



MEXICO'S PRESIDENT FELIPE CALDERÓN INAUGURATED THE ADVENTURE TRAVEL WORLD SUMMIT WITH A STIRRING AND PASSIONATE SPEECH ABOUT THE POTENTIAL TOURISM HAS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE PEOPLE AND ECONOMY OF MEXICO.



THE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY PAVILION WAS OPEN TO LOCALS AND SUMMIT DELEGATES AND SHOWCASED SOME OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM INITIATIVES THROUGHOUT MEXICO.



SUMMIT DELEGATES HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN A NUMBER OF PRE- AND POST-EVENT ADVENTURES, LIKE THIS ONE TO BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR.



THE AFAR EXCHANGE GLOBAL MARKETPLACE GAVE SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET AND DO BUSINESS WITH 100 SUPPLIERS FROM DESTINATIONS AROUND THE WORLD.

AGENT INVOLVEMENT

Travel Weekly spoke with Summit speaker Leilani Latimer, director of sustainability initiatives, Sabre Holdings, about agent involvement in responsible tourism:

• **“U.S. TRAVEL AGENTS HAVE A GREAT OPPORTUNITY** to promote sustainable travel to their customers as a value add, and as a point of differentiation. I don't think the majority of U.S. agents have understood how to capitalize on this yet. The second big opportunity for agents is to understand how integrating sustainability into their businesses and into their services will help them achieve their goals—creating deeper customer engagement, loyalty and measurable value.

• **Too often people view sustainable travel as niche or just eco-tourism, but it's so much more than that. Our industry is uniquely positioned to not only reduce the footprint of travel, but to use TRAVEL AS AN AGENT OF CHANGE** to create prosperity for our societies, cultures, people, economies and environment.

• **My advice is for agents to figure out their INDIVIDUAL OPPORTUNITY** with sustainable travel, and then their **COLLECTIVE OPPORTUNITY** with their suppliers, customers and other key stakeholders. We need to move sustainable travel beyond a “feel good” moment and treat it as a core business dynamic.

The 8th annual Adventure Travel World Summit, held in San Cristobal de las Casas in Chiapas, Mexico, Oct. 17–20, 2011, drew a sold-out delegation of 650 industry representatives and international press from 50 nations. Sponsored by the Adventure Travel Trade Association, the Summit had highly visible support and participation from Mexico's state and national tourism ministries and the national government. Mexico President Felipe Calderón delivered the inaugural address—a first in the Summit's history—and the Mexican government made a significant financial investment to host the event, including \$40 million to revitalize the various venues where Summit events were staged in the colonial center of the city. Noted Juan Carols Caly, minister of tourism for the state of Chiapas, “This is proof of the commitment Mexico has to this sector, and the importance adventure tourism has for the development of tourism for this country.”

Nowhere was the theme of Summit—“prosper with purpose”—more eloquently conveyed than in the event's inaugural address by Mexican President Felipe Calderón.

Adventure travel is not only about how to take travelers to marvelous and magical places, nor is it solely about creating a good business, he told a capacity audience of 800 at the Hermanos Dominguez Theatre during Monday night's opening event. Rather, the President said, adventure travel has “deeper purposes,” including the “opportunity for engagement” among the people who have been most marginalized due to racial and cultural issues. President Calderón spoke with passion about the capacity of tourism to correct inequalities, generate jobs and protect natural resources. “We need our natural resources to be preserved so the people who live there can live with dignity from the income the visitor brings,” he said.

The President's love for and pride in Mexico shone with a particular brightness when he spoke of “the great natural wealth and cultural wealth” of the country, which is home to 112 million

people, including 4 million indigenous people. “Most of all, what Mexico has to give to the world,” he added, “something even more important, is its people. When a Mexican says, “This is your home,” we mean it. We are a very hospitable people. **We are people who love to receive.** It's in our nature, it's in our DNA. Mexico is a joy we want to share.”

In his opening address, **Shannon Stowell, president of the Adventure Travel Trade Assn. (ATTA)**, commented on his meeting with President Calderon in Cancun in 2010. In a brief conversation, Stowell said he was “humbled and amazed at the President's commitment to tourism in general but **responsible adventure tourism** specifically.” Stowell jokingly noted that President Calderon is undoubtedly the first head of state to mention the words “adventure travel” in a public forum.

DEEPER PURPOSES

Stowell also addressed the deeper purposes of adventure travel, which, by its very nature, has a more intimate and

symbiotic relationship with the natural environment and local people than mainstream tourism.

He noted that, “while finances are a critical part of sustainability, God forbid that this be our only goal. The demonstrations worldwide occupying financial districts in protest of greed and abuse are an indicator that we are not alone in our determination to do better as stewards of precious people and places. Reducing poverty, protecting the environment, protecting wildlife, nurturing unique cultures—this is our business. We are the lucky, the ones who get to **merge mission with method.**”

That theme was evident in the topics and speakers chosen for keynote presentations: Tensie Whelan of the Rainforest Alliance spoke about ‘profitable conservation’; Bruce Poon Tip of G Adventures covered ‘innovative entrepreneurship’; Martha Isabel Ruiz Corzo spoke of the community-based Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve; in a video presentation, former New Mexico governor Bill Richardson spoke about tourism as a force for peace; Leilani Latimer of Sabre Holdings spoke of a

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— MEXICAN PRESIDENT FELIPE CALDERÓN, DURING HIS INAUGURAL ADDRESS AT THE SUMMIT

new perspective on sustainable tourism; and Maryan Fernandez of Philanthropy Indaba covered ‘philanthropy and corporate social responsibility.’

The ‘method’ dimension of merging mission with method was not neglected; a marketplace/trade show included more than 100 exhibitors who set up in the Courtyard of El Carmen Cultural Center to meet, cultivate business relationships, and engage in product development discussions. The Summit also featured **in-depth presentations on trends** shaping the world at large and adventure travel in particular, as well as business-focused workshops on risk management, media and public relations, marketing and distribution, brand development, and web and digital strategy. Two-part workshops on indigenous tourism and voluntourism included presentations, discussion of issues and challenges, and development of action-oriented solutions.

CONSUMER VALUES

Key trends and research in tourism, adventure travel, various business sec-

tors, and **consumer motivation** were presented during a Summit session covering macro trends shaping the industry. Six trends required for success in the current climate were identified, culled from the multiple sources, including the need to cultivate an ecosystem, enable mobility, empower consumers, stay local, engage in emerging markets, and take note of the ‘spend shift’ movement based on changing consumer values.

The spend shift trend among consumers was derived from Young & Rubicam's Brand Asset Valuator (BAV), a poll of consumer values, attitudes, and behaviors that includes a million consumers in 50 countries over 20 years. That poll showed significant shifts in what consumers currently value. Of decreased importance: exclusivity was down 60%, sensuous was down 30%, and daring was down 20%. Of **increased importance to consumers:** socially responsible was up 63%, friendly was up 148%, and **kindness/empathy was up 391%.**

NOTEABLE QUOTES

Former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson submitted a video to the Summit that addressed his perspective on the **power of travel and tourism to bring peace** to the world. Richardson spoke of tourism's ability to function as a healing force, and as an “antidote to strained relationships.” Citing New Mexico's identification of and support of ecotourism development, he said, “The key is not becoming something you are not, but embracing the culture and landscape that exists in its own right where you already stand.” He noted that adventure travel has an estimated \$89 billion impact on the global economy, and identified the need to shift the mindset of mainstream tourism.

ATTA president Shannon Stowell said, “We see adventure travel as an opportunity to help adjust, or change, or add to, the image of Mexico tourism. **It's not just sun and beach,** it's not just all-inclusive resorts. There are really rich cultural, environmental and wildlife opportunities available. Archaeology, nature, culture—it's all here. We want to tell that story.”

A NEW MODEL

A U.S. based kayak manufacturer, the Mexico Tourism Board, and the Tourism Department of the State of Veracruz have forged a **PUBLIC-PRIVATE TRAINING AND MARKETING PARTNERSHIP** designed to expand the manufacturer's business while expanding adventure travel in the state. The project, announced during the ATTA Summit, was described by Jackson Kayak founder and president Eric Jackson as “industry-to-go” and bringing in “business in a box.” Later this year the kayak company will help train people and leave in place the boats and techniques to help adventure travel outfitters in whitewater, touring, and kayak fishing in Veracruz enhance their businesses.

During the same two-week period Jackson Kayak's top paddlers, accompanied by adventure photographers and writers, will generate multimedia images and stories for all three partners to use for marketing purposes. Describing the team that will be in Veracruz to “capture the beauty and the essence of the places we are going,” Corey Rich of Jackson Kayak said, “I hope we blow the world away with the visual content that comes from this opportunity.” Chris Doyle, ATTA vice president, described the project as “a new model” of public-private partnership in the tourism industry with global implications.