

Travel AND Tour™

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W O R L D

Special Feature

Archeological wonders of **AZERBAIJAN**

Meetings Point

Chiang Mai

Thailand

Cover Story

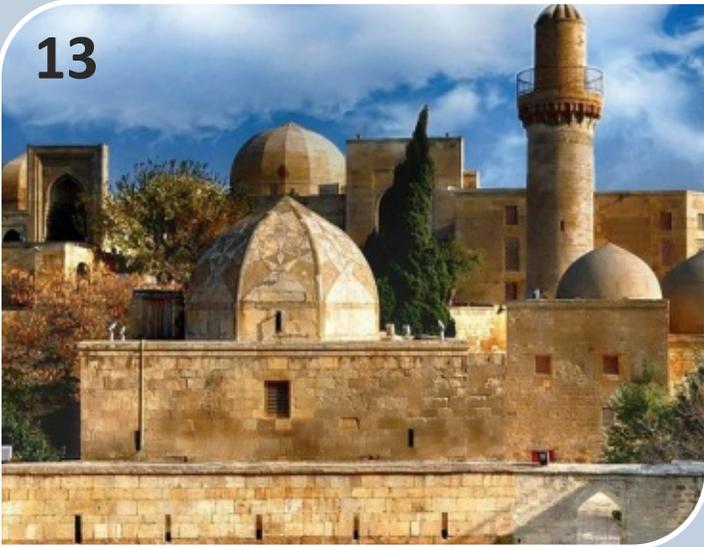
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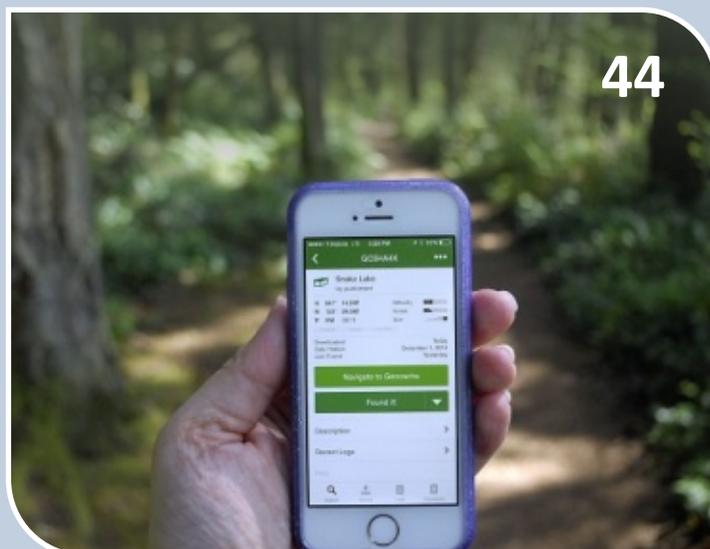
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Dear Readers,

Like hotel, airlines and cruise industry, the tourism and event sector in every country continues to be one of the sectors hardest hit by the coronavirus pandemic. The outlook remains highly uncertain in these days. It is noted that the international tourism (in both leisure and MICE tourism) fell by around 80% last year. Some of the countries that rely heavily on international meetings and tourism, business and events industry are particularly struggling, with many coastal, regional and rural areas faring better than any busy cities.

But the encouraging news on vaccines that evade this COVID-19 disease has boosted slight hopes for meetings, events, travel and tourism recovery but challenges remain, with the sector expected to remain in survival mode until well into 2021-2022 year. Now this crisis is a chance to rethink and reorganize tourism for the future. Now the travel industry is at a crossroads and the measures put in place today will shape tomorrow. The governments need to consider the longer-term implications of the crisis, while capitalising on digitalisation, supporting the low carbon transition, and promoting the structural transformation needed to build a stronger, more sustainable and flexible tourism and meetings' economy.

In this issue, we are highlighting on music venues, LGBT friendly cities, and unexpected travel expenses that gives you an idea to plan for your future travel. While on the other, we are focusing on Azerbaijan and its archaeological destinations and Thailand's business event capital Chiang Mai. Here also read the mobile applications for hikers and an exclusive interview of Florian Sengstschmid, the CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism

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**Exploring
the
meeting opportunities
in
Chiang Mai
Thailand**

Chiang Mai, the capital of Chiang Mai province, is the largest city in northern Thailand. Known for its beautiful landscapes, ancient temples and natural attractions, the city is one of the most popular tourism destinations in Asia. It also stands as a key business tourism venue in Thailand. Over the years, the Thailand Convention and Exhibition Bureau have promoted Chiang Mai as an International MICE city. The city is home to some of the finest meeting and conference centres, luxurious convention hotels and ample tourist attractions, making it an ideal venue for business travellers.

Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre

Considered to be one of the biggest convention centres and meeting venues in Southeast Asia, the Chiang Mai International Exhibition and Convention Centre consists of 60,000 sq. m. of usable space and is perfectly suited for all kinds of national and international events, meetings, conventions, exhibitions, trade shows and other business gatherings. The venue consists of the SMEs building and the main exhibition and convention hall. The main building is 2 storied and comprises of meeting rooms, exhibition halls and convention halls. There are 3 interconnected halls that when combines have a space of 8000 sq. m. and can accommodate nearly 1000 people. The centre also has a 1,700 sq. m. large convention hall as well as 29 modern meeting rooms and other additional facilities. The SMEs building serves to promote Thailand's entrepreneurship stimulus programme and offers 11,988 sq. m. of usable areas including business meeting rooms, seminar rooms, exhibition hall, product display hall and rental office. The centre also comes with a 7,443 sq. m. multi-use outdoor space for hosting all kinds of outdoor events and activities.

**TOP MEETINGS
AND
CONFERENCE
VENUES**

Empress Convention Centre

The Empress Convention Centre is another ideal venue for hosting conventions, meetings, exhibitions, trade fairs and other corporate and social events. Located adjacent to the Empress Hotel Building, the multifunctional centre provides around 980 sq. m. of pillarless hall space and 660 sq. m. of meeting area. The centre is capable of accommodating up to 1,500 people and provides additional facilities like business centre, small breakout meeting spaces, VIP rooms, simultaneous interpretation facilities and registration counters. The ground floor consists of board rooms specifically made for meetings, seminars and corporate sessions as well as a food court, a coffee corner and a VIP lounge. The second floor of the complex features five meeting rooms that can also be opened to one large hall of 600 sq. m. These rooms are ideal for meetings, business gatherings, conferences and similar other events. Lastly, the third floor offers the main hall of the centre with 925 sq. m. of event space ideal for larger conventions, exhibitions, shows, banquets and similar large gatherings.



Khum Kham International Convention Centre

Khum Kham International Convention Centre is a luxurious convention, seminar, meeting and event venue located in Chiang Mai Business Park. The venue is built for hosting domestic and international MICE events as well as social and corporate events. The centre features a grand ballroom, the most elegant and luxurious space inside the venue that can accommodate up to 1,400 guests for conventions, conferences, exhibitions, shows, banquets and all kinds of social and corporate events. It also consists of a few middle-sized multipurpose rooms for seminars, conferences, and presentations and all mid-size events and can hold up to 300 guests. These rooms can also be divided into smaller rooms with partition. The centre also offers separate rooms for smaller meetings, breakout sessions and intimate corporate gatherings. All rooms are equipped with state-of-the-art technology and come with VIP facilities.



**BEST
CONVENTION
HOTELS**

Le Meridien Chiang Mai

An ideal combination of historical European roots and contemporary hospitality, Le Meridien Chiang Mai is a 5-star hotel close to Chiang Mai's vibrant night markets. Situated in the centre of the city, the hotel provides the finest accommodation facilities. It is also a great choice for business travellers for its incredible meeting and convention facilities. The hotel features 18,739 sq. ft. of total event space with the largest capacity of hosting 1,050 individuals. There are 11 event rooms that are ideal for hosting meetings, conferences, seminars, shows, exhibitions and different kinds of business and social events.

Duangtawan Hotel Chiang Mai

Situated in downtown Chiang Mai, in the middle of the famous Night Bazaar, the Duangtawan Hotel Chiang Mai is only 15-minutes away from the Chiang Mai International Airport, main railway station and Chiang Mai bus station, making it an ideal choice for business and corporate travellers. Besides providing great luxurious stays and top accommodation facilities, the hotel also offers a variety of meetings and convention options. It consists of a grand ballroom that can host up to 1000 guests in theatre style and is perfect for major conferences, seminars, meetings and corporate galas. The hotel also comes with a range of other meeting spaces ideal for arranging meetings, seminars, corporate sessions, conferences, business gatherings and similar MICE functions.



Lotus Pang Suan Kaew Hotel

Located in the heart of the Chiang Mai City, Lotus Pang Suan Kaew Hotel offers great accommodation facilities surrounded by spectacular views of Chiang Mai. The hotel comes with great meetings and events facilities and can accommodate anywhere between 10-3000 attendees. It has three large conference rooms ideal for large conventions, meetings and corporate events and can host up to 3000 guests. It also has three medium-sized conference rooms perfect for meetings, seminars and other corporate gatherings. Additionally, it has eight smaller meeting rooms for small events, sessions, conferences, meetings, seminars and similar other events.

Visit the holy site of **Wat Phra That Doi Suthep**, one of the most historical and spiritually significant places in Thailand, to witness the perfect embodiment of the Lanna culture. It is one of the top tourist attractions in the city.

Go on the **Chiang Mai Night Safari** to experience the animal zones of Savanna Safari, Predator Prowl and Jaguar Trail via an open-sided tram or on foot. You can feed wild animals, pet tiger cubs; enjoy the laser light and dancing fountain show as a part of the activities in the safari.

You can also pay a visit to the **Karen Long Neck Tribe** and **the Chiang Dao Cave** as well as the **Doi Pui Tribal Village and the National Park**. You can witness the ancient caves in the rawest form accompanied by local guides and see the highest peak of the **Doi Suthep-Pui National Park**. The tribal village tour will also give an insight into the private life of the tribal villagers.

Also, visit the **Doi Inthanon Natural Park** above the highest peak in Thailand and **the Elephant Jungle Sanctuary** that work towards elephant welfare and serve as elephant care home. Finally, make sure to enjoy shopping and some local dinner in the **Chiang Mai Night Market**.



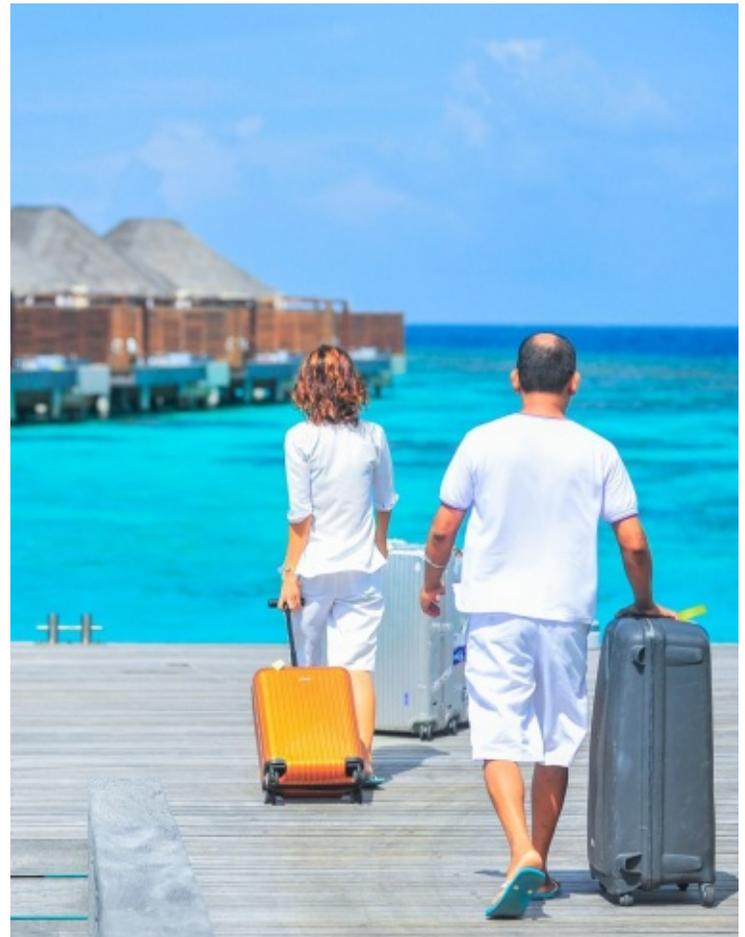
**THINGS
TO DO
BEYOND WORK**



Oktoberfest cancelled for a second year due to COVID-19

Bavaria's Minister President Markus Soeder and Mayor of Munich Dieter Reiter recently announced in a press conference that Germany's Oktoberfest, the world's largest beer festival hosted annually by Munich, will be cancelled for the second consecutive year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At their meeting, the two politicians agreed to recommend that large festivals should be cancelled in Bavaria this season due to rising cases of COVID-19 infections in order to maintain safety and to prevent further spread of the virus.

Soeder said that the Oktoberfest's reputation was also at stake but with countless restrictions in place, there would be a danger of mass gathering and chaotic conditions as measures such as social distancing and usage of face masks were practically not feasible in classic beer tents at big festivals. Mayor Reiter added that the decision was supposed to be made with immediate effect as the festival's suppliers would now have to enter into contracts and hire staff, and it would not have made sense to wait and to postpone a decision any longer.



UNWTO joins hands with G20 ministers to drive sustainable recovery of tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) has served as tourism's global voice as the Tourism Ministers of the G20 nations met to devise a way forward for an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery for the sector.

Upon assuming Presidency of the G20, Italy has drawn on UNWTO data to highlight the impact the pandemic has had on tourist numbers globally and how this translates into lost jobs and revenues, as well as lost opportunities for social development.

EU likely to reopen to fully vaccinated foreign tourists from June

According to the latest plans of the European Commission, the EU has decided to reopen to holidaymakers from countries with low COVID infection rates, such as the U.K., and to anyone who has been completely vaccinated, starting from the beginning of June. Officials confirmed that the EU borders would be reopened by June 2021 at the latest with agreement due to be sought from member states this month.

As the rate of vaccination has been constantly rising in the EU member states, commission officials said it was time to relax rules on non-essential travel while legislating to provide powers to pull an emergency brake if necessary. Under the new rule, the requirement to undergo COVID testing before or after arrival or to quarantine could still be enforced by individual states. However, officials have said that if situation continues to improve and the vaccination rate picks up immense pace, a gradual phasing out of the additional conditions could also be considered.



Disneyland California reopens after a year of closure

After being closed for more than a year, Disneyland California finally reopened its doors to visitors on Friday, April 30, 2021 much to the joy of tourists. The theme park in Anaheim, California closed down on March 14, 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and announced plans to reopen in March 2021. However, the theme park has decided to continue enforcing health safety protocols to keep visitors and crew safe. According to an official press statement by Disneyland, the park's capacity will be significantly limited to comply with California's health safety requirements and it will promote social distancing. In addition, it was mentioned that until further clarification from the state, only California residents will be allowed to visit the Disneyland Resort theme parks, in groups no larger than three per household.

Archeological wonders of Azerbaijan



Azerbaijan has rich historical evidences. It is a Muslim- ex Soviet nation, located in the southern part of Caucasus, at the crossroads of Southwest Asia and Southeastern Europe. This country also shares its border with Russia, Georgia, Armenia, Iran and Turkey.

“Azerbaijan is home to multiple ethnicities and always takes pride in the diverse beliefs of its multicultural population. Among them all, Azerbaijan also has a rich Jewish heritage. Up in the north of the country, in Guba region, there is a place called Red Village which is home to Mountain Jews and believed to be the world’s only all-Jewish village outside of Israel and the United States and the last surviving shelter, where they can freely practice their religious beliefs and traditions” says Florian Sengstschmid, the CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

Javanshir Fort

Javanshir Fort is a pride of the Ismayilli region. This ancient fort is associated with the name of the outstanding Albanian commander and ruler, Javanshir Mehranid, who ruled from 642-681 AD. The Girdyman domain was founded by the Mehranid dynasty on the territory of the modern Ismayilli region, and later they extended their dynastical empire to the whole of Albania.



Sheki Fort

Sheki Fort is located in the upper northeastern part of the city. This was built during the reign of the first Sheki Khan, Haji Chelebi. The fortress is a Khan's citadel. Its features did not include city-wide structures. The total length of the fortress walls is 1300 m; the height of the northern wall is 4 m whereas that of the southern wall is 8 m; the wall thickness is 2.2 m. The Sheki Fort has southern and northern sides with two gates and defensive towers. In the Soviet period, the destroyed parts of the fortress were restored.

Maiden Tower

Maiden Tower is an iconic eight storey cylindrical tower in Baku's old city. The base of Maiden Tower is believed to date back to 6th or 7th century, while the higher parts and the addition that juts out from the tower were built around 12th century. Maiden Tower, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage site, is open to the public. Visitors can climb its staircases, some original and some modern, to see its exhibits of old photographs and finish at its observatory, that offers magnificent views of the city.



Shirvanshahs' Palace

Shirvanshahs' Palace is a medieval 15th century castle and complex in the old city of Baku. It was originally constructed by the ruler, Shirvanshah Khalilulla I and his son, Faruk., Shirvanshahs' Palace has both royal and religious significance.



Ganja Fort

Ganja Fort is witness to several bloodsheds in Azerbaijan's history. The ancient Ganja has an extremely rich and interesting history, captured in numerous architectural monuments, one of which is the Ganja fortress. Ganja turned into a battlefield between the rulers of Ottoman Empire and Safavid states. Then there was the need for powerful fortifications. Ganja fortress, known as the “Shield of All Asia”, was built in 1588 by the Commander of the Turkish army in the Caucasus Farhad Pasha by order of the Turkish Sultan Murad III.

Gulistan Fort

Gulistan Fort is one of the greatest monuments in Azerbaijan. Gulistan fortress was popularly nicknamed the Maiden's Fortress. During the invasions of foreign invaders, the inhabitants of Shamakhi for centuries found protection behind the walls of the fortress. Its fortifications took the blows of Arab, Seljuk, Mongol and Ottoman militia.



Alinjagala Fort

Alinjagala was erected on the slope of Mount Alinja in Nakhchivan. The fortress is believed to be built in 6th century. Some researchers believe that it was built 2,000 years ago. The massive walls of Alinjagala Fort were built of burnt bricks and large stones.

Interview Zone

“

Azerbaijan is distinguished by its varying landscapes from mountains and forests to steppes and hundreds of kilometres of sea. You'll also find the most amazing collection of mud volcanoes in the world – an experience that will be bolstered with the Mud Volcanoes Tourism Complex under development now as well as ever-burning patches of hillside and many natural hot springs. All these are combined with classic and modern architecture, UNESCO-listed sites, exciting activities, a wide variety of adventure experiences and the genuine hospitality of local people, and make the country an ideal place for international tourism.

Florian Sengtschmid ”

Yeah it's a very true word for Azerbaijan. Here is an interview of **Mr. Florian Sengtschmid, the CEO of Azerbaijan Tourism Board**, where he explains how this nation presents to the global tourism industry and how they are alluring international travellers.

Travel And Tour World: What are the necessary steps ATB has taken to boost tourism in Azerbaijan? Elaborate for us.

Florian Sengstschmid: When the Azerbaijan Tourism Board was established in 2018, our main goal was to introduce all these unique features of Azerbaijan to the international audience and promote Azerbaijan as a tourism destination globally. Having launched our global marketing campaign “Take Another Look” in the same year, we successfully presented Azerbaijan at international exhibitions and roadshows together with the Azerbaijani travel industry members. We won multiple awards for the “Take Another Look” campaign and simultaneously promoted Azerbaijan via a network of international representative offices established in several countries.

We were able to achieve this success thanks to the holistic approach we developed to connect all the direct tourism industry actors, which made it possible to showcase the undiscovered beauties of Azerbaijan. We strongly believe that our success gained over just a few years is due to the unified vision we share with our stakeholders. While we still aim to place Azerbaijan among the most successful tourism destinations in the world, it is more important than ever to keep the economic and social advantages of tourism as well as protect our natural, historical, cultural and social environment from any negative impacts.

Travel And Tour World: Azerbaijan's decision to open a tourism promotion and trade office in Israel

is surely a boost to the strategic alliance ties between the two countries. Do you have any plans for tourism and cultural exchange between these two countries?

Florian Sengstschmid: Besides the cultural ties between Azerbaijan and Israel, over the last few decades, these two countries have also developed strategic and economic relations that are mutually beneficial. Opening a tourism office in Israel will certainly further these relations. It is noteworthy that Azerbaijan has become an important tourism destination for Israelis with about 50,000 tourists per year before the pandemic, and we are already in close connection with our Israeli counterparts to advance our cooperation in this field.



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Travel And Tour World: We all know that COVID-19 has devastated the global tourism industry. What are the strategies you have taken for a safe trip to your country?

Florian Sengstschmid: It is true that the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges for the whole world, and the tourism industry suffered a great deal from the travel restrictions. The very first concern for all of us was the health and safety issue. In fact, Azerbaijan was actually one of the first destinations to introduce nationwide health, safety, and hygiene standards through our SAHMAN program (Sanitation and Hygiene Methods and Norms), which is designed for local industry players to improve hygiene and sanitation across accommodation, F&B and touristic transportation providers. Run jointly with PwC, which is leading the audit and certification process, the program aims at helping to guide a safe

pathway for the industry. About 12,000 monitoring sessions have been held so far, and we are happy to see our partners becoming invested in making traveling to Azerbaijan safe.

Early on we prepared a four-phased recovery plan, beginning with closed borders and lockdown in phase one and returning to a “new normal” with international travel restrictions lifted in phase four. The Azerbaijani government was also very proactive in establishing an operational headquarters under the Cabinet of Ministers to closely monitor the spread of COVID-19 and manage restrictions depending on the infection rates. Now, with the vaccines rolling out and the daily number of cases going down, the situation with the pandemic in the country is getting much better and we have a positive outlook on the future and are optimistic about the reopening of borders and welcoming tourists again.



Travel And Tour World: What are the marketing strategies Azerbaijan Tourism Board has taken for the development of MICE tourism?

Florian Sengstschmid: Having a successful record of organising sporting contests and cultural conferences from the mid-1990s on, Azerbaijan has made its name heard over the last few years within the business events industry as well. During these years, Baku has successfully hosted over 20 large-scale international events in addition to cultural and sports events with all the needs and expectations of event planners as well as delegates highly met. I also feel proud to say that as a result of the hard work done, we have won the bid to hold the 73rd International Astronautics Congress in 2023, which is expected to bring more than 5,000 delegates to Azerbaijan.

To achieve this, we reached a significantly high number of people through promotional literature, advertising and in-market sales events. We also organised Familiarization Tours and Site Inspections for both event planners and foreign media representatives, giving prospective clients first-hand experience of Azerbaijan in the pre-pandemic period. As for the current period, we have chosen to focus on the present conditions and direct our marketing and promotional activities to digital means for now. The Azerbaijan Convention Bureau operating under the ATB, has been participating at webinars, online meetings and discussions to deliver our message that we are taking every necessary step to make sure that we will be able to host business events under the new

conditions brought by the pandemic. Clearly, these conditions include meeting health and safety needs as well as having the necessary tools and mediums to host hybrid events and developing unique propositions and solutions for event planners and delegates alike.

Travel And Tour World: What is your international target market in the post COVID-19 time?

Florian Sengstschmid: Certainly, with the help of vaccines, the global situation with the pandemic will improve gradually, but we understand that this year will be full of challenges – it will be a year of transition. Therefore, our plan is to gradually resume global marketing and communications once international travel restrictions are eased and people are free to travel again. Much focus will be given to developing domestic tourism and providing the best travel experiences to local residents since a lot of us are yet to discover many wonderful parts of Azerbaijan.



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As ATB, we plan to attend several trade shows and open representative offices in new markets. Our aim is to expand our activities to new markets in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, and Western and Northern Europe as well.

Undoubtedly, we will continue to use webinars and other digital tools until face-to-face communication and destination promotion at international trade shows and other events become possible again. Rest assured that Azerbaijan will emerge as a tourism destination on the global stage stronger than ever before and we will be ready to welcome visitors from all over the globe to our beautiful country.

Travel And Tour World: How are the convention bureaus, tourism board and Azerbaijan Hotel Association (AHA) working to boost tourism? How are the Azerbaijan Hotel Association (AHA) and Azerbaijan Tourism Board working closely to make the country a safe tourism hotspot? Tell us in detail.

Florian Sengstschmid: While Azerbaijan is a new tourism destination on the global market, over the last decade tourism has been developing here rapidly and contributing to the national economy, thanks to coordinated efforts by all relevant stakeholders. The role of the Azerbaijan Convention Bureau operating under the Azerbaijan Tourism Board in developing the MICE tourism sector in Azerbaijan has been immense, while the Azerbaijan Hotel Association successfully represents the hospitality industry of Azerbaijan

locally and on international platforms, encouraging the implementation of international standards and sharing the best practices to achieve fair competitiveness and better service quality. It is worth mentioning that in partnership with ATB, AHA has recently started the National Star Classification of hotels based on the HotelStars Union Criteria of Hotel Classification Standards. This system allows hotels to position themselves clearly in the market, while helping customers to assess properties based on quality and amenities. It will certainly contribute to increasing the quality of services in hotels, as well as maintaining and improving the international competitiveness of Azerbaijan's hotel industry. Our joint efforts contribute to promoting Azerbaijan internationally as an appealing, successful and developing tourism destination.

In addition to that, tourism industry players (hotels, tour operators, agents, tour guides, etc.) are in constant direct dialogue with ATB through tourism industry associations (Azerbaijan Hotel Association, Azerbaijan Tourist Guides Association and the Association of Travel Agencies of Azerbaijan), as well as by means of trainings and participation at international platforms. Through cooperative efforts, we aim to ensure synergy and coordination among the various stakeholders involved in the tourism industry.

Travel And Tour World: What are the major tourism destinations in the country that Azerbaijan Tourism Board is promoting at the Arabian Travel Market?

Florian Sengstschmid: ATM Dubai 2021 is ATB's first physical, offline event since the start of the pandemic. Our main goal is to reconnect with international partners and colleagues face-to-face and share our strategy for moving forward. With the vaccination process under way, in-person communication becomes possible again and, hopefully, this will be the start of the global tourism industry's return to the 'new normal'. In spite of being a relatively new tourism destination, with its incredible climatic and biodiversity, magnificent landscapes and abundant natural resources, amazing architecture, enticing activities and a wide variety of adventure experiences, Azerbaijan has many tourism offerings and experiences that attract tourists here. Azerbaijan is a unique country that has great tourism potential rooted in the culture, history, geography, traditions and people of Azerbaijan. Some of the opportunities that await a curious explorer here include rich historic and cultural heritage, including three UNESCO World Heritage sites, pristine nature and outdoor activities, health and wellness resorts and the magnificent fusion of flavours of Azerbaijani cuisine. Travelers can enjoy bustling Baku with its beautiful architecture, seaside boulevard, the narrow streets of the Old City and state-of-the-art malls and shopping centres, as well as Silk Road heritage and the

UNESCO-listed Sheki Khan's Palace in Sheki, placid lakes, outdoor activities and skiing facilities in Tufandag ski resort in Gabala, tea plantations, citrus gardens and wonderful waterfalls in Lankaran and much more. We are also consistently developing new sustainable tourism products and routes to provide a diverse range of activities and satisfy every type of traveller. Certainly, we are looking forward to soon welcoming guests looking to explore the rich cultural offering and tourism experiences of Azerbaijan.

The beginning of the revitalization process in the liberated territories of the Karabakh region has opened new horizons for the future of the country's tourism industry development. ATB is endeavouring to develop Karabakh into a globally competitive, sustainable and attractive tourism destination with state-of-the-art facilities and tourism infrastructure.

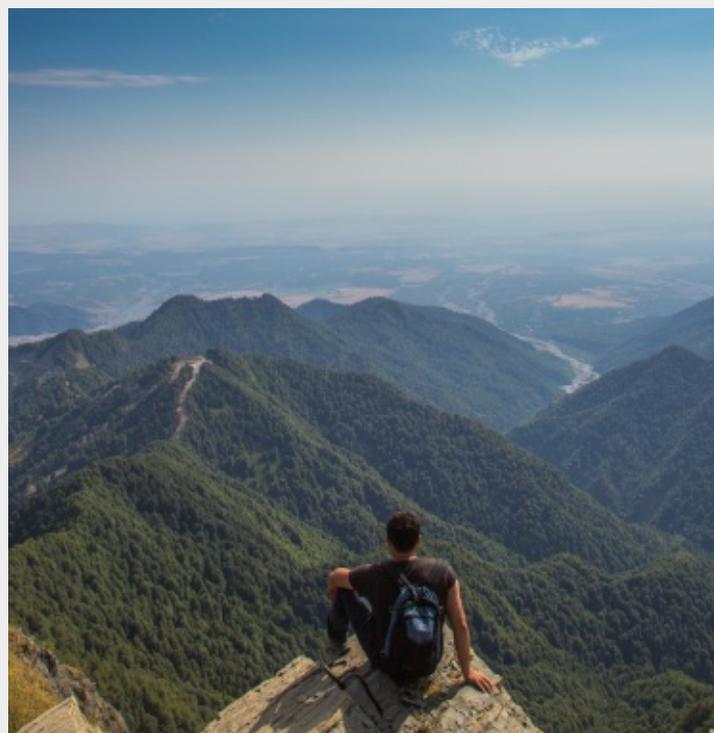


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Travel And Tour World: What are the tourism trends the country is now promoting?

Florian Sengstschmid: The pandemic has prompted a shift in the travel paradigm - travel may never be the same again, but different doesn't mean worse and we can expect it to be healthier, less crowded, more sustainable. People are now seeking out safe, healthy and authentic travel with experiential and transformative experiences with genuine cultural immersion. Travelers will look for destinations with good governance and health systems, prioritizing responsible, eco-friendly, socially conscious tourism.

Considering these changes in behavioural patterns, Azerbaijan as a tourism destination is endeavouring to make sure that the local industry adapts and provides the best travel experiences in the era of “new normal” to welcome more visitors to our beautiful country. We at the Azerbaijan Tourism Board always strive to reinforce the unique features of Azerbaijan and support them through various projects and initiatives, ranging from designing and producing eco-friendly local souvenirs to developing unique heritage routes to niche tourism products that promote eco-tourism opportunities. Khinalig, an isolated village that is set amid the most breathtaking mountain landscapes, would be a great example of this, as all our activities here are designed to preserve the unique features of this beautiful village. We have also started renovation and restoration work in Basgal – an authentic mountain village which is also known as the home of Azerbaijani “kelaghayi”



(a traditional headscarf for women), making this a place where tourists can soak up the spirit of the Silk Road.

For the post-pandemic period, ATB is focusing on developing sustainable, eco-friendly, authentic tourism products and activities – future visitors will be able to go hiking along newly developed and marked hiking trails in the Greater Caucasus and Lesser Caucasus mountains, try a wide variety of delicious Azerbaijani cuisine dishes and get first-hand experience of farming and cooking within the Slow Food Travel concept, enjoy pristine nature and outdoor activities away from crowded places, visit new birdwatching spots all across the country and stay at guesthouses and homestays to experience the authentic hospitality of the Azerbaijani people. The ongoing vaccination process gives hope that soon the international travel restrictions will be lifted and people will be eager to travel again. Rest assured that Azerbaijan will still be here offering unforgettable experiences and opportunities to take another look at this beautiful country.



Travel And Tour World: In April 2021, a ceremony was held for the Mud Volcanoes Tourism Complex in Gobustan village, Absheron district. What are the plans for the promotion of these volcanic regions?

Florian Sengstschmid: The moonlike landscape of bubbling mud volcanoes is a unique feature of our country - Azerbaijan is home to about half of the world's discovered mud volcanoes and around 400 of them are accessible in the Gobustan area. After assessing the tourism potential of this area, it was decided to establish a Tourism Complex here. The foundation of the Mud Volcanoes Tourism Complex in Gobustan was laid recently by the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan. We are optimistic that

the construction of the complex will be finished and put into operation until the summer of next year. It is also envisaged to create the necessary infrastructure around the complex to provide the best experience for the visitors to come. Currently, a 20 km road is under construction to ensure proper access to the volcanoes in the area from the UNESCO-listed Gobustan Reserve, as well as facilitate the creation of the Baku-Gobustan-Mud Volcanoes tourism cluster. Along with providing visitors with an immersive experience just 1.5 hour away from Baku, this place will be a perfect destination for glamping and star gazing – amazing activities away in nature.

LGBT-friendly Cities around the World



If you are looking for the most LGBT-friendly cities to visit, please have a look at these cities where travellers can enjoy. From Pride festivals in Auckland to the clubs of Berlin, there are many metropolises waiting to welcome LGBT visitors.

Amsterdam Netherlands

Amsterdam has been the hometown for LGBT tourists for the past four years. It is the former gay capital of Europe. In 2001, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to legalise gay marriage and the country is known for its tolerance.



Berlin, Germany

cabaret made it a gay hotspot in the 1920s and continues to make it so special and unique for LGBT people today. There is something for everyone and the city fascinates all for its glamorous parties and meetings.

Guadalajara, Mexico

Guadalajara is Mexico's most gay-friendly city. Compared to other places in Mexico, Guadalajara sees the most signs of affection in public between same sex couples. There are plenty of gay bars, clubs and parties for everyone. One of the best known is Voltio, which every Friday hosts the scandalous underwear party where men of all kinds strip down to their pants and get to know each other in this grungy, former warehouse.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Argentina is extremely progressive with LGBT rights. It was the first country in Latin America to legalise gay marriage in July 2010, which included full adoption rights. The right to change gender has been in place since 2012 and anti-discrimination laws are in full force in Rosario and the big capital city, Buenos Aires.



Gran Canaria, Canary Islands

Gran Canaria is an extremely famous destination throughout the year for European gays. This Spanish island is part of the Canary Islands, which lies off the coast of Africa, and has wonderful weather all the year round.



Travelling to attend concerts and live performances by iconic artists around the world is one of the most famous contemporary forms of tourism. Going the extra mile and travelling beyond states and even countries to catch a glimpse of your favourite artist on stage is something all travellers wish to experience at least once in their lifetime. In this article, we bring you some of the best live music venues in the world that host legendary performances and house millions of attendees every year.

BEST LIVE MUSIC VENUES IN THE WORLD



Madison Square Garden, New York, USA

Recognised as one of the top international live music venues, Madison Square Garden or MSG is a multipurpose indoor arena in New York City located in Midtown Manhattan atop the Pennsylvania Station. MSG is partly a sports arena and partly a concert venue and witnesses everything from some of the largest music and entertainment events in the world to the biggest sports competitions. The venue was opened back in February 1968 and has been named after James Madison, the fourth President of the United States. In 2016, MSG was named as the second-busiest music venue in the world in terms of ticket sales. It is now considered the fourth biggest selling music arena in the world. Over the years, MSG has hosted concerts of some the biggest popstars in the world including Elvis Presley, U2, John Lennon, Elton John, Madonna and Michael Jackson, among others.





O2 Arena, London, UK

The O2 Arena is a multipurpose indoor arena and one of the largest live music venues not only in Europe but the world. It is situated in the centre of the O2 entertainment complex on the Greenwich Peninsula in southeast London. The present arena was opened in 2007. The venue can hold nearly 20,000 people and is an indoor venue with the second-highest seating capacity in the UK. In 2008, the O2 Arena was declared as the world's busiest music venue. The arena provides one of the best live music experiences and has hosted concerts by legends such as Prince, Celine Dion and Queen among many others. The venue has also held events like the Brits and the ATP World Tour Finals. The O2 Arena is also home to Capital's Jingle Bell Ball, one of the most popular music events in the world, since 2008.





Sydney Opera House, Sydney, Australia

One of the most iconic landmarks in Sydney, Australia, the Sydney Opera House is a multi-venue performing arts centre located in the Sydney Harbour. It is known as one of the most distinctive and popular buildings of the 20th century. It is also considered to be the best live music venue in Australia and hosts nearly 1500 events in a year for approximately 1.2 million people. Although the venue is mostly known for holding world-class opera, ballet and classical performances, it has also hosted concerts for contemporary artists like Nick Cave, Thin Lizzy, Mary J Blige and Michael Buble. The Sydney Opera house is also one of the most famous tourist places in the country and has been declared as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007.





National Centre of Performing Arts, Beijing, China

Another renowned performing arts centre is located in Beijing, China. The National Centre of Performing Arts, also known as the Giant Egg, is Beijing's flagship theatre and live performance venue. The centre consists of an Opera Hall designed for large-scale performances especially ballet and opera, a Music Hall for live concerts, symphonies and folk music and a Theatre Hall for dramas, operas and other stage performances. The egg-shaped venue has been constructed from titanium and glass and is surrounded by an artificial lake. The centre can accommodate more than 5000 people in its three halls and is the perfect place to enjoy live concerts, operas and similar performances in China.





Royal Albert Hall, London, UK

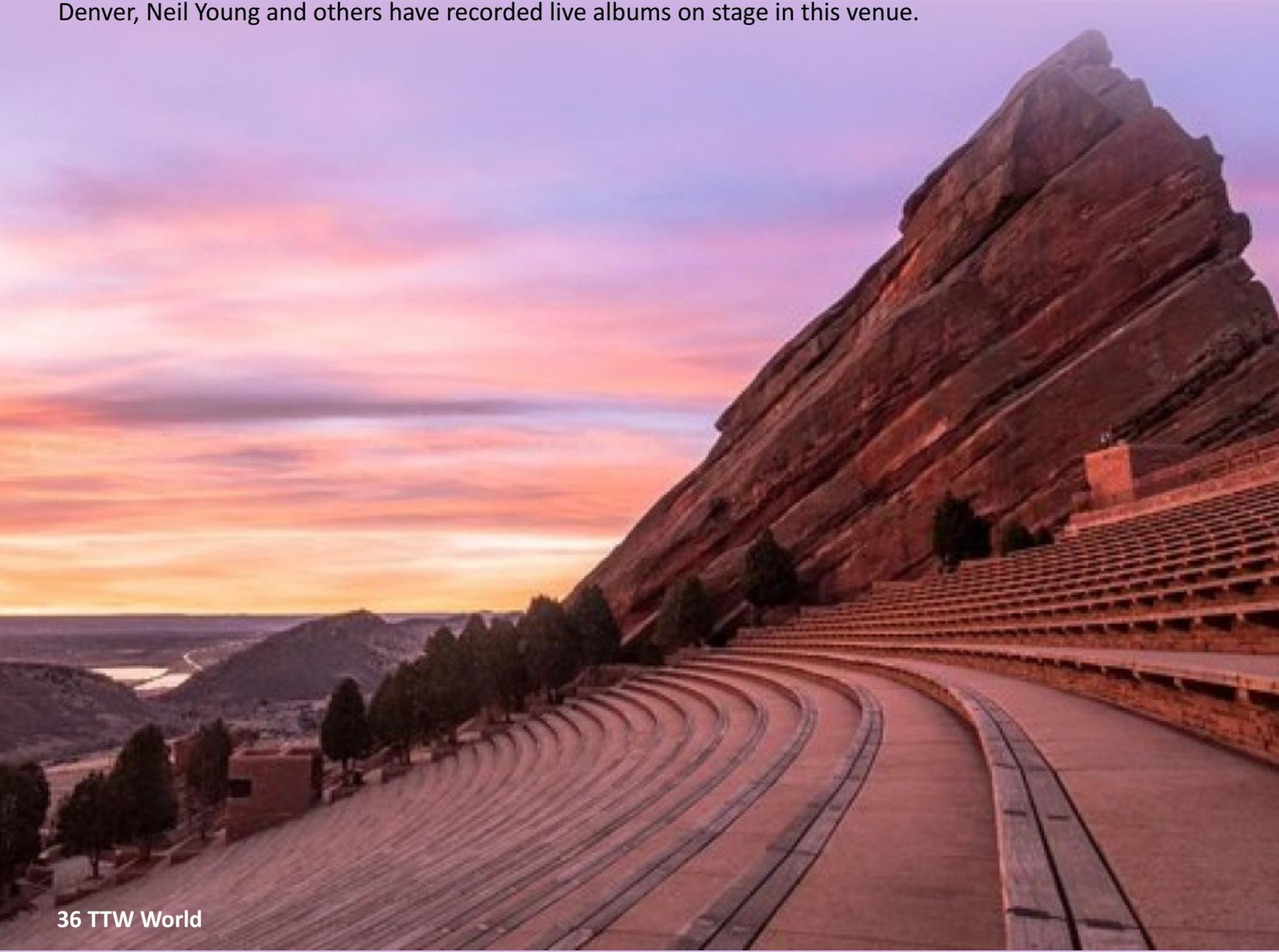
Inaugurated back in 1871 by her majesty Queen Victoria, the Royal Albert Hall is one of the most popular live music venues in the world. The concert hall is situated on the northern edge of South Kensington, London and can seat nearly 5,272 people. The venue has hosted performances by some of the world's legendary artists. It hosts nearly 390 shows in the main auditorium every year. The venue organises several events like pop, rock and classical concerts, opera, live orchestra, ballet, award ceremonies, film screenings and even sports events. The venue provides once-in-a-lifetime experience in the most royal way. It regularly hosts key concerts like The Proms, Classic Brit Awards, Teenage Cancer Trust's annual charity concerts and National Brass Band Championships of Great Britain. Famous music artists like Cirque du Soleil, Eric Clapton and David Gilmour have all performed here.





Red Rocks Amphitheatre, Denver, USA

The Red Rocks Amphitheatre is an open-air amphitheatre located near Morrison, Colorado, around 10 miles west of Denver. It is one of the finest and most unique live music venues in the USA. The venue is placed between two gigantic sandstone boulders nearly 6,450 feet above the sea level and can host up to 9,525 individuals. Ever since its opening in June 1941, the venue has been hosting notable concerts and live recordings for legendary music artists as well as film and television projects. Due to its naturally acoustic environment, the venue is much-loved among artists for not just live performances but also live recordings. The amphitheatre has hosted iconic concerts for the Beatles, Fleetwood Mac, the Fray, U2 and Mumford & Sons, to name a few. Music artists like Coldplay, One Republic, Depeche Mode, John Denver, Neil Young and others have recorded live albums on stage in this venue.





Nippon Budokan, Tokyo, Japan

Located in the heart of the Japanese Capital in Chiyoda, Tokyo, Nippon Budokan is an indoor arena and a well-known live music venue. The venue was originally built for a judo competition in the 1964 Summer Olympics and to host martial arts contests and professional Japanese wrestling. Over the years the arena became popular as a venue for concerts and live music performances. It has since then hosted remarkable concerts for artists like the Beatles, ABBA, Bob Dylan, Bryan Adams, Eric Clapton and similar others. It has also been home to Western music artists like Iron Maiden, Led Zeppelin, Toto, Diana Ross and Aerosmith. Artists like Santana and Frank Sinatra, Bob Dylan and many others also did live recordings in the venue. The building is octagonal in shape and has a seating capacity of 14,471 individuals.



New Faces

*Global Wellness Summit appoints **Hannah Messerli** to its advisory board*

The Global Wellness Summit (GWS), an organization at the heart of the multitrillion-dollar global wellness economy focused on facilitating collaboration, today announced the appointment of Hannah Messerli, PhD, Senior Private Sector Specialist in the Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Group of the World Bank, to its advisory board. Messerli's appointment follows fast on the heels of two other significant additions to the GWS Advisory Board: internal medicine doctor Nicola Finley, MD, and technology innovator and blockchain expert Maggie Hsu. Susie Ellis, chair and CEO of GWS said that Hannah's expertise in tourism policy and development and her specific focus on opportunities around nature-based tourism for countries around the globe supports the GWS's goal to help governments and tourism boards not only expand their wellness tourism initiatives but also measure their value to the local economy.



***Michael R. Mullaney** appointed Chief Executive Officer of Fraport USA*

Michael R. Mullaney has been appointed as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Fraport USA, a wholly owned subsidiary of Fraport AG Frankfurt Airport Services Worldwide, and a leading developer of award-winning airport retail, food and beverage concession programs. Mullaney comes with over 30 years of aviation experience, spanning concession development, airport operations, aviation consultancy and education.

Most recently, Michael served as Executive Vice President of Corporate Strategy and Development for the Hudson Group, where throughout his 18 year tenor he led the company's strategic direction, business development, governmental affairs and business diversity divisions. Prior to Hudson, Michael oversaw the concession leasing and store reconstruction programs as the Manager of the Commercial and Business Development for the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky International Airport (CVG).



Clarence Tan appointed Senior Vice President, Development at Hilton Asia Pacific

Clarence Tan has been appointed as the Senior Vice President, Development at Hilton Asia Pacific. Tan comes with more than 20 years' experience, and joins Hilton from international hotel management and development company Valor Hospitality, where he served as the principal and corporate advisor. Prior to this, he was Group CEO at Millennium & Copthorne after serving at IHG in several senior leadership positions, including as Chief Operating Officer for Japan, Korea and South East Asia; Chief Financial Officer and Chief Development Officer for the Asia, Middle East and Africa regions, leading all aspects of planning, design and development.



Hannah Fisher appointed Marketing Director of Saga Travel

Hannah Fisher has been appointed as the new Marketing Director of Saga Travel. Fisher comes with a wealth of experience gathered over more than 20 years in the marketing industry. She specialises in marketing strategy and digital transformation, having most recently worked for Dentsu International leading clients Honda, Camelot and TSB. Prior to that Fisher held senior marketing roles at More Than, Sky and Direct Line. As a part of her new role, she will be responsible for the development and delivery of the marketing strategy for Saga Travel and will lead the implementation of greater digital capability to drive a truly integrated approach to marketing communications.



Therese Cedercreutz appointed Member of Board of Directors at Scandic

Therese Cedercreutz has been appointed Member of Board of Directors at Scandic. Prior to Scandic Hotels Group AB's Annual General Meeting 2021, the Nomination Committee has already proposed Therese Cedercreutz as a new member of the Board of Directors. The number of members on the Board will thus be increased to seven Board members elected by the annual general meeting and one employee representative. Since 2016, Therese Cedercreutz has been CEO and partner at Milton Inc part of Milton Group, one of Northern Europe's most reputable agencies within sustainability, communication, public affairs and marketing. She comes with extensive board experience, a significant network in the Finnish business community and has through board work and management consulting successfully advised companies on integrating a holistic view of sustainability as an integral part of a business model and strategy.



Budget is one of the major things to consider while planning a trip. Irrespective of all the planning, travellers can often be seen struggling with several additional costs during their trip. It is easy to go beyond budget and come across multiple unexpected expenditures while travelling. Therefore, it is important to be aware and pre-plan everything that can help you prevent spending unexpected amount during your trip. Take a look at some of the most common unexpected travel expenses and learn how to avoid them.

UNEXPECTED TRAVEL EXPENSES AND HOW TO AVOID THEM



CURRENCY EXCHANGE

Currency exchange can be one of the key expenses while you are travelling. Travellers often tend to forget that currency exchange can be costly. Along with the actual currency exchange rate, people who provide currency exchange services also charge a service or commission fee. There are also several scams and hoaxes that people unexpectedly face when it comes to currency exchange in a foreign country. That is why it is essential to be careful about such mishaps and important to factor your own budget. Make sure to check a proper currency converter or use a reliable currency exchange app to ensure that you are not paying any unnecessary money. Exchanging your currency in the destination country rather than at home is also often considered to be cheaper.



CARD FEES

Travellers often miss out the fact that even using their debit or credit cards in a foreign country will

cost them foreign transaction fees charged by the company. Withdrawing cash from ATMs comes with withdrawal fees and banks often charge inter-bank fees alongside their current exchange rate toppling your unexpected travel expenditures even further. Using a travel card is the best way to avoid these extra charges. You can also try and be a part of Global ATM Alliance to avoid extra charges during international transactions. Also, make sure to inform your bank while travelling abroad to avoid other unnecessary transaction issues

BAGGAGE FEES

Baggage fees can also come as an unexpected expense as airlines charge extra for excess baggage. All airlines have different policies for weight and size dimensions and hence expenses can double up for people travelling with multiple airlines. Travellers often try to get a good deal on a plane ticket forgetting the additional baggage charges in the process. People also have the tendency to overpack before figuring out the weight and size requirements for their airlines. Always make sure to research your airline's website well to find out all the baggage charges applicable. Check the dimensions of your baggage with your airline's desired dimension before packing and pack accordingly. Find out baggage fees deals especially if you are a frequent flyer and also check if the baggage is included with your ticket. You can also try to fit your packing inside carry-ons instead of a large suitcase to avoid all the unexpected expenses associated with packing.



HOTEL EXPENSES

Most travellers make sure to book their accommodation before arriving at their desired destination. They often do a lot of research to get the ideal place to stay within the ideal budget. However, the additional expense associated with hotel booking is often unexpected. Many hotels put service charges, tips, internet fees, bar and restaurant fees, among others as additional costs that travellers often find out only during checkout. In some places like Europe, hotels also charge a city tax or tourist tax that travellers are asked to pay on-spot. Therefore, always take note of the total cost including all services while booking a hotel to avoid the surprise expenses. Make sure to cross-check and remove all the additional expenses with your hotel. Also keep yourself prepared and add the extra cash to your travel budget to avoid the

unexpected shock towards the end of your trip.

DEPARTURE TAXES

One of the major costs travellers forget to include in their travel budget is departure tax. Many countries with departure taxes often include it in the ticket price but there are also several countries that require travellers to pay an additional fee at the airport before departing. Though most countries charge a minimal amount for departure taxes, some countries charge a lot. Moreover, even small amounts can add up to a large amount if you are travelling between countries. Hence make sure to stay updated on departure fees. Check entry and exit requirements of your destination and be well-prepared to avoid unexpected costs before the end of your trip.

VISA CHARGES

Alongside departure charges, you will also come across visa fees in the country you are arriving. Travellers sometimes overlook the visa charges especially while travelling between countries. The sudden addition may not only increase your travel budget but also cause a lot of legal harassment. So, it is important to research well about the visa requirements and costs to be prepared with the documents and costs beforehand.

EMERGENCY EXPENSE

Even though no one wants to encounter emergency situation while travelling it is important to be prepared for emergencies. Accidents, injuries, theft, sickness and any similar incidents during a trip not only cause a lot of hassle but also add on to unexpected charges. Emergencies may

require you to spend a lot of additional money to come out of such situations. It is important to keep some emergency cash handy or to invest in travel insurance to keep you covered from spending unexpected cash in a foreign land.

TRIP CANCELLATION

No traveller would ever like to face a situation where they have to cancel a trip at the last moment. However, there can be such a situation. Trip cancellation comes with major loss of money and is one of the major unexpected expense travellers tend to forget. Therefore, it is important to research on cancellation and refund policies before booking for a trip. Make sure to invest in some travel insurance that can provide some refund in case you have to opt for cancellation.



Exploring the unknown can be a mesmerising experience for anyone. May it be hiking or trekking, these adventures surely give you a thrill. If you are a seasoned mountaineer, trekker or a trailblazer, then you know your routes well. But it is always better to have a dependable mobile application installed that can assist you with directions, and environment and give information on various aspects of your hiking journey – including newer and safer routes to explore.

Mobile Applications for Adventure Lovers



All Trails

AllTrails app is the perfect app for any hiker. This hiking app has more than 50,000+ routes in the United States alone, contributed by the generous, like-minded hikers and mountain bikers. You too can record and upload your input, adding to the plethora of existing information. The crowd-sourcing allows you to view detailed warnings, including good-quality images of the routes – which helps to make your experience smooth and convenient.

View Ranger

View Ranger's advanced navigation system has contributed immensely to the world. This app is extremely popular among the hiker's community – as they can plan, navigate, record and share their experiences using this app. You can also purchase and download high-resolution Ordnance Survey maps, including a range of other topographic maps for more than 20 countries. These maps can be used even when offline, as they are present in your

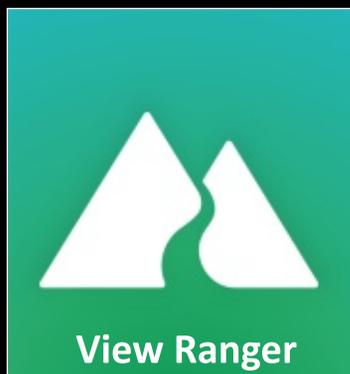
phone, instead of the app.

First Aid

Red Cross First Aid App should be a must for any adventure seeker as it has pre-loaded content spanning to timely safety information, expert advice for emergencies, videos, interactive quizzes, diagrams and step-by-step guides to help users with any emergency.

Moonlight App

Free yourself of the logistical nightmare of group texts by downloading Moonlight, a mobile application created to make preparation for a camping trip a breeze with trip-planning checklists that you can share among friends. Here you can download the free version or pay for the premium form to load your dates and the campsite you plan to visit. The premium app will give you a suggested list of recipes to cook by the campfire, as well as helpful information from previous campers.



World Festivals



Gawai Dayak Festival

Date: 1-2 June, 2021

Place: Sarawak, Borneo

Dayak Day is held to celebrate the end of their harvest season. For both the Iban and Bidayuh tribes the event is one of both religious and social significance, so preparations, like making the rice wine known as Tuak, are carried out in the month leading up to the celebration. Throughout the festival period tribe-members make offerings to god and celebrate with music, dancing and plenty of rice wine.



Randol Fawkes Labour Day

Date: June 4, 2021

Place: Bahamas

Randol Fawkes Labour Day is a public holiday dedicated to Sir Randol Fawkes, who established this day as Labour Day in 1961. Local music bands and a few leaders lead the parades, providing lively music for the marchers and spectators. The parade ends at the Southern Recreation Grounds, where union leaders and local politicians deliver speeches.

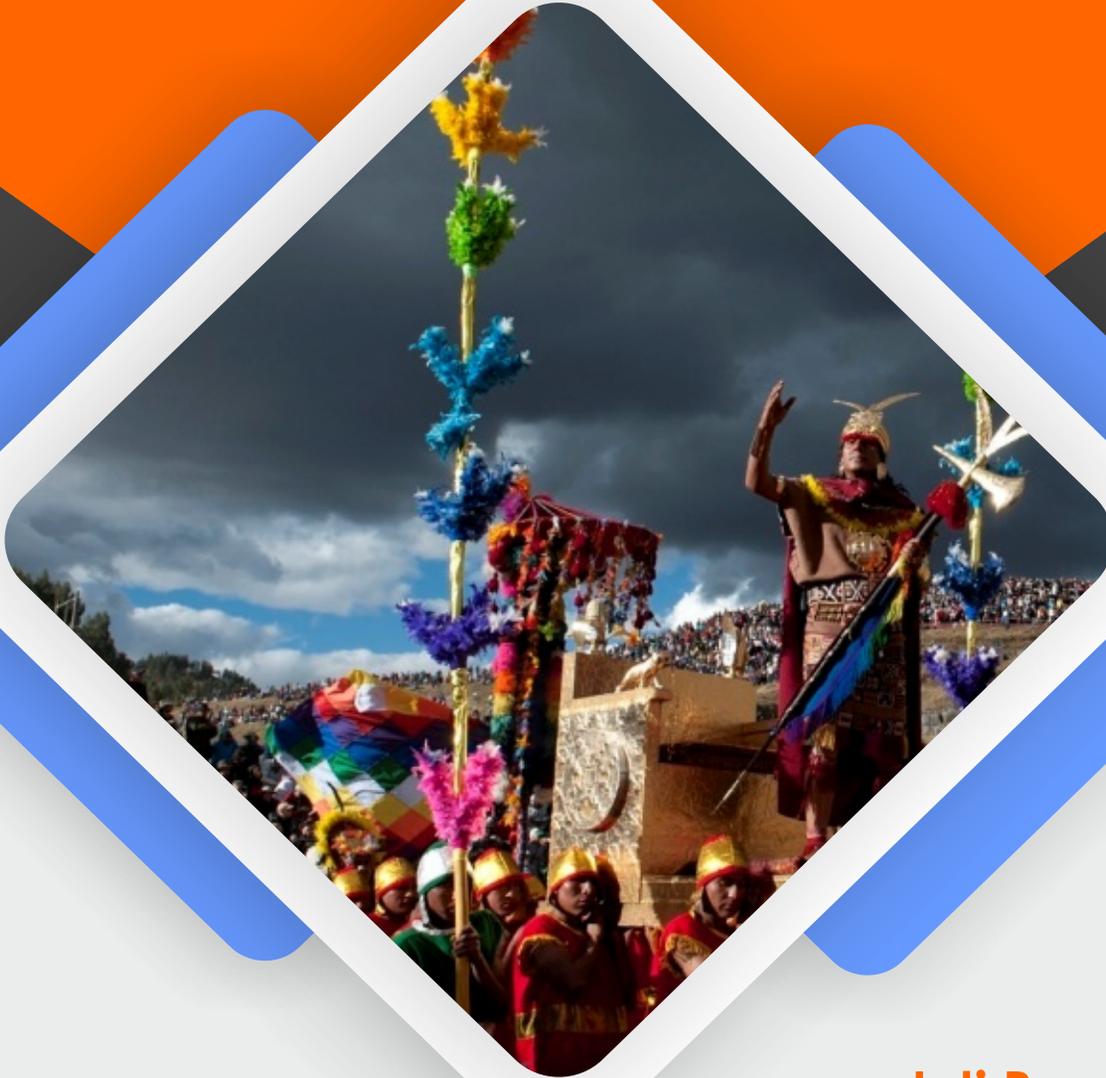


Icelandic National Day

Date: 17 June, 2021

Place: Reykjavik, Iceland

Icelandic National Day was chosen as a birthday of Jon Sigurosson, the leader of the 20th century Icelandic Independence Movement. Across the capital city of Reykjavik, many national and international visitors can watch the National Day parades, catch street performances and concerts, try the street food and take part in workshops that are set up by the Icelandic Circus.



Inti Raymi

Date: 24 June, 2021

Place: Cusco, Peru

Inti Raymi is a nine-day celebration over Peru's winter solstice, paying homage to the Inca god Inti. Here you can see various colourful reenactments which portray historical tales of the Incas to the rhythm of beating drums, with dramatic settings like the ruins of Sacsayhuaman. Over the festival period, explore street fairs, catch stage performances and watch the festival's concluding street parade.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

THE HOTEL SHOW DUBAI
Place; Dubai
www.thehotelshow.com



**31st May-2nd
June 2021**

**04-05 June
2021**

Vakantiebeurs Utrecht
Online
www.vakantiebeurs.nl



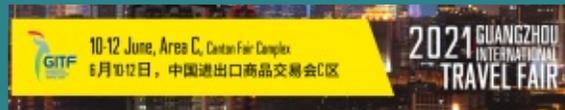
BBTF
Bali, Indonesia
www.bbtf.or.id



**08-12 June
2021**

**10-12 June
2021**

GITF
Guangzhou, China
www.gitf.com.cn

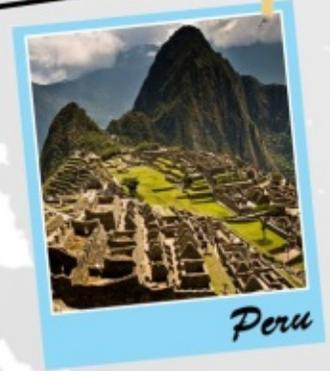
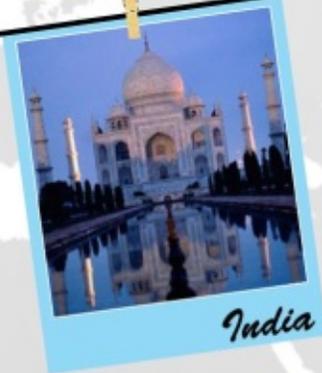
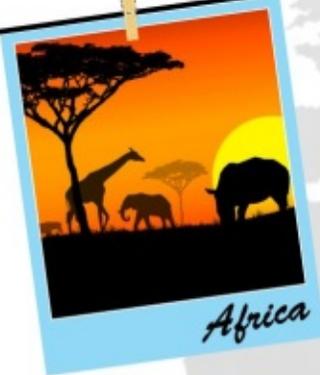
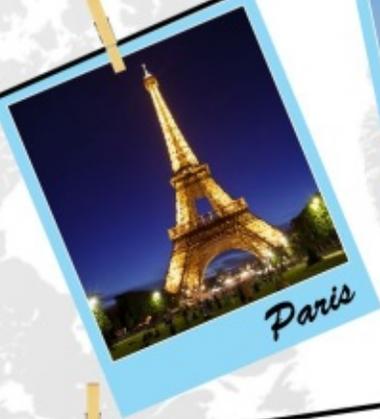


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