

News & Notes

TRAVEL • MANUFACTURER • RETAIL

TRAVEL

Five Things to Know About U.S. Visa Changes



The BBC recently detailed five important changes to the United States' visa waiver program. The changes particularly affect Europeans with ties to the Middle East. Travelers who previously would have qualified for the expedited Electronic System for Travel Authorization but who have a second citizenship from Iran, Iraq, Syria or Sudan, or who have visited those countries in the last five years, will now need to apply for a visa. Once the law

is implemented, travelers will likely have to visit a U.S. embassy and complete an interview process before a visa will be granted. A visa for United Kingdom nationals with dual citizenship will last up to 10 years and cost \$160. The changes are expected to primarily affect business travelers as those who enter and leave the country most frequently. United States passport holders with dual citizenship, or those who have traveled to designated countries, do not require a visa.

SOURCE: BBC

Expedia Purchases HomeAway

Vacation rental giant HomeAway has been acquired by travel site Expedia for \$3.9 billion in cash and stock. Expedia has been on a purchasing spree, having already acquired Travelocity, Orbitz and Australian site Wotif. The Expedia-HomeAway partnership surpasses Booking.com as the largest lodging seller of hotel rooms, vacation rentals and apartments, with 1.3 to 1.5 million listings available. The acquisition will save Expedia years of building up its own database of vacation rental listings, an increasingly important sector of the lodging market. HomeAway has also announced that midway through 2016 it will change its fee structure and begin charging customer booking fees.

SOURCE: SKIFT

How to Avoid Airline Change Fees

A cottage industry is emerging to shield fliers from change fees, which generate billions of dollars annually for the domestic airlines. According to *The New York Times*, change fees earned domestic airlines nearly \$3 billion in 2014, triple the amount of 2007. Two new companies, Options Away and Flyr, offer customers the opportunity to lock in rates for up to three weeks for fees as little as a few dollars. Travelers simply pay Options Away or Flyr a nonrefundable fee to hold a fare for a specified period of time, but the company doesn't purchase the ticket until the traveler's plans are finalized. In case of cancellation, the traveler forfeits only the fee.

SOURCE: THE NEW YORK TIMES

USTA's New Monthly Travel Trends Index

The U.S. Travel Association has developed a new monthly report detailing the direction and pace of travel volume to and within the United States. Previewed in December, the U.S. Travel Trends Index includes both a Current Travel Index (CTI) and a Leading Travel Index (LTI). Both measures are subdivided into domestic, international, leisure and business categories. Data for the index will be compiled from trusted sources including the U.S. Department of Commerce, ADARA, Airlines for America, Airlines Reporting Corporation, nSight and STR. The index will be included in USTA's *Outlook* newsletter and posted online monthly to provide an up-to-date look at domestic and international travel trends.



SOURCE: U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

Hotels Are Reimagining the Lobby

Writing for *USA Today*, Jessica Festa says hotels are reinventing their lobbies. Along with retailers and marketers around the world, they are first and foremost catering to millennials. These young travelers want fun spaces and large social gathering places. The Hard Rock Hotel in Palm Springs, for example, has filled its lobby with a bar, seating area, DJ booth, charging stations and an open restaurant. Hotel business centers may be going away, but properties such as Hotel Victor in Miami have filled lobbies with Macintosh computer workstations while the Hotel Schani in Vienna offers desk and workspace rentals, creating contemporary coworking spaces. The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas demonstrates that many hotels are turning lobbies into art galleries, with its rotating floor-to-ceiling video columns, while other hotels, like Edson Hill in Vermont, have eliminated lobbies altogether in favor of a greeter armed with an iPad.

SOURCE: USA TODAY

News & Notes continued on page 20

Travel Goods SHOWCASE Spring 2016

Lojel Expands in Las Vegas

Luggage maker Lojel has expanded its U.S. distribution with an additional



Lojel's new 40,000-square-foot Las Vegas warehouse.

warehouse in Las Vegas, NV. The 40,000-square-foot facility will help Lojel better serve its Southwest regional market. The facility will also operate under the latest cloud-based ERP system to streamline the fulfillment process and improve supply chain management. SOURCE: LOJEL

Eagle Creek Wins One Award and Gives Another

Adventure travel gear manufacturer Eagle Creek has chosen Clear Creek Reps as its 2015 Rep Agency of the Year, an honor bestowed annually on an agency that delivers outstanding results and superior customer service. Clear Creek directs sales in the Rocky Mountain region, and includes Principal Owen Dennehy, Associate Chapman Stewart and the newly retired Smoky Anderson, who represented Eagle Creek since 1977. "They have shown through example how to go above and beyond," said Eagle Creek National Sales Director Tim McGuire. "They embrace change and adapt to the market and pay attention to their clients' needs to achieve great growth. Thanks for the hard work, passion and effort. Excellent individuals make this job fun."

Eagle Creek also wins awards. The company was named by *Outside* magazine as one of the top 100 places to work in the United States. The top 100 companies encourage employees to lead an



[Left to Right] Eagle Creek National Sales Director Tim McGuire with representatives from the company's 2015 Rep Agency of the Year, Clear Creek Reps' Owen Dennehy, Smoky Anderson and Chapman Stewart.

active lifestyle, are eco-conscious and prioritize giving back to the community. "We are honored to be recognized by *Outside* magazine as one of the best places to work," said Eagle Creek President Roger Spatz. "At Eagle Creek, we place a strong emphasis on work-life balance, and to be recognized for creating an inviting and inspiring workplace and investing in our employees and our community is truly gratifying."

SOURCE: EAGLE CREEK

LODIS Merges with The American Belt Company

Private equity firm Kinderhook announced that its portfolio company LODIS Accessories has merged with The American Belt Company. LODIS is a California-based supplier of fashion accessories including clutches, belts, wallets, handbags and travel accessories. The American Belt Company, based in Pennsylvania,

specializes in making men's accessories including belts, wallets and suspenders for branded product, including Carhartt, as well as private label customers. The company had been owned and operated by the Ford family since its founding in 1969. The newly combined company is named American Accessories. SOURCE: AMERICAN ACCESSORIES

Genius Pack Gets Good Press

Genius Pack carry-on bags have been receiving lots of positive press. The bags were featured in Fodor's 2015 list of best carry-on bags, as well as features in *The New York Times*, *GQ Magazine*, *Smarter Travel*, *PC Magazine* and *CNN Money*. The Genius Pack Carry-on Spinner also won *USA Today's* 10Best Readers' Choice Award.

SOURCE: GENIUS PACK



Genius Pack has been the beneficiary of lots of great press.

LCI Brands Selects iVendix B2B E-Commerce Software

LCI Brands, parent company of 13 unique outdoor and travel brands such as Lewis N. Clark and UrbanGear, has selected iVendix business to business e-commerce software from CenterStone Technologies, Inc. The web-based platform, along with companion visual merchandising software called Guide, will allow reps, customers and customer service professionals to access LCI's brands and products at any time and from any location, as well as create line sheets, custom digital catalogs and merchandised views of products in their virtual carts. "We were looking for something that was well established in our industries," said Franz Wieshuber, LCI Brands' senior vice president of sales and marketing, "and would support the breadth of our accessories business. With many travel and outdoor retailers already using the platform, it was an easy decision for us. We expect to provide an unparalleled level of customer service to our specialty and national accounts through visually enticing presentations."

SOURCE: LCI BRANDS

News from Sakroots

The Sak Brand Group has announced that, starting in fall 2016, all of its footwear will be sold under the Sakroots brand. It's the company's fastest growing lifestyle brand worldwide, particularly in warm climates where the company's espadrilles and sandals are expected to perform well. Sakroots is currently sold internationally in Australia, Indonesia, Korea, New Zealand, the Philippines and Spain. Sakroots is also making its way into the lifestyle circuit as an omnichannel brand. The strategy will focus on channels such as surf, outdoors, travel, collegiate, festival and gifting. Consequently, the company will be attending new trade shows and developing new products specifically for these categories. Sakroots has also introduced its newest print, called Brave Beauti. It features watercolor artwork by artist Barbra Ignatiev. The Brave Beauti print has a Native American theme using Indonesian ikat designs and tribal elements, and it will be available in fall 2016 on bags, footwear and travel and fashion accessories.

SOURCE: THE SAK BRAND GROUP

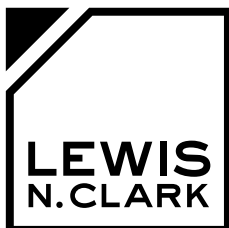


Sakroots' newest print, artist Barbra Ignatiev's Brave Beauti, will debut in fall 2016.

Lewis N. Clark Debuts New Look

Travel gear brand Lewis N. Clark has rebranded itself with a fresh new look. Along with a new logo the company says is meant to represent "a window to the world," the brand has unveiled a new blue and green color scheme as well as all new product packaging. "We want to inspire travelers to find adventure in their travel experiences," said Jen Panattoni, director of business development, "whether that is at the top of a mountain or on a business trip."

SOURCE: LEWIS N. CLARK



Lewis N. Clark's new logo represents "a window to the world."

Travelpro Wins Best Luggage Award

After three years of rigorous testing of 31 carry-on bags, gadget and gear website The Wirecutter has named Travelpro's Platinum[®] Magna[™] 2 22" Expandable Rollaboard[®] Suiter the best carry-on bag money can buy. The closest competition, according to The Wirecutter, is the Travelpro[®] Crew[™] 10 22" Expandable Rollaboard[®] Suiter, which received the second place award. The website cited the Platinum Magna 2's ability to pack five days worth of clothes into a carry-on bag, as well as its premium touches, affordable price and lifetime warranty. "We are honored that the judges recognized two of our outstanding products," said Travelpro's Vice President of Marketing, Scott Applebee, "even noting that the Platinum Magna 2 is better balanced and less prone to tipping than comparable models, and has a sleeker, higher-end aesthetic." For more information on the competition, visit <http://thewirecutter.com/reviews/best-carry-on-luggage>.

SOURCE: TRAVELPRO



Travelpro's Platinum Magna 2 22" Expandable Rollaboard Suiter won The Wirecutter's Best Carry-on Luggage award.

Ricardo Beverly Hills Acquires Stephanie Johnson

Luggage maker Ricardo Beverly Hills has acquired upscale cosmetic case and travel accessory brand Stephanie Johnson. The Stephanie Johnson brand will continue to operate independently, and Johnson herself will remain as the brand president. "I started this business 16 years ago with a vision to create a stylish haven for all of the travel essentials a woman needs to make her look and feel beautiful," Johnson said. "To fulfill this vision I needed to find the right partner to help achieve the next level of growth and scale."

SOURCE: RICARDO BEVERLY HILLS

Ensley Sponsors New Syracuse Athletic Center

Leisure Merchandising Corporation founder and Travel Goods Association Immediate Past Chairman Cliff Ensley donated the funding for a new, state-of-the-art athletic training facility at his alma mater, Syracuse University. Opened last summer, the 87,000-square-foot Ensley Athletic Center features a full-size turf field where the football, lacrosse and other teams can practice year round, as well as a 7,600-square-foot pavilion complete with meeting rooms. Ensley was a walk-on football player and eventual three-sport standout athlete when he attended Syracuse. He was named the school's 1969 Athlete of the Year.

SOURCE: LEISURE MERCHANDISING CORPORATION



Cliff Ensley and his wife Sue outside the new Syracuse University athletic center bearing his name.

Flanabags Now Available at Bed Bath & Beyond

The TSA-compliant AirQuart[®] travel bag from Flanabags is now being sold at Bed Bath & Beyond. The AirQuart is a durable, see-through, quart-sized bag intended to help streamline and de-stress the airport TSA security screening process. The Bed Bath & Beyond agreement marks the first national retail chain to sell the AirQuart bags. "Partnering with Bed Bath & Beyond is the first step in our company's larger product distribution plan," said AirQuart creator Linda Flanagan. "Needless to say, we're honored...and we're optimistic that this national exposure will lead to other amazing things for Flanabags."

SOURCE: FLANABAGS

News & Notes continued on page 22

Portmantos Acquires Luggage Online

E-commerce luggage retailer Portmantos has acquired LuggageOnline.com, a company founded in 1998 as one of the first online luggage and travel goods retailers. Portmantos President Moses Berger is excited to continue the legacy of such a pioneering site. “Portmantos and Luggage Online are, and will continue to be, two distinctly different online platforms,” Berger said. “However, all orders should be billed to and under Portmantos.”



SOURCE: PORTMANTOS

eBags Celebrates Major Milestones

eBags, online retailer of luggage, backpacks, handbags and accessories, just sold its 25 millionth bag. The bag – a North Face Borealis backpack – was delivered to a customer in Laurel, MD. According to company co-founder Peter Cobb, if all 25 million bags were lined up, they would stretch 7,000 miles – or from San Francisco to Athens. “Hitting the 25 million milestone is remarkable,” Cobb said. “It’s gratifying to enhance our customers’ lives, whether via their vacations, business trips, or everyday commutes to work, school, or the gym.” eBags is also celebrating a record-setting 2015 capped off by several sales records set during the holiday shopping season. Black Friday sales totaled the fifth-highest ever for the retailer in both sales and profits, the “Steals of the Day” program hit an all-time high with more than 1,000 deals, eBay sales hit a single-day all-time high as well (beating the previous record from 2011 by 64%) and Amazon partner sales increased 64% over 2014. The holiday season also saw eBags achieve its highest ever Saturday sales in its 17-year history, up 63% over 2014, with eBags branded products up 112%. Mobile sales almost doubled and partner sales sites nearly tripled as well. The company added 20% more products in the fourth quarter of 2015, and ended the year with record sales. SOURCE: EBAGS

Consumers Increasingly Choose Experiences Over Things

Shoppers are choosing experiences instead of things and that new dynamic poses a real challenge for retailers. Restaurant sales are up, as are air travel and entertainment spending. Video gaming and streaming services such as Netflix and Spotify are earning up to \$750 a year from the average millennial. Consumers are spending, but not on the same things they used to. Instead of expensive clothing and accessories, Americans are more likely instead to shell out dollars on dinners and vacations. Big retailers such as Macy’s and Nordstrom are adjusting to the change – or trying to – in creative ways. They figure if shoppers want an experience, they will provide one. Nordstrom, for instance, is adding counters in shoe departments to allow shoppers to customize their footwear by altering fabrics, cuts, heel heights and more. At its Flatiron store in Manhattan, athletic clothing retailer lululemon has begun offering a concierge service to help shoppers book exercise classes or customize running routes. Even Urban Outfitters recently purchased a pizza chain because of the growth it spotted in the casual dining sector. Vacations and restaurants are projected to see consumer spending grow by more than 25% in the next three years. SOURCE: THE WASHINGTON POST

Twenty Great Retail Ideas

The National Retail Federation took a look at some enviable success stories from various retailers to compile a list of 20 great ideas worth stealing. The list includes concepts such as integrating products with an experience and a lifestyle; bringing concierge service to online shopping; giving customers a peek behind the scenes to help them feel a part of the brand; showing sincere appreciation to customers, even in little ways; building meaningful, long-term relationships through unique membership opportunities; and making the most of every social media opportunity to meaningfully connect with customers. The list is full of great ideas and examples of retailers putting the suggestions into practice. The full list can be seen online at <https://nrf.com/news/20-ideas-worth-stealing-2016>.

SOURCE: NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION

Go Shopping on Your Xbox

Looking to take a break from gaming? Don’t throw out that old Xbox, just change the game to shopping. Microsoft recently launched The Mall on Xbox One, a virtual shopping platform and changing room that allows shoppers to virtually try on clothes. SOURCE: POWA TECHNOLOGIES

Retailers Should Learn from Startups

According to Eric Olson, National Retail Federation’s vice president of content and education, the most popular trend at this year’s NRF BIG Show is the importance of innovation and agility for retailers large and small. “The biggest craze is to think like a startup,” Olson said. “It’s one of the overriding themes this year. There is a sense that retailers do see a need to keep innovation at the forefront of what they’re doing, and how better to do that?” Olson suggested small retailers team up with outside partners such as XRC Labs, which are better able to carry out the testing and research to find the next big things in retail. He also said retailers are beginning to master the bridge between online and physical retail locations, finally understanding that the two aspects are utterly dependent on one another. The digital experience can, and must, be brought into the physical store as part of the overall effort to refine the customer experience. SOURCE: NATIONAL RETAIL FEDERATION