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"Tourism unites people and nations, and Greece has a significant role in the efforts in the wider region to open new roads for stability and growth, peace and prosperity"



WORLD TOURISM FORUM LUCERNE 2017

STAY RELEVANT IN
UNCERTAIN TIMES!

500 leaders, senior executives and experts from the global travel and tourism industry attended the 5th World Tourism Forum Lucerne 2017. They were joined by tourism ministers, ambassadors, university professors, Next Generation representatives and Young Talents from the World Tourism Forum Lucerne's university network from around the world. With delegates from 75 countries, inspired by the extremely high level of debate and presentation at the Forum, they formed a dynamic network prepared to engage openly and dynamically.

The Forum, overseen by Professor Martin Barth, President and CEO of WTFL, and with the help of Reto Wittwer, Chairman of the Advisory Board, focused this year upon staying relevant in uncertain times. The industry is facing its most challenging period ever, with an array of pressures that include keeping up with fast-changing digitalisation, attracting and retaining talent, the sustainability challenge and the ongoing threat of terrorism.

The illuminating and inspiring keynote speeches, interviews, roundtables and panel discussions featuring some of the most prominent speakers in the travel and tourism industry tackled the most pressing issues of today, augmented by innovative workshops and brainstorming sessions.

Plenty of hope in uncertain times

The Forum began with a welcome from Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), who pointed out that although we have myriad challenges, from terror threats to natural disasters and inequality, there are many positive things to reflect upon, for example we are more connected and more informed than ever before. Swiss Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann echoed this point of view, for example observing that digitalisation by far offers more chances than risks, reconstructing opportunities and ending up offering additional jobs, welfare and insight.

Encouraging the next generation

This year, there was especially strong focus on encouraging the next generation and nurturing and retaining new talent. Those participating in the Young Talent Programme 2017, connecting CEOs with talented young people, were welcomed on stage.



Where we are now

Sean Cleary, Chairman of Strategic Concepts, explained how a collision of factors including massive connectivity, huge population growth, higher returns to capital and lower returns to labour, and a return of geopolitics have triggered the path we are taking globally now. Jason Fox, author and leadership adviser and Head of The Cleverness, urged us to move away from our default thinking and strive towards meaningful progress.

Facing Tomorrow's Challenges

A prominent panel that included Simon Lehmann, President of Phocuswright, Teo Ah Khing, Chairman of Desert Star Holdings, Puneet Chhatwal, CEO of Deutsche Hospitality and Lina Annab, Minister for Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan identified key challenges for tourism, which include keeping up with the fast changes in technology, eradicating destination stereotypes and prejudices and getting people to understand the level of disruption upon us right now. Ways forward they suggested included realising a greater efficiency in analysing the vast array of data available to us now and creating a selection of options to prepare for the unprecedented level of change we see in these times.

Tourism Star Award

The first Tourism Star Award was announced, a WTFL global search to spot, shine a light and celebrate the most committed, inspiring, passionate and enthusiastic person working in the travel, tourism and hospitality industry, featuring stirring films about finalists working in travel in Iraq, Rwanda and Mexico.

Innovation the key

Innovation to stay relevant was very much on the agenda, with Rasoul Jalali, General Manager at Uber explaining how the Uber app, now used in nearly 80 countries in 500 cities, has transformed urban travel, innovations Uber has introduced, including shared taxi travel, and the introduction of driverless cars in Pittsburgh, U.S. The secrets of how Switzerland stays relevant in an ever-competitive marketplace were unveiled in

an absorbing talk by Juerg Schmid, CEO of Switzerland Tourism, while the battle to stay relevant in a very different small country, St Lucia, were explained by no other than the country's Prime Minister, Allen Chastanet.

Attracting and retaining talent

There was much focus during the Forum about attracting and retaining talent. At an aviation CEO roundtable featuring Rob Gurney, CEO one world, Paul Steele, Senior Vice President IATA, Nazim Samadov, Commercial and Marketing Director Azerbaijan Airlines, and Michael Kerkloh, President and CEO Munich Airport, the need to attract more women into the industry, a greater ethnicity pool at higher levels, and finding enough people in a time when the aviation industry is growing massively were discussed.

Start-up Innovation Camp

This year saw the first-ever start-up Innovation Camp, and in total 170 young companies from 50 countries submitted their business models. Over the two days of the Forum, representatives from the four most promising companies pitched their projects and were honoured with the "Start-Up Innovation Award 2017" where they were endowed with prize money of CHF 20,000, and will receive professional coaching over the next two years.

Digitalisation

Much of the tourism industry currently struggles to keep up with advancements in digital technology yet realises that it confers so many benefits. Jon Erni, Director Public Sector Microsoft, urged tourism companies to embrace the growing number of online tools to find and retain customers, and to welcome a disruption of the existing tourism model. He pointed out that small start-ups are so successful - and in turn can greatly disrupt large, established companies - because they know how to use the online platforms so well.

The Forum closed in a spirit of optimism and inspiration. The overriding opinion amongst participants is that whilst there are significant challenges to overcome, the industry is adapting to embrace a future full of opportunity.