

Trade Show Report
ABA Marketplace – Louisville, KY
January 8 - 12, 2016

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- Montana Office of Tourism – Kim Birrell
- TownHouse Inns of MT – Paula Ruark
- Butte CVB – Maria Pochervina
- Helena TBID – Jennifer Davis
- Red Lion – Chuck Carter
- Karst Stage - Dan Martin

Overview:

- The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace took place in Louisville, KY where they had record breaking attendance with more than 3,500 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- 925 motorcoach and tour operator companies were in attendance.
- The average delegate was matched with 30 appointments. Glacier Country was matched with 35 tour operators for pre-scheduled 7 minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions. Two appointments were no-shows, so I ended the conference with 33 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. Eleven 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: Cleveland, Ohio – January 13 -17, 2017

Trends:

- Customers are still looking for special treatment, unique experiences, smaller buses, fewer people to travel with. Average people on a bus is 25-30.
- 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. They call them “pods”.
- Top tours; Bucket List 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 2016:

- 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.