WiT Africa 2024 Programme

March 15 • Main Stage • Innovation City Cape Town

WiT Main Stage Programme

8:00 AM - 9:00 AM
Checking in & Coffee

9:00 AM - 9:20 AM
Opening & Setting The Stage

Africa's population is going to be 1.72 billion by 2030, seven years from now. That's larger than China, larger than India, and 477 million of those are young people, between 15 and 35. That demographic represents both outbound and inbound opportunities for the rest of the world. Beyond the numbers, what lies under the surface? Let's get started with The Human Revolution.

Stephan Ekbergh
CEO
Travelstart

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

9:20 AM - 9:30 AM
The Mobile Revolution

According to the GSMA 2023 report on "The Mobile Economy Sub-Saharan Africa", there are 489m unique mobile subscribers in 2023, indicating a 43% penetration rate; 287 mobile internet users in 2023, a 25% penetration rate; and the mobile industry has added a $170b in economic value to the sub-Saharan economy in 2023, 8/1% of GDP. How can travel ride on this revolution?

Christian Bombrun
CEO, Digital Platforms
MTN

9:30 AM - 9:50 AM
Coffee Chat: Beneath the Wings of Africa

Since its inception in Dubai in 2016, as part of the Satguru group, Travelwings has expanded across Africa and is now present in 32 countries on the continent. With 80% of its business coming from Africa, it has managed to dig deep into the big local markets of South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. For this founder, "every market here is a local market with deeply local characteristics". Find out why he's so excited about the African opportunity, beneath the numbers.

Interviewer:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Speaker:

Albert Fernando
CEO & Founder
Travelwings

9:50 AM - 10:20 AM
Top Trends Driving Online Travel in Africa

We put the spotlight on leading travel brands who have made their mark in Africa's online travel landscape, and take lessons from how they have evolved, and how they see the future and opportunities for the region.

Moderator:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Panel:

John Friel
Country Manager
Travelstart

Bayo Adedeji
Group CEO
Wakanow

Ross Veitch
CEO & Co-founder
Wego

10:20 AM - 10:40 AM
Coffee Chat: Through The Lens of Booking.com

It's hard to believe but online travel is now nearly 30 years old, and the way it's evolved differs from region to region. And no company has a better global and contextual overview than the world's largest OTA founded in 1996. In this interview, we learn how this travel giant is preparing for the future, and how it intends to balance human smarts with tech power and AI to navigate the path ahead.

Interviewer:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Speaker:

Carlo Olejniczak
VP & Managing Director EMEA
Booking.com

10:40 AM - 11:10 AM
Humans Need A Break

11:10 AM - 11:35 AM
The Heart & Future of Tech & Product

What's getting travel tech leaders excited or perhaps a little terrified of the future? We challenge our clan of travel tech leaders to project into the future and tell us what they see with their human-powered knowledge and experience. Will user interfaces disappear, thanks to AI? Will AI make us less or more human? Will we own our own identity? What will unravel as corporate travel and sustainability converge? How should we prepare for the future?

Ross Veitch
CEO & Co-founder
Wego

Paulina Klotzbucher
CEO & founder
Glyde Payments

Timothy O'Neil-Dunne
Managing Partner
T2Impact

11:35 AM - 12:05 PM
The Future of Payments in Africa

Africa is seeing impressive growth in mobile money and financial services. Quoting Akinwumi Adesina, head of the African Development Bank, "If you look at the number of people using mobile phones in Africa: 650 million. That is larger than the US and Europe together, and when you look at the financial services – whether mobile phone or e-health, insurance, digital payments – a revolution has happened in Africa. You have $701b just from digital payments in the world – 70% of digital payments in the world happening in Africa." How do you ride on this wave to win human hearts?

Moderator:

Paulina Klotzbucher
CEO & Founder
Glyde Payments

Panel:

Mbali Mngomezulu
Manager, Business Development
Mastercard

Otto de Vries
Executive Director
World Travel Agents Associations Alliance

Jonathan Smit
Founder
Payfast

Rahul Jain
Co-founder & CEO
Peach Payments

12:05 PM - 12:35 PM
The Revolution Is In The Air

Africa's aviation market is huge. According to Cirium, in November 2023, there were 76,000 flights comprising 7.7 million seats scheduled within Africa, and there were 324 airports offering 1,586 routes operated by 102 airlines in November 2023. How is the African aviation market shaping up and what are the opportunities ahead as airlines compete in an increasingly turbulent world? What are the different distribution, marketing and technology trends driving this sector?

Moderator:

Stephan Ekbergh
CEO
Travelstart

Panel:

Alessandro Lodigiani
VP Sales, Online, Metasearch & Digital Players
Amadeus

Jonathan Ayache
CEO
LIFT Airline

Liezl Gericke
Head of International (Africa, Middle East & Asia Pacific)
Virgin Atlantic

Louis Van Zyl
Managing Director
Trans-End Africa

12:35 PM - 1:05 PM
The Revolution in Hospitality: From Global To Local

We get different perspectives on the changing hospitality landscape – from a fast-growing global brand that's investing in technology to prepare for the future and from local hospitality players who are empowering hoteliers on the ground. Learn from the customer trends they are seeing and how they are both adapting distribution, marketing and technology strategies for the new age.

Moderator:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Panel:

Mark Flower
Vice President, Commercial Strategy, Premium, Midscale & Economy Division
Accor Hotels Middle East, Africa & Türkiye

Theresa Emerick
Managing Director
NightsBridge

1:05 PM - 2:00 PM
Lunch

2:00 PM - 2:30 PM
Tours, Activities & Transportation

The tours and activities segment, estimated to be worth $250b, is one of the fastest growing segments in the online travel space, with the pandemic accelerating digitisation of tour providers and attractions. Connected to this segment is the vast car rental market – people, after all, have to be able to easily move around while in-destination. We find out the trends driving change in the experiences market in Asia and Africa, and speak to a new car rental startup on the opportunities arising in the car rental segment.

Moderator:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Panel:

Pierre Kleinhans
CEO
Tactivion

Chee Chong Chan
CEO & Co-founder
GlobalTix

Mike McGearty
CEO & Co-founder
Meili Travel Technology

2:30 PM - 2:50 PM
Coffee Chat: New Frontiers in Travel & Beyond

Where others see bad traffic and chaos, this entrepreneur sees opportunities. It was with this thinking that he fearlessly co-founded the first travel metasearch company in China in 2005, Qunar, which is now part of the Trip.com Group. Since his exit, he's been keeping a watchful eye on travel tech investment opportunities – he is an early investor in GetYourGuide, the tours and activities unicorn. Other than venturing into new frontiers in travel, he is also curious about other worlds – he's on the board of SETI Institute (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence). In this one-on-one, we find out how he's thinking about investments and startups, the balance between humans and AI in the future of travel, and beyond.

Interviewer:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Speaker:

Fritz Demopoulos
CEO
Queen's Road Capital, Hong Kong

2:50 PM - 3:20 PM
Spotlight: Nigeria

You couldn't pick a more challenging market than Nigeria to build an online travel business – poor economy for starters, 1.6% credit card penetration for another, currency issues etc, etc – but therein lies the opportunity for those brave enough to take on this country of 221 million, 70% of whom are under the age of 30. Insights into this most dynamic of markets in Africa from a panel of experts.

Moderator:

Zachariah George
Managing Partner
Launch Africa Ventures

Panel:

Bukky Akomolafe
Country Manager
Travelstart, Nigeria

Bastian Gotter
Founder & Investor
Bamba

3:20 PM - 3:50 PM
Humans Need A Break

3:50 PM - 4:20 PM
Luxury & Wellness: Is the Boom Real?

All signs point to increasing interest in far-flung destinations, villa rentals, private jet bookings and personal pilgrimages in 2024. How is this trend playing out in Africa? We speak to the leading players in this ultra-luxury space.

Moderator:

Kieno Kammies
Co-founder
Innovation City Cape Town

Panel:

Pieter Brundyn
Founder
In Residence

Lindy Rousseau
Chief Strategist
Singita Group

Klaus Kallweit
Hotel Manager
Mount Nelson Hotel, Cape Town

4:20 PM - 4:50 PM
The Revolution In Accommodation: Independent Hotels, Alternative Accommodation & Youths

The accommodation sector has undergone major shifts in recent years where it's no longer just about the room. Alternative accommodation is growing fast and furious as well – Booking.com, for example, has 7.2 million listings in this category, from zero 15 years ago, Airbnb is reporting longer stays on its platform, independent hotels are driving change and a whole youth segment is underway to revolutionise the space. Then there's sustainability demands being placed on hospitality players with increased government attention and consumer awareness.

Moderator:

Stephan Ekbergh
CEO
Travelstart

Panel:

Julie Cheetham
Founder / Managing Director
Weeva

Velma Corcoran
Regional Lead, Middle East Africa
Airbnb

Kim Whitaker
Strategy Consultant & Entrepreneur /
Co-founder, Khwela Womxn, Once Travel & Ubuntu Beds

4:50 PM - 5:40 PM
The Revolution in Destination Marketing & Experiences

How are tourism boards and tourism marketers rethinking how they market themselves, the kind of travellers they want and the kind of experiences they want? As travellers become more demanding and discerning, how are they levelling up to face the Traveller Revolution?

Moderator:

Yeoh Siew Hoon
Founder
WiT

Panel:

Tim Harris
Chairman
South Africa Tourism

Farirai Sanyika
Founder & Director
Gophari

Hermina Sennelo
SA Lead
Mauritius Tourism Promotion Authority

Linda Balme
Commercial Manager
Travelstart

5:40 PM
It's A Wrap

6:00 PM - 8:00 PM
Closing Cocktails

Programme correct at time of publishing
All times shown are in Central Africa Time (GMT+2)

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