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An illustration of four stylized figures running across a checkered floor. Each figure is carrying a dark blue suitcase. The figures are rendered in solid colors: one in yellow, one in red, one in light blue, and one in dark blue. The background is a warm orange-red color with white lines forming a grid pattern.

TRAVEL IN
AN AGE OF
PERMANXIETY

Skift.

DEFINING

**THE
FUTURE
OF**

TRAVEL

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Skift Products

SKIFT.COM

Daily news and insights

Skift.com is the daily homepage of the travel industry. Through original reporting and analysis, it's the leading source of intelligence for the industry and its watchers.

SKIFT RESEARCH

Deep industry dives

Skift's Research work is aimed at the strategists, marketers and technologists in travel, providing the latest intelligence on travel trends. We deliver insights through multiple channels:

- Twice monthly reports for individual and enterprise subscribers
- Analyst Sessions for live broadcast and download
- Data Sheets for a closer look at numbers behind stories

SKIFT X

Branded content studio

Skift's in-house content studio redefining the way the travel industry approaches marketing through creative storytelling.

SKIFT PODCAST

Conversations with leaders

Our podcasts explore big events and developments, as well as bring leaders and experts into our studio to discuss emerging trends and compelling industry developments.

SKIFT NEWSLETTERS

Inbox intelligence

Daily and weekly updates on the news the travel industry needs to do its job. In addition to daily emails, we also have sector-specific weekly emails:

- Business of Loyalty
- Corporate Travel Innovation Report
- Meetings Innovation Report
- New Luxury Newsletter

SKIFT FORUM

Thought-leadership events

The Global Forum is an annual creative business gathering in New York City, with carefully curated topics and speakers to inspire the professionals in travel about the business and creative promise of the sector. In 2018 you can attend the following events:

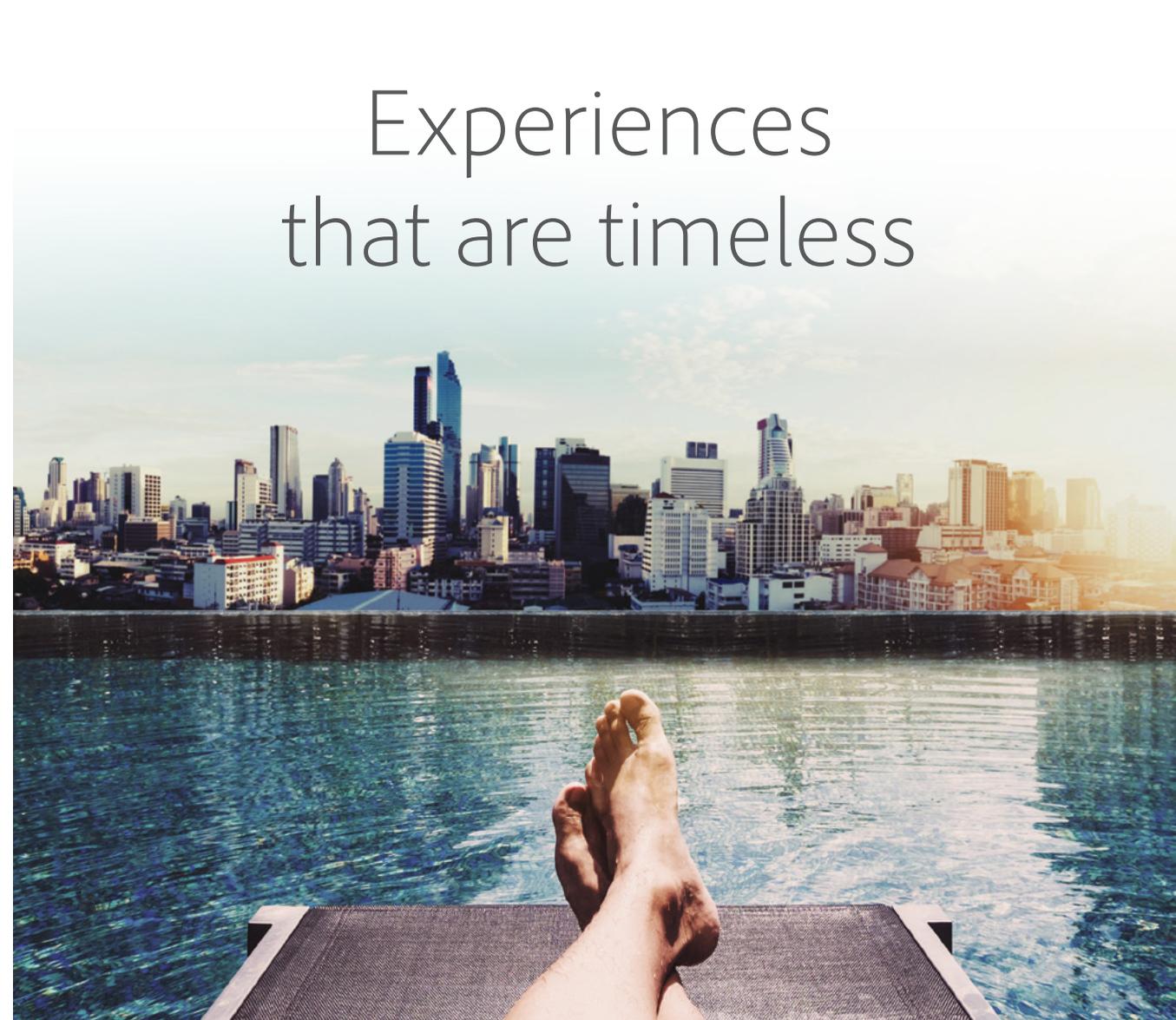
- Skift Forum Europe in Berlin, Germany in April
- Skift Tech Forum in San Francisco, CA in June
- Skift Global Forum in New York, NY in September
- Skift Forum Asia in Singapore in October

SKIFT LENS

Documentary reports

With Skift Lens, we continue our same in-depth coverage of the travel industry but now through the use of documentaries into this storytelling mix. Our first film "Barcelona and the Trials of 21st Century Overtourism" will be followed in 2018 by more.

Experiences that are timeless



Today's travelers expect more than just a booking. To give them that, you need to know every detail about them. But those details are often in silos among internal teams and legacy systems with few insights from second and third parties. With the right solution, you can unify all your data to create complete customer views and personalize experiences even with new channels such as voice-based search.

Stop by our booth to upgrade your experience.

A Note From the CEO

TRAVEL IN AN AGE OF PERMANXIETY



Every fall, to accompany **Skift Global Forum**, we publish a collector's magazine devoted to one big topic. These have focused on larger issues that have an outsized effect on the travel industry and travelers. In 2015, our inaugural Skift Global Forum magazine revolved around the Faultlines of Disruption in the Global Travel Industry, and covered the larger clashes in travel. The next year, our second magazine featured exclusive essays, custom research, and an expert panel to better understand Supertravelers and how tech has changed their habits — and what this means for the future of travel.

This year, we're focusing on a very current and relevant topic, something we're calling the **State of Permanxiety**, a near-constant state of anxiety that exists now around the world. Travelers endure a barrage of worries about terrorism, security, neo-isolationism, racial tension, Trumpism, technology and its adverse role, the widening economic gap, culture wars, climate change, and other geopolitical and local issues. The state of Permanxiety is exacerbated by hyper-connected citizens using social platforms to create a state of permanent frenzy on all of the above issues. "It is difficult to tell where your anxiety disorder ends and where actual news begins," read a recent New York Times essay. Another Times essay puts it in terms of a new sociological condition, "a shared cultural experience that feeds on alarmist CNN graphics and metastasizes through social media."

Permanxiety is also spawning a slew of new industries, services, and gadgets to soothe this collective human condition: meditation apps, meditation retreats, activity trackers and body monitoring devices — seemingly endless variations of them. Not to mention fidget spinners, FOMO (fear of missing out), overcoming FOMO, and Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle brand goop.

What is the travel industry's role here? Travel, as Skift has been saying for several years, is a global crucible for everything. "It is where the largest consumer and tech trends first meet and are quickly tested. Everything converges in travel," we wrote in a manifesto last year. **Travel is where all the Permanxieties show up in a concentrated form.** From the security theater at airports, the cattle-prod state of U.S. airlines, the Trump Muslim travel ban, the laptop ban on select airlines, the high-profile terrorist attacks at tourism landmarks in Western

countries, extreme weather disruptions, and more, travel has become the global crucible for these Permanxieties.

As Michel Dugas, a psychologist at the University of Quebec said in the Times essay, "[F]eelings of anxiety are closely connected to an inability to handle uncertainty. What might make human beings less anxious, it seems, is having a firmer sense of what in the world is happening and what's likely to happen next."

In this age of Permanxiety we are short on both these imperatives. Uncertainty in travel goes hand-in-hand with the increasing state of Permanxiety and travel has to play a bigger role than just putting people on planes and sticking them in hotels.

Travel's promise is an antidote to anxiety and that's how it's marketed to consumers. But is that it? Can travel be disengaged from the world in which it exists? Can and should travel exist in a sensory deprivation cocoon?

What can travel brands do to participate and alleviate travelers' anxieties? What role do brands play in all phases of the travel cycle, from inspiration to research to booking to post-booking to the actual trip?

This magazine explores the intersection of Permanxiety and travel, the role of the travel industry therein, traveler expectations and how to address them, and related issues. We hope it becomes the first in-depth dissection of our new shared sociological reality, a reality reflected in all facets of travel.

RAFAT ALI
FOUNDER & CEO,
SKIFT

Masthead

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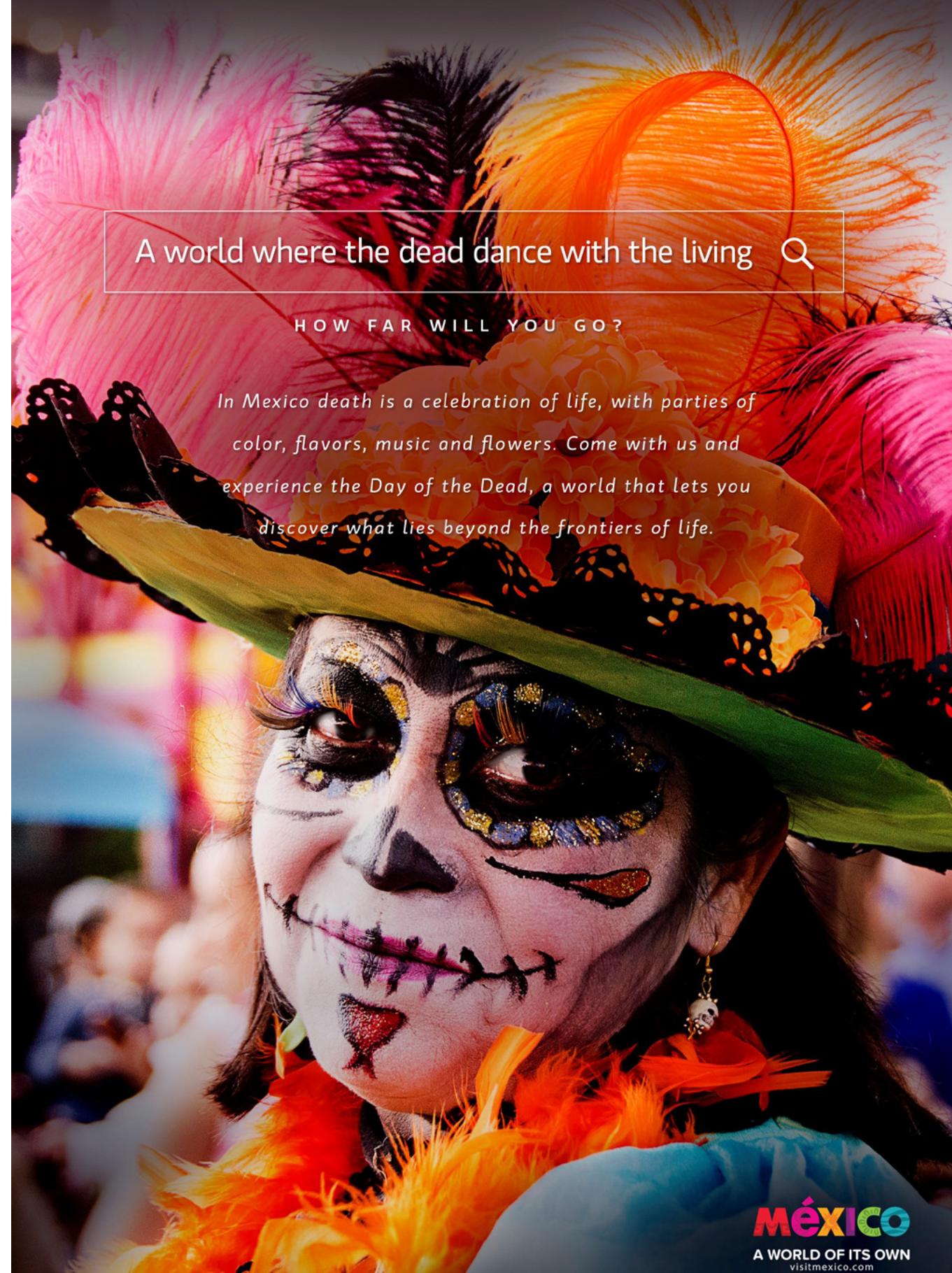
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A world where the dead dance with the living 🔍

HOW FAR WILL YOU GO?

In Mexico death is a celebration of life, with parties of color, flavors, music and flowers. Come with us and experience the Day of the Dead, a world that lets you discover what lies beyond the frontiers of life.

LOOKING AT THE WORLD THROUGH ANXIOUS EYES

SKIFT TAKE

The world has always been a complicated place, but shifting geopolitical tensions and the echo chamber of social media have contributed to a culture of anxiety affecting travelers around the world.

Writer
Andrew Sheivachman

Illustrator
Bing Qing Ye

Travel has always been an unpredictable activity. Somewhere around the world, thousands of miles from the safety of home, the unknown becomes known and anything can happen. This can be thrilling or uncomfortable, enriching or life-threatening. Part of the fun is not knowing what will happen, yet this sort of uncertainty can mar your travel experience even if nothing goes wrong.

There is an often irrational feeling you get when traveling that the world is a dangerous place, and the violent events you hear about on the television or see online will happen to you. Your mind tells you to worry, even if you are completely safe. You're more likely to win a lottery jackpot than be the victim of a terrorist attack in most places, for instance, but you wouldn't know it by the anxiety you feel walking the streets of another country.

The world has embraced travel like never before in recent years. In the first four months of 2017, destinations received 369 million international tourists according to the United Nations World Tourism Organization, a six percent increase over the previous year. International tourist arrivals totaled 1.235 billion in 2016, and the growth in global tourism shows no sign of slowing down. It's no coincidence that isolationism is on the rise globally at the same time.

Beyond physical safety, cultural and political tension have created a hostile environment for those looking to spend time immersed in a culture different from their own.

With a rise of nativism around the world, deterring foreigners from visiting is often a tactic used to curry favor with citizens opposed to change. In the U.S.,

Presented by



"America First" rhetoric from the highest levels of government has led many from Europe and the Middle East to reconsider visiting. The stirrings of a renewed Cold War between the NATO countries and Russia also has travelers on edge, along with the constant threat of attacks by terrorist extremists on major cities.

The travel industry plays with the juxtaposition between comfort and adventure every day in its marketing. A vacation simultaneously represents an escape from the banality of life, a way to experience new cultures, and a chance to enjoy luxuries you normally wouldn't. The desires of the tourist, however, don't always align with what is socially acceptable in a foreign country.

As many tourists now aspire to "live like a local" while on vacation, it's become abundantly clear that locals don't want to live like a tourist.

A tourist can be loud, rude, messy, wave a selfie stick around, or treat locals like they either don't exist or exist solely for their entertainment. They

can also be respectful, curious, and considerate, but you don't hear much about this second type of tourist.

The travel experience has become more complex for vacationers than ever before in recent years. At the same time that low-cost airlines have made it easier for travelers to reach destinations on the cheap, air travel has largely become a commodity product with a set of intractable problems: abysmal customer service, tiny seats, and frustrating flight disruptions.

As hotel brands have proliferated, it can be unclear to travelers what type of property they're even staying at. Roomshare companies like Airbnb have added an additional layer of complexity to choosing accommodations; it can be hard for the occasional traveler to tell if an Airbnb rental fits their needs, or if they'll have any support if anything goes wrong.

There is also the civic tension experienced in cities that have seen explosive tourism growth. This

phenomenon, which we have dubbed overtourism, often leads to frustrations from local residents who come to resent the effect that visitors have on their lives.

And maybe these residents have a point; economic development focused on tourism can have its limitations, especially if tourism decreases or affects the quality of life for city dwellers.

Different cities have adopted different methods to deal with the deluge of tourists. Barcelona has stopped allowing residents to rent out their homes online, and stopped licensing new tourism-based businesses. Venice has renewed its efforts to educate visitors on the fines they face for disruptive activities like littering or swimming. Amsterdam, now jammed with tourists, is encouraging visitors to seek out less popular neighborhoods instead of the usual tourist attractions.

Today, globalization is seen as problematic by many.

"We're now derided by many as globalists," said Arne Sorenson, CEO of Marriott International, at the WTTC Forum in Bangkok this year. "Somehow voices that are not sufficiently patriotic today as they've been in the last number of decades... We don't respond adequately, in my opinion, by ignoring those voices. We have to listen to those voices and what they're telling us."

As global travel has boomed to record levels, so too have the fears and anxieties of global travelers evolved to taint the notion of what it means to travel the world.

As the travel experience has become stressful instead of liberating, what can the travel industry do to assuage the fears of its customers? Can an industry that profits from moving people across the world and providing them services possibly incorporate voices calling for the limitation of travel and tourism?

It can be hard to market the appealing aspects of travel while also portraying the experience in a realistic light. With the overall travel industry in the midst of a massive growth period, stakeholders must do more to work with local communities and mitigate the negative effects of tourism on destinations.

Bad news can also travel across the world instantly. Social media, in particular, has emerged in the last decade as the most popular way for people around the world to receive breaking news. It's rare a day goes by without some incident around the world, ranging from a terror attack to a drunk passenger on an aircraft, capturing the attention of the public.

It can be easy to point to these reports, both from travelers and the news media, as a major influence on the state of travel anxiety. The truth is that the world has always been a complicated and uncertain place; it's only become more apparent recently due to the pervasive influence of smartphones and digital media. Unplugging from the internet also isn't always a luxury travelers have when visiting a destination.

Technology now makes it simple to research and book a trip to a foreign destination. What technology can't teach you to do is to keep an open mind or respect a local culture.

What's a traveler to do in these complex and uncertain times? Unplugging from the echo chamber of social media can help, but isn't a surefire solution. Travelers need to educate themselves about the destinations they visit and act like thoughtful global citizens instead of consumers. This kind of personal responsibility can go a long way toward creating a more positive outcome for tourism in emerging or overcrowded destinations.

At the same time, travel companies need to innovate new types of trips and tours that take pressure off of stressed local communities and showcase the diversity of destinations they explore.

There's no single cure or quick fix for solving the anxiety that travelers feel, but without a serious effort from stakeholders and travelers themselves, the state of permanxiety felt by travelers will only become more deeply entrenched.

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A NEW REALITY

Writer Greg Oates

Is the increasing regularity of political, economic, and violent disruptions worldwide shifting how and where people travel? The answer is yes and no.

Jeff Rutledge, President and CEO of AIG Travel, says that travelers are more conscious of safety and security today, but at the same time, most people in free society believe they have a right to travel wherever they want. Skift spoke with Rutledge about the rise of permanxiety in the global travel industry, and how that's shifting customer behaviors and expectations.

Skift: How significantly have negative geopolitical events in recent years influenced travel behavior?

Jeff Rutledge: How consumers think about travel risk depends on the market, but in the U.S., it's traditionally been focused on medical-related concerns and trip cancellations. Now, the concept of individual security, which wasn't top of mind for the individual consumer just a couple of years ago, is now at the forefront. They're asking questions. They're wondering what's next. And the frequency of events is especially heightening awareness around safety and risk management.

Skift: Are more leisure and business travelers shying away from specific destinations in the long term?

Rutledge: After a terrorist event, we see downturns to the big cities for a short period of time, as travelers shift from one destination to the other. The numbers bear that out. In the U.S., most people feel an innate desire and right to travel. So I don't think that there are going to be long-term impacts in that sense. We're certainly not seeing it in our business.

Skift: Companies and organizations are developing educational platforms to inform their employees and members about risk mitigation. How do you see that evolving?

Rutledge: Many are just starting to educate themselves more on what they need to do. They're becoming tougher, more resilient, just like we've learned to walk, dream, live, and go through more in-depth security in a post 9/11 world. They're also looking at the tools necessary to track employees at any point in time. Others are taking it to the next step to develop immediate crisis response plans and processes.

Skift: With the heightened focus on travel safety, are companies like yours unbundling services so customers can customize coverage, and better understand what they're buying?

Rutledge: Yes, absolutely. Companies and individuals are telling us, "These are the specific things that we're concerned about." So for us, it's a mix of understanding those concerns and making sure we can customize insurance options.

Skift: What keeps you up at night?

Rutledge: My challenge and call to my peers, competitors, and suppliers is: We shouldn't be viewing security delivery as, "Hey something happened. We need to react now." I would much rather see how we can work together to enable stronger connections between first responder networks and travelers, who don't always know how to contact local responders effectively. Security infrastructure is where we have to come together as an industry and scale up to be able to handle individual incidents seamlessly.



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HOW THE NEWS MAKES THINGS WORSE

The always-on, always-connected nature of many people's modern lives means that we are often under a constant barrage of news headlines about bad things via radio, television, smartphones, laptops, tablets and more.

The result is that it heightens our anxiety about the world around us, making it seem as if everything is just one tweet away from completely unraveling. The year began with United States President Donald Trump's travel ban and appeared to go downhill from there. But fear not, for every worry-inducing headline there appear to also be anxiety-soothing solutions, whether that be an app, a tiny horse, or even bacon bits.

— *Jason Clampet*

Airports bringing in therapy dogs to calm anxious plane passengers

Fox News, 8/28/17

Trump's travel restrictions have Muslims on hajj concerned

Associated Press, 9/1/17

The Psychic Toll of Trump's DACA Decision

New York Times, 9/8/17

How to Ease Travel Anxiety in an Era of Terror: Travel More

New York Times, 6/8/17

Terminal: How the Airport Came to Embody Our National Psychosis

Slate, 9/7/17

With an Arsenal of Apps, a Fearful Flier Faces the Skies

New York Times, 11/30/16

Travel ban creates anxiety in Boston arts community

Boston Globe, 2/6/17

Canada's Tech Firms Capitalize On Immigration Anxiety In The Age Of Trump

NPR, 6/9/17

America's New 'Anxiety' Disorder

New York Times, 4/18/17

Bacon Bits eases travel anxiety

Daily Gazette, 12/14/16

US airport hires miniature horses to 'ease anxiety'

Telegraph, 5/12/17

Anger and anxiety at Muslim travel ban as relatives and protesters gather at airports across the US

Telegraph, 1/29/17

Airport anxiety as travel ban restarts at Sea-Tac

KUOW, 6/29/17

Faith and fear: how Muslim anxiety over Trump's travel ban unfolds in Hong Kong

South China Morning Post, 3/7/17

How to Travel Safely (and Keep Calm)

New York Times, 6/20/17

Trump's immigration crackdown is traumatizing a generation of children

The Guardian, 8/23/17

Accessible Travel And Mental Health - Anxiety, Stress, Triumph And Joy

HuffPost UK, 8/24/17

Muslim Americans express anxiety over Trump travel ban

Financial Times, 2/8/17

Black Tourist "Pushed Down Stairs by Airbnb Host" in Amsterdam

The Independent, 7/10/17

Turkey Issues Travel Warning for Germany as Campaign Rhetoric Gets Racist

Associated Press, 9/9/17

Trauma as travellers face a gender issue going through security

The Guardian, 9/11/17

Springfield NAACP president affirms travel advisory while avoiding shouting matches

USAToday, 8/15/17

Gay couples less likely to find booking on Airbnb

The Times, 8/30/17

The travel industry is finally ending discrimination against solo travelers. Or is it?

Washington Post, 6/15/17

Air Asia under fire over racial discrimination at Don Mueang

Phuket Gazette & The Nation, 8/17/17

California just added four more 'discriminatory' states to its travel ban

Washington Post, 6/23/17

Swiss hotel asks Jewish guests to shower before swimming

Associated Press, 8/16/17

Canadians shy away from US travel amid fears of discrimination

Deutsche Welle, 3/24/17

'One word says it all. Asian': Airbnb host banned after allegedly canceling guest because of her race

LA Times, 4/7/17

Lyft Is Partnering With An Anti-Discrimination Group To Train Drivers On Handling White Supremacists

BuzzFeed, 8/19/17

Airbnb Hosts More Likely to Reject the Disabled, a Study Finds

New York Times, 6/2/17



Illustrator
Bing Qing Ye

FIRST-PERSON PERMANXIETY

Absent a heart monitor, anxiety is nearly impossible to capture in a chart or graph. It's about how we feel in relation to the world around us and the challenges that appear to be coming our way. Anxiety's impact, though, can be measured in the choices we make because we are anxious or fearful.

We stay at home instead of going out. Or we don't vacation in the United States because of Trump or avoid Paris because of ISIS or scratch Russia off the list because of unreasonable visa requirements or skip the Caribbean because of Zika. The impact on travel is significant.

These six stories look at travelers' permanxiety from six different perspectives in order to better understand what we think about when we visit an airport, check in to a hotel, or visit a new destination. These are similar to conversations that many of us have with friends or family, as well as how we think about things in our own heads. No matter your background, we think you'll recognize something in these stories from your own experience.

— Jason Clampet

“
I FIT EVERY CLICHÉ; I AM
THE ABSTRACT VILLAIN OF
YOUR IMAGINED ANXIETIES
”

Writer
Rafat Ali

The demons in my head are real. They are real because they have been created over more than a decade and a half, bit by bit, indignity by indignity, layers upon layers of wounds big and small that have now calcified into my overanxious brain.

That is how I live it, a Muslim American immigrant, an apparent success story of the fabled American Dream, an entrepreneur and business owner and the CEO of Skift, a company that lives and breathes travel every waking hour.

In an age of permanxiety, as Skift has defined it in the opening essay, the anxieties of a Muslim traveler are a sociological condition I carry with me all the time. And it doesn't stop there: My mere presence causes anxiety for other people during travel. Recently, Royal Jordanian Airlines came out with a powerful ad that mirrors many of these worries. The minute-long ad "Are you afraid of flying?" goes like this:

I'm not afraid of flying... I'm not afraid of the risk of it. I'm afraid I end up somewhere I don't want to go. Afraid of being stuck in a place with people who look at me differently. I'm afraid of the what-ifs. What if something wrong happens and they don't believe me...?

I am this guy. I fit every cliché: I am the abstract villain of your imagined anxieties.

Traveling while Muslim. Doesn't matter if you are practicing or not. Or you wear visible signs of being Muslim. There are dozens and dozens of permutations of typecasting us, and they all play out every day. Most of all, they settle down in our brains and play havoc while we travel.

Lots has been reported and written about the challenges regular Muslim travelers have had to endure since the day that 19 religious zealots who blamed their hatred on my religion changed the U.S. forever. But like pretty much everything else in media, the exploration has been mostly cosmetic, helicopter reporting by reporters (read: not Muslims) who get a few quotes out of us when some major incident happens and then package it up, tie it in a bow and that's it. That's where it stops.

But American Muslim travelers themselves have rarely written about the mental cost that the last 15 or so years have brought on us, especially while traveling.

The security theater that passes for an attempt to secure the country is a theater that mostly plays out in our minds. Anxiety is the heaviest luggage we carry when we travel, nevermind whether anything actually happens or not.

"Paxex" is industry jargon short for "passenger experience" in the aviation world, usually used in the context of amenities: airport restaurants, in-flight Wi-Fi, seat comfort and such. No one ever talks about soothing the passengers' minds as part of the paxex world — it is instead limited by "amenities." Mostly because the ones defining or writing about it have never had to travel in an overanxious Muslim state of mind.

It starts long before you ever reach the airport. When you hesitate before booking an occasional one-way ticket, especially last-minute, worried your Muslim name may trigger a red flag in the security-industrial complex somewhere. Worrying about packing a Quran or prayer rug or even an Arabic language book in your

bag in case those are checked and misconstrued by immigration.

When you try and check in online and the message comes back: "Sorry we're unable to process your check-in online, please check with the ticket agent at the airport." This could be just an innocent technical error in the airline IT system, but it somehow lands in our minds as something else entirely. Yep, that darned Muslim name of ours has triggered a flag requiring an extra manual check at the airport.

It continues at the check-in counter at the airport, where the same thing may happen at the automated check-in machines and an agent has to check you in manually on her computer. Or when she stares intently into her computer, calls a supervisor, who then keys in a few more steps, adding extra minutes that keep the mind working through various scenarios of what they could be checking for or what could have gone wrong.

You always wonder what the ticket or TSA agent scribbles on your boarding pass, passing secret codes to the other agents down the line to give you extra scrutiny.

Like I said, both real and imagined demons of the overactive and overanxious mind.

This mental game continues at the passport check line, where the TSA agent looks you over a couple of seconds longer than others in front of you. Or maybe it didn't happen but it felt like that to you. Then comes the security where you take off everything along with your dignity, and you voluntarily walk over to the larger scan machine because you know you will never ever be waved over to the more innocent old-school metal detector next to it that others may get a chance to go through, even if you're with a toddler who needs his hand held.

The relief when you get through security then triggers a WhatsApp text back to your family: "I made it through security. Everything OK." These texts to family and spouses are the delicate lifelines we hang onto during the whole airport experience through departure and arrival.

Then the boarding gate, where sometimes you imagine stares from travelers, worried whether they think we're fidgeting too much. Or when you make that call to your family and suppress saying the traditional Muslim (Arabic) greeting "Salam walaikum" too loud into the phone, worrying that if anyone hears it they might raise an alarm. A Muslim in our midst! In any other world this would be extreme paranoia of our own minds, but in the world we live in today, these incidents happen, fellow travelers freaking out over people talking in Arabic or uttering even a greeting. So we stick to hellos at the airports and last-minute "I'm boarded" calls.

Immigration checks on arrival are permanxiety nirvana for us Muslims, but even more so since the Trump administration came in. The Trump travel ban and mysterious global entry snafus for Muslim travelers. The laptop ban, which is not a ban but enhanced interrogation nonetheless, the social media checks for passengers from certain countries (and maybe even American Muslim citizens), it all lands hard. This is what makes you go through somewhat ridiculous lengths to "suppress" chances of being discriminated against, like carrying burner phones and laptops during your travel, as I have been doing this year. (Independent UK even did a story on me about this earlier this year.)

It means worrying when you have to travel to the Middle East or other "problem" areas for work, for leisure, or for family, and being questioned about it at immigration counters.

Beyond the air experience, booking at hotels is less fraught with issues of permanxiety. Hotels in general are structured to soothe the anxieties of travelers, but it isn't always so. With Airbnb and the rise alternative accommodations, a new layer has been added: instances of racism and discrimination from hosts against people of color or different religions or nationalities. Ever since instant booking (i.e. listings that don't require approval from the host before they can be booked, basically how hotel bookings work) became a feature on Airbnb and HomeAway, Muslims like me just gravitate toward it over and above any other options, mainly to never have to face a situation of real or perceived discrimination in the first place.

Then the destinations you go to, depending on how open those societies are to differences, create differing levels of anxiety in you. Travel guidebooks write about how friendly a particular country is, but forget to add the unsaid caveat: that traveling while white — in most cases guidebook authors are white — is very different than traveling as a person of color. Or Muslim.

The discrimination that immigrants living in Western countries face also shows up for Muslim travelers in these countries and regions, and if you are a seasoned traveler, you find ways around them, or avoid these places altogether. Many American Muslims I know have a mental barrier to traveling in the American South, especially the Deep South, and when our American friends take a cross-country trip, we worry about the parts that may not be as friendly to drive through to us as Muslims as they may be to others. Hence it never figures in our plans, fairly or unfairly.

This is the permanent sociological condition we Muslims travel with, the permanxiety baggage that we carry.



THE VAST MAJORITY OF ENCOUNTERS THAT GO WRONG ARE NOT BECAUSE OF ILL INTENTION



As told to Deanna Ting

Peter Slatin travels far and wide in his role as the founder and president of Slatin Group, a company that helps businesses, from airports and airlines to restaurants and hotels, better understand how to deliver customer services to customers with special needs.

I'm blind, and I use a guide dog most of the time when I'm traveling. Sometimes I use my white cane, but most of the time I'll use a guide dog.

What prompted me to start the Slatin Group was all the kinds of experiences I've had — the miscommunication, misunderstanding, and just difficult and challenging service experiences, some of which can be dangerous, and some of which are just annoying and insulting.

At the Airport

The two points that create the most anxiety are the entry to the airport and when I'm waiting to board. When I arrive at an airport, very often, I have a bad experience.

Once I find the door and go inside — and it varies from whether it's very busy or not — but airport design has changed from a time when you would walk in and the check-in counter would be pretty much straight ahead. A lot of times, it's off to the side or they're just kiosks, and the check-in counters are far away, so I rely on someone. I'm hoping that someone from the airline or the airport will find

me and guide me to check-in and that's what I rely on, but most the time that doesn't happen.

There are also queues that have been set up with the mobile straps and expansions so people can queue up for tickets or to check their luggage. Each airline may have a different setup, and security will be here or there. There are just so many places where it's really hard to know where to go and what's happening around you. Once you get to the concourse or your gate concourse, at least again, that's relatively straightforward. People go in generally two directions, although there are stores and restaurants, and people are streaming in and out of those.

If you have a disability, if you need assistance, first, the airline will help you get your boarding pass, which I usually do at the airport rather than online ahead of time because I try to get placed in a seat that's advantageous for me and my guide dog where the guide dog has room. Sometimes they'll block out an extra seat. These are things where things go well, but once I get my ticket, they will guide me to a waiting area. It's a holding pen for people with disabilities, so I'll be there, and there'll

If everyone's receiving bad service, we want the same bad service that everyone's receiving, not even worse service. If everyone's receiving great service, we want that too.

be people with wheelchairs and elderly people, senior citizens. We're just all waiting for someone to take us to our gate, and it's just an odd kind of encampment of people who need assistance.

The people who come and provide that assistance are a huge mix of people who are extremely competent, kind, and smart, and people who are none of the above. There are people who are well trained, but no one's usually well trained. People usually just do what they can, and you kind of train them on the spot.

You trust them to get you to your gate. Once that gets going, I always engage them in conversation because that puts them at ease. If they're not up for that or into it, then that's fine, but most of the time we talk about where they're from, because they're almost always from overseas somewhere. Some have been in the country a very short time, and this is a job they just found.

At Hotels

I find the greatest challenge is usually in the lobby. Lobbies, like airport terminals, are diverse in design. They're all very different in design unless you're in a very simple, limited-service hotel with the check-in counter straight ahead and one person and that's it, but if you're in anything that has a lobby lounge or just a little more variation in design, it's really hard to know what's what.

I think it's less of a thing today, but there used to be so-called lobby ambassadors, which are really helpful, who are there. Their role is to spot someone, whether they have a disability or not,

who's looking for assistance, who seems to need assistance, and that's their job, or sometimes just to welcome people past the doorman. I know it impinges on ROI, and that's a terrible thing, but I think that's really helpful, and something more hotels should have.

I'd say the vast majority of encounters that go wrong are not because of ill intention. They are because of fear and unfamiliarity and uncertainty and awkwardness and just lack of information, lack of education, lack of training, and also clear guidance from the top about what that means. How do you extend service to this or any population of people you're unfamiliar with?

Hotels where someone, whether it's been someone in management or on the staff, has very early on in my stay said, "I'm going to watch out for you, and I'm going to make sure you are taken care of," without being obsequious or overbearing but instead to be, "I'm going to watch out for you." They've just been there. If they see me, they come and say hello. They introduce themselves. They make sure that my experience is good. I don't know. I couldn't say it's because I'm blind. I could say it's just because they saw it as their role.

What I'd Want to Say to the Travel Industry

I understand the challenge of this, but amid all the requirements that you face and the juggling you face of your own personnel, and competing with all of your competition and everything that changes around you — because it all does, that's this industry, and it's constantly evolving and there's movement, ownership changes, management changes — just continually, just keep your eye on the service ball. Because service is not a cliché, it's real. Without it, no one wants any part of what you have to offer.

You're a conduit, from point A to point B, or you're a place to stay, but if someone wants just that, they will go to Airbnb or they'll rent a car or what have you. You're there because people really value what you have to offer, and that really includes the service as much as it includes the décor and the food, all of which can be spoiled by bad service. As long as you keep your eye on that and remember that service is the biggest thing you offer, then you're in good shape.

“
**WE DON'T
VACATION ANYMORE,
WE TRAVEL**
”

As told to Dennis Schaal

Neil Miller, 65, owns an insurance agency in Trumbull, Connecticut that he runs with his wife Esther. He has Gold status in the American Airlines AAdvantage program. The couple has traveled everywhere from Japan to Paris and Jordan over the last 17 years, and usually takes about a month vacation annually.

We've been traveling a lot, and in recent years we've been doing more of the exotic types of stuff. We used to go to the Caribbean and lay on the beach for a week. But around 2005 we decided we thought we'd expand our horizons.

So we don't vacation anymore, we travel.

For about 95 percent of our trips we go on Tauck tours. We don't have time to plan our vacations and with Tauck pretty much 95 percent of the trip is set up for you. So even when you land, there's someone waiting for you, taking you to the hotel or wherever you are going.

We already have a trip planning for next June where we are going to fly to Vancouver and then go by train. You sleep one night on the train and wake up in the middle of the Canadian Rockies.

We're not interested in going to Europe right now; we've been so many times I'm personally getting a little bored. And the truth of the matter is because of the state or the world today, we said, "Let's go to Canada."

We went to Europe two years ago so we flew to Brussels. And the year after that the airport in Belgium was blown to smithereens. So we said, "forget that."

We've been to a lot of places where there eventually has been trouble such as a train station in Madrid, where they had those bombings in 2004.

My family is not crazy about going to Europe right now. God forbid, if something happens and I'm in Canada, I can still rent a car and come home.

And then there's President Trump. My wife Esther says she's "not interested in going to Europe and have them turn around and start yelling, your President is an asshole."

I can guess what the sentiment is about Trump in Canada, but I'm not worried about the Canadians.

We've done things to make the airport experience easier for ourselves. I have Gold status in AAdvantage, and I got the American Airlines Citibank Executive card about four years ago. So we always fly American because I have so many miles and we get to use their Admirals Clubs. We have PreCheck through

the Global Entry Program, which we got through the Executive card.

Esther says she's never leaving our marriage. "I'm staying with him for the miles," she says.

Having adequate Wi-Fi is a concern when we travel because we work a bit while we travel, even if it's only five minutes or an hour per day. I usually buy an international phone package and we try to stay in places where hopefully we'll get wi-fi.

We don't care at all about social media. I have a Facebook account and I don't really know how to use it and Esther checks it every once in awhile if she's online and has nothing else to do. I see people so focused on Facebook and sharing their new pictures. My attitude is: find something better to do on vacation or stay home.

In fact, my wife's daughter gave me a selfie stick for my birthday one year. I told her, "take it back."

One concern I've been having is getting through airport security because I wore braces on my bad knees for several years before my knee-replacement surgery last year. In May we were leaving San Francisco and the titanium set off the TSA scanning machine. I was searched for a long time, and it was really screwed up. It was embarrassing. The TSA guy was touching my "stuff" and it was weird.

In Asia, we've traveled to Japan. We were on a ship, and the cabotage regulations meant we had to sail to South Korea. And then that asshole, Kim Jong-un shot off a missile.

"So you can't even go there now," says Esther, meaning Asia. "Where can you go? Canada."



WE NEED TO CHECK THAT ONE MORE TIME



As told to Sarah Enelow

Jeremy Swift is a 34-year-old African-American actor, who was born in Oklahoma and has been living in New York for five years. Swift went to South Korea in 2017 as a performer in Dreamgirls.

My friend and I went to Japan after performing in Korea and I bought a ninja star. I stuck it in my bag, they gift wrapped it and everything. My friend told me to make sure I put it in my checked baggage before we got to the airport.

We go through security. My bag goes through, and I'm thinking that they're not going to let me take a bottle of Listerine I forgot. So they push it through and say, "We need to check that one more time." So it goes through again. I'm still thinking about the Listerine. I'm mad, but you know, it was \$5; I'm cheap.

I asked them what they were looking for and the security agent wants to know, is there "metal or something" in my bag? I was telling him that I had remembered to take my laptop out just as he pulls out the ninja star.

My friend started screaming and I literally just threw up my hands. I'm certain I'm going to jail or at the least I'm going to get cavity searched. I'm sure I turned red, white, orange, and purple. My friend just kept saying, "Oh my God, oh my God." She goes, "He didn't mean it, he didn't do it on purpose."

The Japanese agent is much cooler than us. "You can't have this. Have a nice day," he says. My friend asks if I can put it in my checked bag and the agent helpfully says, "Let me make a phone call." He calls the counter and then walks me back through security with the ninja star.

Of course, I'm thinking that if this was America, I probably would have been shot in the face, twice. This just doesn't fly. I was so shocked at how understanding they were. My friend tells me that in America they would have said, "Take it all off. We are searching every crack you have."

That was one the scariest moments I've had.

On the other end of the trip, it's a different story. The second we get off the plane in America, this six foot five, 300-pound black man starts yelling in this tourist's face because she didn't have her paperwork straight, or something like that. And I was thinking why are people in America not nice? He was literally screaming at her. She was stammering while the man barked orders at her.

Like, I'm sure it's in her bag, calm down.

I'm a goofball. I'll sing in the airport security line, dance in line, I'll rap your name, I'll just do weird stuff because sometimes flying is stressful. Some TSA agents will look at me like they are going to put me on the no-fly list. And some will join in and dance with me. It just makes things a little lighter. Sometimes I get some nice people. Other times I get ones who I know are thinking "I have been on this shift since 1974. Shut up."



I'M JUST SCARED THAT THEY'RE GOING TO SAY, 'YOU CAN'T COME IN'



As told to Sarah Enelow

Joshua Robinson is a 31-year-old designer of Chilean descent who was raised in Sydney, Australia. He now lives in New York City with his American husband.

I hate security and going through the process of immigration. It's just scary. I guess I have nothing to fear. I've got the correct papers, so why would it be scary?

I'm just scared that they're going to say, "You can't come in."

The first time that I came into the U.S. as an adult was with a J-1 visa. They totally grilled me at that time, but then the next couple of times, once I had the green card, they just looked at the document and they'd write, stamp — so there's nothing to fear.

What do they do with all those documents? Is it processed at the time? Or is it processed later?

You think that you have everything in order, but what if you don't? Going through the green card process, you do that with a lawyer so I always know that that's a backup plan.

I always wonder, would they question my marriage for some reason? My husband advocates for me, plus he's white. When he's with me I'm fine.

The media coverage and the facts of the immigration ban contribute to paranoia. And it's the fact that people had gone and done their research and got their papers correct and then came here and then a certain few were questioned and sent back.

I definitely feel like being Australian we have a close ally with the U.S.

I didn't realize how Americans are perceived to some different nations compared to Australia. Australia is friendly Australia. We don't have really any conflicts with anyone.

My husband Matt and I recently came back from Mexico. I'm in a transition period with my green card where I have a temporary one while they put me onto the 10-year green card. Because my actual card is expired, I have a letter from the government saying that it has been renewed for one year. I just felt like this flimsy letter feels like a letter from your parents to the teacher, it's like, "Yeah, he's fine," but there was just this paranoia of my actual card having an expiring date. But it was fine — we went to the officer and she was like, "Great. Stamp. Next."

I was just thinking of stories from friends. Some of them have misdemeanors. One of them — every time she comes through immigration — she gets escorted to the little room where they just double check everything.

My friend who's from Saudi Arabia has no criminal history. Zero.

Whenever he comes to Australia, he's always escorted into the room, no matter what.

“

I WAS BASICALLY ILLEGAL

”

As told to Andrew Sheivachman

Ping Chan is a 27-year-old Asian-American graphic designer at Skift, who was born in China and has been living in the U.S. for 11 years. Chan is currently a resident of the U.S. under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

When I first came to the U.S., it was 11 years ago, not long after 9/11 so the authorities were really serious about who was entering the country. My Dad looks really dark-skinned so Customs officers pulled us into a room and interviewed us for 30 minutes, basically asking us why we were here.

I told them I was here to travel. But they found a letter in my bag from a friend telling me to have fun in school. They said I was lying. I was so scared, and then they pulled my Dad away to interview us separately.

Everything is kind of a blur now, but then they let us pass anyway. They only left me with a month to stay, even though my parents had longer visas, and I became illegal because my parents didn't bother to change my status. The high school had accepted me; I could have switched to a student visa and avoided this. I don't know whether my parents didn't care, or messed something up, or what.

The first five years, I really wanted to go back to China, but then I accepted my fate. Skype and all that makes life easier. Honestly before I got my DACA, I couldn't travel anywhere. I was basically illegal. I was so scared; I was about 15 years old

when I came here with my parents. I didn't know anything about how visas work.

Anywhere I would go, I wouldn't go to the airport and fly. I would take the bus, even from Indiana to New York which is like a ten-hour bus ride. I would rather take the bus. I thought the bus was the only option. Now I've got my DACA, and I can go to the airport. I only fly domestic of course. I would like to visit a place like Cuba, for instance, but can't. When I travel the country I visit places like Austin and the furthest I've gone is Palm Springs in California.

I really want to go to Hawaii, it's been a part of my childhood dream. It's the furthest state away from the mainland U.S., and closest to Asia. Even with that, I feel like I have to be really careful and look up whether I can go there without a passport or something else. Even though Hawaii is a part of the U.S., I have second thoughts. Am I really allowed to go? Will I be allowed to come back? I have to do a lot of research on it if I want to go.

I'm worried now because of the Trump Administration repealing DACA. The news came out on my birthday, and it was very upsetting. I don't know what I can do, it's very confusing.

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GLOBAL WORRY MAP

Writer
Daniel Peltier

The U.S. Department of State regularly issues travel warnings and alerts, or updates existing warnings, to help make travelers aware of potential dangers they face in their destinations.

Because of a lack of specifics, and bias toward traditional destinations, the list often feels like a blanket warning to stay away from some of the more interesting destinations in the world, in addition to painting them with a broad brush that simply says, “Stay away.” A focus on generalities — especially under the current administration — does more to add to anxieties than contribute to understanding safety and security.

Travel warnings, the more severe of the two advisories from the State Department, are issued for reasons such as unstable government, civil war, ongoing intense crime or violence, or frequent terrorist attacks. In theory, they are meant to make travelers consider very carefully whether they should go to a country at all, according to the State Department. Travel alerts are issued for short-term events that might include a contentious election season,

demonstrations, or disturbances; a health alert like an outbreak of H1N1; or evidence of an elevated risk of terrorist attacks.

Skift recently reviewed U.S. warnings and alerts from 2015 to 2017 and found there are 40 active travel warnings and two alerts, one for Europe and one for the 2017 hurricane and typhoon season. Travel warnings during the past two years have been concentrated in Africa, Central America, and the Middle East with some warnings like those for Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria in place before 2015. Most of the travel warnings in recent years have been issued for threats of violence and terrorist activity.

But this is a two-way street. Multiple countries have also warned against travel to the U.S. In 2016 and 2017, the U.S. was on the receiving end of alerts by United Arab Emirates, Bahamas, France, Turkey, United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, and Germany.



Country	Date/Timeframe*	Country	Date/Timeframe*
1. Afghanistan	pre-2009-present	21. Kenya	2017-present
2. Algeria	2016-present	22. Lebanon	2016-present
3. Bangladesh	2016-present	23. Libya	2016-present
4. Burkina Faso	2016-present	24. Mali	2016-present
5. Burundi	2015-present	25. Mauritania	2016-present
6. Cameroon	2016-present	26. Mexico	2016-present
7. Central African Republic	2016-present	27. Niger	2016-present
8. Chad	2015-present	28. Nigeria	2017-present
9. Colombia	2016-present	29. North Korea	pre-2015-present
10. Democratic Republic of the Congo	2016-present	30. Pakistan	2017-present
11. Egypt	2015-present	31. Philippines	2016-present
12. El Salvador	2016-present	32. Saudi Arabia	2015-present
13. Eritrea	2016-present	33. Somalia	pre-2015-present
14. Ethiopia	2016-present	34. South Sudan	2016-present
15. Haiti	2016-present	35. Sudan	2016-present
16. Honduras	2016-present	36. Syria	pre-2015-present
17. Iran	2016-present	37. Tunisia	2016-present
18. Iraq	pre-2015-present	38. Turkey	2017-present
19. Israel, West Bank and Gaza	2016-present	39. Ukraine	2016-present
20. Jordan	2016-present	40. Venezuela	2016-present
		41. Yemen	2015-present

There are evolutionary reasons for this anxiety, said Jenni Blackford, an associate professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. Humans, she said, do not like uncertainty. And at airports and on planes, many do not know what to expect. More than ever, they don't feel in control.

"Even though traveling is relatively safe, our brains are still wired to pick up on potential threats," Blackford said. "These days, where it's pretty safe, things that are uncertain or ambiguous can cause the same sense of fear that a sabre-toothed tiger would have caused in the past. Somebody who may have a high need for control might worry that their bags are going to get lost and they won't have their favorite sunscreen."

(Un)Welcome Security

One newish problem is security checks. Even seasoned travelers do not always know what to expect, and many passengers fear they could receive a random — and invasive — pat-down, said Jeff Price, an expert on airport security and professor at Metropolitan State University in Denver.

Price knows extra checks are necessary, but he recently watched officers perform a secondary screening on his wife — she set off the alarm after handling household cleaning supplies — and he said he understood why people find it uncomfortable. "That person touched my breasts," his wife told him afterward.

"If you are never encountered by law enforcement for anything more than a speeding ticket, there is really no other place in our society where you are going to be patted down like that except at the airport," Price said. (Pat-downs at concerts and sporting events are usually less invasive, he said.)

The Airline Problem

Almost two decades ago, David Neeleman founded JetBlue Airways with a simple idea: bringing humanity back to air travel. His airline offered more legroom and free TV, didn't overbook flights, and served snacks to everyone, even during less profitable times.

In the 17 years since its first flight, JetBlue has made some missteps, and one — its inability to recover following a 2007 Northeast snowstorm — cost Neeleman his job. And, yes, JetBlue has tweaked its model, reducing legroom and charging some customers for checked bags. But the founder's ethos remains important, a major reason JetBlue strives to treat passengers respectfully.

JetBlue often focuses on simple stuff. It refers to travelers as customers rather than passengers. Its employees are crew members, so no one focuses on job titles or roles. And the airline calls its economy class cabin Core instead of coach. The airline's premium section, meanwhile, is Mint — not first class. Using words, it wants to remind passengers and employees they're all in it together — that no one is better than anyone else.

"Air travel can be really stressful," Joanna Geraghty, JetBlue's executive vice president for customer service, said in a recent interview. "We have all been there. When I travel with my family, the stress level rises. We try to create an environment where our crew members are empathetic to our customers."

It's an interesting approach, and judging by airline-industry awards, JetBlue probably creates more goodwill than any competitors other than Southwest Airlines and Alaska Airlines, both of which have similar philosophies.

Unequal "Rights"

But not all airlines follow the egalitarian model. Many reward premium customers with perks, but charge frugal passengers for nearly everything. This is not new, but the chasm has widened as carriers have prioritized "high-value customers" more than before. (JetBlue also rewards loyal customers, but not as extensively as other airlines.)

On many larger airlines, loyal customers check bags for free and receive upgrades to first class and premium economy. While flying in economy, they have first choice of seats, so they can usually sit with their families. When flights are delayed or canceled, they're the first to be rebooked. And on some flights, they get free meals and alcohol, when others do not.

But on most airlines, boarding is probably the biggest issue. Generally, loyal customers get on first, allowing them to place bags in overhead bins before less profitable passengers board. By the time "regular" passengers board, there's often little room.

"One of the things [humans] want is to be the first person to secure resources," Vanderbilt's Blackford said. "The one with the most toys wins. If you are worried about a shortage of resources, which you often are for overhead bin space, you end up getting this crowd mob mentality."

For non-elite flyers, "It's just like being in a cage," said Sarah Steegar, a 19-year flight attendant at a major U.S. airline, who tweets at @FATravelWriter. "You're so limited and at the mercy of other people to help you — and getting such help is harder and harder because airline employees are stretched as well for resources and manpower. More and more, it's a bit of an 'every man for himself' environment."

Most flyers are well-behaved, Steegar said, but about two percent "cause some sort of drama" — though not all do so intentionally. She noted her employer has not taught her how to handle anxious passengers since her initial training two decades ago. (The airline does train flight attendants on how to respond to passengers who pose a security threat.)

"I've seen colleagues punched, I've been cursed at, I've had weird threats," Steegar said. "People try it all on with us, and it got worse after the United incident (with the doctor dragged off the plane) where belligerence spiked and people seemed like they really wanted a confrontation."



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SOCIAL MEDIA SCARES US ABOUT AIRLINES

SKIFT TAKE

Social media brings the world closer and informs us, but it also amplifies the insignificant to the point of crisis when patience would solve the problem better.

Writer
Grant Martin

Illustrator
Bing Qing Ye

It's 12:37am on the taxiway at San Francisco International and I'm rage-tapping my phone, trying to figure out just HOW there can be airport traffic in the middle of the night. Anxiety-refreshing my Twitter feed, I discover passengers on adjacent planes doing the same and venting to @flysfos black hole of an account. Every two minutes there's another update, perhaps one more piece to the puzzle of why we're stuck.

The widespread use of social media made it magnitudes easier for customers to speak directly to brands and the airline industry over the last few years. It's now possible to get customer support directly through Twitter, book flights using

chatbots on Facebook and provide feedback on broken-down subway trains instantly and directly to New York's MTA.

Along with the benefits though, it has also dragged out bitter side effects — including anxieties that come along with information oversaturation and infinite online reach.

In no place is this anxiety better shown than when a flight is canceled or delayed. Back when media were slower, passengers only had their companions and neighbors with whom to commiserate. Now,

that same 45-minute weather delay can turn even the most friendly and apolitical person with 28 followers into a crusading zealot, threatening to turn his audience against the airlines.

In San Francisco, on the taxiway, I watch stranded travelers lob complaints out into the Twitter ether like ants swimming upstream in the Colorado River. "Stuck on the tarmac at @flySFO for a full hour after landing. Come on, @united! It's after midnight now, this is absurd #LetUsOffThisPlane" said one @andiakin, apparently unaware that air traffic control was actually causing the delay.

@MiriamBWilliams chipped in from her marooned flight, adding "@flySFO @VirginAmerica #VX29 on tarmac for >30 mins with no gate?!?! My 5-month-old deserves better."

"Anger and anxiety in social media have noticeably picked up over the last few years and appear to have really blown up with the new administration," says Andrew Hickey, a digital marketing consultant in the travel industry. "Incidents like the United fiasco in April really have made people openly target specific airlines now in contrast to the general discourse seen in years past."



One of the biggest turning points in the global conversation, as Hickey points out, happened earlier this year on a United Airlines flight out of Chicago O'Hare. Thanks to an overbooking situation, United was forced to remove a passenger from the aircraft — and when that customer resisted, he was dragged off kicking and screaming. The whole incident was captured on video via smartphone; when the content went viral, angry customers descended on social media like it was the French Revolution.

To this day, the social media sphere seems on edge, perhaps because of the constantly polarized and political environment. In a time when it's easier than ever to leave an anonymous comment on a news article or lob a mean tweet from a fake Twitter account, rage-tweeting may seem like the easiest way out, but many find the anxiety spreading throughout the entire travel experience.

"Social media this last week made my anxiety much worse," admits Alex Freire Kawakami, director at Industrial Logic out in the Bay Area and frequent Twitter user. "I'm away from my family and worried sick about hatred and Nazis since we are immigrants." It's not all bad news though. While social media has created anxiety for many, others use it as a tool for finding peace.

"By facilitating access to (serious) resources, social media helps me to see how ironic it is that I am scared, because I love to fly," says Amelie A Gagnon, a demographer at IIEP UNESCO. "Knowing about the industry in general, regulation and standards is helping a lot. I guess the more you understand, the less you are frightened."

Back on the ground at SFO, my 737 starts inching forward just over an hour after we park on the taxiway. It wasn't the tweets that helped it; rather, a broken-down aircraft had pushed out of the alleyway and cleared the path for a dozen planes.

SFO's Twitter account, for its part, stayed radio silent on the issue. The next morning, its next tweet was an animated cat gif celebrating the upcoming eclipse.

WHAT'S WORRYING THE BUSINESS TRAVELER

SKIFT TAKE

In a complicated world, businesses are concerned with the safety of their workers on the road. Technology can help ease business traveler anxiety, but there is no flawless solution when something goes wrong.

Writer
Andrew Sheivachman

Illustrator
Vanessa Branchi

Business travelers go where they're told, regardless of the state of the world and with limited say in where they stay, how they get there, or what they do with their time.

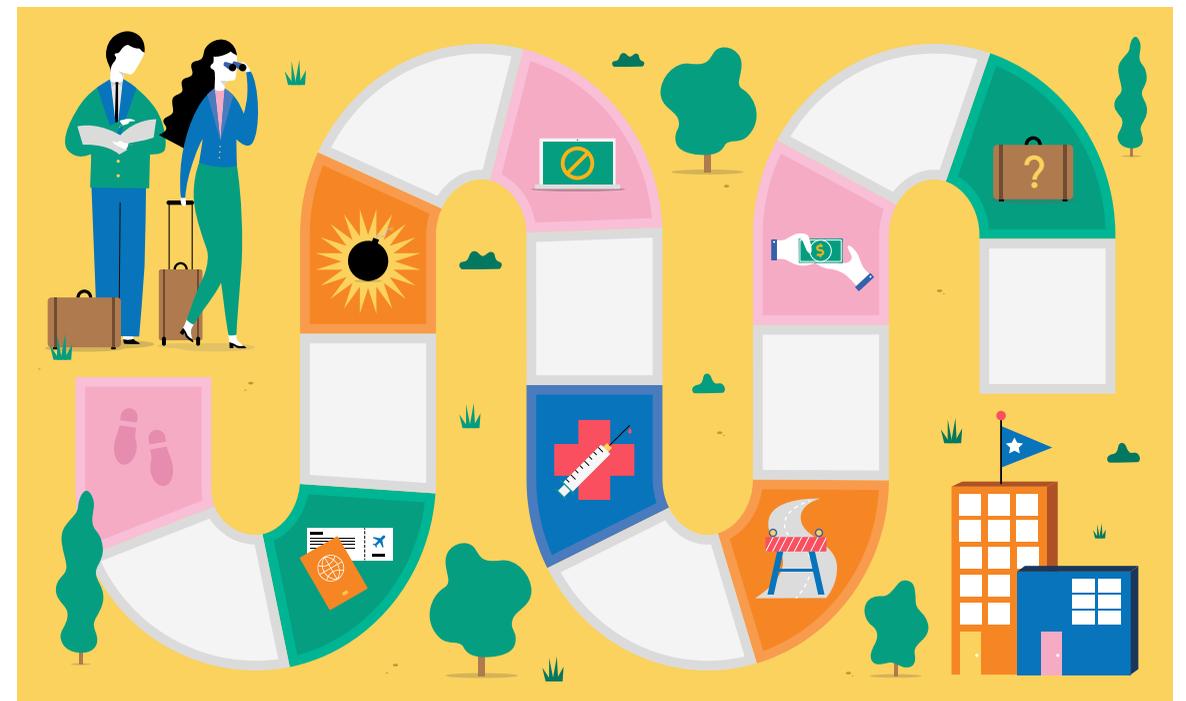
As security becomes less certain even in regions that once seemed sheltered from violence, road warriors report that they are concerned about their safety on the road — even as they continue to travel. The travel ban and laptop ban earlier this year just added to the feeling of permanxiety for business travelers. Employers, who have an obligation to prioritize the safety of their travelers, turn to risk and security consulting firms like iJet and International SOS, and increasingly are creating their own tools to track, notify, and more easily communicate with business travelers on the road.

Workers are divided when it comes to traveling for business. Younger employees love to travel for work as it represents an opportunity to travel the world while developing their careers. Older employees, though, may want to spend more time at home with their families.

Regardless of who you are, travel for work is often stressful. In addition to dealing with the annoyances and discomfort that come with travel, you also have to do your job, often working longer hours than you normally would at the office. Not everyone is well-equipped to deal with these challenges, and there is often enormous pressure to perform.

Business travel is growing across the world, a result of a strong global economy. The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) found that \$1.2 trillion was spent worldwide on business travel in 2015, with China, the U.S., and Germany representing the three highest spending countries.

In an age of anxiety and uncertainty, businesses now have to keep close tabs on employees when traveling. This can manifest itself in many ways, from limitations on neighborhoods or properties someone can stay at, to more advanced tools that allow companies to track a traveler's location using their mobile device.



It's important to remember that not every business traveler is a grizzled road warrior crossing the globe every few days. Most travel a couple times a year to destinations not far from home, according to GBTA research.

The concept of duty of care, which refers to the legal need for businesses to care for travelers they dispatch on trips, has become a focus for organizations. (In the U.S., there is actually no law stating companies have to care for workers who are traveling; most provide this service for liability purposes, instead.)

"Unfortunately, security concerns are on the rise globally," said Michael Gulmann, Egencia's chief product officer. "Our customers need to be able to account for their employees' safety and address issues and risks immediately. In the past, when employees booked through multiple booking tools, travel managers had to query multiple systems to understand which employees were potentially affected by an incident... Combined with the rise in smartphones and apps, travel managers [now] also have the benefit of being able to alert employees to risks even before they board their planes to communicate an action plan well in advance."

Travel management companies and risk management providers offer the ability for travelers to check in as safe during a crisis, with functionality similar to Facebook's Safety Check feature.

There's also the capability for travel managers to view employee locations on a map in real time, giving further granularity when something goes wrong.

While terrorism may be the most alarming concern on an everyday basis, business travelers also suffer many other less discussed problems on the road, ranging from medical issues to travel disruptions and mental health breakdowns. These sorts of problems that regularly afflict business travelers are not much discussed, but can completely derail a trip and affect a company's bottom line if not handled effectively.

It's no wonder that a business trip can sometimes place workers in an unusual, and disconcerting, situation.

Companies like International SOS and iJet provide risk management information and tools for travel management companies to help them better predict and respond to the uncertainty in the world. Dealing with the unpredictable nature of the world, however, remains a constant challenge.

"The terrorism angle is the big issue because it's in the news; even though it ends up being a lower risk event, the impact is so high," said Matthew Bradley, regional security director for the Americas region at International SOS. "[For employers] It's also the internal piece of how did you respond when it happened. In Western Europe, you can't really go back to a time where there was a two-year period when every month there was a major event in a major city. The surprising part is there haven't been more in the U.S."

There's also the wider issue of security precautions on global airlines disrupting business travelers. The recent laptop ban on direct flights from the Middle East and Africa to the U.S. led many to rebook their flights through other airports, due to the risk of damage to checked laptops and the chance of company data being compromised.

While the ban imposed earlier this year has been relaxed, it's not hard to imagine future restrictions on traveling with large electronic devices. Coupled with travel and immigration restrictions imposed by the U.S. government, a new layer of complexity has been added to the business travel experience.

There's only so much that companies can do to relieve the anxiety of their traveling workers while mitigating the risks they face. Travelers themselves can remain vigilant and educated about their surroundings, but inevitably things can go wrong regardless.

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To embrace science-based targets, and encourage the wider industry to join in reducing emissions at scale.



Human rights

To raise awareness of human rights risks, embed human rights into corporate governance, and address risks arising in the labour supply chain and during hotel construction.



HOTELS TRY TO SOOTHE GUEST CONCERNS

SKIFT TAKE

How can hotels make sure their employees know exactly how to welcome a diverse guest list?

Writer
Deanna Ting

Illustrator
Bing Qing Ye

To combat travelers' general anxieties, today's hotels are hosting meditation retreats, coaxing smartphone-addicted travelers to "unplug" in their device-free settings, and urging them to indulge in all things wellness-related.

While those efforts are all well and good for our collective mental health, they don't amount to much more than escapes in a bubble – temporary fixes for living in an increasingly stressful world.

But whether a hotel offers complimentary yoga classes or special programs designed to help you unwind doesn't carry as much weight as having a staff that knows how to treat its guests with hospitality that's free from bias or ignorance. It's hospitality that's genuine, intuitive, and accommodating that

really sets travelers' nerves at ease when they walk in the door – and that's sometimes much harder to find than a fancy hotel spa.

"The fact that travel can be so stressful, I always thought about what we can do as a hotel, when the guest walks through our front door, to ease that, and have that sense of empathy as to where they're coming from," said Suzanne Markham Bagnera, a former hotel general manager at a number of properties who's currently a clinical professor at the Boston University School of Hospitality Administration.

"One of the first things we do with front desk agent training is to focus on that, especially because it can be really stressful to have long lines and have



customers taking out all of their travel frustrations on you, even though it has nothing to do with you. We let agents know it's not about them, and that they need to look beyond that and try to find the best solutions for the guest, and just have a sense of empathy."

Markham Bagnera said she remembered working at a hotel in downtown Boston at the time same-sex marriage became legal in the state of Massachusetts in 2004, and the hotel she worked at wanted to make sure they could accommodate same-sex couples as much as they possibly could. However, not all staff members necessarily knew how to do so.

"We would have same-sex couples coming in who had reserved a room with a king-size bed, and then at the front desk, the agent would say something like, 'Oh, you have a king-size bed for just the two of you. That's not right; you don't want to sleep together and share the same bed, do you?'" she recalled. "That was not the way we wanted to handle that. So, from then on, we made it a point

to have agents say, 'I have a room with a king-size bed. Will that meet your needs?'"

To further drive home the point of having empathy for guests, Markham Bagnera would also make sure her staff knew what it was like to experience the hotel as a guest who may have special needs, especially those who may have a physical disability.

"I would actually make my employees get in a wheelchair, with one person sitting in the chair and the other pushing that staff member," she said. "They had to go throughout the whole hotel – all 15 floors – and come back and report on what the experience was like. What heights could they not reach? What doorways did they have trouble with? People don't realize, until they're put into that situation, what works and what doesn't."

She added that training hotel staff to know how to provide hospitality to guests with disabilities remains a challenge, especially today. "Some people still feel awkward and uncomfortable, especially if that person has a physical disability,

or if there's a service dog or animal," Markham Bagnera explained. "And when they think they're doing the right thing — like seating someone with a disability in the back portion of the restaurant where they'll have more room — they're actually isolating them and making that guest feel worse."

That's exactly something that's happened before to Peter Slatin, founder of the Slatin Group, a company that helps businesses better understand how to deliver customer services to customers with special needs. Slatin, who is blind and has a service dog, recalled that happening at a hotel where he was hired to do a staff training.

Whether he works with hotels or destination marketing organizations or even airports, Slatin says he stresses this to all of his clients: "Compliance is the floor, not the ceiling. I know that's sometimes a hard pill to swallow for someone who feels that they've already invested heavily in compliance, so they think, 'Why do I need to do more?' Because compliance is not about service, it's about access. Now we've got the physical access, what we need is social access."

And beyond accommodating guests with specific needs related to disabilities, both Slatin and Markham Bagnera stressed the need for more overall "cultural competence," too.

Markham Bagnera said she was especially impressed by a presentation delivered by Apoorva Gandhi, Marriott International's vice president of multicultural affairs, at a recent conference hosted by the International Council for Hotel Restaurant and Institutional Education. "He was looking at the changing demographics in the areas between women, Hispanics, African Americans, Asian Americans, and the LGBTQ community," she said. "He created these video vignettes as training tools to show staff how to respond in all sorts of different situations."

And we're continuing to see more signs from major hotel companies that they're paying special attention to making sure all guests feel welcome. Just last month, Marriott International debuted a new campaign for its Courtyard, Fairfield, Four Points by Sheraton, and Springhill Suites brands called "The Golden Rule." That golden rule is the one we were taught as kids: to treat others the way we want to be treated. It's a simple principle, but

one that can all too easily be forgotten, especially in an age when permanxiety reigns.

But if hotel staffs hold steadfast to that concept, that's a start. Slatin added, "It's just a basic truth about service that it's for everybody, and the more you know about who your customers are and what they need, the better prepared you are to serve them. As you can tell, I'm passionate about it, and I believe it really opens up the world to everybody."

I would actually make my employees get in a wheelchair, with one person sitting in the chair and the other pushing that staff member. What heights could they not reach? What doorways did they have trouble with? People don't realize, until they're put into that situation, what works and what doesn't.



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ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATIONS AND TRAVELERS' FEARS

SKIFT TAKE

Professionalizing the home-sharing experience is helping to alleviate travelers' concerns and anxieties about staying in a stranger's house.

Writer
Deanna Ting

Illustrator
Patricia Mafrá

Airbnb, HomeAway, onefinestay, and their peers all have the comforts of home when it comes to the accommodations they offer on their sites, and with that, sometimes the stress of dealing with hosts and homeowners without any formal hospitality training.

But these companies are also learning that as alternative accommodations become less of an alternative and more mainstream, they need to professionalize the experience a bit more to address travelers' very valid concerns.

Given the massive number of bookings these platforms facilitate on a daily basis, there are relatively few instances where things have gone

terribly wrong during a home stay. But when they do, those stories often go viral, and they only add to the valid concerns any traveler might have about staying in a stranger's home versus a hotel.

Not only that, but recent incidents where hosts and guests alike have been subject to bias or discrimination on peer-to-peer platforms like Airbnb, have only added to the anxiety travelers feel. For some travelers, it's not even a matter of whether everything will be all right during the actual stay, but whether they'll even have a place to stay.

To that end, many alternative accommodations providers have attempted in varying degrees to

assuage travelers' concerns by implementing new features that allow guests to instantly book a listing, easily order groceries, or turn to the support of a trusted on-site concierge.

Airbnb and HomeAway

On one end, there are platforms like Airbnb and HomeAway where, in some instances, travelers do have to interact with the hosts or homeowners directly. And on the other end, there are platforms like Oasis, onefinestay, and Paris Perfect that act more like professional rental management companies and offer additional services to guests during their stay.

Airbnb head of global host and community operations and general manager of vacation rentals, and an Airbnb host himself, Jonathan Lesser, said that the key to addressing travelers' concerns is giving "hosts the kind of information they need to provide a great guest experience" and "setting expectations."

He noted that Airbnb invests in online education, community meetups, and specific platform features that make it easier for hosts to know how to host,

as well as communicate appropriately with their guests. A hospitality standards page encompasses "a checklist of the things you should provide for your guests."

"Our efforts to make sure hosts think about expectations doesn't mean that we create a cookie-cutter experience that is the same every time. It just means that a host has done the kinds of things that any great host, whether it's on a platform like Airbnb or just me hosting you in my house, would do to make sure their guest is well taken care of."

And when it comes to Instant Book, Lesser noted it now comprises "over half of our bookings and nearly half of our listings." For reference, 1.9 million of Airbnb's total four million listings are Instant Book, and since the company's founding in 2008, it has had more than 200 million guest arrivals. Instant Book allows guests to book a listing on Airbnb instantly, without having to wait for host approval, thereby minimizing any bias or discrimination on the part of a host.

Lesser said, "Guests like Instant Book because they have an easy and magical booking experience and, frankly, hosts like it because it eliminates the back



and forth and makes it easier for their listing to get booked. For me, this is just another way that we extend the hospitality into the booking process and make it easier for both sides. So, for me, it adds to the specialness of Airbnb.”

Likewise, at HomeAway, chief product officer Tina Weyand says the company is also working hard to encourage more of its homeowners to adopt instant booking, but without imposing it on its hosts.

“Travelers expect online booking,” she said. “There is a large set of travelers who expect instant booking. We know it’s not right for every owner, so we have the option for them to have it and not to have it. We want to provide the right tools and education for owners, but give them the control to manage their property most effectively, but also give ease of use and meet traveler expectations.”

Weyand said more than 90 percent of HomeAway’s owners accept online bookings (although that doesn’t mean they are necessarily instantly bookable), and the remaining 10 percent “are onboarding right now.” She added that HomeAway has more than one million instantly bookable listings, and the conversion rate for those listings is higher than those that are not instantly bookable.

Both Lesser and Weyand also noted that their respective companies offer 24/7 customer service to guests.

Weyand said HomeAway is also using its research and user labs in Asia, Europe, and the U.S. to better understand how customers are using its product, and to “make sure there are no surprises, by reducing the friction and anxiety some travelers might have, and to make it a more consistent and reliable experience.”

Oasis, onefinestay, and Paris Perfect

Last November, Airbnb CEO Brian Chesky hinted at the possibility of integrating on-demand services like grocery delivery into the Airbnb app, but these kinds of services are already being offered by some of the company’s peers such as Oasis, onefinestay, and Paris Perfect.

Unlike Airbnb or HomeAway, these platforms operate on models that borrow more heavily from the traditional hotel experience so that, for one

thing, hosts don’t ever have to actually interact with the guests who stay in their homes. The companies do all the work instead, and provide additional services to guests to make them feel more at home. They also carefully vet and curate the properties that they advertise so they know exactly what that listing is like.

“The market was naturally going to focus on the kind of higher volume, mass-market solution first, which is why VRBO, HomeAway, and Airbnb have scaled the way they did,” said Parker Stanberry, CEO of Oasis. “But now we’re at a point where what we saw and some other folks saw is that for certain travelers, especially corporate travelers or solo female travelers, there’s a demand for higher levels of convenience, service, and safety, which is why more companies like Oasis are popping up.”

At Oasis, guests have ongoing concierge support and the ability to add services to their stay, such as a stocked fridge, breakfast, a mega bar, extra cleaning, etc. They also benefit from what Oasis calls “perks” — member club access in 14 of Oasis’ 22 cities, as well as spa or gym partnerships where available.

At onefinestay, CEO Javier Cedillo Espin noted that all guests at onefinestay properties receive an iPhone, pre-loaded with local data, and they are greeted personally upon arrival. “It’s a branded experience that is consistent across each home in every city wherein we operate,” but still one, he noted, that’s still “authentic and local.” He added, “We consider onefinestay to be an operator in the hospitality world, owning every point of the process and experiences, and as such, we’re in a unique position to move nimbly as the market continues to grow and mature.”

At Paris Perfect, CEO Madelyn Alster said that because all of the homes advertised on her site are owners’ second homes, her company does all it can to make sure it’s a branded experience, consistent with what a hotel might offer, too. “We’re not just a listing agency. We’re an agency that manages the apartments 100 percent. We now have our own sheets — 400-thread-count percale sheets with our logo on them and our own laundries to handle it,” she said. “There’s consistency.”

However, she added, “It’s not professionalized in that it’s like a Marriott where every single room

has a lamp hanging in the same location in the window, or exactly the same furniture. It’s not that at all, because every apartment is different and every guest experience is going to be different.”

When it comes to instant bookings, these platforms apply different approaches.

Paris Perfect, Alster said, is the agency that approves all bookings that come through the site, and she said “we don’t discriminate; that goes without saying.”

Cedillo Espin, when asked if onefinestay had instantly bookable listings, said, “Guests can book directly from our website, but we find ultimately our customer base is looking for a curated, tailored experience, and conversely, our homeowners want each guest to be vetted so most choose to work through our trusted travel advisors. It’s these two points that make our experience unique and successful.” So, it’s not exactly clear whether onefinestay does have instantly bookable listings.

Stanberry, however, said approximately 35 percent of Oasis’ listings are instantly bookable and that he’s trying to push toward 50 percent in the near

term. Those listings that aren’t instantly bookable, he said, have certain parameters set by the owners, such as the maximum number of guests, the pet policy, smoking or non-smoking, etc. Oasis has guests fill out those forms and then checks their information against the parameters set by the homeowner.

“There are people who want the full-on hotel, full stop, and people who want a true, authentic home-sharing experience,” Stanberry said. “We’ve really tried to nail the middle point where you are getting what me and my peers think are what’s great about a home stay. The goal is to make people not anxious, period. With us, you don’t have to make that leap.”

If Oasis, onefinestay, and Paris Perfect are any indication, as the sharing economy becomes more mature and more mainstream, we can no doubt expect more companies to be offering a more professionalized home stay experience.



NAVIGATING IN A TIME OF PERMANXIETY

SKIFT
TAKE

Discrimination has long caused travel anxiety for demographics underserved by the industry. Historically, travelers looked to their respective tribes for intel, but the burgeoning friend economy may be reshaping that concept.

Writer
Sarah Enelow

Illustrator
Bing Qing Ye

In 2017 — with xenophobia, hate crimes, and discrimination top of mind — travelers from disenfranchised groups are looking to their tribes for reliable safety information online.

LGBT travel concerns are high, from discriminatory bathroom bills and the 2016 Orlando nightclub shooting. Muslim travelers deal with Islamophobia and President Trump's travel ban, which the ACLU identified as a discriminatory "Muslim ban," and which prompted hundreds of lawyers to volunteer at airports across the U.S. Hispanic travelers face an increasingly unwelcoming environment in the U.S. amid calls for a border wall with Mexico and immigration crackdowns. Black travelers express fears of resurging white nationalism and police brutality alongside the NAACP's first state-specific travel advisory, for Missouri.

Where can these groups turn for help? What's the modern-day equivalent of the Green Book, which advised black travelers during the violent and segregated Jim Crow era?

LGBT and Female Travelers

According to a 2017 report by the International Gay & Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) and UNWTO, "The role that small businesses play is crucial. Often set up by LGBT people or their allies, small hotels and guesthouses, tour companies, bars and cafés offer a local welcome that benefits from a shared LGBT identity and provides a degree of reassurance of acceptance."

John Tanzella, president and CEO of IGLTA, said there is a real fear among same-sex couples and



transgender people of interrogation at the U.S. border. "The rhetoric of the White House certainly puts fear into travelers," he said.

IGLTA is currently expanding the safety-related information on its site to empower the community. The organization already has a trip-planning tool featuring LGBT-owned and -friendly providers, as well as discounts for members. "We tend to be on the pro-travel side of that conversation, encouraging people to travel," said Tanzella.

Every year the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association publishes world maps of death penalties and sexual orientation laws to keep travelers informed. In 2016 Marriott and IBM sponsored the LGBT Guide to Business Travel, which puts much of the onus on the traveler: "Do your due diligence... don't become a target... ambiguity may be best."

At this point, guidebooks for women and women-friendly hotel rooms are old news. On the newer side, Wanderful, which hosts events and provides resources for female travelers, launched a female-focused homesharing platform, though with a

subscription fee and few listings it may struggle to gain popularity. UK-based Maiden Voyage provides educational and support services to solo female business travelers as well as consulting for the travel companies hoping to capture that market. Indian airline Vistara even has a free service for solo female flyers, giving them a safe escort as well as preferred seating.

Muslim Travelers

Every year Mastercard and consultancy CrescentRating release a Global Muslim Travel Index to map out which destinations best welcome Muslim travelers, a global market estimated to reach \$220 billion by 2020. Fazal Bahardeen, CEO of CrescentRating and HalalTrip, said in the 2017 report, "We are definitely seeing the influence of a new breed of young travelers... combining technology with a real desire to explore the world while still adhering to their faith-based needs."

In a time of Islamophobia, London-based homesharing site Book Halal Homes does for Muslim travelers what homesharing sites Innclusive and Noirbnb do for black travelers. All three aim to provide a more

welcoming and multicultural-friendly alternative to Airbnb, spurred by discrimination on Airbnb's largely unregulated platform. But new players in this space must fight hard to acquire enough listings for travelers to actually use them.

Karima Bihaki, founder and CEO of Book Halal Homes, said, "In the mosque people are talking about it because there's a lot of fear, especially after the travel ban, what happened in the States when Trump became president. A lot of Muslims feared going to America from any country at the moment even though the ban is just on some certain countries. Because of that people are considering, 'Should we travel to the states or not?'"

Bihaki elaborated, "There are stories from sisters traveling from Italy back to the UK being asked to take off the hijab. They are dressing differently when they travel abroad. They still dress modest. I heard stories even that people are being selected for extra security measurements because they think they are Muslim while they are not."

Black and Hispanic Travelers

Kent Johnson, cofounder of the black travel community and group tour operator Black & Abroad, said that since November 2016, "We encountered a lot more questions around what places can I travel where I'll be safe. Especially with the travel ban happening, people's anxiousness has slowly ratcheted higher over the last few months."

About Trump's policies, Johnson said, "Nothing seems definite, but it all seems immediate at the same time, and those are two prime ingredients [for anxiety]." The company recently launched a new product, a group tour to Johannesburg, South Africa, and Johnson identified anxiety and safety as "key deciding factors" in selecting this inaugural destination.

Evita Robinson, founder of the 15,000-member majority-black and majority-female travel community Nomadness Travel Tribe, which organizes group trips and events globally, held a panel last year on black safety at her company's conference. Robinson said that her members "respect and love having these outlets."

Robinson described to Skift the tribe's concerns in 2016: "I have members who have children who say, 'I'm raising a young black boy in America. Where can I travel to or potentially move to where I don't feel like I have to fear for his life every time he wants to go outside and play?'"

Nomadness' membership is around five percent Hispanic and while something like an organized Hispanic travel movement remains elusive, Hispanic travelers face their own chronic anxieties. President Trump's proposed border wall between the U.S. and Mexico isn't yet a reality, but the rhetoric has already inspired some Mexican vacationers to take visa-free trips to Canada instead.

I'm raising a young black boy in America. Where can I travel to or potentially move to where I don't feel like I have to fear for his life every time he wants to go outside and play?

Travelers With Disabilities

BrettApproved.com provides extensive accessibility ratings on hotels and other venues based on user generated content, separating the brands that understand anxiety from those that resent ADA compliance laws.

"One of the things you probably never think about is: Am I going to be able to get into my hotel room?" Brett Heising, founder and CEO of BrettApproved, told Skift earlier this year. "What we try to do at BrettApproved is give our community that knowledge so that takes away some of that guesswork."

In the realm of developmental disabilities, more airports are helping travelers with autism by offering simulations and quiet rooms. Autism on the Seas provides services for cruisers with such disabilities in collaboration with Royal Caribbean and other cruise lines.

The Friend Economy

So what's the next step in making travelers feel safe and welcome? Maybe today, when travelers are looking online for intel within their tribe, they can reimagine who's actually in that tribe.

The burgeoning friend economy — which operates like the sharing economy but is focused more narrowly on one's actual acquaintances — might provide a new solution that's not specific to one race, nationality, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. Homesharing platform Overnight offers places to stay through a person's extended network of existing friends, which should maximize familiarity, and minimize discrimination and safety concerns between host and guest.

"There's more implicit trust," said Overnight CEO Asher Hunt. "If we can create that network and that community that makes it a more safe experience, that's pretty awesome. And we want to do it many times over," he said about curated groups within the platform.

The challenges? Destigmatizing financial transactions between friends and that familiar dearth of listings.

The networks we use to help and inform each other may be evolving, but they still rely on the same principle used throughout history: knowledge is power.



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14 APPS TO CALM YOUR TRAVEL MIND

SKIFT TAKE

Permanxiety is now a sad fact of life. But you may stress less if you lean on a handful of smartphone tools that can help you avoid health risks, security threats, and other potential travel snafus.

Writer
Sean O'Neill

Travel has always come with stress. But in recent years permanxiety has layered on an extra helping of hassle. (Just feel that pang in your sternum after you have been pulled aside by an airport official for secondary screening or questioning.) We can't wish away hyper-nationalists or authoritarians — or all the drama those characters are inflicting on travelers and others. But we are happy to point you to a mix of mobile apps that can calm your nerves and help you cope with standard snafus. We five-star these free and paid apps for Apple and Android devices because they will let you clear your mind. And having a clear head will make it easier for you to cope with the larger, unavoidable problems.



Companion

Ask a guardian angel watch your back

Travelers have always gotten the jitters when taking an unplanned walk through an unfamiliar neighborhood that may not be safe. One way to seek reassurance is to ask a friend or family member to keep you company — virtually. The Companion app enables this, letting a loved one track your journey home via GPS on an online map. The app pings out a few requests to various contacts to see who is available and willing to keep watch. Thankfully the person does not need to install the Companion app to participate; they instead receive a text message that links them to an interactive map showing the user's location. In a worst-case scenario, the traveler can use the app to blare a terrifying sound to scare off the bad guys. Incidentally, this feature may become more common. In 2017, the Indian government declared that all mobile phones must have a built-in panic button to better protect solo women.

iOS and Android, free
companionapp.io



CDC TravWell

Stay healthy

One year it's SARS. The next, ebola. Then zika. The series of international health scares seems endless. But being informed about the latest risks for specific destinations can take the worry out of travel. The top U.S. health watchdog, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, provides advice to international travelers via its CDC TravWell app. Tell the app where you're headed, and it will fetch destination-specific vaccine recommendations — plus a checklist of what you need to do to prepare for travel, such as which over-the-counter medicines to consider packing. This app lets you store travel documents, keep a record of your medications and immunizations, and find emergency services phone numbers for most major destinations.

iOS and Android, free
wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/apps-about



1Password

Shield your passwords

No, a digital password manager is not a travel app, per se. But travelers will value how they can use it to access usernames and passwords for financial and other critical information while on the road. If a pickpocket snatches your phone, they won't be able to crack the code and access your online accounts. A single password lets you keep in touch with all of your (and your family's) internet accounts, loyalty and reward card numbers, plus copies of your family's passport details. There are a few high-quality password management apps, such as Dashlane and LastPass. But the 1Password app wins points for its

user-friendly interface, an easy system for handling the occasional two-step verification systems that sometimes crop up, and flexible data syncing choices.

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4



PackPoint

Prep for your trip more efficiently

The prosaic worry about whether you remembered to pack a toothbrush and the right chargers for your electronic devices was enough, frankly. But ever-changing security and airline restrictions have compounded packing angst. For relief, turn to a packing list app. There are many checklist apps, yet PackPoint stands out for having especially relevant suggestions. Type in your destination, planned activities, and length of stay and PackPoint will recommend items you may have forgotten, like an umbrella or gym clothes. Make a list once and then morph it into a few reusable lists for different types of trips, such as a business overnighter, a ski trip, and a beach getaway. The app also offers advice tailored to the latest weather forecasts, so you'll be ready for that surprise heat wave.

iOS and Android, \$3
Packpnt.com

8



Weather Kitty/ Weather Puppy

Hit the "paws" button

A great way to calm down about traveling is to have an app that gives you the weather forecast illustrated with a cat that is happy, scared, wet, or otherwise adorable. Of course, there is a Weather Puppy app, too. Don't mock it until you try it, even if you're not a pet person.

iOS and Android
weatherkitty.com

5



Grab

Avoid getting "hangry" at the airport

Once they make it through the airport security gauntlet, many travelers stay close to their gate, because of nervousness about missing a gate change or the flight. Grab is an app that enables a time-pressured traveler to order meals ahead at airport restaurants, so the traveler doesn't have to venture far from the gate for long. Users skip the food court's long lines by walking straight to the pick-up counters of restaurants when their food is ready. Grab's services are available at 19 U.S. airports including Atlanta and Los Angeles, as of publication time. The app is slowly expanding overseas with an expected first stop at London's Heathrow.

iOS and Android
getgrab.com

9



Blur Photo Editor

Don't reveal too much online

Social media seemed like a wonderful way to let friends and family members know about your trips. But then the bee in the honeypot appeared: You can't ever be fully sure if strangers can see the photos you post. Sometimes you want to protect your privacy. A case in point: If you post a photo of your airplane tickets for an exotic trip, enterprising troublemakers might use the information on the ticket in ways you won't like. This app, highly rated by users, lets you blur out sensitive details – or the faces of children who are minors – with just a finger swipe.

iOS only but Android has similar apps like Touch
Blur Photo
No website; search the app store

6



FlightAware

Become an airport ninja

On average, one out of five U.S. airline flights was canceled or delayed in the last year, based on data measured up to May 2017. Often the first passengers on a canceled flight to get in line or on the phone with an agent are among the first to successfully rebook on the next flight to a destination. Given that so many planes today fly nearly full, it's urgent to be among the first to rebook. There are many fine flight alert apps, but FlightAware soars for its rare "meeting the flight" option, which ensures anyone who is meeting a plane can be alerted to any delay or cancellation. The app also helps with vetting upcoming departures, particularly on small airlines flying tiny routes. Knowing that the flight out of Corfu always leaves two hours late will help a traveler plan ahead.

iOS and Android
Flightaware.com

10



Google Translate

Speak when you don't know the language

Not knowing the local language can strike fear in even the hardest of travel hearts. You've already known one solution to this problem: Google lets you look up quick-and-dirty text translations. But you may not know that the search giant says its translation quality improved more in the year 2016 than in the previous ten years combined. You may also not know that you can translate text in images, such as a street sign or a menu, by pointing your smartphone camera at the words and using the Google Translate app to give you the meaning in about 30 languages. You can even use the app without an internet connection to translate among 52 languages.

iOS and Android
translate.google.com

7



Citymapper

Mind the gaps in Google Maps

Feel better about how to get from point A to point B in an unfamiliar city with an app that can give you directions. It triumphs at sharing little tips on how to navigate major cities that it usually takes locals months to master, such as the optimal subway exit from which to leave and the current timetable for a local bus. Plus it has fun bonus tricks, like letting you click "rain" mode to get different point-to-point advice, minimizing the chance you'll get wet.

iOS and Android
citymapper.com

11

Rome2rio
Go the last mile smartly

Getting there is supposed to be half the fun, except when you're not sure how to make it the proverbial "last mile" of your trip, such as from an airport to your vacation rental. Google Maps and its peers are sharp tools, but Rome2rio excels as a supplement by searching any city, town, landmark, attraction, or address across the globe with thousands of suggested routes to get you from point to point. The best part is that the app typically offers accurate price estimates for Uber, taxis, trains, ferries, and buses so that you can pick the fastest or cheapest way to your ultimate destination.

iOS and Android
Rome2rio.com

12

Revolut
Get travel money more flexibly

If you prefer to use a debit card or cash while traveling internationally, you've faced doubts about whether your bank card will be accepted at local stores or whether you'll find a low-fee ATM. Now a few startups are attempting to offer a consistent way to move your money in and out of various currencies while traveling. The best-funded is Revolut, a UK-based startup that has received \$88 million in investment. It lets you get, send, and exchange money in multiple currencies. The process is two-step: A traveler loads money onto a prepaid debit card, which he or she then manages via the app. Revolut says it offers a better deal than using bureaux de change and that it has served more than 700,000 users, a larger group than its UK-based rivals Monzo and WeSwap claim. The downside: You need a UK bank account to use it, as of publication time, though that was expected to, um, change.

iOS and Android
Revolut.com

13

Beditations
Defragment your brain

If you're having a difficult time sleeping, Beditations, delivered by the app of the same name, are meditations designed to guide you into quality sleep. Just choose an evening Beditation to ease you into sleep, and a morning Beditation to gently wake you up at your desired time. Why, you ask, should you use an app instead of say a meditation from memory or a book? Because the app comes with ambient rain noise that plays after your bedtime meditation, so you won't be distracted by external noise at the hotel and lose your Zen. Many Beditations are free, or you can also unlock them all for \$5.

iOS and Android
Highlymeditated.com

14

SAS Survival Guide
Channel your inner MacGyver

For 20 years, the SAS Survival Guide has been the much-discussed handbook for surviving any situation, in any place and any climate. Written by a former Special Air Service (SAS) instructor in the British Army, John "Lofty" Wiseman, this app will help you fend off a bear attack or avoid getting stuck in quicksand. But it's best to read it before you get into those fixes.

iOS and Android
Sassurvivalguide.com

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THE MEETINGS INDUSTRY ADJUSTS TO RISK

SKIFT TAKE

The meetings industry is under growing pressure to provide education and best practices to mitigate risk, which is challenging due to the size of groups and costs to secure large venues.

Writer
Greg Oates

Illustrator
Vanessa Branchi

The impact of increasing social, political, and economic disruptions in the world today is roiling the meetings and events industry, perhaps more than any other sector in travel. That's due to a range of factors. Large events are often planned a year or more in advance, so any uncertainty about a specific region makes long-term planning more challenging. Meeting and event planners also cater to a wide range of attendees who inherently differ in how they perceive the attractiveness of a destination at any given point in time. And, safety and security is now top-of-mind for planners, vendors, host venues, and sponsors, adding significantly to budgets and overall logistics, risk management, and liability concerns.

"Any and all obstacles thrown in the path of anyone considering hosting or attending an event is not good for our industry, so it's our job to give them the resources to effectively connect buyers and sellers," said Deborah Sexton, president and CEO of the Professional Convention Management

Association (PCMA). "Our global industry community needs to collaborate more to create consistent messaging, best practices, and standards. Voicing mixed messages isn't optimal today."

Leading up to its annual Convening Leaders conference in January 2018, PCMA is crowdsourcing ideas online for educational sessions, where attendees can choose topics most relevant to them. For next year, new options include: protecting participants and your brand during an event crisis, geopolitical impact on business events, mitigating cyber threats, and mitigating risks for emerging threats. As well, Sexton says PCMA is expanding its online educational content focusing on risk and management.

"Face-to-face events are not going away," Sexton said. "Through the education we deliver, face-to-face and online, we prepare our members on how to plan and prepare for disruption. From risk assessment and crisis management tools to advocacy efforts with Meetings Mean Business and others, this topic is top-of-mind for PCMA."



In June 2017, Meeting Professionals International (MPI) is collaborating with the National Center for Spectator Sports Safety and Security at the University of Southern Mississippi to develop educational programming and resources. The first course — Emergency Preparedness for Meetings and Events — debuting at MPI's 2017 World Education Congress this summer.

"Over 44 percent of our planners said security and risk management has become the top topic when they meet with their executives on strategic planning," said Paul Van Deventer, president and CEO of MPI, speaking during Global Meetings Industry Day last year. "It's becoming part of how we do business. We know it's going to happen. So how are you preparing for it? How are you changing your policies and procedures to prepare your attendees for it as well? It is now part of the DNA of meeting planning."

The incentive travel sector is also adjusting to growing anxiety around global disruption. The Incentive Research Foundation just published the 2016 Event Disruption Study, which states: "Planners estimated they now spend up to 25 percent of their time planning for potential disruptions. Nearly 40

percent of planners expect that their time and effort to plan for disruptions will increase somewhat in the next two years."

Kevin Hinton, president and CEO of the Society of Incentive Travel Executives, said that he and other industry leaders have a responsibility to emphasize the power of international meetings and incentive travel to fight back against the growing neo-nationalism sweeping across the world.

"One thing we don't talk about enough, but it's critical in this kind of environment, is the power of having people from different countries and cultures come together through travel," he said. "It's about how you enable a company to bring people together, people from different countries, and how you overcome stereotypes because of people's perceptions. In today's populist movement toward isolationism and fear of the unknown, or fear of the foreigner, that's where we have a responsibility to celebrate diversity and foster cross-cultural engagement within the design of our programs."

TRANSPARENCY ALLEVIATES ANXIETY IN RESTAURANTS

SKIFT TAKE

Comfort food needs to go beyond a warm dish of mac and cheese. Diners and travelers are demanding more from their fine dining and their fast food, and smart restaurants are responding.

Writer
Kristen Hawley

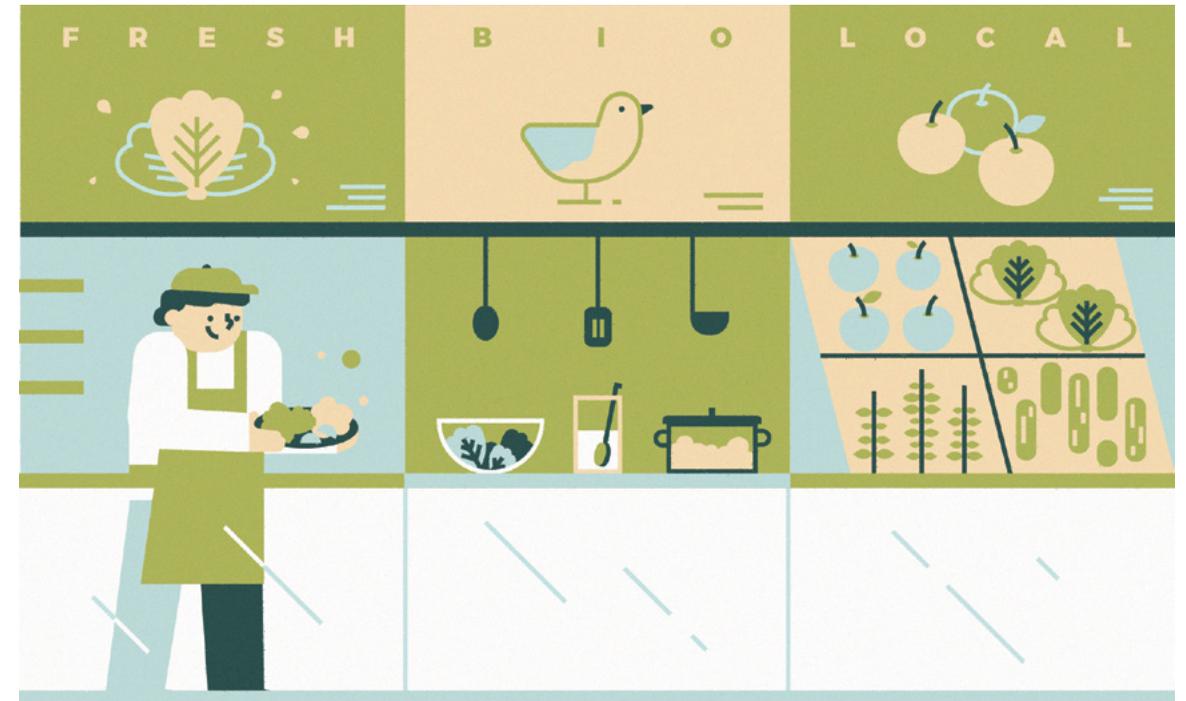
Illustrator
Patricia Mafra

People everywhere need to eat. Red state, blue state, traveler or local. Food is necessary to sustain life, but that doesn't mean eating — or dining out — doesn't come with its own particular anxieties. As well-known restaurant chains make the news with headlines of contamination, foodborne illness, or just plain grossness (i.e. the McDonald's pink slime incident of several years ago), consumers have started to demand fresher, more local, more responsibly sourced food. The popularity of food tourism underscores this phenomenon, too. Much of the value in traveling for food involves a local connection to food, local methods of cooking, and local sourcing.

In part, this has to do with the farm-to-table trend that was thrust into the spotlight in northern

California in the 1970s. Nearly half a century later, the principles of connecting ingredients to the final product at a restaurant have forever impacted the way we dine out and the way restaurants are run. A list of farm suppliers on the back of the menu, for example, has become so commonplace that it's often the butt of jokes and eye-rolls about pretension and yuppie entitlement. But it's definitely struck a chord as the entire restaurant industry changes around it.

Corporate and chain restaurants — especially fast food — have been working for years to dramatically overhaul their image of commodity and homogenization. The rise of fast-casual dining has come out of our desire for transparency in dining out: one of the core tenets of fast-casual is the promise



of higher food quality. And now, fast food has answered, going to great lengths to revamp its supply chain and ingredients to satisfy consumers. For example, McDonald's recently announced it will make its Quarter Pounders and other specialty sandwiches with cooked-to-order fresh beef by mid-2018, and promises to source only cage-free eggs in all of its restaurants by 2025. By 2018, KFC says that it will only purchase antibiotic-free chicken. Amid all of this, Wendy's introduced a marketing campaign informing consumers it has never served frozen beef. No one can talk about fast-casual dining without mentioning Chipotle, which has somehow managed to overcome seriously negative headlines and scary foodborne-illness outbreaks while still touting the freshness and simplicity of its ingredients.

The Internet and its powerful social tools have impacted the way we eat, too. Instead of the familiarity of a chain, we look to the familiarity of a friend's recommendation of where to eat. Yelp has built its business on this. Facebook has made major changes to its product around the concept

of recommendations. And Google aggregates everything and puts it on a map, easily discoverable by anyone, anywhere, with the Internet. It's essentially become a popularity contest, and the winners are the restaurants that cater to our tastes, preferences, and, honestly, feelings of security.

Arguably, dining out has never been an anxious process in the same way that travel contributes to a heightened state of anxiety. The hospitality-fueled restaurant experience is more often associated with happiness, relaxation, and shared time with others. This isn't by accident; it's by design. So what do restaurants owe consumers in challenging times? Good food, safe food, and responsible food free of hidden ingredients, hidden origins, or any other secrecy that definitely doesn't belong on the dinner table.

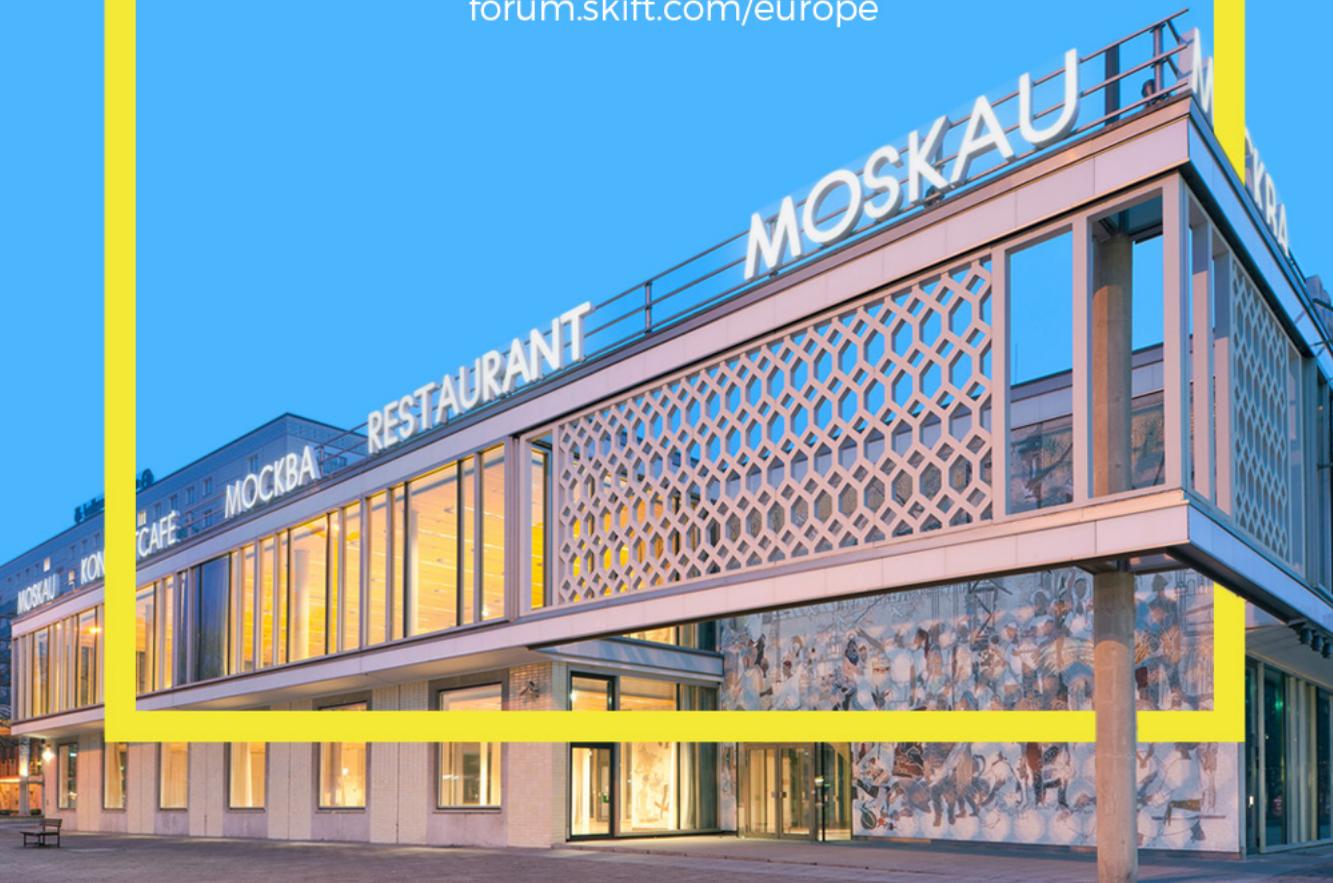
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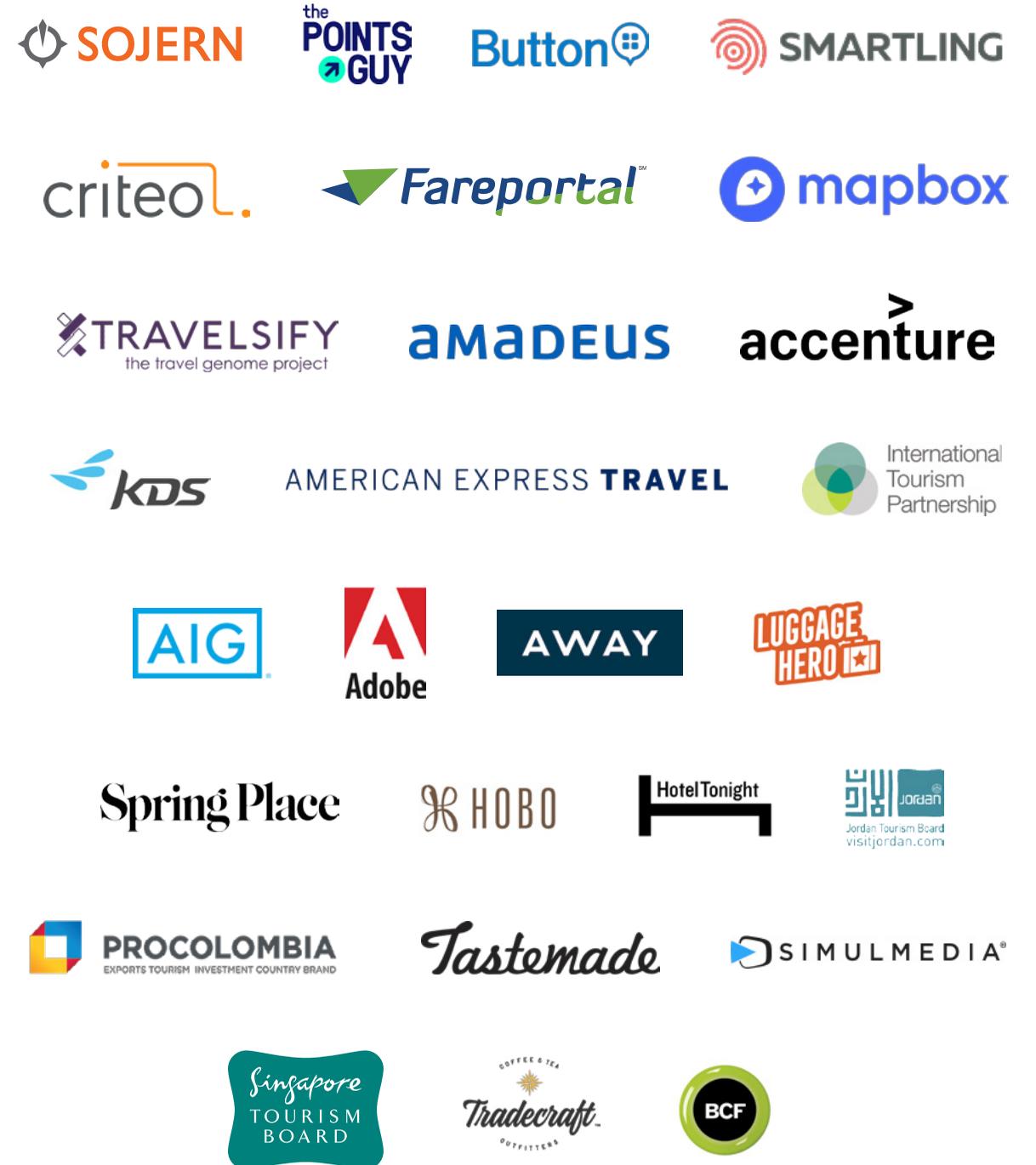
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Speaker Bios



Rafat Ali,
Founder &
CEO
Skift

Rafat Ali is the CEO/founder of Skift, the largest business intelligence and marketing platform in travel, providing news, information, data, and services to all sectors of the world's largest industry.

Previously, he was the founder of paidContent and ContentNext, now owned by UK's Guardian News and Media. Prior to that, he was managing editor of Silicon Alley Reporter.

Ali was the Knight Fellow at Indiana University, where he completed his master's in journalism, 1999–2000. Prior to that he completed his BSc in computer engineering from AMU in Aligarh, India.



Keith Barr,
CEO
InterContinental
Hotels Group

Keith Barr has been CEO of IHG since July 2017. Barr joined IHG in 2000 and subsequently held a number of senior positions in IHG's Americas and Asia, Middle East and Africa (AMEA) regions. He has been a member of IHG's executive committee since April 2011, spent four years as CEO of IHG's greater China business and most recently, served as chief commercial officer for four years. Barr is responsible for implementing IHG's strategy for high-quality growth and generating industry leading value creation for hotel owners, operators and shareholders.



Nathan Blecharczyk,
Co-Founder &
Chief Strategy Officer
Airbnb

Nathan Blecharczyk is the co-founder and chief strategy officer at Airbnb. Blecharczyk plays a leading role in driving key strategic initiatives across the global business. Previously he oversaw the creation of Airbnb's engineering, data science, and performance marketing teams. Blecharczyk became an entrepreneur in his youth, running a business while he was in high school that sold to clients in more than 20 countries. He earned a degree in computer science from Harvard University and held several engineering positions before co-founding Airbnb.



Lina Annab,
Jordanian Minister of
Tourism and
Antiquities
Jordan Tourism Board

A graduate of Georgetown University, Lina Annab has served as Minister of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA) since June 2016. Before MOTA, Annab served in different capacities culminating with the CEO post in 2008 at Zara Investment Holdings, a \$400 million company and Jordan's largest five-star hotel owning company. Throughout the 1990s Annab held positions at Johnson & Johnson and the International Monetary Fund in marketing, finance and research. She served as board director for various hospitality and financial companies, and has worked in various countries in Europe, the Arab world, and the U.S.



John Barratt,
President &
CEO
Teague

John Barratt is president and CEO of legendary design consultancy Teague. Founded in 1926 by design icon Walter Dorwin Teague, Teague is considered one of the most established and respected design consultancies in the world. For the past two decades, Barratt has dedicated his time to strengthening Teague's partnerships with some of the world's leading travel and technology brands such as Microsoft, The Boeing Company, Emirates Airline, Toyota and Intel, and pushing Teague's longstanding mission "to build a new and better world" into the 21st century.



Eric Breon,
Co-Founder &
CEO
Vacasa

Eric Breon co-founded Vacasa in November 2009 after acquiring the responsibility of managing a family member's vacation home, and has since grown the company from two to 1,400 employees, with 96 percent year-over-year compounding revenue growth. Prior to Vacasa, Breon co-founded Oregon Green Solutions, and within 12 months achieved energy savings equivalent to taking 200 homes off the grid, at no cost to customers. Breon's background is in venture capital and analytics.



Geoff Ballotti,
President &
CEO
Wyndham Hotel Group

Geoff Ballotti is president and CEO of Wyndham Hotel Group, leading a team responsible for the strategic direction, operation, growth and performance of the business and its 8,000+ hotels across 19 iconic brands in 79+ countries all united by the award-winning loyalty program Wyndham Rewards. Ballotti previously served six years as president and CEO of Wyndham Exchange & Rentals, the leader in vacation exchange and the world's largest professionally managed vacation rentals business. Ballotti spent 20 years in various leadership positions across Europe and North America at Starwood Hotels & Resorts.



Edward H. Bastian,
CEO
Delta Air Lines

As CEO of Delta Air Lines, Edward H. Bastian's primary responsibility is to champion the company's employee-driven, customer-focused culture and inspire the spirit of innovation that is the foundation of Delta's success. An 18-year Delta veteran, he is committed to putting Delta's shared values of honesty, integrity, respect, perseverance and servant leadership at the core of every decision. Under Bastian's leadership, Delta is focused on operating the nation's most reliable and customer-centric airline; expanding its global footprint; and striving to become the airline of choice for the next generation of travelers.



Luke Bujarski,
Research Director
Skift

Luke Bujarski is a seasoned analyst and expert on the topic of technology adoption as it relates to online distribution in travel. He has written reports and opinion pieces on the future of travel in the context of markets, tech evolution, and brand competitiveness. Prior to Skift, Bujarski was Phocuswright's research director responsible for Europe and Latin America. He has presented findings at Phocuswright Europe, WTM London, WTM Latin America, and other events. Bujarski also has years of cross-industry expertise working in consulting out of Chicago, London, and Barcelona.



Julie Cary,
EVP & CMO
La Quinta Inns &
Suites

Julie Cary is the EVP and chief marketing officer for La Quinta hotels. As a results-driven CMO, she oversees the company's brand, ecommerce, loyalty, guest insights and analytics, and partnership initiatives, and helps define customer experience strategy. Cary joined La Quinta in 2006. Prior to her role at La Quinta, Cary held marketing leadership roles at Brinker, Dean Foods, Gerber Products Company and Ralston Purina. She received her M.B.A. from Washington University and holds a B.S. in business administration from the University of Illinois.



Richard D. Fain,
Chairman & CEO
Royal Caribbean
Cruises Ltd.

Richard D. Fain serves as chairman and chief executive officer of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. (RCL). RCL owns and operates Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises and is part of joint ventures that operate TUI Cruises, Pullmantour and SkySea Cruises. Fain became the cruise line company's chairman and CEO in 1988, and has guided its growth to its current place on the S&P 500, as well as its listing by the Ethisphere Institute as a 2016 World's Most Ethical Company. Fain holds a B.S. from the University of California at Berkeley and an M.B.A. from the Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania.



**Julian Guerrero
Orozco FLS,**
VP of Tourism
ProColombia

Julian Guerrero's career spans over 20 years in government, diplomacy, academia and business in Colombia, Europe and Africa, where he consolidated his projects for the conservation of nature under the approach of smart experiential travel. He is a lawyer and holds a degree in international relations from the LSE, in wildlife filmmaking at the American University and at Wildeye. He is a member at the Wildlife Film, a fellow of the Linnean Society, trained in nature/safari guidance. He also holds an ICS certification on birds and botany. He is an avid sailor, certified RYA Yachtmaster. Married with two children.



Jason Clampet,
Co-Founder &
Editor-in-Chief
Skift

Jason Clampet is the co-founder and editor-in-chief of Skift, the most-visited travel industry news site in the U.S., and a veteran of digital travel media. As Skift's head of content development, he has unique insight into travel trends affecting both businesses and consumers through Skift's daily news coverage, its twice-monthly Research Reports, and regular conversations with industry leaders. He's also a widely quoted expert on the travel industry for CNN, The New York Times, BBC, and other media. Prior to Skift, Clampet was the online editor of Frommers.com, wrote books for Rough Guides, and held multiple roles at CitySearch.



Roland Fasel,
COO
Aman

Roland Fasel was appointed COO of Aman in February 2017. He oversees all facets of Aman's intricate hotel, resort and private residence operations and will define the future vision and strategy of this special brand. Formerly general manager of The Dorchester and regional director for Dorchester Collection, Fasel has over 25 years of experience within the hospitality industry. Fasel is a graduate from Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne in his native Switzerland and later went on to gain an M.B.A. from Golden Gate University in San Francisco.



Kristen Hawley,
Senior Editor
Skift Table

Kristen Hawley is senior editor at Skift Table, fanatically focused on the business of dining out. Prior to working on the recent launch of Skift Table, she wrote and distributed the Chefs+Tech weekly newsletter, acquired by Skift last year, covering the evolving 21st century restaurant experience. In addition to various editorial positions, she has worked with clients including the National Restaurant Association, OpenTable, Salido, Upserve, and others in the restaurant technology industry.



Mark D'Arcy,
Chief Creative
Officer
Facebook

Mark D'Arcy is chief creative officer of the Facebook creative shop. In this role, he leads a team of creative strategists in 18 cities around the world tasked with creating and building ideas that transform how the world's largest and most innovative marketers use Facebook to drive business growth.

After two decades working as a writer and chief creative officer in advertising and media, D'Arcy joined Facebook in 2011 to better explore the creative potential of the Facebook platform.



Glenn Fogel,
CEO
The Priceline Group

Glenn D. Fogel is a 17-year veteran of The Priceline Group, serving as CEO since January 2017. Previously, he was head of strategy and planning, and EVP of corporate development. Fogel has been responsible for global corporate strategy, worldwide M&A, business development initiatives and strategic alliances, helping lead the company during a long period of sustained growth. Prior to Priceline Group, Fogel worked in investment banking and asset management at various firms, including Morgan Stanley. Fogel is a graduate of Harvard Law School and the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.



Stephen Kaufer,
CEO
TripAdvisor

Stephen Kaufer co-founded TripAdvisor in 2000 with the mission to help travelers around the world plan and book the perfect trip. Under his leadership, TripAdvisor has grown into the largest travel site in the world. As CEO, Kaufer has led the growth of TripAdvisor, Inc., which includes 24 other travel media brands that operate in 48 markets worldwide. Kaufer holds several software patents. He is on the board of directors at Classdoor, CarGurus, and the Neuroendocrine Tumor Research Foundation. Kaufer has a degree in computer science from Harvard University.

Speaker Bios



Natasha Kuhlkin,
Managing Director &
Portfolio Manager
Jennison Associates

Natasha Kuhlkin, CFA, is a managing director and a large cap growth portfolio manager and research analyst. She joined Jennison Associates in May 2004. Prior to Jennison, Kuhlkin was an equity research analyst at Palisade Capital Management, covering the consumer staples and cyclicals sectors. From 1998 to 2003, Kuhlkin was with Evergreen Investment Management, where she was an analyst for the Evergreen Small Cap Value Fund. She received a B.S. magna cum laude, in accounting from Binghamton University.



Rene Mack,
President
Percepture

Rene Mack is the president of Percepture. Prior to this he led Weber Shandwick's Travel Practice for 18 years and earned the HSMAL Lifetime Achievement Award. He's also an Eagle Scout, been a fine dining restaurant reviewer, and sung in the Metropolitan Opera, a rare native New Yorker. He's said he's kept travel brands out of the news as much as he tries to keep them in the news.



Christopher Nassetta,
President & CEO
Hilton Worldwide

Christopher Nassetta is president and CEO of Hilton. He joined the company in 2007.

Previously, Nassetta was president and CEO of Host Hotels & Resorts, Inc., a position he held since 2000. He joined Host in 1995 as executive vice president and was elected chief operating officer in 1997.

Before joining Host, Nassetta co-founded Bailey Capital Corporation, where he was responsible for the operations of the real estate investment and advisory firm. Prior to founding Bailey Capital Corporation, he spent seven years at The Oliver Carr Company, ultimately serving as chief development officer.



Christian Langer,
Chief Digital Officer
Lufthansa Group

Christian Langer was selected as process owner digital strategy, innovation and transformation for the Lufthansa Group in February 2017. In this role he leads the digital transformation of Lufthansa Group. In addition, Langer is responsible for the product division digital fleet solutions at Lufthansa Technik in January 2017 with the recently announced MRO platform "Aviatar." Langer was born in 1971, and studied computer science at the University of Koblenz. He was awarded a doctorate in economics from the WHU – Otto Beisheim School of Management.



Mark Mahaney,
Managing Director &
Analyst
RBC Capital Markets

Mark Mahaney has served as a managing director and analyst at RBC Capital Markets, LLC, Research Division since January 2013. He covers internet stocks at the firm.

Prior to this, Mahaney was a research analyst at Citigroup Inc, Research Division. He has worked at the State Department and also held positions on Wall Street at Galleon Management, L.P. He was also an equity analyst at Gleacher & Company, Inc., Research Division and research analyst at Morgan Stanley, Research Division.

He was named the number one Internet analyst for five consecutive years, by Institutional Investor magazine.



Danny Meyer,
CEO
Union Square
Hospitality Group

Danny Meyer is the CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group, which includes Union Square Cafe, Gramercy Tavern, Blue Smoke, Jazz Standard, The Modern, Maialino, Untitled, North End Grill, Marta, Union Square Events, and Hospitality Quotient.



Sven-Olof Lindblad,
CEO
Lindblad
Expeditions

Sven-Olof Lindblad launched his small ship expedition travel company in 1979, offering innovative and educational voyages to the world's most remote places. In 2004 he formed a strategic alliance with National Geographic that combines the strengths of two pioneers in global exploration, with the goal of inspiring people to explore and care about the planet. Today, Lindblad's fleet of 11 ships provides extraordinary global experiences to 20,000 guests annually.



Kathy Tan Mayor,
CMO
Carnival
Cruise Line

Kathy Tan Mayor has been the CMO of Carnival Cruise Line since May 2016. She is responsible for driving the brand's marketing strategy across digital, e-commerce, advertising, guest loyalty and PR. She worked at Las Vegas Sands Corp. serving as global SVP of strategy, CRM and e-commerce. In that role she led Sands' corporate marketing efforts in marketing technology, data science and market research, and then led Sands China's digital marketing, social marketing and e-commerce product management. Mayor holds an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School and a B.S. in management engineering.



Greg Oates,
Executive Editor
SkiftX

Greg Oates is the executive editor of SkiftX exploring the future of urban tourism development, the global meetings and events industry, and the rise of cities as digital platforms. As an advocate for business events that leverage the collective knowledge of all participants both online and offline, he is often asked to speak about trends reshaping the meetings sector. Prior to Skift, Oates traveled to more than 50 countries on assignment for national trade and consumer media covering tourism and hospitality development strategy.



Sean O'Neill,
Travel Tech Editor
Skift

Sean O'Neill is the travel tech editor at Skift, covering enterprise vendors, startups, and other sources of innovation. He has talked about travel industry issues for MSNBC, CNN, and ABC News, among other outlets. Prior to Skift, he was most recently editor-in-chief of Tnooz and the travel tech columnist at BBC Travel.



René Redzepi,
Chef & Co-Owner
Noma

René Redzepi is chef & co-owner of Noma in Copenhagen. Since 2003, Redzepi has developed a cuisine that draws from the area's landscape and culture. Using a network of farmers, foragers, and others, Noma celebrates the region's ingredients and aims to present cooking that expresses its location and the seasons.

Redzepi authored Noma: Time and Place in Nordic Cuisine and A Work in Progress. In 2008, he founded the Nordic Food Lab, an independent research organization. And in 2011, he founded the MAD Symposium, a gathering of chefs and food lovers.



Andrew Sheivachman,
Senior Writer
Skift

Andrew Sheivachman is senior writer at Skift. He's covered a variety of travel industry subjects throughout his career, ranging from tourism and cruising to government affairs and travel distribution. He currently co-edits Skift's Corporate Travel Innovation Report.



Mark Okerstrom,
President & CEO
Expedia, Inc.

Mark Okerstrom is president and CEO of Expedia, Inc. and also a member of Expedia's board of directors. Previously, Okerstrom served as Expedia's EVP of operations, and CFO since September 2011. As CFO, Okerstrom was responsible for all aspects of finance, including planning and analysis, accounting, tax, treasury, internal audit, procurement, real estate, and investor relations, as well as corporate strategy and M&A.

Prior to Expedia, Okerstrom worked with Bain & Company, UBS Investment Bank and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer. Okerstrom is currently a member of the supervisory board of trivago, N.V., a majority-owned subsidiary of Expedia.



Hannah Sampson,
News Editor
Skift

Hannah Sampson is the news editor at Skift covering the cruise industry, corporate travel, and theme parks. She also hosts the Skift podcast. Before joining Skift, she reported for the Miami Herald, where her assignments included breaking news, city government, education, courts, and business. Most recently, she wrote about airlines, cruise lines, hotels, destination marketing, and attractions for the newspaper's business section. Sampson was born in Miami and graduated from the University of Miami with a degree in journalism. She presently lives in Manhattan with her husband and two dogs.



Arne Sorenson,
President & CEO
Marriott
International Inc.

Arne Sorenson is president and CEO of Marriott International, Inc., the largest lodging company in the world. He joined Marriott in 1996. He became the third CEO in the company's history in 2012 — and the first without the Marriott surname. Prior to that, he served as Marriott's president and chief operating officer. He was elected to Marriott's board of directors in 2011. He is a graduate of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa and the University of Minnesota Law School.



Dan Peltier,
Tourism Reporter
Skift

Dan Peltier writes about destination marketing and tourism trends and is employee #10 at Skift. Having joined Skift in year two of its five-plus year journey, he has reported on topics including the U.S.-Cuba tourism detente, overtourism, the rise of the influential Chinese outbound market and the evolving role of destination marketing organizations. He has reported for Skift from places such as Cuba, Colombia, Spain and Thailand and regularly interviews global tourism leaders. An Eagle Scout to his core, he enjoys creating content that helps travel brands understand their industry and stay ahead of the trends.



Dennis Schaal,
Executive Editor/
Founding Editor
Skift

Dennis Schaal was a member of Skift's founding team in 2012 as employee #1. In addition to his executive editor duties, he writes about online travel and identifies trends in the most dynamic sector in e-commerce. Among his notable accomplishments at Skift, Schaal wrote Skift's groundbreaking, 50,000-word Definitive Oral History of Online Travel, tracing online travel's evolution from its earliest days to the mid-2000s through the words of the founders and CEOs who built the sector. In his prior work, Schaal contributed to USA Today, Phocuswright, Tnooz, and Travel Weekly.



Brian Sumers,
Aviation Business
Editor
Skift

Brian Sumers covers the global aviation business for Skift from Los Angeles, with a focus on technology and innovation. Before joining Skift in June 2016, he wrote about airlines for several publications, including Conde Nast Traveler, Aviation Week, and the Los Angeles Times. Sumers is a magna cum laude graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, and he has a master's degree in journalism from USC's Annenberg School. Earlier in his career, he reported for the Tampa Bay Times, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and Los Angeles News Group.

Speaker Bios



Bonny Simi,
President
JetBlue Technology
Ventures

Bonny Simi is the president of JetBlue Technology Ventures, the Silicon Valley innovation hub for JetBlue Airway's investment and incubation of emerging startups at the intersection of technology and travel.

Simi joined JetBlue in 2003 and brings more than 25 years of experience in human resources, customer service, aviation, industrial engineering, operations, broadcast journalism, and design thinking experience to her role.

Simi is also an active JetBlue pilot and three-time Olympian in the sport of luge. She graduated from Stanford University with three degrees, including an M.S. in management, an M.S. in engineering, and a B.A. in communications.



Ernest Wooden Jr.,
President & CEO
Los Angeles Tourism
& Convention Board

Ernest Wooden Jr. has been president and CEO of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board since 2013.

Wooden has spent his entire career in the hospitality industry, including over a decade in senior leadership positions with Hilton Hotels Corporation. Wooden also worked with Sheraton Hotels and Resorts, Omni Hotels & Resorts, Doubletree by Hilton and Promus Hotel Corporation.

Wooden holds a bachelor's degree in business administration and a master's degree in management science from Thomas Edison State College.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Michael Jaconi,**
Co-Founder & CEO
Button

Michael Jaconi is the co-founder and CEO of Button, the world's leading mobile partnership platform. Jaconi formerly served as the CEO of Rakuten Loyalty and executive officer of parent company Rakuten. Jaconi helped build Rakuten Loyalty from a fledgling state to a multimillion-dollar business in less than two years and led Rakuten's \$100 million investment in Pinterest, helping bolster Rakuten's position as one of the most innovative and aggressive global internet companies. Prior to his tenure at Rakuten, Jaconi cofounded two public affairs companies and has been a lifelong entrepreneur.



Deanna Ting,
Hospitality Editor
Skift

Deanna Ting is the hospitality editor at Skift. Prior to joining Skift, she has been an editor for travel trade publications that include: Successful Meetings, Incentive, Travel Agent, Luxury Travel Advisor, and TravelAge West. Her writing has won accolades from the Jesse H. Neal Awards, the Azbees, FOLIO: Eddie Awards, and the North American Travel Journalists Association. Most recently, she wrote Skift's Complete Oral History of Boutique Hotels. A graduate of UCLA and a native Angeleno, she currently lives in New York City.



Alex Zozaya,
CEO
Apple Leisure Group

Alex Zozaya is chief executive officer of Apple Leisure Group (ALG), a hospitality powerhouse comprised of Apple Vacations®, Travel Impressions®, CheapCaribbean.com®, AMResorts®, Amstar dmc® and Unlimited Vacation Club®. With more than 30 years of industry experience, including 11 years as AMResorts' founder and president, Zozaya has driven the Group's record-breaking growth and secured ALG's status as the world's leading provider of North American leisure travelers to Mexico and the Caribbean. In addition, he has guided the growth of AMResorts' portfolio, which will include more than 60 hotels throughout eight countries by 2018.



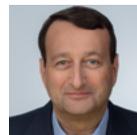
**Brand Talk Speaker
Jonathan Keane,**
Managing Director,
Aviation
Accenture

Jonathan Keane is the managing director of Accenture's global aviation practice, based in London. Keane has spent nearly 20 years working with the world's leading airlines, hotels, tour operators and travel agents across Europe, North America, Asia Pacific and the Middle East to define and deliver programs of significant business change. Keane is also responsible for Seabury Consulting — Accenture's recent acquisition — a move designed to help the world's leading airlines accelerate the pace of digital transformation. Keane previously headed Oliver Wyman's global aviation practice and London office.



Patrick Whyte,
Europe Editor
Skift

Patrick Whyte is the Europe Editor of Skift and is based in London where he covers the European travel industry. Prior to joining the company, he spent more than four years working at TTC, the world's longest-running travel trade newspaper. He has also worked at The Guardian, The Evening Standard and AOL.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Bruno Chauvat,**
CEO & Co-Founder
Travelsify

Bruno Chauvat is the CEO and co-founder of Travelsify, the world's first hotel DNA content platform. Chauvat has a track record of 20+ years in the media, telecom and technology industries, holding various C-level positions in international listed companies (Proximus, RTL Group, Audiofina) as well as in small entrepreneur ventures. Chauvat's out-of-the-box vision and user-centric approach always led him to pioneer and build disrupting businesses. His deep understanding of the strategic importance of metadata together with his passion for travel account for the success of Travelsify in powering personalized hotel search and discovery.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Kershing Goh,**
Regional Director,
Americas
Singapore Tourism
Board

Kershing Goh serves as the chief of Singapore Tourism Americas. In this capacity Goh leads all planning, business development, marketing and tourism investment promotions efforts in the Americas region, and drives strategies that affirm and enhance Singapore's position as a dynamic, global city. Prior to Singapore, Goh worked for the Abu Dhabi government and has consulted with agencies. She came from a journalism background and graduated from the National University of Singapore. Goh is also an adjunct professor at the New York University (NYU) Tisch Center for Hospitality Tourism and Sports Management.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Jamee Lubkemann**
VP of Strategic
Partnerships &
Marketing
American
Express Travel

Jamee Lubkemann has been with American Express for over 11 years and is currently the vice president of strategic partnerships and marketing for American Express Travel. In this role, she is responsible for managing relationships with key industry partners, as well as leading the marketing strategy for core card member benefits, including Fine Hotels & Resorts®, The Hotel Collection and the International Airline Program. Prior to this role, Lubkemann was the vice president and general manager of American Express Personal Savings, where she oversaw the growth and management of the high-yield savings and deposit portfolio.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Lilian Tomovich,**
Chief Experience
Officer/CMO
MGM Resorts
International

Lilian Tomovich is leading the transformation of marketing at MGM Resorts to drive a consumer-centric organization that fuels the guest experience. With more than 20 years experience in marketing communications, Tomovich truly understands that brands must continuously be reinvented and reinvigorated in order to be successful. Prior to joining MGM, Tomovich was SVP of consumer marketing at MasterCard. Her personal mantra is "Do Better" and a piece of framed artwork in her office reminds her of what she strives for every day.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Julie Hoffmann,**
Head of Industry
Strategy - Travel and
Hospitality
Adobe

Julie Hoffmann is a customer experience-savvy data-driven marketer with 18+ years in ecommerce, digital and loyalty marketing, and 20 years overall in integrated marketing for Fortune 500 companies. Hoffmann is known as a passionate customer advocate who understands how to enhance loyalty while driving revenue across a multi-channel experience. Hoffmann operates as a problem-solver with the ability to define solutions that transform organizations and support operational change. Hoffmann is a leader who believes in team and individual growth and development as critical to overall success.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Jeriad Zoghby,**
Global Personalization
Lead
Accenture Interactive

As the global personalization lead at Accenture Interactive, Jeriad Zoghby's practice enables clients around the world to create unique and curated experiences for their customers seamlessly across channels. Zoghby has a Ph.D. in operations research, holds multiple patents and co-invented Accenture's artificial intelligence technology for advanced audience planning and segmentation. He was recognized in Advertising Age's Marketing Technology Top 25 Trailblazers List in 2017 and has been quoted in publications such as CMO.com, The Drum, MediaPost and Ad Age.



**Brand Talk Speaker
Mike Robinson,**
Marketing Manager
Amadeus Airlines IT

Mike Robinson is marketing manager with the merchandising solutions team at Amadeus Airlines IT. The team works to provide airlines with technology solutions to increase airline revenue, competitiveness and customer satisfaction. Robinson has more than 10 years of experience in marketing, pricing and product development, the last four years in the airline industry. Prior to joining Amadeus, Robinson served as an ancillary program manager at Frontier Airlines in Denver. Before joining the airline industry, Robinson worked with Amazon while building the ebook business for Oxford University Press, the world's largest academic publisher.



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DAY 1

CREATING AWARD-WINNING VIDEO CONTENT WITH BRANDS

presented by:

Tastemade

SPEAKER:

Oren Katzeff, Head of Programming, Tastemade

SESSION DETAILS:

September 26, 1:10pm – 2:10pm

LOCATION:

Dizzy's Club *Coca-Cola*

OVERVIEW:

Tastemade is an award-winning, next-generation global media company that creates television-quality programming and distributes it in the places and ways millennials consume and engage with content. Oren Katzeff, Tastemade's Head of Programming, will share actionable insights about Tastemade's recipe for success: content creation best-practices, the role of data in the content ecosystem, and Tastemade's unique point of view on the travel space.

JOIN THIS WORKSHOP TO LEARN:

- Tastemade's best practices for creating award-winning video content
- How data can inform daily content creation decisions
- How organic storytelling can outshine traditional advertising

SCHEDULE: TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 26

7:30 AM

Doors Open/Breakfast
Sponsored by: International Tourism Partnership

9:00 AM

Welcome to Skift Global Forum 2017
Rafat Ali, Founder & CEO, Skift

9:15 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of The Priceline Group
Glenn Fogel
Moderated by: Dennis Schaal

9:45 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ President & CEO of Hilton Worldwide
Christopher Nassetta
Moderated by: Jason Clampet

10:15 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Chairman & CEO of Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd.
Richard D. Fain
Moderated by: Hannah Sampson

10:45 AM

Networking Break
Sponsored by: BCF Agency

11:15 AM

Deep Dive w/ Head of Industry Strategy - Travel and Hospitality at Adobe and Chief Experience Officer/CMO at MGM Resorts International
Julie Hoffmann, Lilian Tomovich
Sponsored by: Adobe

11:35 AM

Skift Talk w/ President of Percepture
Rene Mack

11:50 AM

Tourism Superpanel w/ President & CEO of Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, VP of Tourism at ProColombia, and Jordanian Minister of Tourism and Antiquities
Ernest Wooden Jr., Julian Guerrero Orozco FLS, Lina Annab
Moderated by: Patrick Whyte & Dan Peltier

12:35 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Chief Digital Officer of Lufthansa Group
Christian Langer
Moderated by: Brian Sumers

1:00 PM

Lunch Break

1:10 PM

Lunch Workshop: Creating Award-Winning Video Content with Brands w/ Head of Programming
Oren Katzeff
Sponsored by: Tastemade

2:15 PM

Deep Dive w/ CEO & Co-Founder of Travelsify and Global Personalization Lead at Accenture Interactive
Bruno Chauvat, Jeriad Zoghby
Moderated by: Greg Oates
Sponsored by: Travelsify

2:25 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ President & CEO of Wyndham Hotel Group
Geoff Ballotti
Moderated by: Deanna Ting

2:50 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group
Danny Meyer
Moderated by: Kristen Hawley

3:20 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Head Chef & Co-Owner of Noma
René Redzepi
Moderated by: Rafat Ali

3:50 PM

Networking Break

4:15 PM

Investor Superpanel w/ Managing Director & Analyst of RBC Capital Markets, Managing Director & Portfolio Manager of Jennison Associates, President of JetBlue Technology Ventures, and Venture Partner of TCV
Mark Mahaney, Natasha Kuhlkin, Bonny Simi, Erik Blachford
Moderated by: Luke Bujarski

4:45 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Co-Founder & CEO of Button
Michael Jaconi
Moderated by: Sean O'Neill
Sponsored by: Button

5:00 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of InterContinental Hotels Group
Keith Barr
Moderated by: Deanna Ting

5:30 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Co-Founder & Chief Strategy Officer of Airbnb
Nathan Blecharczyk
Moderated by: Rafat Ali

6:00- 7:00 PM

Cocktail Reception

SCHEDULE: WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 27

7:30 AM

Doors Open/Breakfast

9:00 AM

Welcome to Day 2
Rafat Ali, Founder & CEO, Skift

9:10 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ President & CEO of Expedia, Inc.
Mark Okerstrom
Moderated by: Dennis Schaal

9:40 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ President & CEO of Marriott International, Inc.
Arne Sorenson
Moderated by: Jason Clampet

10:10 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of Delta Air Lines
Edward H. Bastian
Moderated by: Brian Sumers

10:40 AM

Networking Break

11:10 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Managing Director, Aviation at Accenture
Jonathan Keane
Moderated by: Rafat Ali
Sponsored by: Accenture

11:25 AM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Co-Founder & CEO of Vacasa
Eric Breon
Moderated by: Sean O'Neill

11:50 AM

Skift Talk w/ President & CEO of Teague
John Barratt

12:05 PM

CMO Superpanel w/ CMO of Carnival Cruise Line, CMO of Tourism Australia, and CMO of La Quinta Inns & Suites
Kathy Tan Mayor, Lisa Ronson, Julie Cary
Moderated by: Rafat Ali

12:50 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ VP of Strategic Partnerships and Marketing for American Express Travel
Jamee Lubkemann
Moderated by: Greg Oates
Sponsored by: American Express Travel

1:00 PM

Lunch Break

2:15 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ COO of Aman
Roland Fasel
Moderated by: Greg Oates

2:40 PM

Deep Dive w/ Product Marketing Manager at Amadeus Airlines IT
Mike Robinson
Moderated by: Luke Bujarski
Sponsored by: Amadeus

2:55 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of Apple Leisure Group
Alex Zozaya
Moderated by: Andrew Sheivachman

3:20 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of Lindblad Expeditions
Sven-Olof Lindblad
Moderated by: Hannah Sampson

3:45 PM

Video Interlude
Presented by: Singapore Tourism Board

3:55 PM

Networking Break

4:20 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ CEO of TripAdvisor
Stephen Kaufer
Moderated by: Dennis Schaal

4:50 PM

Deep Dive Q&A w/ Chief Creative Officer of Facebook
Mark D'Arcy
Moderated by: Rafat Ali



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