BRAND USA

NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA announces new Social Learning platform and encourages Travel Agents to enter Fam Photo Competition

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Brand USA, the tourism marketing body for the United States of America, has announced the development of a new online Social Learning site for travel agent training.

This innovative programme is designed to inspire and engage agents utilising an interactive platform that will connect US destinations with products and experiences. This means that agents can navigate and learn either by region (i.e., Pacific, Mid-West, South Atlantic) or by experience, such as Great Outdoors, National Parks, Fly-Drive and Family.

The training platform allows agents to think much more along the lines of a consumer, rather than by state borders. As tests are taken on experiences, agents earn e-badges and can become, for example, a USA Fly-Drive Specialist.

State training programmes currently in place will also be accessed through the site, as will bespoke webinars, blogs, live chats and travel advice.

The site is currently being built by UBM and is due to launch at International Pow Wow in June 2013.

Jay Gray, Vice President Global Partnership Development, Brand USA, said: “It’s an exciting platform that will provide both in-depth experiential information, as well as links to existing State training programmes, and ensures an interactive schedule is fed with relevant, dynamic content. We are really enthused at having something like this to provide for travel agents.”

In addition, Brand USA is calling for all UK and Ireland-based travel agents to enter the new Fam Photo Competition.

www.famphotoUSA.co.uk has been built for agents from the UK and Ireland to upload their photographs taken on familiarisation trips in the USA – any trip and photo taken in the USA since January 2011 is applicable.

The winning 12 travel agents will have their photographs printed in a new 2013 Brand USA desk calendar, which will be distributed to all entrants and to UK and Irish travel agents. The overall winner will win a place on Brand USA’s inaugural Megafam in spring 2013.

Photos can be uploaded from a camera or mobile phone – photos of landscapes, people or animals taken in colour, black and white or Instagram are all welcome. The website will allow entrants to upload up to five photos, along with their details and locations of the photos.

Agents attending WTM on Thursday 8th November will be able to upload photos on the Brand USA stand: **NA245 Booth 12**

All entries will be judged and the final decision made by photographers Lisa Young* and Marc Sethi**.

Jay Gray, Vice President Global Partnership Development, Brand USA, said: “We are delighted to announce the launch of the travel agent fam photo competition. It has been identified as a way of engaging the UK and Irish travel trade, in particular front line sales staff, with both USA product and Brand USA. It will help to raise awareness of the USA, invigorate sales and generate a stream of ‘brand ambassadors’ within the UK and Irish travel trade. The competition will unite all fam activities by State DMOs, tour operators and airlines and we’re looking forward to seeing some impressive photos.”

The competition is open now at www.famphotoUSA.co.uk. The closing date is Friday 9th November 2012 and winners will be announced on the site on Friday 16th November 2012.

Brand USA was established by the Travel Promotion Act in 2010 to spearhead the nation's first global marketing effort to promote the United States as a premier travel destination and communicate U.S. entry/exit policies and procedures. Formed as the Corporation for Travel Promotion, the public-private entity began operations in May 2011 and does business as Brand USA. Brand USA works in close partnership with the travel industry to maximise the economic and social benefits of travel. Through its call to action, DiscoverAmerica.com, Brand USA inspires travellers to explore the United States of America's boundless possibilities. For industry or partner information about Brand USA, visit www.TheBrandUSA.com.

Discover this land, like never before at DiscoverAmerica.com

* **Lisa Young** (http://lisayoung.co.uk/) is a London-based freelance photographer and travel writer. She produces photos, video and articles about her escapades, which have taken her to over 55 countries. Lisa's photos have been used on various film and TV sets, including *ER*, *Without a Trace* and *House*.

** **March Sethi** (www.marcsethi.com) is a London-based freelance photographer specialising in portraiture and reportage, live music, festivals, and performing artists. Regular clients include the BBC, Something Else, Festival Republic, Strummerville, Gone Fishing, A_LittleBird, and Outgoing

Notes to editors:

- The judging panel will consist of Brand USA representatives who will compile a shortlist.
- Photographers Lisa Young and Marc Sethi will make the final decision.

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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.