

Bus Tours News

Economic Bright Spot for Michigan's Sunrise Side Tourism

The new Governor's Award for Innovative Tourism Collaboration has been awarded to several Michigan's Sunrise Side groups and businesses for successful efforts to develop regional itineraries and promote to the group tour/motorcoach industry. The winning nomination was submitted by Develop Iosco, an economic development group in Iosco County.

The Bus Bash, sponsored by Thunder Bay Resort, Michigan Sunrise Tours, the "Charity Island Dinner Cruise, the Alpena Convention and Visitor's Bureau and all the editorial coverage and ads that went with it in BUS TOURS MAGAZINE and NATIONAL BUS TRADER were cited as an example of the "innovative collaboration." Also cited was the formation of "Michigan Sunrise Tours" as a "Receptive Tour Operator" by Heidi Zanner-Dewald in conjunction with the creation of the "Charity Island Dinner Cruise," by Karen and Bob Wiltse in Au Gres. The Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center, part of the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary, is a key attraction, as is the Elk Viewing, Carriage Ride, Gourmet Dinners and Wine Tasting at Thunder Bay Resort created by Jan and Jack Matthias.

These three key attractions have been combined with a number of other Sunrise Side attractions including lighthouses, a sailing ship, museums, wineries and breweries to create appealing three-, four- and five-day itineraries that are being actively promoted to group tour operators.

It is working and as a result the Sunrise Side has become one of the "hot" new destinations in the Midwest region for group tours. From a handful of coaches coming into the region three years ago, the numbers are growing rapidly. The goal at Thunder Bay Resort, Charity Island and the Maritime Heritage Center is to host 80 to 100 coaches in 2009 and 63 had been booked by April. Approximately 80 to 85 percent are coming from outside Michigan, where economic conditions are much better. Customer response has been very good and many are booking return visits.

The average coach generates \$7,500 to \$8,000 per day in revenues, most of which remains in the region at attractions, hotels and restaurants. The economic impact in 2009 will exceed \$2 million, and the potential impact over the next five years should



Michigan's Sunrise Side region has been awarded the Governor's Award for Innovative Tourism for recent successes in promoting and attracting tourism to the area. In spite of the challenging economy, the area has seen an increase in motorcoach tour business thanks in part to promoting and developing new group-friendly itineraries.

approach \$15 million annually, as additional attractions, hotels and restaurants are created or become involved.

The award is a work of art, handcrafted by the glass blowers at The Henry Ford, and was one of four presented at the Governor's Tourism Conference. The solid glass "light bulb" with vivid yellow and green filaments signified "a better idea." Group tours coming to the Sunrise Side is one of the few "bright spots" in a challenging economy.

Wilson's Leather Liquidation Store Opens in Minneapolis

The newly opened Wilson's Leather Liquidation Store in Minneapolis invites you to make their shop part of your bus tour group's itinerary. Located near downtown Minneapolis, their assortment includes quality overstock merchandise from their Wilson's Leather Outlet stores, as well as unique closeout and liquidation items. Shoppers will find leather jackets, handbags, wallets, briefcases and more at better than outlet prices. They offer ample free parking, wide, handicapped-accessible shopping aisles and friendly associates.

"The new Wilson's Leather Liquidation store offers groups an excellent shopping experience and we want to invite bus tours traveling in the Minneapolis area to stop in and see us. We offer quality overstock and closeout merchandise and we are looking forward to welcoming your group," says Caese Carlson, marketing manager.

The new store is in close proximity to the Sculpture Garden, Farmer's Market and Loring Park. Store hours are Thursday through Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. To learn more phone (612) 377-3239.

Tickle Your Senses in 4D at the Vancouver Aquarium

Want to come in contact with a sea snake or feel the salty spray of the ocean on your face? The Vancouver Aquarium has launched western Canada's only 4D cinematic adventure. The 4D Experience features high definition, digital 3D film, immersive 5.1 surround sound, topped off with full sensory effects such as wind, mist, scents and dramatic lighting. The new space is equipped to spray, rumble, tickle and poke viewers where they sit. Kids and adults alike are loving this fun, educational and unique



Accepting Award (L-R) Bob & Karen Wiltse of Charity Island Dinner Cruises, Heidi DeWaldt, Michigan Sunrise Tours, Melanie Libby, GM Thunder Bay Resort, Jack Matthias, Owner Thunder Bay Resort



2009 Governor's Award for Innovative Tourism Collaboration