



January 2015

ASTA Mid America Chapter

Happy New Year
2015

CHAPTER OF THE YEAR 2014

Dear «First Name»,

Your Mid-America Board started 2015 by inviting ASTA National's new chair, Roger Block, to lay out his leadership agenda at its "All Board" meeting in Chicago.

Roger said that one of his primary goals is to have a significant increase (by over 50%) of people in attendance at the next Global Convention, which is being held in Washington DC. Roger believes that large goals energize an organization and that an ASTA sponsored event of that magnitude will attract a similarly large investment by suppliers, who are anxious to have visibility with travel professionals who utilize both preferred and non preferred providers.

Roger said Chapters are the heart of ASTA and he will be seeking ways to support and strengthen chapter activities. He called for an increased effort to attract younger members by emphasizing the fun as well as the exceptional opportunities our industry provides.

He feels active grass roots organizations that are closely involved with suppliers are the best way to build chapter prestige and attract professional, engaged members.

Roger also noted that major issues such as:

1. FAA Re-authorizations
2. Independent Contractor Issues
3. Cruise Ship Regulations
4. Government Travel Restrictions

Will test ASTA National's core responsibilities to "[Protect and Defend](#)" our combined interests.

Other ongoing efforts by ASTA to institute uniform standards for state regulations involving taxes, ARC and travel insurance has required ASTA to make a significant financial investment over the last 7 years. This means Chapter support for ASTAPAC must take on an even higher priority in the future if these strategic goals are to be sustained and objectives met.

Roger emphasized that increased fee commitments by consortiums and online agencies have strengthened ASTA financially and this year for the first time in over 20 years all three major airlines will appear together at ASTA's Global Convention.

This is a good time to continue building upon our positive momentum as a chapter.

Calendar of Events

Chapter Events: No Chapter Events are planned at this time.

National Events:

[ASTA Destination Expo | Feb 26 - Mar 1, 2015 | Marrakech, Morocco](#)

[ASTA Legislative Day | March 19, 2015 | Washington DC](#)

[ASTA Premium Business Summit | June 8-9, 2015 | Chicago](#)

[ASTA Global Convention | Aug 29 - Sept 1, 2015 | Washington DC](#)

Warmly,

Claudia

Claudia Darling
Chapter President

Board Members:

Dan Lanser, 1st Vice President

Barbara Mazzola, 2nd Vice President

Ann Waters, Treasurer

Pam Faust, Secretary



ASTA Destination Expo

Morocco, Feb 26 -March 1, 2015

There is hardly a country more spectacular

January 2015

Happy New Year!

This month's newsletter is devoted to one of the most exciting changes we are going to see for the travel industry in 2015 - an easing of travel restrictions for Americans for travel to Cuba. While not a total lifting of the 50-year ban on most travel to Cuba, it is an immediate opportunity to travel agencies that can now, effective Friday January 16, sell travel to Cuba to authorized travelers without obtaining a special license from the Office of Foreign Asset Control (OFAC).

With this change in policy comes many important questions from agents on how to stay within the law and tap into this new market. Given the importance of this development and the influx of member questions into ASTA Headquarters, this newsletter will help answer your questions. Airlines and cruise lines already are quickly ramping up plans to serve Cuba on a regular basis, so new opportunities are around the corner and we want to help you be prepared.

The main resources for ASTA members to help understand the new Cuba policy are:

A recent [Member Alert](#) from the ASTA Government Affairs Department will be your main fact sheet, complete with several links to important OFAC documents. Use this as your main legal guide.

We prepared [Talking Points](#) to help you understand ASTA's overall position on the need for free and unfettered travel for all Americans, and what we expect from the easing of these restrictions. You may use these as a guide when talking to the press or issuing any statements of your own.

See our [press release](#) on this for quotes from Zane Kerby.

We are preparing a webinar to answer all of your questions on how to sell Cuba. Please check back on ASTA.org in the near future for details.

Just a reminder to all agents that "tourism" in the general sense or "vacationing" in Cuba is still not permitted under U.S. law. To further help guide you on selling travel to Cuba and answering your clients' questions, here are a few frequently asked questions:

Q: What are the 12 categories of travel that OFAC is now authorizing under a general license?

A: The 12 are: family visits; official business of the U.S. government, foreign governments, and certain intergovernmental organizations; journalistic activity; professional research and professional meetings; educational activities; religious activities; public performances, clinics, workshops, athletic and other competitions, and exhibitions; support for the Cuban people; humanitarian projects; activities of private foundations or research or educational institutes; exportation, importation, or transmission of information or information materials; and certain authorized export transactions.

Q: Are airlines and travel service providers required to verify that an individual traveler is authorized to travel to Cuba?

A: Persons subject to U.S. jurisdiction providing authorized carrier or travel services must retain for at least five years from the date of the transaction a certification from each customer indicating the provision of the CACR that authorizes the person to travel to Cuba. In the case of a customer traveling under a specific license, a copy of the license must be maintained on file. The names and addresses of individual travelers must also be maintained on file for at least five years. See 31 CFR § 515.572(b).

Q: Are there any spending limits for Americans in Cuba?

A: The per diem rate previously imposed no longer applies, and there is no specific dollar limit on authorized expenses. In addition, travelers are authorized to acquire in Cuba and import as accompanied baggage into the United States merchandise with a value not to exceed \$400 per person, provided that no more than \$100 of the merchandise consists of alcohol or tobacco products and the merchandise is imported for personal use only.

Q: Has there been any announcements as to changes in visa requirements for U.S. citizens traveling to Cuba?

A: We have not heard of any changes yet. Anyone traveling to Cuba, even for authorized travel, must obtain a "tourist card." Here is what the Cuban Government says on its website:

The Tourist Visa or Tourist Card is only for purposes of tourism to Cuba. It is valid for one single entrance into national territory for a 30-day trip and can be extended for an additional 30 days at the office in the hotel where one has accommodations or with the immigration authority. Minors must have their own Tourist Card even if they are travelling under their parents' passport(s). To obtain this visa in person at the Consulate, these documents are needed--valid passport, plane ticket with entry and return dates, payment of the Consular fee for this service. These documents are needed to obtain this visa by mail--legible photocopy of valid Passport; legible photocopy of plane ticket with entry and return dates; payment of the Consular fee for this service; stamped self-addressed envelope for the visa to be sent back.

We hope this information is helpful and we look forward to seeing you in 2015.

Upcoming Webinars from ASTA Headquarters

[Selling Australia and New Zealand](#) | Jan 26, 2015 | 2pm ET

[An Early look at Avalon Waterways 2016 with Current Trends and Promotions to Help You Sell More Avalon Waterways Today!](#) | Jan 28, 2015 | 2pm ET

[Exploring Opportunities with Nexion](#) | Jan 29, 2015

[Travel Insurance 101](#) | Feb 4, 2015 | 2pm ET

[Sales 101 with Travel Quest's CEO](#) | Feb 20, 2015 | 2pm ET

[What's New with Celebrity Cruises in 2015](#) | Feb 27, 2015 | 2pm ET

Recent ASTA Member Alerts & Press Releases

[Administration Issues New Regulations on Cuba Travel](#) | Jan 15, 2015

[ASTA Lays out 2015 Advocacy Agenda, Highlights 2014 "Wins"](#) | Jan 8, 2015

[ASTA Compares Differences in New Hotel Free Wifi Policies for Members](#) | Jan 6, 2015

The global advocates for travel. Go with the pros.

To decline all e-mails from this chapter, [click here](#).