



SKÅL

INTERNATIONAL
Connecting Tourism Globally

MAGAZINE

277





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SKÅL MAGAZINE 277

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This Magazine 277 edition has been prepared with articles collected till 8th March. Due to these daily changing times, we have published the most current content.



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STAY INFORMED

As Skål International is closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to provide travel professionals and business leaders in the Tourism and Travel sector with truthful and updated information.

HELPING OUR MEMBERS

Skål International is collecting useful professional contents to provide all our members with valuable documents, information and training resources.

Keep updated in our communication channels!



GENERAL SECRETARIAT IMPLEMENTS THE TELEWORKING MODEL DUE TO THE GLOBAL COVID-19 SITUATION

As you are aware, and in view of the serious situation generated globally by COVID-19, we would like to inform you that the Skål International office will continue to operate.

At this time, more than ever, we are available to support all our members globally.

All the Skål International office team and their families are well. But in compliance with the Spanish government, we have implemented the teleworking model.

A measure adopted to safeguard the health of the entire team and to contribute to the civic duty of helping to control the pandemic.

This methodology will allow us to continue working and carrying out our daily tasks with total normality; at the same time as continuing to provide support to our thousands of members in these difficult moments. Therefore, do not hesitate in contacting us.

It is precisely in this kind of situation that we see the great usefulness of the new technological platform. The use of this new system allows us to somehow mitigate some of the adverse effects that these situations are generating.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.
Warmest regards from all the team of Skål International.

Daniela Otero
CEO



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Peter Morrison
President

COVID-19
PANDEMIC.
A ONCE IN A LIFE
TIME TRAGEDY. –
WE HOPE!!

Dear Skålleagues,
I write this today as many countries in the world are going through an unprecedented horrific situation that has decimated our wonderful global Tourism industry. Many of our Skålleagues are small business operators and will be struggling to keep their companies afloat. Here in my own country of New Zealand, the Government has announced a complete Level 4 lockdown of our country.

All International Airlines will cease flying to us as from Friday, and we still have some 160,000 International tourists in the country today. Of

course, the real tragedy is playing out in Europe, USA and Asia and we feel for all our fellow Skålleagues that are living through this nightmare. There are many other regions in the world, that are experiencing high levels of virus and once again we will seek to see how we can assist you in these troubled times.

As you are aware **world travel has been halted**, with many congresses and travel postponed and cancelled. Jan and I were so looking forward to meeting many Skålleagues in Ireland, UK, Spain, Winnipeg, Canada and Darwin. We hope the world gets back to business sooner rather than later and we are able catch up with our fellow Skålleagues.

My best wishes also go out to all those that experienced the **recent earthquake in Croatia**. Something we are all too familiar with here in Christchurch.

I want to once again assure you that the Executive Board is so very aware of the immense difficulties you will all be having. **WE are here for our Members!**

Our staff at HQ in Spain are all working from their homes, but they are here to help you as per usual. Please keep in mind they do not necessarily have access to all information; however, they are doing their best to respond and answer all your enquiries. Of course, we wish them and their families all the best in these difficult times.

The Board and the CEO are conversing daily by email, Skype and phone. **We are closely monitoring everything that is happening around the world** and we are getting updates from our partners at UNWTO who work very closely with WHO (World Health Organisation).

We have been in contact with the **FVF trustees**, whom are as equally concerned. The trustees will be informing us this week how they can assist Skålleagues in need. Please remember that the FVF is for individuals not companies. Of course, we are aware that many governments are offering assistance and this will all be taken into consideration.

It is our intention to set up digital sessions with the National/Area Presidents of our organisation and the Executive Board. We hope to do this soon and are just going through all the technicalities this will involve.

We are currently faced with a very different business environment and we need to work out how we

communicate, inform network in this new era we find ourselves in. Daniela Otero, the IT Team and our staff have been 'Brainstorming' and I am sure there will be some very good initiatives that will be approved very soon by your Skål International Executive Board.

PLEASE PUT YOUR SKÅL
MEMBERSHIP AT THE TOP OF
YOUR LIST.

It is in such troublesome times like these, **it is even more important than ever to stand together**, work together and address the damage that has been caused in all sectors of our industry.

Yes, Tourism activities will be in recession; we will all need to assess and explore how the Tourism industry can be revitalized during the recovery phase. I hope sooner rather than later!

There is a lot information being sent out by governments around the world on assistance available to businesses and individuals. If you do not have access to this information, ask your National Committee to point you in the right direction.

Together in our great organisation of Skål International WE CAN DO THIS!!

With kindest thoughts.

Yours in Skål

Kia Kaha (Stay Strong)

Peter C Morrison MNZM

Skål International President 2020

NOTE FROM THE CEO

THESE DAYS IN OUR SECTOR THERE IS JUST ABOUT ONE TOPIC



Daniela Otero
CEO

Our industry is facing one of the greatest threats ever seen.

The COVID-19 pandemic has put the entire world in alarm, but without a doubt, the Tourism industry more than any other, is getting a terrible impact.

We are all going through very difficult times, both personally and businesswise. We are experiencing an unprecedented crisis, which therefore also requires exceptional measures to be taken.

Skål International wants to provide as much support as possible to our members and we are working on the contingency plan that we have already shared with you by email.

We have updated our website and have included links to reliable information. You will find a banner at the top of our platform, where you will have easy access to relevant news and links.

Skål International is working closely with the UNWTO. We belong to the Board of Directors of the Affiliate Members, which is in permanent contact with the World Health Organization (WHO) to evaluate possible measures and collaborative responses to the crisis caused by COVID-19.

Within the UNWTO, we have asked governments to implement financial and political support to make recovery measures for Tourism effective and that support for the sector be included in the recovery plans and measures of the affected economies.

Political and financial commitments are essential to ensure that Tourism can lead a broader economic and social recovery, as has been demonstrated in past situations, due to the highly resilient nature of the sector and its ability to recover strongly.

We are concerned of course, but not everything is negative.

A steadfast commitment can be seen from all the companies and organisations involved in getting Tourism back up on its feet and that the business can be viable when the crisis is overcome.

Another of the most positive aspects is the coordination between Tourism and health officials to guarantee the containment of the epidemic.

Hopefully, this is an initiative that will continue over time, as it is important not only for responding to emergencies, but to meet future challenges.

Another thing that I would like to comment on is that I have noticed in general a better citizen awareness of the traveller; perhaps fear improves our behaviours and helps us globally to prevent the circulation of all kinds of diseases.

Today each person has become extremely aware that taking care of themselves also protects the next.

I do not want to end without showing my appreciation to all the people who are putting all their energy into overcoming this situation, especially the health professionals, the security forces and those who continue to work to provide supplies to the population.

It is time to join forces, strengthening the Tourism sector and our global network!

Daniela Otero
CEO

COUNCILLOR'S CORNER

Margaret Cahill
National President & Councillor,
Skål International Ireland



Ireland is a small European country with strong links to Skål International.

Our location on the edge of Europe provides our island status with a bridge between the New World and the Old! Like many of our European neighbours we are having difficulties in retaining and increasing the Skål membership. Currently we have four clubs – Cork, Dublin, Galway and Kerry. **With around 130 members our clubs are active and work hard on keeping Skål International relevant in a fast-changing world.**

Politically we are an independent republic and have recently held a General Election to elect the members of the next parliament. Tourism is one of our biggest industries, accounting for revenue of around €10 billion to the Irish economy. Our legendary hospitality, the warmth of the welcome, or 'Cead Mile Failte' – hundred thousand welcomes, and variety of stunning scenery provides the ingredients for continued growth in attracting domestic and international visitors.

St Patrick's Day on the 17th March, our National Day, is celebrated all over the world. A recent initiative by Tourism Ireland is the 'Greening of the World'. Nearly 500 iconic landmarks in 60 countries will be illuminated in green to celebrate St Patrick and Ireland. To mention a few – Victoria Falls (Zambia), Christ the Redeemer (Rio de Janeiro), the Angel of Independence (Mexico City), Empire State Building (New York City), Sydney Opera House, London Eye, Colosseum (Rome) and Trsat Castle (Rijeka, Croatia)!

One of the biggest threats to our economy, our relationship with our closest neighbour, and our way of life is Brexit. It is hard to believe that it is nearly four years ago since the UK voted to leave the European Union. Whilst negotiations on a future trade agreement are now set for detailed negotiation, the all-important ease of travel between Ireland and Great Britain is safe guarded through the Common Travel Area, created in 1923, which means that British visitors to Ireland can travel freely without restriction.

We are living through some of the most challenging times in our fast-changing industry. Where the global effects of the viral threat of the COVID-19, or Coronavirus will lead to in 2020 is something that none of us can forecast at the moment. The downward spiral of global stock markets, airlines cutting schedules and visitor cancellations would suggest there will not be a resolution anytime soon.

There is a fine line between sowing panic by global media coverage and the need for governments and health services to keep citizens informed. This delicate need for transparency in the handling of the infection is critical to ward off unnecessary cancellations in our business.

Surely this latest global crisis will lead to lifestyle changes and the evolvment of different or new travel trends? Food for thought and discussion for Skål International?



As you are aware, and in view of the serious situation generated globally by COVID-19, we would like to inform you that the Skål International office will continue to operate. At this time, more than ever, we are available to support all our members globally.

But in compliance with the Spanish government, we have implemented the teleworking model. A measure adopted to safeguard the health of the entire team and to contribute to the civic duty of helping to control the pandemic.

It is precisely in this kind of situation that we see the great usefulness of the new technological platform. The use of this new system allows us to somehow mitigate some of the adverse effects that these situations are generating.

Once the peak of this crisis has passed, the Tourism industry will need to recover quickly. Companies will need to be prepared to know how to mitigate the effects in the short and medium term. For this reason, we are working to include in the new platform **a space where you will be able to find valuable professional information** to apply to your business or company.

We are also adding some extra features in order to provide some additional services to our members and our technical team continues polishing functionalities, improving the 'usability' of the tool, and correcting some internal codes to avoid some errors that have occurred.

We know that it is natural that these new challenges imply adaptability, therefore receiving complaints from users is common when these types of changes are made.

We are managing and supporting those who request it and also understanding those who still 'resist to do things differently' and think that *"the previous was better"*.

We remind you that our team is ready to collaborate with you in this process and we are sure that in a few months we will be very proud of the step the organization has taken to modernize its technological structure.

[Stay tuned... more news on Skål Clubs & National Committee's websites coming soon.](#)

We intend to have the Spanish and French websites completed by the end of March. Our technical team is working actively to meet this deadline, which has been affected these last two weeks by the seriousness of the current crisis.

At the end of April we will send the Skål Clubs and National Committees the packages and modules proposed to offer the different alternatives of modular services that we are preparing.



OCTOBER
2020

81ST SKÅL
INTERNATIONAL
WORLD
CONGRESS

Croatia's Kvarner region's fantastic WOW factor has been noticed.

Lonely Planet places Kvarner in the 'Best in Travel 2020' – the annual collection of the world's hottest destinations for the year.

The Kvarner Region is smiling a big beautiful smile because Lonely Planet has noticed this beauty and has included one of Croatia's best kept secrets in the 'top 10 regions' for 2020.

Diversity is beautiful is how we are known; It is what our residents know and what our visitors discover. The motto of the region stands for a wealth of distinct locations which are offered to our visitors; the coast, the islands and the mountains provide for a variety and a great experience of nature – from walking, hiking and cycling to playing tennis, swimming in crystal-clear sea, sailing, diving... Enjoyable daytrips, historical sightseeing tours, cultural events and culinary hotspots will all make great memories.

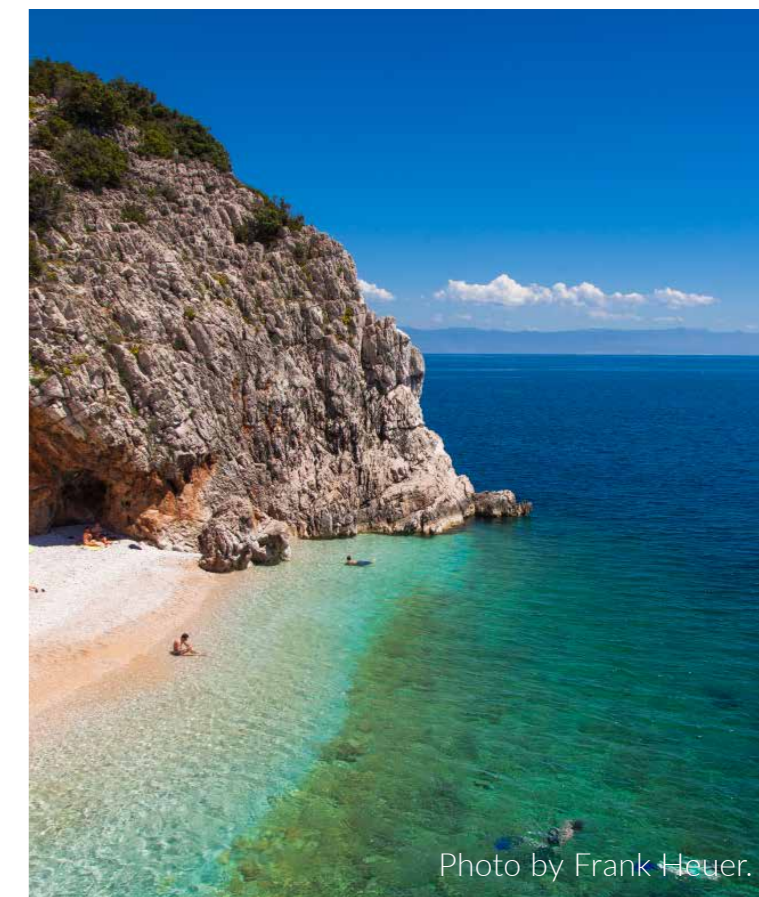
Barely anywhere else in Europe will you find so many restaurants and konobas with such magical panoramas as here in Kvarner Region. And barely anywhere else, will you find the very best ingredients so close by. Kvarner is famous for the Kvarner Bay Scampi (langoustine prawns), fresh Adriatic white and blue fish, all types of seafood including crab and octopus, home-made pasta (octopus ragout is legendary!), succulent lamb from the island of Cres (animals wander free and eat wild herbs), forest mushrooms, fresh fruits and vegetables including wild asparagus, figs, cherries and more.

More than 100 years ago, the region also exported essential oils around the world. Unique varieties and highest quality make olive oils from Kvarner Bay true origin-protected rarities.

The City of Rijeka has been pronounced the European Capital of Culture 2020, Rijeka thus became the first Croatian city to hold this prestigious title. Today, the City of Rijeka is Croatia's biggest port city, and renowned for its Fish Market, Theatre House, Trsat Castle, huge port and its very own 'Leaning Tower'.

2020 is the year when Croatia takes the Presidency of the European Union and when Rijeka holds the coveted title of European Capital of Culture – a rather beautiful and memorable coincidence.

Dear Skålleagues, welcome!



Stay tuned at
Congress Webpage →

EXEMPLARY SKÅLLEAGUE

Karine Coulanges

President Skål International 2014
& President Skål International Paris



I was invited to join the Skål Club of Paris in April 1991, and 29 years later, I am still as passionate about it! As my friends say, I have Skål International blood running through my veins!

I have had wonderful experiences in our association: From 2000 to 2004 I was appointed the first woman President of the club in Paris.

During the 2008 Congress in Taipei, I joined the Executive Committee, chaired by Hulya Aslantas, which entrusted me with the communication portfolio.

In October 2013, the Skål Club of New York organised a fantastic cruise for the World Congress, during which I had the great honour of being appointed World President.

There had not been a French World President for 30 years, and I was also the first Frenchwoman to become World President.

That was an incredible experience, which was hard work, but led to exceptional meetings with Skålleagues around the world which shared my ambition to develop friendship between different peoples and the concept of 'DOING BUSINESS AMONG FRIENDS', which started in 2000. I have personally always put that slogan into practice, as I find it fantastic to be able to work with the Skål International network every chance I get, and I have multiple examples and success stories to share. Indeed, **Skål International was the first 'World Social Network'**, well before Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. At the end of 2016, Skål International Paris asked me to take on the club presidency there again,

and I did not hesitate very long to accept the challenge. My main goal is to reposition Skål International Paris as a dynamic and highly professional association, while attracting young professionals, straightening out finances and doubling the number of members. Today I can say that I have achieved my goals, but my work here is far from done, since we have signed partnerships with such major institutions as PARIS WELCOME CITY LAB, or AMFORTH, and we have many ambitious projects and partnerships planned for 2020.

The club of Paris originated, together with our Italian friends, from the need for a Skål International Europe, and successfully held the first foundation meeting in November 2018.

We are fortunate enough to have world-renowned travel personalities among our members, and we strive to innovate the formats of our meetings, for instance with 'meetups' and 'after-work' events for networking, always in the spirit of doing business with friends, we invite speakers and we mostly hold monthly meetings in partnership with events organised by travel professionals and other associations. The best example took place in November 2019, thanks to our friend Patrick Pourbaix, Managing Director for France and Benelux at MSC CRUISES, Immediate Past President of Skål International Paris, the first 'LES TALENTS DU TOURISME' (TOURISM TALENTS), in collaboration with Air France, the Martinique Tourist Office and the professional publication 'Tour Hebdo' and more recently in February, an evening conference and workshop in partnership with the Indonesia Tourist Office, whose Director is a Skål International member, an evening event at the Indonesian Embassy, hosted by the Ambassador.

I would like to add that under the exceptionally difficult circumstances we are experiencing with the Coronavirus pandemic, and the financial consequences all travel professionals will have to face, we are lucky to be Skål International members, because we will be able to have exchanges with professionals all over the world and benefit from the 'best practices' and experiences of our Skålleagues, and of course, as soon as possible, TO DO BUSINESS AMONG FRIENDS: if we have to choose a hotel, agent, restaurant, transport, etc., we must prioritise whenever possible a Skålleague; we have to defend and help our 'family'.

I also recommend you, whenever you can, to participate to the World Congress, it is a great opportunity to build close friendships and business relationships with Skålleagues from all over the world, and the opportunity to see them again and share our experiences and good moments of conviviality. Since 1993, I have only missed five congresses for professional or health reasons.

SKÅL

SKÅLLEAGUE

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL GIRONA CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

**BY LAVONNE WITTMANN
PRESIDENT SKÅL
INTERNATIONAL 2019**



It was a night to remember when Skål International Girona pulled out all the stops to celebrate their momentous 50 year anniversary on the 27th of February held at the gorgeous Costa Brava Hotel in Platja d'Aro.

Exceptional entertainment, perfect location, delicious food and drinks and friendly and welcoming hosts all added to the success of the evening.



The 75 guests represented the different sectors of the Travel and Tourism industry and included amongst others, the Principal and her staff of CETT, one of the biggest universities of Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy in Spain and who work very closely with the Girona Skål Club regarding mentoring and training courses for Skål members.

The guest list represented the captains of industry in both the private and public sector and included the Mayor of Platja d'Aro Mr. Mauricio Jimenez as well as the Vice President of the Catalan Tourist Board and the General Manager of the Tourism Board Mr. Xavier and Mr. Octavi Bono respectfully. Each special guest had a few minutes to address the guests on the importance of collaboration between all sectors of our industry.

This special celebration was also a time to acknowledge Skål International members locally and internationally and each awardee was handed a unique ceramic plate that was especially handmade by Vila Clara in the home town of Pol Fages, La Bisbal de Emporda. The ceramic artists have been involved in their family business for the past 75 years and I was honored to have met them both in person.

The award winners were:

- Josep Maria Corretger (best President of the decade 1970-1980)
- Bertran Halle (best President of the decade 1980-1990)
- Carles Pallares (best President of the decade 1990-2000)
- Jordi Comas Matamala (best President of the decade 2000-2010)
- Magic Xevi (best 'Magic' Skålleague)
- Josep Antoni Goñi (best Secretary Skålleague)
- Maria Teresa Díaz Comas (best President of the decade 2010-2020 and as World Senior Vice President)
- Lavonne Wittmann (Best Skålleague and World President 2019)

A 50 year anniversary is always an historic occasion and it was a huge honor for me to have been able to attend this evening and personally congratulate all members of Girona Skål Club and be recognized with such a beautiful award.

I salute and admire each and every member as well as the various committees of Skål International Girona over the past 50 years that have all added their own flair, expertise and guidance in steering the club to the success it enjoys today. A big thank you to club President Pol Fages and Vice President Skål International Teresa Díaz Comas and their team for hosting an exceptional event.

The 'cherry on the top' was the signing up of 6 new members for the club!

Skål International Girona upwards and onwards... Here is to another 50 years of great success and innovation.

[View Photo Gallery here](#)

SKÅL CANADA'S EXCLUSIVE POLAR BEAR ADVENTURE

NOVEMBER 1-3, 2020

[LEARN MORE](#)



For centuries Polaris, the North Star, has depicted True North, a navigational reference for adventure-seeking explorers in their expeditions across the often-perilous oceans. Our True North is an unwavering love for Canada's North - the extraordinary wildlife, the incredible landscapes and the remarkable people and their customs. We consider it a privilege to share this awe-inspiring land with visitors from around the world.

Find your True North on an authentic experience with [Frontiers North Adventures](#).



SUMMER (JUNE, JULY AND AUGUST)
Sing with thousands of **beluga whales**
on the Churchill River.

AUTUMN (OCTOBER AND NOVEMBER)
Explore the subarctic tundra during peak
polar bear season.

WINTER (FEBRUARY AND MARCH)
Witness the **northern lights** from the
warmth of a Tundra Buggy®.

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SKÅL INTERNATIONAL

MEXICO NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020

Skål International Mexico has a new Board of Directors to lead in 2020, consisting of Enrique Flores Altamirano, National President, Jane A. García, First Vice President, Angelica Angón, Second Vice President, Gustavo Bolio, Secretary, Raúl Chi, Treasurer, Juan Ignacio Steta, International Advisor, and Isidro Martinez, National President in 2019.



Skål International Mexico Board of Directors

This year, Skål International Mexico celebrates 70 years since the foundation of the first club in Mexico City and today Mexico is ranked fourth worldwide with 23 clubs and more than 925 members, including 135 women.

Skål International Mexico holds National Meetings five times a year where the Board of Directors and the National Executive Board, which is comprised of the Presidents of the 23 clubs, meet at a different point in the country to host a General Assembly, where activities begin with a traditional golf tournament, training for new Presidents, activities for those accompanying them, lots of conviviality and a gala dinner to close the weekend. In 2020, the first meeting of the year was held

at the Hotel Marival Armony Punta Mita, Puerto Vallarta, from 17-19 January, where the change of the Board of Directors took place during the gala dinner with almost 150 people in attendance.

The **2019 Skålleague of the Year** award went to **Gustavo Bolio**, the National Secretary and Vice President of Skål International Mexico City, who received the Rafael Millán medal.

Skål International Mexico congratulated **Skål International Puebla** for being the **2019 Best Skål Club of the Year**, a club passionate about twinning, activities and integration that motivate its members to be a part of the club.

Green my Room is one of the programmes that Skål International Mexico contributes for specialised certification in sustainable solutions for the Tourism industry, being a Skål carbon calculator or carbon inventory, a carbon footprint measured by the total amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the environment by its operation. The main objective is to create and implement sustainable development and gas reduction strategies. The winners of the clubs in 2019 are Guadalajara, Bahías de Huatulco and Los Cabos.

The newest club worldwide, known as **Skål International Ensenada/Valles Vitivinícolas #738**, was officially consolidated in November 2019, with a big celebration at Hacienda Valle de Guadalupe, chaired by the Founding President Daniel Sánchez.



2019 Skålleague of the Year.

Young Skål is an important part of the Mexico operation. These members, being our future leaders of tomorrow, are present in several clubs. There are many within Skål International Bahías de Huatulco and they actively participate in club activities.

Skål International Mexico participated in supporting the Australian emergency fund by donating just over US\$ 5,000.

Skål International Mexico celebrates 70 years since the foundation of the first Skål Club in Mexico City



Training for new Presidents.



Puebla, 2019 Best Club of the Year.



Young Skål.

United. Resilient. Proud.

To the global business events industry, our extended family...

Remember who you are and what you represent.

We are an industry that contributes US\$1.5 trillion of GDP to the global economy*. As we've demonstrated many times before, we will be part of the solution to drive recovery, growth and social impact that will transform the world.

Ray Bloom & Carina Bauer

#WeWillMeetAgain



*Figures from The Events Industry Council's Global Economic Significance of Business Events Study 2018.

SKÅL INTERNATIONAL
IS PROUD TO ANNOUNCE THAT
THE 2020 SUSTAINABLE TOURISM
AWARDS ARE NOW OPEN!



The Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards grant recognition to companies from the public and private sector, NGOs, government agencies and educational institutions worldwide that carry on best practices in terms of sustainable and responsible Tourism around the globe.

Why should you enter these Awards?

- To enhance visibility and get recognition of your outstanding performance in terms of sustainable and responsible Tourism.
- To increase your contacts and introduce your products and services to professionals from the Tourism industry from all over the world.
- To obtain media coverage among the entire Skål International membership worldwide and our international press contacts.
- To personally collect the award during the Skål International World Congress in attendance of an excellent opportunity to network with Tourism professionals from all over the world.
- To experience the membership of Skål International first-hand.

Available categories:

1. Community and Government Projects.
2. Countryside and Biodiversity.
3. Educational programmes and Media.
4. Major Tourist Attractions.
5. Marine and Coastal.
6. Rural Accommodation.
7. Tour Operators-Travel Agents.
8. Tourist Transport.
9. Urban Accommodation.



How to Enter

Simply complete the [Application Form](#). You will be also asked to attach a letter of endorsement from a Skål Club or another Tourism Organization, Tourism Government Agency or Local Tourism Authorities.

Awards Ceremony

The 19th Sustainable Tourism Awards ceremony will take place on 16 October 2020 during the Opening Ceremony of the 81st Skål International World Congress in Kvarner, Croatia.

Special Skål Biosphere Award 2020

Skål International has established a partnership with [Biosphere Tourism](#) and the [Responsible Tourism Institute](#), to give the 'Special Skål Biosphere Award' that will be presented to one of the winners of the Sustainable Tourism Awards.

NOMINATIONS CLOSE: 30 JUNE 2020

For queries regarding the Skål International Sustainable Tourism Awards 2020, please [contact us](#).

Click here for full information





Skål International Incentive Programme

Valid between February 26, 2020 - September 11, 2020

Ask your Skål International Club for further information!



“ INDIVIDUAL MEMBER INCENTIVE PROGRAMME ”

RELIGIOUS TOURISM

How the Hospitality Industry Fulfills a Sacred Role

By Lisa Mansell
Skål International Tampa Bay



Former British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli once wrote that “*Travel teaches toleration.*”

Though our planet seems to shrink day by day, tolerance and world peace seem to become a more and more unobtainable goal. However, the hospitality industry stands as a beacon of friendly exchange, education and the fundamental idea that if you get to know the people of a country, and understand their ethnics and beliefs, hostilities lessen. Interestingly enough, as one of the oldest industries on earth, hospitality has a very ancient purpose – to provide food and rest for those on religious pilgrimages and missions.

Religious Tourism is one of the oldest forms of Tourism and has continued to grow, year by year – attracting both the faithful and the curious alike. The United National World Tourism Organization estimates



Photo of Sensoji Temple (Japan) by Nicholas Doherty on Unsplash.

SPORTS TOURISM



By Vijay Mohan Raj

Director, Skål International

We perceive Tourism as an opportunity to see places and the different cultures that is prevalent in other cities and countries.

Over the centuries the propensity for an individual to travel and visit foreign lands was driven by the curiosity to discover new avenues and the catalyst would have been to conquer new lands to satiate the desire to amass wealth through travel and trade.

This journey has continued however the forms have changed. In modern times the ease of procuring information of the prospective destinations and the avenues available to fulfill the desire to experience these destinations on account of shorter and better connectivity has added several more reasons for travelers to visit cities and countries.

While the traditional reasons to travel such as leisure and business continue to be popular, there is another avenue 'Sports Tourism' which in the past has been grossly underestimated. However, in the past decade and with the advent of professional sport this avenue has generated tremendous enthusiasm and fan following.

The Olympics, Cricket World Cup, World Cup Football, Wimbledon and USA Open in Tennis are some of the major International Sporting events which generates a fan following and also acts as a catalyst for the sports lover to travel to the country participate as spectator in the event and also tour the country.

We have a huge community across the globe of 'Golf Addicts' whose passion for the sport makes them vulnerable to spend several hours during the week on the Golf Course. The Golfing Tour packages is an avenue which has become increasingly popular amongst the young and old. The advantage of focusing on this segment is that an avid Golfer plays the game for a long period in a life span.

Sporting tours are very popular with Schools, Colleges and Clubs and specially in team sports like Cricket, Football and Hockey where tours are arranged in the Domestic and International domain to give exposure to players to excel in different conditions.

My own company has organised and I have escorted Cricket teams to England on several occasions and provided young cricketers to different playing conditions. We also have organized cricket tours of teams from Australia and New Zealand who tour India every year to play matches in Indian conditions. I have contacts with Destination Management Companies who provide tickets and packages coinciding with sporting events in Australia and England for Tennis, Football, Cricket and other World events. Some of these companies are owned and managed by Skålleagues.

Promotion of Tourism is basically providing pleasure through experiences. A modern tourist has evolved and explores different avenues to fulfill this requirement. **Sport Tourism will grow in an exponential manner as there is no other activity that could match the excitement that is derived from participating in Sport.**

that 300 million people a year make such journeys – to as far flung parts of the globe as the Meiji Shrine and Sensoji Temple in Tokyo - with 30 million visitors a year, to St. Peter's Basilica in Rome with 7 million visitors a year, to Israel's Western Wall which draws five million, to Muslims making their pilgrimage to Mecca, which hosts approximately three million a year.

In addition to the millions of hotel room nights and meals and many local guides hired to provide tours, these tourists, the faithful and the seekers alike, bring with them unique challenges. These challenges are more than just dietary requirements or ensuring that tourists are properly dressed when entering holy places.

"There are some particular challenges in some areas such as language barriers, but we work with translators to help mitigate that," said Traci Day the Global Accounts Manager for HelmsBrisco, an international meetings and site selection company. *"Security and safety is always something in everyone's mind, but with proper tour guides that know the area, that fear is mitigated as well."*

Day, who among other clients, books trips to heritage sites for religious groups, sees **a bright future for religious Tourism.**

"More and more groups are taking mission trips to various countries to explore the world we live in. Like all leisure travel, it is gradually overtaking corporate travel as the most prevalent form of travel today."



Photo of Golden Temple (India) by Kit Suman on Unsplash.



Photo of Vatican City by Victor Malyushev on Unsplash.

THAILAND

MEDICAL TOURISM



By Martin Venzky-Stalling

Skål International Chiangmai & North Thailand

Thailand is among the top five destinations of inbound medical Tourism spending globally, according to the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC 2019).

Much of this medical Tourism activity is concentrated in only a few areas and in even fewer places. Cosmetic and plastic surgery, dental procedures and certain types of medical treatment related to heart, joint, or cancer are the most prevalent. The majority of service providers are based in Bangkok, where large hospitals provide world-class services. These large hospitals receive the lion's share of mainstream medical treatments customers from around the world. The combined share of medical Tourism services in Phuket, Hua Hin, Pattaya, and Chiang Mai represents only 20% of services in Thailand. Moving forward, there may be opportunities to leverage the strengths of these destinations to grow their share of medical Tourism.

Medical Tourism and Wellness

The lines between what is medical Tourism and what is health and wellness Tourism are blurred. Several trends bring this together. Medical service providers, such as hospitals, focus increasingly on customer engagement and experience. There is growing interest in addressing the demand for adding alternative treatments, wellness, and prevention. The BDMS Wellness Centers in Bangkok is a good example of this in action.

The Global Wellness Institute has identified medical wellness as one of the major trends - defining it as adding more medical and evidence-based treatments to cleansing, reboot or rejuvenation packages. Cosmetic and plastic surgery clinics have also realized that they need to offer more than simply inexpensive options or exclusive medical excellence. Some clinics for cosmetic surgery, for example, have set up a business unit focusing on marketing medical Tourism. The first impression customers get when interacting with their [website](#) is that they are going on a vacation to change their life and begin a new chapter.

New Intermediate Care Options

Given Thailand's strengths in health and wellness services, it is surprising how underdeveloped the local preventive care market still is. Evidence-based preventive care includes services such as physical therapy and medical rehabilitation. This is changing gradually, particularly with new large projects for the local aging population, often tied with recovery from a hospital. When compared with other countries where medical rehabilitation and medical wellness retreats are common, this represents development opportunities.

Intermediate Care as a New Service

Thailand is already popular for long-stay and retirement. And as the wellness and health industry is demonstrating, Thailand is an ideal place for reboot and recovery. One of the challenges after a hospitalized medical treatment is the recovery process. As excellent hospitals might be, they are still hospitals. Even many rehab-clinics in Europe, which are a mix of a hospital and hotel, still feel like a hospital. ChivaCare in Chiang Mai, Northern Thailand, is introducing a new managed outpatient model by which patients, with medical support as required, can stay in apartments or boutique resorts and complete their medical rehabilitation (cognitive, mobility, etc.) at the ChivaCare's center. This arrangement can socially integrate them more which increases motivation, one of the most important factors in a successful recovery.

Responsible Medical Tourism?

Thailand's medical sector will come under significant pressure in the future because of resource constraints. The questions will be how to create a win-win from international medical Tourism. Learning from other sectors, medical services providers could emphasize how high-end resources financed by international tourists could also be provided to local customers and communities (rather than competing). This represents responsible and sustainable medical Tourism.

Technology; Many Applications to Extend Pre and Post-treatment Care

We can also expect new models involving telemedicine to emerge. It may not be self-evident how this may increase Tourism to Thailand but customers have questions before they decide where to go and they have needs once they completed their medical treatments. These are indeed exciting times with new opportunities for Thailand's medical Tourism sector.



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NEW ITB.COM PLATFORM: NETWORKING, INDUSTRY NEWS AND THE ITB VIRTUAL CONVENTION

Despite its cancellation this year, ITB is offering digital services 365 days a year by launching itb.com.

The World's Leading Travel Trade Show is establishing a completely new networking platform for the world's travel industry. This global website spans a bridge between real-life meetings and digital networking, and features innovative tools for business, networking and exclusive content. "In these very difficult times the Tourism industry needs ITB more than ever", said Dr. Martin Buck, Senior Vice President, Travel+Logistics, Messe Berlin GmbH. That is why, at the forward-looking events of the ITB Virtual Convention, leading speakers from ITB will be discussing how the world's travel industry can harness intelligent strategies to make sure it remains future-proof even in a challenging environment. In the wake of the latest developments,

discussions on how the industry can deal with the coronavirus will play a key role. Between 5 and 11 March 2020 viewers could follow more than 20 exclusive live streams and videos in English and German, some in real time, some time-shifted, on itb.com. Afterwards, they will be made available as videos on demand.

"By launching this new website we are establishing a key platform and travel network which has no parallel and which can be made use of in every market around the world. The aim is to ensure business, content and networking availability 365 days a year. We also want to provide easy access for newcomers to the industry. This underscores our year-round leading international standing in terms of the market and opinions and consolidates the position of our USPs, contacts and content", Dr. Martin Buck added.

Networking made easy – the new Travel Network of the B2B travel industry.

The AI-based Travel Network is a self-teaching system which continually offers users relevant travel industry contact information. All registered attendees at ITB Berlin 2020 may access the Travel Network, i.e. trade visitors, convention participants, exhibitors and representatives of the media who have acquired a personalized ticket from the ITB ticket shop. Shortly after its launch the network is already well subscribed. Numerous stakeholders have already registered. These had previously received a personal invitation by email prior to the original opening date of the show. Those who had not previously planned to visit the show in Berlin can also register now. Travel Network users can set up a profile, match interests, be contacted and can network. They can also follow other users, exchange contact details, chat and set up appointments. 'Virtual rooms' are being made available online where users can hold meetings which they had scheduled prior to ITB Berlin 2020. A video link enables face-to-face meetings – it is also possible to communicate via an audio link only. Under 'Insights' and 'News', itb.com has the latest news from the World Travel Trends Report and ITB Berlin News, the official Show Daily of the event – which this year will be a weekly edition.

Virtual ITB Convention: outstanding sessions on up-to-the-minute topics.

The streaming and video programme will be updated regularly over the next few days in order to provide additional content. Details and updates are available from ITB.com at any time.

Nils Müller, CEO of TrendOne, will hold his keynote speech originally scheduled for the ITB Convention on the Top 8 Trends for Tourism & Travel, asking "*Which trends, technologies and developments do you need to know and how to combine in order to be successful in the future?*"

In another keynote speech, Eric La Bonnardière, co-founder of Evaneos, will address the topic of overtourism and how local tour operators can deal with this phenomenon. At the panels of the Hospitality Tech Forum powered by the Hospitality Industry Club, experts will take a look at revenue management, sustainability in the hospitality industry and the future of online distribution. Sessions featuring high-ranking experts will dwell on topics such as establishing and restructuring brands as well as 'Hospitality 2025'.

At the new Data Talks originally scheduled for the ITB eTravel World, topic headings will include 'Highly Recommended – Best Practice On Personalization' and 'Multi-Platform Network in Travel – Digital Enablers and Travel of the Future'. Other sessions will incorporate a Berlin panel discussion featuring representatives of bookingkit and VisitBerlin, who will be asking "*What drives the Industry in 2020?*"

The following events from the ITB Berlin Convention are also taking place: Sharry Sun of Travelzoo will present the eagerly awaited empirical study on 'Global luxury customers and sustainability', which the company carried out together with ITB Berlin. This session will be streamed live from the CubeClub. Caroline Bremner of Euromonitor will talk about 'The Future of the Tourism industry' and address the

disruptive challenges facing the industry, including overtourism, climate change and insolvencies as in the recent case of Thomas Cook. The day after, her lecture will also be available in English. Based on around 500,000 interviews, the IPK World Travel Monitor® is the world's largest travel survey. Rolf Freitag, CEO of IPK International, will present the latest forecast figures on global and European travel trends – an indispensable decision-making tool for the entire Tourism industry.

Statista will explain how trends are influencing personalisation and individualisation in the eTravel market; one of the sessions will examine the topics 'Voice Commerce: Selling travel and hotel rooms via Amazon, Alexa and Google Assistant' and 'Instagram, influencers & co: the underestimated challenge for destinations'.

Throughout the programme, the fascinating contributions of ITB Digital and Tourismus Zukunft could be followed online until Friday 6 March. As well as examining how the industry is dealing with the coronavirus, the sessions will look at New Work, AI, blogging and open data.

Recordings will take place in a specially equipped studio on the Berlin Exhibition Grounds, where numerous sessions will be streamed live. Some speakers will also be joining in from remote locations via Skype. Viewers can join in too: under the hashtag [#ITBvirtualcon](#) they can exchange opinions on the sessions and discuss them on social media.



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