

TRAVEL FAIRS: CANCELLATIONS FOLLOWED BY VIRTUAL EVENTS



The WTM in London in November will only be held virtually. Meanwhile, the IFTM in Paris is officially cancelled after a postponement. More and more travel fairs turn to the virtual option.

The shock was big in March, when the ITB, the world's largest and most important tourism trade fair, was cancelled at short notice. **The consequences of the Corona crisis became clear to many tourism professionals for the first time.** As a result, other trade fairs that were scheduled later were also gradually cancelled, not without first having been postponed, such as the IPW in the USA, the Arabian Travel Market in Dubai.

In the meantime, the IFTM in Paris (formerly known as "Top Resa") suffered the same fate: The event usually takes place at the end of September and was initially postponed weeks ago to new dates in mid-November as a precautionary measure. However, the trade fair operators quickly realized that the uncertainty was too great for potential exhibitors, especially since trade fairs with over 5,000 visitors are still prohibited in France until at least the end of October. For this reason, IFTM has now been definitively cancelled; the next date specified is 28.09. - 01.10.2021.

Are any trade fairs still taking place? The 26th International Russian Travel Market took place from September 8-10 at the Skolkovo Center in Moscow. According to reports, it was a somewhat smaller event, but with booths from tourist offices, such as those of China and Cuba, but also from Spain. Not yet canceled is for example also the "TTG Incontri" in Rimini, whose 57th edition of 14 -16 October is to rise.

A Virtual Mega Fair: Will It Be Successful?

The second-largest tourism fair of the world, the World Travel Market (WTM) in London will also take place but not "live".

"For 40 years you've been coming to us; WTM London 2020 is coming to you now," the fair operator Reed Exhibitions communicates on the WTM website. Meaning: For the first time in the 40-year history of WTM, the event is only virtual. The virtual event will take place from 9 -11 November and aims to help the travel industry get back on its feet by means of (virtual) networking and information on comeback strategies and opportunities. Live conferences and forums, speed networking sessions, virtual one-to-one meetings and more are planned.

The original plan had been to offer a mixture of live exhibitions and virtual follow-ups, but this has been thwarted. Due to the increasing number of cases throughout Europe and recent restrictions on the staging of larger events, **a live trade fair no longer stood a reasonable chance.** The increasing number of travel restrictions (entry bans or quarantine obligations) and the resulting travel uncertainty made it impossible to hold a trade fair with trade visitors from all over the world.

The "FVW Congress" recently proved that it is also possible to be purely virtual. From August 31 to

September 3, there were online sessions and virtual panel discussions that could be followed via streaming. The advantage: All sessions were recorded and could be accessed online afterwards.

The virtual form seems to have proven its worth for specialist congresses - but for public exhibitions, there is hardly any conceivable alternative.

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