



# Taking the Lyon's share



Lyon on the River Saône

*“IDE Lyon was a very great success for us. Our stand was buzzing for most of the time and our product seminar was packed out. I feel that we have introduced the world of barging to a wide range of important travel agents — people who are keen to find a top-quality specialty product.”* Alasdair Wyllie, founder,

*Midi Hotel Barges*

**ASTA's International Destination Expo (IDE) in Lyon in April (12-16), has been hailed a success.**

**WITH SPONSORSHIP FROM** Accor Hospitality, OnlyLyon, Marriott International, Lyon le Grand Tour, Rhone-Alps Region and many other organizations, the third staging of the event attracted nearly 1,000 travel professionals from 47 countries. They converged on the city to learn about the culture, attractions and flavors of France's second largest hub, often dubbed 'the gateway to Europe.'

Among the delegates, 62% were from North America, 14% from France and 24% from other countries, including far-flung destinations such as Brazil and Fiji.

The conference offered delegates the opportunity to meet with 110 supplier companies on the exhibition floor of the modern Lyon Convention Center. Among them were representatives of tourist offices,

tour operators, accommodation providers and transportation companies.

Meanwhile, destination focused seminars and conferences concentrated on dynamic packaging, wedding and honeymoon destinations, river barges, cruises and the best ways to do business in the US. Agents were also able to attend certification seminars, where subjects included Selling France to Mature Travelers and Making France Your Specialist Destination.

During the five days, delegates were given the opportunity to sample the region's offerings, with organized trips to many of the city's attractions as well as evening events focusing on food and wine. Highlights of the week included a dinner at the opulent town hall and a gala dinner on the final night organized by South African Tourism, South African Airways and Sun International, hosts of next year's IDE conference from March 8-11.

The venue for the fifth International Destination Expo in 2010 was also announced during the third IDE, with the Turkish city of Istanbul named to host the event.

Confirming the success of the Lyon IDE, Cheryl Hudak, CTC, ASTA president and CEO, said: "Attendees have had the chance to experience for themselves the beauty of Lyon and the Rhone-Alps region and discover the nuances that set this region apart. Meeting one-on-one with regional suppliers, travel agents will now return home empowered to sell the destination."

During her opening address, Hudak appealed to delegates to sign up for daily ASTA news alerts from [www.asta.org](http://www.asta.org) and to support the industry as much as possible by attending meetings and talking up the association to peers.

"When it comes to getting things done, we need fewer architects and more builders," Hudak insisted.

# Head to head

*It takes a year to plan, but how important is hosting IDE? Jo Gardner gets the low-down from the tourist boards of the past two host destinations*

**François Gaillard, CEO, Lyon Convention & Visitors Bureau**



**How important is it for Lyon to run an event like IDE?**

Running an event such as IDE is very important for us because Paris is known all around the world, but Lyon is still relatively unknown, despite being France's second largest city. We wanted the opportunity to explain to agents why Lyon is just as good as the capital.

**What are the current visitor figures to Lyon?**

Some 10% of our visitors come from the US in July and August and we want to develop this. Hosting an event like this can give us the level of exposure we need.

**Does the work stop once the event is over?**

No. We need to keep up the momentum by remaining in touch and encouraging agents to come back with family and friends, while also suggesting that clients who have been to Paris give Lyon a go. We want agents to propose to clients that Lyon is just like Paris — the same prices, same shopping, bars and restaurants — but easier to navigate due to its size, not to mention safer.

**How long did the event take to organize?**

Something of this scale is always going to take a long time and we started planning it as soon as the second IDE was finished in Korea. It's a privilege to run such an event and we all enjoy the work, so it's no hardship. It's just over so fast once it starts, but it's very exciting while it's happening.



*Harubang, stone guardians of Jeju-do*

**Sung Woock Cho, executive director, Korea National Tourism Organization**



**Where exactly was IDE hosted last year?**

The island of Jeju-do, an hour from Seoul. The island is the best in Asia for conferences as it has good business facilities but is also beautiful and relaxing.

**Has hosting IDE helped tourism to the island?**

Thanks to ASTA members, almost 590,000 US travelers visited Korea last year, up 5.7% from 2006. Technically we can neither confirm nor deny the IDE led to the increase in visitors. That said, it's a lovely stat and makes for 'wishful thinking'. Plus I'm happy to take the credit if no one else will!



*Quiet corner of Lyon, France's second city*

**What are you doing on the back of the event to keep Korea in the spotlight?**

Last year we launched a new brand campaign — Korea Sparkling — which aired on CNN and the Discovery Channel and was also featured in the *New York Times* and *Conde Nast Traveler*. The second stage of the campaign started in June, with ads on Manhattan's double-decker tourist buses. We are also in the process of inviting journalists over to see the country for themselves.

**What would you say to an agent who has never sold the island before to convince them to sell it to clients?**

The Olympic Games are a good way of ensuring a sale as accommodation in Beijing is either already full or hiked in price, and the commute from Seoul is only an hour. Accommodation is much cheaper, with availability almost guaranteed.

# Destination specialists

**SIX HUNDRED SPECIALIST** certificates were awarded to travel agents during IDE in Lyon. This followed training on the France Destination Specialist Course and in niche topics such as European Rail Travel, France Soft Adventure and Western European Culinary Travel.

“Nothing can beat first-hand experience when it comes to selling a destination,” said Cheryl Hudak, CTC, ASTA’s president and CEO. “Networking with local professionals helps agents gain an in-depth understanding of a region’s culture and environment, as well as establishing partnerships with niche suppliers they otherwise might not have met.”

In addition to classroom training, exhibitors conducted product seminars and delegates took part in pre- and post- tours in Perouges, Beaujolais, Lake Annecy, Côte Rôtie vineyards, Vienne and other destinations.

Travel agents who completed destination certifications were provided with customizable press releases to use in promoting their new specialties. They were additionally offered a complimentary one-year membership of the Specialty Travel Agents Association. A list of recently announced Destination Specialists from this year’s IDE event can be found at [www.travelsense.org](http://www.travelsense.org)



*The Lithuanian capital Vilnius*

## First-timers

This year’s IDE welcomed a large number of first-time exhibitors — around 91% of those exhibiting were new to the event and they used it as a way to promote their products to the US travel trade in one hit.

One such exhibitor was Baltic States travel agency Baltcoming, which found the show a great success. Its most popular products were the guaranteed summer departures through the three Baltic States with a program of

seven-day tours including the most important sights of the Baltics.

In Estonia, visitors can discover the medieval Old Town of Tallinn, Kadrioru Palace, St Bridget’s Convent and Parnu, the country’s best-known resort. In Latvia, visitors can explore Riga — the world capital of art nouveau (Jugendstil) — along with Gauja Nature Reserve, Turaida Castle and magnificent Rundale Palace. In Lithuania, the tour takes visitors to the Hill of Crosses, the amazing capital Vilnius and Trakai Castle, on an island in the middle of a large lake.

Another first-time exhibitor was Düsseldorf International Airport, which used the show to promote its new flight connections between the US and the German city. This summer the airport will have 56 flights a week from North America, making it the perfect gateway for US travelers to Germany. Other new destinations offered by the airport include Beijing, Shanghai and Toronto.

Christoph Blume, spokesman for airport management, said: “Düsseldorf is the most important airport in Germany’s largest commercial region. We view expansion of intercontinental air traffic as one of our essential tasks to provide the economy with the required mobility.”

## case study

Via One, owner of the World Phone For Dummies, presented at IDE in Lyon. Its objectives were:

- To let travel agents scheduling international trips know there is a simple and easy way to make calls while traveling abroad;
- To get a chance to meet with travel agents and tour guides to better understand how to design the order and support for the World Phone so it meets their needs and those of their clients;
- To identify ways of generating revenues for the agents in a way that also enhances their customer service to clients.

Via One found the forum to be the ideal venue to achieve its goals. A spokesman said: “We got to meet and listen to numerous travel agents so we could identify ways we could structure the order and support for the World Phone For Dummies in a way that will generate more revenue for them and simplify the lives of their clients while traveling.

“We are looking forward to the next ASTA show, where we can unveil how we will work with travel agents and have more details regarding the phone, service and pricing.” [www.viaone.com](http://www.viaone.com)