

Tahoe travel company connects people to the world

By Jessie Marchesseau

Marching with penguins in Antarctica, swimming with sea turtles in the Galapagos, standing atop an active volcano in the South Pacific. These are the things dreams are made of.

Taking that into account, one could say Tahoe City-based AdventureSmith Explorations specializes in making dreams come true.

Todd Smith founded the company in 2003 to introduce people to a relatively new kind of travel. Having worked on a small cruise ship in Alaska, been a wilderness guide and worked in eco-tourism, Smith had a passion for adventure travel. AdventureSmith was his way of helping others discover that passion, too.



AdventureSmith is about providing unique experiences for travelers.

Photos/AdventureSmith

On the verge of its 10th anniversary, the adventure travel company served more than a thousand clients last year, with more than \$3.5 million in total sales. That is a pretty big

jump from just 56 bookings the first year.

AdventureSmith does not actually operate any tours or cruises. Instead, it acts as more of a wholesaler, booking small ship cruises and land tours with a variety of companies, offering expert advice and travel planning, and taking care of all the necessary paperwork along the way.

They will not book just any cruise, though. This is not a traditional travel agency where you call and ask for a cruise to the Bahamas. The company works almost exclusively with small-ship cruises, meaning generally between eight and 150 people per boat. Many of their destinations are not your usual cruise routes. Think Belize, Antarctica and Easter Island. Even then, trips are only added to the lineup upon personal approval from Smith or one of his staff.

“We won’t sell anything until we have experienced it firsthand,” he said. “Not every trip makes the grade.”

Small ship cruising is decidedly different from the major cruise lines that can fit upward of 3,500 passengers on their enormous oceanliners. The small ships AdventureSmith specializes in can go to more remote places compared to big ships and are almost always equipped with kayaks and canoes for guests, and a naturalist onboard to offer knowledge and guidance about the surrounding area.

“The quality of the education of these trips is the equivalent of going to school for a week,” Parky May said.

May and his wife have done numerous trips through AdventureSmith, including Alaska, Mexico and the Galapagos. He said they do all their traveling these days exclusively as small ship cruises. Like many of the company’s clients, the Mays possess a certain curiosity and desire to learn about the places they are visiting.

In its first decade, AdventureSmith has received recognition

for its expertise in expedition cruising and wilderness travel from *National Geographic Traveler*, *Outside* magazine, the Outdoor Channel and more. Smith has even been featured on television shows including “Lonely Planet” and “Jack Hanna’s Animal Adventures”.

However, the national recognition is not what keeps clients coming back again and again.



A small cruise ship plies the waters of Alaska

“We could do it ourselves, and have in the past, but it’s nice to know they will take care of every little thing,” said Mel Weiss who, along with his wife, Paula, has booked at least half a dozen trips through AdventureSmith.

Weiss said he likes the fact that Smith and his staff have been to the destinations before and done this kind of traveling themselves. It adds a layer of trust for him. The couple recently returned from an expedition in Vietnam and Cambodia, but Mel Weiss, an anthropologist and world-traveler, declared Antarctica his all-time favorite: “It’ll blow your mind.”

In addition to the uniqueness of their travel offerings, AdventureSmith does something else a little out of the ordinary for a travel company. They call it “carbon free cruising.” Based on the gas, oil, mileage and a host of other factors, AdventureSmith calculates the amount of carbon

emitted for each passenger on each trip they book. This is converted to a dollar figure which is then invested in climate-friendly projects around the world. The company is not required to do this, nor do they tack on an extra cost to their clients. Smith said it's "just something we believe in."

Though none of the company's tours includes Lake Tahoe, and few of their clients are local, Smith has no regrets on choosing Tahoe City for the AdventureSmith home base.

"Me and my staff are very lucky to do what we do and go all these places around the world, but there's nothing quite like coming home to Tahoe," Smith said, "... it puts a smile on your face."

Placer County attracting slew of film crews

Placer County isn't just a place to visit, it's an area film crews like to shoot.

In the last 15 years, millions of dollars have been generated from film companies.

The vistas, abundant recreational activities and diverse terrain have been used in feature films, television commercials and photography for national companies.

Beverly Lewis, director of the Placer-Lake Tahoe Film Office, recently hosted a Tahoe Film Conference for government officials who may be involved in some aspect of a production company's work in the county. The conference highlighted the needs of production companies and the local economic benefit

that is derived from this work.



“Cinema Verite” scenes were shot in a variety of homes in Placer County.

Photo/Provided

Placer County said of the film industry, “It brings Placer County to the world.”

The Placer-Lake Tahoe Film Office publicizes the many available locations and assists production companies in finding the right “look” for what they’re trying to achieve. The film office also expedites the permitting process and ensures all the needs of the production companies are met, from lodging and meals to materials used to construct sets.

Keynote presenter Amy Lemisch, executive director of the California Film Commission, pointed out the huge economic effect the film industry has on the state.

“The film industry brings millions of tourists to California,” she said. “People do want to visit the places they see on TV and in the movies.”

Although Placer County is distant from most Southern California-based studios, the close proximity of varied terrain within the county makes it a popular place to shoot. While there have been numerous feature films shot in whole or in part in locations throughout Placer County, production work

primarily comes from commercials and photography shoots.

Commercial film director Tim Damon has produced 14 commercials in the county in the last 10 years. This year also marks the ninth time in five years that the Orvis Company chose Placer County to shoot still photography for its seasonal catalogs.

California, which at one time was the state where almost all movies and commercials were shot, is now facing competition from other states that offer financial incentives to production companies. To sweeten the pot for filming in California, the state Legislature recently enacted a film tax incentive, giving production companies tax breaks for production shoots in the state.

Placer County has already played host to four such productions including The Muppets, an HBO movie and an upcoming Spike Jonz film starring Joaquin Phoenix. The California Film Commission estimates that, depending on the complexity of the shoot; a production company will spend between \$100,000 and \$250,000 a day.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

Exercise during pregnancy good for mom, fetus

By Kenneth Spielvogel

A vital component to a healthy pregnancy is some element of exercise. Beyond the potential physical benefits for both mother and fetus, improvement in one's emotional and overall mental well-being can be achieved through even the simplest of

exercise plans.

It is important to establish clear guidelines with your health care provider regarding what is safe for you and your baby during pregnancy. Certain medical conditions – such as high blood pressure, a history of preterm labor (or short cervix), and other high-risk conditions – require more specialized plans. But even the most restrictive exercise plan may still allow a woman to reap the exercise benefits of a sound mind and body.

Focus on your goals



Exercise during pregnancy is important. Photo/Women's Health Care

A workout plan during pregnancy should be separate from discussions of weight gain. A recent patient of mine was told by her previous provider that she was, “gaining too much weight and should drink only water and exercise more.”

Few providers take the time or have the experience to give specific guidelines about when to exercise and when to slow down. For those who have never been formally told how to exercise, this type of advice often falls on deaf ears. With each passing visit, the number on the scale becomes the focus.

With little guidance, patients' self-esteem decreases, stress levels increase, and the chances for a healthy and happy

pregnancy are reduced even further.

Let us not focus on a number, but rather our goals. Weeks of pregnancy challenge one's strength, posture, and balance. Expectant mothers grow more fatigued as their sleep is disturbed by both physical and hormonal changes. We work to ensure the safety of both mother and fetus in our plan.

I target a goal for beginners of approximately 30 minutes of activity, five days a week. If time restrictions make this difficult, they can break it into two, 15-minute sessions, or even three, 10-minute sessions.

Start with easy walking

Assuming you have no dangerous health conditions, I recommend beginning by walking. Mix in a hill or two, pump the arms, and maybe even add some tiny hand weights if you're not pushing a stroller. If you can hold a conversation, but are also huffing and puffing, you're exercising at the right pace.

With regular exercise, you can improve your strength, balance, and cardiovascular conditioning. And exposure to sunlight raises vitamin D levels, decreasing your risk for gestational diabetes, in addition to other potential benefits for your baby – but don't forget that sunscreen. Bring along some friends and combine your walk into a pregnancy support group.

Each individual has different guidelines. Even exercise enthusiasts need support regarding limitations, positional considerations, and which activities to avoid during pregnancy. Work with your provider to develop a plan that is both safe and effective in accomplishing the simple goals of sound mind and body for a healthy mom and baby.

Kenneth Spielvogel is a doctor with Barton Women's Health.

Seminars in Tahoe focus on health care changes

Barton Health and Lake Tahoe South Shore Chamber of Commerce are putting on seminars to educate people about healthcare reform, also known as the Affordable Care Act or Obamacare.

California and Nevada insurance exchanges for 2014 coverage enrollment open Oct. 1.

The workshops will be led by qualified industry specialists.

If you are an employer and have questions like:

How do I calculate my part-time and full-time employees to get my total full time equivalents?

I have seasonal employees, do I have to offer coverage to them?

What does "Pay or Play" mean? Do I qualify for tax credits and subsidies?

I have less than 25 employees, what does this mean for me?

If you live in the South Lake Tahoe region and have questions like:

Obamacare ... Reform ... Affordable Care Act, what does it mean for me?

I already get health coverage through my employer – will anything change?

Do I qualify for tax credits if I pay for coverage?

I don't have a job; do I still have to get health coverage?

I didn't qualify for Medi-Cal before, will I now?

The employer seminar is June 18; 3 to 4:30pm at LTCC, 1 College Drive, South Lake Tahoe in the board room.

Guest speakers are John Carlson, executive vice president of Benefit Intelligence, a leader in delivering the highest quality health and welfare benefits, insurance and human resources consulting solutions; and Gene Furr, from Menath Insurance an independent insurance agent located in the Lake Tahoe area and serving most Western states.

For community members the meeting is June 18 from 5:30 to 7pm at the same location.

Guest speakers are Carmella Gutierrez, president of Californians for Patient Care, a nonprofit dedicated to ensuring all California consumers have fair and equitable access to high-quality health care; and Debbie Stack from El Dorado County Health and Human Services.

Space is limited and pre-registration is strongly encouraged. For more information about these upcoming forums, contact Leanne Wagoner at Barton, (530) 543.5537 or Emily Abernathy at the chamber, (775) 588.1728, ext. 303.

College student transforms planters into artwork

The facelift of Kings Beach begins later this year, but Jamie Himes, an interdisciplinary studies student at Sierra Nevada College in Incline Village, already got the beautification

started.

As part of a project for her Service Learning class she came up with the Coloring Kings Beach idea. Himes' project won the college's award for Inspiring Community Impact.



Artsy planters in Kings Beach. Photo/Provided

Himes was inspired by the mosaic fish created by Peter Hazel that stands guard over the driveway at Lanza's restaurant in Tahoe Vista. She also wanted to involve the Boys and Girls Club of North Lake Tahoe in a project that would help to bring more public art into the community.

Himes saw the perfect canvas for her project in the flower pots that sit outside the entrance to the North Tahoe Event Center.

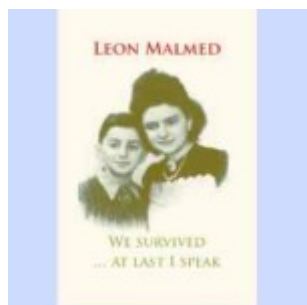
During three weekends this month, the mosaics on the pots took shape.

However, there is still work to do. Himes is soliciting donations to purchase an additional 50 pounds of clay to complete the work and will need help cutting more tiles, glazing them and then applying and grouting them. If you would like to donate money, materials or time, call (530) 412.2701.

Holocaust survivor, author to give talk

The Friends of the Library are hosting Leon Malmed, South Lake Tahoe resident and the author of "We Survived ... At Last I Speak", on June 25.

This is Malmed's true story of his and his sister, Rachel's, escape from the Holocaust in Occupied France with the help of their French neighbors who volunteered to watch the children until their parents returned from the roundups.



Malmed bares his soul in this narrative of love and courage, set against a backdrop of tragedy, fear, injustice and prejudice. It is a story of goodness triumphing, once more, over evil.

In addition to sharing this story, Malmed will be showing the documentary, "17 rue St Fiacre" realized by Daniel Meyers, a Steve Spielberg collaborator.

Books will be available for purchase and signing. Malmed will donate \$5 from every book sold that night to the Library.

The free event starts at 6pm at the South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd.

For questions e-mail Tahoe.Programs@gmail.com or call (530) 573.3185.

Gretchen Wilson to take stage in Stateline

Country music's "Redneck Woman," Grammy-Award winner Gretchen Wilson will kick up the dust May 31 at Lake Tahoe's MontBleu casino.

The hard-singing country music star has charted 13 times, including the Grammy Award-winning single "Redneck Woman." Wilson's anthems are as real as her album titles imply; most noteworthy being "Here to Party," "Work Hard, Play Harder," "All Jacked Up," "One for the Boys" and "I've got Your Country Right Here."

She's sold more than 8 million records worldwide. Her latest album, "Right on Time and Under the Covers" was released in April with critical acclaim. Her MontBleu performance begins at 9pm.

Tickets are \$45 and \$55; 888.829.7630.

N. Nevada woman trying to make equestrian history

By Arianna Bennett, KTVN-TV

A Reno woman will attempt to make Nevada history Saturday by becoming the first person to travel the Nevada Discovery Trail solo on horseback.

Over the next four weeks Samantha Szesciorka, her dog Bella and her horse Sage will be alone in the wide-open Nevada desert trekking 450 miles on the Nevada Discovery Trail.

It's an adventure this trio has been preparing for for years.

"I feel really ready. We've been getting gear and training and riding for three years now. So we're about as prepared as you can get," Szesciorka said.

Their path goes from the Utah border in Baker, Nevada to the California border at Lake Tahoe; passing through mountains, deserts, ghost towns and historical sites along the way.

"We have such diversity in terrain in Nevada. I can't wait to just get out there," she said.

It will be a mental and physical challenge, under the hot desert sun in a dry and often hostile environment. But it's nothing these two can't handle. Samantha is an Army veteran who served a tour in the Middle East.

And Sage is uniquely qualified for this adventure – he's a wild mustang. He comes straight out of the Nevada wilderness.

"They are self-sustaining. The strongest survive. And he's one of them," says Bonnie Matton of the Wild Horse Preservation League.

And that makes Sage the star of the trip.

Samantha, along with a dedicated group of volunteers, crew members and activists, is hoping Sage will bring awareness to the issue of wild horses in Nevada and encourage adoption.

"We want to have an adventure, but I also want to show people- 'look what mustangs can do. They're great riding horses. Take it from me, I've ridden one across the state!'"

Szesciorka will have a satellite tracking device with her

during the ride so you can monitor her progress on her website.

Open house planned at Tahoe City Field Station

UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center's open house at the Tahoe City Field Station (Historic Hatchery) is June 15 from 10am-2pm.

Visitors may tour the historic building, talk to TERC scientists about their work, and learn something about Lake Tahoe. Local garden clubs will be on hand to give plant selection and gardening advice, and Red Truck of Truckee will sell food and beverages.

The UC Davis Tahoe City Field Station has evolved from its origins as a state fish hatchery to its current function as a field station for UC Davis researchers at Lake Tahoe. The Field Station houses the Eriksson Education Center, native plant demonstration garden, a small laboratory facility, and the equipment necessary for researchers to boat on, dive in, and scientifically examine Lake Tahoe.

Between Memorial Day and Labor Day, the Eriksson Education Center offers visitors an opportunity to explore the facility at their pace with self-guided tours between 8am and 6pm daily. Volunteer docents are available on Saturdays from 10am-2pm for guided tours and hands-on science activities.

Eriksson Education Center also hosts the Green Thumb Gardening Series, a series of weekly lectures on sustainable gardening in the Lake Tahoe Basin. This year's topics include edible

gardens, pest management, composting and efficient irrigation. Green Thumb lectures are every Tuesday at 5:30pm beginning June 25.

For more information about the Open House, Green Thumb Gardening Series or volunteer opportunities, contact Kelsey Poole at (775) 881.7560, ext. 7402 or klpoole@ucdavis.edu.

The facility is at 2400 Lake Forest Road, Tahoe City.

Red poppies – a symbol of patriotism

By Mike Crowley

Have you ever asked yourself while passing by some stores in May, why are these men and women in military dress handing out red poppies made of paper? Yes, it's to commemorate and remember the loss of men and women who died in wartime for our freedom. But why a red poppy?

On May 3, 1915, during World War I, a young Canadian physician and lieutenant colonel named John McCrae was presiding over the funeral of a fellow soldier, killed in the western part of Belgium in a region known as Flanders Fields. McCrae composed a poem for the service titled, "In Flanders Fields." He did not think it was a very good poem. He wrote it in 20 minutes, just before the service.

However, his fellow soldiers thought he had written an all-inspiring poem perfect for the battlefields in times of war. Over the next few months the poem became very popular throughout the free nations at war. On Dec. 8, 1915, the poem

was first published by the British magazine Punch. It was so popular during World War I, it became the most quoted poem of its time. Here it is in full, from a 1919 published collection of McCrae's works:

"In Flanders Fields," by John McCrae

*In Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.*

*We are the Dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.*

According to writers, the reference to poppies is the red poppies that sprung up quickly from the ground around the

graves of buried soldiers. These red poppies have been associated with battle since the Napoleonic Wars. A writer of the time noted that poppies grew in abundance over the graves of soldiers lost in battle. Research indicates that bombings of the landscape at Flanders fields increased the deposit of lime into the soil, which greatly increased the growth of poppies. After World War I ended in 1918, wearing a red poppy symbolized the remembrance of those who had died in war.

Wearing a Red Poppy today is the continuance of a great American tradition – remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice so we could live in freedom. So now you know, why a red poppy.

Sources used: Article: In Flanders Fields, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia; American Legion, Legion Auxiliary, and War Veterans.

Mike Crowley is a resident of South Lake Tahoe.