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PRESS RELEASE

Reiseliv 2010 expands despite tough times

A total of 33 328 people visited this year's Norway International Meeting and Travel Fair (Reiseliv), reports project manager Torill Engelberg at Norway Trade Fairs. That is up 10 per cent from 2009.

"We've achieved this expansion after the worst-ever year for tourism worldwide, when virtually everyone has experienced a downturn," she notes.

"And a survey by Argus Analyse found that 85.5 per cent of the general public who came were in buying mode. That's a positive and important message both for us and for the exhibitors."

This performance confirms that the annual Reiseliv event at Lillestrøm outside Oslo has several important dimensions, a gratified Ms Engelberg points out.

"We're Norway's national arena and meeting place for our own tourism and visitor industry, and the international showcase for other nations in Norway.

"At the same time, we provide a massive platform for relationship-building and meetings – and we're not least an extremely effective arena for direct sales.

"We had several innovations and collaborative constellations this year, including the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMIAI)/Møtebørsen and a separate photography exhibition.

"And we added yet another dimension in the form of knowledge and expertise building, where we'll be making a strong commitment in the future."

The Argus Analyse survey of those who visited Reiseliv on the Saturday and Sunday, when it was open to the general public, found that respondents are literally on the move.

According to the poll, no less than 85.5 per cent either bought a trip at the show or were planning to do so within the next three months.

The past year has been a tough one for Norway's tourism and visitor industry, as in the rest of the world, with sharp budget cuts across the board.

So the travel trade is also pleased that the latest show both confirmed and reinforced Reiseliv's presence and position as the national Norwegian arena for this industry at home and abroad.

Per-Arne Tuftin, responsible for tourism at Innovation Norway, emphasises that the show is an important place to be for the country's travel trade.

"The attendance figures show that people come to the exhibition to learn about exciting offers and experiences," he says.

Oslo had committed substantial resources to this year's exhibition, and promoted itself both with the Eurovision Song Contest final and the world skiing championships.

The city's tourism head, Tor Sannerud at VisitOslo, is also very satisfied with the event and says that Reiseliv is an important meeting place for the Oslo region.

"It's very important for us to be present both to meet industry players and to communicate to local resident and all the other visitors what's happening here in the time to come – not least our big events."

Gjøvik Land Toten – representing an area of east-central Norway – was acclaimed the best national stand at the show, and Ms Engelberg got a big kick out of that.

“The great thing about Reiseliv is that we reflect the whole Norwegian tourism and visitor industry in addition to the 162 nations represented this year.

“This award demonstrated that destinations and local authorities outside the big cities are also aggressive and present in the market, and are reaping the rewards.”

Marketing manager Arne-Jorgen Skurdal in Gjøvik Land Toten says they attracted much positive attention on the open days, and being named the best Norwegian destination was a further boost.

Restplass.no, Norway’s premier internet travel agency, aroused a lot of interest through its decision to take part. But chief executive Jason Eckhoff is convinced that a physical presence in the market also plays an important role for web companies.

“We exhibited at Reiseliv because we were also keen to meet our customers in the real world, and we don’t regret that decision.

“We’re very pleased with turnout at the show. We experienced heavy visitor pressure both during the trade days on Thursday and Friday and in the two open days.

“The exhibition offers and activities we staged yielded good results, and will definitely encourage a repeat performance next year.”

The Trade Council of Iceland was at Reiseliv for the first time with an exciting tourist product, and is taking an aggressive market approach after the tough time the country has been through.

Berglind Steindórsdóttir, director of trade fairs, says the meeting with the Norwegian public was extremely positive.

“This is our first time at a travel trade show, and we had a very good response and an excellent result. We’ll be back next year to show what a great place Iceland is.”

Italy, a popular tourist destination for many Norwegians, was presented by the Italian Tourist Board with director Massimo Montarul in the lead.

“The open days were very good for us, with highly focused visitors who were really ready to learn what we had to offer,” he reports.

“There’s a growing interest in Italy among Norwegians, and we’re very satisfied with both the quality of the show and the level of visitors.”

Thailand has been acclaimed as one of the foreign winners in the Norwegian market, and marketing manager Veena Bohlin at the national tourism authority was no less pleased with Reiseliv 2010.

“Crazy and extremely good,” are among the terms she uses to describe the interest and response. “We’ll definitely be returning in strength next year,” she emphasises.

The USA is becoming increasingly popular with Norwegians as competition increases between the airlines. Widar Jensen, head of the Discover America umbrella organisation, was responsible for a big pavilion representing many different US regions and cities.

“Our exhibitors are pleased, and many have already told us they’ll be back next year,” he reports. “We had plenty of visitors, and think it’s great that Norwegian eyes have really been opened to the USA as a tourist destination.”

The Estonian Tourist Board won the prize for the best foreign stand, and marketing manager Kristiina Ojamaa is naturally pleased.

“We’re really satisfied, with lots of visitors on the open days as well as a great many meetings and good response during the trade show.”

The Eurovision Song Contest project organisation at the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK) had its own representation on the VisitOslo stand.

Event manager Stina Greåker feels this was a fine way to promote the final. “It was nice to be at Reiseliv and meet everyone who’s looking forward to the contest in May.

“We recruited Eurovision hosts during the two trade days, and ticket sales for the programmes will be starting soon. When Norway wins, we’ll be back at Reiseliv next year,” she adds with a smile.

One innovation at Reiseliv 2010 was the News Café concept, where activities were offered every day – travel and professional lectures, entertainment and quizzes.

The Spanish ambassador also appeared here on Thursday to perform the official opening together with Norwegian ski jump legend Bjørn Wirkola.

“Jumping after Wirkola” has become a synonym in Norway for following somebody who has done a really good job, and the ambassador sportingly demonstrated this with an action jump.

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See all the press releases from Reiseliv and the exhibitors at www.messe.no/reiseliv.