



Gaylord Golf Mecca Goes International

By Paul Beachnau

July 2023 - It is hard to believe we have wrapped up the month of June and Alpenfest is knocking on our door. Whew...this month has been busy for the Gaylord Area Tourism Bureau. In addition to hosting our annual golf media familiarization tour with six communicators from around the United States and the Pure Michigan partner summit, I took a venture down to Saddlebrook, Florida to attend the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO) conference.

IAGTO is an association that puts golf tourism destinations and resorts (suppliers) in touch with golf tour operators (buyers) from around the world. International golf travel is at an all-time high and these tour operators are always looking for new and exciting destinations. They all have a significant base of high-income clients who take golf trips lasting 7 - 14 days, and in some cases, 21 days. In addition to great golf, they like to experience different travel experiences and numerous restaurants on their trip.

The conference provided me with a station to represent the Gaylord Golf Mecca, and through a computerized scheduling system, I could set up appointments with major golf tour suppliers and they could set up appointments with me. It was a "speed dating" format where we had exactly 20 minutes to explain our businesses and then I had the opportunity to sell our Gaylord Golf Mecca members to them. During my twenty appointments, I met with representatives from South Korea, China, Germany and

Canada. There were also many social events where we had the opportunity to continue our conversations. These were fun and quite a bit more relaxing.

Over the past ten years, our organization has been reaching out beyond the Midwest states and into parts of Texas, Georgia and Florida. With our lovely summer temperatures, forests and numerous lakes and rivers we have found that Gaylord is an oasis among these scorching hot warm weather states. We have experienced some very nice successes and find these guests stay longer and spend more money per visit.

Reaching out to International Tour operators is a very new endeavor and will take some time to grow. While it is sometimes hard to comprehend that our quaint Northern Michigan town with amazing golf courses is capable of hosting visitors from around the United States, we regularly hear from guests and media that our community and courses are as good as any they have been to or played. I tell our member properties that every year.

Of course, the most exciting aspect of attending the IAGTO conference was the announcement that the 2024 conference will be held right here in Northern Michigan at Boyne Resorts. In conjunction with other communities, we will have an amazing opportunity to host these golf delegates and see firsthand what we all already know, the Gaylord Golf Mecca is an amazing place capable of hosting guests from everywhere including those around the world.