

For Immediate Release

ASTA's Travel Retailing & Destination Expo Offered "Top-Notch" Education, Extended Networking Opportunities

Alexandria, Va., Sept. 21, 2011 – Last week ASTA's sixth Travel Retailing & Destination Expo closed in Las Vegas, where more than 1,350 leading travel professionals from 55 countries gathered to network, share best practices and learn from some of travel's foremost experts in sales and marketing, technology solutions and product-specific information.

"This year, ASTA's Travel Retailing & Destination Expo raised the bar even higher, providing today's travel professional with unparalleled educational opportunities that really go to the heart of what they need—targeted, hands-on training that will translate into future sales. Agents in attendance were able to gain an advantage over their competition thanks to a new education program, which focused on interactive, high-tech courses. Beyond the classroom setting, the show offered the opportunity for agents as well as suppliers to advance their professional career through the exchange of ideas and networking with the industry's leaders," said Tony Gonchar, ASTA CEO.

A strong majority of agents in attendance rated the robust line-up of education as being superior, noting that the courses provided relevant, applicable content that provided them with new avenues to showcase their services in the marketplace.

David Murphy with Personalized Travel Inc. (Oakland Park, Fla.) described this year's event as "clearly several notches above previous shows. The education was terrific; the presenters were excellent—all top-notch."

"ASTA provides top-notch training we can use in real time and put into practice in our agencies. When I came last year, I knew I had to come again [this] year," said Dorette Seder, Serene Vacations (Port Charlotte, Fla.).

As the one place "where top travel agents enhance their skills," this year's event successfully delivered more qualified agents, with 56 percent of attendees holding the position of owner/manager and front-office, retail travel agents. Of them, 80 percent focus on leisure sales, whereas the remaining 20 percent focus on corporate bookings. Moreover, 61 percent of attendees have been in the travel industry for more than six years, and more than 75 percent are affiliated with a professional trade association such as ASTA, the National Association of Career Travel Agents, Cruise Lines International Association, Global Business Travel Association or the Association of Canadian Travel Agencies.

Over the course of the two-day open trade show, travel agents were able to meet with representatives from more than 200 companies representing various parts of the industry, including destinations, hotels and resorts, car rental firms, insurance providers and more. Suppliers particularly commented on the high quality of agents who were in attendance.

"As a Premium Member as well as an exhibitor at the annual conference, CCRA is a proud supporter of ASTA and the critical role it plays in the travel industry. The travel agent market is on the rebound, and ASTA is at the forefront of the educational enrichment, industry awareness and legislative affairs that benefit us all. In fact, as CCRA prepared to announce our newest product, we chose to make that announcement during THETRADESHOW, because we recognized that this single event brought together the key industry leaders from all over the country," said Dic Marxen, president and CEO, CCRA Travel Solutions.

When not attending training sessions or walking the trade show floor, attendees were able to take advantage of exclusive networking functions, allowing them to expand their circle of key business contacts. The popularity of ASTA's annual Advocacy Dinner was evident this year in that the event, which gathers the industry's leading organizations to celebrate ASTA's legislative accomplishments and

influence, saw a rise in attendance of 54 percent. All told, the companies in attendance represented close to 80 percent of all travel sold in the United States.

Meanwhile, ASTA's elite Premium Members were able to take part in an exclusive Premium Business Session, which grew this year by 44 percent. During their session, Premium Members shared best practices and sought solutions to some of the industry's most pressing issues while forging long-lasting business relationships that harness the power of travel's top agencies. A new entrant to the special event line-up was ASTA's exclusive Leadership Luncheon, where more than 175 leaders within the travel industry, representing ASTA's Proud Partners, Board of Directors, Chapter Presidents Council, and Premium Members, gathered for networking and lunch.

TheTravelBloggerShow, now in its second year, saw more than 100 people attend a full-day of seminars all targeted at providing current and aspiring travel bloggers with the tools and know-how to take their blog to the next level.

"TheTravelBloggerShow was excellent," said Donna Daniels with Fox Travel/American Express (The Woodlands, Texas). "After attending we know exactly what we want to do with our blog. The quality of the speakers was phenomenal. The fact that we walked away with several things we can put into practical application translates to success for us!"

For more information, visit THETRADESHOW.org. Next year's event will be held in Los Angeles, Sept. 7-9.

ASTA's Travel Retailing & Destination Expo provides agents the chance to gain an advantage from the all-new educational program and to advance their professional career; exchange ideas and network with the industry's top agents to build their business; and diversify their partners with the latest products and destinations on the show floor to increase revenue.

The mission of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) is to facilitate the business of selling travel through effective representation, shared knowledge and the enhancement of professionalism. ASTA seeks a retail travel marketplace that is profitable and growing and a rewarding field in which to work, invest and do business.

Contact: Kristina Rundquist/Yolanda Walters 703.739.8710

###