

Tourism authorities need to reach for the sky

Regional and national tourism authorities will have a larger presence at **World Routes** than ever before. But what do they bring to the table? And can they help airlines to understand the true potential of a new destination?

Developing a new route is still seen as a deal between airport and airline, but a new player is getting involved in the decision-making process. Tourism authorities will be attending World Routes in greater numbers than ever before, bringing their insight to meetings that will heavily influence which new markets airlines open up. Gerard Brown, tourism development director at The Route Development Group, believes their input is invaluable.

"Tourism authorities have always been at Routes, but their presence has not been as marked as in the last three years," he explains. "The feedback we get from airlines suggests that the information held by tourism

Airlines want to mitigate the risk of going to a new market. If they have got people from the airport, the tourism authority and an economic development agency in front of them, then they are aware of the risks and know they can be shared."

In 2008, 40 tourism authorities attended World Routes; last year there were 80, and this year there will likely be more than 100. Such has been the growth in tourism authority attendees, that the Tourism & Air Service (TAS) Summit, now in its third year, will be co-located with the World Routes event in Vancouver.

Focusing on the relationship between tourism offices, airlines and airports, the TAS Summit will discuss how tourism can be promoted and supported through the creation of new air services.

Commonwealth of Independent States are travelling to the region. As a market, Antalya is changing, and tourism authorities are in the best position to help airlines understand how.

Engaging with the market

As the benefits of a joined-up approach to route development become clear, tourism authorities are likely to become partners to airports, extolling the virtues of new routes.

"Tourism authorities can't just go to travel trade and press events. They must promote themselves to the airlines, to the people who will get the tourists there," says Brown. "Airports want more traffic and so do the tourism authorities, so they have a shared aim. Working together shows cohesion, a common goal and opens the possibility of sharing resources.

Routes is all about the meetings, which can be very beneficial for all parties, especially if all the decision-makers are present. That said, being present is not enough in itself.

"Tourism authorities and airports must prepare together if they are going to work together. The point isn't to put on a show for an event like Routes, but to develop a coordinated approach and work together throughout the year."

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authorities, particularly details of new resorts or hotel developments, is the evidence of a market waiting to be served that they are looking for."

Invaluable insight

World Routes 2010 will bring together airlines, airports and tourism authorities from every continent, and many will engage in face-to-face meetings. Airlines, low-cost and national carrier alike, will be looking for regional and hub airports to offer something extra, and tourism authorities could give them just the insight they need.

"National tourism authorities cannot support one airport over another, so the regional authorities are very important.

Antalya in Turkey is a good example of how a tourism authority can ensure an airline has the information it needs. Although it is a well-established resort, its recent hotel developments include many five-star and six-star properties. Furthermore, more visitors from the



Tourism authorities are well placed to advise airlines of changes to the market, as in Antalya.

The Tourism & Air Services Summit will be held in rooms 109 and 110, Level 1, as part of World Routes on 19 September 2010. ■

Further information

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