

# coach tourism PROFESSIONAL

*RDA Workshop & Cologne*

# edition

*edition help & Welcome* 



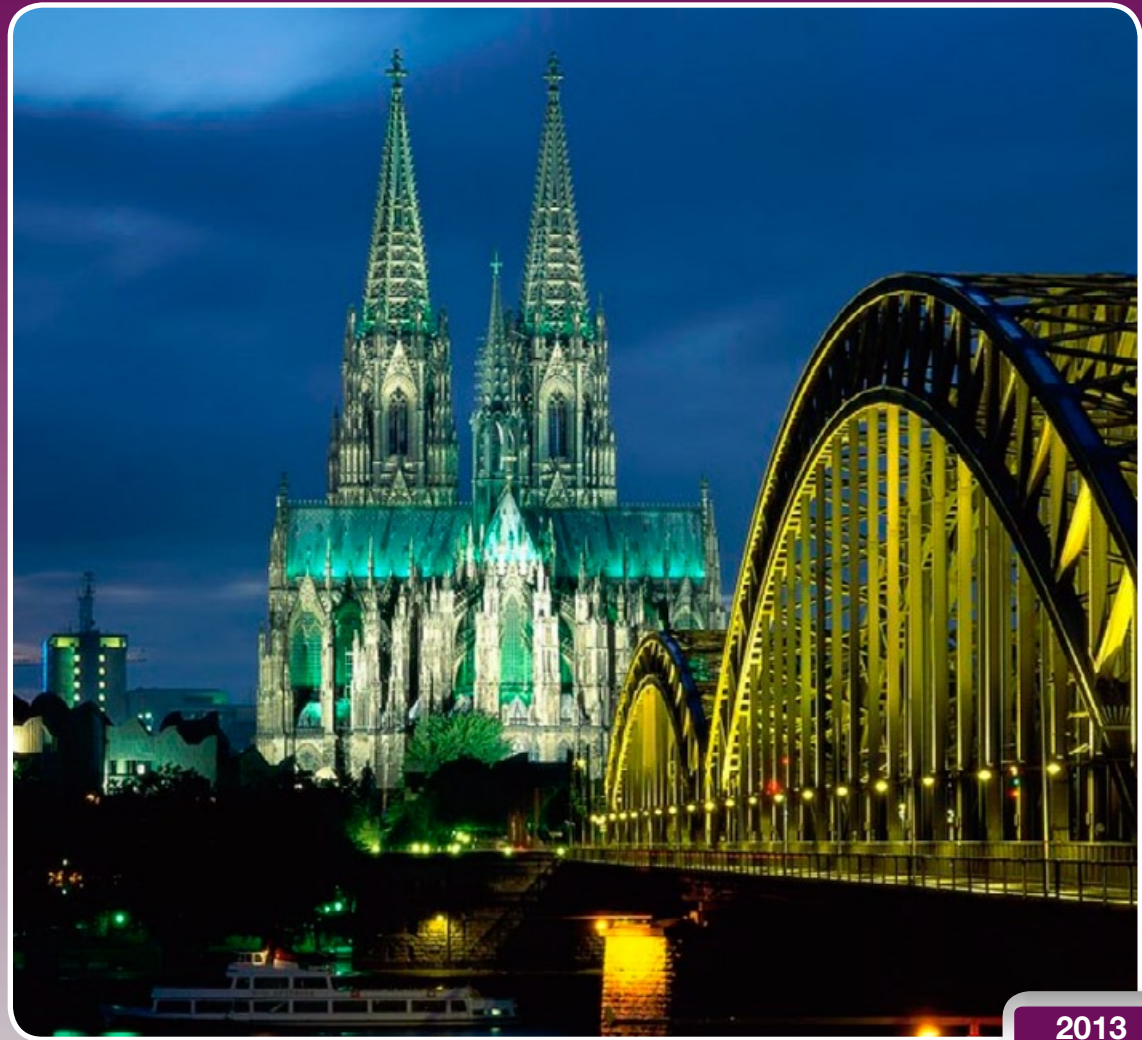
**RDA WORKSHOP**



**ON TOUR  
IN COLOGNE**



**GERMAN  
COACH  
MARKET**



2013

# coach tourism PROFESSIONAL

## RDA Workshop & Cologne *edition*

### How to find your way around

WE have worked hard to make the *edition* easy to find your way around and a pleasure to use. It is designed to be viewed in landscape format and has been produced as a clever pdf format which fits well on an iPad and other tablets, and of course, on a laptop or desktop screen.

### A few simple pointers ...



Click the front page icons to go to each section.



Click the Front Page link to return to the cover



Click the arrow next to go to the next page



To navigate between section click top bar links.

To jump to sub section click sub head in drop down menu.

WELCOME to a special *edition* highlighting this year's RDA Workshop in Cologne.

The RDA Workshop is the largest international show targeted at the coach and groups market and provides a unique forum for professionals to come together to learn about the latest trends and developments.

Our coverage of this year's show includes some of the highlights within the show's 'Cultural' theme, with evidence of a great variety of international interpretations.

The show's global reach also includes a small group of UK exhibitors, working under the Visit Kent group stand, but there is plenty of room for more UK desitnations and attractions to take part.

And as well as covering the show itself, we have also included a special *On Tour in Cologne* section. We have gathered together information on some of the top attractions in this amazing city, as well as some of the lesser-known, but equally-deserving which are well worth a stop-off for your coach groups.

A brief look at the coach market in the German-speaking markets is also included to complete the picture.

We hope you enjoy our German special - we look forward to seeing you at next year's show!

- Introduction
- Heidelberg
- Romantic Road
- Alpine Christmas
- Slovenia
- E-Biking
- Wholesalers
- UK Exhibitors



# A masterclass in European tour opportunities

Steve Rooney reports from this year's RDA Workshop in Cologne.

**T**HIS year's RDA Workshop, which took place last week in Cologne, boasted 1,300 exhibitors dedicated to coach tourism. Once again, it proved to be an extraordinary resource for anyone who is serious about developing new ideas and strengthening business relationships with suppliers and destinations across Europe. It may be called a Workshop, but it is really a trade show on the scale of a World Travel Market, but entirely dedicated to coach tourism.

This year's theme was culture, with strong representation from across the German-speaking countries, as well as the rest of Europe - north, south, east and west. The UK exhibitors are a small, but growing band, working together on a stand under the Visit Kent



*Visiting RDA dignitaries, president Richard Eberhardt (left) and chief executive Dieter Gauf (second right) on the Kent stand at the show.*

umbrella, albeit that their geographic reach now stretches to the capital and beyond.

The richness and diversity of cultures across the continent was amply demonstrated at the RDA show with a myriad of displays concerning heritage, literary festivals, romantic castles in the mountains, and of course a good deal of dressing-up in regional costumes. At UK shows, the costumes often seem a little over the top and more about showing off, while in Cologne it looks perfectly natural and allows people to demonstrate pride in their own locality and product.

And pride is something that one finds in ample measure at RDA with the large number of independent, and mainly family-run hotels and restaurants. One seasoned UK-based German specialist commented that these family-run establishments really go out of their way to welcome groups offering them a rich experience of local food, culture and entertainment.

Many UK coach operators will be familiar with the popular destinations in the region, but a wander through the aisles of the RDA's

two floors will demonstrate an extraordinary variety of hidden treasures. The key to this region is the structure of the groups market. In Germany there is a long tradition of people belonging to one or two local clubs and societies. Each of these clubs has one or two coach trips a year, with the result being a big market for coach operators putting short breaks and tours together with themes suitable for each specific group. You can see the evidence for this in the city of Cologne itself with lots of mixed age groups, and somewhat below the average age that one usually sees with UK coach groups.

## HEIDELBERG

IN BRITAIN of course, the royal family is a major element in the cultural tapestry and at the RDA last week, there was considerable interest in the arrival of the latest British royal. But what do you do if you don't have your own royal family? You borrow someone else's of course. The city of Heidelberg has no shortage

of assets when it comes to attracting tourists, but this year it is celebrating royalty in a big way with a festival to mark the 400th anniversary of the marriage of Prince Frederick V to Elizabeth Stuart, daughter of our own James I (James VI of Scotland). Elizabeth was for a brief time queen of Bohemia, known as the 'Winter Queen' as their reign only lasted a season, ending in a battle that signalled the start of the Thirty Years' War. The city is proud to present the patronage of Queen Elizabeth II for the festivities which commemorate the anniversary of the couple's wedding in London and subsequent instalment at Heidelberg Castle. The original arrival of Frederick and his Stuart bride was marked with the city's first ever fireworks display, an event which will be re-enacted in the celebrations this August.

## ROMANTIC ROAD

MEANWHILE THE Romantic Road (Romantische Strasse) is a well-trodden route that packs in a great variety of cultural delights



*The Romantic Road is a 400km tourist route from Würzburg to Füssen.*

along the 400km route from Würzburg to Füssen. Coaches have always been a part of the route, which was established to capture the imagination of American tourists and military personnel who were in Germany in the

post-war period. Today the road signs along the route can even be seen in Japanese, demonstrating its international notoriety. And in a recent poll of 15,000 international tourists to rate the top 100 sights in Germany, the royal

castle, Schloss Neuschwanstein, which sits at the foot of the Ammer Mountains, was rated number one, with two other highlights from the Romantic Road in the top 20 - Rothenburg ob der Tauber and the Prince Bishop's Residence in Würzburg.

Groups can even enjoy a nostalgic trip along the route in a classic coach with tours offered in well-preserved vintage coaches including a 1958 Neoplan NH 6/7, a 1963 Mercedes/Vetter 0 321, a 1979 Magirus Deutz SH 110 and a 1974 Setra S 80.

## ALPINE CHRISTMAS

THE CHRISTMAS and Advent season is always a big seller in the Alpine regions and a joint initiative promotion among four destinations offers linked celebrations across three national boundaries - Berchtesgaden and Grossarl in Germany, Vipiteno in Italy's South Tyrol, and Wolfgangsee in Austria. Groups can combine days in each of the towns which provide variations on the alpine theme, each with





*Alpen-Advent is an initiative linking four Alpine towns across three national boundaries.*

their own regional flavour in terms of crafts, food and gifts.

Another Austrian specialist in the groups market is Hirschen Hotels in Imst, 60km

from Innsbruck, owned by the Staggl family and boasting 220 beds in 110 rooms with a 320-seat restaurant, sauna, steam room and sun terraces. Owner Hannes Staggl is a member of the RDA board and a former MP for the Tirolean parliament. He specialises in groups with UK clients including Lancashire tour operator Alpine Overland.

Staggl can provide a complete itinerary including excursions, walks and activities, music and entertainment. Some group packages are available inclusive of all meals and drinks. There are even winter trips available for non-skiers with a range of activities for those unable to glide down the slopes, including curling, walking and a romantic sleigh ride.

## SLOVENIA

FURTHER EAST are the dramatic natural landscapes of Slovenia and tour operator Allegro is aiming to build links with UK coach operators to develop tours in the Triglav national park area near Bled. The park extends

to 85,000 acres in the Julian Alps and is named after the country's symbolic Mount Triglav which rises to nearly 3,000m in the centre of the area. Allegro offers a range of partner hotels from the Alps to Dalmatia, and covers the Slovenian wine regions of Vipava Kras as well as the capital Ljubljana.



## E-BIKING

IN ADDITION to promoting the cultural heritage and natural assets that Europe has to offer, the RDA Workshop is also the place to find some of the latest thinking in group tours. E-biking is a case in point. Bicycles that are fitted with a small electric motor can be a great bonus for groups who want to get out and about, but can't always manage those annoying hills that keep cropping up.

One tour operator who is aiming to make the most of this new theme is Italweg's Riccardo Busso. He is working with a Swiss coach operator and an e-bike supplier to provide a complete package that he intends to make available for the 2014 season. Busso stresses that you need to provide a thorough service however, which is why he is tying up with a manufacturer who will ensure that the groups have support on the road in the form of a generator to re-charge the bikes and a mechanic to carry out simple repairs. The groups will even be able to make an offer to purchase at



*Regional costumes were much in evidence at RDA Workshop.*

the end of the trip if they fancy taking their e-bikes home.

Busso's stand at this year's show was itself a novel partnership with three tour wholesalers coming together in a joint stand. Italian specialist Italweg, came together with France's La Cordee, and Robinsons who promote Scandinavian markets. Busso acknowledged that such partnerships are a necessity in the current economic climate, but it also offered advantages in that the three groups do not compete against



each other and could direct clients to each other without any commercial issues.

## WHOLESALEERS

WHOLESALEERS ARE always a major element in the mix of exhibitors at RDA with their strong grip on the market. One of the developments which has been noticeable over recent years has been the growing presence of some UK destinations within their brochures,







*Quaintly referred to as 'oldtimers' in German, a display of well-preserved coaches in one of the two halls.*

which are in themselves sumptuous, hardback publications. The recent winners from the UK standpoint correlate closely with those from the Kent area who have been regular attendees at the show for a number of years. There is a clear lesson for other destinations and attractions here; make a genuine commitment to the German-speaking market by exhibiting at RDA Workshop and the coaches will follow you home.

Service-Reisen is one of the largest wholesalers and its UK team has seen a strong growth in tours to the UK, up threefold in the past 10

years, according to a spokesperson. There is however quite a narrow focus for German groups coming to the UK currently, with Kent having joined London, Cornwall and Scotland on the major itineraries, but there is undoubtedly potential

to promote other regions of the UK as well.

## UK EXHIBITORS

THE KENT stand this year included regular exhibitors from Canterbury Cathedral, Euro-tunnel, English Heritage, Leaf Hotels, P&O Ferries, Rochester, University of Kent and Visit Kent. In addition, joining the group stand this year was theatre and event marketing specialist Made, although the company is no novice at RDA, having exhibited in a number of guises at previous shows. UK-based wholesaler Alba-



*UK coach operator Shonaig Macpherson meets Italweg's Riccardo Busso on the joint wholesaler stand, while Robinson's chef cooks up some Scandinavian delicacies.*

tross is another regular at RDA Workshop with its own stand alongside Visit Kent.

But whilst there is a lot of work to do to increase the UK presence at RDA, it doesn't mean that we don't lead the way in some respects. Indeed a counterpart who edits one of the leading German coach trade magazines acknowledges that when he is asked to

name the best example of how towns and cities should cater for coaches, he doesn't give them a German municipality. Instead he singles out Rochester, where the coach welcome has been led for many years by the indefatigable Mary Sewell, who it turns out is also the person who led the very first Kentish presence at RDA many shows ago.

To find out how RDA Workshop could help your tour business, you simply need to be there. Put next year's dates in your diary now, 29-31 July 2014.

[www.rdaworkshop.de/en](http://www.rdaworkshop.de/en)

[www.allegrotours.si](http://www.allegrotours.si)

[www.alpen-advent.com](http://www.alpen-advent.com)

[www.hirschen-imst.com](http://www.hirschen-imst.com)

[www.italweg.de](http://www.italweg.de)

[www.romanticroad.de](http://www.romanticroad.de)

[www.thewedding2013.de](http://www.thewedding2013.de)



*Briefcases mean business; clients on the stand of one of the two giant wholesalers, Behringer.*

- Introduction
- Cathedral & Old Town
- Museums
- Shopping
- The Rhine
- Coach Parking

*Cologne panorama with cathedral and Groß St Martin church.*



*Photo: Cologne Tourist Board/Udo Haake.*



# Panorama on the Rhine

Steve Rooney reports on the many attractions that the city of Cologne has to offer.

**T**HE city of Cologne offers a rich mix of heritage, culture and hedonism that makes it a magnet for more than 100 million visitors a year. There are no shortage of exciting options for groups to make the most of a short break here.

Many cities boast about their iconic 'landmark' buildings. But Cologne doesn't have to make such a boast. Wherever you are in this city that straddles the Rhine, the cathedral is ever present. The two towers of the Dom reign over the city, dominating its skyline and inner core.



*The Hohenzollern bridge carries more than 1,200 trains a day.*

## Cathedral & Old Town

THE 'MODERN' gothic building was started in 1248 and building works continued for nearly 300 hundred years before coming to a stop. Then it was another 300 years before works were restarted. Friedrich Wilhelm IV laid the foundation stone in 1842 and a 38-year programme saw it completed, working to an original masterplan developed in the middle ages.

Today the landmark continues to woo visitors. The site was named top German attraction in this year's TripAdvisor awards with more than 2,000 international reviews and more than 1,500 photos uploaded to the website.

"The top ranking and the many authentic travel reports from the largest travel community in the world underline once more that the Cologne Cathedral internationally has an outstanding USP," says Cologne Tourism chief executive Josef Sommer.

Inside, the cathedral houses many treasures including the shrine containing the remains of



*The Old Town on the banks of the Rhine.*

the Three Magi, Caspar, Melchior and Nabor, brought back to Cologne by archbishop Rainald von Dassel in 1164.

Close to the cathedral are a myriad of other attractions including the Old Town (Altstadt),

most of which was rebuilt after the bombing of the Second World War, and today offers attractive pubs and restaurants alongside the Rhine. It also features one of the most prominent of the city's famous Romanesque churches, the

former abbey Groß St Martin with its tower and clover leaf chancel that have dominated the area since the middle ages. There are also many small craft shops in the Old Town, including the Nutcracker House which has a collection of eponymous nutcrackers

as well as cuckoo clocks, Christmas pyramids and wooden collectibles.

There are of course plenty of opportunities here to sample the local beer, Kölsch, in one of the bars or brew-houses, including Peters Brauhaus which offers plenty of room for groups with a full menu of authentic local dishes. Kölsch is served in small glasses, at least to those used to a British measure, of just 200ml which are replaced by the waiter as soon as they are empty. The only way to stop this never-ending flow of beer is to place a beer mat on top of your glass to show you've had enough.

Now some parents might berate their own youngsters for ending up in the gutter after



*Inside the cathedral.*



*Peters Brauhaus, one of many bars serving Kölsch and local menus.*

a few drinks, but here in Cologne you can enter a sewer instead. And not just any old sewer, an authentic Roman one that has been excavated as part of the extensive archaeological works underway in the centre of the city. A 150m section of the sewer is open to visitors as is the remains of the Praetorium, the ruins of the Roman governor's palace.

A major project is in progress underneath the Town Hall Square



*The Roman sewer section that is open to visitors.*



*The archaeological works under the Town Hall area include the Roman governor's palace, the Praetorium.*

(Rathausplatz) to create an archaeological zone with around 7,500 sq m of exhibition space including a Jewish Museum which will display a medieval synagogue and ritual bath (Mikveh).

## Museums

ABOVE GROUND there are enough museums already to keep visitors busy for days on end. Some of the highlights include the

Museum Ludwig which houses some fine examples of modern art including many Picassos and modern pop art. The Ludwig is located above the Romano-Germanic Museum, which is itself on the site where the world-famous Dionysus mosaic was found. It features items from the art, culture and everyday life of Roman and early medieval Cologne.

The waters of Cologne are of course famous as well. A visit to the Farina

Haus Fragrance Museum will give you an insight into the origins of 'Eau de Cologne', and groups of up to 25 visiting the 4711 building on Glockengasse can enjoy a practical session involving creating their very own cologne with guidance from the store's expert perfumiers. A fountain which runs with 'Echt Kölnische Wasser' flows right inside the door of the Glockengasse 4711 building,

and a gallery exhibition area tells the story of the world-famous brand. A huge tapestry dominates one wall depicting the origins of the brand name. In 1796, a French corporal carried out orders to number all of the houses in Cologne, and duly inscribed '4711' on the door of what is now the home of Eau de Cologne.

For those wanting a lighter cultural experience, there is the Chocolate Museum (Schokoladenmuseum), housed in a striking building



*Picasso's 'Woman with a pram' in the Museum Ludwig.*



*The wall tapestry depicts the origin of the '4711' brand name.*



*Cologne's famous Chocolate museum.*

on the banks of the Rhine. Visitors can take a journey through 4,000 years of chocolate-making and watch the museum's master chocolatiers at work, as well as have a nibble at the legendary chocolate fountain which is filled with 200kg of Lindt delights. And just along the river is the German Sports & Olympia Museum

which offers static exhibitions on the origins of today's professional events as well as the opportunity to get involved with penalty shoot-outs, racing a bike in a wind tunnel, boxing, BMX bikes and skateboarding. On the roof of the building is Cologne's highest playing field which offers a stunning view of the river and the cathedral if you are not ball-watching.



*Bicycle rickshaws are one of the many ways of getting around in the city.*

## Shopping

SHOPPING IS another of the city's attractions with Hohe Straße laying claim to being the oldest pedestrianised area in Germany, having been the city's main street for more than 2,000 years. Today, along with Schildergasse, it houses many large department stores and leading brands with plenty of boutique stores to be found in the surrounding streets.





During Advent the city goes completely crazy with Christmas markets, with no less than seven located in the central area, welcoming visitors from around the world. This year the markets run from 25 November until 23 December. In front of the cathedral, there is a major market which features more than 100 festive performances, while in the Old Town, the Home of the Elves market aims to captivate visitors with traditional craft stalls, pavilions and hidden figurines. The Market of Angels takes place at Neumarkt, near the main shopping streets, while just 10 minutes away is the Fairytale Market at Rudolfplatz. The Chocolate Museum gets in on the act with its own Cologne Harbour Christmas Market, and there is also a gay and lesbian market, Christmas Avenue, next to Schaafenstraße.

## The Rhine

IF SHOPPING is not for you, then the river can offer some respite. Three tour companies offer short trips from a one-hour city panorama to



*Looking across to the right bank and the 103m Triangle Tower.*



*The 'crane buildings' in the old harbour area.*

a full-day excursion down river to Bonn and beyond to the Rhineland's 'Seven Mountains'.

The harbour quarter (Rheinauhafen) has seen extensive redevelopment in recent decades including the three renowned 'crane buildings' which evoke the former industrial past of the working area, but today are home to stylish apartments as well as offices for leading technology and media businesses.

The cathedral, Old Town and shopping areas are all on the left bank of the Rhine, but

the modern city stretches across on the right bank too. It accounts for more than 40 per cent of the city's total footprint, although it is still pejoratively referred to as the 'wrong' bank (Schäl Sick) by locals. This is where the Messe is located that hosts the annual RDA Workshop, as well as the Rhine Park and many modern buildings including the 103m Kölntriangle/LVR tower, from the top of which you can get the best view of the cathedral and a complete panoramic view of Cologne. Another



opportunity for a bird's-eye view is afforded by the cable car which crosses high over the river from the zoo on the left bank to the Rhine Park. It first opened in 1957, and runs daily from April to October carrying up to 2,000 people an hour along its 935m route.

Transport is a major reason for Cologne's historic status as a trading city. The river brought traders from far and wide and later the railways became dominant with the central station (Hauptbahnhof) being a major transport hub for local, regional and international services. Just a few hundred metres away is another of Cologne's iconic railway stations, Köln/Deutz Messe, linked by the Hohenzollern bridge (Hohenzollernbrücke) across which more than 1,200 trains pass every day. A pedestrian footway runs alongside the bridge linking the cathedral area with the right bank and here you can see evidence of the thousands of padlocks which have been fixed to the bridge by lovers of all types and ages. The number of locks on the bridge reached such proportions that rail operator Deutsche Bahn sent its engi-

neers to inspect the loadings on the structure. At one stage there was a threat to remove all the locks, but they remain in place.

## Coach Parking

FOR COACH groups arriving in Cologne, the city's tourist board offers a range of guided tours of the city, themed to suit the needs of the party. Coach parking is available at the Buspark at Koln Riehl, which is signposted from the city centre drop-offs available on Komodienstraße, close to the cathedral. There is also



*Coach parking is available on the banks of the river near the Zoo Bridge, in addition to the main coach park.*

some coach parking available on the banks of the Rhine under the Zoo Bridge (ZooBrücke).

One of the latest initiatives by Cologne Tourist Board is a stunning online panoramic view of the cityscape at [supergigapixel.com](http://supergigapixel.com). It has developed a unique online tool which comprises 2,280 individual images taken by a graduate engineer, Michael Aichberger, last August, that have been slotted into a single panorama, with the ability to zoom into sections of the image with incredible detail. It is a very apt demonstration of how Cologne has continued to develop with modern media technology companies based in the city helping to promote the myriad of cultural and heritage delights that it has to offer.

[www.colognetourism.com](http://www.colognetourism.com)

[www.glockengasse.de](http://www.glockengasse.de)

[www.museenkoeln.de](http://www.museenkoeln.de)

[www.museum-ludwig.de](http://www.museum-ludwig.de)

[www.schokoladenmuseum.de](http://www.schokoladenmuseum.de)

[www.sportmuseum.de](http://www.sportmuseum.de)

[www.supergigapixel.com/koelntourismus](http://www.supergigapixel.com/koelntourismus)

# Understanding the German coach market

Assessing the trends and developments in coach tourism in German-speaking markets.

**T**HE RDA-Workshop's range and potential for innovative international coach holiday travel is probably greater than ever before. There is no other exhibition where UK coach travel companies, tourism regions and coach holiday suppliers can meet so many potential coach tourism partners under one roof (more than 55,000 sq m). The 1,300 exhibitors range from international package tour wholesalers, coach holiday companies, accommodation providers, sea carriers, theme parks, destination marketing organisations, visitor attractions and coach manufacturers to individual and family-run restaurants and hotels.

“The RDA-Workshop offers tremendous business potential for UK companies” says Karin Kohls, managing director, RDA-Workshop. “The RDA-Workshop is an absolute must for all companies interested in increasing and expanding their coach and group holidays business – whether this be inbound or outbound”.

2012 was another good year for tourism from Germany with travel expenditure reaching record highs. Spending on holiday trips (five days and longer) increased by 5



per cent compared to 2011 – to more than €63 billion. Holiday expenditure increased to a new record level of €914 per person and trip. In addition, expenditure for short holiday trips (two to four days) was up to more than €20 billion. Coach holidays increased in

value to €716 per holiday taken, an increase of 9.6 per cent compared to 2011.

The high volume of almost 70 million German holiday trips of over 5 days' duration has remained stable over the past year.

The coach holidays market share of these also remained stable at 8 per cent (5.5 million trips – accounting for 9 per cent of domestic holiday trips and 7 per cent of trips taken abroad). Short holiday trips (two to four days) totalled almost 80 million in 2012, a slight increase of 1.4 million trips compared to 2011. This is also good news for the UK coach travel sector, given the high levels of short and city trips carried out by coach from Germany. In addition to this, some 1.25 million flight/coach trips were also taken abroad.

The outlook for 2013 is positive. At the beginning of the year, 55 per cent of the German population have concrete travel plans, and only 12 per cent are certain that they will not go on holiday in 2013. Most are planning with the same holiday budget as in the previous year.

The theme of this year's RDA-Workshop Special Offers Campaign is 'Experience culture!' – an excellent theme for UK visitors in particular given Britain's great strengths and high consumer demand in this field. Cultural trips and tours have long been a staple of coach holiday and group travel programmes and account for a significant and increasing volume of bookings.

Culture enables coach travel companies to approach not only traditional study tour fans, but also organisations, clubs and associations with specific and targeted cultural offers.

Cultural themes provides opportunities to approach customers and destinations from novel and refreshing perspectives. Not only are operas, theatre performances, grand musicals and cultural events a major theme, but also regional festivals, local culinary traditions, archaeology, industrial heritage and modern architecture.

Germany itself is very popular as a cultural destination for UK coach travellers. In a sur-

vey conducted by the GNTB and IPK International, places of historical interest were a key travel motivation for UK visitors. Around half of visitors from the UK associate Germany with having a wealth of history and marvelous historical attractions. For many potential travellers, Germany's 37 UNESCO World Heritage sites also provide a motivation for cultural trips.

The RDA – International Coach Tourism, based in Cologne, Germany, is Europe's largest umbrella organisation for the coach tourism industry. It currently boasts a membership of 3,000 companies from 40 countries and provides a forum for business-to-business, market research, legal and fiscal advisory services, further training and political lobbying at both national and European Union levels.

The RDA is a founding member of the European Alliance for Coach Tourism, which also includes UK-based Confederation of Passenger Transport and the Coach Tourism Council.

[www.rda-workshop.de](http://www.rda-workshop.de)