Each year, as spring bursts into bloom, the first full week of May is celebrated as National Travel & Tourism Week. The tradition was established in 1983 by a Congressional joint resolution. This year, between May 3 and 11, there have been local rallies, events, proclamations, resolutions and lectures focusing on the benefits that Travel & Tourism brings to every U.S. state and almost every nation on earth.

Travel & Tourism is one of America's largest industries, projected to generate $2.1 trillion in economic output and support 14.9 million U.S. jobs this year.

Travel & Tourism provides significant employment and other economic benefits in almost every developed and developing nation, certainly including those where Outrigger has properties. For more data on the size and impact of Travel & Tourism around the globe, visit the World Travel & Tourism Council's website, www.wttc.org.

WTTC recently reported that Travel & Tourism's total contribution to global gross domestic product (GDP) grew 3.0 percent in 2013, outperforming the world's overall GDP growth for the third consecutive year. The outlook for 2014 is even stronger, with Travel 

In Hawai‘i, the economic and employment benefits of Travel & Tourism are particularly important because it is by far the state’s No. 1 industry. It generates:

- $18.6 billion in spending
- $2.8 billion in federal, state and local government tax collections
- 176,000 jobs (36 percent of non-farm employment) with a payroll of nearly $6 billion

(Data Source: U.S. Travel Association)
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In light of these numbers, it is interesting to speculate about why Travel & Tourism Week is hardly ever recognized in Hawai‘i. I believe it has a lot to do with timing. The state Legislature is usually ending its annual session around the first week in May. The Hawai‘i Lodging & Tourism Association (formerly Hawai‘i Hotel & Lodging Association) sponsors the statewide Visitor Industry Charity Walk, which is typically held three Saturdays in a row starting in early May. (This year: May 3 – Moloka‘i and Lāna‘i, May 10 – Hawai‘i Island and Maui, May 17 – Kaua‘i and O‘ahu.)

Perhaps one day someone will figure out the potential marketing impact of somehow tying Hawai‘i’s Visitor Industry Charity Walk to our national Travel & Tourism Week.

In the meantime, take a few moments to reflect on the many wonderful things Travel & Tourism brings to everyone – whether you are a worker in the industry, a citizen in a community enjoying the benefits of Travel & Tourism, or a traveler enjoying visiting new places, meeting new people and experiencing new cultures.

Louis Armstrong (1901 – 1971) may not have been thinking specifically about Travel & Tourism in 1967 when he recorded his Grammy Award-winning single “What A Wonderful World.” Perhaps legendary Hawaiian entertainer Israel “IZ” Kamakawiwo‘ole (1959 – 1997) was when he blended that song into a medley with “Over the Rainbow.” In any case, the haunting music and lyrics of “What A Wonderful World” – a hymn of praise to life itself – deeply remind me of what a glorious part of life Travel & Tourism really is. We are all lucky to be a part of that world.

“What a Wonderful World”

I see skies of blue, and clouds of white,
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world.
The colors of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky.
Are also on the faces of people going by.
I see friends shaking hands, sayin’ “How do you do?”
They’re really sayin’, “I love you.”
I hear babies cryin’. I watch them grow.
They’ll learn much more than I’ll ever know
And I think to myself
What a wonderful world
Yes, I think to myself
What a wonderful world.