



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.