

Travel Industry Association Names 2006 Odyssey Award Winners



Washington, D.C. – August 2006 – The [Travel Industry Association](#) (TIA), in partnership with [National Geographic Traveler](#), has selected six travel industry organizations to receive 2006 Odyssey Awards, the premier recognition program for the \$646 billion travel and tourism industry, to reward them for attaining new levels of excellence. These annual awards recognize the very best in the industry: the very best marketing and advertising programs; the top promotion and public and community service programs; and excellence in communications and building awareness of tourism’s positive impact on our nation.

“The Odyssey Awards are an unparalleled showcase of inspiring, successful work across the U.S.,” said Roger Dow, TIA’s president and CEO. “Every year, entries come in from all segments of the industry that are truly exceptional – work that takes us into new, uncharted territory. These winners have demonstrated creativity, resourcefulness, community involvement and solid business results.”

“This year we tried to raise the bar for entrants by opening up the Awards to international travel destinations and companies. All of the entries showcased innovative thinking and exceptional creativity – setting new standards in marketing, public relations, advertising and industry partnerships,” observed Dawn Drew, chair of the TIA Odyssey Awards judging committee and Vice President and Publisher of National Geographic Traveler.

The winning programs for the Odyssey Award recipients are outlined below. They will be formally honored at TIA’s Annual Awards Banquet, which takes place October 12, during the [TIA Marketing Outlook Forum](#) in Boca Raton, Florida. All winners will be recognized in the January issue of National Geographic Traveler magazine.

Online Marketing: “Real People, Real Roadtrips”

The Pennsylvania Tourism Office’s innovative online campaign chronicled the adventures of six diverse groups of travelers as they took road trips across the state, sharing their experiences via blogs on VisitPA.com. A high level of visibility was achieved through rich media and banner ads on major Web properties and keyword buys on Google and Yahoo. The first to use blogs as the focus of a marketing campaign, the state generated significant media coverage and convinced other bloggers and discussion board participants to spread Pennsylvania’s message. Within a month of the campaign’s launch, traffic to the Roadtripper blogs on VisitPA.com soared by 939%, and traffic to road trip itinerary pages on the site jumped up 225%.

Domestic SeeAmerica Marketing: “Philadelphia – Get Your History Straight and Your Night Life Gay”

Philadelphia became one of few cities worldwide to promote itself as a gay-friendly destination when the Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation launched a \$1 million, three-year campaign to capture its share of the \$64 billion gay travel market. In partnership with the

Philadelphia Gay Tourism Caucus, they made history when their 30-second “Penn Pals” commercial aired on national television. Their Gay Friendly-Merchant program, connecting tourists to gay-friendly businesses, demonstrated Philadelphia’s gay appeal and its genuine intentions to welcoming gay and lesbian travelers. Publicity coverage alone was valued at \$10 million in advertising equivalency with 183 million impressions. More than 14 hotels now offer the gay-friendly Philadelphia Freedom Hotel Package.

Publicity & Promotion: “Philly’s Got BENERgy!”

The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation transformed the one-day celebration of Benjamin Franklin’s 300th birthday into a year-long tourism-driver and image builder for Ben and Philadelphia. To increase hotel stays, ticket sales, and extended visits during their off-season, the city capitalized on the Benjamin Franklin: In Search of a Better World exhibition to draw people into the National Constitution Center. The GPTMC created buzz by launching and sustaining their media campaign 300 days before Ben’s birthday. They created dozens of reasons why visitors should see the traveling show in Philadelphia, including Ben-centric hotel packages, walking tours, restaurant specials, kid-friendly Ben’s Traveling Trunk shows and 300 mini-parties during the birthday weekend. Their efforts yielded nearly 1,700 stories in various publications and 200,000 visitors to the exhibit, with almost half from out-of-town.

Public and Community Service: “Hurricane Katrina Assistance Program”

Following the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau realized the 150,000 evacuees sent to their area would need an outlet from the stress of their situation. The bureau worked with more than 100 Houston attractions to secure free or discounted rates for evacuees, contacted hotels to inquire availability and housed the information on their website. As a result, the bureau helped make their visitors feel welcome and nearly 13,000 evacuees were able to take advantage of special or free offers from Space Center Houston, Houston Museum of Natural Science and the Houston Zoo.

Partners in Tourism: “Oregon Bounty”

Travel Oregon demonstrated the power of co-op marketing by bringing together several Oregon commodity commissions to provide an amazing culinary travel experience and increase visitation during the slow month of November. With the use of newspaper and radio ads and an insert in Gourmet magazine, the Oregon Bounty campaign celebrated some of Oregon’s finest wineries and food products. Consumers were able to sample the pairing of local foods and wines at 60 participating wineries, indulge in Oregon Bounty dinners and menu items at 70 different restaurants, purchase and taste Oregon products at over 100 participating stores and take advantage of special hotel and B&B packages throughout the state.

International Inbound SeeAmerica Marketing: “You’ve Seen the Films, Now Visit the Set”

The U.S. Tourism Promotion Program needed to increase the awareness and positive perception of America and make the country a desirable long-haul destination for UK travelers. Their campaign capitalized on the popularity of the U.S. entertainment industry by using the tagline “You’ve Seen the Films, Now Visit the Set.” They rolled out a national TV

campaign of 30 and 50 second commercials supported by billboards, a pre-Oscars week-long promotion on the UK's highest rated morning show, a retail promotion with a leading travel agency, themed radio programs, and private sector co-op opportunities created around www.seeamerica.org.uk. Results of the campaign showed that two million trips to the U.S. were intended that would not have been planned otherwise.

Domestic Travel Advertising: "VEGAS.com"

VEGAS.com, a private venture, wanted to establish that Las Vegas is unlike any other destination and ensure its website became a top consumer choice for reliable Vegas information and travel offerings. Four different "Do Vegas Right" ads were created to demonstrate how VEGAS.com makes things happen by transforming a wish or fantasy into reality. Since the ads launched, VEGAS.com sales have increased nearly three-fold, site traffic tripled and their total unique user count ranked 34th in the entire online travel industry.

Tourism Economic Awareness: "The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Monitor"

The Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation needed to show legislators, business leaders and potential funders the tremendous economic impact that tourism had on the city and that funding tourism marketing was wise public policy. The GPTMC established the first in-house, full-service research department of any tourism agency in the region and created the annual Tourism Monitor. The Monitor synthesizes dozens of research studies conducted throughout the year into a single report that underscores the importance and effectiveness of tourism marketing. The result was a \$500,000 increase in their annual budget and the city's budget included a \$2.5 million investment promoting Philadelphia to be administered by GPTMC.

About Travel Industry Association of America (TIA)

TIA (www.tia.org) is the 2,000 member national, non-profit organization representing all components of the \$646 billion travel industry. TIA's mission is to represent the whole of the U.S. travel industry to promote and facilitate increased travel to and within the United States.

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