

Rick Antonson - Speaker Bio

Author Rick Antonson also enjoyed over 30 years as a leader in the international tourism industry.

Rick served as chair of Destination International (DI) based in Washington, D.C., and as deputy chair of the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) based in Bangkok, Thailand and as a Games Ambassador for the 2010 Olympic Winter & Paralympic Games held in Vancouver and Whistler, Canada. These and many other volunteer roles anchored Rick's full-time career as President and CEO of Tourism Vancouver, an international award winning, 1,000 member organization widely recognized as a global leader in destination marketing, sales, management, and visitor experiences.

Tourism Vancouver launched the bid to bring the 2010 Olympics to Canada. And they initiated the Vancouver Convention Centre Expansion Taskforce, which led to the new centre funded by Tourism Vancouver's \$90-million investment along with investments from the federal and provincial governments.

Capilano University awarded Antonson an Honorary Doctorate of Laws in 2011, and he has been inducted into the Canadian Tourism Hall of Fame. In 2013, he was presented with the IMEX Academy Award in Europe. Antonson is also a recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal, and the Chairman's Award from PATA presented in Macau. An inveterate traveller, visiting places as varied as Iraq, Belarus and North Korea, Rick is the bestselling author of ten books, five of them travel narratives. The New York Times noted his *Route 66 Still Kicks; Driving America's Main Street* as One of the best books of the bunch in their Christmas book roundup.

The Chicago Tribune called his *To Timbuktu for a Haircut; A Journey Through West Africa* a travel classic. His most recent book (2024), *Slumach's Gold: In Search of a Legend – and a Curse* features the popular History Channel series *Deadman's Curse*. Rick's speaking has taken him around the world to deliver keynote addresses on the long-range planning philosophy of Cathedral Thinking. Among the many have been the South Pacific Tourism Association's Insights Conference held in Vanuatu; Best Cities held in Tokyo, and the World Cocoa Conference held in Berlin. PATA Global Insights Conference, Auckland, New Zealand; Australia Council Marketing Summit, Cairns, Australia. The Greater Madison Convention Visitors Bureau, Wisconsin, US; the Global Café, hosted by Brisbane in advance of the G20 conference, Australia; the International Convention Centres Conference (International Association of Venue Managers), Vancouver, Canada; conferences with New York University, Visit Irving, Cape Cod, Visit Seattle, and Landsbankinn, Reykjavik, Iceland.

Rick is a firm believer that “tourism is a vital force for peace.” Rick and his wife Janice live in Predator Ridge, British Columbia.