

American Bus Association Annual Convention

Louisville, KY January 9 – 12, 2016

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NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development (DTTD) attended the American Bus Association (ABA) from January 9 -12 in Louisville, Kentucky with about 30 delegates from throughout New Hampshire. During ABA, DTTD conducted prescheduled one-on-one meetings, participated in networking events, and managed a booth for the duration of the event.

DTTD participated in a total of 40 one-on-one appointments. The total number of appointments was less than prior years; however, there was an increase in the total number of tour operators requesting to meet with New Hampshire (both scheduled and unscheduled due to conflicting availability) and six operators cancelled their show attendance at the last minute. Of the 40 that took place, 10 tour operators will launch a new tour to New Hampshire, 7 might likely build a new tour, 21 were exploring ideas and wish to maintain current tour programs, and 2 had to reduce their tours to New Hampshire for 2016.

Some highlights from the appointments are:

- DATTCO, based in CT, plans to launch a retail program so they need to develop all new tours throughout New England that are so unique that they don't compete with their current charter clients.
- A decision maker from Daytripping, Inc, based in CA, came to NH for a fishing trip and now he plans to build a Presidential theme tour to VT and NH.
- Friendly Tour & Travel, based in NJ, is running a brand new tour starting this Oct that will repeat every two years.
- Hanover Holidays from Ontario will add a new tour for 2017 and is open to coming in the spring if the ideas are convincing.
- Operation Europe, an established London-based inbound operator, has an office in PA that has been tasked with specializing in European outbound to the United States.



DTTD collaborated with the Rocks Estate to conduct a maple demonstration during the exhibitor reception period. This was a successful partnership in that it achieved a lot of tour operator attention and developed interest for bringing groups to New Hampshire in different seasons. In addition to conducting the maple demonstration, DTTD partnered with Kellerhaus to give samples of buttercrunch chocolates. This has been a strong partnership for a few years now and tour operators and suppliers alike now regular the booth each year for these chocolates specifically. The samples prompt inquiries as to the visitor programs offered by Kellerhaus which is the primary goal of the partnership.

DTTD collected business cards for a White Mountains Getaway raffle exclusively offered to tour operators with prize partners Indian Head Resort, Loon Mountain Resort, Franconia Notch State Park, and maple syrup from the Rocks Estate. The getaway winner was given to Kim Ward from Miller Transportation based in Louisville, KY and the syrup prizes were awarded to Funtastic Getaways from MA and Rill's Bus Service based in MD.

It is recommended that DTTD continue aggressive efforts at next year's ABA Convention in Cleveland, Ohio (January 14 – 17, 2017). DTTD should continue to have a booth on the exhibitor floor, and, if the opportunity allows, encourage greater collaboration with the other New England states in regards to décor and multistate suggested itineraries.

Overall, the 2016 ABA Convention was very successful. Consecutive attendance at future ABA Conventions is essential for the continued growth of New Hampshire's share of group tours and to defend existing programs.