

Great Lake Seaway Trail at IPW Review

May 17-21, 2026

Attending IPW far exceeded expectations, demonstrating an extraordinary level of market interest among media, tour operators, and travel product distributors that justifies further long-term investment in the Great Lakes Seaway Trail. The foundation built at this event has significantly elevated our enthusiasm for the future and provided New York State staff with the fundamental knowledge needed to drive our upcoming marketing and development efforts.

REPRESENTATION

Greg Marshall attended IPW, May 17-21 in Fort Lauderdale, FL on behalf of the nationally designated scenic byway, the **Great Lakes Seaway Trail**. IPW is the largest professional tourism conference and tradeshow in the United States. 4,100 travel trade professionals and media from around the world and destinations from throughout the United States attended the convention. Attendance was made possible by the investment of \$5,600 plus contributed time by the following partners:

1000 Islands Tourism Council (Corey Fram)

Buffalo/Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau (Patrick Kaler)

Niagara Falls USA (John Percy)

Visit Rochester (Diana Rapp Keating)

Genesee Journeys, LLC (Greg Marshall)

The base of presence for the **Great Lakes Seaway Trail** was **within the New York State Division of Tourism exhibit space at IPW**. A total of **approximately 160 advance appointments** with media and tour operators were arranged by State staff and contractors in support of the co-op partners. An additional nine exhibit booths reflected other NYS destinations that administered their own appointments and programs.

Greg Marshall had a total of 41 pre-scheduled appointments over a three-day period plus an **additional 11 engagements** resulting from promotional and meal events and the NYS sponsored client event. Further, 9 meetings took place with industry representatives related to the **Great Lakes Seaway Trail** and scenic byways

overall. A full compendium of appointments is being developed by ILNY contracted staff and will be distributed soon.

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

beyond travel trade/tech/tour operators' meeting

1. Meeting with **Fred Dixon** and **Peter Dodge** of **Brand USA** related to integrating the network of designated scenic byways into the Brand USA's global marketing campaigns and online presence.
2. Conversation with **Peter Greenberg**, **CBS News Travel Editor**, and owner of **Peter Greenberg Worldwide** regarding the potential of following up on America's 250 with a focus on U.S. discovery by "collecting" trips on the designated national scenic byways.
3. Discussion with **Ross Levi**, **VP and Executive Director of ILNY** regarding the potential for a **symposium/conference on New York State's Scenic Byways**
4. Meeting with **Stacey Brown**, Past President of the **National Scenic Byways Association** (NSBA) related to furthering awareness of the national system of designated byways into the advocacy work of **U.S. Travel Association** and marketing work of Brand USA. Discovered that Brand USA currently helps foster NSBA presence at IPW.
5. Individual meetings with New York State's **contracted tourism marketing firms** in **Australia, Canada, UK/Ireland, and Germany** to explain scenic byways, and particularly the Seaway Trail.
6. Meeting with prominent British author and owner of **Roadtrips Rendezvous**, **Graeme Evans**, to discuss the importance of scenic byways to the cultural experience of travel.
7. Discussion with **Heather McElhiney** regarding the **NYS Inter-agency Task Force** and engaging **Empire State Development** and **NYS Dept. of Transportation** in a collaboration on the further development and marketing of NYS Scenic Byways
8. Assured that all **ESD staff and contractors** present at IPW **heard media and tour operators state the importance of scenic byways** in choosing and featuring destinations.

9. Engaged **Ronja Tacke, Manager, Visit USA Committee-Germany**, in a conversation related to Germany's network of scenic byways and how their system is a premier opportunity to introduce American Byways to German travelers.
10. Engaged **Susan Webb, President of Discover America Canada (Visit USA Canada)** in a conversation related to U.S. designated scenic byways as to "**the roads that tell America's story**" and how they are an exceptional way to engage Canadians when they are ready to return to the United States for holidays.
11. Conversated with **Florian Herrmann**, President and owner of **Herrmann Global** on his willingness to potentially do some pro-bono work to help market scenic byways to international and domestic audiences.

Proposed Next Steps

- Provide supporting partners with the compendium of NYS call reports that occurred during 2026 IPW. It will be forwarded upon receipt.
- Meet Ross Levi and others to discuss the process for a **NYS Scenic Byways Summit/Conference to be held on the Seaway Trail**.
- Find a process that incorporates and elevates **Seaway Trail** and other scenic byways **into NYS trade and consumer marketing programs**
- Propose **2027 NYS Scenic Byways Media trips and Tour Operator FAMS** focused on scenic byways with the **Seaway Trail** as the prototype.
- Follow-up with tour operators and media who indicated high interest Learning more about NYS scenic byways and further introduce the Seaway Trail.
- **Revise Seaway Trail collateral materials and online presence** to reflect appeal, resources, and partners.
- **Engage Peter Greenberg** in a conversation that focuses his programs on scenic byways utilizing Seaway Trail as a prime example of inherent value and breadth of experience for travelers.

Conclusion

The foundation set by attending IPW was incredibly gratifying, ultimately exceeding all initial expectations. As the information gathered in this report clearly demonstrates, further engagement with media, tour operators, and travel product distributors is not only warranted but highly worthy of continued investment. Moving forward, maintaining education and communication with NYS staff and contractors will be essential to successfully executing Great Lakes Seaway Trail marketing efforts. Ultimately, IPW has brought absolute clarity to the work ahead and left me deeply energized for the future.

Thanks to my partners thus far for helping to make this early step forward possible.

More to come. Stay tuned!

Greg Marshall

**Interim Project Coordinator
Destination Seaway Trail**

