

RDA English Newsletter December 2011

Dear RDA Members, Dear Readers

Welcome to the December issue of our monthly English RDA Newsletter!

This time of year is a time for reflection on the year past and for anticipation of the year to come. The business climate appears to have improved considerably in 2011 for the coach and group tourism sectors in Germany in particular, despite prevailing economic uncertainty. This is welcome news, indeed, but many challenges remain. Our core message for the coming year remains very much the same and can fit well into a Tweet: *coach holidays are excellent value for money, environment- and climate friendly, sociable, enjoyable and informative.*

The RDA team will continue to work hard on your behalf, for all of our members and for all of our industry partners. We very much look forward to meeting you in person at some stage in 2012, either at the 30th Day of Coach Tourism on 9th January 2012 in the Autostadt Wolfsburg, at our 61st RDA Annual General Meeting and Annual RDA / gbk Conference from 26th to 28th April 2012 in Graz, Austria, and / or during the course of the 38th RDA-Workshop from 17th to 19th July in Cologne or at one of the many RDA regional get-togethers and RDA Academy seminars that are being organised for your benefit.

In the meantime we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and prosperous New Year 2012!

Wishing you an informative and enjoyable read!

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Select RDA Dates in 2012

30th Day of Coach Tourism

09th January 2012, Autostadt, Wolfsburg, Germany

www.tag-der-bustouristik.de, dieter.gauf@gauf-germany.de

61st RDA AGM & RDA / gbk Conference

26th to 28th April 2012, Graz, Austria

38th RDA-Workshop

17th to 19th July 2012, Cologne, Germany

RDA Academy Seminars 2012

Tour Guiding Seminar

3rd to 5th February 2012 in Bremen, Germany

Innovations Seminar: Complaints Management

10th to 11th February 2012, Cologne, Germany

RDA Partner Seminars:

Partner Seminar I – The German Coach Tourism Market

30th May 2012, Cologne, Germany

Partner Seminar II – Coach-friendly offers: from initial idea to final contract

31st May 2012, Cologne, Germany

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Social business occasions instead of business networking events?

Next year's pre-Day of Coach Tourism 2012 Get-Together takes place on Sunday, 8th January 2012 in the phaeno in Wolfsburg. This is an important social evening where RDA members and conference participants have an opportunity to meet up and "network" in a pleasant and unusual location. Tony Hsieh, CEO of "Zappos.com", states in his inspiring and bestselling book *"Delivering Happiness – A Path to Passion, Profits and Purpose"*, that he himself really dislikes "business networking" events. He says that the goal of most of these events is to walk around and find people to trade business cards with, in the hope of meeting someone who can help you out in business. In exchange, you might also be able to help that person out in return.

Tony Hsieh says that he generally avoids "networking" events and that he rarely carries any business cards around with him. He advises us all to stop trying to "network" in the traditional business sense and to try to build up the number and depth of our personal friendships where the friendship itself is its own reward. He is convinced from his successful experience to-date that the more diverse our friendships are, the more likely we will derive both personal and business benefits from these friendships two to three years down the line.

I remember when I was a young lad that my father used to attend "socials". These were none other than networking events but without the business cards. The foreground emphasis was indeed on the social, but such gatherings solidified a support structure that transcended any purely business aspect. Many of us are involved in organising or attending "business networking events" which have a social character. Some of the best and longest-standing relationships and friendships are established during the social as opposed to the more formal levels of these events. This social connection is frequently transformed later on into a business connection.

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So rather than talking about industry and business networking maybe we should be returning to the concept of social occasions where participants can get to know each other better. Where they take time out to establish new relationships and strengthen existing ones without having to immediately exchange business cards and other credentials. Our annual exhibition and conference programmes will no longer be promoted as business networking events but as “social business occasions” where the strictly business makes way for the “familial” atmosphere we all experience, enjoy and appreciate during RDA conferences and events in particular. Who knows who we will meet, share stories with and end up helping out down the road?

This is not only a change in terminology but an incentive to reflect upon and engage in further personal and business transformation over the New Year to come. As Tony Hsieh says, you will not know exactly what the benefits will be, but if the friendships are genuine, those benefits will indeed magically appear! I look forward to seeing you at our next RDA social business occasion on Sunday 8th January 2012 in the phaeno in Wolfsburg!

The phaeno in Wolfsburg is a contemporary space for people who want to experience something new discovering the world by touching, trying things out, finding astonishment, playing, exploring and above all unravelling the mysterious natural-scientific phenomena of everyday life. Over 300 phenomena may be marvelled at in phæno. Have you ever steered a car with the accelerator pedal, created a melody out of soap bubbles, formed a mushroom out of mist, seen an electromagnetic hedgehog or experienced the world’s most fiery tornado? If not, then this is the place to do so. Two Visitor Labs, a Science Theatre and an Ideas Forum will provide Day of Coach Tourism participants even more opportunities to see, hear, touch, smell and feel. The phaeno features rooms for staging special events on three levels of the building as well as two restaurants. And phenomena "to go" can be found in the "Supermarket of Knowledge" the phæno Shop.

Further information: www.phaeno.de - Dr. Patrick Patridge -

Working with German coach and group travel operators

Germany's coach and group travel operators start planning and contracting for the following tourism year in spring and in early summer. The highlight of their purchasing year is the annual RDA-Workshop in Cologne (17th to 19th July 2012).

Germany's coach and group travel operators tend to divide their offers into "must have" offers, "should have" offers and "could have" offers. If, for example, you are currently a "could have" offer, then your task is to move up the scale to become a "should have" offer. Contracting for the following year is usually completed by late-August. Offers, catalogues and programmes are published in autumn and early winter – both print and online, customers primarily deciding upon their following year's vacation over Christmas and the New Year holidays.

When working with German coach and group travel operators it is important to ensure that most if not all your information, website and materials are in German. German-speaking personnel are also to be highly recommended. Your offers should feature a clear structure with precise and transparent language. They should include basic package components, optional package components and commissionable net prices (high & low season).

Tour operator commission rates in Germany range from 15 – 20 percent. Commission rates for travel agents range from 10 - 12 percent. Once agreed, rates should never be undermined by price dumping later on. Your offers should also include advice on conditions and terms of payment, cancellations policy, complimentary elements, free places, discounts and seasonal specials if available (e.g. Easter and New Year).

All of the above should be backed-up by quality high resolution and iconic images that will enhance catalogues / websites and awaken German customer desires. A great thing about our business is that a really good picture literally can sell a trip.

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Photos and programme offers should also be accompanied by customer-oriented descriptions suitable for inclusion in flyers, websites & catalogues with easily understandable and Google searchable catch words and phrases (SEO).

These are some of the suggestions given in the RDA partner seminars.

Further information: www.rda-workshop.de

RDA Federation News

World's largest toboggan run in the Autostadt Wolfsburg

The 30th Day of Coach Tourism on Monday, 9th January 2012 in the Autostadt Wolfsburg does not just promise plenty of lively discussions but also a rapid and exciting descent on the world's largest mobile toboggan run. This enlivening seasonal experience begins at the lofty height of 30 metres and continues over a thrilling distance of 150 metres with lots of ups and downs, twists and turns. Day of Coach Tourism participants may share in the fun and excitement free-of-charge prior to, or immediately after this year's kick-off coach tourism event at the very kind invitation of our conference hosts, the Autostadt Wolfsburg. The toboggan run consists of some 12,000 individual parts and was constructed over a three-week period. It weighs over 1,000 tons and covers an area of 1,000 m². Some 350 cubic metres of glistening white snow lying on a thin layer of chopped ice add to the colourful and Winter Fairytale atmosphere.

Further information: www.autostadt.de

Coaches are still the safest mode of holiday transport

Coaches are still the safest mode of holiday transport. This has been confirmed once again by the latest TÜV-Bus-Report (German Association for Technical Inspection).

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More than 80 percent of vehicles examined became the TÜV sticker straight away, a far higher percentage than for cars and for lorries. Failings, when detected, were often not of a very serious nature, e.g. headlight settings. Only 0.1% of coaches examined were declared unsafe for road traffic, i.e. 25 out of 50,000 vehicles. The RDA – International Coach Tourism Federation concludes that the high levels of coach safety are a direct result of coach sector safety initiatives over the past couple of years. Brake defects were rarely discovered by the TÜV. This is good news. Corrosion in body work was mostly discovered in coaches over ten years old and here in less than 5 percent of vehicles examined. RDA President Richard Eberhardt stated that he very much welcomed the fact that the TÜV 2011 Report confirmed that coaches are still – as before – the safest mode of holiday transport.

Further information: www.rda.de