



MEET THE TEAM BEHIND THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL WOMEN IN TRAVEL & TOURISM FORUM



To register for the International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum,
please visit www.iwttf.com.

5 December 2019 – From becoming a United Nations Special Ambassador for Tourism as the First Lady of Iceland, to lobbying the Moroccan government, to leading inclusion for the UK's most popular cruise brands, these experiences have helped shape the female founding partners of the first [International Women In Travel & Tourism Forum](http://www.iwttf.com), taking place at the Radisson Blu Saga Hotel in Reykjavik in Iceland on 23-24 January 2020.

The inaugural Forum came into being after Alessandra Alonso, founder of [Women in Travel \(CIC\)](http://www.womenintravel.com), chaired a World Travel Market 2018 panel debate celebrating the 100th anniversary of Women's suffrage. Sitting on the panel alongside Alessandra were the three additional innovators behind the Forum: Eliza Reid, the First Lady of Iceland; Zina Bencheikh, the Regional General Manager for Europe, Middle East and North Africa at PEAK DMC; and Jo Phillips, Chief People Officer at Carnival UK. A key issue discussed during the panel was the need to encourage those in the travel industry to better articulate their vision of a gender-inclusive industry. As a result, and with additional support from Promote Iceland, the first International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum was developed and those who attend the Forum will have the chance to meet with these senior leaders.

Eliza Reid is the First Lady of Iceland and was named a United Nations Special Ambassador for Tourism and the Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. During her keynote address at the Forum, delegates will hear Eliza's views on the unique challenges women in tourism face plus the importance of recognising women's contributions on all levels and how that is reflected in Iceland. Eliza is also a patron of several organisations in Iceland, including the United Nations Association Iceland. Eliza will be joined by senior representatives from Promote Iceland, including Director Inga Hlín Pálsdóttir, who will share her learnings and experiences of how women have played a major role in the success of Icelandic tourism.

Zina Bencheikh's passion for travel started very early when, at the age of just one, her parents decided to move from Marrakech to Canada. After moving back to Morocco and then to France and the UK, Zina joined PEAK DMC in 2010 and is now the Regional General Manager for Europe, Middle East and North Africa. In 2018, Zina decided to take on the Moroccan Ministry of Tourism to alter their attitudes



about women working in the travel industry and as a result of her lobbying, the Ministry started issuing new tour guide permits to women for the first time in a decade.

Joining Zina will be Jo Phillips, Chief People Officer at Carnival UK. Jo leads on the company's approach to inclusion amongst other matters and this has meant that during the past two years, Carnival UK has been driving an assertive agenda around its culture, in an endeavor to become truly purpose-led and shape an environment where everyone feels valued and that they belong. Speaking about the Forum, Jo said: "Carnival UK is really excited about being part of the first International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum. It's going to be a great opportunity to do some collective thinking around how we can unblock access for diverse talent to thrive in our industry."

Alongside Eliza, Zina and Jo, the Forum was developed by Alessandra Alonso, a trailblazer and women's champion in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector who has continually worked to support women's advancement in the industry. In 2017, Alessandra founded the social enterprise Women in Travel (CIC), which is dedicated to empowering women through employability and entrepreneurship in the travel industry. This November, Alessandra was named as one of the UK's top 100 women in social enterprise and impact investment by the WISE100, which is produced by NatWest Social & Community Capital.

Alongside meeting with the Forum's founders, those who attend in January will have the chance to attend a full day of talks and mentoring sessions led by other international travel and tourism leaders, entrepreneurs and changemakers. Attendance is limited to 60 industry chiefs and 60 next-generation female professionals from across the globe who are passionate about tackling gender imbalance in the workplace and sharing, learning, challenging and furthering their understanding of diversity and inclusion. Those interested are urged to register their interest as soon as possible as there are just a few remaining spaces left. Register here: www.iwttf.com/registration/.

Forum attendees will also have the opportunity to explore Iceland during a complimentary women-focused sightseeing [day tour on 25th or 26th January 2020 from PEAK DMC](#). Each tour will have a maximum of fifteen participants and be accompanied by a local female tour leader from PEAK DMC. There are now just a few remaining spaces on the complimentary day tours, so delegates are encouraged to register for the Forum as soon as possible.

Speaking about the forthcoming Forum, Alessandra Alonso, the Founder of Women in Travel (CIC), concluded: "I am proud to be working alongside a group of senior female leaders from the travel industry for the inaugural International Women in Travel and Tourism Forum. There are now just a few weeks remaining until the event so travel industry professions keen to meet with us and discuss how we can tackle gender imbalance in the workplace are encouraged to register their attendance as soon as possible, as spaces are limited."

ENDS



There are now just a few remaining delegate spaces at the inaugural International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum so to register as attending, please visit www.iwttf.com.

To explore event speaker or sponsorship opportunities, please email WIT@gecpr.co.uk

For further information about Women in Travel, visit www.womenintravelcic.com.

NOTE TO EDITORS

Image Captions: (from right to left)

Image 1: Alessandra Alonso, Founder of Women in Travel (CIC).

Image 2: Eliza Reid, the First Lady of Iceland.

Image 3: International Women in Travel & Tourism Forum logo.

Image 4: Zina Bencheikh, Regional General Manager, Europe, Middle East and North Africa at PEAK DMC.

Image 5: Jo Phillips, Chief People Officer at Carnival UK.

About Women in Travel

Women in Travel (CIC) started life as a gender focused platform at World Travel Market flagship event in London, in 2014. Growing successfully from then onwards, in 2017 it was incorporated as a social enterprise dedicated to empowering women through employability and entrepreneurship in Travel Tourism and Hospitality. Its vision is to become a catalyst for sustainability by placing women at the heart of an industry which is inherently attractive to females and growing at a fast pace. It is the brain-child of Alessandra Alonso, who has been recognised as a trail-blazer when it comes to gender diversity in the industry and who has supported women in maximising their opportunity in the travel, tourism and hospitality (TTH) industry for well over a decade, originally through Shine & the Shine Awards. Women in Travel partners with employers to provide the first Women Returners service through which the industry can access a pool of marginalised but often highly skilled women who are eager to get back to work. Women in Travel also runs entrepreneurship focused events, mentoring and networking supporting start up and early stage female entrepreneurs and those wanting to start a business, particularly of BAME background.

For further media information, images or interview opportunities please contact:

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