

# The Miami Herald

## NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

• **Finnair to join American Airlines-British Airways alliance:** Finnair Oyj said it will join the trans-Atlantic venture operated by Oneworld alliance partners British Airways, Iberia and American Airlines in a move that will see it coordinate schedules and share revenue on some of the world's most lucrative business routes.

MIAMI HERALD STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

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## Travel briefs

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### Florida tourism

#### IT WAS A VERY GOOD YEAR

Tourists visiting the Sunshine State spent more money last year than ever before.

Gov. Rick Scott reported that visitors spent a record \$71.1 billion in 2012. That's a nearly 7 percent increase over 2011 which was also a record year.

The preliminary spending figures were compiled by Visit Florida, the state's quasi-public marketing arm.

Visits Florida has already estimated that nearly 90 million people visited the state in 2012. That included 10.2 million overseas visitors and 3.6 million Canadians.

Scott is asking state legislators to set aside \$75 million in this year's budget for Visit Florida to pay for its marketing and advertising efforts.

### Lodging

#### HOTELS UP THE ANTE ON LOYALTY POINTS

Here's another sign the economy is stronger: Several major hotel chains are significantly raising the number of loyalty reward points needed to book a free room.

It's a simple matter of supply and demand, said Joe Brancatelli, who writes an online column on business travel. An improving economy has spurred more travel, prompting hotels to raise rates.

"Demand is up so they can charge more," he said of hotels adjusting their reward points programs.

Most of the chains adopting point hikes are shifting hotels to a higher tier in their respective programs. Each tier designates the points needed to stay in that hotel. The higher the tier, the more points needed.

For example, Starwood Preferred Guests, the program for the Westin, Sheraton and W hotels, among others, raised the rate by at least 25 percent on nearly 250 hotels. The changes took place Tuesday.

The Marriott Rewards program, which includes Fairfield, Courtyard, Ritz-Carlton and TownePlace Suites, will raise the points requirement by at least 33 percent for more than 1,300 of its hotels.

### Airlines

#### FINNAIR JOINS AMERICAN ALLIANCE

Finnair Oyj said it will join the trans-Atlantic venture operated by Oneworld alliance partners British Airways, Iberia and American Airlines in a move that will see it coordinate schedules and share revenue on some of the world's most lucrative business routes.

#### DEMOLITION BEGINS AT CYCLORAMA

Demolition is under way at Gettysburg National Military Park on a building situated at the center of what were once the Union Army's battle lines. Work to tear down the Cyclorama Building is expected to last until late April.

The removal is part of the National Park Service's longstanding efforts to restore the park to conditions more closely mimicking 1863, when the property was engulfed by a pivotal battle in the American Civil War.

"Anyone who studies the Battle of Gettysburg learns about the Union fishhook, and it's the shape that the battle lines of the Union Army took," said park spokeswoman Katie Lawhon. "This building was right in the middle of the fishhook, and it blocked people's ability to kind of connect the dots."

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