



CONA NEWS

VOICE OF THE CARRIAGE OPERATORS OF NORTH AMERICA

MAY 2022 ISSUE

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Accepting & Dealing with Animal Activists

by Sean M. Giery - Dun Dreamin' Farms - Campbell, NY

It seems most CONA members have either had an experience with animal rights activists or know someone who has. What I enjoy about being a CONA member is that we regularly share information that improves our daily operations to include horse care, safety measures and equipment maintenance. We love our animals, we love our jobs; however, in life, you cannot have the apples without the pits. In the spirit of sharing useful information, I feel the need to speak about the animal rights activist.

My personal experience is that the activist sees animals, specifically; the carriage horse working for a profit, as "abuse." What we do and say to educate the activist, they interpret as "rationalizing abuse" which is rationalizing "human violence"(1). Pretty far out stuff if you ask me.

Having our horses hitched to a carriage in their minds eye is a "presumption of human supremacy."(2) Again, pretty far out. They feel this way about lab testing, zoos, horse racing, etc. It's all proof that these folks have already made up their minds, and there will be no changing that.

It is the fair and open-minded politicians and public at large that we need to concentrate on along with a focus on dealing with the activists and their tactics. Let's face it--accidents happen. An activist's goal is to make headline news, and when they do - often they receive more favorable coverage than, in our case, the carriage owner/operator. In the span of 25 years, I personally have responded, in official capacity, to countless, on the street aided cases with both the NYPD and FDNY. Many of the aided cases that led to serious bodily injury and even crushing deaths, were the result of pedestrian/vehicle accidents. I still find it amazing, how the story of a person crossing a NYC Street finding themselves under the rear wheels of a delivery truck, appears on page 7 and beyond in the local newspaper - yet, when "Charlie" the carriage horse goes down on the street, natural causes or otherwise....it's FRONT PAGE NEWS! Go figure. While the media/news is trying to generate the most emotional story possible, it's hard for a carriage operator/owner to convey the operational facts of our business in one concise clip. Most reported

Activists (Cont'd.)

by Sean M. Giery

carriage stories of incidents and accidents have the conflict, controversy and emotion all built in! Keep in mind, in today's modern world, the news sometimes does not let all the facts get in the way of a good story!

News reporters need a story. A story with a bad guy, victim and hero is best, it sells! Guess who the villain is in the carriage business? Yep....us!

Here's the breakdown:

Carriage Operator = Bad Guy.

"Charlie" the horse = Victim.

Activist = Hero.

If ever respectfully questioned by an activist, a reporter or as I was recently questioned by American Humane personnel on a movie set, engage them. Peacefully, of course don't appear like a bad guy. Bad guys tuck and run or say "no comment."

In my travels, I have found three rules for dealing with activists or media.

Own it and correct it!

Do not attempt to down play or make little of an incident or concern!

Embrace a third-party! (3)

Accept responsibility for the issue, don't run away, fix it with a third-

party. A third-party may be a veterinarian, police agency or even CONA! Offering a third-party is to show or offer proof of your concern that animal welfare and safety protocols are being followed. A sample statement such as... "I understand there are concerns, we have "police/veterinarian/CONA investigating/reviewing."

It's never wise to minimize a situation especially if there are videos or pictures that tell the story. When speaking to the press or media it is best to say "I understand the concern and we are investigating with a third-party and taking precautions for every eventuality." Another pearl statement could be..."We share any concerns you have and that's why we are having a third-party investigate" with this particular statement no legal responsibility is being accepted. (4)

Reporters, activists, Humane Society personnel can potentially be aggressive. We need to remain calm and avoid getting emotional...a simple..."Animal

Activists (Cont'd.)

by Sean M. Giery

welfare is a priority" is a good response to most all questions that are asked, especially when in crisis situations and/or under duress. Keep in mind, animal welfare is the bottom line. We need to educate the public at large. Favorable still photos or good cell phone video of our barn operations will help with this effort and it is always good to have these items on hand at the beginning of a crisis if possible.

Again, I say engage these folks. Recently, on a Verizon commercial TV set an individual from American Humane (the "No Animals Were Harmed" in this movie folks) complete with official uniformed logo shirt approached me, and very matter-of-factly - asked me my contact info, horses name, vet, information, etc. It briefly felt like a car stop by the police. Defensively...I respectfully complied...yet...I also asked for her name, contact information, etc. I also asked this respectful young woman her level of experience with horses. Her experience was limited to petting her neighbor's horse over the fence most summers--or something like that. This was the individual the Director and film crew were

consulting with when inquiring about the horses' potential performance, set placement, etc. A film crew member attempted to use a portable artificial smoke effect machine. I watched the American Humane individual challenge the film effect member and redirect that individual fearing for my horses safety. The filming continued and at one point as the horses shifted their weight so did the harness. The American Humane member was concerned that my horse maybe overheating due to sweating. I engaged and explained that the strap sweat mark on my horse's upper rump was from the biothane harness strap, much like the leather headband in my cowboy hat creating a sweatband mark on my brow and nothing of great concern. Oversensitive ? ... perhaps. Engage, explain, and educate?... yes! I spoke up and reintroduced myself to the film crew making it clear that I was the teamster/handler/owner of the two draft horses and the best individual to decide what the horses can and cannot do. In short, American Humane has a legitimate, important job

Activists (Cont'd.)

by Sean M. Giery

promoting the welfare and safety of animals. We all need to "stay in our lane" ... the TV commercial went well, but engaged communication was obviously a must.

Getting our message out first and educating the public is paramount. Animal rights activists focus on young impressionable minds, we need to adopt that tactic as well. CONA members have conducted familiarization days. A day in the life of a carriage horse to include folks having the opportunity to actively pull, to their surprise, a carriage on level ground. I recently hosted a "horse powered farm field day" complete with carriage rides and invited the public along with local reporters - both attended. All were familiarized with my operation and the care my work horses receive and deserve...a great way to meet the press, enjoy some positive social media exposure and educate the public. This is just a small part of what we can do to accept and deal with the "uneducated animal activists." Your thoughts?

(1) & (2) Hill Country Observer
(3) & (4) Country Folk



Arival

by Mary Allis Edwards

The Arival Group provides events, insights, and community for creators and sellers of tours, activities, and attractions and experiences. Their mission is to establish and inspire a diverse community of individuals and companies in the "In-destination Industry" by providing opportunities to gain insights, share knowledge, and build connections.

Just recently, Palmetto Carriage Works, Royal Carriages and The Hitching Company attended The Arival Conference in San Diego, California. The conference provided information on everything such as business development, industry trends and new technology developments in the tourism industry. We sat in on lectures from industry leaders such as Marilyn Hannes, the VP of Seaworld and Rod Cuthbert, the founder and former CEO & Chairman of Viator Inc. Arival also provided us with interactions and workshops with all the latest reservation companies and their new advances. There were sessions throughout each day that attendees of the conference could choose from. These topics covered

a wide range of business segments, such as hiring, budgeting, marketing, internet searches, and website development. Attendees are also given ample time to mingle with other tour operators and hear their stories, share ideas, and network. Companies such as whale watching in Hawaii, food tours in New York, and river rafting in Utah make it a unique learning experience that enables operators of all types to share their expertise. The convention and the Arival group have become a great source for those in the tourism industry. Any tour operator would find attending the Arival Conference a benefit to their business and is encouraged to join. The next conference is October of 2022 in Las Vegas, Nevada. Hope to see you there!



MY TWO CENTS

by Ben Speight

To all members of CONA as we continue to navigate this unique and challenging time. I would like to take a few moments to say "thank you." Thank you to the Board for all the leadership and support it has provided throughout the pandemic and thank you to all our members who continue to fight for this industry. While I may be one of the newer members, I have been moved to see so many people pull together to help one another, and of course, help our beloved equines. All our personal and professional lives have been turned upside down, but this crisis also has provided us with an opportunity to think about all aspects of our work differently. It has allowed us to examine how we can think outside the box and take advantage of technology to be more flexible in meeting the needs of our members. I am proud to say I am a part of this resilient group of professionals.

In 2020 the Board had to make the difficult but responsible decision to conduct a virtual convention. Because we thrive off communication and hands-on learning, everyone was saddened by our

inability to meet in person as we have for so many years. We could have thrown our hands in the air and just given up, but we decided to persevere! We were extremely proud to see ourselves facing the same decision. Again, we decided that because many of us were unsure of how traveling may be that it would be the best idea to do another virtual convention in 2022. However, Royal Carriages also extended an invitation to host any members willing to travel to New Orleans, Louisiana. Royal Carriages were very excited to host 2022 CONA. President, Nicki VanTuyl, Alex Levine, Clay Voyles, Terrence Reed and his wife, Dr. Stacey Jones-Reed, joined us for the 2022 convention. During their time in New Orleans, Nicki and Alex were able to spend Tuesday on the training buggy together with me, and we drove two of our newer mules--Ivan and Po'Boy on some training expeditions. Clay Voyles from Sacred Spur Carriage Co., Texas, was able to join us on Wednesday, we had another successful training day. We were able to work with many mules and tour the famous French Quarter. Of course, being in a city known for

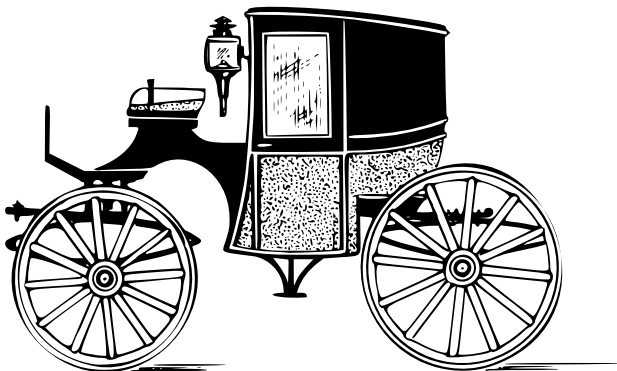
MY TWO CENTS (cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

its cuisine, we ate some really good food! I hope in the future we can do another convention in New Orleans and have all of you come to visit us in person!

I would like to hear from our members about their ideas for our convention in 2023. Would you, as the membership, be willing to attend an in-person convention next year? If you have any ideas or suggestions, please let us know! My contact information is:

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CONVENTION RECAP (Cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

Last year I thought it would be fun to do a convention recap to put into the current newsletter and decided that I would tackle that again this year. I hope those of you that wanted to watch the convention have been able to do so. If you missed the convention and have not been able to watch it, I hope that this recap gives you a good idea of what you missed.

Day 1

Our first presenter for day one was Brianna Erdmier DC. She is a licensed human chiropractor with 10 plus years' experience and became certified in equine chiropractic about 5 years ago. She works with all types of disciplines and owns her own horses. Brianna spoke to us about preventative maintenance. She believes the order in which you should focus preventative maintenance on your equine partner should be as follows:

1. Feet
2. Teeth
3. Chiropractic

The first thing that she explained was that we try to adjust the animal for their needs. Each

adjustment is different. She went through two different horses and did full chiropractic adjustments.

If you have never seen a chiropractor work on horses, I strongly urge you to do so. It is very interesting to see how they respond to the different corrections. There were several questions asked about the length of time in between adjustments. Brianna says that for light use usually the time in between adjustments is about 3 to 4 months. If you are using a horse for heavier use, she suggested about every 4 to 8 weeks as needed. There were some questions about how long someone should rest their animal after an equine adjustment. Generally, one day up to five based on the intensity of the adjustment. An adjustment should be close to the amount you normally pay for a shoe job in your area. Obviously prices depend on location, but she suggested a starting price range of \$75-100. Those in attendance were very interested in how to find a good equine chiropractor. Brianna suggested that you try www.animalchiropractor.org, but she also suggested using Facebook. Many times you can

CONVENTION RECAP (Cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

find great chiropractors through word of mouth and Facebook. It was a very interesting and fact-filled presentation. If you have a chance, I strongly suggest you check it out.

Our next presenter for Day 1 was Ryan Milam with Polston Tax Resolution and Accounting. Ryan is a CPA and spoke to us about properly filing taxes, payroll, and employee classifications. He spoke about using a proper tax professional to complete the tax process. There are many laws and loopholes that change from political administration to administration. It is very difficult to keep up with all the new policies. It is so easy to make a mistake that might cost someone hundreds if not thousands of dollars, but having a certified CPA helps to aid in that. Next, he focused on payroll taxes. If payroll taxes aren't paid, companies may have to pay it later resulting in the employer having to pay 100% of the tax. But if payroll taxes are taken out in the normal process of the business, the employee pays part of the tax along with the employer. That is why it is very important to be sure it is paid

upfront because you do not want to come back later and pay double what you would have originally paid in payroll taxes. With employees and payroll, companies must make sure they are paying their employees properly. It is very important to properly distinguish between a W-2 employee and a 1099 contractor. The law is very different for each, and companies must file differently for each. The next thing he brought up was making sure that business distinguishes between being a corporation or an LLC. Having a corporate or LLC involved with our business allows us to keep our personal assets separate from our business assets. If someone wants to sue the company, they're not going to be able to do so personally. That is very important when we are setting up our business as to whether we are a C corporation or standard LLC. The last thing discussed was how to handle our money and investments. There are many ways to use loopholes in tax code to benefit our businesses. It is very important you understand depreciation, and how to go even further with depreciation by using a gift lease. These are just a few

CONVENTION RECAP (Cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

ways to protect your assets and save you money. If you have questions about your taxes or ways to improve your business, please get in touch with Ryan at Polston Tax his email is ryanm@polstontax.com. His partner is Ashley and setups all his time and her phone number is 405-602-1818.

Day 2

Ted DeHaas at Windy Hill Farms started a free YouTube channel several years ago called the "Handy Horseman." He has a lot of great techniques that he uses and has many years of experience. It's not the barn, it's the horses in it. Ted was very adamant on us understanding that our horses are a direct reflection of us. There is more to it than just climbing on an equine's back or hooking them to a carriage. Ted explains we must occupy the equine's mind before we ever occupy their body. It is important that we constantly work on our communication and our horsemanship. We must be empathetic, consistent, kind, and patient for however long it takes to put the horse and puzzle together. He says the best way for us to rescue horses is to teach people to communicate with

them better. It was very clear though that if the horse starts to like you and starts to feel like they are part of the family based on your method of communication, you will have better results. Ted has helped a lot of people, find their forever equines in his career. He found that we would sell some very nice horses to people that did not know how to use them, and he got horrible results regardless of how great the horse was.

Why sell a horse without making sure the rider knows what to do with this! This is a disservice to the horse and the potential new owner. It was at this point that Ted started focusing on the riders that were working with different horses and not just the horses themselves. He found that a lot of people simply struggle with communication with their animals. He said we should say thank you to our horse way more than we say please. He made it very clear that trust is extremely important and that if your equine trusts you they will be okay and understands that they are not trying to fight against them so they will enjoy their job. The biggest thing I took out of this presentation, was the fact that we cannot be in a hurry. We must do

CONVENTION RECAP (Cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

things in the horse's time and not on ours. If we realize that and we take our time to be patient, kind, empathetic and trustworthy, the result is going to be a much stronger bond with greater communication the likes of which some of us may have never seen before. If you have a chance to check Ted out, I strongly encourage you to do so. We hope to possibly partner with him in the future and try to go to his farm in Millersburg, Ohio, to do a CONA boot camp with he and his staff. You can check him out at windyhillfarm.net or check out handyhorseman.com as well as his YouTube.

Our next presenters were Emily Nyman and Ben Baumgartner from the Association of Living History Farms and Museums. The Living History Farms is about the 1800's in Indiana. Emily started off explaining she works for Conner Prairie in Indiana. The main reason oxen were used for draft purposes was cost. Oxen are not only cheaper than their equine counterparts, but less costly to maintain as well. They require less intense feeding protocols and are setup to pull in less complicated equipment. They use oxen that are historically accurate, and breed

temperament is extremely important. Emily and Ben spoke about carrying a curry comb everywhere they go. They do not use treats and so the best way to personally connect with their animal is to groom them. They explained that when working with your teams you should be confident because they feed off your energy, especially since you aren't holding them in your hand. One of the main things that I noticed that was different when working oxen compared to horses was the factor that no lines are used. The driver or drover literally walks beside the oxen and controls them with a goad stick as they walk. Ben said that most people in the US walk on the left side. When they're people working a team of oxen for the public, they always have three handlers. They have two on either side of the oxen and the drover also. This makes sure that when dealing with public that are wanting to walk up and interact, they can be as safe as possible with control of the environment.

Ben is on Barrington Plantation in Texas representing 1850's era Texas. He considers himself a conservator because they are raising heritage animals and pro-

CONVENTION RECAP (Cont'd.)

by Ben Speight

duce. Most are castrated bulls and are called steers until they are 4 years old. They are considered oxen after 4 years of age, and they can do real work at this age. They normally work until the age of 12 years. By the time they get to their teenage years they would have to retire at the living history museum. In the old days retirement would mean going into the beef industry. Living history farms are very important to continue to educate people on how differently things were done in the past. It really gives a great idea on the type of people it took to settle this great land.

Day 3

Nicki VanTuyl spoke to us about Open Meeting Laws in City Council Meetings. We need to understand this for the longevity of our organization. The mayor has no real power on the City Council except supporting the council. There is a chain of command, and every city has a clerk, treasurer, and council. The council votes on ordinances and resolutions, and follows Roberts Rules, and the city council keeps everyone on task. To see the listing of Open Meetings in your state please go to the links we have provided following this article. Nicki can answer many questions on council tasks.

Mindy Patterson suggests we ask lawmakers to come to our barns and see our animal's care. There is much misinformation given to lawmakers by people that are in animal rights groups. Animal rights groups have infiltrated the government to start their ordinances under the radar. If you have any questions, please reach out to Cavalry Group, and Mindy Patterson.

OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER HAS NEW MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS

Open Meeting Links

by Nicki VanTuyl

This is just a starting point, and if you want more information please contact your local governing agency.

ALABAMA

<https://www.openmeetings.alabama.gov/generalpublic/public-and-default.aspx>

ALASKA

[https://open-meetings-act.pdf\(alaska.gov\)](https://open-meetings-act.pdf(alaska.gov))

ARIZONA

<https://azoca.gov/open-meeting-and-public-records-law/open-meetings/>

ARKANSAS

<https://www.dws.arkansas.gov/src/files/Arkansas-Sunshine-Law-from-the-Arkansas-Freedom-of-Information-Act.pdf>

CALIFORNIA

<https://oag.ca.gov/open-meetings>

COLORADO

<https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/open-meeting-requirements-of-the-colorado-sunshine-law.pdf>

CONNECTICUT

<https://www.cga.ct.gov/PS94/rpt/olr/htm/94-R-0998.htm>

DELAWARE

<https://delcode.delaware.gov/title29/c100/>

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

<https://www.open-dc.gov/open-meetings-act>

FLORIDA

<https://m.flsenate.gov/statutes/286.011>

GEORGIA

<https://law.georgia.gov/key-issues/open-government/law>

HAWAII

<https://oip.hawaii.gov/laws-rules-opinions/sunshine-law/>

IDAHO

<https://www.ag.idaho.gov/content/uploads/201804/OpenMeeting.pdf>

ILLINOIS

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/ilc/s/ilcs3.asp?ACTID=84&ChapterI=2>

INDIANA

<https://www.indy.gov/activity/open-door-law>

TO BE CONTINUED IN NEXT
NEWSLETTER JULY

President's Corner

By Ben Speight



Hello, My name is Ben Speight and I am your new president. I went to my first CONA convention in Fort Worth in 2019, and had an unbelievable time meeting everyone. At the Jacksonville Convention in 2020, Nicki VanTuyt was elected as President, and I was nominated to serve the remainder of her term as Vice President. I was then reelected into the position as Vice President during the 2021 Virtual Convention. This year at the 2022 Virtual Convention I was honored to be nominated to run for President, and I graciously accepted. I am so proud that I was chosen to lead this group, and I am excited at great things to come! I have been a member for three years now, and during that time,

I have served for two years as Vice President. I appreciate how friendly everyone has been to me and Royal Carriages. I look forward to many years of friendship and comradery that comes with such a great organization. The last two years have been very unstable for everyone in our industry. I think that we did a great job by pivoting to a virtual convention and was extremely impressed at how well the two virtual conventions ran. They were relatively easy to access, and they were very informative! My goal over the next two years is to try to reengage companies that have been with us for a while but may not be active right now. I also want to try with all of our might to reach as many new members as possible. We need our voice to be heard and the more voices that we have increases our ability to do so. I want to make sure that we are the best stewards for our organization and that we let everyone know what CONA is about! We are working on some simple marketing brochures so that you can share the group with your world. I see a great group of people that have a wealth of knowledge to be tapped! One of the best ways to share knowledge is to have a time for fellowship. I hope we are going to be able to do an in-person convention for 2023. I appreciate

President's Corner (Cont'd.) by Ben Speight

the option to do a virtual convention, but I feel like this organization needs in person contact as much as possible. When I talk to my friends that work remotely, I always laugh because it is hard to train an equine over a video conference call. I would definitely like to get feedback from membership, and I think the majority of you will agree that it would be nice to meet in person for the next convention. I look forward to all of the positive things that we are going to continue to get done with CONA. I am here to do my best

represent the Carriage Operators of North America in the best way possible. If you have any questions, concerns, or just want to "chew the fat," just let me know. I am always available via my cell phone or email. ■

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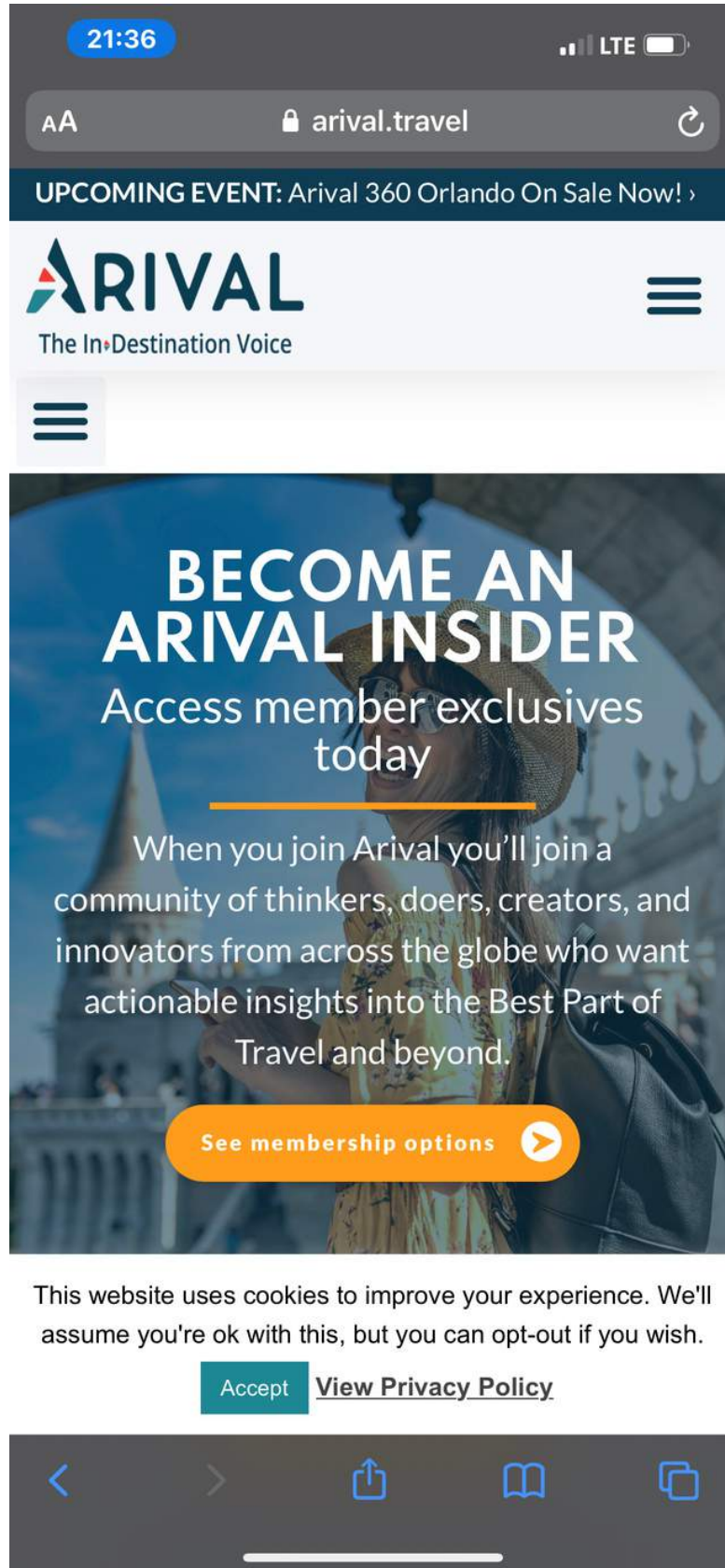
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[Go to:https://arival.travel/membership-overview/](https://arival.travel/membership-overview/)

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