



## Featured interview with **JULIETTE LOSARDO** Exhibition Director at WTM London

**How has the World Travel Market (WTM) evolved over the past four decades in terms of the number of exhibitors, trade visitors, and countries participating? What are the key milestones that have contributed to its growth?**

World Travel Market brings together the global leisure travel community; providing inspiration, education, sourcing, and benchmarking for travel professionals seeking to build unique & competitive world-class travel experiences. The World Travel Market started in 1980 and in that time has grown exponentially. From its beginnings at Olympia London, to its move to Earls Court in 1992, to the launch of its Responsible Tourism programming in 1994, and onto its current home, ExCel London, in 2002. Now, over 20 years later, the show sees representation from over 3500 exhibitors worldwide, attendance of over 40,000 visitors from 184 countries and is known as the most influential travel gathering in the world.

World Travel Market's heart lies in its community. With relationships that span the globe and partnerships many years deep, WTM are proud to have worked with some of the best organisations in the world such as United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and Cable News Network (CNN). In addition to this, WTM truly believes in producing an event which guides the B2B travel sector in navigating change. These very beliefs and relationships underpin our success.

**WTM is described as the most influential gathering of travel professionals globally. What factors contribute to its influence?**

World Travel Market's heart lies in its community. Its relationships span the globe and we're proud to be supported by some of the most credible organisations in the world. The network and relationships are the key components that contribute to this success. – many of these made over decades. We are home for the travel industry and invest heavily in creating an event that delivers what B2B travel professionals need to do their jobs better.

WTM is home to the largest gathering of tourism ministers globally and is party to some of the most incredible stories and strategies at the highest level. WTM believes that travel has the power to change the world - and attendees to WTM have the power to change travel.

**The event emphasises the importance of networking. How would WTM London provide opportunities for attendees to network and build relationships?**

Every year WTM prides itself on providing the very best opportunities for attendees to network and build relationships. After in-depth customer research carried out late last year, WTM has announced a host of developments to improve the attendee experience and ensure that every member of the travel community extracts as much value from the event as possible.

This year, WTM London will open its doors earlier than usual – ready to welcome visitors from 09:30 am providing an additional hour for visitors and exhibitors to have impromptu meetings.

Visitors are invited to make use of the new, open-for-all Community Hubs right in the centre of the show. Attendees can look forward to an 'everyone's welcome'



Networking Party that will take place within ExCel London on its first day, Monday 6th November from 5:30 pm-7:30 pm. WTM Connect Me – the show's meeting booking platform – will return in 2023 and is available for Buyers, VIPs and Media to pre-schedule those all-important meetings. All attendees will have access to the official app, which returns this year with exciting new enhancements. For the first time, the Discover Stage will have a new layout enabling attendees to network at tables during sessions.

**What is the role of WTM London in supporting new entrants in the travel industry? What resources or programs are available to help them make a name for themselves in the travel world?**

For more than 15 years, WTM London has been bringing a range of inspirational speakers to the stage, from senior leaders to rising stars, to inspire and inform with career advice and hints and tips for success. WTM London helps unite our audience around an exciting vision for the industry, re-framing travel and tourism positively for people who currently work within it and giving newcomers a sense of purpose and shared identity.

WTM London 2023 will welcome all kinds of students during the three-day show and partners once again with ITT – Institute of Travel and Tourism, which educates employers on connecting and supporting students. The institute also aims to raise and maintain professional standards in the travel industry through continued personal development and training of individuals.

**With the ever-changing travel and tourism landscape, how does WTM stay updated with emerging trends and destinations?**

Every year WTM conducts research into the changing landscape of travel, and this enables us to keep our finger on the pulse. We work closely with experts across the world to ensure we have fresh information being fed into our strategies on an ongoing basis. WTM also has a dedicated Conference Team that

works closely with the Media and Association partners across the sector as well as dedicated experts on specific subject matter.

**How would WTM London cater to the unique needs and interests of the travel industry?**

Following the loss of 62 million jobs in travel in 2020, WTM prioritised investment in visitor intelligence in 2022 to ensure it understood the needs of a new travel world. This visitor intelligence project gave huge insight into how the B2B sector had adapted and changed in a post-pandemic world. With this data, WTM has been able to develop its event strategies to continually meet the needs of its attendees. This has resulted in changes and evolutions to the way the conference is developed and has led investment decisions for the coming years.

**What is your opinion on the growth potential that Maldives and Sri Lanka can gain through WTM London?**

There's a tremendous opportunity for further growth for the Maldives and Sri Lanka with WTM London, as the show attracts visitors interested in the variety of products both destinations offer. Sustainability is a crucial topic for all within the industry, and it's good to see Maldives and Sri Lanka actively adopt a sustainable approach to the products they offer. This will give them an advantage over the buyers that attend the show, leading to potential further growth.

**As the Exhibition Director at WTM London, your role is crucial to the event's success. What key challenges have you faced in managing the circumstances, and how have you overcome them?**

I joined the World Travel Market at the beginning of 2022, as it was emerging from the pandemic, so it would be fair to say that recovery was my biggest focus and challenge. However, as we watched consumers return to travel with a boom, many of our loyal exhibitors and visitors were also fast to get in



touch. Those loyal attendees to World Travel Market knew our events could play a pivotal role in getting the sector back to business.

What is so incredible, is that WTM enables more meetings in three days than some people might otherwise have in a full year – so, it really is a great place to kick start recovery. Aside from that, the most crucial thing in running any business is understanding the needs of your customers. My responsibility is to deliver value for all our major stakeholders. Value is what underpins every decision made at WTM. With that in mind, it wasn't a case of recovering in the same way as before, it was about rebuilding the foundations to futureproof the business, and ensure it was aligned with what its customers needed.

