

Media Information

Sharing economy and digitalization take centre stage at the 4th World Tourism Forum Lucerne

The 4th World Tourism Forum Lucerne has closed in an air of optimism at the end of the two-day event in the central Swiss city, attended by some 450 participants from the international travel and tourism industry. The overriding opinion among participants – the sharing economy, dynamic digitalization and ever increasing technology remain the mega trends within the global tourism sector.

Lucerne, 24 April 2015 – This year's 4th World Tourism Forum Lucerne again attracted top decision makers as well as up-and-coming tourism industry talents and elite students. During a packed two-day programme, participants debated selected topics and the changes and challenges facing global tourism. Reto Wittwer – chairman of the Forum's international advisory board and former CEO Kempinski Hotels & Resorts – commented: "This year's World Tourism Forum Lucerne again provided positive proof that we offer the perfect platform for the interactive exchange of ideas and opinions within small select groups, above and beyond non-operative aspects. With such specialized themes as sustainable business models, innovation concepts and digitalization, we clearly succeeded in creating an ideal agenda."

In his welcome address, Swiss Economics Minister Johann Schneider-Ammann called on the Swiss tourism industry to combat the effects of the strong Swiss Franc by strengthening cooperation and improving innovation. Kevin Roberts – Executive Chairman Saatchi & Saatchi and one of the world's leading advertising specialists – said of the currency situation: "Switzerland's future tourism strategy should focus first and foremost on the country's hospitality, independent of currency fluctuations. Real hospitality is invaluable."

Eminent international speakers also included the Azerbaijan Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism, Nazim Samadov, whose country was this year the first to participate in the Forum as a guest nation; and Her Majesty the Queen Mother Sangay Choden Wangchuck of Bhutan. Both spoke of the tourism sector situation in their respective countries.

Another high-profile speaker was American sociologist and researcher Jeremy Rifkin who made this urgent appeal to the Forum's participants from 65 countries: "The international tourism industry must develop its own roadmap if it is to face up to the changes and challenges resulting from the sharing economy, digitalization and technological trends."

His comments were shared indirectly by the Forum's 30-member Think Tank, which met on the eve of the event. VisitBritain Chairman Christopher Rodrigues summed up the Think Tank's finding in these words: "It is time for our industry, international bodies and service providers to stop talking about sustainable strategies – and to take concrete steps instead. It is time we all faced up more to our responsibilities."

Professor Martin Barth, General Manager of the Forum, commented: "Our industry grew globally in 2014 by some 4% – a clear sign that tourism continues to offer younger generation talents professional perspectives and opportunities. As in previous years, the 4th World Tourism Forum has provided clear proof of this promising potential." This year's Forum saw the presentation of the Young Talent Award to three tourism students from Australia, Austria and Switzerland.

GUEST COUNTRY:



World Tourism Forum Lucerne

The WTFL is an interdisciplinary professional platform which offers decision-makers in business, politics, science and finance an overview of current topics and trends in the global tourism industry. It is the only international platform enabling leading decision makers and emerging young talents in the industry to interact under the "Next Generation" designation. The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is supported by an international Advisory Board under the chairmanship of Reto Wittwer (former CEO Kempinski Hotels & Resorts). The next World Tourism Forum Lucerne will take place on 4 and 5 May 2017. Further information: www.wtflucerne.org

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