NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Showcases U.S. Communities, Small Businesses Through First Major Destination Immersion of 2025

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HOUSTON, TX (April 8, 2025) — Brand USA, the destination marketing organization for the United States, concluded its 2025 Latin American USA Destination Immersion Program with a finale event last night at the Downtown Aquarium in Houston. As one of the organization's signature trade engagement programs, these events serve as an immersive educational opportunity, providing international travel advisors with firsthand experiences to better sell U.S. travel experiences. The effort also highlights the organization's leadership in promoting the United States as a top international destination and the vital role inbound travel plays in fueling economic growth and supporting jobs in communities across the country.

"At Brand USA, we are proud to showcase 12 states in this latest effort to increase legitimate inbound travel and build economic opportunity at the local level," said Brand USA President and CEO Fred Dixon. "Destination product education through strategic immersions is a critical component of growing lucrative inbound travel, giving travel sellers a deeper understanding of the USA's immense offerings from small towns to iconic experiences. Programs like this convert on the ground training into meaningful economic impact through high-spending visitors in communities across the country."

This year's Latin America USA Destination Immersion Program (also known as a MegaFam in travel trade parlance, "fam" being short for product familiarization) featured six curated itineraries across 12 states and 25 cities, from Talkeetna, Alaska to Shreveport, Louisiana and from the Rocky Mountains of Colorado to the Mid-Atlantic. This experience equips travel advisors with the tools, knowledge, and firsthand experience needed to generate new and expanded itineraries—encouraging longer stays, deeper exploration, and increased visitor spending.

Leticia Maia of RMG Viagens & Turismo of Brazil said, "It was an incredible experience to get to know new destinations with local and specialized tourism professionals in the USA. The country has a lot more to offer than we think, stunning views, so much nature, food diversity, art, cultural attractions… I can't wait to share everything I've seen and learned [with my clients]."

These efforts are especially timely as the United States prepares to welcome the world during a decade of major events, including the 2026 World Cup, America's 250th Anniversary, and the 2028 and 2034 summer and winter Olympic Games. Educating and empowering the travel trade now ensures they are ready to meet the moment and promote the United States as a destination worth exploring beyond the games themselves.

International inbound travel is a key pillar of the U.S. economy. In 2024 alone, Brand USA showcased more than 1,200 U.S. businesses to the world, drove over 1.6 million legitimate visitors to the country, and supported nearly 80,000 American jobs. Brand USA's efforts focus on dispersing this economic benefit beyond gateway cities, ensuring a more equitable distribution of tourism dollars in communities nationwide.

Damien Chapman, owner of Orlandeaux's Cross Lake Café—one of the oldest continuously operating Black-owned businesses in the U.S.— believes Shreveport's rich culinary heritage is one of the city's greatest ambassadors.

Chapman said, "It's so very important to have international travelers come here to Shreveport and to eat at Orlandeaux's Café. We host [international visitors] from all over the world, [they] come just to get that Louisiana flavor. And you can't get our flavor anywhere else in the world."

Josh Evans, general manager of the Shreveport Aquarium, shares that perspective—emphasizing that welcoming international visitors not only drives tourism, but also fuels economic growth.

“[International visitors] spend a lot of money here. Because of that, we can work to expand the aquarium, create new exhibits, and create new job opportunities for those individuals that live here in the Shreveport area,” said Evans. "We get a lot of reviews [from] international guests that have come and the wonderful experience they had, how knowledgeable our staff was that answered all of their questions, and about the animals that they've seen here at our aquarium that they haven't seen anywhere else."

Each itinerary concluded in Houston, allowing participants to engage with fellow travel trade members, share destination insights, and learn about offerings outside of their routes.

“Houston receives about 2.4 million annual international visitors that have an enormous economic impact on our city,” said Jorge Franz, senior vice president of tourism and industry relations for Visit Houston. “Our partnership with Brand USA is incredibly powerful and valuable. Brand USA helps extend our [marketing efforts] when we're working to attract international visitors to our city. When we [work] together, we recognize that we’re all part of the United States—and that’s the goal: bring visitors to the U.S. and then inspire them to explore our cities. Brand USA helps increase our visibility and amplify our message.”

"International travelers make up 20% of the annual transient business at the Westin Galleria and Westin Oaks, contributing nearly $3 million in revenue each year," said Mark Weatherall general manager, Westin Galleria and Westin Oaks. "Without that business, we would be in a much different place. International travelers stay longer and they spend more."

Brand USA remains committed to driving international visitation, strengthening the tourism sector, and supporting economic vitality in communities large and small. As the United States enters a new era of opportunity, Brand USA will continue to lead the way—leveraging global milestones to elevate the nation’s brand and drive demand for U.S. travel experiences worldwide.

The full list of itineraries includes:

- **Historic Roads: Heritage, Hidden Gems & Timeless Tales**
  - Washington, DC
  - Fairfax, Virginia
  - Baltimore, Maryland
  - Frederick, Maryland
  - Houston, Texas
- **The Last Frontier: An Alaskan Exploration**
  - Anchorage, Alaska
  - Talkeetna, Alaska
  - Fairbanks, Alaska
  - Houston, Texas
- **Pacific Peaks & Scenic Shores**
  - Seattle, Washington
  - Ruston, Washington
  - Hood River, Oregon
  - Portland, Oregon
  - Houston, Texas
- **Midwest Road Trip: Iconic Cities to Historic Trails**
  - Chicago, Illinois
  - Springfield, Illinois
  - Moline, Illinois
  - Cedar Rapids, Iowa
  - Des Moines, Iowa
  - Houston, Texas
- **Southern Stories: From Big Easy to Lone Star**
  - New Orleans, Louisiana
  - Lafayette, Louisiana
  - Shreveport, Louisiana
  - Dallas, Texas
  - Houston, Texas
- **Peaks, Brews, and Western Views**
  - Denver, Colorado
  - Fort Collins, Colorado
  - Cheyenne, Wyoming
  - Laramie, Wyoming
  - Houston, Texas

The image shows participants enjoying a meal at Orlandeaux’s Cross Lake Café in Shreveport, Louisiana—one of the local small businesses featured during the program.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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