

BoBI goes from strength to strength

Organisers of next year's Best of Britain & Ireland (BoBI) have announced a new hosted buyer event, new coach links to make it easier for GTOs to attend the event, and a raft of trade partners. The initiatives are all focused on making BoBI 2012 the must-attend travel trade event of the year. More than 350 exhibitors and over 2,600 visitors are expected at the show which takes place on 14 and 15 March at the NEC in Birmingham.

The Confederation of Passenger Transport, Coach Tourism Council, Group Travel Organisers Association, UKinbound, ETOA, and the Tourism Society are working alongside the BoBI team to help target domestic and international hosted buyers.

"Stand bookings are well ahead of schedule with sales over the 50% mark already, and five months still to go," says Event Director Sam Warnock. "The Scotland stand sold out within days of opening for registration and the Tourism Ireland pavilion has also had a lot of interest. We're now working on a detailed programme for domestic and international hosted buyers and expect to announce further details of this in the next few weeks, with invitations going out at the end of November. With our industry partners, we will target key domestic hosted buyers including coach operators, group travel organisers, tour operators and travel agents. This will help to ensure our exhibitors can talk face to face, and do business with these influential buyers. Internationally we're targeting the top travel agents and tour operators from the US, Canada, Germany, France and Ireland. These hosted buyers from the five main overseas markets for England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales will ensure exhibitors both large and small get access to these important bookers of tourism products."

The BoBI team has made a number of improvements to the plans for next year's show in direct response to comments from exhibitors.

"Rather than host two separate evening events for domestic and international hosted buyers, we will be putting on one networking and gala dinner for all buyers and exhibitors," says Sam. "The event will take place at the Birmingham Hilton Metropole Hotel on the evening of 14 March and will ensure exhibitors have the maximum access to these influential buyers."

A further new initiative, the 'BoBI Express', will see coaches operating to the NEC from key locations around the country.

"We know that GTOs see BoBI as an important event in their schedule," says Sam, "so we want to make it as easy as possible for them to get to Birmingham."

The BoBI team is also working with the British Guild of Travel Writers and the International Travel Writers Alliance to invite key consumer and trade press to the show to see and hear at first-hand the latest news from attractions, accommodation providers and destinations.

2012 will be a big year for domestic tourism and Best of Britain & Ireland will be playing its part. "VisitEngland recently announced the dates for the new English Tourism Week (10 to 18 March) and we are delighted that BoBI will be the travel trade showcase event of that celebration," says Sam. "We look forward to working with VisitEngland to ensure that the importance of tourism is both celebrated and recognised."

For more information go to www.bestofbritainandirelandevent.co.uk