



From the President's Desk

In 1983, the Travel South USA Board of Directors invited 35 tour operators to an exclusive marketplace to meet one on one with 65 suppliers from the South – and Travel South Showcase was born.

Liz Bittner
President & CEO
Travel South USA

Over 35 years later, we are in the planning stages for two upcoming programs – International Showcase in Nashville, Tenn. in November 2018, and Domestic Showcase in Myrtle Beach, S.C. in February 2019, and I am proud to say we have had vetted, credentialed, qualified and invited more than 20,000 tourism professionals to these "By Invitation Only" meetings.

I call out the term "By Invitation Only" as it is an important distinction for our Showcases. Travel South Showcases are for thoughtful people, who want to conduct serious business, and the invitation to attend comes from the Travel South USA Board. Many resources are used to organize and host tour operators, journalists and fellow southern suppliers are considerable – and the Board takes this business of creating business very seriously.

"Over the last three decades, Travel South USA has vetted, credentialed, qualified and invited more than 20,000 tourism professionals to Showcase."

Sure, we are southern and exhibit a welcoming attitude but these events must be conducted in a professional and safe environment.

For our **tour operator** guests who receive an invitation to attend Domestic or International Showcase – it is a privilege. Behind the scenes, we conduct qualifying and vetting interviews, rank and profile operators and may even require letters of recommendations or proof of business conducted in our region. We also carefully vet journalists. And most importantly, we expect results from all our guests.

For **suppliers and travel service providers**, it is expected that all come prepared to sell not only your services but the industry as well. As a member of this vast eco-system we call the tourism industry, we believe partnering with destinations, attractions, hotels, restaurants, and media companies is the best road to success.

We expect the highest standard of conduct and have zero tolerance for unprofessional behavior by any person or organization.

You may be interested to know that on each satisfaction survey after Showcase, we ask, *"Is there anyone that you would recommend NOT be invited back?"* We typically have one to two names from suppliers and buyers whom we do not invite back. This is .01% of the delegation, and we believe that .01% should not spoil the experience for the other 99.9%. Please know TSUSA takes these survey responses seriously.

As you register this year, you will see posting of a professional Code of Conduct for all that attend any Travel South USA sanctioned event. If you have any questions at all about the Code of Conduct, please do not hesitate to reach out to my staff or me.

I am deeply appreciative of the support you've provided that promote, foster and encourage travel to and within the Travel South USA region and look forward to seeing you at our upcoming Showcases.

Liz Bittner
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