



True colours

Celebrity chefs, mind-reading headsets and a special appearance from Rio Ferdinand - Laura French picks out the highlights from the stands at this year's exhibition

@laurafrench121

It's that time of year again, and the stands of World Travel Market will soon be alive with the sound of music - alongside the explosions of colour, food, drink and dance we've come to expect from the travel calendar's annual extravaganza.

Exhibitors will once again fill the halls of the ExCeL centre across three jam-packed days (November 5-7, if it's not already in your diary), bringing

special guests, prize giveaways, cultural performances and plenty more to the thousands of visitors who flock to do business at one of the world's most-renowned travel exhibitions.

But the sheer scale can be a little overwhelming. To help you navigate your way around we've put together a guide to the most unmissable stands - read on to find out some of our highlights. [➔](#)

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UK & EUROPE

MEET RIO FERDINAND AND BOBBY ZAMORA

WTM has a history of bringing world-renowned celebs to the stands, and this year will be no exception. Head to the **Cyprus Tourism Organisation (EU900)**, where ex-Premier League heroes Rio Ferdinand and Bobby Zamora will be posing for selfies on Monday from 11.15am-12.45pm. They'll be marking the much-anticipated debut of Parklane, a Luxury Collection Resort & Spa, set to open in March 2019 in Limassol, and featuring a Football Academy coached by the two stars. While you're here, throw in a business card at the **Larnaka Region Tourism Board** section and you could win a seven-night diving holiday around the Zenobia wreck - one of the best dive sites in the world.

TRY POLISH DELICACIES WITH A TV CHEF

Poland (EU1420) is celebrating 100 years of independence this year, and award-winning TV chef Damian Wawrzyniak - who's cooked for the royal family, baked with Mary Berry and worked at some of the world's most-renowned restaurants - will be dishing out local specialities (and giving pro cooking tips) at lunchtime every day to celebrate. Head here from 1pm-3pm Tuesday for a sampling session featuring the likes of Atlantic herring cured two ways, pierogi with sauerkraut and mushroom, and na zdrowie - a Polish drink brewed in Scotland made from hops, marjoram and juniper berries.

HAVE YOUR CARICATURE DONE, ISRAELI-STYLE

Fancy seeing yourself in caricature



Larnaca - dive the Zenobia wreck



Israel - caricatures



Head to the Cyprus Tourism Organisation, where Rio Ferdinand and Bobby Zamora will be posing for selfies

form? Look no further than the **Israel stand (EU1760)**, where a local artist will be scribbling away every day.

You'll also be able to try out an immersive virtual reality experience while snacking on Israeli delicacies - think Jerusalem bagels and freshly squeezed juices - and, if you're there at 2pm on Monday or Tuesday, polish it off with a wine-tasting session.

Chef demonstrations will get the taste buds tingling further from 1pm-2pm and 3pm-4pm on the two days, with dishes such as pitta with harissa-spiced tahini, and local Maleb dessert on the menu.

EXPERIENCE A CATALAN CONCERT

Head over to the **Catalonia stand (EU400)** at 5pm on Tuesday for a live music concert from Australian singer Steve Smith - star of the new, award-winning film *Route of Fate*, filmed in the region. Catalan wine, cava and Estrella Damm beer will be available, and afterwards you'll have the chance to learn all about updates for the year ahead.

BRUNCH WITH CHARACTERS FROM SLOVENIA'S PAST

Slovenia will be hosting a 'Culture Time Brunch' at 11am on Tuesday (EU1400), offering a themed buffet cooked by Ljubljana Castle's in-house chef, Igor Jagodic, with historic figures in period costume providing a glimpse into the country's past (email slovenia@alexandramarr.com to bag a spot).

While you're there, tweet about @SloveniaInfo with the hashtag #ifeeslovenia and #WTMLDN, and you'll be in with the chance of winning a trip to the country.

Best of the rest

The **Czech stand (EU1620)** will be offering wine-tasting from 12.30pm-2.30pm on Tuesday, **Malta (EU558)** will be serving nibbles from the region at 11am-1pm every day, and **Greece (EU1000)** will be handing out free olive oil and aprons, courtesy of Aldemar Resorts.

Wembley Stadium (UK128) will be making its debut in the UK section, telling agents more about its commissionable tours, with a professional photographer to snap you holding a replica FA cup.

Elsewhere, **Big Bus Tours (TA220)** will be holding a champagne reception for the trade and media at 4pm on Tuesday, with plenty of merchandise up for grabs.

Closer to home, **Visit Wales (UK1200)** will be serving freshly made Welsh cakes, alongside craft liqueurs from the Aber Falls Distillery at 4.30pm on Monday, and whisky from the Penderyn Distillery at the same time on Tuesday.

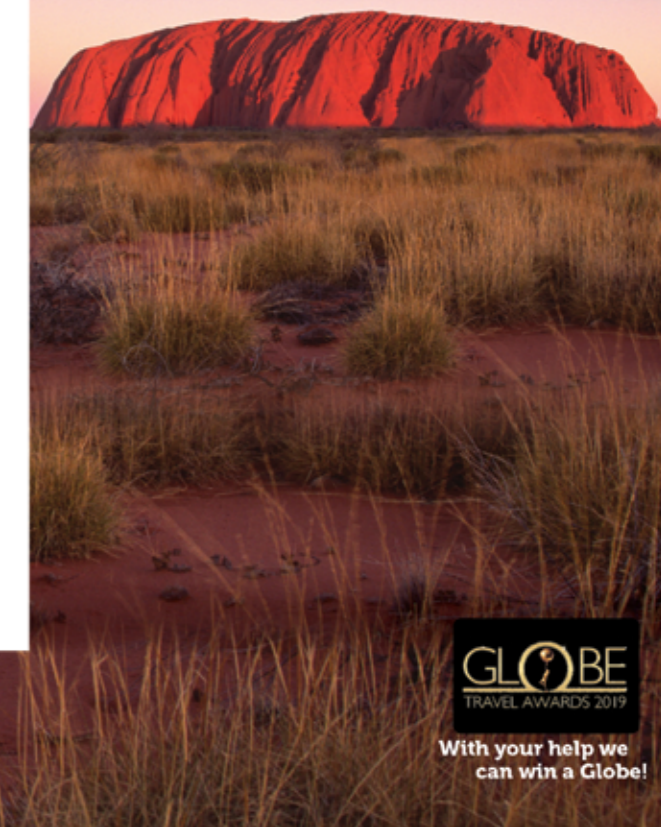


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WIN+

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LEFT:
Dubai
Parks and
Resorts

RIGHT:
Sharjah –
coffee



Best of the rest

▶ **Qatar (ME100)** will have a henna artist on stand throughout WTM, offering free temporary tattoos, while **Ras Al Khaimah (ME500)** will have you whizzing along on a zipline (virtually, that is).

▶ **Jordan (ME140)** will be hosting food and drinks at 2pm on Monday, celebrating the launch of the non-stop easyJet flight from Gatwick to Aqaba.

▶ Emerging emirate **Ajman (ME540)** will be exhibiting with information on new hotel openings and developments, including its first overseas office in the UK.

MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA

▶ MEET WORLD-FAMOUS CYCLIST VINCENZO NIBALI

Italy's most-renowned racing cyclist (and member of the Bahrain Merida Pro Cycling Team) Vincenzo Nibali will be making an appearance at the **Bahrain** stand (ME650) on Wednesday. Head over to hear more about the country's sporting developments – including the Ironman 2018 in December – then snap a selfie.

Before you go, try your hand at the virtual version of the Formula One Bahrain International Circuit, and be in with a chance of winning a holiday – the person with the fastest lap each day will nab flights, accommodation and tickets to the F1 Bahrain Gulf Air Grand Prix.

▶ SEE DUBAI IN VIRTUAL REALITY

If you don't have time to hop on a flight to Dubai to glimpse its soaring skyscrapers, glittering resorts and world-class restaurants, pop on a virtual

reality headset at the WTM stand (ME300) instead.

While you're here, stop by the **Dubai Parks and Resorts** booth to hear more about updates for the coming years – including fifth theme park Six Flags Dubai and a Legoland Hotel, both due to open by 2020 – then enter the prize draw to win tickets.

▶ GET YOUR CAFFEINE FIX WITH SHARJAH COFFEE

The UAE's third-largest city (once named the Capital of Islamic Culture) might not get as much attention as its better-known, glitzier siblings, but it's firmly on the up. Head to the **Sharjah** stand (ME400) to hear more about its eco-tourism efforts and cultural developments – including the Tourism Vision 2021 plans – while fuelling up on local coffee and

Emirati delicacies, and try your luck at winning some traditional prizes, from food hampers to silk scarves.

▶ SEE THE STARS OF WARNER BROS WORLD ABU DHABI

The grand opening of Warner Bros World on Yas Island in July was a game-changer for **Abu Dhabi**, solidifying the city's reputation as an entertainment hub (adding to indoor theme park Ferrari World) and bringing together everyone from Batman to Scooby Doo, Wonder Woman to the Looney Tunes. This year some of its most-loved characters will be on the stand (ME200), offering selfies aplenty across the three days – dig out that autograph book and strike your best pose.

▶ HAVE A HEADSET READ YOUR MIND

Over on the **South Africa** stand (AF500) you'll find something a little different – an EEG headset that measures electrical activity in the brain to detect reactions to different stimuli (provided from a VR headset) and then puts together a personalised itinerary based on the result.

There'll also be Facebook Live broadcasts from the stand providing tips and insider insight for agents selling the destination (10am-11am every day), and a wine and nibbles reception at 5.30pm on Tuesday, when you'll be able to hear more about this year's updates – including the Nelson Mandela centenary, and the British Airways' direct flight from London to Durban, which launched in October.



Bahrain – Vincenzo Nibali



LEFT:
Tobago –
limbo
dancing

RIGHT:
Dominican
Republic
– Carnival
character



PICTURES: TRUE BLUE BAY RESORT; LLOYD STURDY

➔ **CARIBBEAN**

▶ **BOOGIE ON DOWN, TOBAGO-STYLE**

The Caribbean section will be giving Asia a run for its money with glittering costumes and elaborate performances. For one of the best check out the **Tobago** booth (CA250), where you'll find traditional music and dancing every day at 5pm – expect drums, the limbo and a whole lot of sequins that'll give you serious cravings for carnival.

▶ **MEET A CRICKETING LEGEND AND WATCH BAJAN COOKING**

Barbadian former cricketer Sir Garfield Sobers – considered one of the greatest players of his time, and knighted by the Queen for his services to the sport – will be on the **Barbados** stand (CA220) from 11am-4pm every day, so stop by for some inspiring tales. And stay on if you're feeling peckish as Barbadian chef Michael Harrison will be cooking Bajan delights throughout the event, from 3pm-4pm each day, and there'll also be a range of free healthy beverages available during a daily happy hour to promote the destination's upcoming focus on wellness.

▶ **GET UP TO SPEED ON THE BAHAMAS**

Looking to learn a thing or two? Head to the **Bahamas** stand (CA150) at



If you're feeling peckish, Barbadian chef Michael Harrison will be cooking Bajan delights throughout the event

4.45pm on Wednesday for a 10-minute agent training session designed to show you the 16 main islands of the archipelago in a whistle-stop tour. While you're here try your luck at winning a competition – Atlantis Paradise Island, Melia Nassau Beach and Grand Hyatt Baha Mar will be offering an array of glitzy prizes, with hotel stays on the agenda.

▶ **SNAP A SELFIE WITH THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S CARNIVAL CHARACTER**

The **Dominican Republic** will be unveiling a new-look stand (CA300) at this year's WTM and promoting the island's golf, luxury and adventure angles. Pick up a free sun hat to bring a slice of summer to your winter wardrobe, and say hello to the on-stand carnival character, complete with devilish mask and colourful feather headdress.

Best of the rest

▶ The Caribbean Tourism Organisation (CA260) will be hosting 'Sunset Hour' from 4.30pm-6pm on Wednesday, offering Caribbean-inspired food and drink and networking opportunities.

▶ **Jamaica** (CA120) will be sharing updates on the soon-to-launch Global Resilience & Crisis Management Centre over exotic cocktails at 5pm on Monday.

▶ **Grenada** (CA263) will be dishing out chocolate, spices and other treats straight from the island at 4pm every day, plus there's also a business card prize draw for reservations staff.



➔ **US & CANADA**

▶ **SEE LAS VEGAS WITH A LIVE IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE**

Every year the Vegas stand (NA150) manages to pull a few tricks out of its sleeve, and you can expect the same this time too. They're not giving anything away, but we've been assured there's going to be a new kind of immersive, virtual experience that will transport you to the entertainment capital of the world, even in the halls of ExCel - think soaring over the Grand Canyon without having to leave London. And don't leave without picking up a flashing Vegas sign - they've become something of a World Travel Market institution. Drop by at 3pm on Wednesday to make sure you get yours.

▶ **ENJOY LIVE MUSIC FROM ACROSS THE US**

If there's one thing you can be sure of, it's that **Brand USA** (NA370) will put on a decent party. There's plenty to discuss with a flurry of new flight routes this year and next - including the first direct London to Pittsburgh service, courtesy of British Airways - so stroll on over on Tuesday from 4-6pm for



Don't leave without picking up a flashing Vegas sign either; they've become a WTM institution

RIGHT:
Banff National Park, Canada



the annual drinks and canapes networking event, and get your toes tapping with music from the various states.

▶ **WIN AN ALABAMA GOODIE BAG**

Alabama is going agent-oriented at WTM, and if you sign up for its new online training portal - an eight-module programme designed to make you an expert on the region - you'll be entered into a prize draw to win a goodie bag complete with spices, cookery books and other treats straight from the state. Head to the stand (NA450) to find out more.

▶ **IMMERSE YOURSELF IN CANADA**

Destination Canada (NA400) will be bringing a record number of partners to the show this year, with 33 exhibitors including Destination Nunavut, here for the first time to talk about tourism to Canada's north. Climb (virtually)

aboard an Air Canada jet with a VR headset, and snap a picture of yourself on a red chair. It will be on the stand to represent a Parks Canada campaign, which has seen chairs dotted across the country, encouraging visitors to share images of themselves in iconic places.

Best of the rest

▶ **Visit California** (NA440) will be hosting drinks on Monday and Tuesday from 4pm-5pm and sharing its key updates, including celebrations for San Diego's 250th birthday next year.

▶ **Colorado** (NA280) will be serving wine straight from the state on Monday from 4pm-6pm, while **Illinois** (NA140) will be dishing out drinks and canapes on Monday from 1pm-2pm.

▶ **New England** (NA165) will be running a business card drop for agents to win a case of Shipyard Brewing Co IPA and new book *Past Tense: (Jack Reacher 23)*, set in the state.



➔ LATIN AMERICA

▶ CATCH A BRAZILIAN PERFORMANCE OVER A CAIPIRINHA

If it feels like things are winding up at the end of the day, fear not – Brazil (LA250) will be pumping out the tunes from around 5pm every day, with live performances celebrating 100 years of samba and 60 years of bossa nova. Expect a sensual overload of colour and sound, complete with a caipirinha or two to wash it all down, with tastings every day at 4pm.

▶ ENJOY A CHILEAN WINE TASTING SESSION

Chile (LA500) will be celebrating its long-standing vino heritage with a daily wine tasting session at 1pm, showcasing produce from its regions – liquid lunchers, this is your calling. Adventure cruise line Australis will also be

exhibiting on the same stand, so pop along to meet some of the team and hear more about the growth of expedition cruising through the Patagonian fjords, where whales, elephant seals and penguins roam among ice-covered landscapes.

▶ TRY A PISCO SOUR

Noticing a theme? Latin America clearly knows how to do a good beverage and Peru is no exception, with national spirit pisco returning to the Promperú stand (LA300) once again this year. Stop by during Pisco Sour Hour (every day at 12pm-1pm and 5pm-6pm) to sample cocktails, and soak up the alcohol with some Peruvian canapes while you're at it.

▶ FUEL UP WITH A COSTA RICAN COFFEE

Costa Rica (LA200) is booming – UK arrivals were up 2.5% year



ABOVE: Arenal Volcano, Costa Rica

on year in the first half of 2018, as visitors flocked to see the much talked-about rainforests, beaches and wildlife. The new tourism minister will share 2019 plans – including agent training programmes and new product focused on rural tourism – and the stand will be dishing out Costa Rican coffee.



DON'T MISS
Central America
Tourism Agency's
cocktail reception at
the Guatemala stand,
Tuesday, 4pm,
LA440



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PICTURE: STEPHANIE CHEONG/STUDEO M

ABOVE: Malaysia – dance performance

ASIA, AUSTRALASIA AND THE INDIAN OCEAN

SEE A MALAYSIAN DANCE SHOW

The Asia stands are always a riot of colour, with all the sights, smells and sounds you'd expect. This year will be no exception, and stealing the crown is **Malaysia** (AS700), where a dancing troupe in traditional costume will take to the stage at 10am on Monday with a grand ribbon-cutting ceremony. The new minister of tourism, art and culture will also be on hand to discuss key focuses for the year – think eco-tourism and sustainability.

TRY JAPANESE ART

Budding artists unite – the **Japan** stand (AS900) will be going all out on the creative side, offering

everything from calligraphy sessions to paper-cutting demonstrations with the pros. There'll even be a special kimono for you to try on and snap photos with, catwalk-style.

MEET MOWGLI IN MADHYA PRADESH

Head over to India's **Madhya Pradesh** – known as the 'tiger state' – for a slice of the rural life. Mowgli will be on stand (AS430) to celebrate the region being the setting for *The Jungle Book*, and if you share a snap of him on social media (with the handle and hashtag @MPTourism and #MPTourism) you could win one of several prizes, including paintings, artwork pouches and other colourful crafts.

SEE LIVE TAIWANESE MUSIC

Learn more about **Taiwan** over

Prize draws from across WTM


- ▶ **Hard Rock Hotel Riviera Maya (LA100)** is offering a five-night stay at the resort for one lucky winner, to tie in with the opening of a new on-site water park later in the year.
- ▶ A three-night stay at the nearby **Unico 20°87°, Riviera Maya (LA100)** is also up for grabs, so stop by to try your luck and learn about the group's expansion plans.
- ▶ There'll also be a business card drop at **Rotana Hotels & Resorts (ME200)**, with the chance to win five nights at the new five-star Saadiyat Rotana Resort & Villas in Abu Dhabi.
- ▶ **Pegasus Airlines (EU1200)** is running a prize draw for two tickets to any of its 108 destinations.



a tippie from 4-6pm on Monday (AS850), when a string of traditional music performances will get the party started. Expect plenty of regional delicacies and drinks, and the chance to win flight tickets to the island and an appearance from the tourism bureau's mascot, Oh! Bear, who will be around for all three days.

SAMPLE MALDIVIAN DELICACIES

It's all about the senses on the **Maldives** booth (AS140), which will be serving traditional

cuisine throughout the show – including aromatic rotis, crispy samosas and coconut-infused sweets. A virtual reality headset will give you a further taste of what it's like to be on this idyllic archipelago – think turtles and rays galore – and you'll learn about all the latest updates, from the new Maafaru airport, which opened in September on the Noonu Atoll, to Crossroads, an entertainment resort set to open across nine islands that will feature a beach club, restaurants and eight hotels. 



Taiwan – Alishan