
VISIT ST. PETERSBURG/CLEARWATER CENTRAL EUROPEAN OFFICE

Sales Plan FY 2008-2009

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Background

Germans continue to be world champions in terms of travel expenditure. Last year (2007), German travel spending grew 4 % reaching an all time high of 61 billion Euros - more than every 10th Euro spent in the global travel industry comes out of a German pocket. By comparison, American travelers rank second (spending 53.4 billion Euros) and British third (50.8 billion Euros). In 2008, a growth of another 4 % to 63.5 billion Euros in travel expenditure is expected for Germany.

While statistics relative to a country specific breakdown of visitation to our region are currently unavailable, an excerpt of the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of Tourism & Travel industries visitation statistics to the United States reported for 2007 shows the following:

- Germany – 1.52 million visitors; up 10% over 2006
This is the highest increase since 2000. (The projected growth forecast just one year ago was 5% for 2007.) If the economic situation in Germany continues on its positive course, it is anticipated that 2008 will again see a strong increase.
The visitation record was registered in 1996 at 1.996 million German visitors entering the United States.
Per an October 2007 forecast, visitation increase for 2008: 5% and for 2009: 4%
- Netherlands – 506,852 visitors; up 13.4% over 2006
Per an October 2007 forecast, visitation increase for 2008: 4% and for 2009: 3%
- Switzerland – 296,369 visitors; up 9.5% over 2006
Per an October 2007 forecast, visitation increase for 2008: 4% and for 2009: 3%
- Belgium – 202,000 visitors; up 7% over 2006
Per an October 2007 forecast, visitation increase for 2008: 4% and for 2009: 4%
- Austria – 124,000 visitors; up 6% over 2006
Per an October 2007 forecast, visitation increase for 2008: 5% and for 2009: 5%

Virtually all major tour operators (such as Dertour, FTI, Neckermann Reisen, Thomas Cook Reisen and Meier's Weltreisen from Germany, Kuoni and TUI from Holland, Kuoni, Flex Travel and Skytours from Switzerland) are currently reporting double digit increases in U.S. bookings year-to-date and many are expecting to reach pre-9/11 figures for 2008. The outlook is therefore excellent.

Of note is that the purchasing power of the U.S. Dollar has deteriorated relative to the Euro by approximately 23% over the past year. While the steadily decreasing value of the U.S. Dollar relative to the Euro is considered a primary contributing factor to this exciting growth, a more favorable U.S. image in the European media, product expansion in tour operator catalogs, as well as new flight routes are equally strong aspects.

GOAL

Increase visitation to the St. Petersburg/Clearwater area by approximately 4% over 2007, i.e. to approximately 239,000 visitors

STRATEGIES

We will effectively and efficiently focus our efforts on promoting St. Petersburg/Clearwater as a premier vacation destination, building on its strongly established reputation in the marketplace, by employing the following strategies:

Maintain active memberships in tourism organizations within Central Europe such as the Visit USA Committees, the German Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators (DRV), the American German Business Club (AGBC).

Continue the close liaison with tourism organizations such as the Willy-Scharnow Foundation and the U.S. Consulates/Foreign Commercial Service in applicable market countries as well as nurture the strong relationship with industry partners such as the Orlando/Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau, Florida attractions and Visit Florida.

Conduct ongoing sales calls to tour operators relative to developing and maintaining close collaboration regarding the identification of synergies for trade and consumer promotions as well as ad hoc projects in cooperation with industry partners.

Cultivate close relationships with the airlines with primary focus on carriers strongest from central Europe into Florida (such as Delta Air Lines, Continental Airlines, Lufthansa and various charters).

Identify, initiate and develop cooperative advertising programs and marketing opportunities with the travel trade and trade/consumer press (e.g. but not limited to direct mail campaigns, sweepstakes promotions, increased usage of internet platforms and booking engines, etc.).

Optimize the increase of travel industry awareness for St. Petersburg/Clearwater by attending key travel trade shows, conferences and conventions in central Europe (audience approximately 498,000).

Plan participation in designated U.S. trade shows in conjunction with the CVB's leisure travel department.

Build and increase awareness for St. Petersburg/Clearwater to the retail travel industry by participating in/conducting travel agent trainings and roundtable seminars in cooperation with tour operators, industry destination, attractions and hotel partners as well as airlines and car rental partners. In addition we will continue to participate in the Visit USA Committee Germany's ongoing online travel agent training program (combined audience approximately 2,000).

Partner with the Orlando/Orange County Convention and Visitors Bureau and Visit Florida on central European sales missions during which up to 700 agents are expected to be reached.

Initiate and coordinate up to four familiarization trips to the County from central Europe reaching approximately 60 agents.

Optimize the increase of consumer awareness for St. Petersburg/Clearwater with a presence at key consumer shows by means of brochure distribution (audience approximately 1.3 million).

Provide information and sales support to consumers and the travel trade by responding to inquiries in a timely and professional manner utilizing brochures and materials as designated, approved and/or provided by the CVB.

Cultivate a close relationship to the travel trade press and supply them with detailed information in local languages as available.

Assist with public relations efforts as appropriate in conjunction with the CVB's public relations department and German public relations firm related to marketing activities, special events and publicity opportunities in the print and electronic media arenas as applicable.

GOAL

Diversify the scope of our sales and marketing efforts in promoting St. Petersburg/Clearwater to niche markets appealing to an upscale clientele

STRATEGIES

Beyond the initiatives listed above, we will include a focus on ...

Developing promotional and marketing initiatives with tour operators and tourism organizers specializing in niche markets such as “best agers” (customers aged 50+), adventure and nature, wellness and fitness as well as golf.

A presence at applicable trade/consumer shows specific to aforementioned niche markets and possibly participating in large-scale prize raffles and/or giveaway promotions.

Targeting specialized associations or outfitters for co-op marketing efforts related to tying St. Petersburg/Clearwater in with their services and/or products (e.g. golf associations, wellness products, health/fitness equipment manufacturers, wedding and bridal outfitters, etc.).

Developing a consumer promotion with non-traditional partners such as the REWE grocery store chain, tying in tour operators where applicable.

Coordinating one niche market product familiarization tour (such as golf tour operators).

An enhanced effort in the internet arena, utilizing various portals geared toward niche markets as promotional platforms for email blasts and newsletters with calls to action.