

## ASTA Southwest Chapter



Four distinct states, one fantastic chapter!

December 17, 2009

*Fran Lindsey, Chapter President*

Merry Christmas and holiday greetings to you all. I hope you have a joyous season with your friends and family, and that 2010 is your best year ever!

2009 can't come to an end too quickly for most of us. I know I am looking forward to a fresh start in 2010. The travel business has always had its ups and downs and I am certainly looking forward to an "up". The fact that you are reading this means you are a survivor and a creative travel agent, who has figured how to take lemons and make lemonade. I look forward to seeing you and working with you in the new year. I am nearing the end of my final term as president, and once again I am looking for people who are interested in serving ASTA on the chapter level. The Southwest Chapter will have elections in early summer 2010 and we need you to get involved! To the Board Members and Chapter Chairmen, I say a special thank you for all you've done. Keep up the good work!

Just over a year ago we started our Webinar program at both the National and Chapter level. Both were successful. Just last week, our international webinar which focused on how to get more business from the U.S, ASTA received over 300 registrations from a worldwide audience. Only ASTA members can access the past webinars and listen to them at their leisure. Miss one? Just go to.....

<http://asta.org/ELibrary/content.cfm?ItemNumber=2864&navItemNumber=2863>

*Robbi Hamida, Chapter Vice President*

### **2009 In Review**

2009 has been a strange and tough year, but the nice thing about the end of the year, is that all of that is behind us. As we wrap up December, we look ahead taking what we learned from the challenges that faced us.

Not only was your chapter busy, but ASTA was busy as well. Fighting United Airlines' select merchant fees that were announced in late June. There was some success, but the fight continues. ASTA endorsed legislation through House Resolution 1509 to allow a standard deduction of \$1500 for home office expenses and simplify and reduce the tax burden for home based agents. ASTA also endorsed legislation to raise the write off amount to \$20,000 from \$5,000 of start-up costs to help more businesses get off the ground.

Secure flight after some bumps was finally launched. Although still raising some confusion, ASTA is still watching and working with the TSA to ensure that travel agents are assisting their customers in complying with

the new rules.

H1N1 created some interesting situations for travel agents and suppliers around the globe. Although not as bad as originally thought, many travelers became catatonic. It's looking like people are now willing to overlook the dreaded Swine Flu.

Who knows what 2010 will bring, but we do know the outlook looks bright. Just make sure you jump in with both feet, plant them firmly and sell, sell, sell.

We hope to see you at one of our chapter events scheduled in 2010. Look for more information on [www.astasw.org](http://www.astasw.org) or in this bi-monthly newsletter.

Have a safe and happy holiday!

*Melinda Kelly, Chapter Secretary*

### ***Optimism and ASTAPAC***

As 2009 grinds to an end, there is much to be grateful for. The economy seems to be slowly moving in the right direction and we're still here. In Taos, our clients feel optimistic. The snow is falling, the mountains are white and the all important ski season is off to a good start. We are getting 2010 bookings for Europe, family cruises, and even African safaris and World Cup trips.

I'd like to say a little thank you to ASTAPAC, which marked its 30th Anniversary this year. That's 30 years as a watchdog, speaking with the collective voice of ASTA's membership to the US Congress, the White House as well as state governments. It's a big job and they can use our moral as well as financial support. Be sure to take a look at the ASTAPAC section of the ASTA website to learn more about governmental affairs, to find your own member of Congress, and to learn about Federal and State legislation which does now or may soon affect travel agents. And while you're on the site, be sure to make your contribution to their work.

*Yolanda Meador, Chapter Treasurer*

### ***Turkish Food, Cuisine and Drinks***

Turkey is rightly famed for its cuisine, which is rich and savory, not particularly spicy-hot, with abundant use of vegetables. This makes vegetarians happy. For those individuals with food allergies please make note of the following:

Though based on lamb and mutton, Turkish cuisine includes beef and chicken, no pork of course, as well as all sorts of seafood. The most common preparations are roasting and grilling, which produce the famous Turkish Kebabs, including döner kebab, the national dish, and köfte, the workingman's favorite.

Snacks, side dishes and street foods include gözleme (fresh-baked flat bread folded over savory ingredients—a sort of Turkish *crêpe*—and *börek*, pastry filled with cheese and vegetables or meat. A traditional favorite is the

Istanbul fish sandwich.

As for drinks, pure spring water is always available. Drink only bottled water. Some tap water is safe, but it's difficult to be sure.

Turkey is famous for its succulent fruit, and thus for its fruit juices. There's also ayran (yogurt mixed with spring water—tastes like buttermilk), which goes well with Kebap (roast lamb).

Islam forbids drinking alcohol, but many Turks are European in their lifestyle and enjoy alcoholic beverages with meals: beer, wine and raki (clear grape brandy flavored with anise and diluted with water) are the favorites, although gin, vodka, whiskey and liqueurs are also served.

There are great half-day Turkish cooking classes available in Istanbul.

See you in Turkey – April 19<sup>th</sup> thru 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2010!

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