

COMING TO AMERICA

PROMOTING FRENCH TOURISM TO THE USA

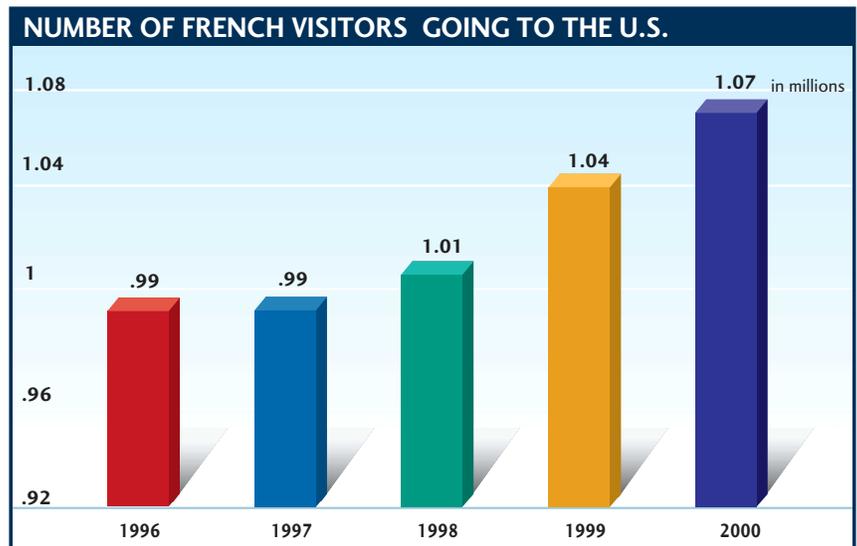
by Valerie Ferriere and Ronald Soriano

Commercial Service France

Reviving the U.S. pavilion at Top Resa, France's leading travel and tourism trade show seemed a simple enough idea in the fall of 2000. The last time a U.S. pavilion was part of the show was 1995. Little did the meeting participants know that a year later, they would be trying to promote travel to the United States in the wake of the events of September 11, 2001.

U.S. PAVILION IS CENTER OF ATTENTION

Top Resa attracts more than 15,000 travel and tourism professionals. Top Resa 2001, held September 20-22, 2001, in Deauville, on the coast of Normandy, offered plenty of challenges, not the least of which was Commercial Service France's recruitment of U.S. tourist destinations



willing to exhibit at the show. Fifteen signed up following an extensive promotional campaign. The events of September 11 caused concern that many of the exhibitors would choose not to participate. As it turned out, all

but one of the destinations originally slated to exhibit in the U.S. pavilion managed to fulfill their commitments. The destinations represented included, among others, the City of New York, the National Capital Area (Maryland, Virginia, and Washington, DC), Chicago and the State of Illinois, the State of Pennsylvania, Houston and the State of Texas, Visit Florida, Orlando, and Palm Beach County (Florida).

Then French Minister of Tourism Michelle Demessine opened the show with a "minute of silence" in front of the New York booth in the U.S. pavilion, an emotional moment for all show participants. The U.S. pavilion attracted a great deal of media coverage, including major television networks. Hundreds of people visited the pavilion to express their solidarity with the United States and to obtain information on the various destinations represented.





TOP DESTINATION FOR FRENCH TRAVELERS

The United States is the top long-haul destination for French travelers abroad and the sixth most important overall. According to the Visit USA Committee in France, the annual growth rate of French travelers to the United States had been 13 percent until 2000, higher than that of German and British travelers. Today, however, the challenge remains great for American destinations, as travelers seek destinations closer to home. More than 1.1 million French travelers went to the United States in 2000.

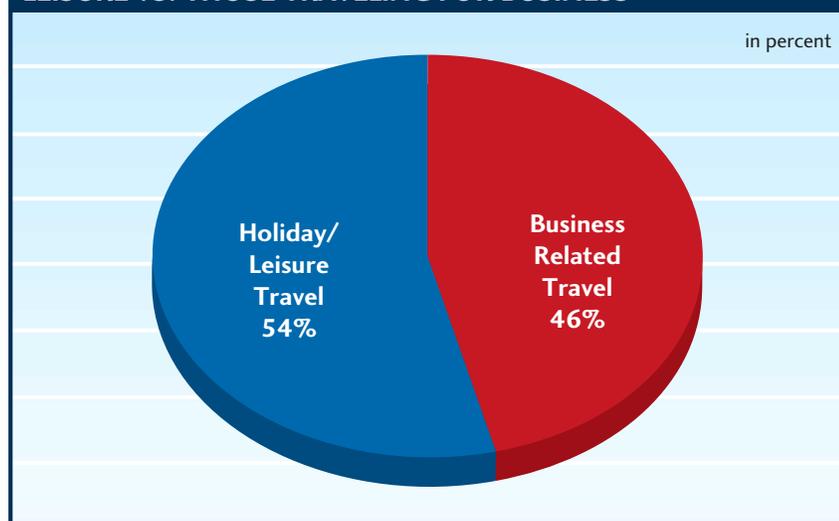
Nevertheless, the French, particularly young people, remain interested in traveling to the United States. While New York, Florida, and California continue to be top choices for first- and second-time travelers, other destinations are increasingly popular, particularly those in the Rocky Mountain states, the Southwest, and the Midwest.

VISIT USA COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES IN FRANCE

The Visit USA Committee has tirelessly promoted travel to the United States, even during troubled times, by urging tour operators to offer special

travel packages. The Commercial Service office at the U.S. Embassy in Paris has been working closely with the local Visit USA Committee and individual U.S. destinations to develop French travel to and tourism in the

PERCENTAGE OF FRENCH TRAVELING TO THE U.S. FOR LEISURE VS. THOSE TRAVELING FOR BUSINESS



United States. The first U.S. pavilion at Top Resa in five years was only the most visible and fruitful of such efforts.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Almost a year later, there are signs that travel to the United States from France is recovering. The Visit USA Committee and other trade professionals remain cautiously optimistic that travel and tourism will continue to improve. As then French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin stated when he concluded France's national conference on tourism last year in Paris, the traveler is "motivated by the curiosity of differences" and thus cannot be long deterred in exploring new places. At Top Resa 2001, three destinations, Key West, Ft. Lauderdale, and Pennsylvania, reported placements in tour operators' catalogs, a measure of success in the industry. In addition, the recent leveling of the euro and the dollar will also stimulate travel, as America appears more affordable than ever.

TOP RESA 2002 SOLD OUT

The U.S. pavilion at Top Resa 2002, to be held again in Deauville, September 19-21, 2002, is already sold out. Twenty-one destinations have signed up, with most of the exhibitors from 2001 scheduled to return. Although the Commercial Service in France



The U.S. Pavilion at Top Resa makes the cover of *Tour Hebdo*, France's leading tourism magazine.



Minute of Silence at U.S. Pavilion at Top RESA (September 20, 2001): from left to right, President of Visit USA Committee Michel-Yves Labbe, Cesar Balderacchi, President of National Association of Travel Agents, French Minister of Tourism Michelle Demessine.

is pleased with what has been accomplished, it is not very surprised by the response.

The most important impetus to tourism is that, in the spirit of the need for life to continue and develop, people will always seek travel opportunities. Discovering new lands and interacting with the people of those lands are part of the human condition. Exploring and understanding different cultures creates more peaceful relationships between people. Both private sector organizations and governments at every level need to make the necessary effort and investment to ensure that tourism continues to grow in the years ahead.

ROLE FOR THE COMMERCIAL SERVICE

In its own way, the Commercial Service in France is determined to continue to promote what is the world's greatest and most diversified destination, the

United States of America. The beauty and expanse of its land is only surpassed by the spirit and courage of its people, as exemplified by the U.S. exhibitors at Top Resa 2001. The Commercial Service stands all the more ready and available to assist U.S. destinations to market themselves in France, through promotional missions, seminars, and, of course, trade events like Top Resa. ■

For more information about French-U.S. travel and tourism promotion, contact the U.S. embassy in Paris at www.csfrance.amb-usa.fr, or e-mail Valerie.Ferriere@mail.doc.gov.

TOURISM TRADE PROMOTION EVENTS 2002 – 2003**ARGENTINA**

October 19 – 22, 2002

The 7th Annual FIT

(Feria Internacional de Turismo)

Predio Ferial de Palermo

Buenos Aires, Argentina

FIT 2002 will bring together exhibitors from all over the world. A combined audience of more than 15,000 trade and consumer buyers visited FIT during 2001.

Contact: Tel: 305-66-7650

Fax: 305-66-7399

E-mail: fconil@conexgroup.com

www.conexgroup.com

AUSTRALIA

February 2 – 6, 2003

Visit USA

Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and

Brisbane, Australia

Contact: Monique Roos

Tel: 61 2 937 3 9210

E-mail: Monique.Roos@mail.doc.gov

CANADA

October 2, 2002

See America Pavilion

Toronto, Canada

Contact: Viktoria Palfi

Tel: 416-595-5412 x229

E-mail: Viktoria.Palfi@mail.doc.gov

FINLAND

January 16 – 19, 2003

Matka Travel Fair 2003

Helsinki, Finland

The International Matka Travel Fair is organized annually and is the largest travel fair in Scandinavia by number of visitors.

Contact: Merja Poikolainen

Tel: 359-9-171-931

Email: Merja.Poikolainen@mail.doc.gov

FRANCE

September 20 – 23, 2002

Top Resa 2002 - Travel & Tourism

U.S. Pavilion

Deauville, France

The U.S. pavilion at Top Resa 2002 is the most effective business platform to tackle the French travel and tourism market. Given the strong potential of the French market, the U.S. Department of

Commerce's Commercial Service at the U.S. embassy in Paris is working in close coordination with the Visit USA Committee France and Top Resa to offer a unique opportunity to promote travel and tourism to U.S. destinations.

Contact: Valerie Ferriere

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ITALY

February 19 – 23, 2003

BIT 2003

Milan, Italy

Contact: Simonetta Busnelli

Tel: 39 02 659 2260

E-mail:

Simonetta.Busnelli@mail.doc.gov

JAPAN

September 24 – 27, 2002

See America Week 2002 – Japan

Tokyo, Japan

A series of tourism promotion events in coordination with the Japan Visit USA Committee and the Travel Industry Association of America.

Contact: Yoko Hatano

Tel: 81-3-3224-5318

E-mail: Yoko.Hatano@mail.doc.gov

NEW ZEALAND

September 26, 2002

US Marine Scene

Auckland, New Zealand

In conjunction with the start of the Louis Vuiton Cup on October 1, 2002, post plans to have a catalog show.

Contact: Lisa Struneski

Tel: 649 309 9812

E-mail: Lisa.Struneski@mail.doc.gov

NORWAY

January 9 – 12, 2003

Reiseliv 2003

Oslo, Norway

The annual Reiseliv is Norway's only national travel and tourism show. The show is one of the premier travel shows in northern Europe.

Contact: James Koloditch

Tel: 47 21 30 87 60

E-mail: James.Koloditch@mail.doc.gov

PORTUGAL

January 22 – 26, 2003

BTL – Bolsa de Turismo de Lisboa

Contact: Ana Vila

Tel: 351 21 770 2532

E-mail: Ana.Vila@mail.doc.gov

SWITZERLAND

October 29 – 31, 2002

TTW 2002 - Travel Trade**Workshop**

Bern, Switzerland

TTW is the main trade event covering Switzerland's \$9 billion (outbound) travel market. Some 1,000 exhibitors from over 100 countries attend.

Contact: Werner Wiedmer

Tel: 41 31 357 7342

E-mail:

Werner.Wiedmer@mail.doc.gov

UKRAINE

October 9 – 12, 2002

Transportation & Logistics and Ukraine 2002

Tourism Salon

Kiev, Ukraine

National Exhibition Center, Kiev

Contact: Yuriy Prikhodko

Tel: 380 44 490 0424

E-mail:

Yuriy.Prikhodko@mail.doc.gov

UNITED KINGDOM

November 10 – 15, 2002

World Travel Market

Earl's Court Convention Center

London, United Kingdom

World Travel Market is one of the key trade shows in Europe for the travel and tourism industry.

Contact: Ingeborg Doblinger

Tel: 43 1 31339 2120

E-mail:

Ingeborg.Doblinger@mail.doc.gov