

Good to know

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busworld

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A bright future ahead for tour guides!

Various seminars are held as part of the Busworld salon. During yesterday's Tour Guide Day, the lectures and discussions all revolved around 'the tour guide of the future, the future of the tour guide'.

BY JORIS VERBEURE

The day turned out to be a particularly successful event in more ways than one. For one thing, the organisers recorded an exceptionally big turn-out of very interested members

often promulgated by authorities who barely have any understanding of the sector, has not made life for tour guides any easier. He or she is expected to bring to bear a far greater level of ingenuity and is required to specialise more than ever before. All of which is the result of the fact that a good many European towns and cities have become coach-unfriendly, that the new regulations are 'driving the coach into a corner', etc. as just two prime examples. Increasingly, tour guides find themselves facing exceptional situations

ernment that acts to stifle, cripple and hamper our profession at every turn. We need an end to checks that can see a whole trip ruined. But there is also a positive development: now more than ever, the tour guide is needed on board the coach. Something in which his qualities and the partnership between the tour guide and the driver are pivotal. And finally: "Ten years after my book was published, in the final analysis little has changed".

MULTIMEDIA FOR TOUR GUIDES

At the seminar, Bob Beelen suggested that travellers have become more demanding in recent years. The demands they are making of tour guides are constantly rising. With the arrival of multimedia however, tour guides now find it much easier to act in response to these growing demands than they used to.

Here is an opportunity tour guides should seize upon, as multimedia ultimately also serve to benefit the quality of the trip, of the product, not to mention the fact that the sheer use of modern audio-video and communication technology stands to promote coach tourism as a whole. There are literally dozens of ways of offering coach travellers the added information they crave, which sets our sector of the holiday industry apart from all the others. We can download photos and video footage from the Internet, we can act in complement to topical events by connecting to the Internet during the trip. It is great fun to be able to quote the score of an ongoing high-profile football match for instance and it all adds to the pleasant atmosphere. Bob Beelen also advises tour guides to make sure they have a Plan B as part of their preparations, just in case unexpected situations crop up en route, such as roadworks. Multimedia, such as the use of GPS,



Luc Glorieux: "a coach is not a truck"

can be a great assist in cases like these.

For tour guides, there is more on the way. A whole world of new tools and resources is set to open itself up that places tour guiding in a very different frame of reference, making it all the more exciting on the way. We are moving towards a future involving electronic travel guides, new navigation systems, podcasting, etc.

TOERISME VLAANDEREN (FLANDERS TOURIST BOARD)

In just a few days from now, Jos Vercruyssen is set to assume his duties as the new head of Quality Care at Toerisme Vlaanderen. One of the areas that comes under this particular department is the training of tour guides. Vercruyssen says that quite a few schemes are in the offing in this particular field. A multifarious syllabus is currently being devised for the tour guide training programme, efforts are being made to put in place a tax and social law status for tour guides, language courses are in the process of being developed. The department is also endeavouring to see First Aid certificates included as part of the training

course, which is made to go hand in hand with the production of a First Aid textbook.

WORK TO BE DONE!

Busworld's Tour Guide Day has certainly provided an unambiguous answer to the most pressing question of all. Yes, there *is* a bright future ahead for tour guides but there is work that remains to be done. All the more so as the job is certain to change, become more demanding, as well as more challenging. Which means even greater effort and commitment are needed. Luc Glorieux too takes a upbeat view of the future, a future filled with bold new challenges. To name but one: amongst other sectors, the future of the tour guide lies in school trips as the entire curriculum is certain to be increasingly expanded and concretised in the shape of extracurricular activities, i.e. trips. Regular school teachers will not be in a position to escort and guide this type of coach trips. For these as well as other reasons, the training of tour guides needs to be thoroughly reviewed. But Luc Glorieux is not washed out quite yet, not by a long chalk. Neither are the tour guides for that matter, as after a Tour Guide Day like today, people go home with a renewed sense of vigour and motivation to contribute to this new bright future ahead.



Een overvolle zaal tijdens de Reisleidersdag.

of the public, and the various speakers brought a wealth of information, instructive and forward-thinking.

AN INTRO WITH FIGHTING SPIRIT

Moderated by Johan Verweider, chairman of vzw Reisleiders Vlaanderen (Flanders Tour Guides non-profit organisation), it was none other than Luc Glorieux who opened the seminar with a spirited keynote address, critical, driven, passionate, in the way we are accustomed to from the man. Glorieux referenced his book 'The future of the travel coach, the travel coach of the future' which devotes one of its chapters to the noble tour guide profession. The increased number of regulations, a body of laws and measures, most

because the authorities view coaches as lorries and treat them as such in the regulations they enact. However, said Luc Glorieux: "a coach is not a truck". One thing we could do with, as one of quite a few things on our wish list, is separate coach lanes on the roads. Which is why Busworld has launched a petition intended to make sure the authorities duly acknowledge the specific nature of touring coaches! Luc Glorieux concluded: this multiplicity of frustrating situations combined bring a good deal of stress to drivers and tour guides alike. This needs to stop. We cannot have a gov-

Christmas comes early at Busworld

At an international dinner staged by Busworld, a good tune does not go amiss. But what kind of music do you play when you have Chinese, Indians, Russians and Belgians all sharing the table? What songs are ingrained into collective musical memory, from Oceania to Asia? Well, that is one mystery that has been unravelled and laid to rest since the latest edition. No matter how hard the occasional band tried to tempt the mixed international company with songs by the Beatles and other world hits, none of these ditties drew



much in the way of an applause. It was not until the violinist played the first notes to "Jingle Bells" on his fiddle that good times and high spirits erupted. After this, 'Frère

Jacques, 'Eviva Espana', 'Zwarte Lola' and a medley of Flemish sing-along hits all went down a treat. It is not everywhere around the world that Christmas falls on 25 December.

Just one different letter ...

Misprints are not a thing of the past quite yet. One different letter and you are no longer talking about the same thing. In this case, the safety belts made by MCF Safety Belts. The company's prospectus says 'Bells' instead of 'Belts'. Well, it is not bells Turin-based MCF Safety Belts are selling. Instead they produce and sell high-quality safety belts for a wide range of vehicles, including buses and travel coaches. MCF Safety Belts has been around since 1989 and has since carved out a permanent foothold for itself in a number of impor-



tant international markets. The company runs its own laboratory ready to produce custom-tailored products in compliance with ISO 9001 standards. The business manufactures in excess of one million belts a year. Further information at www.mcfssl.com

Bob Beelen.

Indian industry is transforming at a break-neck pace

India is the second largest market in the world for buses and coaches and the second largest producer. On India Day, a panel of experts from India told the Busworld audience how their industry is changing. Until recently, most buses and coaches were built on simple, truck derived chassis, with bodies built by constructors ranging from large, well organised, concerns to small roadside builders making very basic structures which met no safety standards.

BY DOUG JACK

India had to change and that was described by Balraj Bhanot, formerly head of the Automotive Research Association of India, and still active as a consultant to the Government.



Balraj Bhanot.

Toasting the first success

At the Meeting Point, Belgium's three regional public transport authorities (De Lijn in Flanders, the TEC in Wallonia and the MIVB in Brussels) and the FBAA (Federation of Belgian Bus and Coach Operators) raised their glasses to toast the success of the very first "Best Belgian Bus Driver" competition. The whole event turned out to be a very close run thing indeed between the winners. Ultimately, it was De Lijn's Mario Luypaerts who came out as the first winner. Together with the best bus driver for each of the organisations, Stephane Comer - the competition's instigator and Bus Director for the MIVB - toasted the success of this inaugural edition. One thing is already certain: there is to be a second edition in 2011.



The entire panel with moderator Doug Jack.

He headed a number of committees which had to set up national standards of construction and conformity of production. Many different Government departments and other interested parties had to be involved, but Bhanot and his staff wisely decided to introduce standards which are based on the European Bus Directive.

That was a wise decision and one which will help European and Indian manufacturers and suppliers to trade with each other. India has completed a network of major highways linking the major cities and crossing the sub-continent from north to south, and east to west. That has created demand for more comfortable and more powerful long distance and commuter coaches, running very regular services.

CITY BUSES

City buses are also changing rapidly. The Government has introduced a

stimulus programme which will see the introduction in coming months of more than 10,000 low floor buses. Delhi insists on buses fuelled by compressed natural gas and plans to modernise with another 5,000 buses before the Commonwealth Games next summer.

Mr Sandhu of ARAI told the audience how the new regulations will be implemented. Bus builders must go through a type approval procedure. This might lead to some of the many small bodybuilders teaming up so that each becomes a specialist in one part of the manufacturing process to make complete buses that meet the new standards.

The manufacturing industry was represented by Kulwant Wilkhu, a Director of Sutlej Motors and President of the newly estab-

China is preparing for World Expo

China is preparing for the World Expo, to be held in Shanghai next summer. Visitors are expected from all over China and from abroad. Jianguang Yuan, Secretary General of the China Civil Engineering Society, described the enormous logistics challenge, involving heavy rail, metro, coaches and several bus lines. People will move around inside the 5.28 sq km site on a large fleet of zero emission buses, some powered by batteries and others by fuel cells.

BY DOUG JACK

He was followed by speakers representing three of the leading Chinese bus and coach builders. The industry was small and localised until the stimulus of a highway construction building programme in 1988. Since then, it has grown dramatically, nationally and internationally. The old designs with high frames and front mounted petrol engines have been completely replaced since the last decade by diesel engines, mostly rear mounted, automatic transmissions, superior suspension systems, low floor buses and space frame coaches.

In Western Europe, urbanisation of people is typically 60-70 per cent.

In China, it is around 30-40 per cent, and the drift from rural areas to the cities will continue for many more years, leading one manufacturer to say that bus and coach building will be "a sunshine industry for another ten years at least."

The top four or five Chinese builders account for around 50 per cent of the domestic market, leaving nearly 100 others to contest the rest of the business. The industry will consolidate, with the market leaders enjoying economies of scale. The larger builders are investing heavily in new technology, including sophisticated tooling, alternative fuels and build quality.

All the presentations are now available on our website - www.busworld.org. At one time the Chinese were almost secretive about their activities, but these are a mine of information for anyone wanting to learn more about the bus and coach industry in China. Perhaps the fact that China accounted for 52 per cent of global bus and coach production in 2008 has given them the confidence to be totally open.

Make a note to visit the next Busworld Asia, which will be held in Shanghai (6-8 May), and visit the World Expo at the same time.

lished Indian Association of Bus Manufacturers. His members are promoting the construction of complete integral vehicles and his own company works closely with Mercedes-Benz. Wilkhu produced many fascinating statistics on the

Indian industry, including actual and forecast demand in the various market segments.

All the presentations can be downloaded from the Busworld website - www.busworld.org

BLUEKENS PRESENTS ELECTRIC MIDI BUS

At the Busworld salon, Bluekens Truck and Bus from the Dutch town of Breda is presenting a second electric scoop: the Bluecoach Ro_ero First Electric. This fully electrically-powered city bus was developed in collaboration with the Dutch province of Noord-Brabant, Slovak body builder Ro_ero, convertor AllGreenVehicles which devised the electric drive and Arriva transport service company that ordered the first buses to roll off the production line. The midi bus seats 32 passengers and has an range of at least 130 kilo-

metres. Before the end of this year, the fully electrically-powered midi bus will be operationally deployed, serving an intra-city route in the Dutch town of 's-Hertogenbosch.

YUTONG COMING TO EUROPE VIA ICELAND

After King Long, which is launching a couple of new buses and coaches at Busworld, by which the company is looking to mount its bid on the European market, and Higer which is seeking to earn itself a foothold on the same market through Scania, Yutong is the third Chinese bus brand

to announce that in the short term it will be aiming its sights on the European market. Yutong has chosen to make its entry via Iceland, home to a company by the name of Eurobus which Yutong has just appointed as its European importer. As a first step, the new importer will be focusing his attentions on the Northern European market, especially offering Yutong's coaches. However, the idea is to also start imports of the Chinese bus builder's city buses in the fairly short term.

In preparation of the offensive on the rest of Europe, Eurobus has already put in place a service point in Germany for spare parts, where

largely bodywork components are kept on stock. The chassis and powertrain components are of familiar origin as Yutong uses Cummins engines, a ZF clutch and gearbox, Arvin Meritor axles and suspension bellows by Conti for its coaches, whilst the other suspension components and the brake system are sourced from Wabco. Parts for all of these components are widely available across Europe and do not need to be shipped in from China. The hybrid city buses come with an Eaton hybrid powertrain and ZF wheel suspension and axles, whilst Alco profiles and light metal paneling are used for the body.

IRU trophy for Flygbussarna

After the IRU City Trophy went to Stockholm, the IRU's "Special Award for Businesses 2009" also went to Sweden.

Flygbussarna Airport Coaches was handed the prize by Martin Marmy, the IRU's secretary-general. Flygbussarna serves seven airports, two maritime ports and nine towns and cities across Sweden. The com-

pany that has been a member of the Veolia Group since 2007, runs a fleet of 66 buses and carries four million passenger a year. This year, Flygbussarna set up a campaign highlighting the eco-friendly qualities of its coaches and buses, which brought in a rise in the number of passengers carried, in spite of a 15% drop in the number of passengers at Swedish airports.

Seminars

During Busworld, a series of seminars are set to be held. Full details are available from www.busworld.org. Click through to side events.

MONDAY 19 OCTOBER

A coach is not a truck

Topic: driving and rest times
From 02:00 pm to 04:00 pm
Busworld has taken the initiative to relaunch the 'A coach is not a Truck' protest action in collaboration with the FBAA, the IRU and other foreign federations. The main objective is to

enforce separate driving and rest time regulations for the transport of passengers. We trust we may rely on your support for this protest.

TUESDAY 20 OCTOBER

Bus Ecology And Alternative Fuels Conference

Topic: Eco-friendly city buses
From 02:00 pm to 03:30 pm
Venue: Kortrijk Xpo Meeting Center

Coach Ecology And Safety Conference

Topic: Ecology and safety
From 04:00 pm to 05:30 pm
Venue: Kortrijk Xpo Meeting Center



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