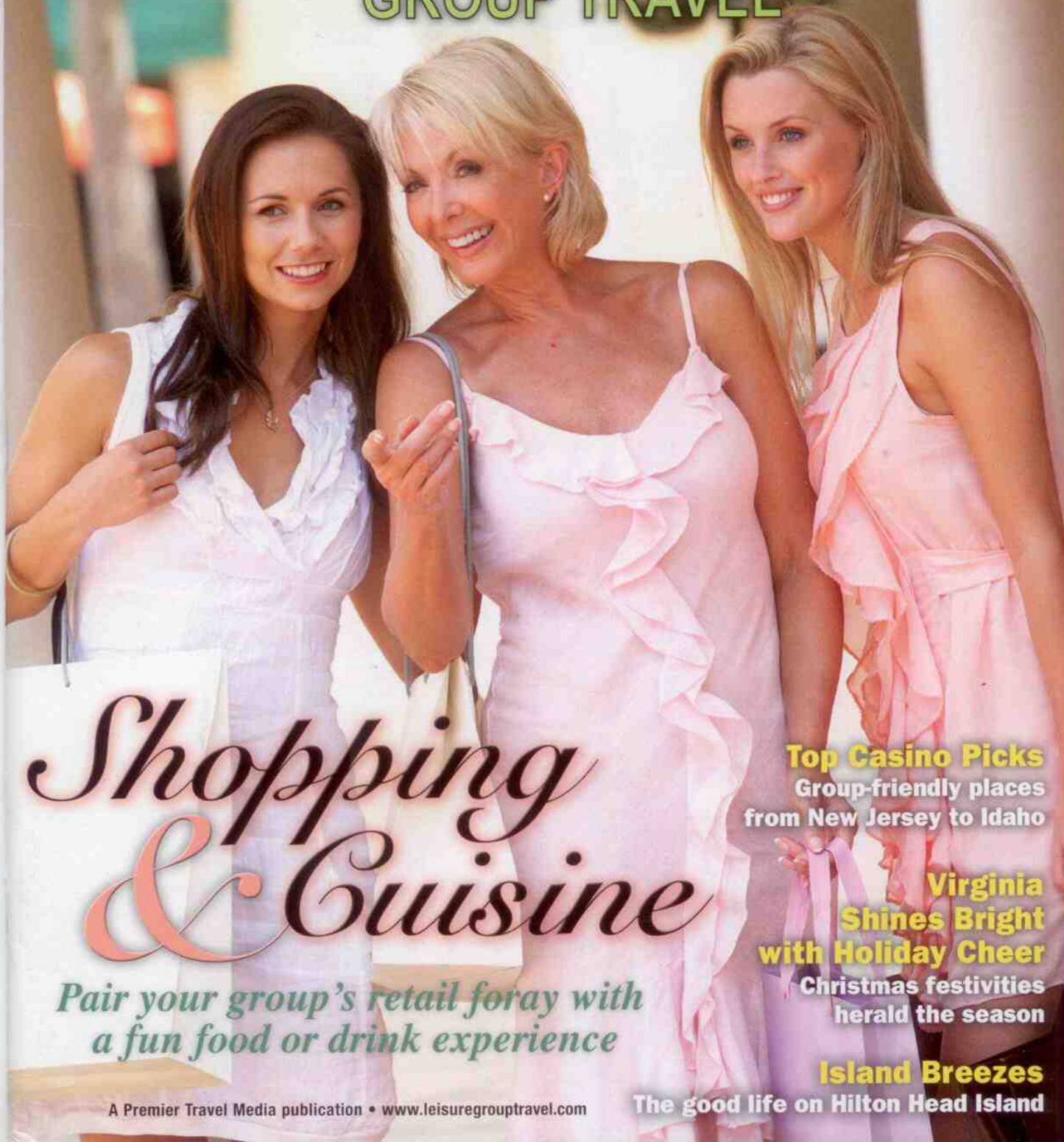


LEISURE

FEBRUARY 2015

GROUP TRAVEL



Shopping & Cuisine

*Pair your group's retail foray with
a fun food or drink experience*

Top Casino Picks
Group-friendly places
from New Jersey to Idaho

**Virginia
Shines Bright
with Holiday Cheer**
Christmas festivities
herald the season

Island Breezes
The good life on Hilton Head Island

A Premier Travel Media publication • www.leisuregrouptravel.com

LEISURE

VOL. 25, NO. 1 • FEBRUARY 2015

GROUP TRAVEL

contents

COVER STORY

10 Recipe for Success: Shopping & Cuisine

BY CAROLYN FEIMSTER

Flavor your group's retail foray with a fun food or drink experience

FEATURES

16 Must-See Metroplex BY LAUREN REINIGER

18 Hilton Head Island BY DAVE BODLE

59 Virginia Shines with Holiday Cheer BY DAVE BODLE

64 Branson for All Seasons BY DON HEIMBURGER

68 Oklahoma City Remembers BY RANDY MINK

70 Connecticut's Litchfield Hills

BY RANDY MINK

72 Top Casino Picks

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

RELIGIOUS TRAVEL PLANNING GUIDE

18

Sonesta and other big names are part of the Hilton Head resort scene.



4 February 2015



10

ON THE COVER:

Time for leisurely shopping keeps tour groups happy.

COLUMNS

6 On My Mind

BY JEFF GAYDUK

8 On Tour

BY MARTY SARBEBY DE SOUTO

78 On Marketing

BY DAVE BODLE

16



Recipe for Success: Shopping & Cuisine

Flavor your group's retail foray with a fun food or drink experience

With "foodie" becoming one of the most overused words in today's vocabulary, the new word for 2015 is "cuisine-tainment." This demonstrates how foodies have transitioned to a new level, seeking unique experiences during their quest for great food while traveling.

As the group travel market continues to evolve, group-friendly shopping centers are working diligently to keep up with the pace. Savvy centers are offering their versions of "cuisine-tainment." So what is it? It's an opportunity for your groups to have fun while enjoying fabulous cuisine.

Here are some examples of experiences that your clients will love:

Noodles, Noodles, Noodles

At Westfield San Francisco Centre, groups love the noodle pulling demonstration at MY China. What is a noodle pull? It's world champion noodle dancers pulling giant balls of dough into thousands of thin noodles in minutes, using only their bare hands. MY China's owner is TV personality Martin Yan. (mychinacafe.com)

Meizhou Dongpo is the hottest Chinese restaurant to hit the U.S. This noodle restaurant at Westfield's Century City in the Los Angeles area hails straight from China and has Chinese travelers visiting in scores. It's also a hot spot with local Asians. **Contact: Frank Yang at frank.meizhou@gmail.com.**

Local Flavors and More

In Boston, Faneuil Hall Marketplace is a "cuisine-tainment" delight with the world-famous Quincy Market Food Colonnade and a variety of sit-down restaurants that cater to groups. Looking for good old-fashioned fun? Try Dick's Last Resort in the Quincy Market building. Dick's serves up buckets of tasty grub, including jumbo half-pound burgers and seafood plates, to groups of all sizes. What makes it unique is the delivery—the food is served in steel pails brought to your table by cheeky servers with steak knife-sharp wit. Dick's wisecracking servers have always played a central role in the brand's personality by bringing fun back to dining. **Contact: Hannah Davis, 617-267-8080; dickslastresort.com.**

The Outlets at Assembly Row, which just opened this past summer outside of Boston, is developing a "Behind the Scenes" dining experience where a group can mix and mingle with the chef as guests receive an exclusive tour of the kitchen, a cooking demon-



Earls Kitchen + Bar at Assembly Row, outside of Boston

stration and a special meal. Says Earls Kitchen + Bar Executive Chef Tim Pennington, "What a wonderful way for small groups to be immersed in the theater of cuisine first, then enjoy a special tasting menu prepared especially for them". Earls is an "upscale casual" restaurant and bar with a cook-from-scratch kitchen highlighting the use of fresh local ingredients. Future plans call for the program to be rolled out in several other Assembly Row restaurants so that the group can decide on the type of food and price point they desire.

Also, a new family-friendly beer garden, American Fresh Brew-house, just opened utilizing repurposed shipping containers, and Somerville Brewing Company will soon be brewing beer out of another shipping container, which will be a first in the New England area.

Assembly Row seeks to provide events that bring in different crowds of people for purposes other than just shopping. The Assembly Row Bar Stars Event, for example, features bartenders from Assembly Row restaurants who compete for the best cocktail.

For more information on the above programs, contact tourism@assemblyrow.com or visit assemblyrow.com.

In New Orleans, Crescent City Cooks offers group cooking classes in the French Quarter. Not only will attendees learn how to capture the culture of New Orleans in a dish, but they can also shop in the restaurant's new store for utensils, spices and recipes. (theculturaltraveler.com/crescent-city-cooks)

In the Spirit of Things

In Las Vegas it is all about tastings, and restaurants now are offering "spirits tastings." Yardbird Southern Table & Bar at the Venetian offers Southern hospitality and welcomes groups of 15 to 100 people. Groups enjoy their own private dining room with family-style, prix-fixe menus catering to every palate. Now comes the fun part! Nicole Ismert, sales & marketing manager, explains, "We urge our groups to get creative and develop custom experiences that

**YOU HAVEN'T SEEN TEXAS,
UNTIL YOU'VE SEEN THE
TEXAS RANGER HALL OF FAME
AND MUSEUM!**



The official Hall of Fame and Museum of the Texas Rangers, the oldest state law enforcement agency.

(877) 750-8631
www.TexasRanger.org
Special Group Rates Available!

ON SHOPPING

encourage team building and interaction, such as bourbon tastings, cooking instruction or whatever your creative mind can think up." For more information, contact Yardbird Las Vegas at 702-297-6541.

More fun tastings can be found at Double Helix. Already famous for its wine bar, they recently opened a wine and whiskey bar at Town Square in Las Vegas offering 40 wines by the glass and over 100 whiskey labels. This is in addition to their champagne-and-chocolate tastings. **Contact:** stephanie@dhvegas.com; doublehelixwine.com.

How about a wine-pairing lunch followed by a tour of the vineyard where the wines were made? Sophie's Bistro in Somerset, New Jersey is developing a program to launch this summer. Once the meal is done and guests have determined their favorite wines, the group can visit the nearby vineyard for a tour and buy what they liked at lunch. **Contact:** sophiesbistro@comcast.net; sophiesbistro.net

Dining Card Programs

Many centers offer a commissionable dining voucher or card program at net rates, providing the group with a variety of choices. Examples of centers with a dining card program include Fashion Show and Grand Canal Shoppes in Las Vegas and Fashion Island and Irvine Spectrum Center in Orange County, California. Each center's card is valid at dozens of cafes and full-service restaurants. At Westfield San Francisco Centre, groups enjoy hot or cold selections from California's gourmet market, Bristol Farms.

There are also voucher programs at Faneuil Hall Marketplace in Boston and Union Station DC. At Westfield San Francisco Centre and Union Station D.C., groups can package in a historic architectural tour. **Contact:** carolyn@historichoppinganddining.com

Carolyn J. Feinster, SCMD, is owner/president of C.J.F. Marketing International. The company's primary focus is on developing results-oriented programs to enhance the tourism experience at shopping centers, retail districts, and other commercial properties and organizations. Feinster can be reached at 718-757-8489, carolyn@cjfmarketinginternational.com, or log on to cjfmarketinginternational.com.

CUT
Go for unusual. Go for unpretentious.
Go a little bit north.
LOOSE

A refreshing break from the ordinary isn't far at all. It's in Fargo. From one-of-a-kind cultural events to a vivid array of dining, shopping, nightlife, sports and arts, every corner offers something new, fun and pointedly unique. Cut yourself off from the everyday, if just for a little while. We're just north of wherever normal is.

FARGO
NORTH OF NORMAL

Fargo • Moorhead • West Fargo | fargomoorhead.org

[facebook.com/fargomoorhead](https://www.facebook.com/fargomoorhead) [@fargomoorhead](https://twitter.com/fargomoorhead) [@fargomoorhead](https://www.instagram.com/fargomoorhead)

