



Trade Show Report

IPW – Chicago, IL

June 15 – 18, 2025

Montana Representation:

- Western Montana's Glacier Country – Debbie Picard
- Destination MT – Emmie Bristow
- Destination MT – Pat Doyle
- Visit Big Sky – Emele Hibdon – PR Firm
- Visit Billings – Polly Mulvaney
- Destination MT – Nicole Gonzales
- Western Montana's Glacier Country – Lucy Beighle

Overview:

- More than 5,000 delegates attended IPW, including 1,800 international buyers from more than 60+ countries. IPW is expected to drive over 26 billion in future travel to the U.S.
- Destination MT purchased two booth spaces, and the Montana delegates shared approximately 80 appointments with international tour operators and additional meetings with journalists for 20-minute appointments over three days.
- The Montana booth was very busy again this year with back-to-back appointments throughout the three days. International travel to the U.S. is down slightly in the first quarter of the year, and prices to travel to the U.S. are high, and the geopolitical climate is not great.
- The biggest discussion was why Montana dropped out of the GAW consortium. The tour operators sell it as a region and couldn't imagine MT "going it" alone. Pat and Emmie answered the questions, letting them know they are looking at data and will reassess markets and GAW this year. Cost was another topic. While some visitors are visiting no matter the cost, others are choosing to put the U.S. on the back burner and visit other less expensive countries this year. Hopefully, they will look at the U.S. again once prices come down. The other big topic was the geopolitical situation. We heard that the news in other countries about the U.S. is VERY negative. From customs agents going through phones to people not being let into the U.S. for many



reasons. Many of the operators said it was an enjoyable experience and they think the news media is playing into fears. Operators from the traditional markets (Europe and Australia) are very familiar with Montana and were either offering products or looking for more information to add products to their current inventory. Most of our new operators were from emerging markets such as Brazil, Japan and India and were looking for regional information. Montana is considered a unique destination for most international travelers, and the mystery and national parks intrigue them. It offers an authentic experience that travelers are looking for. Yellowstone National Park continues to be more well-known than Glacier National Park. However, U.S. national parks are a desirable destination for the international traveler. Utah national parks are very popular. Glacier National Park and Western Montana are paired with the Canadian Rockies and Seattle more than the Dakotas. Yellowstone TV series has a worldwide appeal and attracts international visitors to see the breathtaking landscapes in the show.

- Several other networking lunches and evening events provided opportunities to meet and discuss Montana's attributes with international tour operators.
- There is no other travel trade show that can connect Western Montana's Glacier Country to the reach of international travelers as IPW does. I highly recommend we keep this show in our budget for 2026 and beyond.
- The next IPW is scheduled for May 17 – 21, 2026, in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.