

MONEY

Dot-travel invites destinations

Tourism entities have until the end of March to claim eligible Web names

By Michael Milligan

WASHINGTON — A process began this month to allow entities representing countries and destinations around the world to claim their space on the Internet under the new dot-travel domain.

The destinations will be able to claim all the eligible travel-related Internet names within dot-travel if they register by March 31. After that, the unclaimed names will go into a pool available to other travel entities.

The parceling out of so-called Nations' Priority Rights is the latest phase in the development of dot-travel. The Tralliance Corp., a New York-based firm managing the new domain, is launching a global registry effort on Jan. 29.

"We view this as Internet 2.0. Internet 2.0 is going to be vastly different from what we experienced in the first go-round," said Ron Andruff, Tralliance's president and CEO, during a recent Internet-based seminar. "Travel and tourism [will be] brought out of the anonymity of the dot-com Web."

Unlike the familiar dot-com domain name widely used by all sorts of companies doing business on the Web, dot-travel was designated four years ago by the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, better known as Iann, specifically for travel and tourism entities.

Tralliance has been working ever since to organize and promote the dot-travel domain name to travel entities around the world.

But as demonstrated by its three-phase, nine-month Nations' Priority Rights effort to allow countries to register names, Tralliance has apparently been methodical about how the dot-travel name is being awarded.

"The first phase was what we call supplementation, where we aggregated a list of all place names and city names and we invited the nations of the world to supplement that list," Andruff said. "The list has several million names on it."

The names include heritage sites, historical sites, sacred

sites, national parks, preserves as well as cities and towns, Andruff said. "The names of each country are the sovereign rights of the country. So those in any case will always go to the nation."

Starting on April 1, however, unclaimed names will be up for grabs by other travel entities.

Up for grabs

"If my company's name was Eiffel Tower Travel, and Eiffel Tower was not selected by the [French] government, then I can claim that name," Andruff said. "So from April 1 on it is an open game for entities that share a name as well as for the government of the world. So that priority right will come to an end."

Tralliance has used a similar step-by-step "pre-authentication" process for companies and other travel-related entities seeking a dot-travel domain name.

Tralliance said it has enlisted some 120 travel associations to participate in the pre-authentication process by vetting members seeking dot-travel names.

The accounting firm Dun & Bradstreet, meanwhile, is providing third-party authentication for companies that are not members of travel associations.

Destinations and travel companies won't immediately drop their long-held dot-com Web addresses, but Tralliance contends that the adoption of dot-travel ultimately will be seen as a milestone in the travel industry's evolution.

Dot-travel raises "the aspect of trust and, more importantly, reduces and, in fact, gets rid of cybersquatting and defensive registrations of domain names," Andruff said. "Only businesses and organizations that are part of the travel and tourism industry are entitled to a dot-travel name. A dot-travel name will identify you as a verified participant in the travel industry."

Authenticated dot-travel companies will be listed in an online directory (previewed at www.directory.travel) to help consumers find travel companies and services quickly.