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MEDIA RELEASE

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International travel pros to tour Abilene

ABILENE, TX – Thanks to some smart action from local leaders, Abilene will be included as one of only two professional excursions organized by the National Tour Association when the industry group meets in Texas this week.

Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau staff, volunteers, and community partners will show off the city to a group of international tour professionals this afternoon through Tuesday during an expedition organized through the NTA and the Texas Office of the Governor, Economic Development & Tourism.

The trip underscores the tourism's value to the state economy, and travel is one industry where Texas continues to see progress, said Brad Smyth, Tourism Director for the governor's office.

"It is one of our largest industries, and it's growing," Smyth said. "Leisure travel to Texas grew by approximately 4 percent last year. Travel spending directly supported 664,000 jobs for Texans in 2016, representing the sixth consecutive year of travel industry job growth."

NTA is holding its annual marketplace in San Antonio this week, bringing tour operators from around the world to convene in Texas.

More than 15 from the U.S., Canada, and even China will journey to see historic highlights in Abilene, Waco and San Angelo on a whirlwind tour dubbed "Forts, Frontiers & Fixer-Uppers."

The familiarization trip was orchestrated when ACVB Executive Director Nanci Liles reached out to the state tourism office and suggested that the NTA meeting was a chance to let operators visit "Real Texas" a little farther north.

"We thought this was a great opportunity to collaborate with regional partners," Liles said.

"The state tourism office added Waco. It's a great fit. Our own Margaret Hoogstra, Texas Forts Trail Director, is guiding the operators on their adventure through the sights and sounds of the Texas Frontier."

In Abilene, the group will hit the downtown cultural district, peruse the new sculpture garden, take in regional history at Frontier Texas!, as well as enjoy other treat stops, including learning how to make chaps and cowboy hats, before the gang treks to Fort Chadbourne and on to San Angelo.

Located in the T& P Depot landmark downtown, the Abilene Convention & Visitors Bureau leverages local hotel tax into economic development. The ACVB's tourism professionals harness the latest travel trends, research and strategies to bring groups and leisure visitors to Abilene. Travelers to the Abilene MSA produced more than \$11.5 million in local receipts in 2016, bringing happy people to stay in Abilene hotels, shop, dine, and enjoy sports, arts and attractions. Established as an affiliate of the Abilene Chamber of Commerce in 1970, the bureau has improved the quality of life and enhanced the Abilene visitor experience for nearly 50 years.

To learn about Abilene's best adventures, see the ACVB's fully loaded calendar of events, helpful information, and discounts for travelers at www.abilenevisitors.com. Follow Visit Abilene on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for the latest updates.