



Building Bridges Over Tea: WFTGA & K-iTG Connect with Potential Sponsors

In preparation for the much-anticipated 2026 World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) Convention, a tea event was held at the Okura Hotel to bring together potential sponsors. Led by WFTGA President Sebastian Frankenberger and Head Trainer Viola Lewis, the gathering provided an ideal platform to share the convention's vision, discuss opportunities for collaboration, and highlight the importance of sustainable tourism.

A Vision for the 2026 WFTGA Convention

Sebastian delivered a compelling speech outlining the significance of the upcoming convention. He revealed that an estimated 400–600 tourist guides are expected to attend, representing countries from across the globe.

Sebastian emphasised the need for collaboration, particularly among professional guides and local stakeholders. He urged potential sponsors to seize the opportunity to work together, not only to enhance tourism in Japan but to create global connections.

"This is an excellent starting point," Sebastian explained. "By coming here, I can easily travel to Seoul, China, and other Asian countries. I'm thinking about partnerships with second-tier destinations."

Embracing Sustainability

The 2026 WFTGA Convention will centre on sustainable tourism, with a strong emphasis on integrating technology and fostering global collaboration. Sebastian highlighted the importance of equal partnership and shared expertise from at least 40 countries.

"Help us to help you," he urged.

Sustainability is at the heart of the convention's vision, with a commitment to working with local businesses, sourcing locally, and ensuring the event supports the host community. Rather than focusing on the cheapest option, the goal is to create an impactful event that leaves a positive legacy.

Sebastian highlighted the value of authentic and engaging tourist experiences, drawing on a recent mochi-making activity as an example. He explained how such experiences allow visitors to actively participate rather than just observe, creating immersive and lasting connections with the local culture.

Staying Authentic

WFTGA Head Trainer Viola Lewis echoed Sebastian's sentiments on authenticity.

"Stay as you are, don't change anything," she said.

Viola noted that even in cities without iconic landmarks, it is the culture and way of life that make a destination truly unique. Fukuoka's friendly and organised atmosphere, she explained, is perfect as it is and doesn't need to compete with the overwhelming scale of Tokyo. Instead, she emphasised the importance of focusing on what makes the city unique.

Elevating the Value of Tourist Guides

Sebastian outlined strategies for improving the quality and value of tourist guides, emphasising the importance of collaboration between governments, Destination Management Organisations (DMOs), guide associations, and other stakeholders. He highlighted that by implementing guide education programmes and promoting qualified guides through official tourism channels, the value of the profession can be significantly raised.

While some travellers may opt for the cheapest options, Sebastian noted that individual travellers and smaller groups are often willing to pay for high-quality experiences. By focusing on these groups and offering unique experiences, the tourism industry can create lasting value for both guides and tourists.

Additionally, Sebastian proposed hosting workshops during the convention to focus on best practices for DMOs, stakeholders, and app developers. These sessions will explore innovative topics, including AI-powered systems for matching guides with tourists and building partnerships with major platforms such as GetYourGuide.



A Convention to Shape the Future

The tea event concluded with a shared commitment to sustainable tourism, cultural experiences, and forward-thinking innovation. The 2026 WFTGA Convention aims to set a new standard for the tourism industry, fostering a powerful synergy between global and local collaboration to drive sustainability, authenticity, and progress.

This milestone event promises to leave a lasting legacy, showcasing the transformative potential of unity and creativity in shaping the future of tourism.