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ABTOF

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A Message from the Chairman

It's nearly Christmas already and another year has flown by. Several highlights of 2011 stand out. The Conference in Saint-Malo, hosted in superb style by our partners in Brittany, was hugely enjoyable and a great success. The Wintersports Seminar and lunch was the best attended ever and produced hot debate! And recently, ABTOF's Big Lunch at Le Pont de la Tour, proved our ability to attract a guest list of high quality journalists for you to engage with.

Next year will be our 20th anniversary. So much has changed in our industry since those early days in 1992 - no internet, no low-cost airlines, no Channel tunnel, just profitable ferry companies and a proliferation of tour operators. Ahh, those were the days!

Elections took place in October. Leslie Hurst and Jane Dunham retired after four years service and I would like to thank them for their efforts. In their place we have gained well respected industry colleagues in Mike Ward from TUI Ski and Theresa Foley from DFDS Seaways.

In 2012 we will review and redefine our membership benefits to keep the organisation fresh, relevant and valuable to your business, the business of more travel to France. We'll celebrate 20 years by offering more superb events and I encourage you to take part fully and get the best from what ABTOF has to offer. Put the key dates in your diary, join in our celebrations and let's hope we see an upturn in 2012. It can't come soon enough!

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Robin

Contents

A Message from the Chairman
Membership update
Dates for your diary
Conference 22nd -25th April
Ski Press Trip
ABTOF and Bugatti
ABTOF buys a race horse
ABTOF and the Press
Educational to Savoie

Dates for your Diary

Press Lunches

We have made changes to the format making them shorter more focussed and cheaper at £139+vat.

Wednesday 25th January

[Family France](#)

Wednesday 22nd February

[Self-Drive France](#)

Tuesday 27th March

[Luxury & Lifestyle France](#)

Wednesday 18th April

[Short Break/Festival France](#)

Wednesday 23rd May

[Lakes and Rivers France](#)

Tuesday 19th June

[Sustainable France](#)

Training Courses

We will be looking at courses on Social Media, Negotiation Skills, Customer Service and Travel Law. Dates to follow.

Membership

The number of members currently stands at just under 200. The numbers are relatively static as we gain a few new members and lose a few that no longer have a need for the services or have been taken over by a larger organisation. The new Travel Organiser members are Pure Mountain, Savoie Holidays and Chalets 1066.

We are also delighted to announce that new members Moneycorp have agreed to become one of our main sponsors. They worked out quickly that they can help our members make savings in the Foreign Exchange domain. In only three months they have signed up five members and have already managed to save them on average in excess of £1,000 per company. They have offered an exclusive free health check to all ABTOF members worth a minimum of £250 and Marianne Gilmore will be only too happy to discuss your requirements further and to help you save money.

marianne.gilmore@moneycorp.com or +44 (0) 330 0107 401

News Update December 2011

Les Arcs 1950 Conference 22nd – 25th April 2012

We are delighted that there has already been a huge amount of interest in going to a ski destination for the first time, even from non-skiers. The 20th Anniversary is proving a draw for both members and former members.

Delegates will have the option to arrive on either Saturday 21st or Sunday 22nd April to get in some extra skiing or networking. There will be a day and a half of business and breakout sessions plus surgeries and sidetrips along with the usual welcome and gala Evenings, which will have a different twist this year.

Accommodation will be in the 4 Star Premium apartments in the Pierre & Vacances Resort Club of Le Village in Arc 1950. Self-drive options are available at no extra cost although many may choose to arrange their own flights or to travel by rail. Transfers may be available on nominated arrivals subject to sufficient numbers.

Prices are from £399 with no registration fee which is a reduction for all attendees on 2011. Non business delegates sharing will again be welcome for only £99. A brochure will be available in the next couple of weeks to book online however to secure your place all we need is a deposit of £100 + vat, which will be deducted off your final invoice.

Ski Press trip to the Maurienne Valley

We are currently in discussions with the relevant Tourist Offices and aiming to confirm dates in late March shortly. Accommodation will be kindly supplied by Lagrange with travel options being finalised. There are a number of costs that need to be covered but if you are interested in spending some quality time with key wintersports journalists please contact paddy@abtof.org.uk or call 07813 344810. Full details of the programme and attendees will be sent out as soon as we have them.

ABTOF goes Horse Racing in Summer 2012

We have invested all remaining funds into the race horse Bonne Anniversaire in order to boost the reserves! Her first outing will be next summer and we would like ABTOF members to come along (after all she only has three legs and needs all the support she can get). As you can tell we are only joking but as part of our 20th birthday celebrations we will be organising a networking lunch and afternoons racing within striking distance of London. Further details to follow in the new year.

ABTOF goes Motor Racing La Vie en Bleu with Bugatti May 26th and 27th 2012



As a complete departure from anything that we have tried before we will be setting up an ABTOF Member French Holiday Village at the home of the Bugatti Owners Club during their annual French Themed Weekend, La Vie en Bleu. The attendees will include not only families but affluent members of this famous club and other wealthy motorsport competitors/enthusiasts. To date 16 companies have expressed an interest in taking a stand at this prestigious motor racing event at the Prescott Hilleclimb circuit just outside Cheltenham. Expected numbers are about 8,000 visitors per day. Stand costs will be in the region of £150 + vat which includes two weekend passes (normally £25pp), a table, and a 3m square waterproof pop-up gazebo in either red, white or blue, complete with wheeled case, which is yours to keep. Additional tickets are £25 per head for the weekend or £15 per day. Why not come and join in the fun?

ABTOF and the Press

Recent lunches have shown that news from the ABTOF membership still lures the UK's top Travel Journalists and Editors. The last three events have brought over 100 journalists to hear our message. This combined with over 100 Travel Organisers indicates a thirst for information on France. Other Themed lunches will be shorter, more focussed and cheaper at £139+vat.

Wintersports Lunch/Seminar

This kicked off the Autumn programme with a series of excellent presentations relating to the UK Market and how to grow this sector. For the first time Jean-Marc Silva from France Montagnes joined us to give us an overview from France. There was the usual lively debate with Giles Hawke sharing his views on how Ski could pick up a few tips from the Cruise industry. This was well received and we will be looking at how to progress some of the ideas. The Three Valleys kindly sponsored the lunch which was attended by 85 people - our biggest attendance yet.

Rail Inclusive Holidays

New to the series of themed lunches. Although this is currently a niche market, organisers and journalists alike responded well and had the opportunity to promote this increasingly popular method of travel. Members Franche Comté sponsored the lunch and were delighted to introduce the new TGV Line from Paris to Besançon.

The BIG Lunch

As our flagship press event we strive to raise the bar and this year was no different.

The venue was *Le Pont de la Tour* - Blair thought it perfect place to entertain the Clintons, so we thought it ideal for the crème de la crème of the media and the travel industry. Due to high demand we took over the whole restaurant.

A press briefing was followed by an aperitif, a specially prepared lunch and the Travel Article of the Year Awards. This year saw more entries than ever which were judged by the Media's finest Travel Editors. Winners in each category (Eve Middleton – Magazine and Sharron Livingston – Online) were awarded a certificate and won travel with DFDS plus a holiday provided by ABTOF Members. Mary Novakovich was the overall winner writing for *The Independent*. Her award included an iPad2 and a break to Nantes. The following day Mary tweeted *'having a silly amount of fun with my new ipad, thanks to @ABTOF'*. Runners-up received certificates and free travel with DFDS. The winning articles are available to download from the news section of www.franceyesyoucan.com.

The Lunch was sponsored by *Le Voyage à Nantes* (their cultural festival for 2012) with Benjamin Bellet commenting *'Thank you very much for the big lunch yesterday. It was very professional and well organized'*

Feedback to date from members and journalists alike has been effusive including Twitter conversations going out to over 350,000 followers within a matter of hours.

ABTOF and Rail Europe Educational to Savoie Mont Blanc

In September the Savoie Mont Blanc Tourist Office hosted an educational for ABTOF Travel Organisers. Travel to the region by Eurostar and TGV was kindly provided by Rail Europe. Highlights included a light aircraft flight over the glaciers and peaks around Mont Blanc, mountain biking, accrobranche, hiking in the mountains and some fabulous meals. For photos please see www.facebook.com/abtof.

