



Trade Show Report ABA Marketplace – St. Louis, MO January 9-13, 2015

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- Montana Office of Tourism – Kim Birrell
- 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 St. Louis, MO where more than 3,300 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- Over 700 tour operator companies were in attendance.
- Glacier Country was matched with 25 tour operators for pre-scheduled 6 minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions. Two appointments were no-shows, so I ended the conference with 23 appointments. I was able to leave my profile sheet with an additional 4 tour operators who had requested to meet with me but appointments were not scheduled. 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 4 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: Louisville, Kentucky – January 8-12, 2016

Trends:

- Customers are looking for special treatment, unique experiences, smaller buses, fewer people.
- Boomers and multi-generational travel are still trends.
- Millennials (ages 18-32) are traveling as groups more. They want their friends with them at all times and want a variety of activities.
- Top tours; Bucket List tours, celebration tours, culinary tours, educational tours, heritage tours, Love of Extremes (heli-tours/zip-line/dog sledding etc.), voluntourism, music tourism and mystery tours.
- Mobile is a must. Get mobile friendly-reactive websites.

Recommendations for 2015:

- 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.