

Q&A

COLIN STEWART, CHAIRMAN, LATIN AMERICAN TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

INTERVIEW BY Clare Vooght

Q. Lata's 10th Expo is coming up in June – what's in store this year?

A. The theme of this year's Lata Expo is the power of tourism, and how tourism is a force for good. I think sometimes we get a bit lost thinking about the challenges we have to overcome in this industry, but actually we're excited about looking at how tourism benefits not just the social but the economic aspects of our lives. It's a catalyst for growth in local economies; it provides jobs and fuels innovation; and it drives funds and visibility for important conservation initiatives. These are all things that Lata stands for too, and we're excited to hold the Lata Expo face-to-face again.

Q. Can you share anything about the special events you have planned?

A. We're expanding the ministerial think tank we introduced last year, bringing together the key influencers and decision makers within each of the Latin American destinations to discuss how the region can better promote itself and work together.

Q. How is Lata trying to encourage countries to work together more closely?

A. Co-ordinating and promoting a country's unique selling points in a way that benefits the whole region will ultimately come back in that country's favour. That's because when people go to Latin America, [many] do multi-destination and multi-city visits. The UK is one of the key markets for Latin America, and we feel Lata can be that central



Costa Rica

“Our roadshows are a chance for agents to meet with the exhibitors and find out more about Latin America



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point – we're based in the UK, we understand the market and we have a really good feel for what's happening here.

Q. You debuted Lata's first agent programme at last year's Expo – how did that go?

A. We had a dedicated area within Lata Expo where we were able to bring together a number of destinations and tour operators to create an agent-specific training session. And we had 30-35 agents turn up – some familiar with Latin America and some not. We were really happy with the feedback we had from agents. So for this year, we're looking at how we can expand on that and how we can develop that agent element. We'd encourage agents to follow Lata on Facebook and to stay posted on all of our agent activity, because we are really looking at pushing that forward.

Q. Lata is also debuting its first agent roadshows in March. What can attendees expect?

A. We'll take destinations, including Colombia, Argentina, Belize, Puerto Vallarta, Buenos Aires and Nicaragua, as well as other exhibitors, such as Journey Latin America, Latin Routes, Abercrombie & Kent, Cox & Kings, Golden Galapagos Cruises and Quark Expeditions – and visit Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester. It'll be a chance to meet the exhibitors and destinations, and find out more about Latin America.

Q. How are Latin American destinations continuing to rebound after the pandemic?

A. The overall feeling is positive. We've seen Latin America be really

COLIN'S TOP TIP

I'd encourage agents to make Latin America a real priority for their business for 2023, if they haven't already. It has everything, and I think people would be surprised how professional, organised and ready Latin America is for tourism.

resilient, with a very strong comeback after the pandemic. Capacity is starting to build again in terms of flight frequencies, which is really exciting. Our members, a lot of whom are operators, say the first weeks of this year have been

very positive. Argentina is very strong, Colombia is performing strongly and Costa Rica is doing well. There's been a real build-up of demand of people wanting to get back to Latin America or to visit for the first time. There's still a way to go, but the uptake has been really positive, so we expect that to continue over the coming year.

● The Lata roadshows will be in Bristol (March 14), Birmingham (March 15), Manchester (March 16). lata.travel/travel-agent-hub

● Lata Expo 2023 takes place on June 19-21 at Battersea Evolution. lataexpo.travel **TW**