

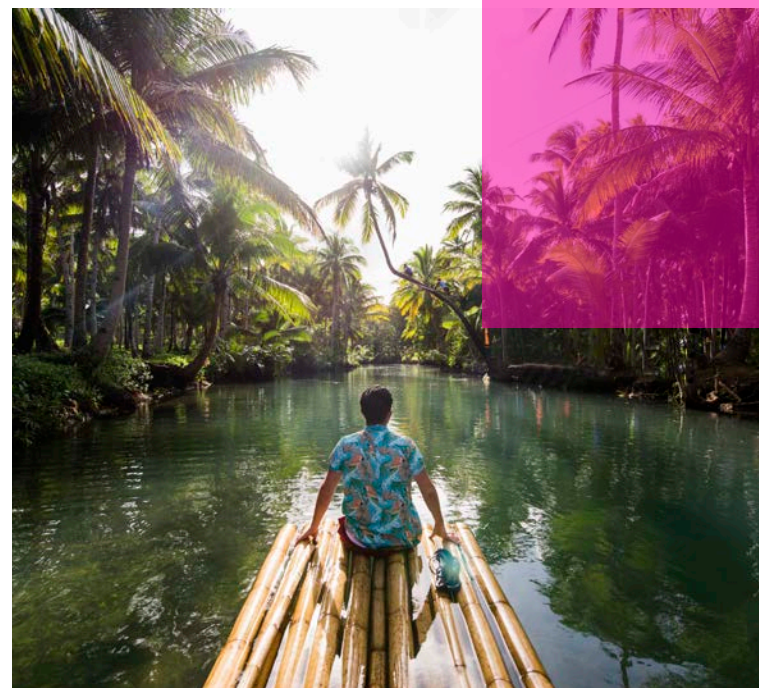
TOURISM NOW MAGA ZI NE

84th Skål International
World Congress
Cusco 2025

Cusco will be the host destination for the 84th Skål International Congress, which will take place from 25-30 September 2025.

JUNE 2025

T N E T N O C



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EDITORIAL



Denise Scrafton

Skål International President

AS I NEAR THE HALFWAY POINT OF MY PRESIDENCY, I REFLECT ON THE MANY SKÅL INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS I HAVE HAD THE PLEASURE OF MEETING OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS.

One of my primary objectives for this year was to **communicate and connect with as many Skål International Clubs as possible**. Your Executive Board set an ambitious agenda for 2025 titled ‘Shaping Tomorrow’, which aims to advance our strategy by introducing a new IT platform, creating our forward strategy plan, and implementing a robust membership strategy.

Your Executive Board has been actively engaged in discussions with members globally. Several Directors have personally invested their time and money to attend regional congresses, showcasing their unwavering commitment to the organisation. I want to express my sincere gratitude for their dedication!

In April, a few members of the Executive Board attended the **Latin America Congress** and joined the Area Committees in the region. They then attended the **North America Skål Congress (NASC)**, where they participated in the Club meetings of Canada, and the USA members, as well as attended the roundtable discussions conducted by North America. These valuable insights will undoubtedly be instrumental in our future endeavours!

In late May and early June, I spent time in the office in **Torremolinos**. With numerous projects in progress and a pending congress in Cusco, it provided an excellent opportunity to discuss any necessary approvals for the workload moving forward. Additionally, I embarked on a three-day trip to **Germany**, where I had the privilege of meeting with members from Hamburg and Bonn. We engaged in a wonderful dialogue, which I truly appreciate.



One thing that became evident throughout our interactions with members is that **friendship is the core of Skål International**, and secondly, doing business with friends within Skål International. The warm and welcoming reception the entire Board has received wherever we have gone is truly commendable.

Finally, the sight visit to the **2025 Congress venue in Cusco** was amazing. Flying through the stunning Andes into Cusco was beautiful, and the city itself was enchanting. If you are able to attend this stunning destination and important congress, I urge you to register soon.



Georges Koch

Tourism Now Editor & Skål International Director

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: KEY TO SUSTAINABLE AND CONSCIOUS TOURISM.

In this edition we focus on something important that is impacting civilisation worldwide and in all types of industry: Artificial Intelligence (AI).

In the 21st century, **tourism faces a crossroads: continue to grow at the expense of the environment or reinvent itself towards sustainability**. In this scenario, Artificial Intelligence (AI) is positioned as a strategic tool to transform the way we travel, conserve and connect with the planet’s destinations.

For centuries and decades, tourism has been an economic driver for countless communities, but also a cause of negative impacts such as overexploitation of resources, pollution and loss of cultural identity. AI, however, offers innovative solutions to balance the scales. From personalised recommendation systems that distribute the flow of tourists more equitably, to predictive models that help prevent overcrowding in fragile natural environments, technology can be an ally of sustainability.

In addition, AI can strengthen efficient resource management in hotels and tourism services through smart

sensors that monitor water and energy consumption, or data analytics platforms that promote responsible, evidence-based decisions.

Even the traveller’s experience can be enriched with virtual assistants that inform about sustainable practices or local realities, thus promoting a more conscious and respectful tourism.

But it is not enough to implement technology. The key is how we use it. Governments, businesses and tourists need to adopt an ethical and collaborative vision of tourism where AI does not replace the human but enhances the common good and the preservation of natural and cultural heritage.

In short, if we want a future where travel remains a possibility, **it is time to look at AI not as a threat, but as a powerful ally to build a tourism that cares for destinations, their communities and the planet**. Because travelling with intelligence is also travelling with responsibility.

Skål International Latin American Congress 2025

FROM 23 TO 27 APRIL, MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY, HOSTED THE 49TH LATIN AMERICAN CLUBS CONGRESS OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL, HELD IN CELEBRATION OF THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL MONTEVIDEO.



Group photo on the steps of the Legislative Palace.



Group wide shot at the Centenario Stadium in Montevideo.

The event combined professional sessions with recreational activities, embodying the spirit of camaraderie that defines this global organisation of tourism professionals.

More than one hundred Skålegas attended the congress, representing countries such as Argentina, Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador, the United States, Panama, Peru, Switzerland, Venezuela, and, of course, the host nation, Uruguay. The programme included pre and post-congress tours, featuring visits to Colonia del Sacramento and Punta del Este.

The event welcomed prominent international Skål International authorities, including President Denise Scafton, Vice President Andrés Hayes, Past President Annette Cárdenas, and Directors Georges Koch (Region 6) and Armando Chaquirian, along with Sergio Acuña, Deputy Director for Region 6. Also in attendance were Rosario González (President of the South Latin America Area Committee – CAS) and Nicola Furnari



Group photo on the Montevideo Rambla.

(President of the North Latin America Area Committee – CAN), as well as Álvaro Gimeno, President of Skål International Uruguay, and representatives from National Committees and Clubs across the region.

A key milestone of the congress was the formation of the Latin American Area Committee, unifying the former CAS and CAN committees under a single body, now led by President Mario Costa. This marks a significant step forward for the organisation in Latin America.

The cultural theme of the event focused on Uruguayan rhythms and traditions,

with performances of tango, candombe, murga, and eastern folklore. These artistic expressions accompanied various activities and were complemented by a carefully curated selection of local cuisine.

Juan Martínez, President of Skål International Montevideo, described the gathering as an enriching experience that reinvigorates the drive to strengthen both regional and international ties within the organisation.

Montevideo and Uruguay, as the organisation expressed, continue to welcome Skålegas from around the world with open arms.



Floral Tribute: Georges Koch, Skål International Director, and Andrés Hayes, Skål International Vice President.



Group photo at Plaza Independencia, Monument to National Hero José Gervasio Artigas.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARDS

Record participation for the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards 2025

Receiving an impressive **106 entries from 30 different countries**, this year's awards clearly demonstrate a burgeoning global commitment towards sustainable tourism and responsible practices.

The 2025 edition introduces **eight newly revamped award categories**, ensuring that every innovative and impactful initiative has the opportunity for due recognition.



CATEGORIES

1. Accessible Tourism
2. Accommodation, Food and Hospitality Services
3. Communication
4. Community, Government and Service Companies
5. Educational and Social Programmes
6. Innovative Sustainable IT Solutions
7. Land and Marine Biodiversity
8. Tour Operators and Travel Agencies

Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards Timeline Highlights

2002
Inception of the Sustainable Tourism Awards Program.
Skål International launches the Sustainable Tourism Awards to recognize and promote best practices in sustainability across the global tourism industry.

2002–2020
Growing global recognition.
Over the years, the STA program gains international prestige, celebrating innovative projects from diverse sectors including eco-lodges, community-based tourism, and conservation initiatives.

2021
Strategic partnerships begin.
STA begins collaborating with key sustainability organizations, enhancing the credibility and impact of the awards.

2023
Enhanced visibility and outreach.
Skål International strengthens its digital presence and outreach, increasing global participation and awareness of the STA program.

2025
Record-breaking participation.
106 entries from 30 countries mark a historic milestone for the STA program.

#STA



CUSCO, CAPITAL OF WORLD TOURISM:

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS 2025

From 25th to 30th September 2025, the enchanting city of Cusco, celebrated as the former Inca capital and designated a [UNESCO World Heritage Site](#) in 1983 for its outstanding cultural legacy, will serve as the vibrant host for the [86th Skål International World Congress](#).

This prestigious event is set to bring together **tourism professionals from over 90 countries**, offering a dynamic forum for exchanging ideas, fostering innovation, and promoting exemplary practices within the industry.

With the slogan ‘**Tourism with purpose, connecting cultures**’, this congress seeks to highlight the value of the encounter between destinations, cultures and people, promoting the sustainable development of global tourism from the heart of the Peruvian Andes.

A UNIQUE ANDEAN EXPERIENCE

The official program will take place in emblematic spaces of the city, combining historical settings, technology and first-class hospitality.

The Opening Ceremony will take place on September 26 on the esplanade of the Qoricancha, the ancient temple of the Sun, with a cultural show that will fuse traditional dances, live music and a visual display that promises to thrill attendees.



A FULL AGENDA OF ACTIVITIES

For six days, the congress will include academic sessions, business roundtables and social gatherings. The main venues will be the Cusco Convention Center and various heritage and gastronomic locations in the city.

More than 200 international delegates are expected to attend, including ministers of tourism, directors of global organizations, businessmen, academics and Skål International members from the five continents. Among the confirmed personalities are renowned experts in sustainability, regenerative tourism and technology applied to the sector.

CUSCO AS A MICE DESTINATION

This congress is also a unique opportunity to position Cusco as a world-class MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) destination.

In addition to its archaeological treasures such as Machu Picchu, (also declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1983), Sacsayhuamán or the Sacred Valley, the region offers high-quality hotel infrastructure, world-class culinary experiences and increasingly efficient connectivity.



IMMERSIVE CULTURAL AND RESPONSIBLE TOURISM

Attendees will be able to enjoy pre- and post-congress excursions, specially designed to discover the landscapes, flavors and traditions of this magical land. Responsible tourism will also be promoted, with visits to local communities, craft markets and social projects.

The Skål International World Congress 2025 will be a key platform to showcase the best of Peruvian tourism to the world.



The organization of the event is led by Skål International Cusco in coordination with PROMPERÚ, the Municipality of Cusco, and private sector partners.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: TOURISM FAIR

In addition, the event will feature a fair of Peruvian tourism suppliers and experiences, open to the local public and professionals in the field, on September 28 at the Cusco Convention Center, providing a space for promotion, innovation and networking.

The Skål International World Congress 2025 is not just a congress, it is a celebration of tourism as a force for peace, understanding and shared prosperity. Cusco will open its arms to the world with the warmth of its people, its cultural richness and its commitment to a more humane and sustainable tourism.



See you in Cusco
from September
25 to 30, 2025!

MEET ALTAN DEMIRKAYA

THE POWER OF CONNECTION: HOW SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SHAPED MY JOURNEY

I first joined Skål International 13 years ago as a Young Skål member, a university student with big dreams and no connections.

Eleven years ago, I moved to a new country, Canada, determined to build something meaningful. I never imagined this organization would become one of the most defining communities of my life.

Over the past decade, Skål International has been at the heart of my journey. In 2022, I became one of the youngest Skål International Presidents in the world, leading Skål International Vancouver.

Along the way, I've built a fulfilling career in hospitality and tourism, holding leadership roles with global hotel brands and airlines. I've received recognition including Skål's Future Leader, Rising Leader, Certificate of Appreciation, and the Vancouver Tourism Award.

But what changed my life wasn't the titles, it was **the power of connection**. At my very first Skål International event in Vancouver, I met someone who later became my mentor and GM, proof that showing up with intention creates opportunity.



Skål International taught me that success is never a coincidence. It's about being in the right room with the right people and contributing with purpose.



Altan Demirkaya.
Founder & CEO / AD-INSPIRE
Skål International Canada Board member

Today, I lead AD-INSPIRE, a company empowering professionals and businesses through keynote speaking, hospitality education, coaching and mentoring, consulting, and The AD Show Podcast. We work internationally with schools, hotels, and individuals to elevate service and inspire the next generation of leaders.

Skål International taught me that success is never a coincidence. It's about being in the right room with the right people and contributing with purpose. Whether you're a CEO, student, or entrepreneur, Skål International is where connections spark opportunity and friendships cross borders.

Let's continue building a hospitality world where connection, collaboration, and friendship lead the way.



THE FLORIMOND VOLCKAERT FUND

A UNIQUE MEMBER BENEFIT SUPPORTING TOURISM PROFESSIONALS IN CRISIS

In the dynamic and often unpredictable world of tourism, having a reliable support system can make all the difference.

One of the most meaningful benefits offered by [Skål International](#) to its members is the **Florimond Volckaert Fund (FVF)**, a humanitarian initiative that provides **confidential financial assistance to members and their immediate families** during times of serious personal hardship.

A LEGACY OF SOLIDARITY AND LEADERSHIP

The Fund was established in 1954 and named in honor of Florimond Volckaert, the founding figure of Skål International and its first World President, who served from 1934 to 1937. His vision of global friendship and professional unity continues to inspire the organization's values today.

The FVF supports members facing a wide range of personal crises, including:

- Serious or prolonged illness.
- Medical expenses beyond personal means
- Accidents or physical disability.
- Death, with financial assistance available to the surviving spouse or dependent children.
- Natural disasters affecting the member or their family.

Each application is reviewed individually by a board of Trustees, ensuring a confidential and compassionate process. Once approved, funds are transferred directly to the recipient, often within just a few business days.



REAL STORIES, REAL IMPACT

The true value of the FVF is best illustrated through the voices of those it has helped. Here are two original testimonials:

“ *I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Florimond Volckaert Fund (FVF) for the invaluable support I received during my medical cancer treatment. The financial assistance provided by the Fund was a lifeline that enabled me to access critical medical care and alleviate the overwhelming burden of high medical expenses.*



“ *As a member of Skål International for more than 40 years, I enjoyed unique experience of friendship and business at the same time. My position as a club President and Councilor with numerous participation at Skål International World Congresses gave me an exceptional chance to develop sincere friendly relations with Skålleagues from all continents. Few years ago I was in serious health problem with my hip and only solution was an expensive surgery which I couldn't afford due to my financial condition as a retired person. In that moment I applied for support from Florimond Volckaert Fund (FVF) and my problem was efficiently and fast solved and I passed successful surgery! It is confirmation that Skål International beside business impact has a human face and I am honestly and deeply grateful for support and proud to be a member of Skål International!*



FUNDED BY MEMBERS, FOR MEMBERS

What sets the FVF apart is its funding model: it is entirely sustained by voluntary contributions from Skål International members, clubs, national committees, and legacy donations. This peer-supported structure reinforces the organization's values of friendship, professionalism, and mutual care.

The Fund is managed independently by three Trustees, who are Past World Presidents appointed by the Executive Board for four-year terms. It is audited annually, with full transparency and accountability.

A TESTAMENT TO THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

The Florimond Volckaert Fund is more than a financial resource, it is a reflection of the values that define Skål International. It demonstrates how a professional association can go beyond networking and advocacy to provide real, life-changing support to its members.

As the tourism industry continues to face global challenges, the FVF stands as a reminder that compassion and solidarity remain essential. **For members of Skål International, it is the reassurance of belonging to a global community that truly cares.**

SAINT-LOUIS

AN IMMERSIVE JOURNEY INTO SENEGAL'S VIBRANT LIFE

IN THE 17TH CENTURY, IT WAS DECIDED THAT THE FRENCH TRADING POST ESTABLISHED AT THE MOUTH OF THE SENEGAL RIVER WOULD BE NAMED AFTER LOUIS IX — THUS, SAINT-LOUIS.

Formerly the capital of French West Africa, Saint-Louis lost its status to Dakar in 1902.

Fishing, history, and warm hospitality



ROAD TRIP

While there is a stretch of motorway from Dakar to the city of Thiès, taking the scenic route to Saint-Louis is the best way to immerse yourself in Senegalese daily life.

From the northern suburbs of Dakar to towns like Thiès and Tivaouane, the road is alive with energy. You'll pass all kinds of shops — some quite rudimentary — hair salons, marabouts, mechanics, roadside bread stalls, furniture vendors displaying luxurious sofas that contrast with the surroundings, luggage shops, tyre and wheel sellers, and more.

Goats graze on anything they find along the roadside, and the ever-present horse-drawn carts are part of the landscape, as are the small mosques that come to life at prayer times.

CHANGE OF SCENERY

Leaving Louga, the landscape becomes distinctly Sahelian — more arid, with dunes, semi-wild dromedaries, and even vultures

feasting on a carcass. The baobabs have shed their leaves to conserve sap during the dry season.

Eventually, you reach the outskirts of Saint-Louis, with salt marshes and piles of salt, and teams of fishermen rhythmically casting their nets into the lagoon. **The town of Saint-Louis is divided into three areas:** Saint-Louis Island, the Langue de Barbarie, and Sor. We will focus on the first two.

THE HISTORIC CENTRE

Measuring 2,200 metres long and 350 metres wide, with neatly laid-out streets, Saint-Louis Island is connected to the mainland by the majestic Faidherbe Bridge, built from plans by Gustave Eiffel. A great way to explore it is by horse-drawn carriage, offering an elevated view. During colonial times, the city was divided into two parts: the Muslim quarter to the north and the Christian quarter to the south. This is why **the first mosque in French West Africa was built in the north, and the first Christian**



cathedral in French West Africa in the south. You'll see schoolchildren in uniform — dark blue trousers and light blue shirts — and solid colonial houses, some still occupied by French residents. At the centre stands Faidherbe Square, named after the French general responsible for many developments, including the ports of Dakar, Saint-Louis, and Rufisque. He is said to have "pacified" the country with a heavy hand, which led to the square being renamed Baya-Ndar. It was first a parade ground, then Saint-Louis's main market, and today it hosts all major public events.

The colonial regiment was once housed in the Rognant barracks, now a hotel and police station. A curiosity: a steam crane brought by French soldiers in 1883.

THE LANGUE DE BARBARIE

This is a narrow strip of land stretching about 20 km between the mouth of the Senegal River and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a natural reserve for migratory birds. The French named it Langue de Barbarie — "Langue" for the long sandbank, and "Barbarie" because it was inhabited by so-called "barbarians", a term later softened to "Berbers".

For about four kilometres from Saint-Louis, a line of large pirogues is moored along the riverbank. In Senegal, every boat is called a pirogue, whether large or small, motorised, sail-powered or rowed. This is the fishermen's district.

Fishing is the country's second-largest source of income and the primary one for Saint-Louis.

The activity is intense from the northern exit of the city. Although the houses here may appear modest, many belong to wealthy shipowners. Imagine an endless row of brightly coloured boats. Pirogues often sail in pairs, each with a crew of around thirty men. The area is always bustling — especially in the evening when the boats head out to sea, and even more so in the morning when they return, flags flying, proudly displaying the name of their patron painted on the hull. The atmosphere is electric. A line of refrigerated lorries waits patiently for the fish auction to end, ready to transport the catch to cities across Senegal, neighbouring countries, and even Europe.

Once the fish is delivered, the fishermen's work isn't over. Nets must be hauled out and repaired. It's quite a sight: a chain of sailors spaced about five metres apart, carrying a net several kilometres long on their shoulders.



If you're driving through at that moment, you'll need patience — it can take half an hour to fully unload the net. Meanwhile, the whole neighbourhood is buzzing. Under makeshift shelters, men chat at length, while women, feet in the water, gossip loudly.

■ **Text and photos by Gérard Blanc.**
Skål International Lausanne, Switzerland.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN SWITZERLAND THROUGH A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE WINE LANDSCAPE

EXPLORING LAVAUX AND MONTREUX BY EBIKE.

Switzerland, renowned for its breathtaking landscapes and strong commitment to sustainability, offers countless opportunities for environmentally conscious cyclists and nature lovers.

Among its most iconic regions, Lavaux, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is ideal for gentle, eco-friendly exploration.

With its terraced vineyards overlooking Lake Geneva, Lavaux features routes suitable for all levels of cyclists, from beginners to experienced riders.

The winding roads between the vines offer spectacular views and the chance to discover a unique winegrowing heritage.



Far from mass tourism, exploring this region by eBike, a bicycle equipped with an electric motor that assists pedaling—allows visitors to adopt a relaxed pace and fully enjoy the natural and cultural richness of the area.

Not far away, Montreux provides the perfect extension for those who appreciate soft mobility. Known for its famous jazz festival and mild climate, the town is a peaceful haven on the shores of Lake Geneva.

Cycling along the lakeside reveals iconic sites such as Chillon Castle, while offering a serene atmosphere and exceptional scenery.

Local initiatives actively promote sustainable mobility, with safe cycling paths and easy access to public transport, encouraging the combination of different modes of travel. Many wineries also welcome visitors for tastings, offering an authentic immersion into the local terroir.

Whether it's a contemplative ride through Lavaux or a cultural journey in Montreux, this region beautifully illustrates the harmony between tourism and environmental respect. By choosing to travel by bike, each visitor contributes to preserving this Swiss gem while enjoying a unique experience in the heart of nature.

■ **Text and photos by Pierre Daviau.**
Skål International Montreux Vevey, Switzerland.

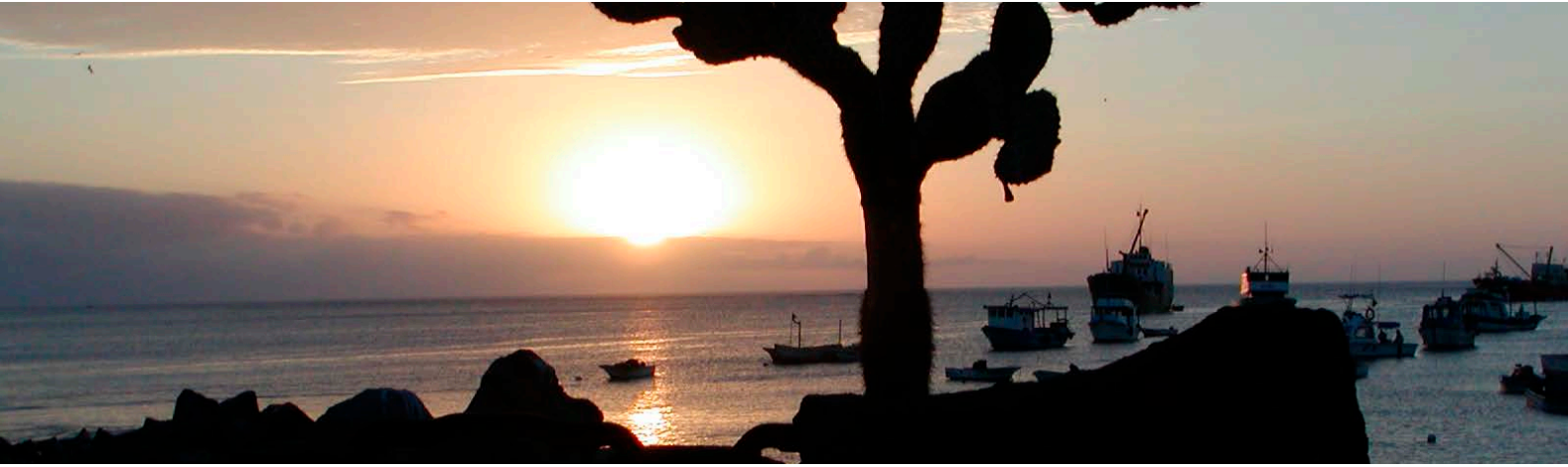


IS THE GALÁPAGOS TRULY A BIOSPHERE RESERVE?

FOR SEVERAL DECADES, NUMEROUS EFFORTS HAVE BEEN MADE TO FIND THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN HUMAN ACTIVITY AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

Undoubtedly, sustainable development, when properly implemented, offers a pathway to achieving this goal. In this context, it is worth highlighting the work of international organisations such as [UNESCO](#), which in 1971 launched the [“Man and the Biosphere” \(MAB\) Programme](#).

This programme is a clear example of the link between environmental conservation and human development. However, despite UNESCO declaring the Galápagos Archipelago a Biosphere Reserve in 1984, there have been limited local, national, and international efforts to establish a genuine process of conservation and human development aligned with the principles of sustainability. In many cases, international investment has focused solely on scientific research and the protection of natural areas, overlooking the fact that human communities also inhabit this unique archipelago.



This calls for serious reflection: **If the Galápagos Archipelago is recognised by UNESCO as both a Biosphere Reserve and a Natural World Heritage Site, what are we all doing to preserve it and live in harmony with its environment?**

As a resident of these beautiful islands, I would like to highlight several examples of daily life and community efforts that reflect the principles of a true Biosphere Reserve:

1. The daily coexistence between local fishers and Galápagos sea lions in a shared, humanised natural space. It is both amusing and fascinating to watch the sea lions, in the late afternoon, climb aboard small fishing boats to rest and spend the night—perhaps lulled to sleep by the gentle rocking of the deep blue sea. Early in the morning, the fishers begin their day by cleaning their boats, scrubbing away the droppings and urea left behind by their wild companions. This routine illustrates a remarkable relationship of coexistence between humans and wildlife.
2. Another example is the ongoing effort to conserve the natural environment. One success story is the recovery of the endemic plant *Calandrinia galapagosa*, found only on San Cristóbal Island. Once on the brink of extinction, its population has stabilised thanks to the dedicated work of local park rangers. This demonstrates a strong human commitment to nature and its preservation.
3. One of the greatest threats to island ecosystems is the introduction

of invasive species, such as blackberry, guava, insects, and other pests. These affect both the natural environment and human livelihoods. In response, farmers on San Cristóbal Island, with support from the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation, have launched an Agricultural Development Project. Today, the results are visible: farmers are motivated, caring for and cultivating their land while eliminating invasive species. Organic farming, free from pests, is proving to be the best barrier against these threats.

4. A large part of the population is now engaged in ecotourism activities, where environmental conservation and community participation are key. Examples include fishers involved in diving tourism and the opening of artisan shops for visitors. Ecotourism is, and will continue to be, a vital tool for building the foundations of sustainable development.

These examples are just a small sample of what people are doing to protect the Galápagos.

This is not to deny the existence of environmental conflicts, particularly in the management of the Galápagos Marine Reserve, but it is important to recognise the strong commitment of the local population.

Our goal is to preserve the Galápagos for future generations, always remembering that in a biosphere reserve, human beings are just as important as the natural environment.

■ **Text and photos by Diego Bonilla Urbina, M.Sc.**
Environmental Manager, Galápagos, Ecuador
President-Elect, Skål International Quito Galápagos.



CAPAC: A NETWORK FOR STRUCTURING SLOW, SUSTAINABLE AND COOPERATIVE TOURISM IN PERU

In a rapidly evolving tourism landscape, the **CAPAC project offers a concrete alternative: to build a network in Peru of professionals committed to the principles of Slow Travel.**

Our ambition is twofold: to meet the growing expectations of travellers seeking authentic and meaningful experiences, and to bring together local stakeholders to cooperate and strengthen one another within a sustainable development framework.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SLOW TRAVEL

Slow tourism is not just a way of travelling, it is a philosophy. It means slowing down, doing less but doing it better, focusing on immersion rather than consumption, and on exchange rather than performance. It involves reconnecting with nature, authenticity, human encounters, and rooted experiences that engage both body and spirit.



IMMERSION IN NATURE AND CULTURE

Another example is immersive holidays in Huayopata, on the edge of the mountain rainforest, where visitors learn about coffee and cacao cultivation, take part in agricultural workshops, and explore lush valleys on foot, in direct contact with local families.

CAPAC is not a product or a commercial brand. It is a platform for cooperation, serving a fairer and more sustainable tourism ecosystem. For professionals, it is an opportunity to be part of a forward-looking project, to help shape it, and to benefit from the network's growth while developing their own business and connections.



A SHARED CHARTER OF VALUES

CAPAC brings together accommodation providers, travel agencies, restaurateurs, artisans, and transport operators around a shared charter of values: genuine hospitality, respect for cultural identities, short supply chains, reduced ecological footprint, and a coherent customer experience.

A COLLABORATIVE NETWORK

By joining the network, each partner becomes part of a collective dynamic: sharing resources, increasing mutual visibility, supporting professional development, and creating integrated tourism offerings. Many slow travel experiences have already been developed with our CAPAC network partners. For example, a caravan journey between Cusco and the Colca Valley, where travellers stop at the homes of local hosts—far from the tourist crowds—to share a meal, a tradition, or a walk.

■ Text and photos by Bertrand Gross.
Skål International Cusco.



Artificial Intelligence

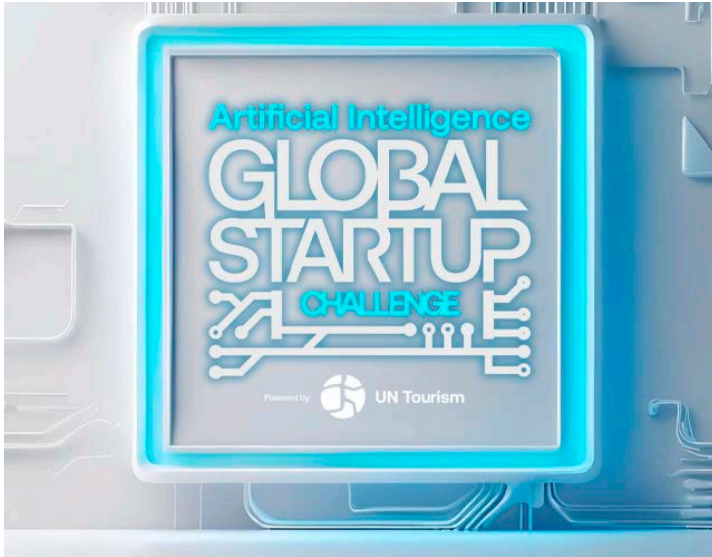
A STRATEGIC ALLY FOR THE TRANSFORMATION OF TOURISM

Artificial intelligence (AI) represents a tangible opportunity to transform tourism into a more efficient, competitive, and inclusive sector.

Now more than ever, we need tools that allow us to anticipate traveller behaviour, better manage tourism flows, and make decisions based on real-time, reliable data.

The scale of investment in AI confirms its strategic role in today's technological development. In the past three years alone, venture capital investment in travel technology has reached USD 48 billion⁽¹⁾. Furthermore, the global smart tourism market is projected to reach USD 126.889 billion by 2033⁽²⁾, with an annual growth rate of 16% from 2023. These figures demonstrate that tourism is at the forefront of technological innovation.

At UN Tourism, we promote a vision of AI as a driver of digital transformation, with a focus on creating balance in what is arguably the most human of all economic sectors. Through its application, destinations can improve planning, diversify their offerings, reduce pressure on critical sites, and attract sustainable investment. AI also enables more accurate measurement of tourism's economic impact, helping public authorities to design more effective policies.



To foster innovation, we launched the **Artificial Intelligence Global Startup Challenge**. In the field of education, we have integrated AI into the **Tourism Online Academy**, and we have also developed vocational training courses via WhatsApp with the support of AI. Additionally, our research reports on AI adoption in tourism provide analysis and recommendations for the ethical and effective implementation of these technologies in the sector.

With vision, leadership, and innovation, AI can accelerate the modernisation of tourism, making it smarter, more competitive, and better aligned with the sector's current needs.

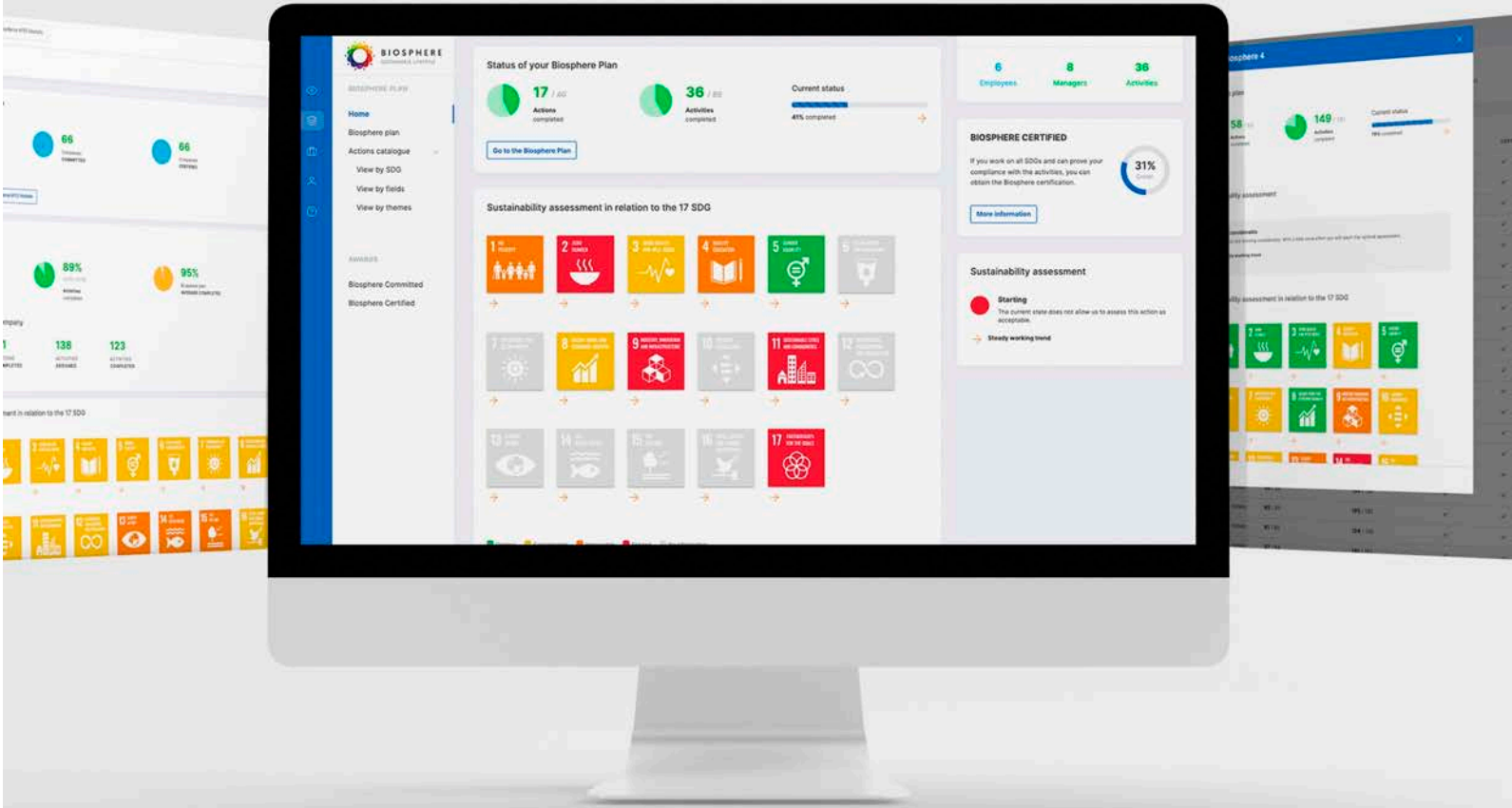
■ By Natalia Bayona
Executive Director, UN Tourism

⁽¹⁾ UN Tourism based on studies.
⁽²⁾ UN Tourism: Tourism Highlights, 2023 edition – Future Marketing Insights.



Biosphere, the smartest path toward sustainability.

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Artificial Intelligence will play a key role in Sustainable Tourism

Today, sustainability has become a cross-cutting pillar for the future of tourism.

As a result, Artificial Intelligence has emerged as a transformative tool for the tourism sector.

Its vast capabilities to optimize resources, personalize experiences, and even reduce environmental impact position it as a fundamental asset in the evolution toward more sustainable and responsible tourism.

The 1995 World Charter for Sustainable Tourism, signed on the island of Lanzarote, already emphasized the need to manage tourism from a global perspective, integrating various ecological, social, and cultural criteria.

Two decades later, the +20 Charter of 2015, signed in Vitoria-Gasteiz, not only reaffirmed these principles but also highlighted the critical role of technological innovation as a driver of change.

Within this context, Artificial Intelligence aligns with the principles of both charters by offering solutions that help reduce carbon footprints and promote inclusion, along with the preservation and conservation of local heritage.

One of the most visible contributions that Artificial Intelligence can make to tourism is the personalization of experiences. Real-time data analysis allows destinations to offer personalized

recommendations tailored to each visitor's interests, promoting more conscious and respectful tourism.

Examples include smart platforms that recommend low- or zero-impact activities, such as hiking routes. Additionally, automatic translation systems now enable interaction between tourists and local communities.

These tools not only enhance the visitor experience, but they can also strengthen the connection with the local environment—just as the 2015 Charter advocates.

Artificial Intelligence could also help promote smart destinations, those that integrate sustainability, accessibility, and innovation. These places use advanced technologies to efficiently manage resources, improve residents' quality of life, and, ultimately, enhance the travel experience for visitors.

Cities like Gijón, a pioneer in urban sustainability, are already incorporating Artificial Intelligence to monitor energy consumption in accommodations, manage waste, and analyze average tourist behavior to enable personalized planning.

As stated in the First World Charter for Sustainable Tourism, signed in 1995, sustainable tourism requires the involvement of all stakeholders. That is, governments, businesses, local communities, and tourists must all play a part to move together toward a more developed and responsible future.

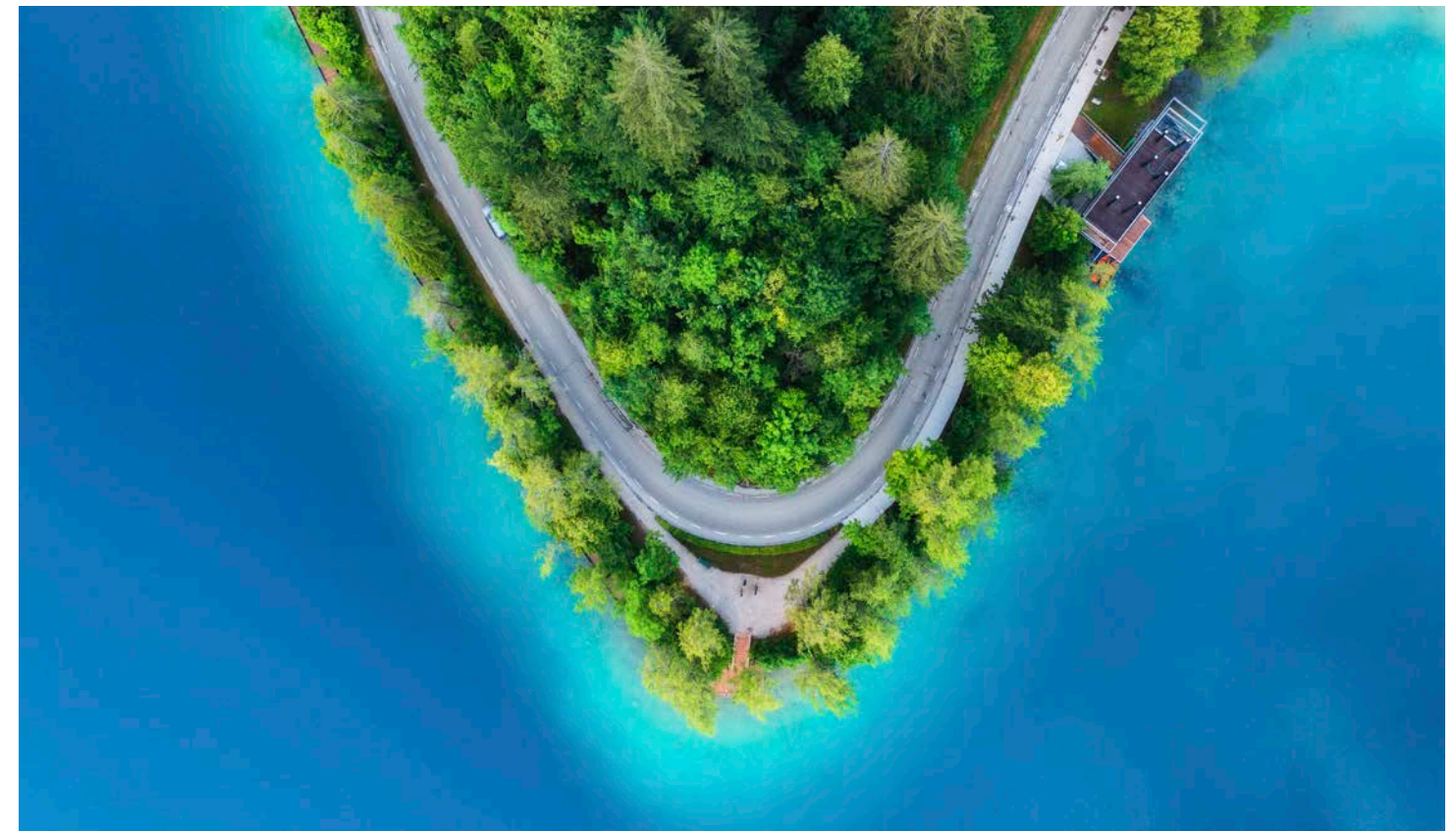
Artificial intelligence, far from being an isolated solution, must be integrated into a global strategy that prioritizes equality, the preservation of the natural heritage of destinations, and action against climate change.

As Biosphere Sustainable, a sustainability certification body, proposes: "Sustainability is not an end, but a continuous process toward a better future for all".

In conclusion, Artificial Intelligence is not just an advanced technological tool, it represents a significant opportunity to redefine 21st-century tourism based on fundamental principles of sustainability, inclusion, and the utmost respect for cultural and natural diversity.

It is a long road that must be traveled with an ethical vision, cooperation, and collective commitment.

■ 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



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.

Meeting people is priceless: 21st IMEX Frankfurt closes on a high



The 2025 edition of IMEX Frankfurt closed having welcomed more than 13,000 global attendees, of which well over 4,000 were meetings and events buyers.



IMEX CEO, Carina Bauer and IMEX Chairman, Ray Bloom.

The show, which took place May 20-22 at Messe Frankfurt, was the largest ever in terms of exhibitor floor space, generating over 67,000 pre-scheduled meetings across three days. One to one meetings increased by 10% compared to last year demonstrating not only heightened business demand but also increased engagement among buyers.

The 21st edition of the show reflected both current sentiment and momentum within the worldwide events sector, with robust business pipelines evident in the meetings, connections and collaborations happening on a busy show floor.

Heledd Williams, Head of Business Events at Meet In Wales, summed up the IMEX experience: *"Meeting people in person is priceless. Nothing can replace it. Being here makes you feel things, it sparks unique ideas, you feel part of a*

community. We collaborate and share our challenges. In that way, our industry is very unique". Tracy Halliwell MBE, Director of Tourism and Conventions at the London Convention Bureau, said: *"IMEX Frankfurt 2025 was a*

tremendous success for us. Our stand attracted more interest than ever, with more than 750 pre-scheduled meetings—not including those arranged on the day. We were especially proud to be joined by our chairman and London's Deputy Mayor for Business and Growth, Howard Dawber, whose presence highlighted our strong commitment to the new London Growth Plan. We're excited to build on the valuable connections we've made to drive real results for our city".

As an industry founded on collaboration, the global range of buyers and suppliers enjoyed the positive benefits and insights of meeting face to face.

Claudia Kliem, Senior Manager Group

Sales-Worldwide Sales at BWH Hotel Group, said: *"MICE business is people's business... the personal touch is what makes the difference. To tell our story face to face is even better... if the customer has a question, you can share your story in a way that's relevant to them. This gives us the personal touch".*

TRUST, TRANSPARENCY, EXPERIENTIAL DESIGN

The Inspiration Hub, home to the show's education programming, saw event professionals come together to question, debate and look to the future. Several themes arose time and again—the importance of trust, transparency, experiential design combined with emotional journey planning, psychological safety and leadership.

In a panel session exploring how agencies and planners can work together more successfully, Alexandra Howar, Director of Business Development at InVision Communications, highlighted that "transparency is the currency of trust." She encouraged planners to collaborate across the supply chain to drive efficiencies and elevate the audience experience.

Looking ahead, Carina Bauer, IMEX Group CEO, noted that Frankfurt has been designated World Design Capital 2026, which offers the show multiple opportunities to extend its partnerships across the city and promote the importance of strong design principles as the bedrock of successful events and experiences.





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