

Brand USA introduces multi-state U.S. itineraries at French travel exposition

The Brand USA Pavilion – joined by 29 exhibiting U.S. destinations and travel-service providers – was a major exhibitor at the 40th annual IFTM Top Resa, which was recently held at the Porte de Versailles in Paris, Sept. 25-28. The 4,100-square-foot Brand USA Pavilion occupied the second-largest exhibition space at the event.

Top Resa, nicknamed the “travel-market rendezvous,” is a high-profile French tradeshow for the global-travel industry. Its signature appeal is that it caters to multiple target markets: leisure, business, MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibitions) and group tourism.

Approximately 34,000 industry professionals, journalists, and online influencers attended – an increase of nearly 5 percent over the 2017 show. They interacted with 1,680 exhibitors. The 2017 show also had a 5-percent increase in attendance.

Brand USA and the Visit USA Committee France (supported by the U.S. Commercial Service of the U.S. embassy in Paris) jointly sponsored the Brand USA Pavilion.

“This year the Brand USA Pavilion was in a great location, resulting in increased foot traffic,” said Valérie Ferriere, trade specialist, U.S. Commercial Service France. “The beautiful design of the pavilion enhanced its visibility in the hall. The pavilion was well received by exhibitors and attendees, alike.”

During the four-day exhibition, Brand USA conducted “Expert Training” sessions for 80 international agents. It introduced a variety of U.S. itineraries, which highlight multi-state adventures that include lesser known destinations. Visitors can access these suggested trips during their travels to, through and beyond traditional U.S. gateway cities.

Visit USA Committee France arranged a Sept. 25 cocktail reception with Tour Hebdo, a travel-trade magazine, for 50 guests – exhibitors, tour operators, travel agents, and members of the media.

The next evening, Brand USA and the Visit USA Committee hosted a networking event and cocktail reception for more than 150 guests. William Mondello, account manager, Brand USA, and Geoffrey Duval, president, Visit USA, were featured speakers.

Officials from Interface Tourism France, which has led Brand USA marketing in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg since the beginning of 2018, assisted at the Brand USA Pavilion.

French FAM

Earlier, in September, Brand USA organized a familiarization trip for five French product managers. The FAM, held Sept. 4-10, included visits to Chicago and Springfield (Illinois); St. Louis (Missouri); and Memphis and Nashville (Tennessee). Called "Un Roadtrip Musical," the FAM highlighted an array of destinations – on and off the beaten path – through the multi-dimensional perspectives of American music.

New French product

Maisons du Voyage, a French tour operator, has developed a new travel product, "La musique au fil de l'eau (Music over water)" which was inspired by Brand USA's "Rhythms of the River" itinerary.

The French trip runs 16 days and 14 nights, and spans most of the cities and activities featured in the Brand USA itinerary (Some were also part of the recent French FAM trip.) Locations are: Chicago and Springfield (Illinois); St. Louis (Missouri); Memphis and Nashville (Tennessee); Clarksdale and Natchez (Mississippi); and Lafayette and New Orleans (Louisiana).

All of the destinations have ties to strands of iconic American music, including rock and roll, blues, jazz, country, rhythm and blues, soul, folk, and hip-hop.

Brand USA created the "Rhythms of the River" itinerary in alignment with this year's global release of "American Musical Journey," its giant-screen documentary that traces the evolution of American music. In May, the film had its French debut in Paris.

French market

The United States welcomed just over 1.6 million travelers from France during 2016, making France the ninth-largest source market for international visitors. Those travelers spent nearly \$6 billion during their trips.

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