

WHAT IS THE ALASKA TRAVEL INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION ATIA Insert for Alaska: North to the Future, Vol. 2

Few undertakings are as challenging and rewarding as promoting Alaska tourism. At one-fifth the size of the lower 48 states, the “last frontier” is home to three million lakes, over 3,000 rivers, 17 of our nation’s 20 highest peaks, 100,000 glaciers and 15 national parks, preserves and monuments.

Promoting Alaska is the responsibility of the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA). ATIA is a non-profit, membership-based, trade and marketing association organized in 2001 through a merger with the Alaska Visitors Association. The newly formed organization also assumed the marketing programs of the Alaska Tourism Marketing Counsel and the State, Division of Tourism.

BACKGROUND

- **ATIA’S MISSION:** ATIA’s mission is to promote travel to and within the state, develop a statewide marketing plan, increase overall awareness of the economic importance of the visitor industry and work cooperatively with the state on tourism development and long-range planning.
- **MEMBERSHIP:** ATIA’s growing membership ranges from family-run B&Bs to cruise lines. Ninety percent of our member businesses have under 50 employees; 60 percent have five employees or less.
- **MARKETING CHALLENGE:** For all of Alaska’s large-scale appeal our state faces significant competition from other national destinations. According to the 2002-2003 Survey of U.S. State & Territory Tourism Office Budgets report, in 2003 the average state tourism-marketing budget was \$12.3 million. Alaska’s was \$7.8 million. In 2003 and 2004, sixty percent of ATIA’s marketing dollars came from its membership; 40 percent came from the state.
- **MEMBERSHIP IMPORTANCE:** Member participation is critical to grow Alaska’s national presence as a visitor destination. The combined contributions of our private members support ATIA’s cooperative marketing efforts. This, in turn, allows Alaska’s many smaller business operators the means to promote their businesses outside Alaska.
- **RETURN ON INVESTMENT:** Though funding a national marketing program is challenging, the return on investment is considerable. Visitors spend an estimated \$1,260 per-person, per-trip. In 2002, total direct full-year spending by visitors was estimated at \$1.8 billion. The visitor industry accounts for approximately 30,700 Alaskan jobs, or one-in-eight private sector jobs.

ATIA'S MARKETING EFFORTS

- **TOURISM IS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE:** Because tourism remains one of the state's most important economic engines, ATIA manages a comprehensive marketing program to ensure the industry's continued growth into the new century.
- **IMPORTANCE OF ONGOING RESEARCH:** Utilizing years of research, ATIA's marketing experts identify the demographics and interests of the people who visit Alaska. Guided by this research, ATIA continuously refines its marketing efforts to attract potential travelers from across the country and around the world.
- **BRANDING ALASKA:** Recently, ATIA adopted a new logo reflecting the opportunities and expectations this state offers to new and returning visitors:
ALASKA: Beyond your dreams. Within your reach. SM
- **USING MEDIA TO GENERATE AWARENESS OF ALASKA AS A VISITOR DESTINATION:** Public awareness is generated through advertising efforts using magazines, direct mail, television and the Internet. ATIA continues to grow its online presence through its consumer website, www.travelalaska.com.
- **ATIA PUBLISHES THE OFFICIAL STATE VACATION PLANNER:** A critical adjunct to our website is the comprehensive Official Alaska State Vacation Planner. The Planner aids travelers in creating their ideal itinerary and identifies activities and services offered by our members.
- **PUBLIC RELATIONS:** ATIA invests significant resources into public relations efforts to generate stories that promote Alaska as a visitor destination. These efforts coincide with a vigorous government relations program to improve conditions within the visitor industry.
- **VISITOR FULFILLMENT:** The association provides important information services to potential visitors and actively develops and shares potential visitor leads and planning information with businesses and numerous, statewide community partners.
- **PROMOTING NICHE MARKETS:** Through the combined use of the Internet and its public relations program, ATIA bolsters specific niche markets in adventure/ecotourism, sportfishing, winter, highway/Alaska Marine Highway and cultural/historic activities and actively promotes these travel opportunities as part of its overall marketing efforts.

- **EDUCATING TRAVEL AGENTS & TOUR OPERATORS:** Creating interest in traveling to Alaska is not limited to consumers. ATIA actively participates with travel agents and tour operators to educate, identify and build alliances with groups that actively promote or provide tour opportunities within the state.
- **OVERSEAS PROMOTION:** ATIA participates in high potential international markets including Japan, German-speaking Europe, Australia, Korea and the United Kingdom.
- **TOURISM IS THE ULTIMATE RENEWABLE RESOURCE.** ATIA will continue to use all its resources to grow this critical industry.