



Trade Show Report ABA Marketplace – Nashville, TN January 11-15, 2014

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- TownHouse Inns of MT – Paula Ruark
- Butte CVB – Maria Pochervina
- Helena TBID – Heidi O'Brien
- Red Lion – Chuck Carter

Overview:

- The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace took place in Nashville, TN where more than 3,500 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event. It was a record number of attendees this year.
- Over 800 tour operator companies were in attendance.
- Glacier Country was matched with 33 tour operators for pre-scheduled 6 minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions. Two appointments were no-shows, so I ended the conference with 31 appointments. I was able to leave my profile sheet with an additional 6 tour operators who had requested to meet with me but appointments were not scheduled. This is an increase of 13 appointments over last year. Fifteen of the scheduled appointments were new to our Glacier Country database this year.
- There were several networking events scheduled in the evenings that allowed for more interaction with the tour operators. I came away with at least 6 more contacts from the social events and sightseeing excursion.
- In addition to appointments, there were several educational opportunities to learn about tour trends, different tour markets and the health of the packaged travel industry.
- Next ABA Marketplace: St. Louis, MO – January 10-13, 2015

Trends:

- Trends for 2014 and beyond remain similar to what we heard in 2013.
- Customers are looking for special treatment, unique experiences, smaller buses, fewer people.
- Boomers are a great target especially with airline travel rage being so high.
- Millennials (ages 18-32) are a group worth marketing to; willing to spend money on status, want to travel with friends and are desperate for peer approval. Some operators are changing up their buses to look like limos.
- These younger travelers are looking for adventure, more independence/variety in a tour (don't make everyone do the same thing at the same time).
- Top tours; Bucket List tours, celebration tours, culinary tours, educational tours, heritage tours, Love of Extremes (heli-tours/zip-line/dog sledding etc.), stay-cations, voluntourism, music tourism and Randomness or Mystery tours.
- Mobile will be bigger than desktop by 2015. Get mobile friendly websites/apps set up NOW.

Recommendations for 2014:

- Focus on Niche Markets and do them well. What do we have that they will not find anywhere else? With GNP, we are a Bucket List destination. Work with Glacier Country communities to find creative niche tour ideas to sell to tour operators. They need to be hands-on, innovative, specialty, experiential, behind the scenes.