



Trade Show Report NTA Travel Exchange – Cleveland, OH November 14 - 17, 2021

Montana Representation:

- Glacier Country – Debbie Picard

Overview:

- National Tour Association (NTA) Travel Exchange took place in Cleveland, OH, where more than 800 attendees gathered for the packaged travel event.
- Glacier Country was the only Montana member in attendance.
- Glacier Country was matched with 24 tour operators for pre-scheduled 7-minute appointments.
- There were several networking events scheduled in the evenings that allowed for more interaction with the tour operators.

Trends:

- The talk this year was just about surviving the last 2 years of COVID. The tour operators did not get governmental assistance like the airlines or other sectors.
- Many tour operator owners were there in attendance having laid off product developers and sales managers.
- The demand is coming back, and people are ready to travel.
- Lots more DEI discussions based on the pulse of the nation.
- Smaller motor coaches with fewer passengers for a more effective and relaxed tour is still on trend.
- With the explosion of RV sales, RV tours seem to be gaining in popularity.
- Usually, my appointments with those tour operators that have multiple tours through GC are just fine-tuning itineraries. Not this year. The workforce shortage REALLY affected tour this year especially in the restaurant industry where reservations were cancelled last minute, and groups were left with no where to eat.

Recommendations for 2022:

- I am working with Dawn and Dan to preemptively have back up plans in Flathead County in place if things do not improve for 2022. Catering options and takeout or prepackaged meals.
- Tour operators are still looking for authentic Montana. They are always looking for that unique experience to offer their clients that the client couldn't get if traveling on their own.
- Experiences need to be hands-on, innovative, specialty, experiential, behind the scenes/back of the house experiences.

- This year I REALLY pushed shoulder seasons especially September for any group tours. 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.

The next NTA Travel Exchange: Reno, NV – November 13 – 16, 2022. I am recommending that we attend NTA every other year until we feel we need more summer business.