

# Sturbridge Group Tour Alliance

Photo: Patrick Tomasso

## BECOMING GROUP READY

NOVEMBER 14, 2019



COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN OF STURBRIDGE



# ECONOMIC IMPACT FOR MASSACHUSETTS – MOTORCOACH MARKET

- Massachusetts serves a total of **4,333,188** motorcoach group tourist people on day trips, and an additional **1,420,072** on overnight stays, for a total of **5,753,259** group tour visitors.
- It is estimated that approximately **164,379** motorcoaches visited Massachusetts in 2018.



**Economic Contribution of Motorcoach Group Tourism in Massachusetts (2018)**

	Direct	Supplier	Induced	Total
<b>Economic Impact</b>	\$2,964,003,100	\$1,386,704,000	\$2,386,733,200	\$6,737,440,300
<b>Job</b>	33,696	7,373	13,482	54,551
<b>Wages</b>	\$1,424,961,500	\$541,511,100	\$885,972,300	\$2,852,444,900

- The motor coach industry is thriving and growing. Tour group sizes, demographics and behaviors are evolving. Many tour operators reported that 2018 and 2019 have been some of the best years for business, in fact, a recently quoted tour operator said, “**some people have called this not the golden years of tourism, but the platinum years of tourism.**”

# DOMESTIC GROUP TOUR MARKETING PROGRAM GOALS



Increase overnights –  
focus on soft periods



Increase group tours to  
Sturbridge and  
surrounding communities



Build awareness of group  
tour product with  
domestic and Canadian  
tour operators



Offer strategic training for  
domestic group product  
development

# HOW TO BE GROUP READY – BEFORE THE VISIT

- **Train your staff.**

- Make sure the people that will be interacting with the group know how things work.
- Staff should know pricing, where items are located, where the restrooms are.
- General information about the business – how long have you been in business; how did the business come to be; any unique information about the establishment (i.e., a famous person visited, it's haunted, etc.)



- **Group pricing, programs & menus. Have clear and concise information.**

- Your offering should include the package price per person, inclusive of taxes and all fees.
- Tour operators price trips by the person.
- The easier you make it for them to package a trip, the more likely they are to book a group.
- Offer a complimentary ticket/meal to the tour director and driver. This is the industry standard.



- **Can a motorcoach access your property?.**

- Motorcoaches are big. They need ample room to make turns and sufficient height to navigate parking lots and driveways.



- **At least one bathroom for guests to use while visiting.**

- The bathroom on the bus is for “emergency use only.” You need at least one bathroom for guests to use while visiting.
- A port-a-potty is generally not acceptable.
- Always be honest with tour operators about your restroom facilities before they book.
- Good tour operators will plan stops with ample restrooms before and after your attraction.



# HOW TO BE GROUP READY – DURING THE VISIT

- **Staff up.**

- Make sure you know how many people will be on the bus.
- A Motorcoach can hold 40-55 people. For small establishments, that is a lot of people at one time!
- Bring in extra staff to greet, serve, and work registers.



- **A little attention goes a long way.**

- Step outside to greet the bus.
- Hop on and welcome everyone to your place.
- Making them feel welcome before they walk through the door sets the right tone for the visit.



- **Clear a path.**

- A clear, even path from the bus to the entrance.
- Many groups are senior travelers.
- It's essential that there is a clear, even path from the bus to the entrance and throughout the facility.
- Shift tables and merchandise inside to make sure people can easily maneuver once they come inside.



# HOW TO BE GROUP READY – DURING THE VISIT CONT'D

- **Have a Plan B.**

- Maybe rain ponchos or flexibility with rescheduling. Have a plan!



- **Figure out logistics.**

- Will the entire group fit into one area?
- Will you split the group up?
- Do you need a microphone to be heard?
- Have you allowed ample time to experience your site?
- They will need time for the restrooms and shopping.
- Groups of 50 travel much slower than individual visitors.



- **The experience a group has directly impacts the reputation of the tour operator that brings the group.**

- If group members have an amazing experience, the tour operator will become your regular customer.
- If group members have a bad experience, the tour operator's reputation can suffer.
- Don't forget to say thank you!



# HOW TO BE GROUP READY – AFTER THE VISIT

- Regroup with the team.

- Discuss the tour and what should be kept the same and if any changes could be made.



- Follow up with the Tour Operator.

- Ask direct questions as to what went well and if something can be approved.
- It's a nice touch to send a thank you note.



- Keep menus/pricing/programming up to date.



- Stay top of mind.

- Inform the Tour Operators you work with of any updates or new offerings you may have.
- It doesn't hurt to give them a call or an email every six months, just to say hello.



- Spread the word.

- If you know of an attraction or experience that compliments the tour, let the Tour Operator know.
- Let your fellow business colleagues know of the opportunity.
- Work together!





# THANK YOU

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