



Welcome Letters



General Information



Sponsors



Event Schedule



Education Sessions



Speaker Bios



Attendee List



Power Hour Profiles



Maps



Welcome from the IITA Chaiman:

Welcome to the IITA Summit right here in Memphis! We're excited to have you all with us, and before we dive into this incredible event, we'd like to take a moment to acknowledge and thank those who've made this Summit possible.

A big shout-out to Memphis Tourism for their unwavering support in bringing us the fantastic opening and closing events, as well as those unforgettable sightseeing tours. Memphis Tourism has truly gone above and beyond to ensure you get to experience the best of Memphis during your stay.

Our summit is all about addressing the core pillars of IITA – Inbound Operators, DMOs, and Industry Suppliers. Throughout the Summit, you can expect to deepen your understanding of the challenges and initiatives among Inbound Operators, gain insights from Industry Suppliers adapting to the current environment, and explore the valuable perspectives shared by DMOs nationwide, based on their interactions with partners, stakeholders, and clients.

Now, let's talk about what's at the heart of this conference — our extensive education program. It's here where we focus on education and relationship-building once again. We've invited numerous partners who will share valuable updates, insights, and strategies to help us navigate the ever-changing world of tourism.





But that's not all, don't miss out on the Power Hour Networking Appointments, where you'll have a golden opportunity to connect one-to-one, with more than 30 operator companies, DMOs and Suppliers from across the country. It's your chance to forge valuable relationships and explore exciting business opportunities.

Before we conclude, we must express our heartfelt gratitude to all our amazing sponsors who've made this event possible. Please take the time to connect and show your appreciation for their invaluable support.

The IITA Summit promises to be an enriching and unforgettable experience, and we're excited to have you here in Memphis. Thank you for being part of this event. We can't wait to make lasting memories together.

Enjoy your Summit!



Rafael Villanueva
Summit Chairman
CEO, Travel Nevada





Welcome from Memphis Tourism:

On behalf of the Memphis and Shelby County tourism and hospitality industry, we extend a warm welcome to the 2024 International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) team and delegates. We are thrilled to have you here in the Home of Blues, Soul & Rock 'n' Roll.

Memphis is a city known for its rich cultural heritage, soulful music, delicious cuisine, and warm hospitality. As the IITA Summit kicks off, we know our innovative and diverse destination will provide a backdrop for successful collaborations and meaningful connections.

During your stay, we encourage you to explore the iconic Beale Street, a historic hub that resonates with the rhythms of the blues, showcasing the heart and soul of Memphis music. Or indulge in our culinary scene that includes our world-renowned





Memphis BBQ. From savory ribs to mouthwatering pulled pork, our barbecue is a true reflection of Memphis's culinary prowess with over 115 restaurants locally specializing in Memphis que.

Memphis takes pride in being a melting pot of creativity, innovation, and tradition. We hope that your time here not only contributes to the progress of your work, but also allows you to experience the essence of our community.

If there's anything you need or if you have any questions about Memphis, feel free to reach out to any member of our Memphis Tourism team. We're here to ensure that your stay is comfortable and enjoyable.

Once again, welcome to Memphis, and we look forward to a successful and enriching collaboration with IITA.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kevin Kane".

Kevin Kane
President/CEO
Memphis Tourism





Renasant Convention Center

255 N. Main Street

Memphis, TN 38103

901.576.1200

Questions during the event?

Contact Kim Fisher, IITA

kim.fisher@inboundtravel.org

+1.678.772.5051

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Credentials

All attendees will be issued a badge, and it must be worn to all sessions/events.

Dietary/Special Needs

Attendees that indicated special dietary restrictions will receive a voucher that must be presented to wait staff during food functions in order to receive customized meals. Please advise IITA staff right away if you did not receive a voucher.

Dress Code

Business attire is required during all meetings/sessions on Monday and Wednesday. Casual attire is appropriate for Sunday, Tuesday and all evening events.

Emergencies

If a serious health issue arises, please call 911. Promptly notify the front desk and contact Kim Fisher, IITA at **678.772.5051**. If an issue arises while in attendance at an off-site event, event staff should be notified.





Summit Updates

You'll find changes/updates on the [IITA 2024 Summit Updates page](#). Updates may include schedule changes, session cancellations, attendee cancellations, etc.

Spouse/Significant Other Participation

Those registered, are invited to participate in the evening events. Breakfasts, meetings and luncheons are not included in the spouse registration.

Sustainability

Attendees are encouraged to use the water bottles that have been provided for your daily water consumption, place recyclables in the bins available and to reuse towels/sheets, etc. Share your sustainability best practices during the Summit.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





IITA Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Chairman

Peter van Berkel, *Travalco*

Vice Chair

Lena Ross, *America 4 You*

Secretary

Richard Groesz, *American Ring Travel*

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Makiko Matsuda Healy, *New York City Tourism + Conventions*

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Sandi Lackey, *BWH Hotels*

DMO

Mindy Shea, *Visit Savannah*

At-Large

Letizia Sirtori, *Washington CVB/Destination DC*





At-Large

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Advisory Council

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IITA Advisory Council

Quintin Blair, *Blair Hotels*

Grey Brennan, *Alabama Tourism*

Lorna Davis, *Travel Oregon*

Hubertus Funke, *San Francisco Travel Association*

Sandi Lackey, *BWH Hotels*

Evelyn Lopez-Kelley, *St. Augustine/Ponte Vedra & the Beaches CVB*

Paul Mason, *Visit Lauderdale*

Makiko Matsuda-Healy, *New York City Tourism + Conventions*

IITA Staff

Kim Fisher, COO

Julie Heizer, *Ambassador*

Beth Meeks, *Member Engagement Associate*

Lisa Simon, *CEO / Executive Director*





Event Information and Transportation Schedule

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11

Welcome Reception

Super Bowl Party

at Sheraton Hotel, Magnolia Room (Lobby Level)

Sponsored by Travel Nevada

4-5 PM: Catch up with your friends/peers.

5 PM - END: The Super Bowl will be aired until the winner is declared. Food and drink will be available for purchase.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12

Opening Event

YOU MUST WEAR YOUR BADGE

at Memphis Pyramid

Sponsored by Memphis Tourism

6:45 - 9 PM: Shuttle service to/from the Pyramid for the Opening Event. (Buses will be at the corner of Main and Exchange Streets by the Sheraton Hotel.)

7 - 9 PM: Enjoy great food/drink/fun hosted by Memphis Tourism while visiting one of the most dynamic and immersive retail experiences in the world. Bass Pro Shop is more than a store; it's an adventure! In addition to an incredible assortment of fishing, boating, hunting and outdoor gear, the mega store includes a 103-room hotel with treehouse cabins ([Big Cypress Lodge](#)); 600,000 gallons of water teeming with over 1,800 fish; a cypress swamp with alligator pools and duck aviaries; and a breathtaking observation deck at the top of the 32-story steel pyramid.





TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13

Sightseeing Tours

YOU MUST HAVE YOUR SIGHTSEEING TICKET

Sponsored by Memphis Tourism

12:30 - 5 PM: Shuttles for all three tours will depart from the corner of Main and Exchange Streets by the Sheraton Hotel. All tours will return by 5 pm. Box lunches will be served on the shuttles.

While the tours are full, you can check in at the Memphis Tourism booth to have your name added to the Wait List.



PHOTO CREDIT: Andrea Zucker





WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!

Closing Event

YOU MUST WEAR YOUR BADGE

Old Dominick Distillery

*Sponsored by Memphis Tourism and
Tennessee Department of Tourist Development*

6:45 - 9:30 PM: Shuttles will depart from the corner of Main and Exchange Streets by the Sheraton Hotel.

7 - 9:30 PM: Put on your dancing shoes and prepare to dance the night away. You will enjoy some fantastic Memphis food and drink at Old Dominick's Distillery. Rumor has it there may be a tasting involved! There is also a surprise musician/performer that will blow you away!





Thank you to our Summit 2024 Sponsors!

IITA is proud to partner with so many leaders in international inbound travel. Click on a sponsor logo to learn more about them.

HOST CITY:



TITLE SPONSOR:



PLATINUM SPONSORS:



SALT LAKE



Event Sponsors



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BRONZE SPONSORS:





Sunday, February 11

10 AM - 4 PM: Registration

Lower Level Foyer

Sponsored by Colorado Tourism Office

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM: Board Lunch

Lower Level Boardroom

12:30 - 4 PM: Board of Directors Meeting

Lower Level Boardroom

2 PM: Mississippi Pre-Tour Arrives

Sponsored by Visit Mississippi, Visit Clarksdale and Tupelo

4 - 5 PM: Welcome Reception

Sheraton Hotel, Magnolia Room

Sponsored by Travel Nevada

5 PM - END: Super Bowl Party

Sheraton Hotel, Magnolia Room

Food and beverages will be available for purchase.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Monday, February 12

7 AM - 5 PM: Registration

Lower Lobby Foyer

Sponsored by Colorado Tourism Office

8 - 8:45 AM: Inbound Operator Breakfast

Ballroom 4

Sponsored by Visit YOLO, California

9 - 10:30 AM: Annual Meeting/ General Sessions

Ballrooms 9-10

Sponsored by Visit Savannah

IITA Annual Meeting

U.S. Government Updates

10:30 - 10:45 AM: Break

Sponsored by Louisiana Office of Tourism

10:45 - 11:15 AM: Brand USA: International Tourism Outlook

Ballrooms 9-10

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM: Navigating Tomorrow: USA's Roadmap in the Face of Disruption





12:30 - 1:30 PM: Luncheon

Ballrooms 1-3

Sponsored by Alabama Tourism

1:45 - 2:45 PM: Power Hour Networking - Group 1

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by Mall of America

1:45 - 2:45 PM: Breakout Session: Are you “international ready?” Build Your Inbound Tourism from Soup to Nuts

Ballrooms 9-10

2:45- 3 PM: Break

3 - 4 PM: Power Hour Networking - Group 2

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by Mall of America

3 - 4 PM: Breakout Session: How to Leverage U.S. Embassies and Consulates to Target and Amplify Your Marketing Efforts

Ballrooms 9-10





4:15 - 5:15 PM: Power Hour Networking - Group 3

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by [Mall of America](#)

4:15 - 5:15 PM: Breakout Session: Join the Billionaires Club: Navigating Emerging and Re-emerging International Markets with Billions of Potential Travelers

Ballrooms 9-10

5:15 - 6:15 PM: Wine Reception

Lower Level Foyer, Registration Area

Sponsored by [Travel Oregon](#)

6:45 - 9 PM: Shuttle Service

Memphis Pyramid

7 - 9 PM: Memphis Tourism Opening Event

Memphis Pyramid

Sponsored by [Memphis Tourism](#)

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Tuesday, February 13

7:30 AM - NOON: Registration

Lower Lobby Foyer

Sponsored by Colorado Tourism Office

8 - 8:45 AM: All Member Breakfast

Ballrooms 1-3

Sponsored by Washington DC/Destination DC

9 - 10:45 AM: DMO/Supplier Forum

Ballrooms 9-10

9 - 10:45 AM: Inbound Operator Forum

Ballroom 5

Sponsored by Visit Savannah

10:45 - 11:15 AM: Break

11:15 AM - 12:15 PM: Inbound Operator/ DMO/Tour Supplier Forum

Ballrooms 9-10

12:30 - 5 PM: Sightseeing/City Tours

Shuttles for all three tours will depart from the corner of Main and Exchange Streets by the Sheraton Hotel.

All tours will return by 5 pm. Box lunches will be served on the shuttles.

Sponsored by Memphis Tourism





Wednesday, February 14

8 - 8:45 AM: Inbound Operator Breakfast

Ballroom 4

Sponsored by Tupelo Convention and Visitors Bureau

9 AM - 9:50 AM: General Session: Global Perspectives: Insights from Inbound Operators

Ballrooms 9-10

Sponsored by BWH Hotels

9:50 - 10 AM: Break

10 - 11 AM: Breakouts:

Sponsored by BWH Hotels

Inclusion is Sustainability: Building Meaningful Travel That Benefits All

Ballroom 5

AI for Business: How this New Tool Can Be Used for Good, Not Evil

Ballrooms 9-10

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





11:15 AM - 12:15 PM: Breakouts:

Sponsored by [BWH Hotels](#)

Aligning Stars: A Dialogue Between Inbound Tour Operators and Hotel Revenue Managers

Ballroom 5

AI in the Travel Space

Ballrooms 9-10

12:30 - 1:30: Luncheon

Ballrooms 1-3

Sponsored by [Visit Salt Lake](#) and [IPW](#)

1:45 - 2:45 PM: Power Hour Networking - Group 1

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by [Circle Wisconsin](#)

1:45 - 2:45 PM: Breakout Session: Join the Billionaires Club: Navigating Emerging and Re-emerging International Markets with Billions of Potential Travelers

Ballroom 9-10

Sponsored by [BWH Hotels](#)





2:45 - 3 PM: Break

3 - 4 PM: Power Hour Networking - Group 2

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by [Circle Wisconsin](#)

**3 - 4 PM: Breakout Session:
Are you “international ready?” Build Your
Inbound Tourism from Soup to Nuts**

Ballrooms 9-10

Sponsored by [BWH Hotels](#)

**4:15 - 5:15 PM: Power Hour Networking -
Group 3**

Ballrooms 6-8

Sponsored by [Circle Wisconsin](#)

**4:15 - 5:15 PM: Breakout Session:
How to Leverage U.S. Embassies and
Consulates to Target and Amplify Your
Marketing Efforts**

Ballroom 9-10

Sponsored by [BWH Hotels](#)

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





6:45 - 9:30 PM: Shuttle Service

Old Dominick Distillery

**7 - 9:30 PM: Closing Reception/
Dinner/Dance**

Old Dominick Distillery

*Sponsored by Memphis Tourism and
Tennessee Department of Tourist Development*

Thursday, February 15

10 AM: Nashville Post-Tour Departure

Hilton - Ridge Lake Blvd.

Sponsored by Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





IITA Annual Meeting

MON 9 - 10:30 AM

Presenters: [Rafael Villaneuva](#), *IITA Summit Chairman & CEO, Travel Nevada*; [Peter van Berkel](#), *IITA Chairman & President, Travalco*; [Lisa Simon](#), *CEO / Executive Director, IITA*

Join IITA leadership to hear an update on association business, Board of Directors election and 2024 priorities.

U.S. Government Updates: National Travel and Tourism Strategy, Visa Processing and the Entry Experience

Featuring: [Brian Beall](#), *Director, National Travel and Tourism Office, International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce*; [Brian McNerney](#), *Director, Visa Services, Bureau for Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State*; [Michael Neibert](#), *Area Port Director for the Area Port of Memphis, TN*

Hear from U.S. Government leaders of the National Travel and Tourism Office, Customs and Border Protection, and the Visa Services Office for updates on the National Travel and Tourism Strategy, including specific market programs for 2024-25, and progress in Visa processing and entry procedures for international visitors. Prepare your questions for an interactive discussion.





Brand USA: International Tourism Outlook

MON 10:45 - 11:15 AM

Featuring: [Chris Thompson](#), *President and CEO of Brand USA*

Having played a pivotal role in promoting the United States as a premier travel destination, Chris Thompson has led Brand USA to achieve remarkable milestones, including increased international visitation, and enhanced global awareness of the diverse offerings across the country. Set to retire in May, Thompson will share his strategic vision for positioning the USA as a global leader in international travel.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Navigating Tomorrow: USA's Roadmap in the Face of Disruption

MON 11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Featuring: [Fred Dixon](#), *President and CEO, New York City Tourism + Conventions*

Panelists: [Hubertus Funke](#), *Executive Vice President & Chief Tourism Officer, San Francisco Travel Association*; [Tony Lyle](#), *Executive Director, Visit Galveston*; [John Percy](#), *President and CEO, Destination Niagara USA*

Inbound tourism is undergoing transformative change, accelerated by the pandemic – reduction in air travel routes, uneven market recovery, loss of international experience, changes in the workforce/place and technology advancements, including AI. Today's travel professionals must embrace disruption and be prepared to adapt. Hear from DMO leaders from across the country on how the U.S. will remain competitive in the face of disruption.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Are you “international ready?” Build Your Inbound Tourism from Soup to Nuts

MON 1:45 - 2:45 PM

Facilitator: [Jennifer Ackerson](#), *President, Alon Tourism Solutions*; [Florian Herrmann](#), *CEO, Herrmann Global*

From marketing plans to measuring ROI, learn how to work with the travel trade to create demand and build a measurable campaign targeting markets best suited for your destination and experiences. A combination of IITA's International Inbound Steps to Success training and Herrmann Global's data-based campaign strategy, you'll learn smart marketing strategies where data intelligence and masterful techniques in working with the travel trade yield a successful destination tourism plan!

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





How to Leverage U.S. Embassies and Consulates to Target and Amplify Your Marketing Efforts

MON 3 - 4 PM

Speakers: [Karen Ballard](#), *Global Travel & Tourism Team Lead U.S. Commercial Service, International Trade Administration*; [Nancy Richardson](#), *Senior Tourism Marketing Specialist at Idaho Department of Commerce – Tourism Development*

Karen Ballard, Global Team Leader with the U.S. Commercial Service (USCS), was once a customer of this division of the U.S. Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration, when she worked for Idaho Tourism. Karen later became a Foreign Commercial Service Officer working in the Las Vegas office before serving in the U.S. Consulate in Sydney and then the U.S. Embassy in Argentina. She's learned how our diplomatic missions tick and knows how to support clients like you in those markets. Travel destinations and companies can find assistance locally in more than 100 U.S. Commercial Service offices nationwide and in more than 70 international offices-but how best to use these resources? When she became Tourism Director of Idaho, Karen hired Nancy Richardson to take over her international inbound portfolio, and the two will tag team in this session to demonstrate how you can work with USCS to reach multiple markets and maximize your inbound marketing dollars.





Join the Billionaires Club: Navigating Emerging and Re-emerging International Markets with Billions of Potential Travelers **MON 4:15 - 5:15 PM**

Moderator: [Karen Ballard](#), *Global Travel & Tourism Team Lead, U.S. Commercial Service, International Trade Administration*

Panelists: [Brian Beall](#), *Director, National Travel & Tourism Office, U.S. Department of Commerce;* [Makiko Matsuda Healy](#), *Senior Vice President of Tourism Market Development, New York City Tourism + Conventions;* [Carl Vaz](#), *Chairman & CEO, Charson Advisory Services Pvt Ltd and President – SKAL International India.*

In a world of constant change and evolving post-pandemic global dynamics, the landscape of international travel is continually shaped by emerging and re-emerging markets. Explore the latest trends and indicators pointing towards the rise of new travel markets and those that are making a comeback, and understand the factors contributing to their growth.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





General Session: Global Perspectives: Insights from Inbound Operators **WED 9 - 9:50 AM**

Moderator: [Jackie Ennis](#), Vice President of Global Markets, Brand USA

Panelists: [Annie Bittencourt Correa](#), CEO, Aloha of America and OnStage Academy;
[Umang Malbari](#), President, Discover Destinations;
[Peter van Berkel](#), President, Travalco & IITA Chairman

Join this distinguished panel of Inbound Operators for an enlightening discussion on the trends, challenges, and opportunities shaping the inbound travel landscape, with firsthand insights from experts from key source markets. From technology reshaping the distribution landscape to demands for sustainable travel products and best practices to the cultural nuances of different markets.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





AI for Business: How This New Tool Can Be Used for Good, Not Evil

WED 10 - 11 AM

Speaker: [Tim Hines](#), *Speaker/Author/Podcast Host, Marketing Starter Group, LLC*

The robots are coming – take your jobs or make them better? The dramatic rise of AI has nearly every tourism marketer both excited and concerned about the future. This presentation will dive deep into what AI marketing is, where it's heading, and how you can capitalize on this new technology. It will also cover key tactics and tools that you can get started with right away that will make AI work for you, not against you.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





AI in the Travel Space

WED 11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Moderator: [Tim Hines](#), *Speaker/Author/Podcast Host, Marketing Starter Group, LLC*

Panelists: [Alexa Berube](#), *Co-founder, Reposite*;
[Dan Flores](#), *Vice President of Sales, Satisfi Labs*;
[Kyle Zelazny](#), *Attorney, Ment Law Group*

In a rapidly evolving travel landscape, Artificial Intelligence (AI) stands as a game-changer, revolutionizing how we plan, experience, and manage travel. This session will dive into the latest innovations, applications, and strategies for effectively integrating AI in your tourism business, as well as key questions around AI ethics and legal considerations. You'll gain a better understanding of the transformative power of AI in the travel and tourism industry.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Inclusion is Sustainability: Building Meaningful Travel That Benefits All

WED 10 - 11 AM

Moderator: [Greg Takehara](#), CEO, Tourism Cares

Panelists: [Karin M. Aaron](#), President/CEO, New Green Book for Travel; [Kristy Durso](#), Owner, Incredible Memories Travel and co-founder, Spectrum of Accessibility; [Sherry Rupert](#), CEO, AIANTA – American Indian Alaska Native Travel Association; [Roni Weiss](#), Executive Director, Travel Unity

International travel has the power to inspire positive change; embracing inclusion becomes a cornerstone for sustainable tourism. This seminar is an invitation to explore the intersection of inclusivity and sustainability in the travel industry. Join us for a thought-provoking session where industry leaders and advocates delve into how building meaningful, inclusive travel experiences not only benefits individuals but contributes to the long-term sustainability of destinations.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Aligning Stars: A Dialogue Between Inbound Tour Operators and Hotel Revenue Managers

WED 11:15 AM - 12:15 PM

Moderator: [Nick Hentschel](#), COO,
AmericanTours International

Panelists: [Shanon Jones](#), Manager, Revenue for Hire Programs|Revenue Management Services, BWH Hotels; [Anthony Bautista](#), VP of Revenue Management and Operations, Bonotel Exclusive Hotels

Unlock the secrets to a harmonious collaboration between Inbound Operators and Hotel Revenue Managers in this insightful panel discussion. As essential components of the travel ecosystem, the synergy between inbound operators and hotels is crucial for providing seamless and exceptional experiences for the travel trade and ultimately the international travelers. Join our expert panel as they navigate the challenges, share success stories, and uncover strategies for optimizing partnerships that benefit both sectors.

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Join the Billionaires Club: Navigating Emerging and Re-emerging International Markets with Billions of Potential Travelers **WED 1:45 - 2:45 PM**

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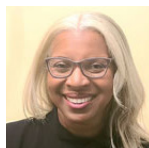
How to Leverage U.S. Embassies and Consulates to Target and Amplify Your Marketing Efforts

WED 4:15 - 5:15 PM

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Karin Aaron

Karin Aaron is President/CEO, of The Green Book Experience is a 38-year veteran in the hospitality and tourism industry. After starting her career in the airline industry, Karin spent the next 15 years in hotel management at Hilton Hotels and Resorts, Hyatt Regency and The Ritz Carlton Hotel brand. Karin is an experienced destination marketing professional having worked in several leadership positions at Visit Loudoun, (Virginia) and Visit Montgomery (Maryland) before being hired as the President and CEO at the Greater Newark Convention and Visitors Bureau.

In 2021, Karin was poised to lead a new initiative, The Green Book Experience, an online digital search engine inspired by the historic Green Book from 1938. Karin is responsible for the strategic direction of the organization to include staff oversight, financial performance, short/long range planning, advocacy and branding.

Karin is a recognized thought leader and currently holds certifications as a Certified Tourism Ambassador (CTA), Sports Tourism Strategist (STS), Executive Education - Hospitality & Tourism Certification from Florida Atlantic University, Certificate in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) and pending Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) from Destinations International. Karin is also managing partner at KKD Tourism Advisors, LLP.





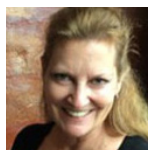
Jennifer Ackerson

Jennifer Ackerson, President of Alon Tourism Solutions is a 25+ year veteran of the tourism industry with deep experience in all tourism supplier verticals. She is an expert in educating and connecting tourism destinations and suppliers with travel trade resellers to build successful relationships that drive profits and sustained success.

Jen spearheads Alon's tourism training program "Steps to Success" in partnership with International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) and the "Tourism Ready" training program for New York City Tourism + Conventions, the official DMO of NYC. The impact and contribution of Jennifer's work is significant in the tourism industry as she delivers custom solutions for tourism businesses and destinations to achieve their tourism goals and build long lasting relationships.

[Check for Schedule
& Event Updates](#)





Karen Ballard

Karen Ballard heads up the Global Team for Travel and Tourism for the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service as a Lead International Trade Specialist, working closely with the National Travel and Tourism Office. Both the Commercial Service and NTTO are part of the International Trade Administration of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Prior to returning to the U.S. Field in May 2021, Karen was the Commercial Attaché to Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. Before Buenos Aires, Karen was posted to Sydney, Australia where she looked after the Travel and Tourism portfolio. Karen joined the Commercial Service in May 2014 and was assigned to the Las Vegas Export Assistance Center where she also focused on travel and tourism.

Before joining the Commercial Service, Karen worked for the Idaho Department of Commerce, first as an International Tourism Trade Specialist and then as the Administrator of the Idaho State Tourism office. Karen served as chair of the Western States Tourism Policy Council working closely with BrandUSA, U.S. Travel Association and many federal agencies including the U.S. Department of Commerce.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Anthony Bautista

Anthony Bautista, the accomplished Vice President of Revenue Management and Operations at Bonotel Exclusive Travel, has been steering the revenue management department since 2017. His extensive journey within Bonotel includes notable roles such as the Director of Revenue Management and Sourcing, Manager of Data and Analytics, and Business Development in Emerging Markets.

A graduate of UNLV with a degree in Business Management and a minor in Finance, Anthony brings over a decade of invaluable experience to the travel and hospitality sector. His proven track record in optimizing revenue strategies has been a cornerstone of Bonotel's success since his arrival in 2015. Anthony's dynamic leadership and innovative approach have rightfully established him as a key influencer in the travel and hospitality industry. Prior to joining Bonotel, he contributed significantly to hotel operations at Green Valley Ranch Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada, laying the groundwork for his impactful career in the field.

Anthony currently resides in Las Vegas with his wife and two children.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





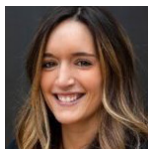
Brian Beall

Brian Beall is the Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) in the International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce where he leads a team working to enhance the international competitiveness of the U.S. travel and tourism industry and maintain America's status as a top destination for international visitors. He is returning to NTTO following his tenure there as Deputy Director for Policy from 2014-2019.

Brian has many years of private and public sector experience in travel, tourism, and public policy. Most recently, he was VP of Government Affairs at Cruise Lines International Association where he led strategic programs to achieve positive public policy outcomes to support the growth of the cruise industry. In addition to his previous time in NTTO, Brian held several other positions in the International Trade Administration, including Senior Advisor to the Deputy Director General of the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service, and Senior International Trade Specialist in the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary. He also worked on Capitol Hill as a Legislative Fellow in the U.S. Senate focused specifically on travel and tourism policy issues, and as an analyst at the U.S. Federal Trade Commission.

Brian earned his B.A. in Business Administration from Truman State University and his Master of Tourism Administration with a concentration in tourism policy development from The George Washington University.





Alexa Berube

Alexa Berube is one of the co-founders of Reposite, an AI powered marketplace, connecting group meeting and event planners and suppliers, with built-in productivity tools to streamline workflows and maximize efficiency. Alexa continues to lead Reposite to new heights and provide value to its members by educating and sharing her wealth of knowledge of the travel and events industry.

Her expertise in scaling sales organizations, building cutting edge technology and fostering partnerships between planners and suppliers has helped modernize the industry bringing thousands of businesses around the world online to Reposite. The Forbes 30 under 30 powerhouse is passionate about building a community of members that are equipped with Reposite's cutting-edge tools and resources to grow their business.

**Check for Schedule
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Annie Bittencourt Correa

Annie Marie, CEO of Aloha of America and OnStage Academy, is a seasoned entrepreneur with more than 18 years of experience in the events industry

in the United States. Originating from Brazil, Annie embarked on her entrepreneurial journey independently and has successfully established herself as the proud proprietor of two thriving agencies. Through Aloha of America and OnStage Academy, Annie has not only demonstrated a commitment to delivering unparalleled experiences but has also garnered a reputation as a respected figure in the events industry.

Aloha has emerged as a benchmark in event planning, renowned for its ability to tailor executions to meet clients' unique needs. In the course of Aloha's evolution, Annie, along with a nurtured talent from Aloha, Jessica Nardulli, co-founded OnStage Academy. This Destination Management Company (DMC) focuses on specialized training and content, operating across the United States and beyond. Reflecting the cultural ethos established in Aloha, Annie and Jessica have fostered a program at OnStage that defies convention, combining insights from speakers with extensive experience at Disney World, Universal, and academia. By incorporating practical training and site visits to partners who align with the client's objectives, OnStage Academy enhances the overall experience, providing a rich and practical knowledge base.





Fred Dixon

Fred Dixon is President and CEO of New York City Tourism + Conventions, New York City's official destination marketing organization. He joined the organization in 2005 as Vice President, Tourism and became CEO in 2014. With more than 30 years of experience in the travel industry, Dixon has the overall responsibility for developing and implementing New York City's tourism, meetings and events strategy and programming to grow business and leisure travel from across the U.S. and from around the world.

He has built a sales and marketing team that is at the core of the organization's strategy to increase visitation and economic impact across the City. In 2019, New York City welcomed a record 66.6 million visitors, which generated \$72 Billion in economic impact and powered more than 400,000 jobs across the five boroughs.

Dixon built a global network of 17 global outposts that more than doubled international visitation to 13.5 million by the end of 2019. In 2020 during the early months of the Pandemic, Dixon organized the Coalition for NYC Hospitality and Tourism Recovery which brought industry leaders together to begin planning a path back.

Dixon holds positions on travel industry association boards and committees including the New York Convention Center Operating Corporation Board and U.S. Travel Association where he serves as Vice Chair of the Board, Co-Chair of the Meetings Mean Business Coalition and member of the IPW Planning Committee.





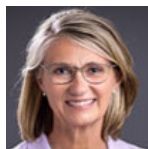
Kristy Durso

Kristy Durso is the founder and owner of Incredible Memories Travel, an agency focused on providing world-class travel experiences specially crafted to provide a lifetime of memories. She is co-founder and author of the award-winning Spectrum of Accessibility training program, teaching on mobility, hearing, visual, cognitive/intellectual, and invisible disabilities, as well as neurodivergencies and dietary accessibility. In addition to being an entrepreneur, she is a requested speaker and accessibility consultant, a recognized expert on accessible travel, and sits on multiple advisory boards throughout the travel industry.

An Army veteran, Air Force Wife, and bio- and adoptive mother, Kristy encourages those around her to live a full and engaging life, regardless of the obstacles in their path.

[Check for Schedule
& Event Updates](#)





Jackie Ennis

Jackie Ennis is Vice President, Global Trade Development for Brand USA, the nation's destination marketing organization with the mission of

increasing international visitation to the United States, fueling the nation's economy and enhancing the image of the USA worldwide. In this role, Jackie leads Brand USA's trade engagement and marketing efforts, manages Brand USA's global offices, and continues to effectively work to optimize trade and consumer reach around the world.

Jackie joined Brand USA in August of 2018 as senior director, global trade development after working as a consultant with the organization's global trade team and became instrumental in strategic development of trade initiatives. Jackie was previously responsible for the international marketing strategy for the Massachusetts Office of Travel and Tourism. She also was the executive director for Discover New England, where she developed the successful business-to-business international marketplace which is considered one of the most valuable business opportunities for the New England hospitality industry in marketing the region to international travelers.

**Check for Schedule
& Event Updates**





Dan Flores

Daniel Flores, the Vice President of Sales and Head of Tourism at Satisfi Labs, brings over 18 years of expertise in the leisure, travel, and tourism industry. At Satisfi Labs, a leader in Conversational AI for tourism, entertainment, and sports, Dan plays a pivotal role in utilizing AI-powered platforms to enhance customer engagement. These platforms use advanced technologies like natural language processing and machine learning to provide real-time, personalized customer service. Under his leadership, Satisfi Labs has made significant strides in scaling customer service operations and generating valuable customer insights.

Dan's professional journey includes a significant contribution to the growth of Maverick Airlines and Mustang Helicopters at Maverick Helicopters. His involvement in various industry boards and recognition as one of the "40 under 40" in Las Vegas in 2017 highlight his influence in the tourism sector. Daniel Flores is a key figure in driving innovation and customer experience at Satisfi Labs.

**Check for Schedule
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Hubertus Funke

Hubertus Funke is the Executive Vice President & Chief Tourism Officer and is responsible for promoting San Francisco as a leisure destination and the premier gateway to North America through the development and execution of an integrated tourism strategy for key international markets. He oversees a network of global agencies, creates multi-channel, integrated marketing campaigns and cooperative promotions with travel trade, airlines and other distribution partners, as well as vertical direct-to-consumer initiatives with the goal of raising global awareness for the gateway, generating economic impact and increasing international arrivals into San Francisco.

Hubertus joined San Francisco Travel in 2007. His background in the international tourism arena spans more than 25 years in both Europe and the U.S. He worked at TUI Group, where he led the commercial business unit for hotel and airline contracting, as well distribution and revenue management for all leisure destinations in Spain, Portugal and Southern France. He has also held leadership roles with large U.S. inbound tour operators, both in New York City and San Francisco.

He currently serves on Visit California's International Marketing Committee, U.S. Travel's IPW Advisory Committee, as well as on the boards for IITA and the San Francisco/Kiel Sister City Committee.





Makiko Matsuda Healy

As Senior Vice President of Tourism Market Development for New York City Tourism + Conventions, Makiko Matsuda Healy has the overall responsibility for strengthening New York City's position as a premier travel destination in new, emerging, developing, and specialty markets, with a primary focus on product distribution channels and strategic trade partnerships. She held a key role in the company's global network expansion and strategized growth in markets such as Brazil, China, India, and Muslim Travel. She is particularly passionate about the development of inclusive travel for people with disabilities.

Ms. Healy actively participates in national-level tourism development efforts, working closely with Brand USA, US Travel Association, and the network of US Commercial Services throughout the world, as well as trade associations such as International Inbound Travel Association (IITA), and the Japanese Travel Industry Association (JTIA) where she serves as a board member. She also serves as an advisory board member of Travel Ability which promotes accessible travel for people with disabilities. She has been an active participant of the annual Sino-U.S. Tourism Leaders Summits, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, and Brand USA. Ms. Healy received the Moves Power Women award in 2022, and the Travel Industry Sales & Marketing Executive of the Year award by the Hospitality Sales and Marketing Association International (HSMAI) in 2009.





Julie Heizer

Julie Heizer currently serves at IITA's Ambassador having recently retired from the U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) in 2023 as Deputy Director of the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO). In that role, she was responsible for industry outreach, partnerships and strategic alliances. Julie served as the department's liaison to Brand USA and managed all federal components of the Travel Promotion Act, including oversight of Brand USA's \$100 million matching funds submissions and their government compliance with the Travel Promotion Act.

From 1997 until 2003, she was Director, and then Vice President, of Tourism for Destination DC. In this capacity, she was responsible for domestic and international tourism development and sales programs, and the organization's consumer inquiry and fulfillment programs.

Prior to her work for Destination DC, Julie served as Assistant Director of Development for the Maryland Office of Tourism Development; Manager of Private Sector Marketing for the United States Travel and Tourism Administration, a former agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce and predecessor to NTTO; Executive Director of the Virginia Peninsula Tourism and Conference Bureau; and she was the first Executive Director of the Montgomery County, Maryland Convention and Visitors Bureau. Her career in the travel industry began 40+ years ago at the U.S. Travel Association, where she worked in the marketing, membership and national councils' departments.





Nick Hentschel

Nick Hentschel is the Chief Operating Officer at AmericanTours International, LLC (ATI), where he is responsible for developing and implementing overall corporate strategy, with a focus on distribution and investment in technology. Nick served on the United States Travel and Tourism Advisory Board during the Obama Administration, advising the U.S. Secretary of Commerce on important issues facing the travel industry.

Founded in 1977, ATI has been a leader in the North American inbound travel industry for over forty years. Our philosophy has always been “innovation, not duplication.” Operating tour and travel products and services across all of North America, ATI develops specialized solutions to deliver product from more than 30,000 accommodation, attraction, and transportation supplier partners to customers worldwide.

**Check for Schedule
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Florian Herrmann

Florian Herrmann is the CEO and founder of Herrmann Global, a strategic tourism marketing firm headquartered in the Rocky Mountains with offices in the US and Europe. His vision for the travel industry is simple: Utilizing innovative technology to connect destinations and attractions with a passionate and responsible global travel audience. Together with his global team, he has built the social platforms Visit USA Parks and Untraveled to inspire millions of global travelers about destinations that are lesser known. His expertise in the travel trade industry is significant. His first job after high school was a traineeship at a travel agency in Germany organizing sightseeing trips all around the world. Since then, his focus has always been on collaboration among industry stakeholders and how trade can build a better future for sustainable tourism.

Florian holds a Master's in Business and Sustainable Destination Management from George Washington University and is currently an active member of the World Travel Tourism Council to help making global travel a better fit for the world.

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Tim Hines

Tim Hines is a global keynote speaker and business coach who helps travel industry professionals accelerate their growth by guiding them to be more collaborative, innovative, and influential. He's the author of the book, *The Marketing Starter: How an Entrepreneurial Spirit Will Make You a More Savvy Marketer* and he also hosts *The Marketing Starter Podcast*.

For nearly 20 years, Tim has been teaching individuals, teams, and audiences around the world how to use an entrepreneurial mindset to elevate their brands and themselves and has worked with companies like AmTrav, Dialpad, Tribune Media, Ticketmaster, and the CIA. Fun fact; he's also a licensed minister and has married many couples.

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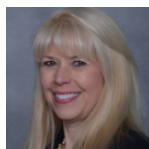


Shanon Jones

Shanon is a hospitality veteran with more than 23 years of experience in the industry. She earned a B.S. in Hotel and Restaurant Management from Northern Arizona University and started her career with Marriott International as a Housekeeping Manager. From there she went on to work for Omni Hotels and Resorts, Expedia, Amadeus Hospitality (formerly known as TravelClick) and has been with Best Western Hotels and Resorts for the last 10 years. Her specialty is revenue management where she has spent the last 18 years. She most recently manages a team of 10 revenue managers and under her direction has created an onboarding and training program that has helped with recruiting and retention of revenue managers.

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Sandi Lackey

Since 2005 Sandi Lackey has been a pivotal figure at BWH Hotels, assuming diverse responsibilities ranging from developing partnerships and formulating strategies to driving revenue, managing distribution connectivity partners, conducting analytical research, and engaging in marketing initiatives. Her role extends further to promoting and educating clients on brand awareness.

In 2018, Sandi's contributions were instrumental in establishing BWH Hotels' first two leisure and corporate (Bleisure) accounts, resulting in substantial growth. During the same year, she joined the Global Managed Distribution department under the leadership of Matt Teixeira.

In 2023, BWH Hotels promoted her to Associate Director, Worldwide Sales. In this role, she has taken on additional responsibilities managing the North America leisure group team and overseeing various programs within the managed distribution department.

Sandi is an alumna of North Central College in Naperville, IL, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Business Management with a minor in Psychology. With a wealth of experience as a seasonal professional in the travel industry, she dedicated 14 years to a Tour Operator before joining BWH Hotels. She played a crucial role in marketing, product development, and product building and pricing, contributing to brands such as Hyatt Vacations, Globetrotters Caribbean, and Amtrak Vacations.





Tony Lyle

With more than 30 years in the tourism industry, Tony Lyle is a seasoned professional, currently serving as the Executive Director of Visit Galveston.

Formerly the Chief Marketing Officer for Visit Lake Tahoe, Tony is renowned for his transformative approach to destination marketing. His commitment extends beyond professional roles; he actively volunteers to further industry interests. Tony excels in building loyalty, retention, and revenue by infusing hospitality into every interaction. His visionary mindset creates brand storytellers and Brand Ambassadors—turning satisfied customers into enthusiastic advocates.

Beyond his professional achievements, Tony holds a Bachelor of Education with Honors in Outdoor and Science Education from Liverpool John Moores University in England. This unique educational background enriches his contributions to the tourism industry, adding depth to his approach.

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Umang Malbari

Umang Malbari, born in India in 1985, is a captivating entrepreneur whose journey from a modest background to the helm of a successful company exemplifies the American dream. In 1992, Umang's family made the courageous decision to relocate to the United States. Umang's pursuit of knowledge and passion for business led him to Georgia State University, where he studied Business Administration. Armed with a solid foundation in business principles and a deep understanding of the global marketplace, Umang was poised for a career that would leave a lasting impact.

In 2010, Umang seized the opportunity to turn his passion for travel into reality by founding Discover Destinations LLC. As the Chief Executive Officer, he has been the driving force behind the company's remarkable success. His business acumen, coupled with a keen understanding of the travel market, has propelled Discover Destinations LLC to new heights, establishing it as a leading player in the industry.

Discover Destinations LLC, under Umang's astute leadership, rapidly gained recognition for its innovative approach to travel, offering unique and personalized experiences to clients. The company's success is a testament to his strategic vision, dedication, and commitment to delivering exceptional service.





Helen Marano

Helen Marano is Senior Vice President of Longwoods International, a highly acclaimed market research firm dedicated to insights on US travel trends, image research and resident sentiment perspectives among other arenas. She serves as a brand ambassador and consultant for their efforts.

In her role as Executive Vice President of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), Helen formed the External Affairs Department. This enhanced her role as Senior Vice President of the Government and Industry Affairs Department which she developed for WTTC.

Helen's active leadership in the travel and tourism industry is derived particularly from having led the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) of the United States for more than a decade and a half. During her tenure, the NTTO was the leader in industry relations between government and every sector of travel and tourism in the country. Her leadership in creating collaborations led to a series of important accomplishments which included opening up Chinese group travel for the USA, and having a lead role with industry in the formation of the Brand USA Corporation for marketing the USA.

Helen was honored in 2020 with a Lifetime Achievement Award from Women In Travel and Tourism International. In 2019, The International Institute of Peace Through Tourism presented Helen with the *Celebrating Her Award* for building global alliances that promote Tourism as a force for good.





Brian G. McInerney

Brian McInerney joined the State Department in 2002. Currently, he is the Director of Field Operations in the Visa Office at the Bureau of Consular Affairs at State. His other domestic posts were as Director of the Information Management and Liaison Office in the Visa Office, a Senior Watch Officer at the State Department Operations Center, and the Deputy Director of Orientation and Coordinator for all incoming Foreign Service Officers, respectively. Brian's previous positions abroad were Consular General at the U.S. Embassy Baghdad, Nonimmigrant Visa Chief in Ciudad Juarez, Consular Chief in Cape Town, Consular Officer in Santo Domingo, and Consular and Political Officer in Dublin.

Brian was born in Indiana and is ethnic Chicagoan, but now calls Reston, VA, home. He attended undergrad at Xavier University and law school at DePaul College of Law. He is married to Jessica and has three sons.

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Michael Neibert

Michael began his career with CBP in 2007 at Miami International Airport where he worked diligently to protect American agriculture. In 2010, he transitioned to a CBP Officer position working in immigration and baggage control at one of the world's busiest international airports. In 2012, he participated in the Alliance to Combat Transnational Threats as an outbound enforcement officer.

In 2014, he was promoted to Chief CBP Officer at the Calexico Port of Entry where he oversaw day to day operations while continuing to develop young leaders. He also participated in a nationwide initiative as a subject matter expert on the use of automated passport control kiosks.

In 2017, Neibert was promoted to Port Director for the Presidio Port of Entry during an unprecedented period of immigration and border security challenges. He also provided oversight on the Boquillas International Crossing.

In 2019, Neibert was promoted to his current assignment as Area Port Director for the Area Port of Memphis. In this role, he continues his commitment to combat terrorism and illicit trade while facilitating legitimate trade and travel.

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John Percy

John Percy is President and CEO of Destination Niagara USA, the official Destination Marketing Organization for Niagara Falls USA, a position that he has held since 2006. Previously, Mr. Percy served as Vice President of Sales and Marketing for the organization. Other prior experience includes Vice President of Tourism for the Niagara Falls Convention and Visitors Bureau and fifteen years in shopping center marketing and management in both Western New York and Detroit, Michigan.

In addition to serving on the US Travel Association Board of Directors, Mr. Percy also serves on the Board of Directors for the American Bus Association (ABA), Board of Governors for the ABA Foundation, Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce, the Niagara Falls National Heritage Area, and Community Missions of the Niagara Frontier.

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Kurt Rausch

Kurt Rausch is Chief of the National Park Service (NPS) Commercial Services Program. He is responsible for overseeing development and implementation of national policy and programs for approximately 500 concession contracts, 6,000 commercial use authorizations and more than one hundred leases providing visitor services in national parks. These range from large multi-service lodging resorts to back-country guides and bus tour operators. Prior to joining the NPS eleven years ago, Mr. Rausch worked for more than twenty years with management, environmental, health and safety consulting firms providing program development and support for various federal agencies, states, local communities and industries. Mr. Rausch has a BS in Environmental Policy from Cook College, Rutgers University and certificates in Executive Management and Strategic Leadership in Hospitality Management from Cornell University. Kurt is married and has two adult children. Kurt is an avid sailor and hiker and loves all things outdoors.

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Nancy Richardson

Nancy Richardson was the Senior International Tourism Specialist for the state of Idaho for more than 15 years.

She has been working in the tourism industry in Boise, ID since 1989. She has been a tour guide, owner/manager, and a director of sales with positions with the Boise CVB, Boise Tours and Shuttle Service, and Hyatt hotels.

Nancy has served on a variety of boards in her community including Preservation Idaho, the Idaho Shakespeare Festival, and the Boise City Arts Commission – Events and Performing Arts Committee.

She has a BS degree from Northern Montana College in Secondary Education – History and Social Science. Her passion for Idaho history and tourism has led her to fulfill her career dreams.

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Sherry Rupert

AIANTA CEO Sherry L. Rupert (Paiute/Washoe) has nearly two decades of executive-level experience managing and promoting Native American tourism.

As CEO of the only national association dedicated to indigenous tourism, she is the leading voice in advocating for travel and tourism as a significant economic driver in tribal nations. She also holds leadership positions on various national boards.

Under her leadership, she has launched the Economic Impact of U.S. Indigenous Tourism Businesses, the first study of its kind. She also curates a robust educational program for tribes and indigenous-owned hospitality enterprises. Prior to assuming the role of CEO, she served as President of AIANTA's Board of Directors. During that time, she was instrumental in working with Congress to pass the Native American Tourism and Improving Visitor Experience (NATIVE) Act.

Sherry previously served as the Executive Director of the State of Nevada Indian Commission, reporting directly to the Governor of Nevada to serve as a liaison to the state's 28 tribes, bands and colonies and served as the Chairperson on Nevada's Indian Territory, Nevada Commission on Tourism.

Sherry holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a Finance Major from the University of Nevada, Reno and has completed professional training courses and programs to support her work in advancing cultural tourism in the United States.





Mindy Shea

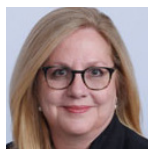
Mindy Shea, Director, International Sales for Visit Savannah, hails from Charlotte, NC, and has been in the hospitality and tourism industry for nearly 30 years. After 10 years in the television industry, she spent the next 12 years in luxury hotel sales, working with top accounts at 4- and 5-star properties.

In 2006 she joined Visit Savannah as their Group Tour Manager, working primarily with their domestic motorcoach industry. Shortly after coming on board, she started working to help bring Savannah into the international spotlight. For the first 16 years she worked with both the domestic and international markets. At the beginning of 2022 her focus turned exclusively to the organization's international efforts, being promoted to the Director of International Sales. Over the past 17 years she's worked hard to strengthen the partnerships with Georgia's state tourism office, US-based receptive operators, as well as international tour operators in Savannah's key source markets.

Her main goal for the future? Showcase Savannah as the world-class destination it has become!

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Lisa Simon

Lisa Simon currently serves as the Executive Director of the International Inbound Travel Association, the only trade association focused solely on international inbound travel to the United States. With her 30-years of experience in the travel industry specializing in association management, strategic planning, and tourism market development, she has spoken on global and domestic travel industry trends throughout the United States and around the world.

Simon is also the principal of The Simon Connection, LLC, specializing in association management, strategic planning, and tourism market development. She has spoken on global and domestic travel industry trends throughout the United States and around the world.

Previously, Lisa served as the president of NTA (National Tour Association). During Lisa's tenure with NTA, she expanded NTA's international presence, including working with the U.S. Department of Commerce and the China National Tourism Administration to open the U.S. as a preferred destination for Chinese travelers. NTA was the only association that volunteered to work with the two governments to register and approve U.S. tour operators to work with the China market.

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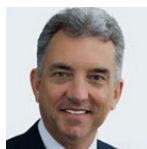
Greg Takehara

Greg has been the CEO of Tourism Cares since 2019. He previously served on its Board, acting as its Chairman before becoming CEO. Prior to Tourism Cares, Greg was the President of Trip Mate, Inc., a travel insurance administrator, and prior to Trip Mate, he was the Senior Vice President of Aon Affinity Travel Practice. He began his 35-year career in the travel and tourism industry at The Mark Travel Corporation, where he served as General Counsel.

Greg is a founding member of the Future of Tourism Coalition, a coalition of six global non-governmental organizations that have come together to stand united in an appeal for change. He serves on the Board of the US Travel Association and has served on the Boards of NTA and the IGLTA Foundation, as well as numerous industry committees. He is from Chicago and has an undergraduate degree from the University of Wisconsin – Madison and a Juris Doctor degree from Washington University in St. Louis.

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Chris L. Thompson

Christopher Thompson is President and CEO of Brand USA, the nation's public-private partnership dedicated to increasing international visitation to the

United States. Chris is responsible for accelerating the organization's efforts to increase U.S. travel exports, create jobs, strengthen the economy, and help enhance the image of the U.S. with people all over the world. Under Chris' leadership, Brand USA has nearly tripled its partnership network and more than doubled its partner contributions and program offerings.

Chris has more than 40 years of experience. Prior to joining Brand USA in 2012, Chris was president and CEO of Visit Florida. Under his leadership, Florida realized record growth in international visitation.

He began his career in tourism with the Division of Tourism in the former Florida Department of Commerce in 1983 and became bureau chief for domestic tourism in 1986. In 1988, he joined the Leon County (Florida) Tourist Development Council as the organization's first executive director, and in 1991, became president and CEO of the Tallahassee (Florida) Area Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Chris has been honored with a number of industry awards and recognized for numerous accomplishments and was the first recipient of Skål International's USA National Tourism Leadership Award in 2018.





Peter van Berkel

Peter van Berkel is President of Travalco, a full range Inbound Operator and DMC headquartered in South Florida. Already during his studies in the Netherlands he was active in the travel trade, both as a Tour Director for a US Company conducting group tours all over Europe and by doing expansion feasibility assessments for a chain of retail agencies.

After his studies he joined Go Florida in 1985 at its inception (renamed to Travalco in 1992) and the company has been fully owner-operated ever since. Travalco is a pure B2B Inbound Tour Operator and DMC with high standards and uses innovative product creation and technical tools to meet the rapidly changing demands of the inbound markets. The company has been consistently trusted by major hotel companies as a partner that contributes to a mutual interest. On the client side the company has enjoyed award-winning partnerships for more than 30 years with leading tour operators in various markets.

Peter has long been an advocate for inbound industry topics like rate integrity and effective distribution and creation methods of travel products for the international markets. Since the 1990s, he has been an active board member of the International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) and one of its predecessors, the International Travel Services Association. Today, he serves as Chairman of IITA, the leading association representing international inbound tour operators, and the industry at large.





Carl Vaz

Carl Vaz is the Chairman and CEO of Charson Advisory Services, in Mumbai, India, which is an in-depth market research, public and media relations firm providing successfully tested and cost-effective marketing strategies to National Tourism Organizations (NTO) of various countries and private sector organizations from the international and domestic travel and tourism industry.

Charson Advisory Services Pvt Ltd is the Indian subcontinent's leading brand management, tourist board representation, and advertising / marketing communications consultancy firm focusing exclusively on the aviation, hospitality, and tourism industry. Charson Advisory Services' clients over a 15-year period have included some of the world's prestigious Government bodies such as Destination Canada, Tourism Council of Bhutan, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing, and Turismo de Portugal, to name a few.

With more than 140 awards and citations; Carl Vaz has been recognized by the travel trade industry, media houses and educational institutions. Additionally, Carl has served as President for Skal International Bombay for two terms.

Carl was the recipient of several awards from Skal International: Skal Order of Merit 2021; Skalleague of the Year 2022; and Certificate of Appreciation for his contribution as Co-Chair of the Subcommittee on Anti-Human Trafficking in 2023.





Rafael Villanueva

After a rewarding and successful 22-year career with the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority (LVCVA), Rafael Villanueva

formed Beyond Global Solutions, a tourism marketing consultant company that specializes in the development of strategic domestic and international inbound marketing programs and event management. While at the LVCVA he developed their international vision and strategy that included recruiting, contracting, and managing international representations offices in more than 15 countries.

Prior to joining the LVCVA, Mr. Villanueva served as Executive Director of Advertising and Public Relations at the Tropicana Resort and Casino. His career also included working for some of the top advertising agencies in the state of Nevada. Clients included hotel-casinos, banks, and homebuilders. Additionally, he worked for KLAS-TV (Las Vegas' CBS affiliate) as sales promotion director.

Born in Mexico, Villanueva has spent all but one year of his life in Las Vegas. He is proud of his work International Inbound Travel Association (IITA) that included the rebranding of the organization.

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Roni Weiss

Roni Weiss is the Executive Director of Travel Unity, a nonprofit focused on making the world of travel welcoming to people of all backgrounds and identities.

Born in New York and raised in Washington State, Roni received his AAS with Honors at the age of 12. He graduated from high school at 15 and received double Bachelor's in Drama and English at the age of 18.

At Travel Unity, Roni has led the curation of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) standards for Travel & Tourism and the management of multiple individual DEI certification programs. Through the Travel Unity Alliance, Roni helps connect organizations serious about applied DEI to one another and to resources to further their work to become more inclusive.

Roni has visited 70+ countries, including every country in Europe, and six of seven continents. He lives in Pleasantville, NY with his partner, Lauren, and their four children.

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Kyle Zelazny

Kyle practices in the areas of travel law, law enforcement representation, corporate and business matters, worker's compensation, and all aspects of commercial real estate transactions, including development, leasing (including office, retail and industrial leasing), financing, title, survey and environmental matters, the sale and disposition of commercial properties and general transactional due diligence.

He received his B.A. from Boston College and his J.D. from the University of Connecticut School of Law. Kyle is civic-minded and enjoys volunteering at the Simon Foundation, and is actively engaged in local community groups and boards. He enjoys rooting for the New York Yankees and New York Jets alongside his king shepherd, Zeus. He currently lives in West Hartford, Connecticut.

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Maps



MUSIC ATTRACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 K-10 Beale Street Entertainment District 1 J-11 The Blues Foundation's Blues Hall of Fame 1 J-10 Center for Southern Folklore 1 K-10 Memphis Music Hall of Fame 1 K-11 Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum 1 L-12 Slave Museum of American God Music 1 L-10 Sun Studio 1 K-10 W.O. Handy Home & Museum 	ATTRACTIONS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 J-10 Beale Street Landing 1 J-10 Equality Trailblazers Memorial 1 K-9 Fire Museum of Memphis 1 K-8 The Fishbowl at the Pyramid 1 K-11 I AM A MAN Plaza 1 K-8 Main Street Trolley 1 J-11 Memphis Escape Rooms - Downtown 1 J-10 Memphis Riverboats, Inc. 1 K-10 The Peabody Ducks 	MUSEUMS & GALLERIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 K-8 Ducks Unlimited Waterfowl Heritage Center 1 J-10 Bell Museum of Asian and Japanese Art 1 J-10 The Cotton Museum at the Memphis Cotton Exchange 1 L-10 The Motor Museum 1 L-10 Memphis Museum of Science & History (Museum of Science & History) 1 L-10 Mural Museum 1 J-11 National Civil Rights Museum 1 K-8 Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum (Bunkle Estate) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 K-8/9 St. Jude Children's Research Hospital (ALAC Pavilion) 1 J-11 Overlook Contemporary 1 K-11 Wilkins Collection Museum & Gallery 1 L-10 Winchell Fountain House Museum 	SPORTS & RECREATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 K-8 Bass Pro Shops at the Pyramid 1 J-9 Big River Crossing 1 J-9 Kayak Memphis 1 K-10 Memphis 901 FC 1 K-11 Memphis Grizzlies 1 K-10 Memphis Redbirds 1 J-9 Mud Island Marine 	BREWERS & DISTILLERS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 C-3 Blue Note Bourbon 1 J-13 Ghost River Brewing Co. Tap Room Downtown 1 L-10 High Cotton Brewing Co. 1 J-11 WISEARC Brewing Downtown 1 J-11 Old Dominion Distillery LLC 1 K-11 Ghost River Brewing Co. Tap Room Beale Street
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