



Trade Show Report

ABA Marketplace – Detroit, MN

February 4 – 7, 2023

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Aerionna Skrutvold
- Destination Missoula – Kara Bartlett

Overview:

- The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace took place in Detroit where 1,600 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- 447 motorcoach and tour operator companies were in attendance.
- Glacier Country was matched with 34 tour operators for pre-scheduled 7-minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions. We had nine new tour operators that were looking to expand their tours into Montana.
- There were networking events scheduled before the conference, during the day, and in the evenings that allowed for more interaction with the tour operators.
- In addition to appointments, there were educational opportunities to learn about tour trends, new technology and sustainable travel, different tour markets and the health of the packaged travel industry.
- Next ABA Marketplace: Nashville, TN January 13 – 16, 2024

Trends:

- The demand is coming back, and people are ready to travel.
- Tour operators are still seeing a strong desire for travel to national parks and rural areas.
- Smaller motor coaches with fewer passengers for a more effective and relaxed tour is still on trend, however we will start to see full motorcoaches again.
- The Canadian Rockies/Glacier National Park tour has regained interest from operators who have run it in the past, as well as new operators.
- Many operators seemed more willing to look at September for visiting the park moving forward, after continued difficulty securing accommodations in peak season.
- “Yellowstone” TV series continues to be a hot topic, with lots of interest in visiting the Bitterroot Valley to see sights and tying it into a larger western experiences tour.

Recommendations for 2023:

- Tour operators are still looking for unique Western Montana experiences. to offer their clients that the client couldn't get if traveling on their own. Find creative niche tour ideas to sell to tour operators. They need to be hands-on, innovative, specialty, experiential, behind the scenes.
- I will continue to focus and push shoulder seasons especially September for any group tours. Also, will continue to share winter itinerary when appropriate.
- Tying in how easy it is to include us on a larger itinerary is vital and shared our newest MT/ID itinerary along with Canadian Rockies, Yellowstone, Seattle and Washington wine country.