

2021 will be a year of recovery

The late winter and early spring will be the point at which Coach Tourism Association (CTA) members will know how many of their valued customers are likely to be travelling with them in the near future, and what the holiday landscape looks like.



Naturally we all hope that it will be as near to normal as possible and there is no reason why that cannot be the case. Equally to recall a wonderful quote from ex United States Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld, there are 'known unknowns' and as I write this, I could easily make a list of those.

Equally, by the time you read this we will have a good idea about just how many coach tours will realistically be able to run in the spring, where they will be going, and what attractions and hotels they will be visiting at home or abroad.

And, if my experience as chair of the Coach Tourism Association is anything to go by, I cannot imagine a tougher, more resilient and more innovative group of tourism professionals than coach tour operators to make the most of those opportunities.

The CTA Coach Operator member has years of experience, product knowledge and commercial relationships enabling excursions and holidays to be planned throughout the country transporting all types of groups with expertise and at great value. You can find your nearest coach partner on the CTA website.

These are not senior executives in huge companies. They are, in the main, running SME-sized family businesses based very much on a regional customer base. The bad news is that they don't have vast reserves of corporate money to fall back on. The good news

is that their businesses are not over-burdened with unnecessary staff and can be flexible in the way they operate and how they run their businesses. I have always been amazed by just how many coach company MDs can also drive the vehicles they own.

Unlike some sectors, such as aviation, the coach tour industry is well placed to make the most of a resurgent 2021. Here are some 'known knowns':

- **Coach travel results in over 23 million tourism visits per year.**
- **These contribute no less than £14bn to the UK economy.**
- **They also support some 27,000 jobs throughout the country.**
- **Coach travel is the most eco-friendly way of transporting groups.**
- **Package coach tours provide valuable social interaction for elderly holidaymakers.**
- **The ratio of repeat business is one of the highest in the travel industry.**

However, it will be the final point in the list above that will prove to be the lifeline for CTA members. Their customers are not clients, a huge number of them are friends, groups who meet up once a year – or more – to enjoy a trip they would not have been able to make otherwise.

They will come back for more and bookings show that they are already doing so.

John Wales
Chair
Coach Tourism Association



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