



Trade Show Report
ABA Marketplace – Charlotte, NC
January 26 - 30, 2018

Montana Representation:

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

Overview:

- + The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace took place in Charlotte, NC where 3,500 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- + 800 motorcoach and tour operator companies were in attendance.
- + The average delegate was matched with 28 appointments. Glacier Country was matched with 31 tour operators for pre-scheduled 7-minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions. Eight of the scheduled appointments were new to our Glacier Country database this year, 4.3% new.
- + 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: Louisville, KY – January 26 - 29, 2019

Trends:

- + The changes for TO with coaches entering 13 of the most popular National Parks was a HUGE topic of conversation. It remains to be seen what the NPS will do to park entrance fees. Whatever it is they will give an 18 month notice to tour operators.
- + Average people on a bus is 25-30. Several ask for behind the scenes options.
- + Boomers and multi-generational travel are still trends.
- + Millennials (ages 19 - 33) 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 and music tourism.
- + Mobile is a must. Get mobile friendly-reactive websites.

Recommendations for 2018:

- + 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.