

Video Clip: 2023 Summit on track to exceed 900+ registrants, says Payne

Michael Payne, President and CEO, IAADFS, provides an update ahead of 2023 Summit of the Americas

With the 2023 Summit of the Americas ([SOTA](#)) coming up April 16 to 19 in West Palm Beach, Florida, Michael Payne, President and CEO of the International Association of Airport Duty Free Stores ([IAADFS](#)), tells *Global Travel Retail Magazine (GTRM)* the event is shaping up to exceed attendee numbers from the 2022 iteration.

“We’re well ahead of where we were last year a month out – which I think is very successful,” he says.

There are already more than 600 people registered to attend, including 200+ buyers and 75+ exhibitors. Based on data from last year’s event, Payne says IAADFS predicts around 300 additional people will register on-site, bringing the total number of registrants to above 900 – exceeding last year’s numbers.

“It’s hard to predict what will happen in the next 30 days. People are still calling to see if they can get in for exhibitor space, so the numbers are going to be good,” Payne says.

“If you’re looking at it from a numbers perspective, I think it’s encouraging,” he tells *GTRM*.

Predicted numbers for 2023

Based on data from IAADFS as of March 14, 2023:

- 600+ people already registered
- 300+ attendees expected to register on-site
- 200+ buyers already registered
- 75+ exhibitors already registered

Conference keynote and sessions

Based on feedback from last year, Payne says IAADFS is introducing a new format for the conference program. There are four one-hour sessions that offer variety while streamlining the learning content.

“The content is going to be really good this year. Sweet and to the point,” Payne says.

IAADFS Chair Rene Riedi will kick-off events Monday morning with welcoming comments, followed by a keynote address from Scott Miller, Senior Advisor on Thought Leadership at FranklinCovey.

“For the first time, the keynote speaker is not specifically an industry representative, but it is very relevant, and I think people are really going to enjoy it,” Payne says.

Monday afternoon continues with an airports session featuring Kevin Burke, President, Airports Council International – North America and Rafael Echevarne, Director General, Airports Council International – Latin America and the Caribbean.

On Tuesday, Tax Free World Association (TFWA) has organized the ‘Regional Recovery, Global Context’ session with John Rimmer, Managing director, TFWA. Panelists include Tania Lee, Vice President of Sales, Blue Water Bridge Duty Free, and President, Frontier Duty Free Association;

Barbara Barrett, Executive Director, Frontier Duty Free Association; Cyril Letocart, CEO, Lagardère Travel Retail Peru; and John Hume, Senior Advisor, Penta Group.

Closing off the conference sessions at 1 p.m. EST Tuesday is the 'Building a Resilient, Sustainable Future' session with panelists Matthew Greenbaum, Director, International Shoppes; Enrique Urioste, General Manager – South America Sub-Cluster, Dufry; and Andrew Weddig, Executive Director, Airport Restaurant & Retail Association.

Payne says there may also be a cruise industry workshop but the details are still being finalized.

“Our partners and the individuals helping to moderate and organize these [sessions] have spent a lot of time and energy getting the right speakers and the right panelists,” Payne says proudly, adding that the sessions will offer something interesting for all attendees and discussion opportunities with questions from the audience.



The Summit will be hosted at the Palm Beach County Convention Center from April 16 to 19

Registration and exhibit hall

Based on feedback from last year's event, registration for this year's Summit has been relocated. It will be stationed right in front of the exhibit hall when entering the Palm Beach County Convention Center. This will make it more accessible for people coming from outside as well as entering from the Hilton.

Some companies have opted for the private suites, but most exhibitors will be on the exhibit hall floor all together – a change from last year which had most exhibitors placed throughout the hallways. This will help keep everyone together, Payne says.

This is likely the format the Summit will adopt going forward, but IAADFS will continue to evaluate feedback after each event.

Socializing, networking, dining

IAADFS will host the annual opening cocktail on Sunday evening, followed by networking cocktails on Monday and Tuesday with drinks and light snacks.

Meanwhile, food & beverages services will also be available inside the convention center and inside the exhibition hall itself. This upgrade also comes based on feedback from IAADFS' 2022 post-Summit survey, Payne explains.

“Last year it was upstairs and there was some feedback from attendees that it was not easy to access. This year it will be more convenient,” he says.

There will also be a designated networking area inside the exhibition hall for meetings.

Regional update

Payne points out that while the Americas is quite sizable, there is an overall feeling of optimism throughout the region now. Some airports are experiencing a slower return to pre-COVID numbers because some key traveler demographics have not yet returned in full scope, such as Chinese travelers and business travelers, but generally, travel in the region is strong, Payne says.

He says new airport terminals and expansions, as well as investments in industry events, reflects a booming region.