

Achievement of Market-Friendly Initiatives and Results Program  
(AMIR 2.0 Program)  
Funded by U.S. Agency for International Development

Secure USTOA Tour Operator Support  
For  
Jordan at USTOA Annual Conference

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## **Executive Summary**

The United States Tour Operator Association (USTOA) is a long standing professional association representing the US tour operator industry. Members have to fulfill stringent criteria to join and participate in USTOA'S consumer protection plan by posting \$1 million in the form of a bond or letter of credit.

USTOA holds its Annual Conference each December which is viewed as the culmination of the travel events of the year. This prestigious meeting provides a venue for active tour operator members of USTOA to discuss their tour programs with tourist boards, ground operators, airlines, and hotels. The purpose of the meeting is to network with destination representatives and plan tour programs for the next two years. The conference also has a general session addressing key issues facing the industry as well as statistics from surveys conducted by various market research firms for the travel industry.

The purpose of Malia Asfour, Director Jordan Tourism Board North America (JTBNA) and Nazli P. Weiss, AMIR consultant, participating in the Annual Conference was two fold – to secure the support of USTOA tour operator partners, (many of whom were surveyed for the June-September study conducted by Nazli P. Weiss on behalf of AMIR/Chemonics Int. for the Jordan Tourism Board North America) to retain tour programs to Jordan, and secondly, to interest new tour operators in considering Jordan as a travel destination for 2004/5 time frame. This effort was important due to the current US State Dept. travel advisory in effect against traveling to Jordan.

USTOA'S official word on the state of the industry was that 2002 was a major challenge. In general, most tour operators survived, and some even thrived but near-term recovery was slow. However, the travel industry is strong and here to stay and has been through cycles of volatility before. What is critically needed to promote travel to international destinations is the need for innovation, creativity and

above all, partnerships within all aspects of the travel industry – tour operator, ground operator, tourist board, airline and hotels. These financial partnerships add to the strength of the marketing dollars and reduce the financial exposure and liability of any one entity. Value conscious consumers, the growth of the internet with on-line bookings, and the role of the media, were also key elements with which USTOA members were keeping abreast and gearing their company strategies accordingly.

The findings of the surveys conducted by Harris Research, the American Society of Travel Agents and the Plog Research found that despite the economic downturn and the negative effects of September 11, revenues per travel agency were up by 13% when compared to two years ago. Consumers who were 50 years and older, with more discretionary income, and higher education used travel agents in making leisure travel plans and were more likely to take escorted or all inclusive tours. Internet will still play an important role in providing information and on-line bookings for simpler travel transactions. Travel agents will continue to be in demand. Those successful were branding themselves as specialists in a destination or product. Travel agencies now charge fees for airline and hotel transactions, sell more profitable tours, cruises and non-travel products such as travel insurance. Surveys found that relationship marketing and knowing the customer was key to success. Over 85% of travel agencies were utilizing databases to market to past and potential clients.

Key issues were addressed by a panel of seasoned tour operators during the general session, discussing such topics as the effect of a war with Iraq, the future of the escorted tour market, the changes in client's booking patterns, the impact of the internet, the emergence of the airline charter market, the rationalization of promotional expenditures, the relationship of tour operators and suppliers, and how new destinations are selected. Overall, the consensus was that the travel industry was a strong and resilient industry regardless of the current volatility of the geo-political or economic climate. People will continue to travel although perceptions of safety and pricing of the tour will determine bookings which are being reflected in late booking patterns. Marketing partnerships are going to be increasingly

important and companies – tour operators, tourist boards, ground operators – will have to be more innovative in differentiating themselves. The consumer will have to be educated on the destination and its perceived safety. In addition, he will have to be wooed by value for money, special tour features, the promised experience in the country, and various loyalty programs. Escorted tours will have to be highly individualized and travel agents will have to be “travel specialists” not order takers. Direct mail and database marketing to past and potential clients, along with ease of on-line website booking is going to be the key to success. Airlines will undergo considerable drop in availability of seats and competitive pricing leading to the rise of airline charters in North America, so common in Europe. Any destination which tourist boards want featured in the future will have to use promotional partnerships with ground operators, national carriers, hotels, and the tour operator in question. Tourist Boards will have to help create demand in the marketplace by informing and educating the consumer, affinity travel buyers, and select travel agents. This needs to be done with the assistance of the media by conducting press trips, generating articles in consumer magazines, direct mail campaigns, and site inspection trips. The panel was cautiously optimistic about 2003 forecasting a slow but steady growth of 10%.

One-on-one meetings by JTBNA Director, Malia Asfour, with the assistance of consultant Nazli P. Weiss, were held with Bestway Tours & Safaris, a Canadian special interest company in Vancouver, and 17 USTOA active members at the Annual Conference in Whistler, BC. The USTOA members were Maupintour’s Gutsy Women, SITA World Travel, Ambassador Programs, Homeric Tours, Lindblad Expeditions, Goway Tours, General Tours, Travel Impressions, Intrav, IST Cultural Tours and African Travel (Far & Wide), Sunnyland Tours, Travel Bound, Globus & Cosmos, Travcoa, Abercrombie & Kent, and Collette Vacations. General Tours, Travel Impressions, IST Cultural Tours, Sunnyland Tours, Globus & Cosmos, Travcoa, Abercrombie & Kent, and Collette Vacations were part of the study conducted June – September, 2002, as was Bestway Tours & Safaris.

Tour operators were briefed with enthusiasm and insight by Malia Asfour, Director of JTBNA on the various positive occurrences taking place with regards to Jordanian tourism. She briefed operators on the upcoming Petra and the Nabatean civilization exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History in New York. The exhibition, which has Her Majesty, Queen Rania, as its official patron, is scheduled to open with much publicity in October 2002. The exhibition is also scheduled to visit Los Angeles, two cities in Canada, Cincinnati and Atlanta over the next 3 years and offers the potential of educating and creating consumer demand for Jordan and its antiquities. This exhibition will provide promotional opportunities for special events and will be an opportunity for JTBNA to market special interest tours to Jordan. In addition, the Consumer Journalist workshop to be held in Jordan in March 2003 is also anticipated to generate new articles and positive press for Jordan, thereby, generating interest and demand in traveling to the region and allaying fears and dispelling misconceptions.

Bestway Tours & Safaris was interested in working with JTBNA and other Jordanian tourism entities in jointly financing a direct mail campaign targeting consumers who meet the criteria for traveling to boutique destinations. The President, Mahmood Poonja, was keen to move forward in the spring of 2003 and gave a short proposal to Malia Asfour regarding the details.

Homeric Tours and Travel Impressions were both excited and interested in the concept of starting extensions to Jordan in 2003 on their existing Greece programs and testing the market in anticipation of the Summer Olympic traffic in 2004. Travel Impressions was also interested in jointly marketing Jordan programs to American Express, and Empress travel agencies, owned by American Express.

Gutsy Women was interested in potentially offering women only cultural/soft adventure/spa programs to Jordan. April Merenda, their Vice President, was intrigued by the publicity appeal of having a Gutsy Woman program to Jordan dispelling the misconceptions about Jordanian Arab women. The idea also appealed to her because of the consumer journalist workshop that is being organized by JTBNA in Amman in March 2003 that could result in new articles in consumer

magazines and newspapers which may create demand for a very special trip to Jordan. Ms. Merenda was also thoroughly briefed by Malia Asfour, Director of JTBNA about the work of Her Majesty, Queen Rania and her support of the Jordan River Foundation that benefits women and childrens' causes. April Merenda believed that this would be a winning formula for differentiating her product which would give her women clients an appealing mix of culture, history, architecture, nature, beauty and soft adventure and the possibility of benefiting the local women by supporting and interacting with the Jordan River Foundation.

Ambassador Programs was also interested in starting student tours to Jordan in 2004, building on the positive publicity that would be generated as the result of a documentary film being shot currently by Nickleodeon on the experiences of two American students visiting Jordan, with two Jordanian students subsequently visiting the United States.

Collette Vacations, was also convinced that there was a market for Catholic tours to Jordan and is ready to seriously consider the possibility of offering tours as early as 2003/4 provided JTBNA could provide a viable database of religious tour leaders.

SITA and General Tours, who already have programs to Jordan, intend to maintain their programs. IST Cultural Tours, would also like to promote a special interest tour to the region. All three companies were encouraged by the new Jordanian initiatives, namely, the Petra exhibit, the consumer journalist workshop, and the Special Interest Tour Operator site inspection trip from March 14-21, 2003. All these companies would like to work closely with JTBNA in targeting the non-profit special interest market, especially around the Non-Profits in Travel Conference to be held in Washington in February, 2003. SITA and General Tours were interested in participating in the site inspection trip as well as taking a group of museum and alumni travel buyers to Jordan. IST Cultural Tours recently sent its Senior Vice President on a site inspection tour in October 2002 to Jordan.



Intrav was also briefed on all new developments and intends to maintain its programs to Jordan, adding the Four Seasons Hotel in a new “Around the world by private jet tour” which will stay at only Four Season properties worldwide.

African Travel and Travel Bound, both luxury independent travel (FIT) operators were interested in a Jordan program. African Travel is considering expanding its Kenya and Egypt program with extensions to Jordan. Travel Bound would like to offer an exclusive independent program to Jordan complete with behind the scenes access to famous sites and meeting with royalty and other important individuals. Both would be suitable for further promotions through luxury leisure consortia members, such as Virtuoso.

Lindblad will continue its programs and Globus & Cosmos intends to re-introduce Jordan in 2004.

Sunny Land, which has been a major proponent of tours to Jordan, will continue its programs and is considering expanding into the religious market provided JTBNA can provide contacts with religious organization leaders and religious press. Jose Luis Cabada, their Vice President, was also interested in offering eco-tourism and soft adventure programs built on sustainable tourism development by working through JTBNA with the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature, similar to the types of programs they offer to Costa Rica.

Travcoa and Abercrombie & Kent, have deluxe special interest tours for affinity groups and individuals and intend to maintain and build further programs upon the favorable publicity that will be generated from the Petra exhibit. Both companies agreed to work closely with JTBNA in increasing positive press and suggesting journalists for the consumer journalist workshop in Jordan.

To conclude, the meetings met our objectives for attending the Conference and generated further follow up actions to bring new marketing concepts and potential business to fruition.

## **Background on USTOA**

Founded in 1972, the United States Tour Operators Association is a professional association representing the tour operator industry. Its members are made up of companies whose tours and packages encompass the entire globe but who conduct business in the U.S.

As a voice for the tour operator industry, USTOA represents this vital sector in matters pertaining to the travel industry as a whole -- both here and abroad. USTOA additionally serves as an advocate for the tour operator industry in communicating with various government agencies. Through the Traveler's Conservation Foundation, USTOA helps protect and preserve sites of historic, natural and cultural significance.

Among USTOA's goals are consumer protection and education. Through educational pamphlets, advertising, and editorial coverage, USTOA informs the traveling public on how to be a better consumer. The organization has also established a \$1 million Consumer Protection Program to aid consumers and travel agents in the event of a USTOA member default.

The organization also provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and communication through an annual "Marketplace." Here, USTOA's Active tour operator members can enter into a dialogue with USTOA's Associate and Allied members, who represent leading airlines, hotels, and other travel-related businesses.

USTOA numbers among its Active Members some of the leading tour operators in the travel industry. They must subscribe to the organization's strict code of ethics. Members are required to clearly represent all information pertaining to their tours and vacation packages, to maintain a high level of professionalism, and to clearly state all costs and facilities in advertising and promotional materials.

To qualify for USTOA Active Membership, a tour operator must meet the organization's requirements, which are among the most stringent in the industry. These include a total of 18 references from a variety of reputable industry organizations, and specific minimums in terms of passengers and/or dollar volume. Additionally, members must be in business for three

years under the same ownership and/or management in the U.S., and participate in USTOA's Consumer Protection Plan by posting \$1 million in the form of a bond or letter of credit.

## **STATE OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY ACCORDING TO ED JACKSON, CHAIRMAN, USTOA**

Ed Jackson, Chairman of USTOA opened the Annual Conference with his remarks on the industry. He began by saying that it's been a rough year for not only the travel industry, but for business and the economy in general.

To quote a travel industry executive in one of the trade publications, "This has been the year from hell." Or, as Alan Greenspan, chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board recently said: "While the economy is softening, there is no evidence that it is accelerating on the down side.' Put in real terms, the economy is still sluggish, but the worst may be over.

While the worst may be over, Jackson said that the tour operators are realistic, and recognize that the near-term recovery may be slow. The past year has been a real challenge for all of us. We have had to find ways of cutting costs while still continuing to promote to clients. There is no doubt, he added that "we are all in this together, regardless of what you sell -- whether you are a vendor, a tourist office, or a wholesaler."

Those of us who are veterans of the industry know that ups and downs are a reality of our business, and that the industry will recover. In fact, some sectors have already shown improvement. Destinations closer to home, family travel, and even luxury travel have shown growth. The long term potential for vacation travel is strong. "

Jackson continued to say that there was more positive news. While some people may be reluctant to travel, he added that seasoned travelers are ready and willing to spend their dollars. Travel Holiday magazine in cooperation with USTOA recently conducted a poll on its website. A full seventy percent of respondents said they plan to spend more on their vacations in 2003. That's an encouraging sign for the industry according to Jackson.

Another positive sign in his opinion was that despite one of the most uncertain years in recent history, the fact that so many tour operators and suppliers attended the Annual Conference is a testament to the fact that the travel industry is surviving. And, in his opinion, it will profit. The

real challenge, however, he said would be to move from survival to success.

He commented that in 2001 at the Annual Conference he spoke of the importance of partnerships to promote travel in the aftermath of the World Trade Center disaster. He gave the example of creative partnerships between New York's Visitors & Convention bureau, 'Broadway theaters and restaurants to jumpstart travel following 9/11, and of airline partnerships to promote destinations.

Destinations like Hawaii and Mexico aggressively promoted through partnerships between their respective tourist offices, the lodging, transportation, and tour operator segments to offer highly attractive packages and promotions for sale through travel agents.

Jackson said that this was key to success. He added that the industry as a whole “ must continue on this path, encouraging destinations, airlines, hotels, and others to spend the money to promote”. He said that USTOA's executives have been spreading that message in speeches before industry groups as far away as Australia, Ireland, and Mexico. "Spend the Dollars to Promote" has been USTOA's theme.

If tour operators are to progress from survival to success, Jackson said that all aspects of the travel industry must work closely with one another to tap pent-up demand and show the community at large the many benefits of travel. Jackson emphasized that “this is not a time to be passive. Rather, times such as these call for innovation. We have to aggressively reach into the marketplace to target the right client.”

He talked about partnerships between cultural institutions - museums, theaters, concert halls; wineries, culinary schools; let's partner with local restaurant associations in destinations we serve. “Let's tap our creativity” said Jackson.

In the next few years partnerships will hold the key to prosperity. More than ever, USTOA members need to promote and work together to keep people traveling. And, one of our best assets of the tour operator is the travel agent. He mentioned a recent article in The New York Times which quoted statistical information from the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA), saying that travel agents account for 95 percent of

package tours from tour operators. The travel agent plays an important role because he or she owns the client. A good travel agent knows his or her customers, their needs and preferences. Jackson encouraged USTOA tour operator members to work think of travel agents as an important strategic partner on the road to prosperity.

He talked about USTOA's new initiative with the Institute of Certified Travel Agents. USTOA and ICTA were going to jointly provide scholarships to travel agents so they could work towards their Certified Travel Counselor (CTC) designation.

He added that USTOA is also involved with partnerships on a very different level through its Travelers Conservation Foundation. Since its inception three years ago, the Travelers Conservation Foundation has raised and generated contributions of over \$1 million to help preserve and protect the world's natural, cultural and historic treasures for future generations.

This year the foundation partnered with Save America's Treasures to help restore Orchard House, the home of Louisa May Alcott, author of "Little Women." The foundation's partnership with Smithsonian magazine is branching out to all areas of the travel industry, enlisting the help of suppliers, and others to foster conservation of important resources significant to tourism.

Throughout this unusually difficult year, he said that USTOA has remained strong and continues to be the industry standard for quality of membership, consumer protection and integrity

He said the proof was in USTOA's 56 Active category corporate members who represented more than 135 different tour operator brands and 750 Allied and Associate members. He said that it was a good indication that the leisure vacation industry was here to stay... through good times and bad.

He went on to say that a trade organization USTOA's goals continued to focus on the areas of financial stability for tour operator members, and efforts in the areas of consumer protection. He added to say that USTOA would continue to set standards in ethical conduct, protect the business

interests of the package travel industry, and serve as a symbol of stability, reliability, and integrity.

Jackson said that USTOA had responded to the growing demand for internet-based knowledge by totally redesigning its web site. The site is a one-stop, user-friendly resource for the public, the press, and for travel agents. Travelers and travel agents can now locate a USTOA member to serve their needs by searching four different criteria: company name, destination, type of activity - and even by the type of package or tour best suited to the traveler's personality.

Throughout the year, USTOA has been an advocate for the travel industry through an active public relations program and educating the public on the value of traveling both financially and culturally.

He went on to say that in times such as these, organizations like USTOA were more important than ever. The annual conference provided an exceptional forum for all members to communicate with one another and exchange ideas. He complimented the participants by saying that "in this room, we have the top suppliers and tour operators in the world. If anyone can make things happen, we can".

He concluded by saying that as USTOA chairman, he urged all participants to share their thoughts, build alliances, and continue dialogues with one another. He said USTOA membership remained realistic but optimistic. He remarked that long term prospects were good, and as the economy improved, so would profits.

To quote from his closing statement, "... through travel, we open doors, build bridges to peace, and make people's dreams come true. I would like to quote Helen Keller, who once said, "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

## Key findings from the 2002 Travel Weekly Survey

Bob Sullivan, Publisher of Travel Weekly summarized from the three different surveys conducted within the travel industry by Harris Research of travel agents and the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) of ASTA members, and Plog Research of consumers.

What the surveys found is as follows:

- The Airline Reporting Corporation (ARC) – approved travel agencies declined by 16% in the last 2 years. Despite the decline, the economic downturn and the negative effects of September 11, revenue per agency climbed up 13% when compared to 2 years ago. Agent productivity was higher than before and increased from \$714,000 in 1999 to \$807,903 in 2001.
- Clients who use travel agents took more trips than those not using travel agents. 25% of those using travel agents took an international trip in the past 12 month period and spent twice as much money as non-travel agency users on leisure travel. Those utilizing travel agents spent \$4334 for leisure travel in one year, vs. \$2493 for non-users.
- Travel agent users not only travel more but go to more destinations. On an average, travel agency users travel to 5.3 unique destinations a year vs non-users who visit only 3.7.
- More than 77% of travel agency users rely on agents as information sources for their travel selections. While 54% of travel agent users said they booked with agents, 45% booked via traditional methods, 9% on-line.
- Travel agent users are more likely to take an escorted tour(16%), inclusive tours (21%) or partial package tours vs non-travel agent users.
- Travel agent users tend to be older than non-users, averaging 50 years of age, compared to 46 for non-travel agent users.



- Travel agent users have higher education and higher income than non-travel agency users. Over 43% are college graduates, compared with 33% of non-users. 27% of travel agent users earn \$100,000 or more a year compared to 17% of non-users who book leisure travel.

ASTA's survey focused on the service fee issue for travel agents as commissions have virtually disappeared for airline tickets. ASTA's key findings were as follows:

- Most fees involve airline transactions are collected by ARC's automated Travel Agent Service Fee program. Non airline related fees are also being charged by travel agents for hotel and car rental bookings. One third of the airlines are giving override commissions to travel agencies who give them substantial business. Many agencies are utilizing consolidators and adding their own commissions on the ticket prices.
- Fees continue to increase but have not damaged customer retention. Clients are getting used to paying for service.
- Agencies are focusing on niche marketing, and commission rich leisure travel products like cruises and tour packages, as well as allied products such as travel insurance.
- Relationship marketing and knowing the customer have become key to success. 99% of travel agencies use databases to gather basic information. Over 85% of travel agencies use customized databases to market to current and potential clients. Data includes client age, gender, residence, income, employment, travel history, hobbies, interests, passions, anniversaries, birthdays, and the like.

### **Tour operator panel discussion:**

An interactive panel discussion was held during the General Session to address six main issues affecting the travel industry and get the perspectives of the panelists as well as the Conference delegates. Bob Whitley, President of USTOA, served as the moderator.

#### **Panelists:**

Arthur Tauck, Chairman, Tauck World Discovery  
John Stachnik, President, Mayflower Tours  
Phillip Gordon, Chief Operating Officer, Globus & Cosmos  
Peter Tauck, Co-president, Tauck World Discovery  
Brian Stack, President, CIE Tours  
Nikos Tsakanikas, President, Homeric Tours  
Helga Westell, Vice President, Abercrombie & Kent  
Mark Lusvardi, Director, Worldstrides  
Ron Letterman, President, Classic Custom Vacations and Expedia Inc.  
Ed Jackson, President, Runaway Tours

#### **Issues:**

1. What will happen to the U.S. travel industry if U.S. invades Iraq?

Not all panelists commented on each issue. Bob Whitley called upon select members of the panel to respond to various issues.

According to Brian Stack (incoming Chairman), travel has always been a matter of choice. In 1991, his business dropped by 50% but has picked up nicely since then and the company is doing very well. If there is a war with Iraq in the spring of 2003 and does not last long, people will be back to traveling internationally. If war talk continues week after week, or if the action in Iraq is protracted, business will be impacted on a daily basis as clients will not want to travel far from home and loved ones. As Stack's company primarily does tours to Ireland and England, this will affect their bottom line and they will have to go into a severe cost cutting and maintenance mode.

According to Arthur Tauck, 1991 was a different time for the industry and business came back strong after the first Gulf War. It was more or less a TV war that was over very soon. Now there is the more dangerous factor of terrorism in the mix. The war may create terrorist incidents against Americans and American interests. Terrorism is now a major concern both domestically and internationally.

According to John Stachnik, 1991-92 was a different time for Mayflower tours. His company was primarily a domestic tour company. His business decreased by 15% entering the Gulf War and rose 10% over previous years as soon as the war was over. If there is a new war in Iraq, he sees the domestic regional motorcoach tours being #1, followed by domestic travel by air, and international only third and last.

According to Helga Westell of A&K, there will be an immediate effect on the market, but A&K clients are more educated, and geographically savvy. She sees international travel as still doing fine provided the consumer perceives the destinations as safe. As far as A&K destinations go, she sees more travel within North and South America.

According to Nikos Tsakanikas, he said that he specialized in an area i.e. Greece, which has been through many ups and downs. However, in his opinion, travel is now a basic necessity to people, the desire to travel is strong and “travel is here to stay”.

According to Peter Tauck, the economic uncertainty and the way Americans are perceived in a country will impact international travel to the destination. There is a lot of uncertainty and volatility in the marketplace. Tauck has already invested a substantial budget towards marketing with no guarantee of success.

Mark Lusvardi commented on the student market. Already Worldstrides has sold its student packages for 2003 and in his opinion, student groups usually stay intact as payments are made far in advance. However, most of his student groups are traveling within North America so he does not see it being impacted even if there is a war.

Patrick O’ Shea, V.P. Far &Wide commented from the floor that hotels, airlines and ground operators need to reduce prices and be more

competitive in case of any war. He said that consumers were flexible and resilient and would travel if the prices were low.

According to Phillip Gordon, the greatest challenge is the media which reports only negative news constantly. Speaking for tour operators, he said that they should be pro-active and do their part to allay fears and educate the travel agency community as well as consumers, utilizing testimonials from past travelers on their websites, in their newsletters and communications with clients. Positive messages should be reinforced of the safety and security of travel. He suggested working with the media to get positive messages out and doing press trips to destinations. Also, he suggested offering innovative deals and “call to action incentives”. He said that “good travel deals” often relieve the anxiety of travel.

Malia Asfour, Director of JTBNA, intervened at this point and clarified a position that the panelists had taken about anti-American sentiment abroad. She said that a distinction needed to be made between Americans and American foreign policy. She said Americans were universally liked, it was American foreign policy that was raising questions and opposition in many countries around the globe. She expressed her worry that if tour operators, who should have better knowledge are making such comments, then what are tourist boards supposed to do to educate both the tour operators and their clients. She also commented that the panelists spoke of partnership with the media, but how do they suggest doing that when the news being reported is primarily politically motivated and negative and doesn't comment on the positive aspects of the country. Many panelists and delegates agreed with her on her comments and offered to help with media contacts.

#2 Bob Whitley next asked about the Escorted tour market? Is it here to stay?

According to Arthur Tauck, the escorted tour market is one of the fastest growing segments for the over 50s market. The tour takes care of all details and logistics of travel. Also, there is a certain perception of safety in numbers as far as terrorism is concerned. However, some see it as a liability and added exposure. Those people are booking all inclusive independent trips (FITs) in resorts. But it is escorted tours that give more

companionship and freedom to explore without having to deal with details. So, in his opinion, both FITs and Escorted tours are going to continue to grow. But, he added, the escorted tours, are unlike group tours in the past. They are highly individualized and no one feels like they are being herded from place to place.

Dan Sullivan, of Collette Tours, agreed that Collette had had a similar experience and that both FITs and Escorted Tours are on the rise. The opinion was also shared by John Stachnik who also added that more people will book USTOA member tours for consumer protection, financial stability and reliability.

Peter Tauck of Tauck World Discovery, said that according to a recent study that they contracted with Menlo Research, the findings were that the escorted tour product is very viable for the aging population although it has to be extremely innovative to meet today's sophisticated client base.

#3 – Have clients' booking patterns changed? If so, in what way?

Bob Whitley asked the tour operators if they had noticed any changes in booking patterns on the part of the consumers. According to Nicholas Panza, Vice President Commercial of Air Tahiti Nui, airline bookings are dramatically up from last year but that has a lot to do with his destination as it is perceived to be "safe" and "friendly". However, clients are booking later than ever and the tendency is for late and last minute bookings.

Phillip Gordon of Globus & Cosmos, remarked that Globus's 2003 programs are out in the market and the bookings for Europe are steady and promising. But the trends are destinations closer to home and closer to actual departure time, unlike bookings in the past which were several months out. This presents a challenge for tour operators in managing inventory.

#3. Is the internet going to be the death of the travel agent?

According to Ron Letterman, there are some consumers who will always book direct bypassing the travel agent. This trend has some benefits according to Letterman, as it frees up travel agents from those consumers

who were only “shopping” for information. Travel agents can now be more productive spending quality time on those consumers who are willing to pay fees and consult “travel experts”. As he also manages Expedia Travel, Letterman had some insights regarding travel over the internet. He said that two trends were seen – those sites that were internet booking only are now giving commissions to travel agents if they book with Expedia. The second is that more and more consumers are booking direct with on-line travel sites such as Expedia or using tour operator websites and booking directly, bypassing the agent. As a result the whole industry is ‘smartening up’. Travel agents have to be specialists and not just order takers or basic information providers. Those booking with travel agents are older (50+), more affluent and those that are used to service and reliability.

Issue #4 - Because of the dollar conscious consumer will the charter market resurface?

Nikos Tsakanikas of Homeric Tours that does a sizeable Greece business commented that availability, price and security are all crucial issues for charter operations. Charters are big in Europe with 35% of the European market utilizing them, whereas only 5% of the U.S. market uses them. But, in his opinion, all that is going to change. Eventually airlines will end up cutting service due to budgetary constraints and airline prices will increase due to lack of availability. Also, charter flights can control safety and security more than regularly scheduled carriers. Hence, his prognosis was that the charter flights “were coming and soon”.

Issue #5 - How do you rationalize expenditures for advertising and promotion in this volatile climate?

Ed Jackson of Runaway Tours commented that his company has stepped up partnerships with travel agents, ground operators, hotels and airlines.

Helga Westell of A&K remarked that A&K is emphasizing its efforts on target marketing. The company is focusing on affinity and special interest markets and spending its marketing dollars on leisure consortia, and past and potential traveler base. A&K is also partnering with non-travel related entities and bundling their programs with merchandise, insurance

and other services. More dollars are being spent on direct mail and loyalty programs than ever before.

Brian Stack of CIE Tours said that CIE has been spending heavily in advertising in newspapers and magazines and supporting the travel agent community. The company also does a number of Irish shows with the Irish hotels, airline and ground operators. These efforts are showing results as CIE's destinations (England and Ireland) are well suited for such promotion.

Jose Luis Cabada of Sunny Land Tours and Arthur Tauck of Tauck World Discovery, said that their companies were investing in educating clients on heritage sites, conservation and historic preservation causes in the destinations where they operate tours. In that way clients can be philanthropic, help the local populace, and support sustainable tourism development.

Issue # 6. How has today's climate changed your relationship with suppliers?

Peter Tauck said that without partnerships with suppliers it would be hard to survive. In his opinion, collaboration and joint marketing was the key to success. Customers were increasingly looking for value and it is the joint innovation and creativity with suppliers which was enabling them to offer unique and well priced tours.

Ron Letterman of Classic Custom Vacations, ended the discussion with a cautionary note advising tour operators to be mindful of yields when "giving away deals" lest customers come to rely on reduced rates as the standard.

Issue #7 - How do you select and feature new destinations?

Whitley asked this question for the benefit of various tourist boards which were present in the room.

According to Ed Jackson of Runaway Tours which is primarily an FIT operator, the company considers air carrier lift, schedules, pricing and availability. Concurrently, they assess consumer demand for the

destination, if there are new products that are now available or a new site in the country that has generated a new interest. Also, they assess how many entities are willing to financially partner with the company to reduce overall liability.

Peter Tauck, of Tauck Tours, reiterated that there has to be a demand for the region and also that the destination should be in a growth mode and not over saturated with tour products and companies. Their company then assesses if they can offer differentiated products from a value and competition standpoint.

Helga Westell of A& K said that their company makes sure that that destination has the appropriate infrastructure for their deluxe programs and how the new destination would fit into their existing product mix.

Overall, tour operators agreed that currently countries in South and Central America, Europe and Australia had shown excellent partnerships to tour operators and run effective campaigns increasing consumer demand and emphasizing safety and security.

The session ended with Bob Whitley eliciting closing comments from the panelists.

John Stachnik – Mayflower Tours

Past travelers who are loyal to Mayflower tours will continue to travel. 25% of his business is past travelers. Domestic travel will be more popular in the short term. He anticipated good recovery in 2003.

Phillip Gordon – Globus & Cosmos

Advance bookings seem promising and business is generally good but this is not a time to be complacent. His final word was that their company would continue with raising brand awareness with consumers, maintain partnerships with travel agents, and improve and enhance their sales over the internet. Globus would also continue offering “good deals” to keep interest stimulated in the traveling public.

Peter Tauck – Tauck World Discovery

A broader threat looms due to the potential war with Iraq and the volatility of financial markets. Travel is showing a slow trend upwards



but the economy needs to improve. Tauck will continue to spend money in a targeted manner meeting tactical objectives.

#### Brian Stack – CIE Tours

The company is functioning on two plans. Plan A is to aim for a 10% increase in business assuming the economy continues to improve and there is no long drawn out war with Iraq. Plan B, in case events take a downward spiral, focus on staying in the market and maintaining market share.

#### Helga Westell – Abercrombie & Kent (A&K)

She said she was cautiously optimistic for 2003. A&K is showing a 30% increase in independent bookings (FITs) with no decline in small group bookings for the 50+ market. Overall A&K anticipates having a 10% increase in 2003 and plans to continue building its relationships with leisure consortia members.

#### Mark Lusvardi – Worldstrides

He said as he dealt with a very price sensitive student market and commitments are made in advance, he does not see any downturn for Worldstrides. Most of their tours are booked for 2003.

#### Ron Letterman – Classic Custom Vacations and Expedia Inc.

The most popular destinations have been Caribbean, Mexico, and Hawaii for his company. Europe is also on the rebound. Like the others he said he also anticipates a 10% increase in business for Classic Custom Vacations. As regards Expedia, he said the growth would be “exponential”.

#### Ed Jackson, Runaway Tours

Hawaii and Mexico have been best sellers for his company. December sales have been the very best in the entire history of the company. However, clients are booking later than ever. Runaway Tours is having to stay nimble and aggressively market to consumers. His only concern is the economy which may have a dampening effect on his business as his destinations are only in North America.

#### Arthur Tauck – Tauck World Discovery

Booking trends are indicative of the volatility of the stock market and the fear of terrorism. In his opinion, a lot will depend on the geo-political events and the economy.

## **Tour Operator Meetings and briefings**

Bestway Tours & Safaris

Mahmood Poonja – Chief Explorer

Malia Asfour and Nazli Weiss met with Mahmood Poonja in Vancouver as he was not planning to attend the USTOA Annual Conference in Whistler, BC. Poonja was one of the tour operators surveyed during the June project and was eager to promote Jordan along with the other destinations in the region, primarily Iran, Syria, Libya and Iraq.

He started the meeting by informing us of his very successful Nov. 2002, trip to Iran, Iraq and Syria with 17 passengers of which 14 were Americans and 3 were Canadians. He said that they were extremely well received in all three countries and did not suffer from any anti-American sentiment in any country, even Iraq. He said the local population did not like American foreign policy but felt comfortable with Americans. He was obtaining testimonials from the passengers to post on his website and include in his marketing materials. He said that there was definitely a market for exotic and boutique destinations and that he had been very successful as he only did targeted marketing.

Malia Asfour, Director of JTBNA, briefed him on the upcoming Petra and the Nabatean Civilization exhibit that will open in New York at the American Museum of Natural History in October 2003, and travel to two Canadian cities in 2004. The exhibit would have a good promotional budget and is anticipated to raise consumer interest and demand in travel to Jordan. The exhibit could be used by tour operators as a means to generate interest and bookings, and the Museum could be used as a venue for special events for trade and consumers to publicize Jordan travel programs, especially for the non-profit, special interest tour market.

Mahmood Poonja was interested in knowing more about the code sharing agreement that Air Canada and Royal Jordanian Airlines have in place from Western Canada. If the code share agreement worked it could be used for possible familiarization trips for museum and alumni group meeting planners, and other non-profits in the Canadian market. Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) has an office in Montreal and Malia Asfour promised to put the RJ representative in contact with Mahmood Poonja.

Mahmood Poonja also advised us to contact the Aga Khan network to solicit them to hold the annual Aga Khan Architecture Award event in Jordan. The Aga Khan network supports world heritage sites similar to UNESCO and holds an annual event that generates publicity and dollars for the destination.

He also agreed to give the name of the Globe & Mail journalist that he knows personally who may be able to participate in the Journalists Workshop and tour being organized by JTBNA for March 2003 in Jordan. The journalist workshop will be an invitational for 50 consumer journalists from North America who will have a 2 day briefing in Amman, followed by a press tour of the country. Poonja also requested the names of the Canadian journalists who had been to Jordan and written articles in the hope that he could work with them to further promote Jordan.

His concern was two fold. Firstly, that pricing was relatively high for products and services in Jordan when compared to those in Syria or Iran. Secondly, he saw Jordan as part of a multi-country itinerary for his clients. He said, he understood Jordan could be a stand-alone country but he could not sell it as a stand-alone to his particular target market.

He also gave a short proposal requesting financial support for brochure production from JTBNA, similar to the type he received from Tunisia, Dubai and India. He said he would contact the newly opened Four Seasons in Amman and the Marriott at the Dead Sea, along with ground operators, Dakkak, International Traders and Hashweh (non-JTB) for joint promotional support along with JTBNA.

The gist of his proposal was that he would target educated, high income professionals 50+ years of age who would have a passion for traveling to boutique destinations. Lists of these high net worth and educated individuals would be purchased by Bestway Tours and contacted via a specially designed direct mail piece. He has utilized this marketing method in the past and it has generated good results for him. In his experience this direct mail program works most effectively with 10,000 or more mailings to a targeted database. His cost estimate for printing, purchasing the mailing list for single usage, preparation and mailing,

follow up mailing of Jordan itineraries to interested clients is \$9450 for 10,000 mailings, and \$10,125 for 25,000 mailings. He said that timing was important and that he wanted JTBNA to wait until early March, 2003, before embarking on this program to insure that there was no war with Iraq.

**Meetings during USTOA Annual conference:**

**Maupintour – Gutsy Women Travel**

April Merenda, V.P. Marketing

The Gutsy Women Travel subsidiary of Carl Icahn’s Maupintour, is currently doing travel programs to England, Ireland, Italy, Caribbean, and within North America. These programs combine soft adventure activities, cultural and experiential interaction with locals, and support for feminist, conservation and preservation causes. Most programs are one week long and are high-end in price. This particular subsidiary, Gutsy Women, is a year old, and is getting a lot of publicity due to an aggressive marketing campaign and publicity of its catchy name. She was briefed on Jordan’s potential as a site for Gutsy Women programs as well as those activities of the Jordan River foundation which pertain to women, are under the sponsorship of Her Majesty, Queen Rania. April Merenda was invited to participate in the Special Interest tour operator site inspection trip scheduled from March 14-21, 2003. She was also promised sample itineraries of programs for a women only trip. In addition, she was encouraged by Malia Asfour to participate in the trip, send a journalist with whom she had closely worked, and benefit from the proposed articles that may appear from the journalists who would attend the Journalists workshop in March 2003. This would give additional exposure for Gutsy Women programs, especially if April Merenda would be the first to open Jordan to Gutsy Women. The name of the tour company and the destination would be eye-catching and have substantial publicity appeal. We subsequently met with Terry Rood, Director of Product Development for Maupintour and Gutsy Women. She would send brochures to JTBNA so that a sample itinerary for Jordan could be sent to her for possible consideration.

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## **Ambassador Group Inc.**

Jeff Thomas, President and CEO

Ralph Baard, Executive Vice President

Ambassador Programs, a company of Ambassador Group, does high school student groups within North America, Europe and Asia. The tours are high end, experiential, participatory in local activities in the featured destination, are touted to promote “people to people” dialogue, and promise access behind the scenes for participants. Jeff Thomas said their method of marketing is to target a city or regional area and market heavily in that area promoting one or more destinations. Malia Asfour suggested Jordan as a destination and suggested that Ambassador Programs could consider marketing in Detroit and Michigan regionally due to the vast number of Arab Americans who live in the two states.

Their interest in Jordan grew after they were briefed by Malia Asfour about the program for Nickleodeon currently being shot on location in Jordan. The proposed documentary is about two American teenagers who will spend time in Jordan with a Jordanian family, traveling and sharing their views and experiences with American viewers. Nickleodeon will then film two Jordanian teenagers who come to the U.S. and have a similar experience. The documentary will be aired in 2003 and is hoped to be a good human interest story from the eyes of young adults. As the film will be all about the students and their experiences, it may be a good launching pad for student trips to Jordan.

A second concept that was shared by JTBNA was to do a student tour with a photographer and journalist couple who do features for the National Geographic. Malia Asfour suggested the names of Annie (freelance photographer) and Don Belt, Assistant Editor for the National Geographic and have written on Jordan. She also suggested Jeff Thomas contact Keith Bellows, Editor of National Geographic Traveler who may also be a good contact. Jeff Thomas said he knows Dr. Bert De Vries at Calvin College who has worked with them in the past and may be a good tour host for such a program. He thought that Ambassador Programs could build on the exposure and positive publicity of Nickleodeon programs and National Geographic contacts.

He requested a sample itinerary that would include special activities, home visits, and excavation sites at Jerash and Petra. He was also briefed on the Journalists workshop in March as well as upcoming Special Interest Tour operator site inspection trip. Jeff Thomas suggested inviting Ralph Baard as he is the hands-on developer of these tours. JTBNA will order brochures to review their current programs.

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### **SITA World Travel:**

Roger Mahal – Chairman and CEO  
Max Cassim Aly – Operations Manager

Roger Mahal and Max Cassim were briefed on the Petra exhibit scheduled to open at the American Museum of Natural History in October, 2003. The exhibit will be for 8 months in New York, followed by Los Angeles, two museums in Canada, then back to the States to the Cincinnati Art Museum which has the largest collection of Nabatean artifacts in the U.S., and finally to Atlanta before returning to Jordan.

SITA tours markets to non-profits and according to Roger Mahal, wants to expand in this market segment. He would like for JTBNA to share its database of non-profit clients and affinity travel contacts. He would also like to partner up with JTBNA and make joint presentations to various museums of art, maximizing on the positive publicity that the Petra exhibit will generate. He wanted further details on the exhibit as they become available and agreed to discuss this further at the Non-Profits in Travel Conference in February, 2003.

SITA is also planning to expand its website with programs for 2004 and would like to link it to JTBNA's website.

Both individuals were invited on Special Interest Tour Operator site inspection trip from March 14-21, 2003. They were also interested in organizing a separate site inspection trip for museum travel buyers and would like to see if that would be possible for early spring.

Malia Asfour also briefed them on the Consumer Journalist workshop scheduled for late March, 2003, as well as tourism potential for the



religious markets, primarily Christian and Shiat holy sites in Jordan. Max Aly has contacts with select religious leaders. They were advised about the two key conferences for those pursuing the religious market in the U.S. These meetings are the ones held by the Catholic Press Association and the National Religious Broadcasters. In response to their questions, Malia Asfour told them that there were 125 Biblical sites in Jordan with a Christian population of 5-7%. She also elaborated on the site of Bethany beyond the Jordan, which was discovered after the peace treaty was signed between Jordan and Israel in 1994. She also added that the Evangelical and Catholic markets were segments worth considering for SITA. As the former USTOA member company, Regina tours, had been absorbed by the new conglomerate, Far & Wide, there was a window of opportunity to enter the Catholic market.

SITA executives requested the following information and materials:

- Sample itineraries for the Catholic and Evangelical markets
- JTBNA's new Cradle of Christianity video
- Information on Petra exhibit/contact with Garry Zarr (Dir.of Communications of Am. Museum of Natural History in NY)
- List of JTBNA's non-profit client database

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## **Homeric Tours**

Nikos Tsakanikas - President

Nikos Tsakanikas began our meeting with extolling the effectiveness of joint promotion and advertising in the NY Times and how it has paid off and generated bookings for Homeric. He gave the example of Morocco where with the help of tourist board, Royal Air Maroc, ground operators, hoteliers, and Homeric, a lot of promotions were done.

Typically, Homeric invests 20% and expects the entities representing a destination to pay for 80% of promotional costs, as Morocco did in this case with good results for all.

He re-emphasized that joint promotion is the key to success and his advice to JTBNA was to be proactive with marketing and advertising. Don't

wait for business to come to you. “You have to spend money to make money”, said Tsakanikas.

Homeric is currently trying to get a block of tickets from the US Olympic Committee through the Homeric Athens office. Tsakanikas is interested in offering extensions to Jordan, pre-and post Olympics and, is of the opinion, that he can start extensions even in 2003 if he visits Jordan and can see the destination for himself.

He was invited to join the March tour operator trip but he said that his schedule would not permit him to participate then. However, he will be in Greece in January, 2003 and could possibly visit Jordan for 3-5 days if the logistics of the trip could be worked out by JTBNA.

Nikos Tsakanikas said that he would send a letter to Malia detailing the joint promotional activities for which he needs support and the return on investment that Jordan can expect from this joint promotion.

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## **Lindblad Expeditions**

Bob Morgan – Vice President, Explorer Business Unit

Bob Morgan said that Lindblad Expeditions have programs to the region but have not had much demand lately. They have only 12 passengers booked for 2003 to Egypt despite President Sven Lindblad’s exhortation to travel to the region published in a letter on the first page of the Lindblad brochure. The letter explained the predicament of Middle East destinations and the need to support them at such a difficult time. There was no response from past clients, said Bob Morgan. That could have a lot to do with the negative news about the possible war with Iraq.

Lindblad Expeditions has had year-round programs to Egypt with extensions to Jordan utilizing International Traders for ground operations. However, Bob Morgan said that he views Jordan as an extension to their

Egypt programs and that means that business has to be pick up for the entire region.

He was briefed on the Petra exhibit. He seemed quite interested and requested that more information be sent to him when available. He was interested in any new sales angle and positive press that Jordan and Lindblad's programs could get for stimulating tourism to the region. At present, he said he was cautiously watching the political situation hoping that there would not be a war or a closure of the Suez Canal which could severely impact their programs.

Bob Morgan commented that he was responsible for filling 5 ships and was not adding any new land programs for 2003/4. He said he personally knew the region well and was extremely fond of Jordan and would very much like to expand his programs there once the geo-political situation was clearer.

However, he said he wished to stay informed in case the situation changed or new opportunities emerged.

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## **Goway Travel**

Bruce Hodge, President  
Peter Lacy, VP Finance

Goway is a Canadian company that sells its programs to both Canadians and Americans and has been in business since 1970. The company currently has programs to Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia. Bruce Hodge and Peter Lacy were briefed on the Journalist workshop, the tour operator site inspection trip from 14-21 March, and the Petra exhibit that would be coming to Canada in 2004.

Hodge said that as programs were already finalized and printed for 2003, he would be interested in Jordan for 2004-5 time frame.

He was invited on the March trip and he said that he would advise JTBNA in early January if he could participate in the March site inspection trip for tour operators.

Further follow up would be needed to keep them informed and interested to develop a 2004 program. Company is suited for Jordan as they already work in the region and handle special interest groups, individuals, incentives and escorted tour products, worldwide.

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## **General Tours**

Bob Drumm, President

General Tours, based in Keene, NH, offers cultural tours, soft adventure programs and cruises to the general public through its brochures. The company also has a special interest tour division in St. Louis, MO, which is run by Richard Hefler who was interviewed for the June survey.

Bob Drumm was briefed on the upcoming Petra exhibit which has a promotional budget of \$4 million. He was informed of the various potential opportunities to utilize the Museum of Natural History as a venue for special events to promote tours to Jordan. Drumm said he was definitely interested in building on the interest and would consider hosting a special reception for AAA clients and journalists at the Museum.

Due to the current situation General Tours is not expanding into any new programs but retaining the programs it has. He reassured us that he would keep the Jordan program in his brochure. He would like to build further tourism to Jordan and complemented their ground operator, Jordan Circle Tours.

General Tours is also spending more time and money on developing its special interest tours for non-profit clients. Richard Hefler, who is focused on this segment only, has been invited on the March site inspection trip. Bob Drumm suggested keeping him informed and

discussing next steps when he meets JTBNA at the Non-Profits in Travel Conference in February, 2003 in Washington, DC.

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## **Travel Impressions**

Mitzi Papazoglu – Senior Director, American Express Vacations

Travel Impressions, is a subsidiary of American Express and operates the American Express Vacation product line which is sold through the American Express representative network. As Travel Impressions, the company also sells its tours to travel agents around the country who are not affiliated with American Express. The company does both groups and FITs.

Briefings were given regarding the upcoming Petra exhibit, new hotel openings in Jordan, and the consumer Journalists workshop in March for 50 journalists who would be invited for a 2 day workshop followed by a 5 day tour of Jordan.

She suggested a joint marketing campaign by JTBNA and Travel Impressions to AAA agents and Empress travel agents. According to Mitzi Papazoglu, Empress Travel has 40 agencies, does high end leisure travel and is a subsidiary of American Express. She also suggested JTBNA contact Empress which runs full page ads in NY Times for its travel destinations.

Mitzi Papazoglu has allotments for the Olympics in Greece and was interested in test marketing pre-Olympics program extensions to Jordan. Malia Asfour agreed to get in touch with Royal Jordanian airlines to provide rates between Athens and Amman for 2003.

Mitzi also mentioned a special Travel Impressions client who works at home with high-end clients and has an excellent database. He has been extremely successful in selling villas in Tuscany. If JTBNA can provide access to special sites and access to royalty in Jordan, Mitzi can interest him in promoting Jordan to his clientele.

Malia Asfour also suggested that Travel Impressions should consider creating a partnership to promote Jordan with help from the Four Seasons, the Marriott at the Dead Sea, their Jordanian ground operator International Traders, Royal Jordanian Airlines and JTBNA. The programs can start with offering extensions from Greece to Jordan in 2003.

With regard to the religious market, Mitzi Papazoglu said that American Express does not allow any marketing to any religious organization.

She was also invited on the March tour operator site inspection trip.

Further follow up is needed to obtain latest brochures of the company, provide rates on RJ from Athens to Amman, and further information about the Petra exhibit. Also, follow up is needed with Mitzi regarding setting up the partnership with Jordanian entities to promote Greece – Jordan programs.

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## **Intrav**

Doug Walbert – Vice President Operations and Product Planning

Walbert was given a briefing regarding new hotel openings in Jordan including the Four Seasons in Amman and the new Marriott at the Dead Sea. The Movenpick at the Dead Sea has also undergone a 100 room expansion and by next year, Aqaba is scheduled to have the opening of the Intercontinental Hotel.

Intrav has had an excellent 10 weeks of record breaking sales said Doug Walbert. The company is still printing a Jordan program and has programs in 2003 for September, October and November. In 2004, the company has 15 dates for tours to Jordan by private jet tour. He is also contemplating doing an Around the World with Four Seasons Hotel stays and Jordan can also be featured now that it has a Four Seasons in Amman. Doug informed us that he would work with the new General Manager of Four Seasons in Amman and with International Traders, their local ground operator to create the program.

He was briefed on the Petra exhibit and its publicity value for tourism. Intrav handles the Egypt and Jordan program for the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He was interested in promoting the exhibit to his key clients at a private reception at the Museum and piggy backing on the cultural events that will accompany the opening of the exhibit in October 2003.

Generally speaking, Intrav was being very proactive in the marketplace and very flexible with their clients. In fact, the company has totally revamped its cancellation policy allowing clients the flexibility to cancel 10 days prior to travel with zero penalty and within 10 days with only a \$600 cancellation fee.

He said he had been promoted and Bill Robison has taken over his former position as Director of Operations. Robison will have responsibility for the Jordan product and will be reporting to Doug Walbert who is extremely familiar with Jordan and very fond of the country. He promised to send his latest brochures to JTBNA, asked that he (dwalbert@intrav.com) and Bill Robison (brobison@intrav.com) be put on the newsletter circulation list and requested a copy of the Royal Tour video.

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### **Far & Wide Conglomerate**

Michael Goren – President IST Cultural Tours

Dave Herbert – President, African Travel

Both executives were briefed on new hotel openings in Jordan by Malia Asfour.

Dave Herbert, of African Travel, currently has programs to Kenya and Egypt. He was advised of the Royal Jordanian service between Cairo and Amman and the various possible itineraries that he could combine with his current offerings. Malia suggested he do a 5 night extension including Amman, Petra, Wadi Rum, and the Dead Sea. Dave Herbert requested a 5 night sample itinerary from JTBNA as well as an introduction to the key

person at Royal Jordanian airlines so that programs could be offered as early as 2003. He also wanted JTBNA to suggest a few ground operators (DMCs) in Jordan who are capable of handling very high end individual travel needs (FITs).

Michael Goren intervened to say that he was considering a special interest itinerary for the non-profit market segment that would begin in Cairo and end up in Amman, visiting Luxor, Sharm El Sheikh, cruise to Aqaba, visit Petra, Wadi Rum, and the Dead Sea.

Both Michael Goren and Dave Herbert were eager to work with JTBNA in gaining exposure and doing targeted marketing with the American Museum of Natural History during the Petra and the Nabatean exhibit next October.

Both were also briefed on the religious sites in Jordan, especially Bethany Beyond the Jordan, which had so impressed Susan Nissim of IST Cultural Tours (Far & Wide company) who had participated in the tour operator site inspection trip in October 2002.

They were also informed of the upcoming tour operator site inspection trip to Jordan from March 14-21, 2003. Dave Herbert suggested that JTBNA invite Anne Bellamy, Vice President of African Travel, to participate.

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## **Sunnyland Tours**

Jose Luis Cabada, Vice President

Jose Luis is the son-in-law of Elie Sidawi of Sunny Land Tours who has been a strong proponent of Jordan programs from the U.S. market. Malia Asfour briefed Jose Luis on the opportunities available to U.S. tour operators doing religious tours in Jordan and that with the acquisition of Regina Tours (Catholic pilgrimages) by Far & Wide and the merger of the business with Journeys Unlimited (tours for the Protestant market), another Far & Wide company, there is a window of opportunity for another tour operator specializing in the Catholic tourism market. Jose



informed us that he does handle the business of several religious organizations and would be interested in expanding Sunny Land's programs in the Catholic market. He was briefed on the recent press trip of the Catholic Press Association and that Sunny Land could benefit from the articles that appear in the religious publications if they were to advertise their religious tours in those publications. Very often there is no call to action and giving readers the potential of booking such a tour would be highly advantageous to Sunny Land.

Jose Luis inquired if there were any special conservation or humanitarian causes in Jordan that could also benefit as a result of tourists making a contribution towards the cause. In Costa Rica, they have an "adopt a school program". He was especially interested in sustainable tourism development opportunities and was briefed on the work of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN), especially at the Dana Natural Reserve. He was very interested and wanted to know more about the work of the RSCN and some suggested itineraries that would include travel to the area.

Jose Luis was also briefed on the Petra exhibit scheduled to be in New York in October, 2003, and the opportunities that existed for joint promotion and marketing to stimulate demand and bookings for Sunny Land programs.

Malia promised to send sample itineraries both for the religious market as well as for the eco-tourism market to Jose Luis. She also promised to introduce him to the key contacts at the Catholic Press Association in New York as well as Garry Zarr of the American Museum of Natural History in New York.

Jose Luis was also briefed on the proposed media workshop in Jordan next March. He suggested that JTBNA invite Beverly Beckham, a journalist for the Boston Globe, who is also married to Bruce Beckham, Director of the Travelers Conservation Foundation, an USTOA-sponsored preservation group.

He suggested that JTBNA and Sunny Land jointly create an action plan that can generate publicity and sales for the eco-tourism, religious, and cultural tour markets benefiting both Jordan and Sunny Land Tours. He

said that the action plan also needed to address financial assistance to print and mail brochures to past clients and travel agents.

With regard to participation in the March 14-21, 2003, site inspection trip, he suggested that either Kyle, who handles Jordan programs at Sunny Land, or the new person being hired for group travel be invited to participate.

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## **Travel Bound**

Juan Tamarit, President

Travel Bound is owned by Gullivers Travel in the U.K., a very large and successful travel company with worldwide programs. As the owners of Gullivers Travel are from the Middle East, Juan said there was a strong and special interest to promote travel to the region. Sharon Sauli, Manager, Customized Group Sales, who came on the USTOA Out of Country meeting to Jordan in 2002, is assuming additional responsibilities at Travel Bound. She is fully familiar with the destination and eager to promote it.

According to Juan Tamarit, business has been extremely good for Travel Bound. In 2002, they had to add an additional 10,000 sq. feet of office space in Manhattan, and add another 50 sales representatives. But the year has been quite a roller coaster ride, starting with 72% below 2001 sales and ending with being 35% over 2001 sales. Already for the first quarter of 2003 the bookings are 75% above 2002 bookings for the same period. Bottom line, Travel Bound is doing exceedingly well and the success is largely due to their becoming the official representative of American Express Travel Services as well as a marketing partner of Virtuoso, the consortium of high-end leisure travel agents who book a lot of individual travel. Travel Bound is also a preferred tour operator of AAA Travel and won the "tour operator of the year" award for their relationship. Most of the business has been deluxe and high-end individual travel (FITs). Publicity and promotion has also helped immensely with the assistance of their newly hired, New York based Ogilvy public relations. Africa, South and Central America, Asia and

North America have been big sellers and a luxury product brochure is in the works and will be coming out in January.

With regard to Jordan programs, Juan said that he would like to put a deluxe program together but would like to wait for the next 30-60 days to assess the situation. As the timing improves, he wants to do an upscale direct mail piece that can be mailed to a database of high income past and potential clients.

Travel Bound is also doing incentive and meeting travel and has the account for clients such as Wella, and the recently acquired, American Diabetes Association, with a 5 year contract and \$16 million in revenues. Juan informed us that he has been doing programs for the MICE clients to Ireland, Rome, Goa, Hong Kong, Hawaii and New Orleans, and Jordan could be a consideration. He was interested to hear about the Desert Cup and the Dead Sea Marathon for select clients.

He said he and his team would like to have a very special, highly differentiated product in Jordan and was assured by Malia Asfour that he would be able to have special access to sites and possibly meet members of the royal family.

He was also invited on the March 14-21 tour operator familiarization trip and he said that schedule permitting, he would like to participate.

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## **Globus & Cosmos**

Phillip Gordon – Chief Operating Officer

The company, which was surveyed in the June – August 2002 study conducted on behalf of JTBNA, is one that does more moderately priced group tours, worldwide. All products are designed by their operations office in Lugano, Switzerland with input from all major markets where Globus products are sold. Phillip reiterated the company's way of conducting business. Their main competitor is Trafalgar Tours.

According to Phillip, all the market research that Globus has conducted indicates that their clients need a lot of “hand holding”. Most clients are from the mid-western states, with an average annual income of \$75K, traveling to Europe every second year. In his opinion, consumer confidence needs to return with regard to travel to the Middle East. In light of the current situation, Globus does not have a program to the Middle East in 2003 but he hopes that can be re-instated in 2004. He suggested communicating all positive developments with Mario Sorbara, Managing Director for Globus operations in Lugano via e-mail ([msorbara@globuscosmos.ch](mailto:msorbara@globuscosmos.ch))

Malia briefed him on the religious market potential and the organization, Friends of Jordan. Phillip Gordon said that other than Oberammergau programs, Globus has not done anything in the religious market.

He was briefed on the upcoming Petra and the Nabatean civilization exhibit and he hopes that will create interest and demand for 2004 programs.

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## **Travcoa**

Angela Miller, Director of Marketing

Angela Miller was briefed on the new hotels in Jordan and the Petra exhibit. Malia offered to introduce her to Garry Zarr, Director of Communications at the Museum of Natural History. Angela was briefed on the press workshop to be held in Amman scheduled for late March and was asked for assistance in providing names of journalists with whom Travcoa have strong relationships and would be interested in participating. Angela agreed to find the contact name of the writer at the LA Times and also was interested in using the Museum in LA for a private event around the Petra exhibit when it is in Los Angeles in 2004.

She is familiar with Jordan and currently Travcoa has Jordan and Syria programs in their brochures and intends to maintain them in 2004.

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## **Abercrombie & Kent**

Helga Westell, Vice President

Helga was given the briefings regarding Petra exhibit and journalists workshop. She was all in favor of working on reducing misperceptions in the minds of the American consumers and creating demand for Jordan as a must-see destination. She suggested JTBNA get in touch with Pamela Lazarus at A&K who works with her and organizes press trips on behalf of A&K. At present she has several consumer journalists on a press trip to Egypt. She said if Malia could arrange for Royal Jordanian airline tickets from Chicago, Pamela Lazarus could help JTBNA in putting together a special press trip for qualified and accredited journalists. She also suggested that JTBNA provide details about the Petra exhibit for the Press News and E News columns of the A&K website. A&K has its own ground operations in Jordan and is vested in the market. A&K will continue to offer tours to the country.

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## **Collette Tours**

Manuel Paolo, Director Product Development

According to Manuel Paolo, tourism is generally down to international destinations for Collette. As they are a well-diversified company with many destinations and products, in the long term the prospects are encouraging. Collette is spending its tourism promotion dollars on destinations in North America. According to Paolo, the current reduction in international travel is due in part to the fear of terrorism but also largely to the economy. Destinations that are selling for Collette are Mexico, Central America, Canada, Caribbean, Alaska, Britain and Ireland. He was uncertain about the bookings they would get for the Egypt program that Collette was operating on behalf of the Smithsonian Institute for 2003. For cultural tours, Manuel Paolo said it might be 2005 before JTBNA could expect to see a Collette program to Jordan.

He was then briefed by Malia Asfour on the dissolution of Regina Tours, one of the largest operators of Catholic tours and its merger with Journeys Unlimited, another operator of Christian tours. Both companies are owned by Far & Wide. The former owner of Regina Tours, Jim Adair, has also left the company. Manuel Paolo became interested in the possible window of opportunity for Catholic groups. He became even more interested and excited to consider Jordan after he was told about all the religious sites in Jordan as well as the excavations at Bethany beyond the Jordan. Malia offered to share the JTBNA database of 4000 names, provide introductions to the Catholic press association (CPA), the National Religious Broadcasters Association (NRB), and Friends of Jordan. She mentioned that the two associations have annual meetings which are good sales opportunities. CPA meeting will take place in May in Atlanta, whereas NRB is meeting in Nashville in February. As for the Friends of Jordan, they did not have a preferred tour operator to operate their programs and she would be glad to put Collette in touch with them. She also promised him the latest video, Cradle of Christianity, brochures on religious sites and sample itineraries for Catholic groups. Manuel Paolo said that he has a sales team of 70 sales people, nationwide, who are all Collette employees and are proactively selling. He needs unpublished itineraries that they can mark up to cover commissions and sell to prospective clients. Manuel said that once he sells the concept internally to the company, then the marketing team will work closely with JTBNA. Also, he suggested that JTBNA sponsor a meal function at their Collette sales meeting in New Brunswick in June of 2003. That way Jordan can have all the Collette sales people briefed on the potential of Jordan. He also suggested that JTBNA meet with the Collette Business Development Managers who handle the Smithsonian, American Association for Retired Persons (AARP) and the A&E Historic Tours.

JTBNA to provide database, video, introductions, sample itineraries for Manuel Paolo to sell the concept internally at Collette to jump start religious tours to Jordan as early as 2003/4.

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