

August 2004

## this issue

Message from Sara

Quarterly statistics

What's new

Media FAM

Where's Scooter

division of tourism

# commerce matters

## Summer '04: Web hits, hotel stays increase

As the summer season kicks into high gear, it is hard to fathom how fast time goes by.

Early summer discussions and predictions for the summer season pointed toward an increase in pre-travel bookings and a short planning cycle.

While that has happened, recent Web site activity indicates late planning is the norm.

Early on, attraction and hotel operators indicated an increase in pre-bookings over last year. TIA also predicted an increase in travel and a continuation of the short planning cycle. Here at tourism we worked hard on both ends.



### From the Director's chair

Our initial media buy kicked into gear in the spring to give early planners a push towards North Dakota. Magazine ads and broadcast television were again targeted regionally. In June, we continued the magazine presence and added cable TV, Canadian radio and newspapers to nudge the late planners into booking North Dakota.

An increase in unique visits to our Web

See **DIRECTOR** on Page 2



Tourism Communications Director Rachel Retterath, far left, and her group of writers, clockwise from back left, Renee Gordon of the Philadelphia Sun, Paul Turene of the Winnipeg Free Press, Lisa Mann, a freelance travel writer from California, and Merle Exit of the Queens Times of New York, took a brief rest at Pipestem Creek during their weeklong FAM trip. Photo courtesy of Barb Bachmeier, Valley City Times Record.

## Tales to tell

### National media takes tour of North Dakota

Tourism Communications Director Rachel Retterath is helping get the word out about traveling to North Dakota.

Retterath recently took travel writers from Winnipeg, Manitoba, Philadelphia, New York and California on a five-day tour of North Dakota. The Tourism Division and local tourism partners across the state worked together to show the group a great time and the wonderful attractions, accommodations, restaurants, scenery and activities available to travelers.

The goal, of course, is to generate as much positive press as we can in

larger markets.

"This is a great opportunity to reach audiences in markets that we might not otherwise be able to reach," Retterath said. "The writers on this FAM experienced many of the unique features North Dakota has to offer."

The group's journey began in Fargo-West Fargo, exploring places like the Plains Art Museum, Hotel Donaldson, Fargo Theatre, Fargo Air Museum, Heritage Hjemkomst Center, the Red River and Bonanzaville. Traveling west, the

See **WRITERS** on Page 3

**DIRECTOR from previous page**

site would indicate that late planning is now the norm. In June, we had 69,157 visits compared to 30,061 in 2003. We also are seeing an increase in the time spent on our site, with an average of 12:36 minutes. The top five areas of interest on the Web site are travel guide, attractions, trip planner, accommodations and events.

Midwest Living Magazine continues to be our number one generator of inquires among those who specify where they saw our advertisement.

Our second-quarter statistics from the industry are now in and we see mixed

numbers. Hotel numbers show growth with occupancy rates up 2.7 percent and lodging tax collections up 4 percent compared to a year ago. Hotel numbers are a key indicator in determining visitation to the state.

On the other, hand, our travel industry partners across the state say that cool, rainy weather of early summer affected visitation at some attractions and parks, specifically those with "outdoor appeal." Visitors to our major attractions were down 4 percent.

The tourism staff has been busy attending events, shooting photos, hosting media, tour operators and planners and becoming more familiar with all we have to offer across the state. We appreciate the assistance we get from all of our stakeholders. Your help with FAMs and stats is especially appreciated. Without your numbers we can't determine how tourism is tracking statewide. ●



**Tourism Quarterly Report**

Area of Travel	2004 Second Quarter	2003 Second Quarter	Percent Change 04-03	2004 YTD Total	Percent Change 04-03
<b>State Park Visitors</b>	278,614	311,767	-11%	333,051	-8%
<b>National Parks</b>	131,416	146,024	-10%	138,255	-10%
<b>Web Visits</b>	April: 42,622 May: 60,104 June: 69,157	April: NA May: 50,374 June: 30,061	April: NA May: 19% June: 130%	350,087	NA
<b>Major Attractions</b>	235,614	243,886	-3%	293,206	-4%
<b>Local Visitors Centers</b>	37,889	39,649	-4%	43,460	-1%
<b>N.D. Airport Passengers</b>	141,972	130,740	8.6%	282,865	7%
<b>Cumulative Lodging Tax</b>	\$478,148.29	\$458,704.21	4%	\$932,579.14	4%
<b>1 percent Lodging Tax</b>	April \$91,052.59 May \$99,819.13 June \$90,449.54	NA	NA	\$545,144.78	NA
<b>Statewide Hotel Occupancy Rate</b>	April: 56.6% May: 57.1% June: 68.8%	April: 52.4% May: 56.8% June: 65.6%	April: 8% May: 5% June: 4.9%	57.4%	2.7%
<b>Statewide Average Room Rate</b>	April: \$52.07 May: \$51.81 June: \$53.43	April: \$51.05 May: \$51.77 June: \$51.89	April: 2% May: 1% June: 3%	\$52.40	1.8%

The following chart shows the visitation stats for first quarter 2004. Listed below are the participating entities. **State Parks:** Cross Ranch, Ft. Ransom, Ft. Stevenson, Grahams Island, Icelandic, Lake Metigoshe, Lake Sakakawea, Lewis & Clark, Turtle River, Shelters Grove, Ft. Lincoln, Beaver Lake, and Little Missouri. **National Park:** Theodore Roosevelt National Park, Fort Union. **Major Attractions:** Bonanzaville USA, Chateau de Mores, Confluence Center/Fort Buford, Custer House/Indian Villages, Dakota Dinosaur Museum, Fargo Air Museum, Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center, International Peace Garden, Knife River Indian Villages, Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center/Fort Mandan, Lewis & Clark Riverboat, Lawrence Welk Home, Medora Musical, National Buffalo Museum, North Dakota State Capitol, North Dakota Heritage Center, Pembina State Museum, Plains Art Museum, Three Affiliated Tribes Museum, and Yunkers Farm/Childrens Museum. **Local Visitor Center:** Beach Information Center, Bismarck, Bowman Information Center, Devils Lake, Dickinson, Fargo/Moorhead, Grand Forks, Jamestown, McKenzie County, Minot, Rugby, Wahpeton, and Williston. The Web site visits reflect totals from April to June, 2004. North Dakota Tourism uses Webtrends to gather visitor data from www.ndtourism.com. The statewide hotel occupancy rate is measured by Smith Travel Research. If you should have any questions, or would like to be included in the survey, please contact Tricia Miller, Data Coordinator, North Dakota Tourism, 1-800-435-5663. ●

### WRITERS from Page 1

writers drove the Sheyenne River Valley National Scenic Byway and stopped in Valley City at the Rosebud Interpretive Center, antique shops and unique bed and breakfasts. They even enjoyed some homemade lefse at the Rusty Spur Cafe in Kathryn.

The journey continued to Jamestown to see the Buffalo statue and herd and moved on to Carrington to tour Pipestem Creek and taste some home-grown pasta. As they continued west on Highway 200, they enjoyed some wildlife viewing.

Along the Lewis & Clark Trail in Washburn and Stanton, the group toured Fort Mandan, the Lewis & Clark Interpretive Center and Knife River Indian Villages. The writers enjoyed the Missouri River by voyageur canoe, pontoon and the Lewis & Clark Riverboat. In Bismarck-Mandan, they attended the American Legacy Exposition, the Heritage Center, Five Nations Arts, This Old Hat, Mandan Drug and Keelboat and Steamboat parks.

Traveling farther west, they took photos of Salem Sue and the Enchanted Highway, biked the Maah Daah Hey Trail, toured the Chateau de Mores and Theodore Roosevelt National Park and enjoyed the Pitchfork Fondue and Medora Musical.

They made many more stops along their route. Their comments were very positive and enthusiastic about the array of things to do and see in North Dakota.

Thanks to our industry partners who worked with us to make this media FAM trip possible. Generating positive stories about North Dakota helps spread the word about all the great things our state has to offer. ●

### More event grants available

The North Dakota Lewis & Clark Governor's Advisory Committee and the North Dakota Council on the Arts are both offering grant opportunities for 2004 and 2005.

The grant offered by the Governor's Advisory Board is designed to assist individual businesses, event promoters and tourism marketing organizations looking to promote their Lewis & Clark tourism-related events within the state of North Dakota for 2004 and 2005.

Applications are available on the North Dakota Tourism Web site at [www.ndtourism.com](http://www.ndtourism.com) or by calling 701-328-3505. Applications will be accepted until Sept. 30, 2004. Another grant will follow with a deadline of March 30, 2005.

A second grant opportunity is available from The North Dakota Council on the Arts. This grant is designated for Lewis & Clark-related events slated for projects taking place from Jan. 1, 2004 to Jan. 1, 2005. The program provides communities with financial assistance for

### What's new ...



The Japanese Garden in Grand Forks is one of the state's new and unique attractions.

### Vote for your town

Television personality Oprah Winfrey is looking for a small town (under 5,000) to visit.

Write a letter or put your thoughts on videotape and send it to producers of the Oprah Winfrey show. Tell them why Winfrey should pick your town to visit. Mail entries as soon as possible to: *The Oprah Winfrey Show, Oprah! Come to my Hometown! c/o Team LE, PO Box 917940, Chicago, IL 60661*

For more information, go to the Web site: <https://www.oprah.com/plugger/templates/BeOnTheShow.jhtml?action=respond&plugId=D120100004>

### And the winner is ...

Jane Daily of Pennsylvania was the highest bidder for the eBay auction package to the opening weekend of the Lewis & Clark signature event in October.

Bidding began in early June and continued for the standard 10-day period. Daily ponied up \$560 for the package, which includes two round-trip tickets from anywhere in the lower 48 states; seating with author Clay Jenkinson at the Circle of Cultures Signature Event banquet; a compact car for four days; three nights in a hotel; passes to Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park; and several other Lewis & Clark-related items.

events such as, but not limited to, performances, exhibitions, murals, workshops and special events relating to era of the Lewis and Clark Expedition Bicentennial. Grant awards range from \$500-\$3,000 per fiscal year. The deadline for grant applications is Nov. 1, 2004. For an application or more information please visit [www.DiscoverND.com/arts](http://www.DiscoverND.com/arts). ●

# Up ... Up ... and Away







## Get a bird's-eye view of the Lewis & Clark Trail

Who hasn't had this vacation debate: drive or fly? Two hundred years ago, Lewis and Clark didn't have the option. But you do.

Executive Air Taxi of Bismarck is now offering a new twist to the way you look at the Lewis & Clark Trail. Charter flights from the Bismarck Airport will give a bird's-eye view of Fort Abraham Lincoln State Park and the Custer House. Expeditions start at \$49 for the adventure over Fort Lincoln.

You can also see the entire trail structure starting at On-A-Slant Indian Village and including Chief Looking's Village, the Lewis & Clark Riverboat and Double Ditch Indian Village.

Extended flight options are as follows:

-  The "Southerly Flight" flying south over the Missouri River to Prairie Knights Casino, Fort Yates and back.
-  The "Northern Flight" will fly from Bismarck over Fort Lincoln north to Fort Mandan and back.
-  The "Knife River Expedition" will carry you along the trail to the Knife River Indian Villages and back.
-  The "Sakakawea Exploration" will fly as far north as Lake Sakakawea west on the lake and a



return trip to Bismarck along the trail.

Extended adventures start at \$129 per hour for up to three people per flight. For aircraft availability please call Justin Voller at 800-932-8924 or e-mail Justin@executive-air.com or visit [www.executive-air.com](http://www.executive-air.com) for more information. ●

## WHERE'S SCOOTER?

Would this be every hunter's dream?



### Birds of a feather ... or a weld

Steve Stark knows his bonanzas. The director of Bonanzaville USA correctly identified my stop last month at the Bagg Bonanza Farm in Mooreton. Stark will receive a North Dakota Legendary denim shirt. This month, I'm getting an early start on pheasant season. Where am I? Please e-mail your answers to [jpursley@state.nd.us](mailto:jpursley@state.nd.us) by Aug. 25. In the event of a tie, a drawing will be held to determine who receives the Legendary or Lewis & Clark item. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number so I can contact you if you are the winner. ●