

# **ILTM 2019 - The Year of Civil Unrest**

## **Nor is it fun for us in the Hospitality Industry!**

The ILTM (International Luxury Travel Market) 2019 in Cannes, was to be the largest ILTM conference of all time! The conference started very positively and everyone seemed to feel elated with the turnout.

ILTM introduces global travel buyers to an unrivalled collection of international travel and hotel companies. The ILTM acts like a relationship broker and provides a platform to do business and build relationships.



### **Then The News Hit**

The exhibitors I spoke to said there was lots of business being written, well above expectations. The consensus it was going to be a great year in the luxury hotel segment, then the news hit. The French transportation industry was told by the French government that it planned to take all of their 45 different pension programs and compress them into one program.

Because of this plan the French trains, buses, and taxi unions said that they were going on strike and the airline controllers said that they were also going to strike in sympathy. They promised a shutdown, during the ILTM. Therefore, it meant that most senior executives and buyers who could leave early did so, and a three day show became a one day and a bit conference ... and so the show ended badly...

We all know how fragile our business can be. Just ask a Hotel General Manager in Paris, whose hotel is on the Champs-Élysées about his almost non-existent weekend business, or hotels in Hong Kong due to the recent disruption, or the fires in Australia now.

It is extremely challenging in the best of times to maintain a solid occupancy and a good ADR, but add political issues like Brexit, climate changes, droughts, forest fires and floods makes it really is tough! We must give credit to the hoteliers who tackle all of these adversities and still make money for their hotel companies, and far more important make profits for their owners.

## **Statistics about ILTM 2019**

- **Over 80 countries were represented at ILTM 2019 and**
- **Exhibitors and buyers booked over 10,000 room nights in Cannes and**
- **Over 72,000 appointments were arranged**

ILTM 2019 marked the launch of ILTM's Year of Health and Wellness with a community of wellness experts that all drew the same conclusion. In the future, all travel will be wellness travel, every trip is expected to enhance the physical, mental and social well-being of the traveler. Transformation will be the very promise of travel and self.

***Below are answers to the questions that I asked exhibitors at the ILTM and their replies:***

### **1 - Is ILTM Cannes still the premier Luxury forum?**

Opinion said ILTM Cannes is still one of the most effective available platforms to develop and maintain connections with the luxury trade. That being said others commented that they also attend other fairs who also deliver vetted buyers aligned with their target markets i.e. LE Miami, Traveler Made, ILTM Singapore, Further East).

### **2 - Who else is the new pretender to throne of finest luxury travel show on the globe?**

Many said they did not see another conference or one being better than any of the others. Hence they didn't think there is a throne to win, all agreed ILTM Cannes is the most global show, and the others focus onto defined communities and other segments of the industry.

### **3 – Are Luxury Travel shows still targeting the right buyers? How can ILTM improve?**

A fair comment was "there is always the inevitable low potential encounter, yet the gains of attending the ILTM largely surpass that issue. The large majority of meetings are beneficial to any organization. The identification of the potential a specific buyer brings towards your products and services can be improved". Some offered advice that was "exhibitors should also consider to investing Artificial Intelligence and Data Analysis while keeping the human interaction at the core of the event".

### **4 – Has our industry changed and adapted?**

Overall responses were: "It does for having to adapt to the increase of choices of services, products and destinations, as well accepting diversification of the market segmentation to the changing values and lifestyle of the guests. One exhibitor believed adapting to change is a matter of survival since beginning of time". Most everyone indicated all are respecting diversity and its impact as well as the demand in term of wellbeing and curated offers.

## 5 – In the final analysis what was your accomplishments at ILTM 2019 and expectations for 2020

Even though due to transportation strike where the conference emptied faster than normal; a consensus countered “our success was that we have enlarged our contact base and imitated new partnerships that look promising”.

As for speculations on 2020, the serious experienced professionals who have been in our industry for decades and whom I was able to meet were unanimous in the belief 2020 will be a year of “**growth and uncertainty**”. Tourism is becoming erratic in some areas they said, and the instability is quite perceivable; yet we remain optimist and confident of a positive outcome in 2020.