NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Showcases the Midwest to German-Speaking Markets with USA Destination Immersion

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CHICAGO, IL (Oct. 2, 2025) — Brand USA, the official destination marketing organization for the United States, in collaboration with Lufthansa, United Airlines, and Air Canada, led this year's Destination Immersion program for the DACH market to the Midwestern United States. In September, travel agents from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland explored the picturesque region of Michigan; the first stages of Route 66 in Illinois and Missouri, with a detour to Indiana; and the product range from Minnesota to Wisconsin on three tailored itineraries. The immersions culminated on September 29 with a closing event in Chicago, Illinois.

As one of Brand USA's core initiatives, the Destination Immersion program (often referred to as "FAM" in the travel trade) offers travel industry professionals the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the remarkable destinations and wide range of experiences across the United States. At the same time, Brand USA is underscoring the commitment to promote the United States as an international travel destination, the important economic significance of inbound tourism, and, consequently, its relevance for the labor market across the nation.

"For more than a decade, our Destination Immersions have brought travel partners together to experience the United States in a meaningful way," said Fred Dixon, President and CEO at Brand USA. "By combining networking, training, and intercultural exchange, the program fosters understanding, builds connections, and generates meaningful economic impact for regions across the country."

This year, 29 travel agents from Germany, Austria, and Switzerland attended the Destination Immersion program. To be selected, participants were required to hold Gold status in the USA Discovery Program and complete the "City Vibes - The Midwest" learning module.

The program took participants on three specially curated routes across six Midwest states: Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Indiana, and Missouri. Highlights included Milwaukee, the art- and design-minded birthplace of Harley-Davidson on the shores of Lake Michigan; nostalgic stops along the Mother Road Route 66 such as Ambler's Texaco Station, American diners, and drive-ins; and Detroit, a city that has reinvented itself, serving as the gateway to Michigan's coastline with its impressive sand dunes and the charming town of Traverse City.

The program concluded with a final event in Chicago, where participants networked, shared insights, and gained new perspectives on the U.S. Alongside these sessions, they explored the city's vibrant culture - from a river cruise along the Chicago River to panoramic views atop the Skydeck at the Willis Tower - experiencing Chicago's world-renowned architecture and ever-present rhythm of music.

Malcolm Smith, Senior Vice President, Global Markets & Chief Trade and Product Development Officer, emphasizes: "Our Destination Immersion program gives travel professionals the chance to connect with the very places they sell. Experiencing the U.S. from a local perspective not only deepens their expertise but also benefits the destinations through more meaningful, informed exchange. Germany, Austria, and Switzerland are important source markets, with travelers often returning to the U.S. and showing a strong appetite for exploring lesser-known regions. Airline connectivity plays a key role, and we thank Lufthansa, United Airlines, and Air Canada for supporting travel to the U.S. through direct or stopover flights to Detroit, Chicago, and Minneapolis."

"Travel advisors remain a trusted resource and play an essential role in driving international visitation to the United States," adds Jackie Ennis, Vice President, Global Trade Development, at Brand USA. "The Destination Immersion program underscores Brand USA's commitment to promoting authentic travel experiences while showcasing the U.S. as a welcoming destination for travelers from all around the world."

After years of continuous growth in visitor numbers, reaching a total of over two and a half million visitors in 2024, a comparatively lower number of visits is expected for 2025. Nevertheless, with almost 1.53 million entries from January to August, the level of arrivals remains in the upper segment. According to the National Travel and Tourism Office, the GSA market is ranked among the top 5 overseas markets. (The National Travel and Tourism Office).

The complete list of itineraries includes:

Great Lakes & City Vibes: Culture, Cuisine, and Coastlines

- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Bloomington, Minnesota
- La Crosse, Wisconsin
- Madison, Wisconsin
- Milwaukee, Wisconsin

From Detroit to Dunes: Cars, Culture, and Coastal Charm

- Detroit, Michigan
- Traverse City, Michigan
- Lake Michigan shoreline
- St. Joseph, Michigan

Spirit of the Midwest: From Route 66 to Rising Skylines

- Joliet, Illinois
- Dwight, Illinois
- Pontiac, Illinois
- Springfield, Illinois
- St. Louis, Missouri
- Indianapolis, Indiana

High-resolution accompanying images are available here.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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