

# TOURISM NOW

# MAGAZINE



DECEMBER 2024

Building Bridges  
for a Stronger Skål

---

Embracing the power of diversity  
to continue building a more  
inclusive and welcoming world.



# 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)

# TOURISM NOW MAGAZINE

## 04 Editorial

Message from the President of Skål International and the Editor of the Tourism Now Magazine.

## 06 #EmpoweringDiversity #SkålNetwork

- 06 Skålleague of the Year.
- 08 'Ethnic heritage' by Skål International Director Mohan N S N.
- 12 Interview with Ash Munn, President of Skål International Australia.
- 16 'Sunflower Lanyard', the initiative providing support for travelers with invisible disabilities.
- 18 Skål Club of the Year Award.
- 20 Lifetime recognition to Antonio García del Valle, Skål International Honorary President.

## 22 Corporate Social Responsibility

- 22 Interview to Sustainable Tourism Awards 2024 Winners.
- 29 'Tourism and sustainability' by Biosphere.

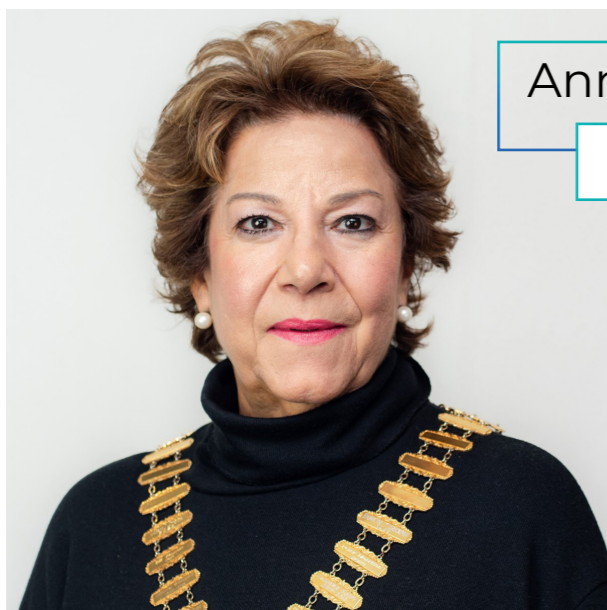
## 30 Events

- 30 Izmir Skål International World Congress highlights.
- 32 Interview with Kamel Badawi, Business Management and Intelligence Director, Aspire Zone (Skål International World Congress 2024 Sponsor).
- 34 Latest news about trade shows.

Boost your brand with advertising opportunities in Tourism Now magazine.  
More info: [skal@skal.org](mailto:skal@skal.org).



# EDITORIAL



Annette Cardenas  
Skål International President

**THERE IS SOMETHING IRREPLACEABLE ABOUT IN-PERSON INTERACTIONS**

As I look back to our recent World Congress in the beautiful city of Izmir, I want to take a moment to emphasize the **vital importance of our annual gathering**. This event is not just a meeting; it is an opportunity for us to come together, build relationships, and identify new opportunities that will strengthen our organization. A big thank you to the Local Organizing Committee, the Izmir Skål International Club, and all those who worked so hard to make this a memorable experience.

There is something irreplaceable about in-person interactions. A face-to-face conversation fosters a deeper connection, creating an environment where ideas can flow freely and creativity can thrive. Sharing laughter, experiences, and insights in person enhances our bonds and allows us to collaborate effectively for the future.

The strength of Skål International lies in its members and the relationships we cultivate. By coming together each year, we not only celebrate our achievements but also lay the groundwork for future successes. Let us make it a priority to attend the world congress, ensuring that it becomes a truly transformative event for our organization.

Together, we can turn this gathering into a powerful **catalyst for change and innovation**. I look forward to seeing each of you there next year ready to share ideas, strengthen our ties, and make a lasting impact on our beloved organization.

Thank you all for a wonderful and unforgettable year!

**Skål!**



Toni Ritter  
Tourism Now Editor & Skål International Director

**#EMPOWERINGDIVERSITY, A CORE VALUE THAT DEFINES WHO WE ARE AS SKÅL INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS**

As we approach the end of 2024, I'm happy to share the December edition of our magazine with you. This issue invites us to reflect on a year filled with challenges, achievements, and moments that brought us closer together as a global Skål family.

Our presidential theme, *'Building Bridges for a Stronger Skål'*, resonates deeply with the **connections we've built throughout the year**. These bridges symbolize the partnerships, collaborations, and shared moments that unite us in our mission to promote friendship and understanding across the tourism industry. Each connection strengthens not only our organization but also the resilience and innovation within our sector.

This edition also highlights the importance of **#EmpoweringDiversity**, a core value that defines who we are as Skål International members.

Diversity is more than a concept—it's what drives creativity, fosters growth, and enriches every aspect of our work. As an industry that thrives on cultural exchange and human connection, **embracing diversity is not just a responsibility; it's an opportunity to create something truly extraordinary**.

As we turn the page on 2024, I encourage you to take pride in what we've achieved together this year. Let's carry this momentum forward, inspired by the bridges we've built and the strength we've found in one another.

Here's to a new year filled with opportunity, growth, and connection.

#EmpoweringWomen

# Skålleague of the YEAR

THE SKÅLLEAGUE OF THE YEAR AWARD IS A PRESTIGIOUS RECOGNITION WITHIN SKÅL INTERNATIONAL, CELEBRATING INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE MADE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ORGANIZATION AND THE TOURISM INDUSTRY.



**Rosario González de Dellien.**  
President of Skål International Southern Latin America Area Committee and General Manager of Paraíso Travel in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

This year, **Rosario González de Dellien**, President of Skål International Southern Latin America Area Committee and General Manager of Paraíso Travel in Cochabamba, Bolivia, has been honored **for her exceptional leadership and dedication.** Her achievements are particularly noteworthy in a sector that has traditionally been male dominated.

### ORIGINS AND HISTORY

With **over 34 years of experience in the travel and tourism industry**, Rosario González de Dellien has established herself as a trailblazer.

Her journey from a travel agent to a respected leader reflects not only her professional excellence but also her unwavering commitment to advancing female representation in tourism.

She has become a role model, demonstrating that women can thrive and lead in a field where gender disparities have long existed.

### BREAKING BARRIERS IN A MALE-DOMINATED INDUSTRY

Rosario's rise to prominence is a testament to her resilience and vision. In Latin America, where leadership roles in travel and tourism have historically been dominated by men, she has defied expectations and created new pathways for women.

- **Empowering Women:** By assuming leadership positions within Skål International and her own company, Rosario is challenging stereotypes and inspiring women to pursue careers in tourism. Her success is a powerful example of how women can excel in all facets of business.
- **Mentorship and Advocacy:** Rosario is deeply committed to mentoring young women, sharing her experiences, and encouraging them to embrace their ambitions confidently. Her advocacy extends beyond words, as she actively works to create opportunities for women in the industry.
- **Promoting Diversity:** Under her guidance, the tourism sector has seen an increased focus on diversity. Rosario champions the idea that inclusive teams lead to innovative solutions and better outcomes for businesses and communities.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO SKÅL INTERNATIONAL

As President of the Southern Latin America Area Committee, Rosario has left an indelible mark on Skål International through her vision and initiatives:

- **Advocating for Sustainable Tourism.** She has led efforts to prioritize sustainability in tourism, aligning with global trends and the growing demand for responsible travel practices.
- **Expanding Networks and Partnerships.** Rosario's tenure has been marked by the expansion of regional networks, fostering partnerships that promote local businesses and strengthen the tourism ecosystem.
- **Showcasing Bolivian Culture.** Her tireless efforts to highlight Bolivia's cultural heritage have helped position the country as a unique and attractive destination on the global stage.

### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AWARD

Receiving the Skålleague of the Year Award is not just a personal achievement for Rosario; it's a reflection of her alignment with the values upheld by Skål International.

This honor recognizes individuals who exemplify leadership, innovation, and a commitment to enhancing the tourism industry.

For Rosario, it serves as a **platform to inspire others, particularly women, to engage actively within their communities and make meaningful contributions to global tourism.**

### IMPACT ON LOCAL TOURISM

Rosario's recognition as Skålleague of the Year 2024 is expected to have a ripple effect on local tourism in Bolivia.

Her leadership not only inspires sustainable practices but also highlights the importance of integrating local communities into the global tourism narrative.

This acknowledgment shines a spotlight on Bolivia as a destination, fostering increased interest and economic opportunities for its people.

### THANK YOU!

Rosario González de Dellien's award as Skålleague of the Year underscores her invaluable contributions to Skål International and the broader tourism industry.

As a woman breaking barriers in a traditionally male-dominated sector, she embodies resilience, innovation, and empowerment. Her **dedication to sustainable tourism and international collaboration** is an inspiration for all.

Looking ahead, Rosario's legacy will undoubtedly continue to elevate Bolivian tourism and empower future leaders -particularly women- within Skål International and beyond.



#EmpoweringCulture

# ETHNIC HERITAGE

In a world that grows more interconnected each day, tourism continues to be a bridge between people of different cultures, backgrounds, and experiences.



Ethnic heritage diversity, which encompasses the distinct traditions, histories, languages, and practices of various groups around the globe, is one of the most powerful elements enriching global tourism.

This diversity transforms travel into a deeply immersive experience, offering tourists not just new destinations but new ways of seeing, understanding, and appreciating the world. Here's how ethnic heritage diversity contributes to the growth and depth of global tourism.

## **PROMOTES CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND UNDERSTANDING**

Every ethnic group carries unique customs and stories passed down through generations. When tourists visit different regions, they engage with these rich narratives, sparking cultural exchange and understanding. For example, exploring the rituals of the Maasai people in Kenya, celebrating Día de los Muertos in Mexico, or participating in Diwali festivities in India gives visitors a firsthand experience of cultural practices. Such exchanges foster empathy, dispel stereotypes, and promote unity through shared human experiences.



**CREATES UNIQUE TRAVEL EXPERIENCES**

Today’s travelers increasingly seek more than just relaxation; they look for meaningful, authentic experiences. Ethnic heritage diversity provides precisely this. From learning traditional crafts in the villages of Japan to attending a Flamenco performance in Spain or savoring the flavors of Ethiopian cuisine, tourists are offered a variety of immersive activities. These experiences, grounded in heritage, allow visitors to connect deeply with local communities, making each journey unique and memorable.

**SUPPORTS LOCAL ECONOMIES AND SUSTAINABLE TOURISM**

Celebrating ethnic heritage through tourism supports local economies, especially in regions where tourism is a primary source of income. By

participating in culturally rich activities—such as guided tours by indigenous communities, artisan workshops, and traditional culinary experiences—tourists contribute directly to the livelihoods of local people. Moreover, such forms of tourism are often sustainable, as they promote the preservation of traditions and provide locals with incentives to protect their natural and cultural environments. This symbiosis between tourists and locals ensures that ethnic heritage diversity thrives for future generations.

**PRESERVES AND REVITALISES CULTURAL PRACTICES**

Many communities face challenges in maintaining their cultural practices in an increasingly globalized world. Tourism can serve as a vital lifeline in preserving endangered languages, crafts, music, and

dance forms. When visitors show interest in learning traditional weaving techniques or understanding the oral histories of a tribe, they provide motivation for the community to continue these traditions. For instance, the Maori people of New Zealand and the Sami people in Northern Europe have found that cultural tourism allows them to pass on their heritage and keep their practices vibrant and relevant.

**EXPANDS EDUCATION AND AWARENESS**

Tourism centered on ethnic heritage fosters a greater awareness of the diversity that defines humanity. Through museums, cultural centers, heritage festivals, and direct interactions with local people, travelers learn about the customs, struggles, and achievements of various ethnic groups. This knowledge inspires travelers to respect cultural differences and promotes a global mindset that is more inclusive and aware of the richness of human history.

**ENHANCES FESTIVALS AND CELEBRATIONS**

Many countries attract visitors through annual cultural celebrations rooted in ethnic heritage. From the colorful Holi festival in India to the spirited Carnival in Brazil and the vibrant Songkran festival in Thailand, these events are not only tourist attractions but also essential to the identity of the communities hosting them. By attending, tourists become part of these celebrations, contributing to their vibrancy and ensuring they remain valued traditions. Such festivals are an invitation to the world, showcasing the unique aspects of ethnic heritage and encouraging travelers to explore and respect these traditions.

**INSPIRES ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

Ethnic heritage diversity has a profound impact on global art, music, dance, fashion, and literature. The cross-cultural influences between tourists and local communities enrich creative expression and inspire new forms of art that blend global and local elements. This is evident in global fashion trends, music fusion genres, and culinary innovations that incorporate flavors from diverse cultures. By exposing tourists to local artistry and crafts, ethnic heritage tourism broadens their appreciation

for creativity rooted in cultural identity, inspiring a more diverse and inclusive global art scene.

**ENCOURAGES RESPONSIBILITY AND RESPECT AMONG TRAVELLERS**

Finally, ethnic heritage diversity in tourism calls for greater responsibility and respect from travelers. With the opportunity to experience different cultures comes the responsibility to engage in a manner that respects local values and avoids cultural exploitation. Organizations promoting responsible tourism and educating tourists about cultural sensitivity play a crucial role in ensuring that interactions with ethnic heritage are respectful and beneficial for all. When tourists approach these interactions with humility and respect, they contribute to a more ethical and sustainable tourism industry.

**CONCLUSION**

Ethnic heritage diversity is one of the greatest treasures of our world, and its influence on global tourism cannot be overstated. By offering unique experiences, fostering understanding, and preserving cultural practices, it transforms travel into an enriching journey that transcends geographical boundaries.

As travelers, **recognizing and valuing the diversity of ethnic heritage deepens our connections to the places we visit and the people we meet**, reminding us that our shared humanity is expressed in wonderfully varied ways. In a world where cultural boundaries are increasingly blurred, tourism serves as a platform to celebrate and honour these differences, making each journey a step toward a more inclusive and interconnected global community.



**“ Ethnic heritage diversity in tourism calls for greater responsibility and respect from travelers. ”**

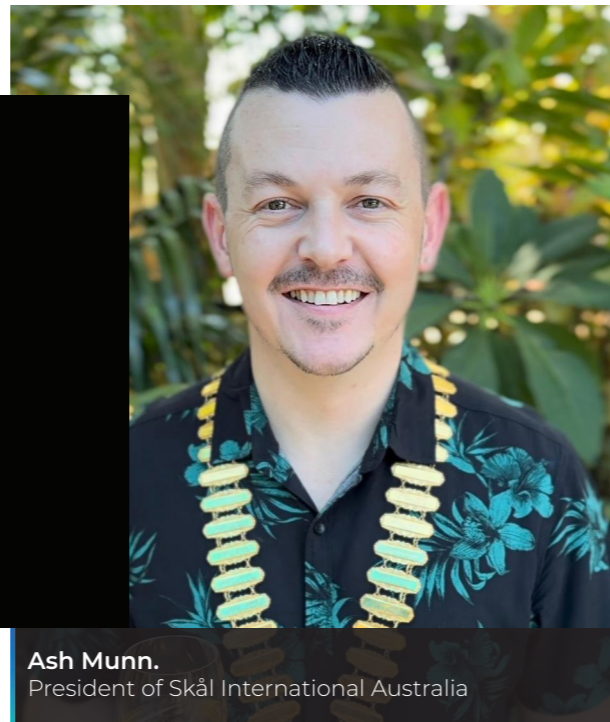


**■ By Mohan N S N.**  
Skål International Director.



#EmpoweringLGBTQIA+

# INTERVIEW WITH ASH MUNN



Ash Munn.  
President of Skål International Australia

## PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY AND ROLE AT AIR KIMBERLEY

### CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY AND WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME THE OWNER OF AIR KIMBERLEY?

My passion for aviation began at the age of 15, following my very first flying lesson – an unforgettable experience. On my 16th birthday, I achieved a significant milestone, my first solo flight. By 17, I had proudly earned my private pilot’s license, cementing my love for all things flying and aviation.

After graduating from school, however, I took a slight detour from aviation to explore another passion, travel. A three-month adventure across Europe led to an extended stay in France, where I spent several years immersed in the hospitality industry. I worked in hotels and bars in Paris and Cannes, soaking up the culture, language, and life lessons that came with living abroad.

Eventually, I returned to Australia, driven by my love of flying and my desire to pursue my Commercial Pilot’s License. I then relocated to Broome to gain experience and build my flying hours in one of the most beautiful and remote parts of Australia. But aviation, like many industries, is not without its challenges.

During a downturn in the sector, I pivoted back to a role in hotel management with Minor Hotel Group. Starting as a Food and Beverage Supervisor, I climbed the ranks to Executive Hotel Manager overseeing their

two Oaks properties in Broome, developing invaluable leadership and business skills along the way.

My connections through Skål International Broome led to an incredible opportunity. Alongside my partner Jensen, also a pilot, we were approached by the company’s owners at the time, who were Skål members themselves. They saw potential in us to takeover the company, and it was an opportunity we couldn’t refuse.

Seven years later, owning and operating Air Kimberley has been the culmination of a lifelong dream. It’s a journey that’s combined my love for aviation and travel, my experience in hospitality and hotel management, and my belief in building meaningful connections through travel and tourism.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU’VE FACED IN THE AVIATION INDUSTRY, AND HOW HAVE YOU OVERCOME THEM?

The aviation industry, particularly general aviation, faces significant challenges that require strategic solutions to ensure sustainability and growth. Rising operational costs, such as fuel, insurance, and maintenance, place immense pressure on operators. Volatile fuel prices, increasing insurance premiums driven by liability risks, and a shortage of qualified engineers all contribute to growing expenses, making it harder to maintain optimal operations.



Keeping pace with advancing technology is another hurdle. The high costs and complexities of modernising avionics and safety systems often results in operators struggling to advance their technological capabilities. Additionally, stringent and complex regulations pose barriers that stifle innovation and limit growth opportunities for aviation companies.

At Air Kimberley, we face these challenges head-on with a focus on innovation, adaptability, and strategic planning. Where possible, we prioritise investments in technological advancements, including modern avionics and in-flight safety systems, to enhance reliability, safety, and efficiency. Flexibility is at the core of our operations, allowing us to adapt to industry changes and seize new opportunities as they arise.

Cost management is another key focus. Through strategic fuel purchasing, preventative maintenance, and exploring cost-effective insurance solutions, we manage expenses while maintaining the highest standards of safety and service quality.

We also actively engage with industry bodies and regulators, advocating for balanced, practical policies that support growth and innovation. At Air Kimberley, we view these challenges as opportunities to strengthen our operations, embrace forward-thinking solutions, and remain resilient in a constantly evolving industry.

### HOW HAS AIR KIMBERLEY EVOLVED UNDER YOUR LEADERSHIP, AND WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE COMPANY?

Since taking the helm of Air Kimberley, our vision has been to build on the company’s rich legacy while our mission

has been to evolve into a leading aviation business in Australia’s Northwest. Over the past seven years, we’ve achieved exactly that, transforming Air Kimberley into a reputable and trusted charter and scenic operator.

Operational excellence has been one of the key focuses in Air Kimberley’s growth. By implementing strategic cost management, we’ve ensured the sustainability of our operations while maintaining our commitment to safety and quality.

We’ve also expanded our service offerings to meet the diverse needs of our customers. From charter flights providing essential service and supply to remote populations, to world-class unique tour experiences that highlight the incredible landscapes of Australia’s remote Northwest. Every flight we take is not just a flight through the skies, it’s a chance to create unforgettable memories for our guests and showcase the extraordinary place we call home.

At the heart of our growth is a strong emphasis on people, our team and our customers. We’ve fostered a workplace culture built on relationships, collaboration, professionalism, and passion, ensuring our staff feel empowered to deliver exceptional service. For our customers, we’ve worked tirelessly to provide unforgettable guest experiences, confidence, trust and reliability.

Looking ahead, we are committed to building upon this foundation and continuing to expand our operations as a leading aviation company in Australia’s Northwest.



## PRESIDENT OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA

### AS THE NEWLY ELECTED PRESIDENT OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA, WHAT ARE YOUR MAIN GOALS FOR THE ORGANISATION?

As the newly elected President of Skål International Australia, my primary goals for the organisation revolve around driving membership growth, enhancing our industry relevance, and delivering increased value to our members.

Our initiatives will focus on membership development, building partnerships to expand membership benefits, ensuring a strong return on membership investment, supporting young industry professionals and further enhancing our communication channels through newsletters and social media. Additionally, we have established a dedicated Australian Sustainability Subcommittee to champion responsible and sustainable practices within the travel and tourism industry.

### HOW DO YOU SEE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL AUSTRALIA IMPACTING THE TRAVEL AND TOURISM INDUSTRY IN THE COMING YEARS?

Skål International Australia can play a huge role in shaping the future of the travel and tourism industry by continuing to promote its core values of networking, collaboration, and creating meaningful business opportunities for its members. These very principles along with the foundations of friendship and mutual respect among tourism professionals, remain as vital today as ever.

Skål International Australia provides a dynamic platform for members to share knowledge, exchange ideas, and build valuable partnerships that drive business success. Through our national events, and local club meetings, we foster genuine connections that lead to collaboration, innovation, and growth.

A key part of this is supporting young industry professionals - helping them develop their skills, expand their networks, and find opportunities within the sector. By nurturing the next generation of tourism leaders, we ensure a vibrant and sustainable future for the industry.

By staying true to these values and committing to the development of young professionals, Skål International Australia will strengthen its membership and play a leading role in creating a more resilient, connected, and forward-thinking travel and tourism industry.

### CAN YOU SHARE A SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVEMENT OR INITIATIVE THAT YOU ARE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF DURING YOUR MEMBERSHIP AT SKÅL INTERNATIONAL?

Over the past 11 years as a member of Skål International, I have very passionately embraced the organisation's values, which has afforded me numerous opportunities for personal and professional growth.

Serving as Australia's representative on the International Skål Council and being elected National President are achievements that I hold in high regard.



Annette Cardenas, Skål International President 2024, and Ash Munn, President of Skål International Australia.

Additionally, being honoured as the Australian Skålleague of the Year in 2022 and receiving the Skål International Rising Skål Leader award in 2023 have been particularly meaningful recognitions of my dedication and commitment to the Skål International movement.

## PERSONAL EXPERIENCES AND LGBTQIA+ ADVOCACY

### HOW HAS BEING OPENLY GAY INFLUENCED YOUR PROFESSIONAL JOURNEY IN GENERAL AND, IF APPLICABLE THE AVIATION/TOURISM INDUSTRIES?

Being openly gay has truly enriched my professional journey, especially in the aviation and tourism industries. It's given me a deep appreciation for **the importance of diversity and inclusivity**, and I'm passionate about creating a **workplace culture where everyone feels safe, valued, and respected** - whether that's our team or our clients.

For me, embracing my identity has allowed me to lead with authenticity, which I believe is one of the keys to building genuine relationships and trust. It's this openness that has shaped my leadership style - relatable, accepting, and collaborative - and it's something I'm incredibly proud of.

**At Air Kimberley, we're committed to supporting and promoting LGBTQIA+ inclusivity.** We're proud members of GALTA (Gay and Lesbian Tourism Australia), actively supporting LGBTQIA+ travel. We're also major sponsors of Broome Pride each year, showcasing our commitment to creating, embracing and celebrating a welcoming and supportive environment for all.

### HAVE YOU FACED ANY SPECIFIC CHALLENGES OR DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF YOUR SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND HOW HAVE YOU DEALT WITH THEM?

I've been incredibly fortunate to grow and develop in environments that have always been supportive, both within my family and throughout my professional career. From the beginning, I've surrounded myself with people who value hard work and results, and I've always believed that my achievements are a direct reflection of the effort I've put in and the goals I've accomplished.

I can honestly say that I haven't felt my sexuality has led to challenges or discrimination throughout my personal and professional life. I know this isn't the case for everyone, and I feel deeply grateful to have been part of workplaces and communities where authenticity and individuality are celebrated.



Ash Munn with his partner Jensen Skjellerup.

This experience has shaped my approach to leadership and how I run my business today. It's important to me that I create the same kind of supportive environment for others, where everyone feels respected and has the freedom to be themselves. I believe that when people feel valued for who they are, they can truly thrive.

### WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNG LGBTQIA+ PROFESSIONALS ASPIRING TO ENTER THE AVIATION AND TOURISM SECTORS?

My advice to young LGBTQIA+ professionals is simple: **be yourself**. Authenticity is your greatest strength, and embracing it will help you thrive. Surround yourself with people who value and support you, and always treat others with kindness and respect - connections are everything in these industries.

Aviation and tourism thrive on diversity, and your voice, ideas, and experiences have the power to make a meaningful impact. Be proud of who you are and the value you bring and never hesitate to dream big. Both industries are full of opportunities, and there's a place for everyone to shine.



## #EmpoweringDisabilities

# SUNFLOWER LANYARD

## PROVIDING MORE SUPPORT FOR TRAVELERS WITH INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

WHEN WE THINK OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES, MANY OF US LIKELY ENVISION A CERTAIN IMAGE: INDIVIDUALS IN WHEELCHAIRS, PEOPLE USING WALKING AIDS, OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED INDIVIDUALS WITH A WHITE CANE. BUT WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHOSE DISABILITIES ARE NOT IMMEDIATELY VISIBLE?

Many people live with chronic conditions, speech disorders, autism, dyslexia, mental health issues, Parkinson’s disease, anxiety disorders, or hearing and vision impairments – disabilities that are often invisible and frequently overlooked or misunderstood by society.

### INVISIBLE DISABILITIES: A MAJOR CHALLENGE IN EVERYDAY LIFE

These ‘invisible’ disabilities are often not recognized as such, which can add to the burden faced by those affected. In addition to dealing with physical or emotional limitations, people with invisible disabilities often feel misunderstood or unseen by society. Conditions like pain, depression, anxiety, or chronic internal illnesses are just a few examples – and no one can immediately tell how much someone is suffering from these issues.

This becomes particularly challenging in stressful, crowded environments such as airports, where quick movement and smooth procedures are required. For individuals with invisible disabilities, it can be especially difficult to navigate such spaces, as they often need more time and support to feel comfortable and start their journey.

### THE SUNFLOWER LANYARD: A SIMPLE YET EFFECTIVE TOOL

The Sunflower Lanyard was created to support exactly these individuals. It is a green lanyard with a sunflower symbol,

discreetly signaling that the wearer may need additional support. Wearing the lanyard lets airport staff and others know that the person may require more time, patience, or personal assistance without needing to explain their condition in detail.

The concept was first introduced at London Gatwick Airport in 2016, and since then it has been adopted globally. Today, the lanyard is available at over 200 airports worldwide and has become an accepted tool for travelers with invisible disabilities.

### THE SUNFLOWER LANYARD AT BERLIN BRANDENBURG AIRPORT (BER)

Berlin Brandenburg Airport (BER) was the first German airport to introduce the Sunflower Lanyard in February 2023. The lanyard is free of charge and can be picked up without proof of disability at the information desks in Terminals 1 and 2, as well as at the Mobility Service.

The use of the lanyard is voluntary, and there are no legal or financial benefits associated with wearing it. Instead, it serves to raise awareness among airport staff and fellow travelers about the potential need for support.



*The Sunflower Lanyard is available at over 200 airports worldwide and has become an accepted tool for travelers with invisible disabilities*

Since its introduction at BER, demand for the lanyards has steadily increased. While around 5 lanyards were initially distributed daily, the number has risen to 10–15 per day. To date, approximately 10,000 people have used the lanyard at BER. Other airports in Germany, such as Hamburg and Düsseldorf, also introduced the lanyard in 2024, and more airports are expected to follow suit.

### AN INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF SUPPORT

The Sunflower Lanyard is not only available at airports but also in other areas to help individuals start their journeys with less stress. In Berlin-Brandenburg, members of the Sozialverband Deutschland (SoVD) can pick up the lanyard at the regional office. Additionally, the FASD Deutschland e.V. association offers the lanyard to individuals with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). This expands the reach of the Sunflower Lanyard, making it a versatile tool that benefits people in various contexts beyond just airports.

### CONCLUSION: RAISING AWARENESS FOR INVISIBLE DISABILITIES

The Sunflower Lanyard is an important step toward providing more support and raising awareness for people with invisible disabilities. It allows wearers to communicate their needs discreetly and enables them to travel more independently and with less stress. The growing acceptance and distribution of this tool highlight the importance of increasing awareness of invisible disabilities and fostering a more inclusive society where everyone receives the support they need without having to explain themselves.

By making these individuals visible, we contribute to building a society where understanding and empathy are paramount, and where all travelers can feel seen and supported.

[MORE INFORMATION >](#)

■ **By Birgit Domröse.**  
Skål International Berlin.



# Skål Club of the Year 2024



## THE KEYS TO SUCCESS FOR SKÅL INTERNATIONAL CÔTE D'AZUR

For decades, the Côte d'Azur has proudly stood as a premier tourist destination, a success owed to the dedication and expertise of the professionals who work tirelessly to preserve its allure.

Founded in Nice in 1933, Skål International Côte d'Azur has played a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining this remarkable radiance.

Under the presidency of Nicolle Martin, the Club's 40th president, membership has grown to 248, earning it the distinction of being the world's leading club.

The Club also boasts 25 Young Skål graduates from esteemed tourism schools.



Nicolle Martin, President of Skål International Côte d'Azur, with the Skål Club of the Year 2024 award.

All united by a shared mission: to **promote their establishments on both national and international stages.**

Nicolle Martin's election marked a crucial turning point for the Club, which was threatening to close its doors with just nine members. Thanks to her vast experience in tourism and her impressive professional network, she was able to quickly attract around a hundred new members. This success is based on a history of friendship and trust, which has enabled Skål International to be discovered by professionals.

The pandemic presented significant challenges, but the Club successfully adapted by hosting webinars, an initiative that led to over 40 new memberships.

Today, Skål International Côte d'Azur is present three times a week on social networks, highlighting its members. The club benefits from a constant following not only from its members,

but also from international skateboarders.

Skål International Côte d'Azur's visibility is enhanced by its website, which attracts many visitors every day, and its newsletter, which has an open rate of over 35% every month.

The President does not forget to celebrate her members' birthdays, adding a personal touch to this dynamic community.

The support of the national and local press is a major asset, with 14 journalists covering club events.

Skål International Côte d'Azur also benefits from the support of the Departmental Council, Côte d'Azur France Tourisme, the Côte d'Azur Chamber of Commerce, the Italian Chamber of Commerce and Nice Côte d'Azur airport, not forgetting the many members who choose to sponsor the Club.

Every month, the Club organises events at its members' establishments, accompanied by networking

sessions and speed business meetings. These events bring together around a hundred participants, 70% of whom are members and 30% travel and tourism professionals, representing the future generation of the Club.

These meetings also include an induction ceremony for new members.

Since 2018, the Club has received several prestigious awards from Skål International. In 2022, our president was honoured with the title of Ambassador of the Year, and in 2023, she was awarded the Order of Skål Merit.

The Club is particularly proud to have been voted Club of the Year in 2024, a prestigious accolade that highlights the significance of our network within the Skål International community, just before the President's term ends in 2025.



# ANTONIO GARCÍA DEL VALLE LIFETIME RECOGNITION



President Annette Cardenas announced during the Annual General Assembly that the Executive Board, during its September meeting, had agreed to honour Honorary President Antonio García del Valle with a meaningful lifetime recognition for his contributions and commitment to managing and maintaining an extensive collection of historical materials and data by renaming the current Membership Development Fund to '**Antonio García del Valle Membership Development Fund**'.

Tourism Now Magazine reached out to Honorary President Antonio García del Valle to share insights on how it all began:

Honorary President Antonio García del Valle holding the certificate of the renaming of the Membership Development Fund to the 'Antonio García del Valle Membership Development Fund'.

**HISTORY OF SKÅL INTERNATIONAL BY ANTONIO GARCÍA DEL VALLE, HONORARY PRESIDENT SKÅL INTERNATIONAL**

*When asked why I began collecting Skål International data—a passion I continue to pursue today—the answer lies in my journey with Skål International, which began in 1961. At that time, Skål was the heart of the tourism industry, bringing together the most influential leaders across airlines, travel agencies, hotels, and other key sectors.*

My career in tourism was deeply shaped by Skål International. The connections and friendships I cultivated opened doors I never imagined.

Starting as a hotelier managing properties like Los Alamos, Las Mercedes, and Delfin, I later ventured into the car rental business with Autos Niza and Auto Spain. Eventually, I transitioned to becoming a travel agent with Viajes Málaga and Savitur.

Within Skål International, I had the privilege of serving in nearly every possible capacity: Treasurer, Vice President, and President at the local level with Skål International Málaga Costa del Sol; Treasurer, Vice President, and President at the national level with Skål International Spain.

Internationally, I held roles as International Skål International Councillor for Spain, Vice-President and President of the International Skål Council, International Auditor, Director for Extension, Director for Congresses, Vice-President, and International President, culminating in the honor of becoming Honorary President of Skål International.

I also contributed to landmark events such as serving as Treasurer for the Organising Committee of the Skål International Congress in Málaga (1968), Coordinator for the Skål World Congress in Málaga (1975), and overseeing the transfer of the General Secretariat from Brussels to Málaga (1984).

Other proud moments include being the Town Crier for the 'International Day of Tourism' in Barcelona (1994), authoring the History of Skål published in Paris (2009), and receiving the Skål International Order of Merit Diploma (2012). Among many awards, the pinnacle of my recognition was the Silver Medal for Merit in Tourism in Spain.

For several years, I managed the Skål International Newsletter, which sparked my deep interest in the organization's history.

During World War II, many Skål International Clubs archives were lost as they were deemed dangerous. Only the records of the General Secretariat in Brussels survived, later relocated to London -though these

too were partially destroyed by bombing. What remained, including materials from George A. Wilczek of Skål International Lucerne, became invaluable. His letter to Eugene J. Fert in 1951 reflects the essence of these efforts:

*"These archives, though incomplete, stand as a silent testimony to the past and reflect the significant role Skål International has played in fostering human relations within the tourism industry -both now and for the future. Long live Skål!"*

This inspiration fueled my efforts. **I began by copying and analyzing these surviving files**, reaching out internationally for information and support.

Former Presidents of the A.I.S.C. (as Skål International was formerly known: A.I.S.C., Association Internationale des Skal Clubs) generously contributed, alongside past newsletters and documents, enabling me to build a comprehensive historical archive.

These materials, meticulously preserved over decades, represent the essence of Skål International's evolution.

**My hope now is for someone to continue this legacy** -leveraging digital tools to curate valuable information, collect photographs (complete with dates, clubs, locations, and names), and maintain the vibrant history of our organisation.

As George Wilczek so aptly said:

**"Long live Skål!"**



Skål International members during the first meeting of the association.



# SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARDS WINNERS 2024



We are delighted to present the **winners of the 2024 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards and the Skål-Biosphere Special Award.**

It is truly inspiring to witness the commitment of companies and organizations striving to create a positive impact on the tourism industry and our planet through sustainable practices. Our winners share their efforts and contributions toward sustainability.

Congratulations to all the winners, and thank you for your passion, dedication, and invaluable contributions to advancing sustainability in our industry!



CATEGORY 'ACCESSIBLE TOURISM' WINNER

REDE DOS SONHOS  
BRAZIL

WEBSITE >



Sustainable Tourism at Rede dos Sonhos: A Commitment to People and Nature

At Rede dos Sonhos Hotéis Fazenda, sustainability is at the heart of everything we do. Our commitment spans across environmental preservation, social inclusion, and community development.

Our hotels are pioneers in accessible ecotourism, offering inclusive adventure activities like zip-lining, rafting, and horseback riding, all adapted for people with disabilities. We invest in renewable energy, water conservation, and waste management programs, reducing our ecological footprint while enhancing guest experiences.

Beyond infrastructure, we engage deeply with our community. By sourcing ingredients from local farmers, supporting regional

artisans, and promoting cultural initiatives, we foster sustainable economic growth. Additionally, we provide environmental education for guests, raising awareness about preserving our planet.

Winning the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Award 2024 reinforces our mission to inspire others to embrace sustainability as a fundamental value. We are proud to demonstrate that tourism can be a force for good, transforming lives and protecting nature for future generations.

Through our ongoing initiatives, we strive to create unforgettable moments while leaving a positive legacy. Together, we can make sustainable tourism the norm, not the exception.

CATEGORY 'ACCOMMODATION' WINNER

JETWING HOTELS  
SRI LANKA

WEBSITE >



Jetwing Kaduruketha is Jetwing Hotels' home of agro-eco luxury, located in the foothills of Wellawaya, a quaint village in Sri Lanka's south-eastern region. Designed as a farming village with 25 dwellings, the 60-acre property boasts a vast expanse of cultivated fields, woodland, and gardens, providing guests a private retreat to wind down.

Each dwelling, inspired by ancient village chieftain homes, maximizes natural light and ventilation through bamboo walls, perforated door sashes, high-pitched roofs, and traditional eaves; eliminating the need for artificial cooling. To further reduce reliance on fossil fuels, a solar photovoltaic system is under development.

An on-site glass water bottling plant minimizes single-use plastic, and a biogas digester processes food waste to fuel the staff kitchen, while all wastewater is treated on-site before discharge.

Jetwing Kaduruketha fosters local economic growth by prioritizing local sourcing and engaging with the community through recruitment and other initiatives. With nearly 50 acres of the property serving as traditional paddy land, Jetwing Kaduruketha works closely with local farming families to cultivate heirloom rice varieties, employing traditional agricultural knowledge and regenerative agricultural practices.

CATEGORY 'COMMUNITY AND GOVERNMENT PROJECTS' WINNER

TARKEM TARIHI KEMERALTİ İNŞAAT YAT. TIC. A.Ş  
TÜRKİYE

WEBSITE >



TARKEM (Historical Kemeralti Construction Investment Trade Inc.) is planning to create a new business model in İzmir by preserving the historical values while creating a new business model. It is Turkey's one of the most important examples of public-private sector partnership model.

The main objective is the renewal of the area of the Kemeraltı and the historical city centre. TARKEM has implemented a vision for this purpose and carries out environmental investments and activities of this vision: 'Uplifting the cultural and historical values of our city, with participatory management approach'.

Guided by a vision to harmonize urban renewal with sustainability, TARKEM's efforts focus on environmental, social, and economic impact. Our initiatives emphasize restoring historic buildings using eco-friendly methods, incorporating energy-efficient designs and materials. By blending modern infrastructure with traditional aesthetics, we ensure the preservation of

the area's cultural integrity while meeting contemporary needs.

TARKEM actively engages all local stakeholders, fostering a participatory approach in decision-making processes. By collaborating with universities, government, and ngo's , we nurture economic opportunities and empower the community. Our work supports the region's designation as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, reflecting its historical and cultural significance.

A core component of our strategy involves promoting sustainable tourism. We create eco-conscious visitor experiences that highlight the rich heritage of Kemeraltı while minimizing environmental impact. Educational programs and awareness campaigns further enhance the understanding of sustainable practices among tourists and locals. Through these integrated efforts, TARKEM exemplifies how cultural preservation and sustainable development can coexist, creating a vibrant and resilient future for İzmir's historical heart.

CATEGORY 'EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL PROGRAMMES' WINNER

LETS GO TRAVEL UNIGLOBE  
KENYA

WEBSITE >



At Lets Go Travel Uniglobe, we lead in responsible tourism by integrating sustainability into our daily operations. Guided by our four sustainability pillars; Livelihood, Conservation, Education, and Community Tourism, and aligned with our mission, "Committed to Sustainable Travel and Tourism", we actively contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

We minimize office waste, eliminate single-use plastics on safari tours, and promote staff awareness through monthly Sustainable Tuesday Meetings. Through our Young Change Makers program, we mentor future sustainability ambassadors in tourism. Our Adopt a Tree program involves students in

planting and nurturing trees as part of our carbon offset initiatives, while corporate clients benefit from carbon reports to manage their travel emissions.

We support vulnerable groups with bi-monthly food distributions in the community, address period poverty by providing sanitary products and school health talks, and encourage connections across generations. Our marketing reflects these values, ensuring clients and partners understand our dedication to sustainability. These initiatives support SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 3 (Good Health), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 13 (Climate Action), and 17 (Partnerships).



CATEGORY 'LAND AND MARINE BIODIVERSITY' WINNER

SOUTH AFRICAN ANIMAL SANCTUARY ALLIANCE  
SOUTH AFRICA

WEBSITE >



Securing a Future for Wildlife: Monkeyland's Bold Conservation Vision.

Monkeyland, part of the South African Animal Sanctuary Alliance (SAASA), is rewriting the rules of wildlife conservation with a groundbreaking initiative: 'Buy a Square Meter of Forest for the Monkeys'. This campaign (www.monkeyland.tv) empowers wildlife by granting them ownership of the land they inhabit - a world-first in conservation.

Located in South Africa's biodiversity-rich Garden Route, Monkeyland's 22-hectare forest is home to diverse species, from primates and birds to frogs and insects. Through this initiative, individuals worldwide can purchase symbolic square meters of forest, securing the land for the animals who depend on it.

By ensuring that the primates and their ecosystems hold title to their habitat, this model addresses long-term challenges such as deforestation and urbanization.

Winning the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Award, Land and Marine Biodiversity Category, underscores the global relevance of this pioneering approach. It demonstrates that sustainable tourism can safeguard biodiversity while inspiring innovative solutions to human-wildlife coexistence.

At Monkeyland, we believe conservation must extend beyond goodwill to create permanent solutions. Our vision is not just to protect habitats but to empower wildlife with the autonomy to thrive. Together, we are building a legacy where nature and humanity coexist in harmony.

CATEGORY 'MAJOR TOURIST ATTRACTIONS' WINNER

AQUILA PRIVATE GAME RESERVE  
SOUTH AFRICA

WEBSITE >



Aquila Private Game Reserve and Spa (located just outside of Cape Town) proudly announces its accolade as the 2024 recipient of the prestigious Skål International Sustainable Tourism Award for Major Tourist Attractions. This marks Aquila's second win, following its 2020 success, affirming its leadership in responsible tourism during its 25th anniversary of operation.

Presented at the Skål International Congress 2024, the award recognises Aquila's commitment to conservation, community upliftment, and innovative sustainability practices. Competing against 56 entries from 20 countries, Aquila emerged as a benchmark for sustainable tourism excellence.

Aquila's initiatives include its renowned 'Saving Private Rhino' programme, which delivers comprehensive anti-poaching solutions across South Africa. Additionally, the reserve's veld regeneration project has planted many indigenous trees, such as the carbon-absorbing

Spekboom, bolstering the fight against climate change. Cutting-edge eco-synergy systems—encompassing renewable energy, aquaponics, and waste management—demonstrate Aquila's dedication to minimising its environmental footprint.

Community upliftment remains central to Aquila's ethos. Located near Touwsrivier, where unemployment exceeds 90%, Aquila employs over 750 residents, investing in local community projects, education, and skills training. Flagship initiatives like the "Food for Litter" campaign provide meals to children while promoting recycling.

Searl Derman, Aquila's owner, expressed gratitude: "This global recognition reflects our commitment to protecting wildlife, empowering people, and advancing sustainable tourism".

Aquila's milestone achievement underscores its vision to inspire global tourism practices that preserve nature while uplifting humanity.

CATEGORY 'TOUR OPERATORS AND TRAVEL AGENTS' WINNER

TALES FROM AFRICA TRAVEL  
SOUTH AFRICA

WEBSITE >



At Tales from Africa Travel, sustainability is more than a principle; it's embedded in everything we do. We provide authentic, unspoiled African experiences that benefit both the environment and local communities. Recognized with Travelife Partner and FTT accreditations, our operations are transparent, verified, and aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Our initiatives address key SDGs:

- No Poverty (SDG 1): By creating jobs and empowering communities in various local villages, we ensure tourism directly benefits those who need it most.
- Zero Hunger (SDG 2): Fair wages for staff and providers support families, addressing poverty and hunger.

- Quality Education (SDG 4): Staff and community training in sustainable practices equips them to promote responsible tourism.
- Gender Equality (SDG 5): With 50% female ownership and management, we champion equal opportunities and support LGBTQI+ travel in inclusive destinations.
- Climate Action (SDG 13): We minimise where possible and fully offset greenhouse gas emissions for all operations and tours, demonstrating a strong commitment to combating climate change.
- Life on Land and Below Water (SDGs 14 & 15): We uphold strict wildlife protection policies.

By travelling with us, you leave more than footprints—you create meaningful, sustainable change. Together, we nurture Africa for future generations.

CATEGORY 'TOURISTIC MOBILITY' WINNER

FINNLINES PLC  
FINLAND

WEBSITE >



Sustainable travel with Finnlines

Finnlines offers sustainable, safe, and efficient ferry crossings across the Baltic Sea, connecting Finland, the Åland Islands, Sweden, and Germany. As part of the Grimaldi Group, Finnlines embodies sustainable innovation in freight and passenger services, contributing to greener maritime transport across Europe. Efficient transport of goods enables a sustainable growth in passenger travel, as the carbon footprint per passenger remains low when carriage of freight and passengers is combined.

Minimising the footprint

To improve the energy efficiency of its fleet, Finnlines has optimised port and

ship operations, adopted advanced energy efficiency technologies, and invested in new vessels. The fleet is transitioning to electricity and other alternative fuels. The two new Superstar vessels, operating between Finland and Sweden, are designed for the unique archipelago route, with a capacity for 1,100 passengers, 200 cars, and 300 lorries per voyage. Environmental aspects, including technical solutions and the choice of goods suppliers, were prioritised in the design and construction process. Energy-efficient technologies such as an air lubrication system, onshore power supply and battery units, have been utilised in the design. Finnlines adheres to ISO 14001 standards for environmental management, ensuring systematic ecological monitoring and sustainable daily practices.



info@biospheresustainable.com



## ¿Do you know us?

Do you want to know who we are and what we do?

Manage and certify your sustainability...  
[www.biospheretourism.com](http://www.biospheretourism.com)

Experience sustainable journeys...  
[www.biospheresustainable.com](http://www.biospheresustainable.com)

# Tourism and sustainability

Has sustainability stopped being a trend to become a growing value?

In light of the undeniable degradation of our planet, the tangible effects of climate change, and the negative impacts of mass tourism, addressing this question is not only timely but essential.

We can confidently say that **sustainability is no longer just a trend or a growing value**—it has become a critical challenge and a necessity that requires urgent action, especially from all the stakeholders in this highly impactful industry. Tourism holds significant social, economic, and environmental influence. But to what extent has sustainability become a fully established value, and how much progress remains to be made?

Although it may not yet be fully consolidated, the number of tourists who recognize the consequences of their decisions is steadily increasing. Many now seek experiences that are not only respectful of the environment but also contribute to benefiting local communities.

Various studies reveal that over 70% of travelers claim they are willing to choose more sustainable options, even if it means paying more. However, this willingness often does not translate into concrete action. The primary

barriers include limited or inaccessible information and a lack of incentives to make sustainability a priority when planning trips.

On the other hand, there is a growing commitment among hotels, airlines, and destinations to adopt responsible practices. These sustainable actions range from resource management to direct support for the communities in which they operate. In this context, sustainability certifications, such as those provided by Biosphere, play a fundamental role. They serve as a reliable guide for operators and travelers alike.

Despite the progress, significant obstacles remain. For instance, the concept of “eco-labeling”—while a valid tool—is sometimes misused as a superficial marketing strategy without substantive content. This is why younger generations, in particular, are increasingly critical of such labels and demand transparency. Their primary interest lies in verifying that the sustainability measures undertaken by companies or tourism operators are tangible and measurable. Examples include the use of renewable energy, conscious sourcing of local products,

and biodiversity conservation.

While sustainability is undoubtedly a rising value, there is still much work to be done to achieve a more conscious and responsible tourism industry.

As Biosphere, a leading sustainability certification body, reminds us: **“Sustainability is not a destination but a continuous process toward a better future for everyone”**.

Traveling more sustainably not only benefits our planet but also creates far more enriching experiences.

The reality is that destinations and businesses capable of genuinely incorporating sustainability into their offerings—with the support of credible certifications like those provided by Biosphere—will face no shortage of opportunities. This is the challenge and the path forward: embedding sustainability authentically and effectively into tourism.

■ By Biosphere.



# Skål International World Congress 2024

CELEBRATING GLOBAL FRIENDSHIP AND TOURISM IN IZMIR, TÜRKIYE

From 16th to 21st October 2024, the picturesque city of Izmir, Türkiye, played host to the 83rd Skål International Annual World Congress. This event brought together over 300 participants from more than 40 countries, creating a vibrant tapestry of cultures, camaraderie, and opportunities in global tourism.

Izmir, with its rich history and cultural heritage, provided an ideal backdrop for the congress. Known for its scenic waterfront, historical landmarks, and warm hospitality, the city left an indelible mark on all attendees. The congress was a perfect blend of professional networking and cultural immersion, allowing members to forge new connections and strengthen existing ones.

The congress kicked off on 16th October with a lively **Get-Together Party** at the Izmir Historical Coal Gas Factory. This venue, a testament to industrial heritage transformed into a modern cultural space, welcomed attendees with open arms.

[PHOTO GALLERY GET-TOGETHER PARTY](#)



On 17th October, the **Opening Ceremony** took place at the Ahmet Adnan Saygun Art Center, a prominent cultural landmark in Izmir. The ceremony featured a colourful Flag Parade, showcasing the nations represented at the congress.

President Annette Cárdenas delivered a speech highlighting the core values of Skål International, emphasising friendship, unity, commitment, and engagement.



A highlight of the ceremony was the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards. The winners of the 2024 Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards were announced, celebrating outstanding contributions to sustainable tourism across various categories:

- Accessible Tourism: Rede dos Sonhos, Brazil.
- Accommodation: Jetwing Hotels Limited, Sri Lanka.
- Community and Government Projects: TARKEM Tarihi Kemeraltı İnşaat Yat. Tic. A.Ş Türkiye.
- Educational Programmes and Media: Let's Go Travel Uniglobe, Kenya.
- Land and Marine Biodiversity: South African Animal Sanctuary Alliance, South Africa.

- Major Tourist Attractions: Aquila Private Game Reserve, South Africa.
- Tour Operators and Travel Agents: Tales from Africa Travel, South Africa.
- Touristic Mobility: Finnlines PLC, Finland.

[MORE INFO ON SKÅL INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM AWARDS](#)

Other awards that were also presented at this ceremony included: Presidential Awards, Membership Development Campaign Awards, and Skål International Club of the Year Award.

[PHOTO GALLERY OPENING CEREMONY](#)

From 18th to 20th October, the Skål International Annual World Congress in Izmir featured a series of engaging activities. On the 18th October, Skål International held its annual General Assembly, featuring presentations on the year's achievements and the announcement of election results. On the 19th, business sessions and networking opportunities delved into the latest trends and challenges in the tourism industry. The 20th was dedicated to cultural excursions, with attendees exploring iconic sites such as Ephesus and the Kemeraltı Bazaar, culminating in the President's Gala Dinner, a grand event celebrating the year's achievements. The congress concluded on the 21st marking the end of a memorable and productive gathering.

The congress in Izmir was not just a meeting but a celebration of global tourism and the enduring friendships within the Skål International community. It was a testament to the organisation's commitment to fostering international understanding and cooperation in the tourism industry.

[MORE INFO ABOUT 2024 SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS IN IZMIR](#)



# INTERVIEW WITH KAMEL BADAWI



## BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INTELLIGENCE DIRECTOR. ASPIRE ZONE.

### CAN YOU PLEASE, IN YOUR OWN WORDS, GIVE US A BRIEF INTRODUCTION INTO THE BUSINESS AREA OF ASPIRE ZONE. WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

Aspire Zone boasts some of the world's finest sport training facilities offering a unique sport, sports medicine, research and education destination for the international sports industry. With proven performance enhancement, Aspire Zone can service the highest sporting demands including hosting major sports events, training and pre-competition camps to conferences and research as well as injury diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation. With convenient on-site accommodation including hotel and spa facilities, **Aspire Zone offers the most integrated sports training facility in the world.**

### HOW DOES ASPIRE ZONE QATAR'S INVOLVEMENT AS THE MAIN SPONSOR ALIGN WITH ITS BROADER VISION FOR GLOBAL TOURISM AND SPORTS DEVELOPMENT?

This prestigious event serves as an ideal platform to showcase our cutting-edge facilities and reinforce Aspire Zone's reputation as a leading sports destination. By being a partner, Aspire Zone can effectively highlight its capabilities in a competitive environment, positioning our brand alongside some of the world's foremost sports destinations. Additionally, our involvement will ensure that Aspire

Zone becomes a founding member of the inaugural Skål International Doha Club, which will create new opportunities for collaboration and growth in the industry in the country and in the region, leading to achieving our mission and vision of being a world class sports destination.

### WHAT INITIATIVES OR COLLABORATIONS DOES ASPIRE ZONE HAVE PLANNED TO ENHANCE TOURISM IN QATAR, ESPECIALLY AS THE COUNTRY CONTINUES TO GROW AS A GLOBAL DESTINATION?

Aspire zone has been very keen in showcasing and hosting various events to enhance tourism in Qatar, especially in the lead-up to major events like the FIFA world-cup. Some of the key initiatives include:

- **Sports events and competitions:** Aspire zone regularly hosts international sports events, which attract visitors that are both local and international. These events also help us showcase the facilities and hospitality.
- **Aspire Zone Foundation** has also been instrumental in organizing significant sporting events that draw global audiences. For instance, in May 2024, it hosted the first-ever HYROX fitness championship, which saw participation from 4,000 athletes representing 34 countries. Such events not only promote sports culture but also serve as a magnet for international tourists.

- **Community engagement:** Aspire Zone actively involves the local community through the encouragement of participation in initiatives that are going on throughout the year. The Pink Walk is an annual breast cancer awareness campaign in cooperation with Qatar Cancer Society. This event encourages the local community to gather around the park to have a group 1KM walk.
- We regularly organizes events that cater to both local community and tourists; activities such as the **Aspire Summer Camp and National Sport Day** celebrations offer unique experiences that showcase Qatar's culture and commitment to sports, thereby enhancing its appeal as a tourist destination.
- In October 2024, Aspire Zone Foundation signed a **Memorandum of Understanding with LIC** to enhance the experience for fans and teams at the upcoming Formula 1 Grand Prix. This collaboration aims to bolster LIC's logistical and infrastructural capabilities for high-profile motorsport events, thereby attracting international visitors and promoting sports tourism in Qatar.
- Hosting the **AFC Cup 2011:** In 2011, Aspire Zone played a pivotal role in hosting the AFC Cup, a prestigious tournament featuring top clubs from the Asian Football Confederation. The event showcased Aspire's advanced facilities, including the Khalifa International Stadium, which provided a world-class playing environment. Hosting the AFC Cup not only elevated Qatar's status in the global football scene but also attracted fans and tourists, contributing to the growth of sports culture and tourism in the region. This event underscored Aspire Zone's commitment to hosting international sporting events and enhancing Qatar's reputation as a premier sports destination. IAAF 2019.
- The **2019 IAAF World Athletics Championships** was the seventeenth edition of the biennial global athletics competition organized by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), now known as World Athletics. The event took place from 27 September to 6 October 2019 in Doha, Qatar, at the renovated Khalifa International Stadium.

- **FIFA 2022:** The 2022 FIFA World Cup was the 22nd edition of the FIFA World Cup, the global tournament for national football teams held every four years and organized by FIFA. Hosted by Qatar from 20 November to 18 December 2022, it marked the first World Cup held in the Middle East and the Gulf region, following Qatar's selection as host in 2010.

### HOW DOES ASPIRE ZONE PLAN TO LEVERAGE INTERNATIONAL EVENTS LIKE THE SKÅL INTERNATIONAL WORLD CONGRESS TO PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE AND INNOVATIVE TOURISM PRACTICES IN QATAR?

Aspire Zone Foundation is set to capitalize on international events like the **Skål International World Congress** to drive sustainable and innovative tourism practices in Qatar.

By showcasing its eco-friendly infrastructure, such as Aspire Park's efficient water systems and Khalifa International Stadium's solar energy usage, Aspire Zone can highlight Qatar's dedication to **environmental responsibility.**

Collaborations with global tourism experts at such events provide valuable opportunities for Aspire to exchange insights on eco-certifications and the latest green technologies, reinforcing Qatar's commitment to sustainable tourism.

Additionally, Aspire plans to promote its **wellness-oriented tourism**, which emphasizes health and environmental harmony, catering to the growing demand for responsible travel experiences. Demonstrating green event practices, including waste reduction, recycling programs, and minimized plastic usage, further establishes **Aspire Zone as a leader in sustainable event management.**

Together, these initiatives align with Qatar's goals for eco-conscious tourism, positioning Aspire Zone as a pioneer in responsible tourism development.



# 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



## IMEX predictions for 2025: Nostalgia, NowGen, Future Dusk and Fun

With 2024 drawing to an end, the IMEX team is in a reflective mood. It's a year that's been uncertain and unsettling for so many of us.

True to our brand, we're on a mission to raise you up and help the global events community feel uplifted; grateful for who we are, what we do and how we're mostly just trying to make a more positive impact on the world.

In the spirit of infusing some optimism and holiday cheer, we're taking a light-hearted look ahead to 2025.

What we're saying hello to:

- **Ah, the good old days!** Expect Nostalgia to make an even stronger comeback in 2025. When the world around us looks wobbly, we tend to look back to the cosy, familiar 'feels' of the past. Old bands reunite to huge fanfare (Oasis!) and the OG takes on new meaning and momentum (Twisters). Even fashion looks back harder – so dig out your Y2K shiny silver jumpsuit and let's get jumping! Who can blame us?
- **Right here, right now -** Next Gen becomes the Now Gen. According to the latest Freeman Trends Report, Gen Z has officially

overtaken Boomers in the workforce. This means the Next Gen is actually the Now Gen and they're shaping trends, driving innovation and calling for authentic connections. In 2025 we'd love the global events industry to rise up together and welcome them in. Because we need you, 'nowers'.

- **Future Dusk anyone?** The Pantone Color of the Year is always a significant event in the world of design. For 2025, Pantone's predicted Color of the Year is Future Dusk, a blend of deep violet and midnight blue. Remember when Peach Fuzz was met with skepticism and now it's everywhere? Future Dusk is coming whether you love it or loathe it. We like the sound of this moody blue.
- **Communal resilience** – Ensuring that we're equipped to cope and adapt to the world and, crucially, ensuring that we make space for others to do the same. The Neu Project Resilience Space at IMEX

America was the epitome of communal resilience - open to all, this soothing environment gave people the physical and mental space to decompress. Megan Henshall, Co-founder of Google Xi, calls it "an invitation for people to take what they need and extend their self-care".

- **It's ok to have fun!** We're human and humans are made to experience moments of awe and joy - together. It's one of the reasons some of IMEX's silliest – and heartfelt – social videos have gained so much love this year. We're not averse to raising a smile and making fun of ourselves if you smile back with us. After all, there's no point in laughing alone! Expect us to be putting more 'oi' into joy in 2025.

So there you have it. **IMEX's not-so-serious look ahead at the world in 2025.** Whatever comes, let's approach it with good intentions, a spirit of optimism and a collective desire to make a positive impact on the world.



# Business Booms at IBTM World 2024 **ibtm**® WORLD

IBTM World 2024 was a celebration of the power of people, exceeding the success of last year's event by a phenomenal 23% with over 73,000 pre-scheduled business meetings taking place.

Coming to do business with 2,350 exhibitors, the leading global trade show opened its doors to an incredible 22% more Hosted Buyers in 2024 than in 2023.

With 63% of buyers attending for the first time, a remarkable 96 countries were represented. There was also a substantial 16% increase in overall attendees year-on-year, and a significant 15% rise in the total number of visitors.

Championing People Power Potential, IBTM World showcased what can be achieved when, alongside the latest technological developments, event professionals work together. At its heart, the 2024 edition epitomised the belief that unites all event professionals: that **what people need to succeed... is other people.**

Sue Baimbridge, Chief Commercial Officer, RIHGA Royal Hotel Osaka, commented: "This is our first year exhibiting at IBTM World as part of our strategy to grow our business pipeline for 2025 when we become part of the Vignette Collection from IHG Hotels & Resorts. With 56 meeting rooms and over 7,000sqm of meeting space, the business events market is crucial for our business.

"The quality of buyers and volume of meetings over the past three days at IBTM has been brilliant. I'm returning to Osaka with eight solid leads and another five or six business leads to follow up on in the next few weeks. The meeting booking system and support I've received from the IBTM team have been excellent and I'm looking forward to returning next year!"

Claudia Hall, IBTM World Exhibition Director, said: "It's been an absolutely thrilling three days, not least because we were celebrating a **very special 20th anniversary in Barcelona**, which only enhanced the feeling of camaraderie and togetherness.

"As they do every year, our wonderful IBTM World

community arrived with a thirst for knowledge, a hunger for opportunities, and an enthusiasm to make connections that will take the global events industry from strength-to-strength.

"Our show didn't disappoint. Between the phenomenal speakers with their captivating insights and ideas, our passionate exhibitors eager to engage, and the imaginative new initiatives designed to provide targeted and tangible support, it's been an incredible gathering that reminds me just what a community we are in the events industry and how much we have to offer the world as a sector".







Official Airline

IBERIA UN Tourism  
AFFILIATE MEMBERGet your pass  
with discount  
online.


**Proud.  
We are tourism.**

I ♥ travel

GO  
TOURISM

**22-26** **2025**  
**Jan** **Recinto Ferial**  
**ifema.es**




# FITUR 2025 is celebrating its 45th anniversary as the global tourism event from 22 to 26 January

The International Tourism Trade Fair is once again bringing together the global tourism market from 22 to 26 January at IFEMA MADRID in a context of tourism recovery.

According to the latest World Tourism Barometer by UN Tourism, some 790 million tourists have travelled internationally in the first seven months of 2024, approximately 11% more than in 2023, making it possible to predict an excellent 45th edition of FITUR where the records registered in 2024 will be consolidated.

With a strong professional focus, **FITUR will be representing the entire tourism value chain** - countries and destinations, the accommodation sector, agencies and tour operators, technology companies, means of transport and institutions from all over the world - opening next year's trade fair calendar as an unmissable showcase for the latest industry trends.

At this next edition, FITUR will be presented as a key tool for boosting the global tourism business, with a

firm commitment to the generation and exchange of knowledge as an engine for innovation, competitiveness and sustainability. It will be a multifaceted event offering a variety of benefits for destinations and companies in the tourism sector with a consolidated focus on networking, global visibility, direct sales and professional training, boosting not only the participating businesses, but also increasing the growth and innovation of the entire industry and laying the foundations for the next tourism year.

In addition, as part of its strategy to be a key platform for accelerating business and know-how, FITUR 2025 maintains its commitment to specialisation and will be offering high quality content in tourism segments with the renewal of its ten sections: **FITUR 4all**, which in its second edition is taking another step forward with the publication of the 'Guía de Buenas Prácticas en Accesibilidad en el turismo by Fitur4all' (guide to best practices in tourism accessibility); **FITUR Cruises**, devoted to the world of cruising; **FITUR Know-How & Export**, aimed at promoting the internationalisation

of tourism knowledge of Spanish companies; **FITUR LGTB+** and its focus on diversity and inclusion in destinations; **FITUR Lingua**, which centres on the challenges and opportunities of language tourism; **FITUR Screen** and the increasing popularity of film tourism; **FITUR Sports**, with sports as the motivation for travel both for attending big sporting events as well as for partaking in sports; **FITUR Talent**, with an accent on people, talent management and professional training as key factors in the growth of the sector; **FITUR TechY**, with the spotlight on tourism technology and innovation; and **FITUR Woman**, which addresses equality and the role of the women in tourism employment.

In addition, **FITURNEXT** will be a channel for responsible commitment, the challenge of which this year focuses on how tourism can contribute to sustainable food management. Also with Travel Technology, which brings together travel technology companies from all over the world and which, after its 23% growth in 2024, is expected to maintain a more sustained increase.





# Registration Opens for World Travel Market (WTM) Africa 2025

Registration for one of Africa's flagship travel events, World Travel Market Africa, is now open.

Taking place in Cape Town from 9-11 April 2025, WTM Africa brings together leaders in leisure tourism, luxury travel, LGBTQ+ travel, MICE/business travel, sport tourism, Tourism Investment, Responsible Tourism as well as travel technology – delivering meaningful networking and collaboration opportunities for the African tourism industry.

Mirrored on WTM flagship events like WTM London and the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, WTM Africa delivers a proven mix of hosted buyers, suppliers, media representatives, pre-scheduled appointments, networking and evening functions.

**“Ignite Africa is the perfect theme for 2025,”** says Megan De Jager, Portfolio Director for RX Africa. **“We’re creating a space for real conversation, connection and collaboration, and bringing together the best minds in the industry to shape the future of African tourism”.**

To this end, the 2025 programme introduces focused ‘content clusters’ for the first time. Each ‘cluster’ combines keynote presentations from established industry experts and emerging voices, panel discussions, and practical workshops for attendees – covering hot-button topics like sustainable aviation, AI in tourism, and next-generation marketing.

New additions to the 2025 programme include:

- A half-day aviation conference addressing industry challenges and opportunities.
- The Africa Tourism Investment Conference in partnership with JLL.
- A youth development section focusing on career opportunities and skills development for young adults in tourism as well as a special session highlighting young African leaders in tourism.

In addition, attendees can expect:

- An exclusive ‘State of the Industry’ report.
- Interactive ‘brain box’ sessions for skills development and knowledge sharing.

- Facilitated connections between buyers, suppliers, potential partners and media professionals.

According to De Jager, WTM Africa 2024 achieved a 53% increase in attendees compared to 2023, with representation from 88 countries across the world. **“But perhaps most exciting, is the number of SMMEs and industry newcomers that showed interest,”** says De Jager. **“The future of African tourism is bright – and WTM Africa is the perfect platform for those looking to connect with both tourism titans and pioneers. It’s the place to be if you want to learn, network, and celebrate the diversity and opportunity in our industry”.**

WTM Africa is one of the cornerstones of Africa Travel Week and De Jager recommends that both visitors and media register their interest as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

This sentiment is shared by Cape Town Mayor, Geordin Hill-Lewis: **“We cannot wait to welcome travel and tourism professionals from around the world to Cape Town for the World Travel Market Africa in April. This**

**event has established itself as the premier travel and tourism expo on the continent and is key to unlocking African tourism’s enormous potential. It certainly means the world to us here in Cape Town. If the popularity and growth of the last WTM Africa is anything to go by, the 2025 event looks set to be the biggest and most well attended to date. I encourage all prospective delegates and exhibitors to register their interest sooner rather than later to ensure they don’t miss out”.**

As Hill-Lewis mentions, early exhibitor registration is important. **“Stands are in high demand”,** says De Jager. **“Potential exhibitors need to get in touch as**

**soon as possible as space on our floor plan is running out. Chat to us about availability – and about pre-scheduling meetings with sought-after buyers and suppliers”.**

For those in the business of luxury tourism, ILTM Africa is scheduled from 6-8 April at the Norval Foundation in Cape Town.

**“It’s a new venue for ILTM Africa”,** explains De Jager. **“We’re celebrating art as a key component of luxury tourism and expect some of the world’s top-tier travel experience providers and international buyers with high buying power. As an invite-only event it is advised that exhibitors register their interest as early as possible!”**

Attendees at WTM Africa 2025 can also attend concurrent events like Incentives, Business Travel & Meetings (IBTM Africa); EQUAL Africa powered by IGLTA; and Travel Tech at no extra charge.

**“WTM Africa is made possible through our partnerships with the City of Cape Town, the Cape Town International Conference Centre and Lift Airlines,”** concludes De Jager. **“We can’t wait to welcome everyone to the Mother City – and show-off Africa’s tourism industry in the most exciting week of the year”.**





## What is World Travel Market Africa?

World Travel Market Africa delivers the leading global events for the travel industry.

Join over 6000 travel industry professionals as they attend Africa's leading and only business to business (B2B) exhibition for both the inbound and outbound African travel and tourism markets.

Mirrored on WTM flagship events like WTM London and the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai, WTM Africa delivers a proven mix of Hosted Buyers, Buyers' Club members, Media representatives, pre-schedule appointments, networking, evening functions and invited travel trade visitors.

Beyond the event we continue to help professionals in the African travel industry to drive commercial success with year-round access to make connections, industry news and developments, trends and technologies from around the world.

Through our industry networks, global reach and regional focus, WTM Africa creates personal and business opportunities providing our customers with quality contacts, content and communities.

# IGNITE AFRICA

## WITH THE POWER OF TRAVEL

Place your Business in front of the tourism industry,  
and book your Exhibitor Stand today.

A variety of stand options are available to suit your budget and business.

**Papy Luzala** - Head of Commercial & Government Affairs, Africa  
M: +27 (0)82 558 8214 | E: Papy.Luzala@rxglobal.com

**Penny Fraser** - Sales Director | Penny.fraser@rxglobal.com

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

TOURISM  
NOW  
MAGAZINE

Contact Us:





TH  
AN  
KS