



## MEMO

To:

From: Kerrie Tripp

Date: January 26 – 29, 2026

Subject: Italian Sales Mission Report

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Discover New England (DNE) hosted a sales mission to Italy from January 26–29, 2026, with stops in Milan, Turin, and Verona.

The delegation included representatives from Meet Boston, Connecticut Office of Tourism, Newport Mansions, Maine Office of Tourism, Joshua’s Worldwide, and Discover Newport.

Over the course of the mission, the group engaged with more than 130 travel trade professionals through trainings, presentations, and networking events.

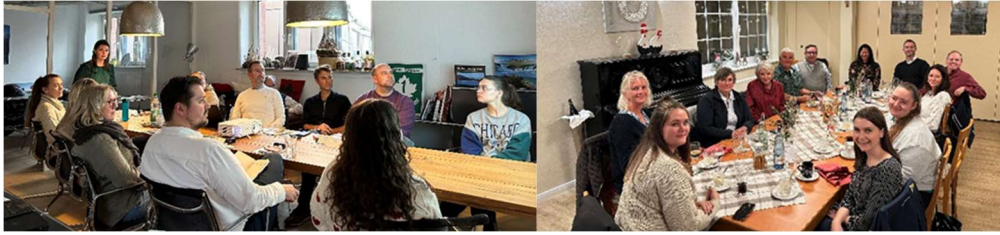
### Program Overview

The mission began in Milan with trainings at Alidays (25 attendees), Naar Bespoke Travel (12 attendees), Volonline (7+ attendees), and GOING / Bluvacanze (26 attendees).

A boutique trade and media event with Touring Club Italiano welcomed approximately 40 attendees and featured the updated Boston and New England guide.

In Turin, the delegation met with America World (25 attendees) and Amo il Mondo (2 attendees).

The mission concluded in Verona with a Visit USA Workshop with approximately 30 travel agents.



New to the program this year was a live online training with FVW as part of *Destination Day: Discover New England*. FVW is Germany's leading travel trade information platform, connecting the industry to the latest trends. This year, Discover New England participated in FVW's Destination Day by conducting a live webinar in which delegates presented in pairs. The webinar was hosted in English; however, with the support of Discover New England's German market representative Get-it-Across (GIA), a large portion of the presentation was also translated into German. The presentation reached 316 viewers on the day of broadcast and remained live on the FVW website.



### Market Sentiment

German operators expressed cautious optimism about U.S. travel improving in 2026. While some companies reported strong early bookings, others noted continued challenges selling the U.S. due to political concerns, tariffs, and fear of encountering issues during border crossing. There was broad agreement that demand will start to rebound in 2026 but may take some time to get back to the level it was at in 2024 and continued market presence is important.

### Key Themes

- Affordable travel was emphasized as an issue for travel to New England during all meetings with tour companies.
- FIFA World Cup interest is strong, though operators cited challenges with ticket access and accommodation inventory. Many are relying on bed banks or OTAs rather than receptive partners.
- Notable interest in Independence Day (July 4) travel and structuring itineraries around major U.S. 250<sup>th</sup> celebrations.
- Strong enthusiasm for the Dark Skies & Natural Places program, packaged through inbound operator Jonview, with many operators already familiar with the program.

### Challenges

- FIFA ticket pricing and housing availability.
- Perceptions of luxury travel differ significantly between the U.S. and other international markets. In New England, luxury is more experience-driven and destination-focused, emphasizing authenticity, access, and sense of place rather than ultra-high service levels. In contrast, traditional luxury markets such as Dubai or Vietnam often equate luxury with elevated, highly personalized service, such as private butlers or service staff, meaning travelers may receive a higher level of service abroad for the same spend than they would in New England.(please explain this better).

The German Sales Mission strengthened relationships during a period of market uncertainty. Interest in New England remains steady, particularly for experiential, nature-based, and iconic travel. Continued engagement positions the region well for renewed demand as the market stabilizes. Leads were shared with all participating partners and state tourism offices.