



## New Experiences in Outlet Shopping

**AS ALWAYS, THE** question for the group travel market is: what's new?

Easy answer...outlet shopping, a perennial group favorite, has finally evolved beyond the cliché of "shop 'til you drop" to a real experience that includes much more than just shopping. Of course, shopping is still the No. 1 priority, but now, your clients are able to enjoy a more fulfilling experience, and you are able to better profit from it.

Why is outlet shopping so popular? In today's economy, your travelers want two things: value and bragging rights. Outlet shopping clearly offers both. What started out as warehouses evolved into storefronts. Merchandise that was once last season has evolved into outlet offerings featuring current, trendy fashion. Your clients are buying value and bringing designer fashions home to impress.

Have you noticed how many traditional shopping centers have re-merchandised to offer the outlet experience? No longer do your coaches have to use expensive gas to drive an hour outside a city center as outlets have sprung up much closer, such as The Outlets at Bergen Town Center ([bergentowncenter.com](http://bergentowncenter.com)) in the hub of shopping in Northern New Jersey. This former traditional shopping center re-merchandised with great success 3½ years ago. Many others around the country have followed suit.

Outlet marketing has become much more savvy, too. Instead of just relying on the in-store discounts and the standard coupon book, outlet center marketing directors now offer transportation, packages and promotional events.

To make sure that the outlet experience continues to evolve and remain relevant for your clients, outlet developers have formed the Outlet Marketing Alliance. With Shop America Alliance, they are launching the first USA Outlet Shopping Festival. Scheduled for May 24-27, 2013 (Memorial Day weekend), this four-day event at outlet shopping centers across the country will offer even deeper discounts, savings and promotions, such as travel packages, gift-with-purchase and shopping

packages for your clients, contact [shopamericatours@aol.com](mailto:shopamericatours@aol.com).

Looking even further down the road and into 2014 is a new outlet shopping experience that will for the first time merge the outlet stores in an urban, downtown, mixed-use setting. At Assembly Row in Somerville, Mass., your clients will not only enjoy outlet prices at their favorite stores, but they will also have a variety of dining and entertainment experiences (including a 12-screen cinema),

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spree giveaways for your clients. Based on successful international events including the Dubai Shopping Festival, the USA Outlet Shopping Festival will be the first national shopping festival inviting tourists from throughout the USA and the world to enjoy special discounts from major retail brands and fun events.

Tour operators and travel partners, including travel agents, hotels and transportation providers, will be invited to develop packages and promotions around the festival. Tax-free shopping opportunities will be highlighted for even greater savings. This is a great opportunity for you to start now to build your packages and profit from this event. The organizers will be launching an extensive online and social media marketing campaign to support it. For more information on how you can benefit by developing

all in a pedestrian-friendly setting on the Mystic River. A riverside park, plus office space and residential units, will be part of the complex. And the new project is located only eight minutes from downtown Boston. Commissionable packages will be available for tour operators. ([assemblyrow.com](http://assemblyrow.com))

While there are a lot of shopping experiences out there for you to sell to your clients, keep your eyes on the outlets as they continue to evolve, allowing you to be even more creative in your packaging.

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