

Press Release



## Successful first edition for Atout France Canada's Back to France Press Forum

**Montreal, November 23, 2020 - Atout France – The France Tourism Development Agency in Canada** brought together 95 Canadian journalists and influencers as well as 13 partners and sponsors during the 1st edition of the *Back to France Press Forum*, a virtual event that took place from November 9 to 13. This event was a privileged moment for lifestyle, culture and travel media to reconnect with beloved destinations and be reminded that France and Monaco await when international tourism resumes next year.

### An inspiring program and distinguished guests

Launched on November 9 with an exclusive performance by pianist **Alexandra Stréliski**, the event was a mood-booster for many. **Caroline Leboucher**, CEO of Atout France, thanked the Canadian press for its loyalty and recalled the historical ties between France and Canada. "*France continues to innovate and modernize its offer, whether it be cultural sites, museums or accommodation. Citizens and businesses are turning to responsible consumption with the support of the government. We look forward to welcoming Canadians and hope that they will keep their habit of long stays*". A special message from the **Beaumont-Hamel** Newfoundland Remembrance Site by **François Bergez**, Director of Somme Tourism, also made a lasting impression as Remembrance Day and Armistice Day commemorations began.

*"The health crisis and border closures have strongly impacted the tourism sector, which for the most visited country in the world and for a sector that represents 7.4% of the French GDP is not without consequence. But France is particularly dynamic in its efforts to revive the economy, and the tourism sector has already benefited from a €1.3 billion investment plan, among other measures. This Atout France Press Forum helped to better understand how to work with media toward recovery, but above all to make fans of France dream and invite them to come back soon."*

**KAREEN RISPAL, AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE IN CANADA**

On November 10<sup>th</sup>, the Forum's program included a series of conferences on a variety of topics. To start the day, **Marie-Andrée Boucher** introduced the next events and openings to come in France, followed by **Club Med** news with **Amélie Brouhard**, VP Canada and Mexico, and a live interview with **Marie Cario (Entreprise et Découverte)**, from the Monnaie de Paris on the theme of French know-how. From Paris, the journalists set off to discover marine gems with **Guy Antognelli**, Director of the **Monaco Tourism Authority**, **Anthony Lacanaud**, founder of the new **Underwater Museum** in Marseille, **Jean-**

**Sébastien Guibert**, lecturer at the University of the West Indies (Martinique's underwater heritage), and **Marie-Céline Piednoir** of **Coral Gardeners** in **Tahiti**. Then **Robert Trudeau** Director, Corporate Sales, **Air Canada** Global Network, played the taste card with chefs

**Jérôme Ferrer (Europea, Montreal)** and **Jany Gleize (La Bonne Étape, Provence)** during a lively discussion on sustainable gastronomy. In the afternoon, **Muriel Wiltford**, Americas Director of the **Martinique Tourism Authority** passionately described the cultural treasures of her island, before handing over to **Thomas Velter**, Director of **Mont-Saint-Michel**, who provided our media audience with an update on this iconic French and UNESCO World Heritage site. A moment of relaxation followed with **Tania Kedikian** of **Tahiti Tourism** and **Valentine Skeels** of **Epik Escapes**. **Mélanie Paul-Hus**, Director of Atout France Canada closed this day of conferences by presenting the missions and objectives of Atout France and the actions to facilitate the resumption of international tourism.

### **270 virtual one-on-one meetings**

The 11th, 12th and 13th of November were dedicated to individual virtual meetings (videoconferences) on the *Back to France Press Forum* platform. This formula was very appreciated by partners and media representatives alike, with nearly 270 meetings scheduled. There is no doubt that Canadian media are ready to explore France again, when borders reopen.

### **Acknowledgements**

Atout France would like to thank the partners and sponsors who participated in this first edition: [Air Canada](#), [Club Med](#), [Visit Monaco](#), Martinique Tourism, [The Journey to Brittany Somme Tourisme](#), [Nice Tourisme](#), [Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Tourisme](#), [Entreprise et Découverte](#), [Milesopedia](#), [Bouygues Telecom](#), [Cinemaniamia](#).

To watch the webinars or for any other information, please contact Marie-Andrée Boucher, Press Manager for Atout France Canada: [marie-andree.boucher@atout-france.fr](mailto:marie-andree.boucher@atout-france.fr).

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### **About Atout France, the France Tourism Development Agency**

Atout France, the only state operator in the tourism field contributes to the enhancement of the attractiveness of the France destination and the competitiveness of its businesses and sectors. Thanks to its 32 offices in 30 countries, Atout France covers 78 intervention markets with the close collaboration of the embassies and has a precise knowledge of the international tourist customers and the actors of the distribution. Atout France supports more than 1,300 professionals (institutional tourism and private companies) in their international development. In total, more than 2,800 promotional operations are organized each year. They target the general public, through a strong digital strategy (a powerful website, [france.fr](http://france.fr), 3 million fans on social media, 5,5 million qualified contacts) as well as communication campaigns or editions. International press and tourism professionals are also continuously kept aware of the advantages of the destination (trade shows, prospectings, fam trips, conferences, etc.).

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