

PA's International Sales Mission in May nets meetings with 250 outbound travel companies & media in UK & Ireland

Coalition organized by PA Tourism Office & co-sponsored by American Airlines included sales representatives from Hershey & Harrisburg, Lancaster, Philadelphia, Pocono Mountains, Brandywine Valley and Valley Forge.

Harrisburg, PA (May 20, 2016) - A coalition of Pennsylvania's Destination Marketing Organizations (DMO) conducted a sales mission throughout the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland in early May to pitch the Commonwealth's most popular areas for international visitors to 250 top outbound travel companies and travel writers in London, England; Glasgow, Scotland; and Dublin Ireland.

The five-day mission was coordinated by the Pennsylvania Tourism Office and co-sponsored by American Airlines in association with The Greg Evans Marketing & Communications Consultancy who serves as the UK-based travel representative for the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and The Countryside of Philadelphia group which includes Brandywine Valley and Valley Forge DMOs.



Pictured above (L-R): Mara Sultan, Discover Lancaster; Svetlana Yazovskikh, Philadelphia DMO; Michael Chapaloney, PA Tourism Office; Fiona Noonan and Caitriona Toner, American Airlines; Greg Evans, UK Sales Rep for PA; Dave Thomas, American Airlines UK & Ireland; Ann Pilcher, Pocono Mountains DMO; Greg Edevane, Brandywine Valley DMO; Audrey Bialas, Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau; Marc Kaminetsky, Valley Forge DMO.

The Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau (HHRVB) participated in the sales initiative as part of the organization's international sales and marketing program that began in 2014. The bureau's initial efforts to attract international visitors has focused primarily on two of the region's most lucrative feeder markets of China (#2) and UK (#4). The top five inbound markets for the region also include Canada (#1), Puerto Rico (#3), and Mexico (#5) according to the latest VisaVue® International Consumer Spending Report.

"Our region is a popular destination for international travelers," said Audrey Bialas, Sales Director for HHRVB. "We have unique iconic American experiences in this part of Pennsylvania from Hershey's Chocolate to the American Civil War and the Amish. These are all popular points of interest for international visitors coming to explore the U.S."

According to Bialas, the region also benefits from its proximity to Philadelphia, New York, and Washington, DC which all serve as major ports of entry for European travelers. This sales mission for example was promoting direct flights on American Airlines from London and Dublin to Philadelphia.

Following the sales mission, HHRVB announced it was increasing its investment in sales and marketing within the UK market and has contracted The Greg Evans Marketing & Communications Consultancy to represent the Hershey Harrisburg Region starting in July 2016.

“We see a great value in retaining Greg Evans as a full-time representative of our region in the UK,” said Bialas. “Evans has represented the Commonwealth in the UK for nearly twenty years, so he knows our region well and he is exceptional at selling our destination to his vast network of contacts. There is also an exponential return on our modest initial investment with this firm at this time because of the cooperative program our neighboring DMOs have already established with Evans.”

The HHRVB contract with Evans will dovetail with the sales and marketing programs already underway for Philadelphia and The Countryside of Philadelphia group in the UK. That now guarantees the HHR will be actively promoted as an official stakeholder in the cooperative sales, marketing, and public relations efforts in England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and Ireland.

The bureau’s initial investment with Evans will be a fraction of what the Philadelphia DMO spends in the market, according to Bialas. But the bureau’s involvement is important to HHRVB’s goals for capturing more of the international travel market.

“This was our opportunity to buy into a program that is already in place with a much greater reach throughout the UK than we could have afforded to do alone,” said Bialas. “By working collaboratively with Philadelphia and The Countryside of Philadelphia group under the representation of The Greg Evans Marketing & Communications Consultancy is an example of the whole effort being much greater than the sum of its parts.”

In 2014 Philadelphia welcomed more than 88,000 visitors from the UK, according to Greg Evans. The latest report for inbound travel from the UK in 2015 will not be released until the end of June 2016.

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MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Mary Smith, President & CEO of the Hershey Harrisburg Regional Visitors Bureau is available for media interviews regarding the contents of this news release. Please try to make interview requests at least 12-hours in advance. The bureau will make every effort to accommodate all interview requests. Contact Rick@HersheyHarrisburg.org or cell 717.884.3328.

ABOUT THE HHRVB

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The HHRVB is the official non-profit partnership-based Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) leading economic growth for Pennsylvania’s Hershey & Harrisburg Region through destination marketing and tourism development. The organization, accredited by Destination Marketing Association International ([DMAI](#)) since 2010, is committed to actively marketing the tourism assets in Dauphin & Perry County to business and leisure travelers both domestic & international. The bureau also leads regional sales efforts to attract meeting & event organizers, sporting event producers, and group tour leaders. For more information go to VisitHersheyHarrisburg.org or call 877-727-8573. Media can use #HHRVB and #HHRVB4Media when tagging stories and social media posts related to the region.