



Conference Report

Go West Summit – Palm Spring, CA

January 6 – 9, 2025

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard

Overview:

- Go West Summit gathers international and international inbound receptive tour operators and travel agencies that focus on offering tours to the 24 western states in the United States. These tour operators specialize in group travel, FIT, and fly/drive programs.
- Twenty-two countries were represented, and over 500 attendees attended. I was the only one there from Montana, which is not great. We need better representation from throughout the state to make an impact.
- Glacier Country was matched with 45 buyers for 12-minute appointments, double the amount from last year.

Trends:

- The demand to visit the U.S. is still there. However, the strong dollar and our hotel rates make other destinations more appealing and affordable.
- National Parks and rural destinations are back to a second or third visit to the US, but something that first-time travelers to the US are incorporating on itineraries.
- The NPS continues to work with Inbound Tour Operators on the CUA and vehicle reservation system because recreation.gov is still not working for international visitors who book 6 to 9 months in advance and need to know they can get into a national park before spending all the money on deposits.
- International visitors are attracted to Montana for its wildlife viewing, wide open spaces, scenic drives, soft adventure, and unique culture that includes cowboys and Indigenous culture, as well as shopping.

Recommendations for 2026 and beyond:

- We will continue educating GC partners on the international travel trade and working with international inbound tour operators. Visitors want small, unique lodging options. Partners must realize that it costs little to make their inventory available for the travel trade. We've added a few unique properties this year.
- In-language pages for FY26 on our website.
- Recognize the developing need for multi-lingual step-on guides.
- Reevaluate attending Go West Summit: Las Vegas – April 2026. Maybe every other year.