



MEDIA RELEASE

Can Europe Arrest its Dramatic Decline in Visitors?

The main question in everyone's minds at the annual conference of the European Tour Operators Association (ETOA), taking place at the Café Royal in London on November 8th will be whether Europe can address the dramatic decline in its inbound tourist market. By 2003 the number of inbound visitors to Europe had fallen by 30% from 2000 and their expenditure had fallen even more steeply (Source: ETOA Member Survey). This is the worst decline since the Second World War.

Inbound visitors are vital to the economies of all European countries because they arrive and spend foreign currency in Europe's hotels, restaurants and shops.

At the forthcoming conference, ETOA will release two pieces of research that will shed more light on the market place and inform the discussion about ways Europe can arrest the decline. The first will be a survey of the participants at the ETOA Workshop on the previous day, when tour operators will sit down with hotels and other suppliers to discuss the levels of business that they project for the coming year. The survey will provide the first authoritative indicator of tour operator confidence in the inbound market in 2004.

The second piece of research is a study commissioned by ETOA in to the key factors that drive demand, including attitudes and opinions held by visitors to Europe. It will reveal how well Europe meets their expectations on a number of different criteria, ranging from historic and cultural aspects to shopping, service and value for money. It will also explore tourists' intentions to return.

As part of the overall challenge of making Europe a more appealing destination, the conference will look closely at transportation, EU Regulation and the on-line market place.

Conference delegates will comprise senior managers from Europe's major tour operators, hotel groups, tourist attractions, coach, rail and cruise companies and local tourist boards. Collectively, as buyers, they have a strong influence on which destinations and attractions are more or less successful, as they spend over €6bn a year on Europe's sights, hotels and transport on behalf of their customers.

Speakers at the event will include:

- James Provan, MEP, Vice President of the European Parliament and Chairman of the Parliamentary Intergroup on Tourism
- John Gilbert, MD Eurolines and Chairman Transport Europe
- Richard Mason, European Commission, DG Energy and Transport
- Marc Billiet, Head of Passenger Tourism Transport, IRU Delegation to the EU
- Mike Beagrie, General Manager, Setra Sales, EvoBus (UK) Ltd

Panellists will include:

- Mike Preager, Vice President Business Development, Cendant
- Soren Langelund, Head of Business Development, Opodo
- Ray Mason, MD OctopusTravel.com
- Peter Franz, Partner, Transport & Travel Services, Accenture
- Kenny Boyle, International Marketing Director, Visit Britain



European Tour Operators Association

At the conference, journalists will be free to meet delegates and speakers and to interview them about the various subjects under discussion.

For further information and to gain accreditation as a journalist, please contact Rachel Tym, Tel: +44 (0) 20 7499 4412, Email: RTym@ETOA.org.

About ETOA

Since its foundation in 1989, ETOA has grown exponentially to include over 350 member organisations, of which 102 are Tour Operators. Collectively, ETOA represents over €6 billion spending on accommodation and travel services annually.

ETOA provides representation at the European government level for companies involved in bringing tourists to Europe. The Association promotes greater awareness of the benefits provided by the group travel industry in Europe - particularly increased income and employment. ETOA also influences European tourism policy and legislation.

Areas of specific activity include:

- Promoting Europe as a tourism destination
- Establishing codes of conduct and guidelines for its members
- Establishing commercial opportunities between buyers and sellers
- Working with other travel & tourism associations to raise the industry's profile

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