

FEBRUARY 2009

MOTORCOACH TRAVEL

ACROSS NORTH AMERICA

Destinations

THAD. L. TATE



Gateway to the SOUTH

Discover why
Charlotte is Queen

- Family-Friendly Tours
- Innovative Partnerships
- Equipment & Services Guide

by Elaine Rogers

Shopping En Masse

Fun, thrifty and lively retail opportunities enrich group tours.

corporated into the mix of a destination trip. Typically, browsing is the name of the game, and travelers enjoy shopping excursions most for the novelty of the stops and how they complement the theme of an event or break up the journey.

"Planners almost always tie in shopping to their events," says Michael Embrey of FunME Events, Excursions & Entertainment in DeKalb, Ill. "It might

While sightseeing and shopping have al-

wa
ity
dit
mil
ab
de
ad

jaz
but
pat
anc
to
de
but
tou
pin

Retail P

Given the mutually retail and tourist report that retailers with tour operators Linda Edelman, president is launching a joint state. The specialty retailer from apparel and home try Store a loyal following ing forces with Custom night tour packages, a t
Originating in hometown Farm and Museum, a v and Hildene—The Lincoln by Lincoln's son, Robert Tours will gain entrance in addition to enjoying v quaint Westin, Vermont dering the unusual shop



eclectic and flashy offerings of the Mission and Castro Districts, the traditional touristy fare found at Union Square and Fisherman's Wharf maintains an undeniable attraction. A popular gathering place that brings all its gifts to the fore is Pier 39 (www.pier39.com), a two-tiered festival marketplace set against the grandiose backdrop of the Golden Gate Bridge and Alcatraz Island. With a busy collection of vendors and street

Retail Partnering

Given the mutually beneficial marriage between the retail and tourism businesses, some ABA members report that retailers sometimes forge direct partner-

ships with tour operators in order to encourage bigger crowds and more group traffic. In this vein, Linda Edelman, president of **Custom Tours Inc.**, a receptive tour operator in Vermont, says her organization is launching a joint venture with **Vermont Country Store**, to encourage "nostalgic tours" of the state. The specialty retailer's president, Bill Ackerman, says marketing hard-to-find products ranging from apparel and home furnishings to make-up, perfume and food novelties has given Vermont Country Store a loyal following for years, and his two locations have attracted bus groups for years. Joining forces with Custom Tours, the store will be the lead stop on the new seasonally-themed, three-night tour packages, a move that Ackerman says will attract more visitors to the state year-round.

Originating in hometown vicinities, the Vermont Country Store Tours will include stops at Billings Farm and Museum, a working dairy farm with exhibits of Vermont farm life in the late 19th century, and Hildene—The Lincoln Family Home, the 412-acre estate and 1905 Georgian Revival mansion built by Lincoln's son, Robert Todd Lincoln. Unlike other groups, Edelman says the Vermont Country Store Tours will gain entrance to private artifacts rooms and receive VIP treatment at the other destinations in addition to enjoying what Ackerman dubs "an experiential visit" at his company's main location in quaint Westin, Vermont, a place he terms a "one-block village," with museums and restaurants bordering the unusual shop.

