

# TOURISM NOW

# MA GA ZI NE

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THE FUTURE OF  
TOURISM STARTS HERE

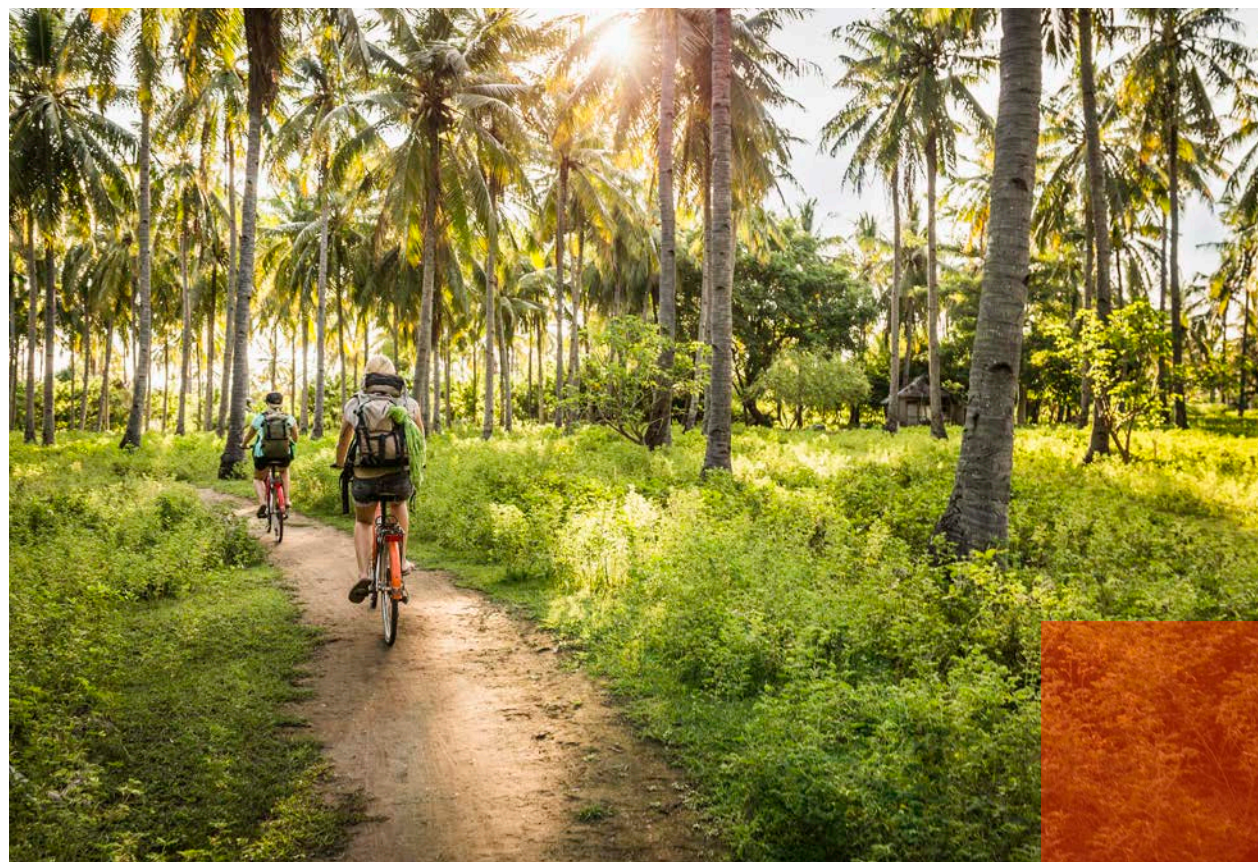
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Innovation, sustainability, and  
global connections for a world on  
the move.

DECEMBER 2025



# T N E T N O C



Skål International  
Edificio España | Avda. Palma de Mallorca 15, 1º  
29620 Torremolinos | Málaga, Spain  
+34 952 389 111 | [communication@skal.org](mailto:communication@skal.org)

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TOURISM  
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MAGAZINE

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# EDITORIAL



Denise Scrafton  
Skål International President

**THIS YEAR HAS FLOWN BY, YET YOUR EXECUTIVE BOARD HAS HANDLED MANY MAJOR AND COMPLEX ISSUES.**

I have had an extensive career in this incredible tourism industry, but being the President of Skål International has been a major highlight. I have travelled to every continent where Skål International is established and engaged in discussions about the organisation's future. Membership input has been crucial, especially in the 'Shaping Tomorrow' project. We presented our very targeted vision backed up by data and facts supplied by our General Secretariat at the AGA in Cusco, and I am delighted to advise that the reaction from the membership was positive.

Now, it is up to the 2026 Executive Board to transition the Strategy to a Plan. I personally look forward to watching Skål International's future success.

As we have said many times, we are the current and temporary custodians of Skål International. We have a vital responsibility to ensure that the organisation is in a relevant condition for future generations. We also have a responsibility to hand on from President to President in a seamless way to ensure the organisation can celebrate progress.

We need to remember that we have four full-time staff in Torremolinos, along with an army of dedicated volunteers. I have never seen so many travel professionals give their time so freely to an organisation. Our Executive Board, National and Area Committees, and many Committees are all run by very devoted volunteers. I want to express my gratitude to the team in Spain for their dedication and work to Skål International, as well as to all the volunteers who keep this organisation thriving.

The Executive Board gives their utmost support to Skål International and its Regions. Some Directors will be stepping down, and I would like to personally thank them for their dedication and friendship. We also have new members joining the Board, and I wish them all the best.

To President Elect Andres Hayes and his team, I know they will excel. To Vice President 2026 and President Elect 2027 Mohan NSN, I also wish you well.

As I now move into my new role as Immediate Past President, I am happy to watch from the sidelines, the progress that will be made and assist only if required.

**I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a Happy 2026.** I look forward to seeing many of you at the Nelson Mandela Bay Congress next year.

Georges Koch

Tourism Now Editor &  
Skål International Director



## THE GREEN SIDE OF THE AIR AND THE DARK SIDE OF THE SUN.

Solar power is often celebrated as clean and renewable, but its limitations are rarely emphasized—especially to buyers expecting quick payback and low maintenance. For industries like hospitality where constant, reliable power is essential, solar panel systems present serious challenges:

- High upfront costs for panels, installation, batteries, and inverters.
- Limited efficiency (15–22%), affected by rainy weather and location.
- Large rooftops space requirements for modest output.
- No production at night and reliance on costly battery storage
- Frequent maintenance and corrosion risks, especially near the sea.
- Drastically increased workload for engineering teams, and overtime.
- Periodical battery replacements that significantly raise running costs.

These issues can lead to power interruptions, dissatisfied guests, and unexpected operational expenses—undermining the 5–7 years ROI solar often promises. Over such a period, engineering teams will spend countless hours maintaining the system, and batteries or electrical components may need replacing multiple times.

Solar also raises concerns about land use, manufacturing impact, waste disposal, and the scarcity of rare materials needed for production. While its main goal is to reduce electricity purchased from the grid, there is another, often overlooked, approach that can achieve similar cost savings with far fewer burdens: reduce consumption instead of producing energy.

## Targeting the Biggest Energy Consumer: Air Conditioning.

In hotel rooms, air conditioning and heating account for about 60%-65% of total electricity use. Reducing this load is easier, less costly, and works both day and night—without adding maintenance or requiring replacement parts.

Some Japanese-patented technologies, offers exactly that. By optimizing HVAC system efficiency with static elimination nets, it cuts electricity consumption by up to 25%. Systems like that has no moving parts, electronics, or batteries, requires no maintenance, and delivers ROI in just 1–3 years—far shorter than solar panels. Moreover, those meshes provide odor elimination from smoke, rotten fruits, and smells of sewage.

## Clear benefits across the board.

From engineering to accounting to marketing, the appeal is straightforward: lower energy bills, reduced carbon footprint, and a credible sustainability story for eco-conscious guests. Even travelers who don't prioritize green choices indirectly contribute to environmental goals through reduced operational emissions.

For hotels and real estate properties, saving energy instead of producing it is not only simpler and more reliable, but also a smarter path to both economic and environmental returns.





# Skål International World Congress 2025

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL  
HELD 2025 WORLD  
CONGRESS IN THE HEART  
OF THE ANDES.

The 84th Skål International World Congress took place from 25 to 30 September 2025 in Cusco, Peru, marking the first-ever Skål International World Congress in the country and the return of the event to South America after 30 years.

Nestled in the heart of the Andes, Cusco, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and former capital of the Inca Empire, offered a stunning backdrop of Incan

and Spanish colonial architecture, cultural heritage, and gateway access to Machu Picchu and the Sacred Valley.

With over 300 participants from more than 30 countries, the congress celebrated international friendship, professional growth, and business opportunities in the global tourism sector.





**OPENING CEREMONY**

The Opening Ceremony on 26 September was held outdoors at the historic Koricanha Esplanade, the most sacred ceremonial site of the Inca Empire. Participants enjoyed a vibrant flag parade featuring tourism students in traditional attire, while distinguished government officials and the CEO of LATAM Airlines delivered remarks on tourism, culture, and international collaboration.

**SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARDS**

The 2025 Sustainable Tourism Awards highlighted global commitment to responsible and innovative tourism, while Skål International Ciudad Condal Barcelona (Spain) received the Platinum Membership Award, and Skål International Mérida (Mexico) was named Skål International Club of the Year.

**ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Annual General Assembly on 27 September at the Cusco Convention Centre featured Executive Board reports, the presentation of the Shaping Tomorrow Strategy project and the announcement of elections' results.



**2026 AND 2027 SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS**

Nelson Mandela Bay (South Africa) was confirmed as the host of the 2026 World Congress, and Cádiz (Spain) was selected for 2027.

**PANEL DISCUSSION**

A Panel Discussion on 28 September explored how innovation, sustainability, and technology are shaping the future of Skål International and the tourism industry.

**PRESIDENT'S GALA DINNER**

The Congress culminated with the President's Gala Dinner at the historic Santo Domingo Convent, featuring the chain ceremony, presentation of awards, and the artistic performance 'Andean Gods', celebrating Andean traditions, music, and dance.

**POST TOURS**

Participants also explored the Sacred Valley, Peru's remarkable destinations such as Arequipa, Lima, Iquitos, and the Amazon rainforest, and enjoyed the country's rich gastronomy, blending ancient heritage with modern creativity.

The 84th Skål International World Congress in Cusco was a resounding success, fostering cultural exchange, friendship, and professional collaboration.



*Members are encouraged to join in Nelson Mandela Bay in 2026 to continue the legacy of connection, sustainability, and shared passion for global tourism!*





# SKÅL INTERNATIONAL EXECUTIVE BOARD 2026



→ **Andrés Hayes**  
President  
*Region 1 (U.S.A.)*  
Principal AH Consulting Firm /  
President & CEO Airtifae Group



→ **Mohan NSN**  
Vice President 2026  
President Elect 2027  
*Region 10 (India)*  
CEO Kennedy Holidays



**Marc Rheaume**  
Director Governance,  
Statutes and By-laws  
*Region 2 (Canada,  
Bahamas)*  
Vice President Delta  
Calgary South



**Enrique Flores**  
Director Governance,  
Statutes and By-laws  
*Region 3 (Mexico)*  
Director General Mexico  
Travel Group



**Ian Gillespie**  
Director Governance,  
Statutes and By-laws  
*Region 4 (Argentina,  
Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia,  
Ecuador, Panama,  
Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay,  
Venezuela)*  
Director APG Network  
Peru



**Toni Ritter**  
Director Membership  
Development,  
Membership Development  
Fund and Florimond  
Volckaert Fund  
*Region 5 (Germany)*  
General Manager Hotel  
Sylter Hof



**Georges Koch**  
Director Media, Public  
Relations, Branding and  
Marketing  
*Region 6 (Switzerland)*  
Executive Director World  
Peace Routes



**Stefan Pettersson**  
Director Technology  
*Region 7 (Austria,  
Belgium, Estonia,  
Finland, France, Ireland,  
Luxembourg, Netherlands,  
Norway, Sweden, United  
Kingdom)*  
CEO Gameng



**José Luis Quintero**  
Director Sustainability  
*Region 8 (Andorra, Croatia,  
Czech Republic, Hungary,  
Italy, Kyrenia, Monaco,  
Romania, Spain)*  
Director Viajes Master  
Internacional



**Deniz Anapa**  
Director Sponsorship  
*Region 9 (Türkiye)*  
President La Maison Hotel



**Dushy Jayaweera**  
Director Training  
*Region 11 (Azerbaijan,  
Bahrain, Guam, Hong  
Kong, Indonesia, Japan,  
Korea, Macau, Malaysia,  
Nepal, Philippines,  
Singapore, Sri Lanka,  
Taiwan, Thailand)*  
Managing Director Acorn  
Aviation Limited



**Ashley Munn**  
Director Finance  
*Region 12 (Australia)*  
Owner Air Kimberley



**Victoria Wales**  
Director Congress &  
International Meetings  
*Region 13 (Fiji, New  
Zealand, Vanuatu)*  
Business Director  
Hot Events / Business  
Director House of Travel  
Christchurch City

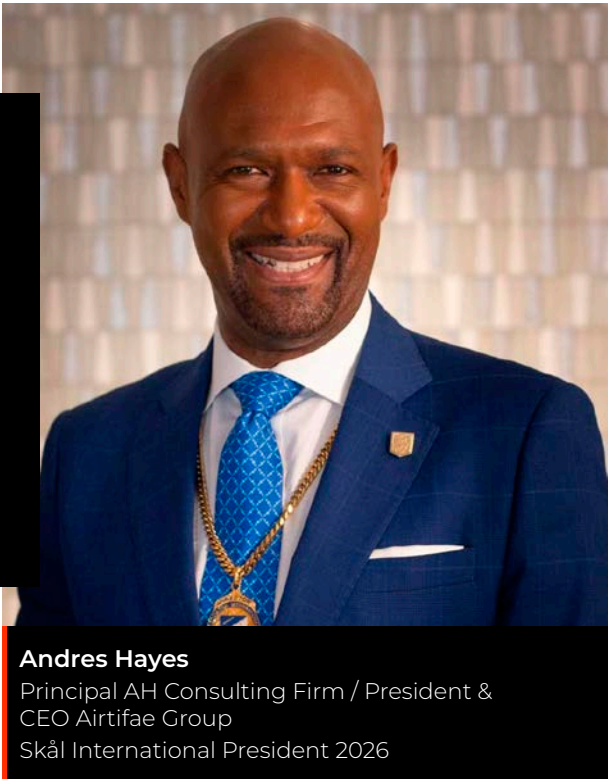


**Fiona Angelico**  
Director Trade Shows,  
Global Partnerships and  
Advocacy  
*Region 14 (Ethiopia,  
Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius,  
Nigeria, South Africa,  
Uganda, Zimbabwe)*  
Executive Head RBS Car  
Hire



# MEET ANDRES HAYES

## LEADERSHIP WITH A GLOBAL VISION FOR THE NEW ERA OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL



**Andres Hayes**  
Principal AH Consulting Firm / President &  
CEO Airtifae Group  
Skål International President 2026

With an international career spanning tourism, banking and marketing, Andres Hayes is preparing to lead Skål International in 2026. In this exclusive interview, he reveals how his experience and strategic vision will drive the organisation’s evolution.

In 2026, Skål International will embark on a decisive new phase under the presidency of Andrés Omar Hayes, a professional with over 25 years of experience in key sectors such as hospitality, banking and marketing. His international career includes eleven years at Visa International, where he held strategic positions in Miami and London, participating in the opening of the operations centre for Central Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Subsequently, as Senior Vice President, he managed operations in the Americas and Europe, consolidating his profile as a global leader. Recently awarded with the Global Engagement Champion Award by the Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

In the tourism sector, Hayes was General Manager of renowned establishments in Washington DC, such as B. Smith’s and The Mansion on O Street, and co-founded PRIMAPACT, a conglomerate specialising in travel and tourism consulting. Multilingual, speaking Spanish, English and

Portuguese, and with experience in corporate governance, he has served on boards of directors such as the DC Chamber of Commerce and Greater Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. At Skål International, his commitment is reflected in his role as president of Skål International Washington in 2018 and current member of its Executive Committee.

His vision for the presidency was articulated around the slogan ‘ONE Skål’, which symbolises global unity and collaboration between the nearly 300 clubs spread across 85 countries. This approach seeks to strengthen internal cohesion, attract new generations and promote sustainability in tourism, all in a context where technological innovation and human contact must coexist. With this perspective, Hayes is preparing to lead an organisation with more than 12,000 members, facing challenges such as regional governance, diversity and the evolution of the sector.

**YOUR EXPERIENCE COMBINES HOSPITALITY, BANKING AND MARKETING, AS WELL AS INTERNATIONAL POSITIONS AT VISA AND TOURISM CONSULTING. HOW DO YOU THINK THIS DIVERSITY WILL INFLUENCE YOUR VISION FOR LEADING SKÅL INTERNATIONAL?**

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to visit 125 countries, which has been a learning process to understand different cultures, how business is done

in different regions and, most importantly, to expand my network of friends. Skål International is a global organisation, and therefore it is essential that we have an international vision, beyond what we consider important in our club at a local level.

**IN 2018, YOU BECAME PRESIDENT OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WASHINGTON DC, AN EXPERIENCE THAT GAVE YOU FIRST-HAND INSIGHT**

**INTO THE DYNAMICS OF THE ORGANISATION. NOW, HIS PROPOSAL IS BASED ON THE SLOGAN ‘ONE SKÅL’. HOW DOES HE CONNECT THAT LOCAL EXPERIENCE WITH HIS GLOBAL VISION, AND WHAT SPECIFIC ACTIONS DOES HE PLAN TO TAKE TO MAKE IT A REALITY?**

Being president of Skål International Washington DC helped me understand the discipline of the organisation and the importance of being a

Skålleague. Being a Skålleague is one of the most important achievements in our industry, as we deal with other executives who are part of it and we have several things in common, such as protecting and speaking out about what affects us on a daily basis and understanding the challenges that arise as the world changes and the industry has to adjust.

**SKÅL INTERNATIONAL HAS ADOPTED A MODEL WITH 14 REGIONS AND REGIONAL DIRECTORS. HOW DO YOU EXPECT THIS STRUCTURE TO IMPACT MEMBER PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION?**

We implemented the governance plan two years ago and are still in the process of adapting. We knew it would not be an easy road, but at least now members have a voice and are being heard. We have made improvements and will continue to do so, because as with any project, there are always opportunities for refinement. Overall, I am very pleased that it has been implemented.

**TOURISM NEEDS TO ADAPT TO NEW TRENDS AND PROFESSIONAL PROFILES. WHAT ROLE DO YOU THINK THE YOUNGER GENERATIONS SHOULD PLAY WITHIN SKÅL INTERNATIONAL, AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ATTRACT THEM TO ENSURE THE FUTURE OF THE ORGANISATION?**

It is extremely important, as we all started in non-managerial positions and have worked our way up to where we are today. The current generation brings added value that ours did not have: technology. However, that alone is not enough to take on management. It is essential to support the new generations by mentoring them because, in reality, we are only here temporarily. If we want our organisation to continue, we cannot neglect them.

**TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, IS TRANSFORMING TOURISM AND THE WAY WE INTERACT. WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY IN SKÅL INTERNATIONAL**

**AND HOW COULD IT BE INTEGRATED TO STRENGTHEN THE ORGANISATION WITHOUT LOSING ITS HUMAN ESSENCE?**

Technology, including Artificial Intelligence, has a direct impact on us because it affects our industry. As I have mentioned on several occasions, I believe that AI is valuable for understanding the behaviour of travellers and consumers, but not for replacing employees. At the end of the day, we work in an industry called hospitality, which means welcoming someone, making them feel welcome and ensuring their comfort, safety and well-being, whether at home, in a place of transit or in a professional environment such as hotels or restaurants.

**WHAT ARE YOUR EXPECTATIONS FOR 2026, AND WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE MAIN CHALLENGES FOR THE ORGANISATION IN THE COMING YEAR?**

My expectation for 2026 is to make as much progress as possible in the effective implementation of the “Shaping the Future” project and to ensure that we make decisions that benefit the well-being of the organisation.

**WHAT WILL BE THE FUNDAMENTAL PILLARS ON WHICH YOU PLAN TO BUILD YOUR MANDATE AS PRESIDENT OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL, AND WHY DO YOU CONSIDER THEM TO BE PRIORITIES FOR THE ORGANISATION?**

The Board of Directors’ priority for 2026 is to continue with the ‘Shaping the Future’ project, which defines where we want to go as an international organisation, especially now that we are celebrating 92 years of existence. As I mentioned earlier, we must adapt to the changes we are experiencing in the world and in our industry.

**TOURISM IS UNDERGOING RAPID CHANGE: NEW TECHNOLOGIES, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRAVELLERS’ EXPECTATIONS.**

**HOW DO YOU ENVISAGE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL’S ROLE IN THIS SCENARIO IN FIVE YEARS’ TIME AND WHAT INITIATIVES DO YOU THINK WILL BE KEY TO MAINTAINING ITS RELEVANCE?**

It is essential that we keep up to date with what is happening in the industry. To do this, we must take an active role in the fight against human trafficking and continue to educate potential victims. We must also continue to be advocates in the field of sustainability and train our members on this issue. In addition, it is essential to establish strategic alliances with other organisations in the sector to unite our voices in the face of current challenges, such as the shortage of personnel in the industry and the need to adapt to travellers who are increasingly informed and demanding in their experiences.

**“Being a Skålleague is one of the most important achievements in our industry.”**

**IF YOU HAD TO SEND AN INSPIRING MESSAGE TO THE MORE THAN 12,000 MEMBERS OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLDWIDE, WHAT WOULD BE YOUR CALL FOR THIS NEW PHASE?**

First, let us remember that we are a club of friends. Second, it is not just about growing in membership numbers, but in the quality of the people who are part of our clubs. And third, as I have said on several occasions, we must work towards a united Skål International.

My motto for 2026 is: “United in friendship, we grow together”.

# AFFILIATIONS THAT AMPLIFY IMPACT.

## How Skål International's alliances shape global tourism.

FEW INDUSTRY NETWORKS CAN CLAIM THE BREADTH, LONGEVITY AND CONVENING POWER OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL.

With ~12,500 professionals in ~294 clubs across ~75 countries, Skål International's footprint gives it a unique vantage point to channel partnerships into practical value for members and into measurable progress for the sector at large.

Below is a concise tour of Skål International's core affiliations—who they are, when Skål International aligned with them, what instruments (MoUs, programmes, committees) underpin the relationships, and the value these ties create for members and the industry.

### 1. UN TOURISM (FORMERLY UNWTO). THREE DECADES OF STRUCTURED COLLABORATION.

Skål International has been an Affiliate Member of UN Tourism (UNWTO) since 1984, a relationship publicly recognised in October 2023 with a UNWTO award marking 30 years in the Affiliate Members' network. The partnership has been deepened through MoUs and joint ethics commitments.

Ethics & governance: Skål International signed the UNWTO Private Sector Commitment to the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism on 29 September 2015

(Antalya), formalising its pledge to responsible, inclusive tourism.

Formal instruments: Skål International has signed MoUs with UNEP (2009) and with UNWTO (2014) to cooperate on sustainability and sector development.

Affiliate platform leadership: Skål International leaders have contributed to the UNWTO Affiliate Members Board, including moderating thematic sessions during the 42nd Plenary

(Nov 2020) focused on recovery partnerships amid COVID-19.

Why this matters: The UN Tourism affiliation gives Skål International and its members a direct seat at the global policy table, access to Affiliate Members programmes, and visibility for initiatives like the Skål Sustainable Tourism Awards, which UN Tourism has supported and integrated in programme planning.



### 2. WORLD TRAVEL & TOURISM COUNCIL (WTTC). RECOVERY, REASSURANCE AND STANDARDS.

In March 2021, Skål International became an Associate Member of WTTC, aligning with the body that represents the world's leading travel & tourism companies. As of 8 June 2021, Skål was authorised to issue the WTTC #SafeTravels Stamp to eligible member

organisations adopting globally recognised health and hygiene protocols.

Skål International also provides guidance (including a Spanish portal) to help members apply for and use the Stamp, making the process swift and practical.

Why this matters: The WTTC alliance delivered immediate, member-level benefits during and after the pandemic, customer reassurance, market access and brand differentiation via a globally understood safety mark.



### 3. PACIFIC ASIA TRAVEL ASSOCIATION (PATA). KNOWLEDGE, YOUTH AND MARKET BRIDGES.

Skål International and PATA signed an organisational partnership in 2018 and renewed their MoU in 2025, broadening co-programming, reciprocal event access and youth collaboration. The current MoU includes a 10% discount for new PATA memberships (first year) for

Skål International members and shared webinars and platforms for Young Skål and PATA Youth. [ Skål International leaders actively participate in PATA Travel Mart and other platforms, strengthening Asia-Pacific connectivity for members.

Why this matters: PATA gives Skål International clubs and members a direct bridge into Asia-Pacific market intelligence, buyer-seller forums and a pipeline for next-gen talent engagement.



### 4. ECPAT & THE CODE. SECTOR LEADERSHIP ON CHILD PROTECTION.

In July 2018, Skål International launched its support for The Code (the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel & Tourism), aligning with ECPAT International to mobilise training and zero-tolerance policies across the value chain.

In 2023-24, Skål International's anti-trafficking sub-committee, working with ECPAT—rolled out

online training & certification for members (hotel and travel tracks) and promoted a Skål International Oath on Human Trafficking (AGA Málaga, Nov 2023).

Context: The Code is a multi-stakeholder, industry-driven initiative that equips companies with tools to prevent sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

Why this matters: Beyond compliance, this affiliation operationalises ethics, giving Skål International Clubs and member companies practical training, policies and reporting mechanisms to protect children and strengthen duty of care.



### 5. IIPT (INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR PEACE THROUGH TOURISM). TOURISM AS A FORCE FOR PEACE.

Skål International and IIPT have partnered on initiatives that put peace-building at the heart of tourism, most notably the IIPT/Skål International Peace Towns & Villages project launched in

2013, and the Travel for Peace campaign involving industry charter members.

Why this matters: The IIPT affiliation positions Skål International as a values-driven

convenor, promoting community-level action, from tolerance to youth empowerment, through tourism's everyday encounters.



#### SUSTAINABILITY PARTNER. AWARDS, STANDARDS AND SCALE.

Skål International's Sustainable Tourism Awards (STA) are anchored in UN Tourism's ethics framework and are backed by Biosphere/Responsible Tourism Institute (special award since 2018) and, since 2023, by Sustainable Travel International. These alliances extend winners' benefits with platform access, recognition and continuous-improvement tools.

Skål International's Tourism Sustainability Committee (2024-2025)

is scaling practical initiatives—world reforestation mapping, Sustainable Champions, catalogues of actions and ongoing training, linking Club-level action to global narratives.

Why this matters: These partnerships translate global sustainability frameworks into club-ready programmes, while giving members and destinations international visibility for credible, third-party-recognised achievements.

#### THE INDUSTRY WEIGHT, AND WHY AFFILIATIONS MATTER NOW.

With its global network and cross-sector composition, Skål International operates as a neutral, 'whole-of-industry' forum, able to carry standards (ethics, safety, sustainability) horizontally across subsectors and vertically from global frameworks to local clubs.

Affiliations with UN bodies, industry councils and purpose-led NGOs give Skål International the architecture to convert goodwill into programmes, benefits and recognition

that members can use in the market, today.

Affiliations are not just logos on a slide for Skål International; they're working alliances that let a 91-year-old network move faster, act bigger and deliver more—from global ethics and sustainability to market access and member-ready tools. The result is a stronger profession and a more resilient, responsible tourism economy.





# SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARDS WINNERS 2025



We are delighted to present the **winners of the 2025 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards.**

This year's honorees exemplify innovation and responsibility, driving meaningful change in the tourism industry and for our planet. Their initiatives set new benchmarks for sustainability and inspire us all to aim higher.

Congratulations to every winner for your vision, dedication, and outstanding contributions to shaping a more sustainable future for global tourism!



CATEGORY 'ACCESSIBLE TOURISM' WINNER

HAYLEYS LAISURE PLC  
SRI LANKA

WEBSITE >



WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Our mission is to uplift the communities we operate in by ensuring uninterrupted, equitable access to education for vulnerable children. Through Sisu Diriya, we transform our resort spaces into learning centers, empowering youth with knowledge and resilience while demonstrating that responsible tourism can actively strengthen social well-being.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

SDG 4 – Quality Education is the heart of Sisu Diriya. During Sri Lanka’s national crisis, children in rural communities faced severe educational disruption. By offering free, fully resourced study centers with professional tutoring and volunteer-led classes, we ensured continuity in learning, improved exam outcomes, and created long-term opportunities for every child we supported.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

Sisu Diriya has supported over 300 students with safe study environments, meals, digital access and high-quality teaching. The programme has achieved a 100% pass rate in Mathematics, Science and English at the O/L examination, strengthened school retention, improved student well-being and fostered strong community participation, creating meaningful, measurable and lasting social impact in our host communities.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

This recognition motivates us to expand Sisu Diriya and deepen our commitment to inclusive, community-centered tourism. It inspires us to innovate, strengthen digital learning, scaling our study center model and building long-term partnerships that uplift youth. The award reaffirms that tourism can be a powerful catalyst for social transformation.

CATEGORY 'ACCOMMODATION, FOOD AND HOSPITALITY SERVICES' WINNER

ITC MAURYA, NEW DELHI  
INDIA

WEBSITE >



WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Our mission is to redefine luxury through “Responsible Luxury”, embedding sustainability into every aspect of hospitality. Our commitment to energy efficiency, water stewardship, waste circularity, and biodiversity drives meaningful impact. As a LEED Platinum and LEED Zero Water certified hotel, we combine world-class guest experiences with measurable environmental performance, proving indulgence can responsibly nurture the planet and elevate guest wellbeing.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Our central focus aligns with SDG 12, reflecting our commitment to resource efficiency and circularity. Initiatives such as zero-mile in-house water bottling, biogas generation, plastic-free operations, and responsible waste systems reduce impact. Through local sourcing and operational optimization, we lower resource intensity while enhancing community value, proving luxury can be delivered with minimal ecological footprint and maximum positive influence.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

ITC Maurya delivers industry-leading sustainability through LEED Platinum and LEED Zero Water certifications. Advanced energy-efficiency systems, solar steam, and the Bio-Urja biogas plant cut carbon intensity. SBR technology, zero-mile water bottling, and full wastewater recycling maximize water stewardship. These initiatives conserve millions of liters, reduce emissions, and strengthen both environmental and community resilience.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

This award reinforces our commitment to responsible hospitality and motivates continuous sustainability leadership. It inspires us to push boundaries in decarbonization, water circularity, waste neutrality, and regenerative practices, supporting Net Zero Carbon goals. The recognition strengthens our mission to demonstrate that luxury can be indulgent and planet-positive, pioneering transformative solutions that support the worldwide shift toward responsible tourism.



CATEGORY 'COMMUNICATION' WINNER

THE ASIAN FOOTPRINTS  
(WHITEHAT MEDIA)

INDIA



WEBSITE >

WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Our mission is to rewrite the travel narrative through dark-green, regenerative, community-led tourism. The Asian Footprints advocates “Slow is the New Speed,” urging travellers to move lightly, leave mindful footprints, give back to host communities, and nurture biodiversity. We promote climate-conscious journeys that align with net-zero pathways, circular economy values, and UN Tourism SDGs, proving travel can heal, not harm the planet.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption & Production is our core anchor. Slow travel dismantles extractive, carbon-heavy tourism models and replaces them with low-impact, community-first, ethically produced experiences. By encouraging travellers to stay longer, spend time locally, and consume consciously, we shift tourism from a transactional industry to a regenerative force that honors culture, ecosystems, and economic dignity.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

Our slow-travel initiatives encourage companies and travellers to redirect tourism flows from over-touristed hotspots to underserved rural communities, enabling fair income distribution, carbon-light mobility, and heritage preservation. We champion regenerative itineraries, plastic-free travel habits, and amplified local storytellers. The result: deeper travel, longer stays, higher community earnings, reduced waste, and measurable growth in planet-positive tourism behavior across our audience network.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

This Skål recognition is a powerful validation that regenerative, net-positive tourism is no longer a niche, it’s the future. The award fuels our commitment to scale deeper storytelling, build new slow-travel coalitions, and champion climate-ethical tourism models. It strengthens our resolve to remain disruptively green, provoke behavior change, and continue aligning purposefully with SDGs and the global net-zero travel movement.

CATEGORY 'COMMUNITY, GOVERNMENT AND SERVICE COMPANIES' WINNER

MDLULI SAFARI LODGE

SOUTH AFRICA

WEBSITE >



WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Mdluli Safari Lodge was developed to uplift the 45,000-member Mdluli Community through a sustainable tourism initiative born from a successful land reform. Our mission is grounded in community partnership, conservation impact and environmental sustainability. This model has been recognised as a blueprint for best practice in South Africa, proving that people, the environment and tourism can thrive together.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Five SDGs guide our work: 8, 10, 11, 12 and 15, shaping how we create employment, reduce inequality, support Community development and protect natural ecosystems. Our commitment is holistic, where people, planet and prosperity thrive. Our ethos, feel good and leave something good behind, reflects how every guest’s stay contributes to a meaningful, lasting, positive impact.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

Our initiatives have created employment, developed skills, delivered clean water, supported education and nutrition, and improved key Community facilities. Conservation efforts include anti-poaching, ranger training and large-scale snare and alien plant removal. Environmentally, we use sustainable construction materials, solar power and natural water filtration to reduce our ecological footprint.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

The award motivates us to keep raising our standards, exploring more forward-thinking ways to strengthen Community impact and environmental stewardship. Learning from global sustainable tourism leaders drives us to innovate, while Skål International’s network of changemakers inspires new ideas, collaborations and partnerships that help us contribute meaningfully to ethical, eco-conscious tourism.



CATEGORY 'EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROGRAMS' WINNER

WATERBOM BALI  
(PT BALI OCEAN MAGIC)  
INDONESIA



WEBSITE >

WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Our mission is to prove that great experiences and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand. Guided by the Balinese philosophy of Tri Hita Karana, our Karmic Returns Sustainability program ensures every visit contributes positively to Bali’s environment and community. At Waterbom, sustainability is built into the way we operate and the way guests experience the park.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production. It reflects how we operate a waterpark responsibly: efficient water and energy use, waste elimination and onsite organic composting, and circular systems that reduce impact while supporting long-term community and environmental wellbeing. SDG 12 captures the essence of how our Karmic Returns approach works day to day in the park.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

As of August 2025, we processed 291,673 kg of waste with a 95% recycling rate, sending only 2,043 kg to landfill. Water use dropped from 336 to 210 liters per guest, supported by 9,111 m³ of recycled water and 42,939 m³ recharged to the aquifer. Our 686 solar panels also helped cut overall energy intensity and emissions.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

Awards like this encourage us to keep challenging ourselves with what a waterpark can achieve in sustainability. It’s great motivation for our team to keep improving our initiatives and raising the bar for responsible tourism. This recognition pushes us to keep assessing and reviewing our systems, explore new solutions, and share practices that help move the wider tourism industry forward.

CATEGORY 'INNOVATIVE SUSTAINABLE IT SOLUTIONS' WINNER

LA MANO DEL MONO  
MEXICO



WEBSITE >

WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

The purpose of La Mano del Mono is to join local hands and co-create global impacts through regenerative tourism. Our mission is to create and facilitate solutions, based on partnerships and technology, that promote regenerative tourism for the conservation of natural areas and the well-being of local communities.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

Goal 17: Strategic Partnerships. The world’s most pressing challenges are complex and collective, which is why they require strategic partnerships. At La Mano del Mono, we design replicable and scalable solutions that promote regenerative tourism, contributing to the conservation of natural areas and the well-being of local communities.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

More than 750 nature tourism companies operate in over 100 natural areas in Mexico and Latin America. We have empowered over 250 women leaders and trained 8,000 people in rural communities. Local companies have increased their income by 45%, and we have co-designed six public policies to promote regenerative tourism.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

Receiving recognition from Skål International encourages us to continue creating solutions in Latin America, strengthening nature tourism destinations through Market Ready Tourism and Reserva Natura, in partnership with local companies and managers committed to increasing the impact and potential of adventure and nature tourism.



CATEGORY 'TOUR OPERATORS AND TRAVEL AGENCIES' WINNER

SARUNI BASECAMP

KENYA

WEBSITE >



WHAT IS THE MISSION THAT GUIDES YOUR WORK IN CONTRIBUTING TO A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD THROUGH TOURISM?

Our mission is to create meaningful travel experiences that protect wildlife, uplift local communities, and honour the landscapes. Every decision we make, from community partnerships to conservation programs to how we structure guest experiences, is guided by the idea that tourism should leave a place better than we found it. We're proof that conservation thrives when indigenous communities lead it.

IF YOU HAD TO CHOOSE ONE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL AS THE CENTRAL FOCUS OF YOUR PROJECT, WHICH ONE WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

SDG 15: Life on Land because people and nature sit at the heart of everything we do. Healthy landscapes support thriving communities and by focusing on this SDG, we are also contributing to several others from quality education, fair pay to better health services because conservation and community wellbeing are deeply interconnected.

WHAT CONCRETE IMPACT HAS YOUR COMPANY OR INITIATIVE ACHIEVED IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY?

We have supported community-led conservation initiatives that protect 1.2 million hectares of wilderness, created employment and training opportunities for local youth, and strengthened partnerships with the indigenous Maasai and Samburu communities whose stewardship is essential to protecting these landscapes. We have reduced our environmental footprint by implementing responsible water use, renewable energy solutions, and waste-reduction practices across our properties.

HOW DOES THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARD INSPIRE YOU TO CONTINUE INNOVATING IN YOUR FUTURE ENDEAVORS?

Skål recognition reinforces our belief that our efforts are making a difference. It motivates us to push further, take bolder steps, and keep experimenting with new ideas that benefit both people and nature. The award encourages us to continue leading by example, nurturing partnerships, and finding innovative ways to protect the natural and cultural heritage that makes travel so meaningful.

Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards.



We extend our heartfelt thanks to all participants of the 2025 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards. Your dedication and innovative efforts are vital in shaping a more responsible and resilient tourism industry.

Once again, congratulations to all the winners for your outstanding achievements and for inspiring us to continue striving toward a sustainable future!



# SKÅL CLUB OF THE YEAR 2025

Skål  
International  
Mérida



The Skål Club of the Year 2025 was officially revealed during the Opening Ceremony of the 84th Skål International World Congress in Cuzco, Peru, on 26 September.

After receiving the highest number of votes, Skål International Mérida from Mexico was honored with the prestigious title. The Club was presented with a distinctive crystal trophy and

a certificate granting one free Double Congress registration in First Class for the 2026 Skål International World Congress. Airfare not included.

We proudly congratulate Skål International Mérida for this outstanding achievement and invite you to discover their remarkable dedication and initiatives that serve as an inspiring example for Clubs around the world [here](#).



**HOW DOES YOUR CLUB ATTRACT NEW MEMBERS AND HOW DO YOU RETAIN THEM?**

To attract new members, we designed a programme called '1+1 Skål' through which each member identifies a tourism leader in our destination whom we would like to add to our community of successful entrepreneurs and invites them to participate in one of our food/networking experiences, as we believe that Skål International Mérida cannot be explained, you have to experience it.

This programme is permanent and active throughout the year and valid for each of our regular meals, so that the task of recruiting leaders from the tourism industry for the growth of our community is in the hands of all the active members of our Club.

We retain our current members by creating an exclusive atmosphere at each meeting, a unique experience that makes members not want to miss a single meal. This is achieved in several ways:

1. Creating new business opportunities through a networking system that takes place one hour before the start of each monthly meal.
2. We ensure that these meals are held at different estates, hotels, restaurants, or tourist attractions in our destination,

thus increasing the catalogue of venues at the top of mind of leaders in Yucatán, who thereby obtain more resources when it comes to promoting our destination. At the same time, we help these venues to promote themselves.

3. We build a united tourism community that exchanges ideas on a monthly basis and discusses common problems in order to find solutions together. This gives us representation, because the more members belong to our club, the more voices we represent, and that is the only way to become 'the authoritative voice of tourism' in our destination.

**WHAT METHODS DOES THE CLUB USE TO ENCOURAGE ATTENDANCE AT MONTHLY EVENTS AND KEEP ENTHUSIASM AND PARTICIPATION ALIVE?**

We reinvent ourselves with every meal; they are all different. It is not simply a meal, but an event designed as a unique experience with multiple components. These components are both fun and effective in generating new business opportunities, connecting members with other key players in the industry in our destination, and with authorities who are invited to attend because it suits the



interests of the members. With this formula, we ensure that attendance is highly desirable and that no one wants to miss out on this experience.

**DOES THE CLUB HAVE ANY EXTRAORDINARY PROJECTS IT IS CURRENTLY WORKING ON?**

Skål International Mérida has a unique project: ‘Encuentro Punta Turismo’ (Punta Tourism Meeting) for Young Skål professionals. This project invites young people from all over the world to come to Mexico and actively participate. We have identified a decline in interest among young people in Mexico in pursuing a career in tourism. Therefore, we designed this event together with our Young Skål professionals in Mérida to:

- 1. Attract the attention of young people by presenting them with success stories in our industry and thus inspire them to follow these models as examples and achieve a leading role in tourism in all its aspects in the near future.
- 2. Teach them to see the Young Skål professionals as a tool for creating an international network of tourism experts that will be useful for the development of their professional careers or their businesses, either as mentors or as strategic allies in international business.

**HOW DO YOU PROMOTE THE NUMEROUS ADVANTAGES THAT MEMBERSHIP OFFERS TO YOUR MEMBERS AND FUTURE MEMBERS?**

Through a digital brochure and our social media channels, but in reality, the most efficient way is by word of mouth. To achieve this successfully, we must generate interesting content and share ongoing activities with members beyond the regular meals. For example, we offer free training courses to our members, taught by our own active members, who provide valuable tools that help our businesses grow; we invite them to participate in environmental care initiatives; or to attend presentations on new tourist attractions that are constantly emerging in our destination. The effectiveness of Skål International Mérida

Club also lies in the fact that we measure how much business is closed monthly among our members, and with this metric, we can now assign an economic value to the return on investment of membership, making belonging to Skål International Mérida something aspirational and highly desirable.

**HOW DOES YOUR CLUB CONTRIBUTE TO THE LOCAL TOURISM INDUSTRY AND THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL NETWORK?**

The best way Skål International Mérida contributes to the local industry is through twinning programmes. Beyond signing an agreement at an event and celebrating, we follow up with meetings between members of the twinned clubs in a constant search for strategic alliances between members that bring tourism to our destination and, in turn, allow visitors to our destination to discover the wonders of the national and international destinations with which we have twinning agreements.

Our club also contributes to the international network of Skål International by presenting our ‘Encuentro Punta Turismo’ project in different forums. We shared our progress with this programme at both the Skål International World Congress 2024 in Türkiye and the 2025 Congress in Peru. In Türkiye we presented the initiative before it was implemented, and this year in Peru, we presented the results as a success story from Mexico.

Thanks to this achievement, the project will be carried out once again in Monterrey in 2026. We are confident that this will significantly increase our number of Young Skål members, and not only in Mexico.

Having been presented in Peru, other nations have shown interest in participating and sending their young people. This will be a catalyst for new generations to seek to join Skål International and become members, building from today the strong and solid Skål International that we all want to see.

■ **Gonzalo Novelo Luján**  
President.  
Skål International Mérida.  
Mexico.

# SKÅLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR 2025

## MICHAEL COLLINS

Michael Collins, recently named Skålleague of the Year 2025, is a distinguished leader in Western Australia’s tourism and hospitality sector. With over three decades of experience, he has played a pivotal role in shaping strategies that enhance visitor experiences, foster regional development, and strengthen industry partnerships. In this exclusive interview, Michael shares insights into his professional journey, the impact of Skål International on his life, and his vision for the future of tourism.

“ *Tourism is a people industry.* ”

**COULD YOU TELL US A BIT ABOUT YOURSELF — HOW LONG YOU HAVE BEEN A MEMBER OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL AND YOUR BACKGROUND IN THE TOURISM INDUSTRY?**

My career in tourism and hospitality so far, spans more than thirty five years here in Western Australia. I have held roles with international hotel groups, regional pubs, and eco retreats, as well as senior strategic leadership roles that have taken me across the length and breadth of the state. These experiences have strengthened my commitment to service standards, regional dispersal, stronger visitor outcomes, and genuine community benefit. They have also shaped the way I work with operators, government, and industry





bodies to lift the value of tourism for Perth and regional Western Australia. Today I lead CF Global, a consultancy focused on strategic planning, self drive tourism, destination marketing and development, and stakeholder engagement. My work supports regions, operators, and agencies to better understand visitor behaviour, respond to emerging trends, and design practical actions that grow demand and improve long term sustainability. Across all of my roles, I focus on people and partnerships. I aim to build alignment, strengthen industry capability, and support a sector that continues to deliver value for Western Australia's communities, businesses, and visitors well into the future.

**WHAT HAS SKÅL INTERNATIONAL BROUGHT TO YOU, BOTH PROFESSIONALLY AND PERSONALLY?**

Skål International has broadened my world in ways I never expected when I first joined. Professionally, it has connected me with people whose vision, knowledge and experience has helped shape my own leadership style. Through Skål International, I have made so many business connections locally and across the globe and built partnerships that add significantly to my own business offering, something I wish to continue expanding in the future. Personally, Skål International has given me deep and lasting friendships across many

countries. These friendships have grown through shared values, trust, and respect. The sense of belonging within the Skål community has enriched my life and reminded me of the importance of genuine connection. Skål International has also encouraged me to give back and support others in the way so many supported me. These experiences shaped my focus on mentoring and on building pathways for young people entering the tourism, travel and hospitality sectors.

**WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO YOU TO BE NAMED SKÅLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR 2025?**

Wow. I am still coming to terms with it! Being named Skålleague of the Year 2025 is truly an incredible honour, something that I never imagined. I have never pursued recognition, my motivation has always been service, connection, and contributing to Skål International and an industry that has given me so much over many years. To receive both the Australian Skålleague of the Year and now this global award is hugely humbling. I see this recognition as a shared achievement; it reflects the dedication of the Skål International Perth Committee and our members who give so much of themselves to support our industry here in Perth and across Western Australia. Our committee and Club work hard to uphold the values of integrity, friendship, professionalism, and service. This award strengthens my own commitment

to lead with purpose, support our members, and help build the next generation of industry leaders. Personally, this award gives me renewed energy to continually promote not only the ideals of Skål International, that of "Doing Business Among Friends", but contributing to our organisations long term and sustainable future, challenging those old paradigms and encouraging change through ongoing relevance and increased leadership.

**WHAT PROJECTS DO YOU HAVE IN MIND FOR THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM?**

In the short term, Skål International Perth is focusing strongly on the SKIWA Mentoring Program. We are building a clear pathway for mentees that supports confidence, leadership growth, skill development, and connection. This includes improved mentor preparation, structured activities, and stronger links with industry and employers. I want young people to see Skål as a place that invests in them from the start of their career. In the medium term, our priorities include deeper collaboration with education providers, industry bodies, and local operators in Perth. We are very keen to help establish a new Southwest Club, we already have a number of Perth members living in the Southwest of Western Australia, and this could be the foundation needed to start a new club. We look to strengthening relationships with our Twin Clubs - Cape

Town, Hyderabad, Bali and Auckland, as well as our sister clubs here in Western Australia; Broome and Kununurra. I aim to keep lifting the profile of Skål International Perth, maintaining its relevance, improve engagement with members and our wider industry, all the while maintaining a strong focus on inclusion, leadership development, and industry (community) benefit.

**HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE TOURISM INDUSTRY EVOLVING OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS?**

I think tourism and travel will continue to evolve as travellers seek meaning, trust, and connection. Visitors want travel experiences that respect culture, support local people, and protect natural places. This shift will guide decisions around product development, community engagement, and marketing. Regional destinations will become more important as visitors look for open space, slower travel, and a connection with local stories. Technology will reshape planning, booking, interpretation, and real time visitor support. Artificial intelligence will influence service delivery, labour needs, and the way travellers interact with destinations. Businesses will need to adapt by strengthening digital capability, focusing on personalised service, and improving workflow. Workforce challenges will remain significant. Attraction and retention will rely on clear career pathways, flexibility,

mentoring, fair workplaces, and positive leadership. Regions and employers that invest in people, partnerships, and long-term sustainability will see strong growth. Western Australia is well placed to benefit from these shifts.

**IN YOUR VIEW, WHAT ROLE CAN SKÅL INTERNATIONAL PLAY IN SHAPING THE FUTURE OF GLOBAL TOURISM?**

Skål International already brings a global community built on trust, which positions the organisation to influence the future of global tourism in a practical and positive way. Skål strengthens leadership across the sector through values-based decision making and cooperation across borders. Its international reach supports conversations on sustainability, cultural respect, regional development, and responsible visitor behavior. Skål also holds a strong place in developing future leaders. Young professionals and new associates need guidance, encouragement, and access to experienced people. Skål can expand structured pathways for emerging talent and build networks that give them confidence and direction. Perhaps, instead of older Skålleagues retiring and disappearing from our clubs we should endeavor to give them purpose and encourage them to remain active within our clubs and take on mentoring roles for our young members. The organisation's focus on friendship and service can further create an environment where

people globally support each other without competition. This can help the industry respond to workforce pressures, global uncertainty, and rising traveller expectations. By keeping people at the centre of decisions, Skål International can guide tourism toward a more inclusive and responsible future. However, this requires a shift in thinking across the entire organisation as it is today. Rather than focus of how things were, we need to focus on what is possible and how we move forward with purpose, we need to embrace succession and change, not fear it.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS ENTERING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY?**

My advice is simple. Stay curious, ask questions. Learn from people who work across different areas of tourism. Build strong relationships across the industry. Look for mentors who challenge you and support you. Take opportunities to develop new skills. Stay open to roles that broaden your perspective. Respect the cultures and communities you work with. Focus on service, integrity, and fairness. Tourism is a people industry. Those who have a positive culture of service and who give their time to help others grow, and those who lead with kindness and direction, are the ones who succeed over the long term.





# TECHNOLOGY GAME CHANGERS: FUTURE TRENDS IN TRAVEL & TOURISM

**DISCOVER HOW EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES ARE RESHAPING THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM.**

This **report by WTTC and Trip.com Group** offers strategic insights into key trends, their impact on traveller experience, and real-world examples of innovation across the industry.

*If you are not a member of WTTC, you can purchase individual reports for download. Create an account or login to your existing account to purchase content!*

## THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IS ENTERING A DECISIVE DECADE...

...ONE SHAPED NOT ONLY BY CHANGING TRAVELLER'S EXPECTATIONS, BUT BY RAPID TECHNOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION.


From artificial intelligence and immersive digital experiences to smart infrastructure and sustainable innovation, technology is no longer a support function of tourism; it is becoming its primary driver. In this context, the Technology Game Changers: Future Trends in Travel & Tourism initiative by the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) offers a critical lens through which to understand how innovation will redefine the sector's future.

As global travel rebounds and evolves in the aftermath of major economic, environmental, and social disruptions, destinations and businesses face mounting pressure to become more resilient, efficient, and personalized. Travelers now expect seamless digital journeys—before, during, and after their trips—while governments and industry leaders seek solutions that balance growth with sustainability, inclusivity, and security. Emerging technologies such as AI-driven personalization, biometric identification, smart mobility, virtual and augmented reality, and data-powered sustainability tools are rapidly reshaping how travel is planned, delivered, and experienced.

WTTC's exploration of technology game changers highlights not just what technologies are emerging, but why they matter. These innovations have the potential to remove friction from travel, unlock new business models, improve crisis preparedness, and reduce the environmental footprint of tourism worldwide. At the same time, they raise important questions around data privacy, digital inequality, workforce transformation, and ethical governance—issues that will define the long-term success of technological adoption in the sector.

This report delves into the key future trends identified by WTTC, examining how technology is transforming travel and tourism across the entire value chain. By understanding these game changers today, industry stakeholders can better prepare for a future where competitiveness, sustainability, and travellers' satisfaction are increasingly determined by technological leadership.

■ **Georges Koch**  
Director Media, Public Relations, Branding and Marketing, Skål International.

 **Download the full report here**  
(WTTC login required)



# ANTALYA

## A WORLD-CLASS TOURISM DESTINATION WITH UNMATCHED DIVERSITY

ANTALYA, OFTEN CALLED THE TURKISH RIVIERA, IS ONE OF THE MOST ATTRACTIVE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS IN THE WORLD, BLENDING NATURAL BEAUTY, RICH HISTORY, AND MODERN TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE.

Located on Türkiye’s southern Mediterranean coast, Antalya welcomes millions of visitors every year who seek sunshine, culture, and unforgettable experiences.

### SUN, SEA, AND BEACHES

With more than 640 kilometers of coastline, Antalya is renowned for its golden sandy beaches and crystal-clear waters. Award-winning beaches such as Konyaaltı, Lara, and Kaputaş are perfect for swimming, sunbathing, and water sports, including parasailing, diving, and sailing. Thanks to its warm Mediterranean climate, Antalya offers an extended holiday season from spring to late autumn, making it an ideal year-round destination.

### HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RICHNESS

Antalya is also a gateway to ancient civilizations. Visitors can explore UNESCO World Heritage Sites such as Xanthos-Letoon and the world-famous Aspendos Theatre, or wander through the narrow streets of Kaleiçi (Old Town), where Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman influences meet. The Antalya Archaeological Museum further emphasizes the city’s importance in global cultural heritage.

### DIVERSE TOURISM OPTIONS

What sets Antalya apart is its tourism diversity, offering something for every traveler:

- **Luxury Tourism:** World-class resorts, exclusive yacht marinas, and championship golf courses in Belek.
- **Adventure & Nature:** Hiking along the Lycian Way, rafting in Köprülü Canyon, or exploring hidden waterfalls.
- **Health & Wellness:** Thermal springs, modern spas, and wellness retreats.
- **Cultural Tourism:** International film festivals, concerts, and art exhibitions.

- **Winter Tourism:** Skiing at Saklıkent Ski Center in the morning, then swimming in the Mediterranean the same afternoon.
- **MICE Tourism:** Antalya is a leading international hub for meetings, incentives, conferences, and exhibitions, offering state-of-the-art convention centers and luxury hotels that regularly host world-class events.

### GASTRONOMY AND LOCAL FLAVORS

Antalya’s cuisine reflects both Mediterranean freshness and Anatolian richness. Local specialties such as tahini piyaz, freshly caught seafood, and a wide variety of citrus-based desserts and homemade jams highlight the region’s identity as a true citrus paradise. These authentic flavors make Antalya an unforgettable destination for food lovers.

### EASY ACCESS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Antalya International Airport provides direct connections to major cities around the world, ensuring easy accessibility. With its modern hotels, eco-friendly facilities, and advanced tourism infrastructure, Antalya stands out not only as a leisure paradise but also as a hub for business and sustainable tourism.

With its breathtaking coastline, cultural depth, and unmatched diversity of tourism opportunities, Antalya is far more than a holiday resort—it is a complete travel destination. Whether you seek luxury, adventure, cultural exploration, or wellness, Antalya promises experiences that will stay with you forever.

**We look forward to welcoming you!**

# TABARD INN

## A SPONSOR WITH A LEGACY IN HOSPITALITY

WITH MORE THAN A CENTURY OF LIVING HISTORY, **TABARD INN** IS WASHINGTON, D.C.’S LONGEST CONTINUOUSLY OPERATING HOTEL AND RESTAURANT, OPENED IN 1922 IN THE HEART OF DUPONT CIRCLE.

**Founded by Marie Willoughby Rogers**, its name pays homage to the “Tabard” in Geoffrey Chaucer’s ‘The Canterbury Tales’, evoking the welcoming spirit of an old English manor that has inspired its style and service from day one.

Its trajectory reflects a genuine commitment to the community and the sector: during the Second World War, the establishment housed officers from the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), contributing to the national effort through hospitality. Decades later, Tabard Inn became a majority employee-owned company (ESOP), consolidating a service culture in which “people serve people” and excellence is built from within.

Today, Tabard Inn maintains its hallmark of craft, seasonal cuisine alongside more than two dozen unique rooms, offering travellers and tourism professionals a refuge rich in character, art, and history just steps from the institutional hubs of the US capital. In keeping with its sector-focused vocation, Tabard Inn supports the network of tourism leaders as a sponsor of Skål International, strengthening collaboration and the ethos of “doing business among friends” that defines the organisation.

With this legacy and contemporary outlook, **Tabard Inn embodies the kind of partner that advances responsible tourism:** a historic host that continues to innovate without losing its soul.



# Manage and certify your destination in sustainability with Biosphere.



International recognition.  
Verifiable results.



**B I O S P H E R E**

info@biospheresustainable.com



# Biosphere

THE METHODOLOGY THAT TURNS SUSTAINABILITY INTO A COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE FOR TOURIST DESTINATIONS.

At a time when sustainability is no longer a differentiating value but a real demand of the tourism market, destinations face the challenge of demonstrating that their commitments go beyond theory. The central question is no longer which actions are announced, but how to demonstrate that these advances are real, measurable, and verifiable. The answer does not lie in isolated initiatives, but in management models capable of measuring, tracking, and communicating every effort with transparency. Only then can credibility be earned among tourists, investors, and local communities.

In this sense, the Biosphere methodology offers precisely this **comprehensive management framework** and has become an essential tool for those seeking rigor and coherence. Through its certification system, destinations can assess their level of alignment with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), monitor results, and communicate their progress clearly and verifiably. This approach not only makes it possible to organize and evaluate actions, but also to transform them into a solid, data-based narrative capable of generating trust and projecting leadership.

One of Biosphere's most notable contributions is its

ability to turn sustainability into real competitive value. Thorough measurement of actions makes it possible to demonstrate impact; transparency builds credibility; and international recognition positions destinations within a global network working under shared criteria. In addition, the model fosters public-private collaboration that drives joint projects aligned with local needs, promoting tourism that strengthens social cohesion and cultural identity.

With more than **25 years of experience** and the backing of the Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI), the results achieved by destinations working with the Biosphere methodology are already visible in numerous territories. From environmental regeneration programs to sustainable mobility strategies, destinations that are part of the international Biosphere network are demonstrating that sustainability is not an added cost, but a strategic investment.

Furthermore, Biosphere certification serves as a guarantee that the practices implemented are consistent with the commitments made and that the destination is moving toward a more regenerative, competitive model aligned with the expectations of today's travelers.

And this is precisely where the true difference lies. Real sustainability cannot be based on statements of intent, but on processes capable of measuring, verifying, improving, and certifying. This is the value provided by the Biosphere Destination Certification, awarded by the Responsible Tourism Institute (RTI), an international recognition that certifies the correct implementation of sustainable practices verified through an independent audit. **This process ensures that the destination is fulfilling its sustainable tourism commitments and is tangibly aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.**

For professionals in the sector, the question is no longer whether to commit to sustainability, but how to do so with rigor, efficiency, and credibility. The Biosphere methodology offers that path: **a system that transforms commitments into results, and results into reputation and competitive advantage.** Joining this international network of sustainable destinations means leading a global movement that drives innovation, inspires trust, and strengthens a more responsible, resilient, and profitable tourism model for the future.

■ By Biosphere.



# GO CARBON NEUTRAL IN 5 SIMPLE STEPS

Solutions for tour operators, travel agencies, hoteliers, and other tourism companies.

1



Measure Your  
CO2 Footprint

2



Offset Past  
Emissions

3



Start  
Reducing

4



Stay CO2 Neutral  
in Real-Time

5



Engage &  
Communicate

CO<sub>2</sub>  
neutral

## Getting started with Climate Action: Practical steps for travel companies

The climate crisis is impacting the very destinations that tourism relies on. At the same time, travelers are demanding more responsibility from the companies they support. **Taking climate action is no longer optional, it's a business imperative.**

Here's how your business can get started:

### 1. Measure your emissions.

Start by understanding where your emissions come from, whether it's transportation, accommodations, facilities, food, or activities. [Sustainable Travel International](#) offers measurement and reporting tools to help travel companies account for their emissions, including a [tour footprinting tool](#), a [travel carbon calculator](#), an [API](#), and [custom carbon footprint assessments](#).

### 2. Reduce what you can.

Once you know your footprint, take steps to shrink it. Develop a climate action plan that outlines your targets and strategies, including transitioning to renewable energy,

adopting lower-carbon transportation, and offering plant-based menu options. Design your products to make low-carbon options the default and most appealing choice.

### 3. Educate and engage.

[Train your staff and suppliers](#) on practical strategies to minimize their impact and engage travelers. Position low-carbon options prominently on booking platforms and frame them as rewarding experiences. [Download our climate-friendly travel tips list](#) and share it with your guests to encourage low-impact behavior throughout their journey.

**4. Offset the rest.** Some travel emissions are currently unavoidable. Investing in high-quality carbon offset projects

enables you to address them. [This article](#) serves as a comprehensive guide to understanding how carbon offsets work and their essential role in tourism's path to net zero. [Sustainable Travel International's Climate Impact Portfolio](#) includes a rigorously vetted mix of nature-based and technological projects that conserve ecosystems, generate clean energy, and remove carbon from the atmosphere.

### 5. Download the Climate Action Checklist.

Looking for more guidance? Download this free [Business Climate Action Checklist](#) for more practical steps and resources to get started.

■ By Sustainable Travel International.



# DISCOVER SOUTH AFRICA

A WORLD OF DIVERSITY WELCOMES SKÅL INTERNATIONAL IN 2026.

South Africa, a nation celebrated for its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural tapestry, and warm hospitality, stands ready to welcome the global tourism community to one of the world’s most inspiring destinations.

As the **host of the Skål International World Congress, Nelson Mandela Bay** and the country will proudly showcase not only its world-class tourism infrastructure but also the authentic experiences that continue to draw millions of visitors every year. From the friendly shores of Nelson Mandela Bay to the wildlife-rich plains of Addo and the adventure-filled coastline of the Kouga region, South Africa offers a powerful combination of natural beauty, business vibrancy, and unforgettable travel experiences.



**NELSON MANDELA BAY:  
WHERE WARMTH MEETS  
OPPORTUNITY**

Located along the scenic Eastern Cape coastline, Nelson Mandela Bay—home to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth), Uitenhage, and Despatch—is a welcoming coastal destination known for year-round sunshine, pristine beaches, and a thriving tourism and events sector. Known globally as the Bottlenose Dolphin Capital of the World, the region offers spectacular marine encounters, from playful dolphins to majestic whales along the coast.

**Nelson Mandela Bay is also home to the Big 7**, offering malaria-free opportunities to experience elephant, rhino, lion, buffalo, leopard, as well as the marine giants: the Southern Right Whale and the great white shark. Visitors can enjoy these iconic animals in safety and comfort, making it one of the world’s most unique wildlife destinations.

Congress participants will enjoy the convenience of modern venues such as the Boardwalk Convention Centre paired with the authentic charm of local culture, cuisine, and entertainment. With its deeply rooted history, including iconic sites such as Route 67—a visual journey honouring the life and legacy of Nelson Mandela—the city provides a unique blend of heritage, creativity, and urban energy.

**CELEBRATING TOURISM  
EXCELLENCE: THE SKÅL  
INTERNATIONAL WORLD  
CONGRESS PROGRAMME**

The congress will begin with an opening press conference, followed by the official Opening Ceremony at the Boardwalk Convention Centre, which will bring together tourism professionals from around the world. Delegates will then enjoy an immersive Xhosa Beach Evening at Happy Valley, blending local culture, storytelling, cuisine, and oceanfront ambience.

During the congress, business sessions will take centre stage with the Skål Annual General Assembly, panel discussions, presentations, and the vibrant Taste of Africa Party, which will offer delegates a flavour of the continent’s rich culinary and musical traditions. Exhibitions and crafters will continue to showcase the creativity and innovation of the region.

The programme also will feature the Global Marketplace & Trade Fair, a premier platform for international networking, B2B sessions, keynote speakers, travel forums, and workshops. Evening events, including a Cocktail Dinner, will provide additional opportunities for collaboration in a relaxed and elegant setting.

Excursions, both full and half-day will allow participants to explore the region’s spectacular attractions, culminating in the

prestigious President’s Gala Dinner, a celebration of global tourism leadership. Optional post-tours will offer delegates the chance to savour even more of what South Africa has to offer\*.

**ADDO: A WILDLIFE  
EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER**

Just an hour from Nelson Mandela Bay lies one of South Africa’s most treasured conservation success stories: the Addo Elephant National Park. Home to over 600 elephants, as well as lion, buffalo, hyena, and endangered black rhino, Addo offers an authentic African safari experience accessible to all.

The park is particularly special as it forms part of the Big 7 experience. In addition to the iconic land-based animals, Addo’s Marine Protected Area in Algoa Bay’s islands are renowned for African Penguins and Cape Gannets, while the surrounding waters provide sightings of the Southern Right Whale and the great white shark, completing the Big 7 experience. Congress excursions will include day safaris and luxury private game reserve visits, where guests can enjoy guided wildlife encounters, gourmet bush lunches, and exceptional photographic opportunities.

*\*Please note that while the programme reflects the planned activities, some elements may be subject to slight adjustments closer to the event.*





**KOUGA REGION: ADVENTURE, SURFING AND COASTAL MAGIC**

To the west of Nelson Mandela Bay lies the Kouga region, an outdoor paradise known for its world-famous beaches, surf culture, and coastal charm. Delegates will have the opportunity to visit Jeffreys Bay, recognised globally as the Surf Capital of the World. Its legendary waves, golden beaches, and relaxed lifestyle offer a quintessential South African coastal experience.

Nearby St Francis Bay, with its striking black-and-white architecture, tranquil canals, and spectacular ocean views, adds another dimension of beauty. Optional congress activities include an exhilarating Ocean Safari with Raggy Charters, offering encounters with dolphins, whales, penguins, and marine life along the picturesque Algoa Bay coastline.

**PRE AND POST TOUR OPTIONS: EXPLORE MORE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA**

For delegates wishing to extend their South African adventure, the congress offers curated pre- and post-tour options. Guests can explore the iconic Cape Town, with its Table Mountain, vibrant waterfront, and cosmopolitan charm; the world-renowned Cape Winelands, offering exquisite wine tasting and culinary experiences; and the Garden Route, a scenic coastal drive showcasing forests, lagoons, and wildlife sanctuaries. These tours allow delegates to discover the diversity and richness of Southern Africa while complementing the congress experience.

**AN INVITATION TO EXPERIENCE MORE**

Beyond the official programme, participants can take advantage of post-tours and optional experiences,

including the Route 67 walking tour, adventure activities such as sandboarding or ziplining, and visits to local markets, craft hubs, and cultural landmarks. South Africa's Eastern Cape truly embodies the spirit of discovery.

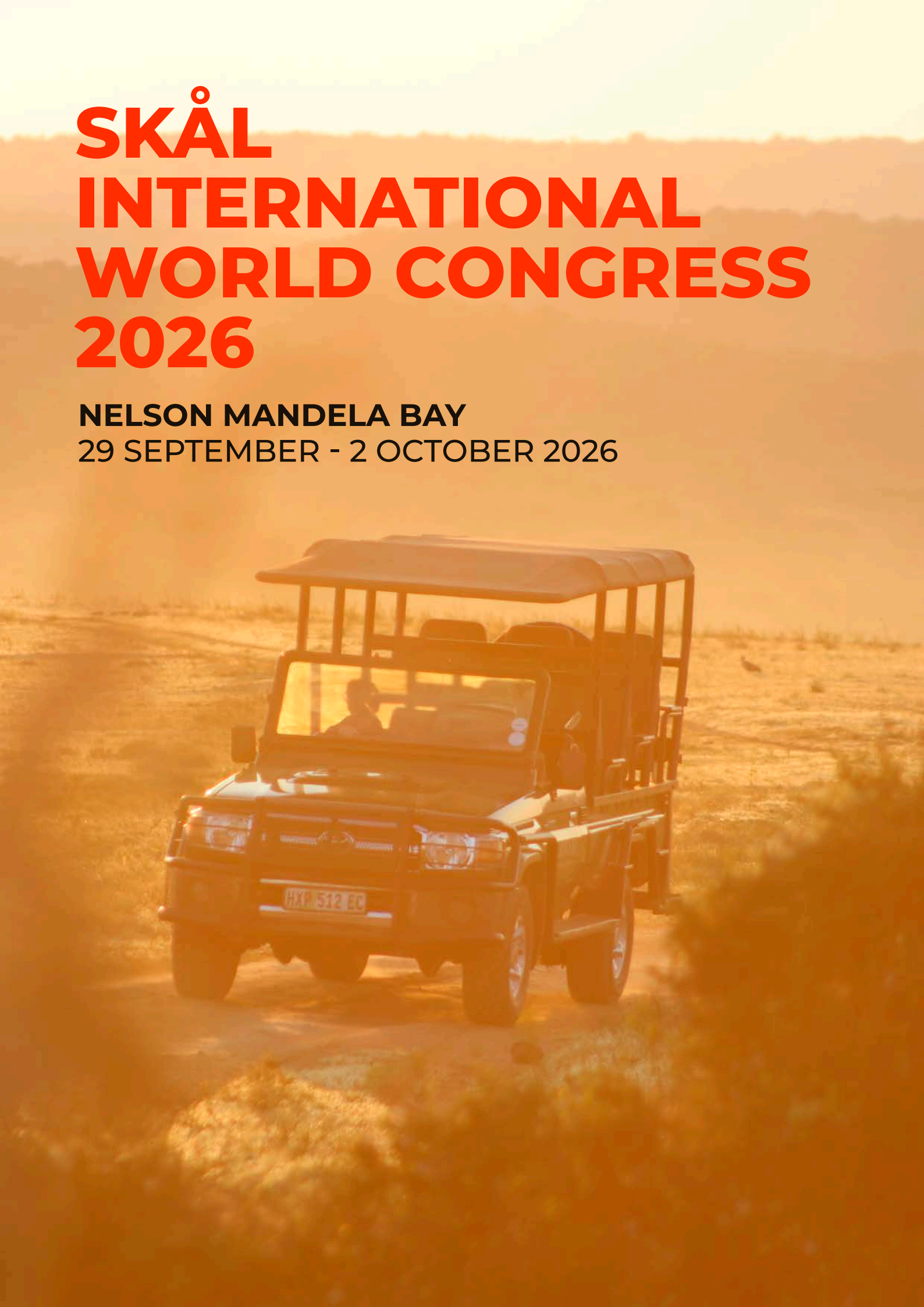
**A DESTINATION THAT INSPIRES**

As the tourism world gathers in South Africa for the Skål International World Congress, delegates will experience firsthand why the country continues to captivate hearts worldwide. Nelson Mandela Bay, Addo, and Kouga stand ready to demonstrate the region's natural beauty, innovation, hospitality, and deep commitment to shaping a sustainable tourism future.

**South Africa welcomes you—where unforgettable journeys begin.**

# SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS 2026

**NELSON MANDELA BAY**  
29 SEPTEMBER - 2 OCTOBER 2026







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# FITUR 2026



FITUR, the International Tourism Fair, convenes the global tourism market from **January 21 to 25, 2026 at IFEMA MADRID**, in a context of growth that enables the definition of the foundations of a tourism sector that generates wealth and employment within a sustainable framework.

In this context, FITUR 2026 announces the creation of the **Knowledge Hub**, which strengthens its leadership with the addition of Hall 12 at the Madrid venue as the epicenter of debate and innovation in tourism. During the professional days — Wednesday 21, Thursday 22, and Friday 23 — experts from around the world will gather in hundreds of sessions to present proposals, share experiences, and disseminate best practices that are setting trends in the tourism industry. In addition, the dissemination of knowledge and technology available to companies and professionals in the sector will be promoted.

The Knowledge Hub, which concentrates the Fair's innovation and technology content, will have direct access from IFEMA

MADRID's South Entrance and will be interconnected with the rest of the pavilions through Hall 4, in a layout that allows the expansion of the fair and optimizes visitor flows.

The Knowledge Hub, which will bring together highly current and relevant content, will host the sections **FITUR TechY, FITUR Know-How & Export, FITUR Sports, the FITURNEXT Observatory, and the Travel Technology area**, as well as new specialized content aligned with the industry's challenges, enhancing the conference offerings of the International Tourism Fair.

**FITUR 2026 CONTINUES TO GROW IN SERVICE OF DRIVING THE TOURISM INDUSTRY FORWARD**

The 46th edition of FITUR will occupy a total of nine halls — 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,

and 12 — where the most pioneering global offering from across the entire tourism value chain will be presented.

Hall 3 will bring together proposals from the Americas; Hall 4 will group together Europe and FITUR Cruises; Hall 5, 7, and 9 will house Spain, along with FITUR LGBTQ+ in Hall 9; Hall 6 will feature the Middle East and Africa; Hall 8, Asia-Pacific and Global Companies; Hall 10, Global Companies along with FITUR 4all, FITUR Lingua, FITUR Screen, and FITUR Woman; and the Knowledge Hub, Hall 12, will include FITUR TechY, FITUR Know-How & Export, FITUR Sports, the FITURNEXT Observatory, and the Travel Technology area.



FITUR 2025.



# JOIN US

WTM AFRICA 2026



From 13–15 April, dive into the tourism industry's hub for essential discussions and interactive workshops. WTM Africa is all about connecting leaders, inspiring innovation, and shaping the future of travel and tourism. Enjoy highlights like the Women in MICE Awards Breakfast, women's empowerment workshops, NextGen Ready networking and more.

Exhibitors and Buyers enjoy pre-scheduled appointments to maximize experience and secure vital business deals. This is the place to be for key industry insights, networking and growth opportunities.

For more information, visit our website.

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[www.wtm.com/africa](http://www.wtm.com/africa)

# WTM Africa 2026



## China in Focus: WTM Africa Unveils 2026 China Ready® Workshop.

World Travel Market (WTM) Africa has announced the launch of its first-ever China Ready® Workshop in partnership with China Business Intelligence Service Network (CBISN), a must-attend event for tourism stakeholders seeking to position themselves for success in the Chinese outbound market.

The workshop will be held on 15 April 2026 from 8am to 10am, providing attendees with critical insights and practical tools while earning valuable Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points.

China Ready® is the world's leading Chinese tourism preparation programme. Since 2002, it has been successfully implemented across 54 countries and six continents, helping more than a quarter of global tourism destinations effectively serve Chinese visitors.

"With China's outbound travel sector projected to reach 200 million travellers annually by 2028, the intensive workshop comes at a crucial time for African tourism stakeholders," says Reanté Naidoo, Buyer & Digital Director at RX Africa.

"Participants will receive expert guidance on everything from understanding Chinese visitors' needs and preferences to marketing and promotion, dos and don'ts, the power of social media, preferred digital payments and cultural expectations, enabling them to create more appealing experiences for Chinese visitors," adds Naidoo.

China Ready® will be rolled out in stages at WTM Africa, starting with the essential Knowledge Module in 2026, offering key insights into the Chinese market – including market demographics, culture and customs, and business protocol. In 2027, the focus will shift to Marketing to China and then Branding and Positioning to China in 2028. This phased approach not only makes the content more digestible but also allows professionals to accumulate CPD credits at a steady pace.

CPD is essential for professionals to stay up-to-date and competitive in their field. Attendees gain valuable credits and insights into the latest

industry trends, innovations and consumer behaviour, while building meaningful connections across the global travel and tourism sector.

### Key Workshop Details:

- Date: 15 April 2026.
- Time: 8am-10am .
- Venue: WTM Inspire Theatre, CTICC.
- Format: In-person expert-led session (no virtual component).
- Price: US\$99 (Early Bird price before 13 March 2026) or US\$110 (Standard price from 14 March 2026 onwards).

### Included in your ticket:

- All attendees will receive a complimentary copy of the "China Outbound Travel Market – Africa Report 2025" (valued at US\$149).
- Attendees will earn CPD points – making this an essential educational opportunity for industry professionals.
- Access to the WTM Africa show floor.

**Registration is set to open on 22 September 2025** for the China Ready® Workshop.

*Please note: Only registered WTM Africa delegates will be allowed to book a place at the China Ready® Workshop.*

### Limited Seats Available.

With only 50 seats available at the China Ready® Workshop, early registration is strongly encouraged to guarantee a place and take advantage of the early-bird pricing.

For further information, please contact Reanté Naidoo at [reante.naidoo@rxglobal.com](mailto:reante.naidoo@rxglobal.com).

**REGISTER NOW**

**LET'S CONNECT**  
13 - 15 APRIL 2026





# MATKA TRAVEL FAIR

**The largest travel industry  
event in Northern Europe**

→ **Inspire, connect & grow at the industry's  
most important meeting place – the kick off  
of the travel year!**

→ **For professional visitors 15 Jan 2026  
For general public 16–18 Jan 2026  
Helsinki Expo and Convention Centre**

Register as a professional visitor:  
[matkatravelfair.com/matka-for-professionals](https://matkatravelfair.com/matka-for-professionals)



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The real social media

## Nature and active travel on the rise – highlighted at **Matka Travel Fair 2026**



Matka Travel Fair 2026 programme and exhibitor list are now live online. The event will take place at Helsinki Expo and Convention Centre from **15-18 January 2026**, with Thursday 15th dedicated exclusively to travel industry professionals.

As Northern Europe's largest travel industry gathering, Matka offers a dynamic programme across six themed stages and zones, each delivering expert insights, practical tips, and fresh perspectives on travel planning. Visitors can explore a wide range of services and solutions designed to elevate the travel experience.

### TRAVEL TRENDS REFLECTED IN THE PROGRAMME

Travel trends for 2026 highlight a growing demand for authentic nature experiences and active holidays. Travellers are increasingly seeking year-round outdoor activities, from gravel cycling and bikepacking routes to hiking in national parks and exploring pristine lakeshores. This surge reflects a broader shift toward sustainable tourism and well-being, where adventure and relaxation go hand in hand. For destinations and operators, these trends offer opportunities to create immersive, activity-based packages that combine local culture with the natural beauty.

Current travel trends also emphasize individuality, sustainability, and experiences – from tailor-made trips and nature escapes to wellness holidays. Nearly 40% of Finns plan a nature trip or a wellness holiday, and cultural travel is gaining popularity. Active holidays, such as cycling and golf, are also strengthening their position.

These themes are highlighted in the Matka Travel Fair programme. The new Golf & Activity Area offers a meeting point for those interested in golf and an active lifestyle. Visitors can explore world-class courses and destinations as well as get tips for planning the perfect golf trip and discover new trends such as electric cycling.

Cycling is one of the growing tourism trends. Across Europe and Scandinavia, its economic impact exceeds €44 billion annually, and in Nordics, cycling tourism extends the season and offers new experiences. Gravel and bikepacking routes, such as Saimaa by Cycle and Posio's 500 km gravel trails, respond to this growing demand and position Finland as a

top destination for active travellers.

*"The event gives the public a unique opportunity to discover destinations and the many forms of travel – both in Finland and abroad. Tourism is a significant export industry in Finland, but domestic tourism also keeps cities vibrant and creates jobs. Matka Travel Fair strengthens industry growth and awareness by creating connections that support Finland's position in international travel industry",* says Matka Travel Fair Business Manager Noora Haatainen.


### MATKA TRAVEL FAIR – THE TRAVEL DESTINATION FOR DESTINATIONS

Matka Travel Fair is more than an event – it is the ultimate travel destination for destinations, where visitors uncover hidden gems and gain first-hand knowledge directly from experts. The fair brings together inspiring stories and insider tips that help travellers go beyond the obvious and explore the extraordinary.



# From scale to serendipity: Official statistics from a value-driven **IMEX America**

The current momentum in the business events sector shone through in the strength and scale of IMEX America last month.



**Newly-released figures highlight a 6.5% increase in buyers from 2024 to 6,145 and confirmation of a new record number of participants—17,633—underscoring ongoing industry demand for the innovative market-leading trade show.**

**Of these, more than 4,700 were hosted buyers, with 41% managing budgets of \$5 million and above. An additional 1,400 buyer attendees brought further purchasing power to the show floor.**

IMEX America 2025.

The 3,700 exhibiting companies ensured a favorable ratio of buyers to exhibitors, fuelling the volume of business meetings evident on the show floor. There were a total of 92,000 meetings spanning one-to-one, group appointments and presentations.

Further statistics from the 14th edition of IMEX America can be found [here](#), including buyers by nature of business, buying power and country.

**A BESPOKE ‘IMEXPERIENCE’**

Insights from the show highlight a continued desire for attendees to shape their own tailored, community-driven event experience.

800 people joined various first timer welcome sessions at the show which were increased from one to four due to strong demand. Each was curated by members of the IMEX team, bringing different voices and formats to the welcome program.

There were 373 education sessions across the four days including partner education and sessions on the show floor Inspiration Hub. Attendees could ‘pick and mix’ sessions to match their learning goals within a range of topics including new tracks: Leadership and culture, and Community builders. Among the most popular sessions on the Inspiration Hub were trend forecasts, budgeting, and event design.

Exhibitors delivered creative brand story-telling through inventive activations.

These included Scottsdale’s hat-making bar, live harp music from Ireland and Encore’s futuristic, train-inspired booth.

Hosted buyer Kathy Bakeberg from Type A Events explained the power of the in-the-moment connections fuelling the show and the importance of walk-up, as well as pre-scheduled meetings: “The exhibitors were fantastic—so creative with their booths and presentations. I stopped by the LA booth for the popcorn and ended up getting a full presentation from ten hotel reps! It’s the kind of serendipitous discovery you just can’t get online.

*“Being at the show and connecting in person makes such a difference—it’s what turns a transaction into a real relationship”.*

IMEX CEO Carina Bauer sums up: *“This year’s edition of IMEX America was remarkable not just for its size, but also the value created for our industry.*

*“The sheer scale of the show offers a clear snapshot of the industry’s current landscape. It was encouraging to witness the energy and confidence reflected in the countless business connections made, not just on the floor but in the many hundreds of fringe events for which IMEX is increasingly recognized.*

*“It was also gratifying to see how attendees tapped*

*into those added-value activations and offerings to create their own personalized take on the show, enjoying dozens of micro experiences within a macro event”.*

- Further statistics from the 14th edition of IMEX America can be found [here](#), including buyers by nature of business, buying power and country.
- Dates for IMEX Frankfurt and IMEX America all the way through to 2030 are [here](#).



IMEX America 2025.



# Biggest WTM London in History Delivers Global Reach, Rising Buyers, and Business Growth

WTM London 2025 has closed on an incredible high, celebrating an 8% year-on-year rise in pre-qualified buyers.

Over three dynamic days, organisers welcomed 5,500 high-quality buyers from leading travel organisations worldwide — all carefully vetted to ensure quality — reinforcing WTM London’s reputation as the most influential event for the global travel and tourism industry.

Held at Excel London from 4–6 November 2025, this edition attracted 5,500 buyers - 8% more than the 5,049 who attended in 2024. With the venue expanding by 25%, this year’s WTM London was the biggest show in its history. A total of 182 countries were represented, with exhibitor numbers up 5% year-on-year, notably the growing Travel Tech region (55%+), and total attendance rising to 46,500. The growth in both attendance and qualified buyers underscores WTM London’s expanding global influence and commercial impact.

Reflecting this momentum, 2025 also saw the highest number of pre-scheduled meetings ever recorded, with confirmed business appointments surging 30% to over 40,000 — which in turn will generate more than £2.2 billion of business deals as a direct result of WTM London.

These exceptional results cement WTM London’s position as the leading global platform for forging connections, driving business growth, and shaping the future of travel.

### GROWTH AND INVESTMENT IN TRAVEL

On day one, the release of the WTM Global Travel Report revealed that the global travel industry is projected to grow at a faster rate than the world economy, with total contribution to GDP expected to exceed US\$16 trillion by 2035.

At the recent 19th WTM Ministers’ Summit in association with UN Tourism and WTTC, held during WTM London 2025, tourism ministers and CEO leaders from across the globe emphasised that investment and education are central to unlocking tourism’s full potential. Public-private funding models, including tax incentives, special economic zones, and airport infrastructure projects, were cited by countries such as the Philippines, Kenya, Ecuador and Lebanon as key enablers of sustainable growth.

Meanwhile, the skills gap in tourism was flagged as challenged and ministers have called for curriculums that align with industry needs, accentuate digital literacy and elevate tourism careers through targeted training and reskilling.

### WTM TRENDFEST TAKE-OFF

This year’s event also introduced WTM TrendFest, a dynamic hub showcasing the latest industry innovations and emerging travel trends. The dedicated experiential travel zone proved a major draw for visitors, hosting this year’s opening WTM Networking Party as well as a wide array of culinary and dancing acts from around the world. WTM TrendFest was also a key focus for exhibitors, with experience providers up 31% compared to 2024, highlighting the growing appetite for immersive and experiential travel offerings.

### CLOSING CRESCENDO

The finale of WTM London 2025 was nothing short of spectacular, with a fireside chat featuring Oscar nominated actor, Richard E

Grant and Sir Chris Byrant MP, recently appointed the UK’s minister of state and trade policy. The pair discussed Richard’s love of travel, sharing humorous and memorable experiences from filming in UK stately homes, visiting a kibbutz, and an encounter with the King of Swaziland.

Chris Carter-Chapman, WTM London Event Director, said: “WTM London 2025 has set a new benchmark for the global travel industry. With a record 46,500 attendees, 8% rise in qualified buyers, and over 40,000 pre-scheduled meetings generating £2.2 billion in business deals, this year’s event has truly showcased the power of connection. Our new WTM TrendFest offered immersive experiences, from culinary and dancing acts to

innovations shaping the future of travel, and was a major draw for both visitors and exhibitors. Make sure to save the dates — 3rd–5th November 2026 — for WTM London, where the industry comes together to connect, innovate, and grow!”

Download your copy of the WTM Global Travel Report [here](#).

To catch-up with some of the WTM London highlights re-watch WTM TV [here](#).

Please find the WTM London 2025 image gallery [here](#).



WTM London 2025.



# IBTM World 2025

## breaks records and redefines the business events landscape

IBTM World 2025 closed last week on an extraordinary high, delivering the most innovative, immersive, and commercially impactful edition in its history.

The show floor saw nearly 12,000 participants from around the world come together for three days of breakthrough ideas, experiential activations, and a record 79,000+ pre-scheduled meetings, an 8% rise on 2024.

This year's edition set new benchmarks across the board:

- Almost 2,500 exhibitors – one of the highest exhibitor turnouts ever.
- 12% rise in returning participants, reflecting the value for buyers and suppliers.
- 49% of Hosted Buyers attending from outside Europe, signalling IBTM's growing global impact.

Elva Yañez, MICE Manager, Promperu, said: "As a brand we have come back to IBTM World after 10 years and this is my first time personally attending. It is one of our most successful events of the year, with lots of great meetings with suppliers and buyers. I thought I would meet mainly people from Spain, which is one of our primary markets, but I have

*also made great connections with people from across Europe, Asia and Latin America which I didn't expect. I am looking forward to coming back to IBTM World in 2026".*

Heather McNee, Corporate & Incentive Manager at VisitScotland Business Events, said: "It's incredible to be back at IBTM World. Our Scottish partners have enjoyed the show with a great variety of high-quality appointments. We are delighted to return to Scotland with a fantastic mix of leads and exciting new connections".

Felicia Asiedu, Marketing Director, Cvent, said: "IBTM World is one of our tier one shows - we always come with full force. I love the fact that this year there is a bright tech space with all the providers close to us and we're right next to the Future Stage, which makes sense. This is an ecosystem place for us, and we are an ecosystem supplier. So that's hotels, destinations, CVBs, event planners, marketers, everyone really, all in one place. The quality really has been good".

**ibtm** WORLD  
BARCELONA, SPAIN  
18-20 Nov 2025

### A NEW ERA OF INNOVATION AND EXPERIENCE DESIGN

This year IBTM World lived up to its People. Power. Potential theme, debuting IBTM Ignite, a bold new platform connecting over 80 start-ups with investors, advisors, and industry leaders. From AI-driven engagement tools to sustainability-focused tech, IBTM Ignite showcased the trailblazers set to shape the next decade of events.

Meanwhile, the show unveiled the Future Stage, home to rapid-fire innovation talks from emerging leaders, and the BEFuture Pavilion, where investors and creators came together to fuel the industry breakthroughs of tomorrow.

### IMMERSIVE FEATURES THAT PUSHED BOUNDARIES

Returning by popular demand, Exceptional Experiences once again drew in-house planners and marketers eager to learn from world-leading brands such as WeTransfer, Canva, Shutterstock, Amazon and UTA. The result was a packed theatre and a wealth of practical, creative strategies for designing unforgettable experiences.

IBTM World 2025 also welcomed back its most successful features from 2024, including The Hotel Pavilion - a dedicated space for independent and small group hotels to showcase their offering.

The Forum for Advocacy, in partnership with The Business of Events, cemented IBTM World as the epicentre for global conversation, collaboration, and change in the meetings and events industry. Advocacy leaders and policymakers emphasised the urgency of unified messaging and storytelling to unlock the full societal value of business events.

This year's Association Leaders Forum, sponsored by Excel London and designed in partnership with ESAE (European Society of Association Executives), examined the role of Association events in building strong communities.

### A CONFERENCE PROGRAMME THAT IGNITED MINDS

IBTM World 2025 delivered its strongest conference programme to date, packed with insights that attendees could take straight back to their organisations and headlined by a trio of powerhouse speakers:

- Nathalie Nahai on empathy and connection in the age of AI.
- B. Joseph Pine II on designing experiences that drive emotional and economic value.
- David Osgathorp on unlocking human potential through performance and wellbeing.

### DRIVING INDUSTRY INTELLIGENCE

The show saw the launch of several significant research pieces, including the IBTM World Trends Report, highlighting how older

demographics are shaping future event design; The Hague & Partners' bleisure study; and Access All Areas, a groundbreaking accessibility report uncovering the industry's most urgent gaps.

### A SHOW THAT EXCEEDED ALL EXPECTATIONS

Claudia Hall, Exhibition Director of IBTM World, said: "IBTM World 2025 has been nothing short of extraordinary. We delivered our most ambitious, international, and impactful edition yet - and the response from the global events community has been phenomenal. From record-breaking meetings to powerful new initiatives like IBTM Ignite and the expansion of Exceptional Experiences, this year proved that innovation thrives when people come together. The show floor was buzzing with energy, ideas, and opportunity".

The 2026 edition of IBTM World will take place from 17-19 November in Barcelona.



Photo by Edward Hill.



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