



## WORLD TRAVEL MARKET, LONDON 7-9 November 2016



### OVERVIEW

World Travel Market 2016, the UK's largest travel industry event, had a joint record total number of **51,444** un-audited attendees which was an increase of **4%** over the 2014 figure of **49,275**. When broken down further, visitors excluding press, ministers, ministers' aides and students stood at **31,951**, 5% more than 2015. Over the three days more than **865,500** on stand meetings were held across the show.

The WTM Buyers' Club is the leading business club for senior travel industry decision makers with direct purchasing responsibility. The first day of the event is dedicated to these qualified buyers. The number in attendance in 2016 was **9,714** which was again a record number and an increase of **6% (588)** over 2015.

The show organisers are reporting approximately 5,000 exhibitors across the event, but from an exhibitor perspective it was evident that there was a reduction in the actual number of stands.

**3,034** of the world's media were in attendance at WTM London 2016, the highest number for more than 10 years. This, once again, made the WTM International Press Centre the largest recurring press operation in the UK. The Press Centre was moved to the exhibition floor this year to bring the media to the heart of the show. However, this may have also been to fill some gaps left by an obvious reduction in exhibitors.

These figures are currently un-audited and final audited numbers for WTM London 2016 are due in early 2017.

WTM 2016 was the introductory year for the new-look three day event with extended opening hours from 10.00am to 7.00pm each day. This was well received by most exhibitors as turnout on the Thursday over the last few years has been extremely poor. With this came the initial concern that attendance on the Wednesday would drop, but this did not appear to be the case.

## **DISCOVER NEW ENGLAND BOOTH**

It was a busy show on the DNE booth with KBC securing **35** meetings that ran from Monday morning into the Wednesday. All notes taken and follow up action has been detailed on the leads sheet. KBC also organised two media meetings for Lori Harnois.

In general, we did see a reduction in meeting requests for the USA across all KBC clients. This mirrors the upward trend across the UK market for Canada and highlights the need to continue to invest in the market to maintain a consistent New England message across all communication channels.

The re-introduction of the New England sign and additional storage facilities on the booth worked well. The general layout and tables/counters to conduct meetings accommodated all partners and left adequate space for tour operators throughout the day. The availability of water was also gratefully received by tour operators during their time on the stand.

The KBC hosted meetings with Lori and available partners on the larger table continued to work. As anticipated, it did lead to some comments from the tour operators who either felt overwhelmed by the number of people or were not able to discuss very specific issues in detail. But overall the meetings were well received and we suggest that we continue to stick to maximum number of five DNE representatives per operator.

Each state supplied **150** pieces of literature which was considerably less than last year. Once again much of this was not required as most people are choosing not to take hard copies away with them. We suggest for 2017 that we reduce the numbers again to **100** pieces of literature per partners.

### **DNE representatives in attendance:**

Lori Harnois – *Discover New England*

Lisa Cooper & Jenni Bridgman, *Discover New England (KBC)*

Sue Henrique - *Connecticut*

Whitney Moreau – *Maine*

Jackie Ennis – *Massachusetts*

Sara Ellis – *Massachusetts (TTM)*

Michele Cota – *New Hampshire*

Gary Orr – *New Hampshire (VVV)*

Mark Brodeur – *Rhode Island*

Caroline Donaldson-Sinclair – *Vermont (Wixhill)*

Doug Hall - *Boston Harbor Cruises*

Katie Aldrich - *The Godfrey*

Paul Saucedo – *The Godfrey*

Olivia Crossley – *Omni Hotels & Resorts*

### **SIGNIFICANT TRENDS**

There is still good interest in the USA as a destination from the UK market and New England remains an important region among UK tour operators. Many have been actively increasing and developing their product offering to the region. However we have seen a significant increase in the popularity of Canada among travellers from the UK over the last 12 months which may impact visitor numbers to the USA.

Of particular interest this year was the increase in enquiries relating to product for the family market. Many operators with an established New England program requested additional ideas, adventurous activities, accommodation and itineraries to suit families. Escorted tour operators are working hard to re-vamp their

touring product and develop new and exciting itineraries as passenger numbers have reduced in recent years. Travelsphere and Titan specifically have both introduced new escorted tours outside of high season as a result of attending Summit in Newport this year.

Airlift to New England has increased significantly this year with the introduction of the Dublin-Hartford Aer Lingus and Gatwick-Boston Norwegian flights. This will continue in 2017 with Virgin's Manchester-Boston service and another new Norwegian flight from the north of the UK to one of the region's smaller airports. Both will be looking for marketing support to help promote the increased airlift and DNE should look to be promoting these new routes heavily in 2017.

## **POLITICAL TRENDS**

Brexit and the US Presidential Election were both hot topics at WTM. UK tour operators are not reporting any major changes to enquiry levels as a result of the UK's vote to leave the EU (dubbed Brexit). Enquiries however are taking longer to convert to bookings. There has also not been any major negative effect on the UK economy. However exchange rates are a concern as Sterling has lost 20% in value against the US Dollar making foreign travel more expensive and in-market spending may reduce in the short term.

The shock result of the US Presidential election during World Travel Market affected the status-quo of the North America area of the show on the Wednesday with very mixed feelings across exhibitors and visitors. It is still too early to predict how this will impact travel to the USA.

Historically, Brits have continued to travel during times of relative uncertainty as they see their main holiday as a MUST. It is anticipated that if any form of travel were to suffer, it will be the second break, not the major vacation.

## **DNE SUMMIT, MOUNT WASHINGTON**

Many of the loyal New England tour operators have already confirmed they will be attending Summit next year (Purely America, Vacations to America) and we have interest from Titan, Travelsphere, Virgin Holidays and Audley Travel again. The new style post-fams have been received well by tour operators.

## **ACCOMMODATION & TRANSPORT**

This year we moved the delegation from the Citizen M Bankside to the new Citizen M Tower hotel. This is significantly closer to ExCeL London and reduced travel to and from the show by at least 20 minutes per journey. The hotel's proximity to the leading London attractions of Tower Bridge and the Tower of London was extremely popular and there is also a good selection of restaurants in the area.

Overall all delegates continue to like the Citizen M hotel chain and prefer to stay away from the exhibition venue. We have already held the same number of rooms for next year to ensure we obtain a competitive rate. When confirming rooming requirements, delegates do need to be aware that there are only a limited number of changes to the room block that can be made.

Transport was once again pre-arranged with Addison Lee to avoid the busy DLR and hefty cab charges.

## **2017 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Next year, World Travel Market takes place from 6 to 8 November 2017.

Investment in World Travel Market remains the largest cost in the UK budget and the hardest to measure in terms of return on investment. We do recommend reducing participation to every other year to allow us to

reinvest the funds into more measurable consumer facing campaigns. This will allow us to ensure that New England is kept front of mind among UK holiday makers.

Brand USA continue to run their block party on the Tuesday afternoon of World Travel Market. As the New England booth is in such a prominent position it would be good to participate in this by offering tasters of New England produce such as maple syrup, cranberry juice, cheese or craft beers. This will ensure traffic to the stand even though meetings are not taking place.