents. Studies have also linked boredom with stress and other health problems.

Read the whole story