



WTM Africa Announces Strategic Women-Focused Partnerships for 2026

Industry partnerships aim to challenge male-dominated tourism sector as leadership shift gains momentum

Cape Town, 12 August 2025 – August is Women’s Month in South Africa, but WTM Africa is setting out to make gender empowerment in tourism a year-round priority. Today, WTM Africa unveiled new strategic partnerships for 2026 with Women in MICE and the Women in Tourism (WIT) initiative, two influential networks at the forefront of advancing women across Africa’s travel sector.

These alliances mark a significant milestone for African tourism, where women make up as much as 70% of the workforce, yet continue to be underrepresented at senior levels. In South Africa alone, less than 40% of management positions in tourism are held by women - a gap these collaborations are determined to help close.

Women in MICE will officially unveil their 2026 Awards categories at a high-profile breakfast event hosted at WTM Africa on 15 April 2026. The event will bring together 80 leading women from across the sector and marks the first time a major African travel exhibition has served as the continental launchpad for women's industry recognition.

Antois Leigh Nepgen, Publisher & Owner of Meetings Magazine and the Women in MICE Awards, says: "It's a defining moment for the Women in MICE Awards to partner with WTM Africa for our 2026 launch breakfast. This collaboration is more than symbolic; it's a powerful alignment of purpose. Women are not only shaping the future of tourism and events across the continent, they're driving it. By joining forces with WTM Africa and Women in Tourism, we're creating a high-impact platform that celebrates excellence, fosters leadership, and breaks down the barriers that still exist in our industry. We're honoured to be part of this movement, and we're excited to shine a continental spotlight on the incredible women making waves in MICE and tourism."



The momentum will continue after breakfast with *Women in Tourism* hosting an interactive masterclass led by Michelle Page, Director at Service Gurus and Chairlady of WIT. This session will deliver practical strategies on leadership confidence, personal branding and visibility within the marketplace; key skills needed if more women are to reach executive positions within African travel.

Strategic marketing leader Sherise Dreyer, who will be running the workshop with Michelle Page, emphasises: "Inclusion without accessibility is meaningless. These partnerships are not just changing structures; they are shifting perceptions of who belongs in leadership. For women in the tourism industry, access and equity must become the standard, not the exception."

Michelle Page adds: "Women in Tourism Western Cape is proud to stand alongside the Women in MICE Awards as they launch their 2026 campaign in partnership with WTM Africa. This is more than a launch — it's a statement of intent. The collaboration represents a powerful alignment of vision and values: recognising, celebrating, and amplifying the impact of women who are not just participating in tourism and MICE, but leading its transformation across the continent. Together, we are building a platform that honours excellence, champions leadership, and actively dismantles the barriers that still hinder progress. We are honoured to be part of this movement and excited to shine a well-deserved spotlight on the trailblazing women who are shaping the future of tourism, business events, and beyond."

A second workshop will form part of WTM Africa's NextGen Ready programme: an initiative tackling skills gaps while ensuring future sustainability - and diversity - for African tourism. "By including both the Women in MICE leadership and the NextGen Ready workshops, we are able to emphasize both leadership development and mentorship targeted at young professionals within the Women in MICE and Tourism space," says Olivia Gradidge, Marketing Manager Rx Africa.

As demand grows globally for more inclusive leadership within travel and hospitality sectors, WTM Africa's new partnerships with WIT and Women in MICE (WIM) position the platform as a catalyst for both dialogue and measurable change. The partnerships are especially significant for RX Africa, given the track record of Managing Director Carol Weaving, one of the driving forces



behind WTM Africa, who has earned numerous accolades for her leadership. She was nominated for a 2025 Women in MICE Award and received the Godfrey King Integrity Award from the Southern African Association for the Conference Industry (SAACI). Under her stewardship, RX Africa delivered a 24% uplift in event attendance, a 48% increase in exhibiting countries, and a 46% surge in meeting requests across flagship platforms such as Decorex Africa and WTM Africa.

"These new partnerships are a meaningful extension of our year-round commitment to empowering women in tourism," says Weaving. "By bringing together these powerful networks, we're demonstrating that real change happens when we unite our efforts from the ground up. WTM Africa is a platform for connection, growth, and transformation, and we are proud to collaborate with Women in MICE and Women in Tourism to drive lasting impact in our industry."

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Notes to editors:

Now in its 33rd year, **Arabian Travel Market (ATM)** is the leading international travel and tourism event in the Middle East for inbound and outbound tourism professionals. Held annually at the Dubai World Trade Centre, ATM 2024 spanned 12 halls, making it the largest edition to date. The event attracted over 47,000 attendees and more than 35,000 visitors (including 6,000+ high-value buyers) and over 2,550 exhibitors and representatives from over 161 countries. In 2025, ATM will expand to 13 halls, growing across all sectors, and will continue to be a crucial gathering for the global travel and tourism industry. Arabian Travel Market is part of Arabian Travel Week. #ATMDubai

ATM takes place from 4 - 7 May 2025, at the Dubai World Trade Centre, Dubai.
<https://www.wtm.com/atm/en-gb.html>



Arabian Travel Week is a week-long festival of events alongside Arabian Travel Market 2025. Providing a renewed focus for the Middle East's travel and tourism sector, it includes Start-Up Competition, Influencers' Event, GBTA Business Travel Forums, and ATM Travel Tech. The event also features ATM Buyer Networking and a series of country forums.

<https://www.wtm.com/arabian-travel-week/en-gb.html>

About RX

RX is a global leader in events and exhibitions, leveraging industry expertise, data, and technology to build businesses for individuals, communities, and organisations. With a presence in 25 countries across 42 industry sectors, RX hosts approximately 350 events annually. RX is committed to creating an inclusive work environment for all our people. RX empowers businesses to thrive by leveraging data-driven insights and digital solutions. RX is part of RELX, a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers. For more information, visit www.rxglobal.com.

About RELX

RELX is a global provider of information-based analytics and decision tools for professional and business customers. RELX serves customers in more than 180 countries and has offices in about 40 countries. It employs more than 36,000 people over 40% of whom are in North America. The shares of RELX PLC, the parent company, are traded on the London, Amsterdam and New York stock exchanges using the following ticker symbols: London: REL; Amsterdam: REN; New York: RELX. *Note: Current market capitalisation can be found at <http://www.relx.com/investors>

World Travel Market (WTM) Portfolio comprises leading travel events and online portals across four continents. The events are Arabian Travel Market, WTM London, WTM Latin America and WTM Africa.

WTM London is the world's most influential travel & tourism event for the global travel community. The show is the ultimate destination for those seeking a macro view of the travel industry and a deeper understanding of the forces shaping it. WTM London is where influential travel leaders, buyers and high-profile travel companies gather to exchange ideas, drive innovation, and accelerate business outcomes.

Next event: 4 to 6 November 2025 at ExCel London

<http://london.wtm.com/>

WTM Latin America is held annually in São Paulo and attracts more than 29,000 tourism professionals during the three-day event. The event offers a qualified content combined with networking and business opportunities. In its most recent edition, in 2024, WTM Latin America maintained its focus on the effective generation of business and managed to secure the early scheduling of more than six thousand meetings that were held between buyers, travel agents, and exhibitors. WTM Latin America contents are available in [English](#), [Spanish](#) and [Portuguese](#).

Next event: 14 to 16 April 2026, Expo Center Norte, São Paulo, Brasil

latinamerica.wtm.com



WTM Africa launched in 2014 in Cape Town, South Africa. In 2024, WTM Africa facilitated more than 10 thousand unique pre-scheduled appointments, an increase of more than 8% compared to 2023 and welcomed more than 10 thousand visitors (unaudited), 25% more than 2023.

Next event: 13 to 15 April 2025 – Cape Town International Convention Centre, Cape Town <http://africa.wtm.com/>

About ATW Connect: Africa Travel Week's digital arm, is a virtual hub packed to the seams with interesting content, industry news and insights, and the opportunity to hear from experts on a variety of topics in our new monthly webinar series. All with the aim to keep all of us in the travel and tourism industry connected. ATW Connect focuses on inbound and outbound markets for general leisure tourism, luxury travel and the MICE/business travel sector as well as travel technology.

<https://atwconnect.com/>

WTM Global Hub, is the WTM Portfolio online portal created to connect and support travel industry professionals around the world. The resource hub offers the latest guidance and knowledge to help exhibitors, buyers and others in the travel industry face the challenges of the global coronavirus pandemic. WTM Portfolio is tapping into its global network of experts to create content for the hub. <https://hub.wtm.com/>