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“Ward has Georgia on his Mind”



Andrew Ward, Cuscowilla CEO just returned from promoting Georgia Tourism at London’s annual World Travel Market (WTM), held at the Excel Exhibition Center in the UK. Ward, who serves on the Executive Board of the GA Tourism Development Alliance, as well as on the GA Tourism Foundation Advisory Council worked alongside the GA Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) who’s governmental department is

responsible for promoting Tourism statewide, nationally and internationally. Ward is seen pictured on the booth where he spent 3 days talking to tour operators, travel agents, and press writers as well as many private and public sector visitors interested to learn more about Georgia. "It's odd really, as so many people I talked to had no comprehension of our State's diversity" explained Ward. "When I proudly explained that we have the Ocean, Mountains, Lakes and Rivers all within 4 hours drive of Atlanta along with near perfect year round weather and the friendliest people on earth I was asked so many times [so why don't you live there]". Ward's English accent clearly confused the many thousands of attendees at WTM, as he has already been a resident of Georgia for the last 10 years. "Over 120 Countries were represented at the annual show, with many of those like America featuring a variety of destinations like GA, TX, FL, TN, NY etc, which contributed to over 400 exhibitors, many of which had displays as big as a house!"

Ward continued. "The regions of Africa, Middle East, Asia Pacific, Europe, UK and Ireland, The Americas and Caribbean were all extremely well represented so it is essential that we are there to take part in this global travel market ~ of course I had my fair share of promoting [heavily] GA's Lake Country, Putnam County and Cuscowilla in particular and received strong interest in business for both 2009 and 2010 at our own resort". Ward goes on to explain "These are tough times in the travel and tourism industry globally; this is not just a US problem but a worldwide one ~ so its more important than ever for GA to get our [more than] fair share of the travel that is taking place; if we can then get those travelers into our own region that's a win-win for all businesses around here and ultimately was the main purpose of my involvement with the GDEcD on this trip".

Travel and trade seminars and presentations also took place throughout the week at WTM, and Ward was able to attend several of those which highlighted many of the challenges ahead for World Tourism. "There has been an absolute global slow down and all the indications show [for the travel and tourism industry] that this will continue through to June of 2010. That's why we all need to be better today at what we offer and the value we give to travelers more so than at any other time I can recall in my career" Ward reflected; and after his resort tourism career has spanned 5 different Countries over the last 25 years it clearly personifies the current situation he sees us all facing.

“I remind my team here at Cuscowilla on a regular basis that our guests may not remember in great detail when they get home what we did for them, what they saw, or how well they played on our golf course while they were here – but they will remember *how we made them feel* and this is so important in order to retain repeat customers”. Ward concluded by explaining “Georgia is a fantastic state to visit; and tourism is the second largest industry we have to offer. When *it* slows down it affects jobs, sales and hotel motel tax income as well as having a roll over effect into many other industries too. It is imperative that we reach out in Georgia’s Lake Country to appeal to GA travelers for their tourism needs and then showcase our amazing region when they do visit – after spending a week in the UK and witnessing the European slowdown coupled with the exchange rate struggle on the dollar they may well be our best customers in 2009!”

Scanned picture below shows group shot (top right) of part of the GA tourism team who were in London at WTM as they were featured in the “Travel Weekly” magazine during the show ~ Ward is proudly holding the GA Golf Guide which currently features Cuscowilla on the front cover.

(For more WTM information go to www.travelweekly.co.uk/wtm2008).

