



Trade Show Report

IMEX America – Las Vegas, NV - September 10 - 12, 2019

Montana Booth Representation:

- + Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- + Destination Missoula – Emily Rolston
- + Explore Whitefish – Dan Hansen
- + Big Sky Resort– Liv Grubaugh
- + Bozeman CVB – Daryl Schliem
- + Sage Lodge – Mike Peterson
- + The Ranch at Rock Creek – Troy Hedenskog
- + Helena TBID – Andrea Opitz
- + Great Northern BW Helena – Karena Bemis

Overview:

- + IMEX America is the largest MICE tradeshow in North America with 12,389 total participants. 150 countries were represented at the show with 3,286 hosted buyers from 61 countries and 3,390 exhibitors along with 2,566 trade show attendees.
- + Glacier Country Tourism was matched with 13 buyers for 30-minute appointments. The Glacier Country Tourism appointments were shared Destination Missoula and Explore Whitefish (Discover Kalispell decided to not attend).
- + The Montana booth was positioned well on the show floor with great visibility. We missed having our Montana Cowboy for pictures and people asked about him, however walk-up traffic was still really good.
- + Met with an additional 2 buyers that did not have a scheduled appointment with us.
- + We increased our database with **50** first time appointments or walk ups.
- + Next IMEX America: Las Vegas, NV – September 15 - 17, 2020.

Appointments and projected ROI:

This was the 6th year exhibiting at IMEX. We did it a little different this year. Glacier Country took the lead and worked with MOTBD to create a Montana booth presence and we opened it up to private companies (not just DMOs) to be in the Montana booth. First right of refusal was given to past participants. We capped it at 6 appointment tables, and it was first come first serve on reserving a table. After the booth was full and contract signed for space, several other entities wanted into the booth and were put on a waiting list: Snow Bear Chalets, Under Canvas, Pursuit Collection, The Wilson Hotel/Big Sky. The planners were quality and they came to the meeting with a specific group or program in mind for Montana. Most had not been to Montana and wanted to meet with us to find something different for their meetings. We heard several planners say that they wanted to get away from the white sandy beaches and concentrate on more experiential destinations. Or they were looking domestically due to safety issues. We felt that there was an assumption that we couldn't accommodate most programs except for those smaller incentive groups. They were surprised when talking about all the meeting venues in western Montana. 4 Diamond properties and high-end guest ranches were still about 75% of the requests. We all felt that our presence at this convention highlights that Montana is serious about the meetings industry and gave us all a chance to showcase that we have more than our great incentive properties and can be that perfect choice for all kinds of meetings. Planners did not want to take



printed materials so our thumb drives with information were well received. We packaged all of the CVB USB's and little gifts into Montana branded insulated cups and gave those out at the end of the meeting. We had a drop your card for a chance to win a Montana swag bag and it really encouraged planners to chat with us and drop their card.

Recommendations for 2020:

- + It takes consistency and continued exposure to build relationships with meeting planners. This show, although expensive, gives the best exposure to quality meeting planners for Montana. Incentive planners do frequent the show which is good for our higher-end resorts and guest ranches, there are plenty of corporate and association planners as well. The show is growing, and they plan to expand into another ballroom next year and it will be in September again.
- + The consensus from the CVB's was that the Glacier Country Tourism combined, or group appointments went really well. We all feed off of each other and the energy at the appointments is good. In particular, when someone says, "Hilton Garden Inn, really?" about our convention properties it's good to have reinforcements explaining the quality and brands that work in Montana and YES, they are higher end than what you would find in larger cities.
- + We again used high table and stools. Dan created burlap table clothes and brought bandanas for the toppers. We used 4 images (fly fishing, Glacier National Park, skiing, people riding horses on the prairie with mountains in the background) and had GES build them into the walls. It looked really good and was nice to walk away without having to ship items out.
- + Participants should plan months in advance and target certain planners for appointments. IMEX does not give out a list of who is attending, but we did utilize their contact the buyer email blast system.
- + I asked the group to send me any comments or suggestions for next year like hosting a cocktail hour, but no one replied. Liv asked if each table could have their own signage to help planners who are showing up for appointments find them easier.
- + We had The Wilson Hotel Big Sky, Paws Up, Snow Bear Chalets, Pursuit Collection and Under Canvas express interest in participating in our booth next year. To accommodate we would need a bigger booth so I will be in discussions with Marlee on how to do and afford that. I will have a plan by the end of the year and propose it to Marlee for 2020.