

Trade Show Report
ABA Marketplace – Grapevine, Texas
January 7-10, 2012

Overview:

- The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace is a motorcoach and group travel business event.
- 226 motorcoach and tour operator companies took appointments
- Next ABA Marketplace: Charlotte, NC – January 17-21, 2013

Trends:

- Tour operators are noticing a lack of interest in the same old motorcoach experience.
- Customers are looking for special treatment, unique experiences, smaller buses, fewer people.
- Rail tours are up.
- Younger customers (20-40 years) are coming to tour operators asking for adventure, more independence (don't make everyone do the same thing at the same time).
- Volunteerism (Habitat for Humanity, National Park volunteering, etc).
- Food to table experiences; visit a local sustainable farm and then eat in a restaurant that buys from the farm.
- Examples of niche tours; cheese tours, pottery tours, learn about bees tours, Philadelphia murals, and LA ghettos, environmental-conscience tours (carbon neutral).
- Examples of innovative tour operators: Tauck Bridges, Road Scholar, Sports Leisure Vacations, Gutsy Women.

Recommendations for 2013:

- ABA is coming close to the development of a database that will track motorcoach business by zip code (3-6 months) for a small fee. Keep up on this development.
- Work with Glacier Country communities to find creative niche tour ideas to sell to tour operators. Be innovative.