

# California STAR launches in Italy at Showcase USA-Italy

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From March 5-7, the iconic city of Naples served as host for the 20<sup>th</sup> edition of Showcase USA-Italy, the annual B2B matchmaking event organized by the U.S. Commercial Service in Milan and the Visit USA Association Italy.

The 2017 event was a record edition, with 53 US companies exhibiting and meeting new and existing clients. Eighty travel agents and 35 tour operators, as well as members of the Visit USA Italy Association, took part in the one-to-one meetings over the course of a packed full day from 8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The California delegation was made up of representatives from Visit California, the San Francisco Travel Association, Mammoth Lakes Tourism, and Handlery Hotels. Visit California sponsored the Monday morning coffee break and took the opportunity to debut California STAR, the new training and sales companion tool for travel agents, in Italian.

Travel Trade Manager Brandi Hardy and the Visit California Italy team put on a brief presentation to showcase the new incentive program associated with the platform. The program provides the opportunity for travel agents who complete the training course before March 20 to win a trip to California, made possible by partnerships with airberlin, Alamo Rent A Car, Best Western Hotels and Mammoth Lakes Tourism. The partnership with airberlin also includes the possibility for five travel agents to win an R/T ticket to California, six nights in the state, and a 1-week Alamo car rental. Each month starting in April, the top-selling travel agent of California trips will be selected for a trip in California.

During the one-to-one meetings, travel agents engaged with the California STAR app in Italian and learned about the functionality of the tool and how it serves as an innovative sales companion. Response from trade operators was enthusiastic, and at the end of the day, 45 travel agents had enrolled into the program.

Visit California participation in Showcase USA-Italy was ultimately very successful, and it was a great opportunity to promote the California STAR program, as well as cultivate relationships with trade operators and press in a key European market that sent more than 177,000 travelers to the Golden State in the past year.