

Singapore: Where the "Progressors" Meet

The Republic of Singapore is becoming synonymous with innovation and growth in various professional fields. Against all odds, COVID-19 has acted as a catalyst for a forced innovation and new opportunities in the MICE business.



Carrie Kwik

Executive Director for Europe at Singapore Tourism Board (STB)

The Government of Singapore has intervened in unprecedented ways to help the city-state cope with the immediate effects of COVID-19 downturn, rolling out \$100 billion in support and training measures. "Our key priority is to preserve jobs and capabilities by helping our businesses recover safely and staying connected to the world," says **Carrie Kwik**, Executive Director for Europe at **Singapore Tourism Board (STB)**.

The "Lion City" is indeed gradually reopening for travel through fast lane arrangements and adjusted measures for inbound travellers. As an example, Singapore and Germany announced in October the establishment of a reciprocal green lane to further enhance business travel with direct flights both ways. On the other hand, key tourism businesses such as hotels, off-site venues and tour operators have resumed with strict Safe Management Measures in place. STB also launched the **SingapoRediscovered** campaign in July to encourage locals to support tourism and lifestyle businesses in Singapore. By handing out \$ 100 SingapoRediscovered Vouchers to all Singaporeans aged 18 and over to spend on hotel stays, attraction tickets and tours, SBT seeks to stimulate the tourism industry in a \$ 320 million initiative.

"The health and safety of the community and our visitors remains paramount. We need to have the best end-to-end system to ensure that MICE visitors can enjoy a safe and seamless journey." According to Kwik, this means developing viable solutions while fulfilling the need to safeguard everyone's health such as the "Safe Business Events" framework or **TravelRevive**, the first international travel tradeshow in the Asia Pacific during COVID-19 – a hybrid event powered by ITB Asia and STB. The aim is to guarantee safe itineraries for delegates and provide high-quality, bespoke interactions. An all-around tech experience.

Singapore also aims to lead the way as a safe, trusted and pioneering destination for MICE events. During the pandemic, both convention centres - **Sands Expo CC** and **Suntec** - launched state-of-the-art hybrid event broadcast studios allowing event planners to produce innovative meetings. "We believe that our country's strong fundamentals as a leading business events destination have not changed with the pandemic and will stand us in good stead," says Kwik... and it's difficult to argue with her: crowned as the top Meeting City in Asia-Pacific for 18 consecutive years, Singapore brings together world-class infrastructure, a stable government, a

tightly-knit business events ecosystem and culture in a strategic location on the continent. To solidify this position, they came up with **SG Clean**, a national mark of excellence for businesses adhering to the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene, covering more than 27,000 individual premises around the island. Simultaneously, Singapore is about to release the new **SG SafeEvent Standard**, an industry-led national accreditation programme for trustworthy business events initiated by STB, ESG (Enterprise Singapore) and SACEOS (the Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organisers and Suppliers).

These efforts are yielding good results: Singapore has secured the rights to host the **Worldchefs Congress and Expo in 2024** and the **110th Lions Clubs International Convention in 2028**. "Singapore needs to redefine our value proposition as a MICE hub so that we can emerge from this crisis in a stronger position," concludes Kwik. Indeed, many companies have used this downtime to upgrade their teams with new training, in order to move their business models and event formats to a more tech environment.

In conclusion, hybridisation, safety, skills, community network and innovation: the recipe to overcome the crisis.

