

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.

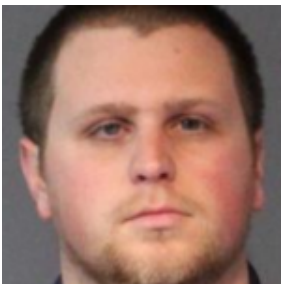
Knowing that the number 8 is a sign of luck and number 4 is dreaded in Chinese culture can help with which floor to place them on in a hotel and how to price goods. Paying attention to red meaning happiness and good luck, gold a symbol of prosperity and luxury, and black and white funeral colors are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

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

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.

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

Change in H-1B visa program won't impact Barton

By Kathryn Reed

Barton Memorial Hospital is not part of the trend of rural hospitals relying on foreign doctors to provide medical care.

That's a good thing since President Trump on April 18 is expected to change the rules for obtaining H-1B visas in what

he is calling "Buy American, Hire American." It used to be that for \$1,225 an employer could get an application approved in a matter of weeks instead of the customary monthslong wait.

Each year about 85,000 H-1B visas are granted.

"H1-B visas give health systems the flexibility to hire international employees who have the medical skills or qualifications they seek when there is a shortage of that talent locally," Clint Purvance, president and CEO of Barton Health, told *Lake Tahoe News*. "Typically, H1-B visas recipients are recruited by health systems with education or training programs, or by a health system unable to fill a position in an isolated area or for very specialized service."

According to the *New York Times*, foreigners make up nearly 25 percent of all physicians in the United States, with those percentages being even higher in most rural areas. The Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates said in December 2015 there were 211,460 international medical graduates practicing in the United States.

"We are currently not contracted with any physicians who are H1-B recipients and it is unlikely changes to the H1-B visa program will impact us," Purvance said. "All Barton Health physicians are qualified and experienced care providers who have trained in the United States or U.S. territories."

The only employee in the Barton Health system with a H1-B visa is a clinical lab scientist. She did not want to be interviewed by *Lake Tahoe News*.

Heller faces combative town hall crowd

By Scott Sonner, AP

Nevada Republican Sen. Dean Heller distanced himself Monday from the Trump administration's immigration and health care policies at a sometimes combative town hall meeting with hundreds of critics.

Considered one of the most vulnerable GOP senators up for re-election next year, Heller also insisted he supports Planned Parenthood's family planning efforts despite his recent vote to allow individual states to defund the program.

"It didn't repeal money for Planned Parenthood," he said April 17. "I think the states should be making those kinds of decisions."

Read the whole story

Trio of bills could boost Nev.'s clean-energy economy

By Mick Akers, Las Vegas Sun

Three major clean energy bills were passed through their respective committees last week at the Nevada Legislature to get them a step closer to becoming law.

Assembly Bills 206 and 223 and Senate Bill 150 were passed with amendments this week before Friday's first house passage

deadline.

A report carried out by ICF International and commissioned by the Natural Resources Defense Council indicates the bills could increase Nevada's renewable energy and energy efficient share, drawing up to \$3.3 billion in capital investments.

Read the whole story

Data: Massive disconnect in Nev. teacher evaluations

By Meghin Delaney, Las Vegas Review-Journal

There are absolutely no ineffective teachers in Nevada's worst-performing schools.

That's according to the most recent teacher evaluation data provided by the state Department of Education. Statewide, only 55 of the 20,785 teachers rated after the 2015-16 year under the Nevada Educator Performance Framework were deemed "ineffective" – the lowest of four possible categories.

And none of them worked at what the state considers the most underperforming schools. You'll find more ineffective teachers working in what the state considers its best schools, according to the most recent ratings of the five-star system issued after the 2013-14 year.

Read the whole story