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**How to Market to Domestic Motorcoach Groups and What to Expect**

**Designated Sales Staff - person(s) to be point of contact for groups**

* Help with group scheduling and planning
* Follow up leads from shows and other sources
* Note “Staffing During Group Visits” below

**Create an inclusive rate and comp policy for groups**

* Group rate should be better than what an individual can purchase
* Comp rates vary, usually expect for the driver and group escort
* Create a definitive reservation/deposit/refund policy for tour group and a billing policy
* Group Rates for Restaurants - Include the above along with:
  + Limited menu with one set price for each person. This is easier for all parties.
  + Menu should be flexible for dietary needs

**Collateral – Group profile sheet – one document provides**

* Explain why they should visit your attraction/location (*good* photos are very important)
* GPS location on all material (*NO* P.O. Boxes)
* Group rates and comp policy
  + Comps are usually expected for the driver and group escort
* Parking for Coaches Information (is there specific space and charge?)
  + Coaches are 45 feet long and require at least 15 feet height clearance
* Days and hours open
* Sales person contact information (phone, email)
* Website address and Social Media

**Signage and Roadways**

* Business should be well marked with directional signage from the roadway and connecting routes.
* Be aware there are roads a car can travel that a motorcoach cannot. Directions to your destination need to include major roadways with adequate space and limited amount of curves, even if it takes longer to travel.

**The Motorcoach & Parking**

* Designated motorcoach loading zone and parking for the coach without obstructing traffic flow.
  + Safe, level loading and unloading areas and level walkways are needed
* Sufficient space for a motorcoach to turn around
  + Coaches are 45 feet long and require at least 15 feet height clearance

**Capacity**

* Able to handle up to 55 people at one time
* If restaurant
  + Seat and serve up to 55 people in one room
  + Complete lunch in 1 hour, dinner in 1.5 hours
  + Clean and accessible public restrooms that can accommodate up to 55 people in a reasonable amount of time. (FYI: One restroom is not adequate)
* Handicap accessibility –
  + If group needs to go upstairs, a public elevator is a must.

**Staffing *During* Group Visits**

* Assign someone to the group for easy check–in and any problems that might occur during their visit
* Be prepared to have a staffer board the coach upon arrival to give an orientation to the site and offer key information to help guests enjoy their visit completely such as what they can expect, a timeline for their visit, where are the restrooms located.
* Staffing must be adequate to handle 55 people in an efficient, professional, friendly and timely manner.
* Staff training for group efficiency is very important. Tours are on a relatively strict timeline. All guests arrive and depart at the same time; therefore wait time for service should be minimized when possible.
* No discussion of the group’s rate/cost should take place by staff while the group is at your destination. This should only be between the sales contact/management and the scheduling operator.

**Lodging – Upon Group Arrival**

* Pre-registration with room keys prepared in advance and ready upon arrival
* Efficient staffing for baggage handling upon arrival & departure (this can be a charge built into the rate)
* Do not include pricing in any information provided to the guest including room rates, meal voucher values, or admissions.

**How to Develop Group Business**

* Work with your local and regional tourism offices
* Attend Group (Travel Trade) Shows (state/regional/national)
* Offer FAM tours/site visits to operators
* Participate in sales missions (independently, local or state level)
* Offer special incentives for groups – such as VIP tours or give-a-ways
* Work with receptive operators. These organizations develop tours and “sell” them to tour operators as a ready-made package. (TDTD has a list of TN receptives.)

**Timeline – expect 6 months to 2 years to see results**

* Be aware group operators build itineraries 1-2 years out.
  + For Example in January 2018, they will be working on 2019/2020 itineraries.
* Do not expect large numbers of groups attending your destination overnight or even within 6 months. The process takes time and commitment for success. You must commit to the process for a 3 year timeline to start seeing an ROI.