

As long as Florida remains popular as a vacation destination, visitors from around the world will be looking for comfortable and convenient ways to travel around the Sunshine State.

Headquartered in Orlando, Florida, Stylus Transportation Corp. provides a friendly, reliable and affordable option for tours and groups to get from point A to point B. With a fleet of European state-of-the-art motorcoaches, Stylus provides extended charter service to Florida attractions, destinations in the continental United States and expanded routes to the East Coast on up to Canada.

While specializing in providing transport for international travelers, Stylus is equally adept in serving the domestic market. Customers range from teens to seniors, with groups sizes as small as 30 on up to 300. Whether taking groups to and from airports, to cruise lines, to attractions or to conventions, Stylus ensures a ride as hospitable as its home state on cool, quiet and impeccably maintained vehicles. "Every day comes with exciting challenges – 24/7," said Fernando Martinez, co-owner of Stylus. "You work hard to have all the pieces together, to make sure everything works right, that the bus is on time and clean and that the driver is smiling. It's always an adventure. That's why I like the business."

#### Southern style

Stylus began serving customers in 1996 with a handful of staff and a couple of Van Hool motorcoaches. Driver and businesswoman Valeria Iorio launched the company out of a need she perceived to serve the thousands of South American visitors who came to Florida during particular times of the year. A native Brazilian, Iorio was sensitive to the needs and wants of international travelers. She understood their travel preferences, the sites they wanted to see and how they often combined travel with celebrations related to customs, culture and special family events. Since Iorio was fluent in several languages, she made multi-lingual services a signature quality of her fledgling company, equipping her small business with drivers and agents who could speak Spanish, Portuguese and other languages spoken by her core customers.

Stylus grew in popularity within its first 10 years. En route, the company captured the attention of Fernando Martinez – a veteran of the motorcoach industry and professional acquaintance of Iorio. Martinez had come to the U.S. from Argentina in 1988, and immediately began his career in the motorcoach industry. He drove for six years, and worked for two or three more as a dispatcher. Later, he worked in a company office in operations, safety and as a general manager for 10 years. All the while, he was determined to someday own his own company.



## Stylus Puts Travelers on the Road Throughout Florida and Expanding Northern Markets

by Ann M. Kammerer

Photos courtesy of Stylus Transportation

Based in Orlando, Florida, Stylus Transportation provides a wide variety of bus services for both large and small bus groups. They include airport transfers, convention service and long distance charters and tours. This Stylus Volvo 9700 coach was photographed in Orlando with the Ritz Carlton and the JW Marriott in the background.

"I knew it was about time for me to buy a company," said Martinez. "After being in all the different parts of this business, and learning the business up and down, I knew it was time to start out on my own." In 2006, Martinez bought part ownership of Stylus. Today, he owns the company outright, running more than a dozen coaches on routes that traverse Florida, up the Northeast coast, and into Canada on day trips and multi-day charters.

The company serves markets from central Florida to Miami as well as all

major ports including Tampa, Port Canaveral, Miami, and Fort Lauderdale. In-bound groups also enjoy transportation to fabled attractions such as the Kenney Space Center, Universal Studios, Downtown Disney and Disney Quest, La Nouba, Wet 'n Wild and popular Florida destinations like St. Augustine and the Everglades. In the Northeast, Stylus transports travelers and groups to destinations and attractions in states along the coast, as well as destinations in several Canadian provinces.

"We're continuing to grow," said Martinez. "We have a strong base in the international market and we're building presence in others." While a relatively small company, Stylus has a commanding presence, particularly with the Latin market.

The busiest months for Latino travel, Martinez said, are December, January and February, and then again in July. The three winter months attract travelers from Argentina, while July is a mix of travelers from Argentina and Brazil. Travelers enjoy trips to all major theme parks, as well as to the Everglades and popular cities. "Not every bus company has that piece of business," said Martinez. "We do because we understand the culture."

Stylus moves thousands of customers during those peak periods. Travelers come for holidays, vacations and for "coming of age" trips for teen girls – also known as quinceñeras. "It's a huge market," said Martinez of the popular Florida party trip for many Argentinian families. "We take these groups to Miami, Disney and other places. It's a dream they will never forget."

Within a few years of taking ownership, Martinez strengthened and grew the niche markets established by Iorio, and began to explore new options on international and domestic fronts for the remaining seven months of the year. Schools, spring breaks, the 55-plus community and conventions were prime for market development, while the Northeastern coastline and Canada presented



Stylus Transportation does a brisk business bringing groups to the major attractions in the Orlando area. This Stylus Volvo coach was photographed while bringing a group to Sea World.

a promising expansion with the Chinese, Korean and other Asian markets. Stylus currently serves northern markets seven months out of the year, with tours and transport offered in places like Washington, D.C., New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Niagara Falls, Toronto, Quebec, Ottawa and Montreal.

"I take opportunities as they come," Martinez said. "We have a great mix of cultures

on staff, with lots of multi-lingual employees. Because of that, we can approach a lot of different markets and serve them well."

#### A growing team and fleet

Within a few years of coming on board, Martinez began to leverage the company's positive growth and methodically invested in vehicles and staff to maintain the forward momentum. In July 2014, he started to build a new fleet of vehicles, mixing Volvos into his existing line of Van Hools. He hired sales and general manager Glenn Cook at the same time. Cook said that Stylus has been capably evolving – which is behind the nearly 50 percent increase in gross sales from 2014 to early 2015. Along with Cook and Martinez, the company employs 22 people – including 16 drivers, two mechanics, two accounting personnel and two in operations. "Valeria and Fernandez had a good working relationship," he said. "They started with just a couple buses and a couple personnel. Now we're up to 13 vehicles and more than 20 people."

The current fleet owned by Stylus includes six Van Hools and seven Volvos. All Van Hools are C2045s with model years ranging from 2004-2009. The 9700 Volvos are brand new, from model years 2014-2015. The company also owns a 2014 Nissan Rogue as a sales car. Cook said Stylus acquired the Volvos over a six-month period, from July to December 2014. All feature European styling, and are equipped with up-to-date safety features like seat belts, and modern amenities like WiFi, DVD players, and power outlets. Four of the seven Volvos have Direct TV via KVH satellite dishes. Stylus is also updating the Van Hools in the fleet, and offers portable WiFi on many of the rides.

Stylus General Manager Glenn Cook (right) congratulates bus industry veteran Fernando Martinez and owner of Stylus Transportation Corp. on the addition of another Volvo coach to the fleet.





One of the more popular group destinations in Orlando is the Orange County Convention Center. Here, a Stylus Volvo 9700 coach is waiting for a group to leave.



The Stylus acquisition of TravelLynx in 2015 provides additional locations in Orlando, Daytona Beach and Cocoa Beach. It also makes Stylus the largest Volvo operator in Florida.

Each vehicle, Cook said, traverses an average of 55,000 to 60,000 miles a year. The fleet is dispatched from the company's base of operations in Orlando. Aside from warranty work, much of the vehicle maintenance and quality control checks take place at the facility, which includes a large concrete yard with good drainage, a dump station and 14 slots to park the vehicles. The company is looking to expand or relocate the facility in the coming year, with an eye toward an Orlando location near major thoroughfares and theme parks.

Cook said the new additions to the fleet have tremendously helped Stylus to build their markets and to change perceptions travelers may have about bus travel.

Those perceptions and services will continue to evolve as Stylus undergoes its next transformation as an evolving leader in Florida's ground transportation industry. In late spring 2015, Stylus acquired TravelLynx Premium Ground Transportation – a move that will result in expanded services, employees, equipment and facilities.

With the acquisition, Stylus assumed oversight of TravelLynx's fleet of motorcoaches, Sprinter vans and Florida locations in Orlando, Daytona Beach and Cocoa Beach, as well as 87 TravelLynx employees. Stylus also added an additional 20 top-of-the-line Volvos, giving the combined companies the bragging rights to operating the largest fleet of Volvos in Florida.

"The easiest way to dispel any negative perceptions about bus travel is to show peo-

ple the new equipment," Cook said. "We have a huge market for destination management companies, so we invite representatives to come in and touch, feel and experience everything about the coaches."

#### Top of the tours

As a tour sales manager, Kim Cook faces the challenge of arranging for group travel in Florida – one of the nation's top inbound travel markets in the country. Stylus, she said, makes her job easier, with the quality, professional care provided to her and her groups.

Kim began working with Stylus two years ago, enlisting the staff to provide her with transportation services related to her work as a student group tour operator for Four Seasons Tours in Orlando. She said she coordinates one large event at the end of February each year that involves ground transportation for 5,000 people. Her needs in the spring typically involve 20 to 30 individual groups ranging from 30 to 300 people needing ground transportation to a variety of places. "Stylus is truly a customer service expert all the way around," she said. "I appreciate that."

For her big February group, Kim relies on Stylus to provide the extra ground support to run and manage the buses. She said Stylus staff also have the ability to make changes over the phone or email, and that drivers are adept at remembering details about the group and the tour escorts. "They anticipate their needs and go the extra mile to be engaging, fun and safety conscious," Kim said. "That's a very big deal when you're working with the student market."

Kim's groups typically involve student tours of theme parks and attractions in Orlando, as well as student group cruises on Carnival Cruise Lines. She said the newer equipment decked out with electronic amenities is a perfect fit for her customers.

The acquisition of TravelLynx Premium Ground Transportation in the late spring of 2015 brought additional Volvo coaches, 87 TravelLynx staff and more locations into the Stylus family.



The 24-hour dispatch with GPS and the excellent safety protocol and standards also puts her mind at ease.

"Stylus has exceeded my expectations time and time again over the last two years," Kim said. "I look forward to working closely with them for years to come to

provide the quality and excellence of service that our clients have come to know and expect from Four Seasons Tours and our vendors." □



Stylus Transportation Corp. keeps its customers happy by doing extra things and providing more than other bus operations. Shown here is a special magnetic sign on the side of a Volvo coach that identifies it as running for a specific tour operator.

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