



## **Trade Show Report**

### **ABA Marketplace – Nashville, TN**

**January 13 – 16, 2024**

#### **Montana Representation:**

- Glacier Country – Aerionna Skrutvold
- Destination Missoula – Kara Bartlett
- Visit Billings – Alex Tyson

#### **Overview:**

- The American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace took place in Nashville where 2,800 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- 1,039 motorcoach and tour operator companies were in attendance.
- Glacier Country was matched with 45 tour operators for pre-scheduled 7-minute appointments during our DMO appointment sessions.
- 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, sustainable travel, different tour markets and the health of the packaged travel industry.
- Next ABA Marketplace: Philadelphia, February 1 – 4, 2025

#### **Trends:**

- A handful of tour operators who have been trying to figure out a Western Montana tour for years are now have made the decision to book through a receptive operator for 2024/2025.
- Tour operators are still seeing a strong desire for travel to national parks and rural areas.
- Since the pandemic, it's more common for motorcoaches to travel with groups of about 30 people, however we still see full motorcoaches (groups of 50).
- 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.

**Recommendations for 2024:**

- 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.