



First-ever Recreational Vehicle World Conference held in Düsseldorf

Approximately 200 caravanning industry professionals from 15 countries attended the CARAVAN SALON to get up to date on the latest news from the international caravanning market

Düsseldorf, 4 September 2008

Some 200 caravanning industry professionals attended the first Recreational Vehicle World Conference at the Düsseldorf convention center, where they got up to date on various aspects of the caravanning markets in the U.S., Canada, South Africa, China, Australia, Japan and Europe. The presentations provided statistical information on the various national caravanning markets, and also focused on topics such as caravanning infrastructures, caravanning-related laws, import and export, and other specific issues of concern to caravanning industry professionals. Representatives of caravanning manufacturers, component suppliers, and service providers from 15 countries attended sessions on subjects such as customer profiles, as well as marketing strategies in various countries.

Despite the international makeup of the presenters, many made similar points during their talks. For example, throughout the world caravanning is regarded as an activity where people experience freedom and independence, but can also take their creature comforts along with them. Presenters from different countries also had a similar take on the challenges faced by the caravanning industry. "The challenges we will be facing in the coming years will arise from the need to achieve both reduced and sustainable resource use. This is a matter of concern even in markets where, unlike in the European market, vehicle weight and fuel consumption have yet to become issues," notes Klaus Förtsch, president of the German Caravanning Industry Association, CIVD.

A prime example of how this issue is playing out is provided by the current U.S. market. Richard A. Coon, president of the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) in the U.S., talked about the shrinking U.S. market in his presentation. The real estate crisis, high energy prices, and new fuel consumption limits for cars, pick-up trucks and SUVs, he pointed out, have all combined to put a major dent in the US auto industry. This in turn has affected the erstwhile rapidly growing market for caravans. But now, for the first time, American recreational vehicle manufacturers are being forced to make lighter weight caravans that can be towed by smaller vehicles that comply with fuel consumption regulations. Mr. Coon expressed confidence that the U.S. caravanning industry will bounce back and that the market will have bottomed out by the end of next year. Mr. Coon also pointed out that the trend in the recreational vehicle industry has been upward since 1980, despite a series of economic slowdowns. Moreover, he said, the fact that consumers under the age of 35 represent the fastest growing target group for recreational vehicle sales in the U.S. is a clear sign that American caravanning has a bright future ahead of it.

According to a number of presenters, one of the key factors affecting the caravanning industry, apart from vehicle quality, is tourist infrastructure and particularly the availability and drawing power of campgrounds and recreational vehicle parks. Numerous presenters emphasized that only if camping and tourist professionals work closely together it will be possible to ensure an appealing infrastructure for recreational vehicle users.

“The international profile of the CARAVAN SALON in Düsseldorf as the world’s largest recreational vehicle industry trade show was bolstered by this first Recreational Vehicle World Conference,” noted Hans-Karl Sternberg, director general of the German Caravanning Industry Association CIVD. In its capacity as organizer of the conference, the CIVD had invited caravanning professionals from around the world to attend the event.

For further information about caravanning, including photos, visit www.civd.de