

London Show reaches new heights

Number of ICE-registered visitors rises 14.6 per cent to 7,322 / ATEI crossover boosts total ICE attendance to 17,775 (UP 18.7%) / All-time high of 101 territories represented

The 2004 International Casino Exhibition (ICE) was universally recognised as the most impressive yet, with a record-high 7,322 unique casino and gaming industry professionals passing through the doors of Earls Court 2 in January – a 14.6 per cent increase on the previous year's figure.

Overall participation in ICE was further boosted with 10,453 visitors registered in ICE's soft gaming and amusements sister show, ATEI, crossing over into the casino exhibition – resulting in a total ICE 2004 attendance of 17,775, over 18.7 per cent higher than the same measure taken in 2003.

A breakdown of the visitor database published by show organisers, ATE, reveals that not only did buyers turn up in great numbers, but their provenance was also remarkable with no fewer than 101 territories across five continents represented by show attendees. First time visitor territories this year included Bermuda, Ivory Coast, Macau, Malagasy Republic, Mozambique and the US Virgin Islands, whilst ICE also welcomed back its first visitors since 1999 from Mongolia and Tunisia. The addition of this year's debutants means that the total number of territories represented by visitors to ICE over the last decade, since 1995, now stands at 151.

International visitors accounted for 59.0 per cent of the total attendance, a large proportion of which (46.9 per cent) were from continental Europe where an annual increase of 6.2 per cent saw visitor numbers rise to 3,433. Substantial increases were recorded in the number of visitors from North

America (up 33.8% to 475), South & Central America (up 20.8% to 116), Australasia & Pacific (up 37.5% to 77), Southern & Central Africa (up 44.9% to 71) and Asia (up 166.7% to 24).

Central/eastern Europe, former CIS states and the Balkans provided some of the most notable growth areas at ICE 2004, with 923 visitors from Albania, Armenia, Belarus, Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia & Montenegro, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Ukraine effecting a combined increase of 21.6 per cent year-on-year.

In line with the continuing programme of deregulation in the United Kingdom, the number of domestic ICE visitors grew year-on-year by 26.5 per cent to 2,920.

After the UK, the most represented nation at ICE 2004 was Spain, whose 24.5 per cent increase in visitor numbers to 386 saw the country move up two places in the overseas nation rankings to take top slot. A similar rise (21.9 per cent) also helped Austria jump two places into second place with 356 visitors, whilst US gaming professionals leapt from fifth to third courtesy of a 40.9 per cent increase to 355. A further nine overseas countries were represented by more than 100 visitors, including Netherlands (332), Slovenia (239), Sweden (197), Italy (179), Russian Federation (174), France (164), Canada (118) and Belgium (111). No fewer than 34 of the top 50 visitor territories either increased or maintained their representation at ICE 2004 compared to the previous year.

Specific casino/gaming hot spots, if growth trends in the number of ICE buyers are anything to go by, include: Austria (356 visitors, up 21.9%), Slovenia (239, up 48.5%), Russian Federation (174, up 32.8%), Canada (118 visitors, up 14.5%), Switzerland (84, up 44.8%), Australia (76, up 35.7%), South Africa (56, up 86.7%), Latvia (54, up 80.0%), Malta (51, up 45.7%), Slovak Republic (35, up 59.1%), Ukraine (30, up 7.1%),

Poland (29, up 45.0%), Croatia (28, up 86.7%), Romania (23, up 109.1%), Gibraltar (23, up 91.7%), Venezuela (21, up 23.5%), Macedonia (17, up 88.9%) and Colombia (16, up 300.0%).

Commenting on the show, ATE Chief Executive Peter Rusbridge said: „We’re delighted that the relocation to Earls Court 2 was so well received by visitors and exhibitors alike. All of the world’s major suppliers really got behind ICE 2004 and combined to put on an unrivalled showcase with a dazzling display of new products and services and unique hospitality packages.“

„It was very encouraging to see the fantastic turn-out with operators from such a diverse range of jurisdictions – particularly those from rapidly expanding markets such as central and eastern Europe – all of which points to a healthy future for ICE as Europe’s flagship casino and gaming show and arguably the world’s most influential event for buying and selling to a truly international audience.“

Next year’s International Casino Exhibition takes place at Earls Court 2, London, UK on 25th, 26th and 27th January 2005. For more information visit www.ATEOnline.co.uk/ICE.

All figures quoted are subject to verification by the Audit Bureau of Circulation (ABC).