

YOUR NAME Jo Roche
Position Managing Director
Company Talent Vista



Election Address

It is critical to nurture the next generation of travel professionals, not only with knowledge, but with the skills, adaptability, and commercial awareness required in a rapidly evolving global landscape. I am very proud to date to have helped many students into the industry throughout my 30-year career and it is amazing to see how they have flourished – hugely rewarding!

I have worked with all parties to bridge the gap between education and employment. I am passionate about ensuring that training programmes remain relevant, inclusive, and forward-thinking—reflecting the realities of modern travel, sustainability challenges, and technological change. I am currently undertaking an MSC in Sustainable Management Specialist with Teesside University. This has been a huge learning curve for me – both whilst experiencing current-day student life, but also enabling me to appreciate the current debates in relation to education, travel and sustainability – a very uneasy mix currently. I can add my learnings to this arena.

I believe the Institute of Travel and Tourism plays a vital role in shaping the future of our industry, and I would be proud to contribute to that mission. If appointed, I would focus on strengthening partnerships between industry and education providers, championing accessible pathways into travel careers, and supporting continuous professional development at all stages. My focus is on work-based, entry-level routes to the industry – whilst respecting the valued contribution of graduate entry to the industry.

My long-standing commitment to both sectors, combined with my enthusiasm for collaboration and innovation, would enable me to make a meaningful contribution to the Board.

Biography

I have had a varied career in Travel and Tourism – graduating in 1986 from Durham College with a Distinction in Business and Finance (Travel and Tourism Options). I secured a position at Thomas Cook's in Manchester Piccadilly and then went on to gain a place on the Accelerated Management Development Programme that took me through to Assistant Manager Position in 1988, From this position, I went into teaching travel courses (COTAC 1 and 2 and HNDs in Travel and Tourism) at local colleges and found my vibe! I discovered that I loved training, developing and encouraging the talent of tomorrow. Throughout this time, I studied a BSC Honours Degree, gaining a 2.1 and also an MBA. I have personally followed the traditional 'educational' route but fully appreciate the challenges and limitations for the majority of our prospective employees and have tirelessly championed the options available to all wishing to enter our industry.

I then went on to establish Training For Travel – offering apprenticeships throughout the travel industry. This was hugely successful but sadly we parted company in 2011.

I set up Northern Training Academy in 2015 – the focus being on apprenticeships, primarily in retail but also focusing on my love, the travel industry.

Fast forward to 2026 – a number of obstacles on the way but I'm still around, still passionate about training and in particular, hugely passionate about the future talent for our industry. I would be honoured if you can find it in your hearts to vote for me!

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