

National Tour Association (NTA) Annual Convention Report
Atlanta, Georgia Jan 31 – Feb 4, 2016
Prepared by Michele Cota, Trade & Industry Relations Manager

NH Division of Travel & Tourism Development (DTTD) attended the NTA Annual Convention from January 31 to February 4, 2016 in Atlanta, Georgia to participate in prescheduled one-on-one appointments, attend educational seminars, and participate in networking events. In addition to convention activities, DTTD had outside meetings including: a brainstorm meeting with a key Travel Alliance Partner who has agreed to increase New Hampshire and Vermont product within that network, a meeting with Hospitality Tours about a Bank Travel Conference coming to Vermont in 2017 and what opportunities that could present for New Hampshire, and strategic discussions with Vermont and Maine DMO colleagues. Group tours almost always visit more than one New England state with their tours so northern New England is far more successful at attracting new programs when collaborating to present a unified partnership to key buyers.

DTTD had 29 prescheduled appointments with tour operators; two of which did not show. The appointments were overwhelmingly positive and exciting. Seven tour companies are urgently constructing brand new tour programs and six more are very open to creating new programs. The remaining appointments were gathering ideas for possibly tweaking existing programs.

NTA, though similar to the American Bus Association, has very different tour companies that tend to be larger and often attract domestic travel as well as inbound and outbound. In addition, NTA has worked to attract buyers from China and South America.

Some highlights include:

- New Hampshire-based outbound tour company Alexander & Roberts, which has been in business for about 70 years, has just made the decision to build inbound business to the United States starting with their home region, New England.
- Creative Tours out of Florida came to Maine for a FAM tour and now has two imminent projects in the works for two separate tour series that includes 2-3 nights in New Hampshire, hub and spoke.
- A large tour company based in WI called Holiday Vacations reported that New England tours continue to sell very strong and have been running about nine departures; each averaging 50 passengers.
- CA based Main Street Experiences, formerly has been selling into the Travel Alliance Partner's Guaranteed Departure foliage program but now they want to package and retail their own foliage tour programs.
- McCoy Bus Service & Tours from Ontario wants to push all last minute ideas with distressed inventory to her clients as she found that her clients respond very well to these types of promotions. She formerly sold tours packaged by Cape Cod Custom Tours; however, he is discouraged by "cookie cutter" itinerary so she wants to break off and build her own that can run from May to October to New England.

There are important operators that DTTD needs to maintain a relationship with who only attend NTA shows and the quality of appointments at NTA are strong. It is recommended that DTTD continue to be active with NTA by attending convention in Saint Louis, MO from February 26 – March 2, 2017 as long as these key buyers continue to attend convention.

Leads will be posted on www.visitnh.gov/industry-members and will be followed up with accordingly. All new buyers that DTTD met with will be added as subscribers to the New Hampshire Update enewsletter.