



Events & Incentive Travel

Industry update

APR-MAY 2026

INSIDE: See why ITA Group's most seasoned experts say Indianapolis is a trending meeting destination.

Hello!

During turbulent times for international travel, I find myself reflecting on the risk mitigation efforts our team makes to prioritize attendee safety and program resilience. When programs are designed with the right partners, and intelligence and safeguards in place, global destinations remain exceptional options for meetings and incentives.

Insights from our global security partner informed my own recent travels to the Middle East for SITE Global, where our team earned exciting industry recognitions. As SITE Midwest president, I'm looking forward to hosting our annual forum in San Miguel de Allende this June.



Monica Fasse

Monica Fasse

Industry & Partner Relations Manager

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INDUSTRY NEWS

These **latest trends** are
shaping the industry.

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Around the industry

What's happening

EST 1865 | LONDON

THE LANGHAM

HOTELS & RESORTS

Reflections on Langham Hospitality Group

The Langham Roundtable, held at [The Langham Huntington, Pasadena](#), brought together attendees from across the entertainment, leisure, corporate, and MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) sectors for a thoughtful discussion on industry partnerships. Conversations focused on what makes event planner-hotel relationships truly successful, with common themes including pre-contracting alignment, flexibility and strong operational empathy.

The Langham Huntington, Pasadena delivered warm, attentive service throughout the experience. The property's 23 acres of gardens and beautifully maintained lawn space were a standout highlight, offering impressive settings for both events and guest enjoyment.

Additionally, the hotel has completed a major renovation of guest rooms, including the Royce Suites which feature an expansive patio and indoor fireplace, and Lanai rooms with large French doors that open onto a private balcony or patio overlooking the historic Lanai Pool. The hotel has further enhancements planned, including a \$6 million investment in landscaping, meeting space updates beginning in 2027, refreshed concepts for the Royce Steakhouse and Tap Room, and upgraded cottages.



Alex Mosher

Buyer, Event Purchasing
6 years at ITA Group



Around the industry

What's happening (cont.)



Destination Celebration marked a decade of gathering

Destination Reps, which brings together more than 40 CVB and DMO partners from across North America, celebrated the 10th anniversary of Destination Celebration at The Whim in Minneapolis.

This year's event embraced a thoughtfully designed small-group structure, reflecting an industry-wide shift toward more intentional, experience-driven engagement. The setting encouraged genuine conversations, making it easy to build meaningful connections with destination partners rather than rushing through scripted pitches.

This format created space for deeper discussions around each city's evolving infrastructure, airlift, convention center enhancements and downtown development. Partners shared candid updates, competitive differentiators and strategic insights that are critical when advising our ITA Group clients on destinations for complex corporate meetings and events.

Attending events like Destination Celebration allows us to move beyond marketing language and gain firsthand intelligence that directly benefits our clients. These conversations inform smarter recommendations, uncover emerging destinations before they become saturated, and ensure our strategies are grounded in real-time knowledge of what is truly changing across the meetings and events landscape.



Kristine Forret

Event Destination Strategist, Meetings & Events
27 years at ITA Group



Around the industry

What's happening (cont.)



ROCCO FORTE HOTELS

Lasting impressions from Rocco Forte Hotels' 2026 showcase

I experienced Rocco Forte Hotels' signature Anglo-Italian style, sophistication and warmth firsthand during a recent showcase. The event, which was hosted in Sicily at [Verdura Resort](#), highlighted the family-owned and managed luxury group's European collection.

Professionals from North America and Europe gathered for collaborative conversations around pre-program and operational program factors impacting the MICE industry. We also discussed AI, destination selection, wellness and creating memorable attendee experiences.

Staying at Verdura Resort on Sicily's southern Mediterranean coast, I felt:


- > **Relaxation:** Surrounded by the blue of the Mediterranean Sea and the greens of the property's two championship golf courses, this location exuded tranquility. The Sicilian spa is the collection's largest and set around an open-air courtyard.
- > **Wellness:** The hotel infuses Blue Zone wisdom into the day-to-day hotel operations. Eight distinct restaurants and bars use the resort's own farm for culinary creations.

If you're seeking a service-forward, five-star luxury property, Rocco Forte delivers. The collection currently features 16 hotels, resorts and villa options, with three more locations opening in 2026 and 2027.

**McKayla Loss**

Buyer, Event Purchasing
3 years at ITA Group





DESTINATION DISCOVERY

This **emerging market destination** should be at the top of your list.

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Indianapolis, Indiana

A Midwest city known for fast cars and major sporting events, investments in Indianapolis' expansive convention complex in the heart of downtown make "Indy" more attractive than ever for planners.



Why choose Indianapolis?

- > **Optimal connectivity:** Indy has the most connected hotel package in the country with 12 hotel properties and 5,200+ rooms currently connected to the Indiana Convention Center, and nearly 5,000 more rooms planned. The combined Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium are linked by climate-controlled skywalks. Proximity encourages networking and business and offers sustainable convenience, helping planners save on transportation. New developments, including \$3 billion in hospitality-related infrastructure, offer more upscale options.
- > **Hoosier hospitality:** MICE professionals have a “when our city wins, we all win” attitude, evident in the care and collaboration between partners. They strive to offer everything planners could possibly need for a seamless, efficient and memorable event experience.

Key considerations

- > **Hotel block density and capacity:** Major events like Gen Con and the FFA Convention attract 60,000–70,000+ visitors, which is a comfortable citywide event for Indianapolis. Current largest properties include:
 - **JW Marriott Indianapolis:** 1,005 rooms
 - **Signia by Hilton:** 800 rooms (opening Fall 2026)
 - **Indianapolis Marriott Downtown:** 650 rooms
 - **The Westin Indianapolis:** 575 rooms
 - **Hyatt Regency:** 499 rooms
- > **Budget predictability:** Expect transparent and inclusive pricing. F&B, AV, labor and service charges similar to national trends. The Indiana Convention Center and Lucas Oil Stadium are currently the only union facilities in Indianapolis. Many major hotel properties, including the new Signia, won't require union labor.

Best time to host

- > **Four-season comfort:** Skywalks make the area accessible year-round.
- > **Plan around:** Major events include Indy 500 (Memorial Day weekend), FDIC International (typically late spring), Gen Con (typically late summer), FFA Convention (typically fall), Performance Racing Industry Trade Show (December).
[View the best real-time resource for upcoming events.](#)
- > **Travel time:** 54 locations with nonstop flights to Indianapolis International Airport (IND)



Where to meet



Signia by Hilton: Opening Fall 2026

Best suited for: Large conferences, conventions or headquarters hotel

This project doubles as an expansion of the Indiana Convention Center with an additional 50,000 sq. ft. ballroom. The 800-room, 38-story property will include a top-level bar with skyline views. This development inspired a ripple-effect boost in renovations at properties like the JW Marriott, Westin and Omni-Severin.



The Westin Indianapolis

Best suited for: Mid-size meetings, leadership summits or breakout-heavy programs

A Capitol Overlook reception space and Rec Room with games for gathering complement 42,500 sq. ft. of meeting space, served by on-site event staff. The hotel is connected by skywalk to Circle Centre Mall's upscale restaurants, shopping and nightlife, with Lucas Oil Stadium just steps away. The adjoining Indiana Convention Center offers an additional 750,000 sq. ft. of meeting space.



Kristine Forret

Event Destination Strategist,
Meetings & Events

A self-proclaimed adventurer with 27 years of experience at ITA Group, Kristine enjoys immersing herself in diverse cultures and local experiences. Through her journeys, she continues to discover the interconnectedness of humanity: "The world is smaller than we think and we're all more alike than we may perceive—this is the beauty of travel."

EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES

These **extraordinary properties** make some of the industry's most unique events extra special.

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PARK HYATT BUENOS AIRES™

Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, Argentina

A luxury landmark, Palacio Duhau – Park Hyatt Buenos Aires spans two distinctive buildings: a restored 1934 palace and the modern Posadas building, with a 250-capacity ballroom. Located in the Recoleta neighborhood, known as a "Petit Paris," numerous cultural institutions sit within a 15-minute walk. Visit the National Museum of Fine Arts, Recoleta Cultural Center and Plaza Francia, which hosts a vibrant artisan market each weekend. In nearby Recoleta Cemetery, extravagant tombs commemorate national icons like Eva Perón.

Property highlights



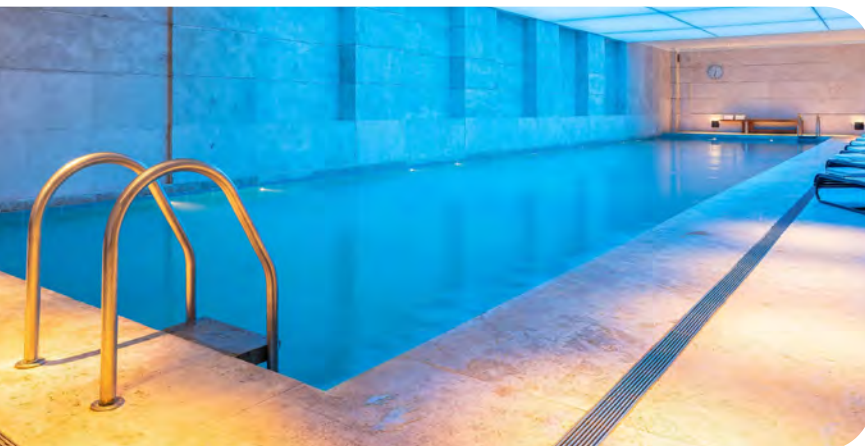
Accommodations: 165 guest rooms



Airport transfer: 15 minutes to Aeroparque Jorge Newbery (AEP), 45 minutes to Ezeiza International Airport (EZE)



[Click to see property](#)



- > **History and hospitality:** Historic details—preserved original woodwork, flooring and chandeliers—plus exceptional service from the entire staff, create a distinctive, welcoming atmosphere.
- > **World-class dining:** Contemporary, plant-based Italian dishes are a specialty at Gioia Cocina Botánica, recognized by the Michelin Guide.
- > **Wellness facilities:** Guests enjoy 24-hour fitness center access, a 25-meter indoor pool and Ahín Wellness Spa.



Bellagio

Las Vegas, Nevada

At the center of the Las Vegas Strip, Bellagio's legendary dancing fountains welcome attendees and attract sightseers. Updated, modern rooms are large and comfortable without being flashy. As a conference venue, excellent service levels in the meeting area, and quality food and beverage options earn the hotel high marks.

- > **Conservatory & Botanical Gardens:** Each season, the 14,000 sq. ft. botanical gardens transform with a new showcase of themed plant designs and displays.
- > **Pool spaces:** The newly renovated pool courtyard, inspired by the grand Palladian villas in Italy, creates a calming respite. The Cypress Pool is an adults-only, reservation-required retreat.
- > **Eye candy:** Browse the ticketed Bellagio Gallery of Fine Art or shop dozens of designer brands, including a Rolex boutique.

Insider tip

One of our insurance clients recently completed a successful 375-person Summit here and remarked on how quiet and conducive to business the meeting areas were.



Property highlights



Accommodations: 3,933 guest rooms and 510 suites



Airport transfer: 15 minutes from Las Vegas Airport (LAS)



[Click to see property](#)



SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

These **supplier partners** stand out for providing superior service to our clients.

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Standout supplier partners



Beth Cronin and Christina Krause

**Marriott Global Sales
and JW Marriott Desert Ridge**

Beth and Christina demonstrated exceptional partnership by executing a full program rebook mere days before staff arrival. After urgent Monday morning outreach, Beth quickly identified strong options across her portfolio. She remained closely engaged to keep the process moving seamlessly as Christina worked in lockstep on the property side to ensure speed never compromised quality. Together, they accomplished what seemed unlikely: a fully executed, high-quality contract on an accelerated timeline, resulting in a smooth transition and a highly successful program.

**—TIFFANY CLARK, EVENT PURCHASING
MANAGER & ERIN HERREN,
EVENT OPERATIONS MANAGER**



Nicole Gore and the team at Secrets Bahia Mita

When our client made the difficult decision to cancel their event due to regional circumstances and attendee concerns, Nicole's team responded as true partners. They made us feel like a top priority, despite managing what was likely a high volume of similar situations. Their team listened carefully, understood our perspective and worked collaboratively to identify the best possible solution for our client.

Their commitment left a lasting impression, and we look forward to a strong partnership for years to come!

**—TIFFANY CLARK, EVENT PURCHASING
MANAGER & ERIN HERREN, EVENT
OPERATIONS MANAGER**



Wayne Palbaum

**Executive Director of Strategic
Accounts, Wynn/Encore**

Wayne has been extremely communicative and flexible as we bring a large SKO to his property. His authenticity and kindness shine in every interaction. It's so easy and fun to collaborate with him.

**—JESSICA SYNDER, EVENT
PURCHASING MANAGER**



Amanda Cassidy, Bree Williams and Sara Loeb

PRA Arizona

This team provided top-notch customer service and problem-solving during our last-minute rebook to Arizona for Homesteaders. Within mere days, they provided a fully developed program plan including transportation, offsite dinner, décor and entertainment options. They were prompt and communicative during the brief planning period and delivered exceptional results onsite.

**—LERIN HERREN, EVENT
OPERATIONS MANAGER**

TRAVEL NOTES

These are the insider perspectives, trending keynote speakers and must-have resources. This is your

catchall for 2026 success.

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INCENTIVE TRAVEL

Insider perspective

Hong Kong/Vietnam: From Hong Kong's city center to a secluded bay on Vietnam's Son Tra Peninsula, ITA Group Lead Buyer Theresa Link crossed a fire-breathing dragon bridge and rode through enchanting rice paddies as a guest of InterContinental.



Q: What surprised you upon arrival to Hong Kong?

A: My preconception of Hong Kong was that it would be a "fast" city. Bustling activity, high-tech, tall buildings, neon lights. We stayed busy, but starting with a Tai Chi lesson encouraged us to slow down and breathe. It was the perfect way to wake up and ease in after a long flight. After that, we visited a Buddhist temple built entirely of cypress that claims the title of the world's largest handmade wooden building. The temple is situated in a park and surrounded by skyscrapers. I was surprised to learn Hong Kong is 85% green space! Next, we enjoyed a guided tour of M+ Museum which features contemporary visual art, architecture, design and moving image.



Q: Were you treated to any other guided tours?

A: Yes! We learned about local tea history, culture and preparation and enjoyed a tasting. The day ended with a night skyline tour of the harbor and duck dinner before retiring to our rooms at Regent Hong Kong. These opportunities would be excellent incentive trip activities.

Egg fried rice with Yunnan ham

龍井奶凍
Longjing panna cotta



Q: Next, you passed through central Vietnam?

A: Leaving the crowded city (so many mopeds!), our pace slowed as we headed toward the aptly named Monkey Mountain. People lined the road separating the mountain from the sea to watch the sunset. After arriving at our accommodations, we enjoyed a Vietnamese beach barbecue party overflowing with options.



Q: Tell us about where you stayed.

A: InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort immediately earned a spot on my short list for most beautiful properties. The designer spent two years living in Vietnam to develop the hotel’s look and feel. From luxurious rooms to unexpected event spaces, each detail serves as an homage to the beach and mountain environments.

Q: What about off-property excursions?

A: Plan to shop in Hoi Ann, a village about an hour away. Hundreds of tailor shops there will create custom pieces for you in less than 24 hours. Show an inspiration photo, choose your fabrics and they will sew to your custom measurements. Hoi Ann is also known for its lanterns, which hang from every building and float along the water.

We also cruised through the organized chaos of Vietnam’s streets on a Vespa tour to a rice farm in the countryside, where we were treated to flavorful local snacks and drinks. Afterwards, we took a river float and watched local fishermen.

Marble Mountain, the site of an ancient Buddhist temple built into the mountainside, is 30 minutes from the hotel. ‘Hidden in plain sight,’ right next to China Beach, it’s a place to reflect on Buddhist principles of compassion.

Properties at a glance

REGENT
HONG KONG

[Click to see property](#)



INTERCONTINENTAL
DANANG SUN PENINSULA RESORT

[Click to see property](#)



Theresa Link

Lead Buyer, Event Purchasing
11 years at ITA Group

Initially lured by the prospect of making travel her career, Theresa soon discovered this industry is about much more. She loves learning about destinations, meeting people around the world and seeing sights beyond belief. Creating programs is especially rewarding because it allows her to share those experiences with clients.

When Theresa isn’t checking in at airports, she’s listening to the loons on the lake at a ‘70s cabin that she’s renovating with her husband in northern Minnesota.

Trending keynote

Clint Pulver

LAI: Leading Authorities, Inc.

LAI Leading Authorities, Inc.

For more than 35 years, LAI has matched speakers with audiences across almost 100,000 events, earning a reputation for exceptional client service.

Workforce expert, Emmy award-winner, musician and author Clint Pulver's message resonates with organizations navigating rapid change. As the president and founder of The Center for Retention, Clint helps audiences navigate communication breakdowns, leadership missteps, intergenerational complexities and culture cues to ensure long-term employee loyalty and success.

Accolades

- > Hall of Fame Keynote Speaker
- > #1 Best-Selling Author of "I Love It Here"
- > Professional drummer
- > *Business Q Magazine* "Top 40 Under 40"

Topic takeaways

- > "I love it here: Create an organization people never want to leave" offers insider leadership secrets for elevating engagement and cultivating creative, collaborative environments.
- > An expanded drumline experience connects participants through a hands-on activity that fosters the mentorship connection.
- > "Make your sales soar" presents mindset shifts and proven processes for creating customer connectivity, trust and loyalty by mentoring customers rather than "closing" in sales conversations.



Quick facts

- > **Preferred format:** Keynote
- > **Budget range:** \$20,000 – \$35,000



Why we recommend

Blending research-driven insight with high-energy storytelling and a unique musical approach, Clint delivers timely, practical strategies audiences can apply immediately.

Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks

What's in your travel bag?



[View website](#)

Shark FlexStyle Hair Styler

Fake a professional blowout or smooth your locks upon arrival with this ultra-versatile, 1.5-pound multitool.



[View website](#)

My Bag Amsterdam 'Audrey' Crossbody

Stash sightseeing essentials in this timeless but modern leather bag by a certified B-corp. Even better? Swap out strap styles.



[View website](#)

Kevin Murphy Young Again Dry Conditioner

Revive dull hair with this silky, softening spray. Travelers to tropical locales will appreciate its humidity-resistant protection.

Bio insights showcase: Events Buyer



Kaitlyn Miller

Buyer, Event Gifting
3 years with ITA Group

Kaitlyn says seeing the progression from initial proposal to guests receiving thoughtfully curated gifts is always exciting. When she's not busy introducing clients to new brands and products, Kaitlyn volunteers with a local shelter and cheers on the Iowa State Cyclones.

Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks (cont.)

From around the industry



Incentive travel: From elite rewards to year-round culture builder



What's trending: Taking the pulse of the meetings industry



New report: The new standard for event ROI



3 event risk management capabilities incentive trip planners need



Meetings and events get greener during Earth Month



On topic

Listen

Articles of Interest

Podcast produced and hosted by Avery Trufelman



“ Although this podcast is not specifically 'about events,' I believe industry innovation comes from being open to new experiences and connecting dots between seemingly unrelated topics. If you're a lifelong learner interested in culture, history and how fashion has shaped our lives, I would highly recommend you give it a listen. This host's fresh perspective inspires me.

—ASHLEY BOHNENKAMP, SENIOR MANAGER, EVENT SOLUTIONS



Events & Incentive Travel

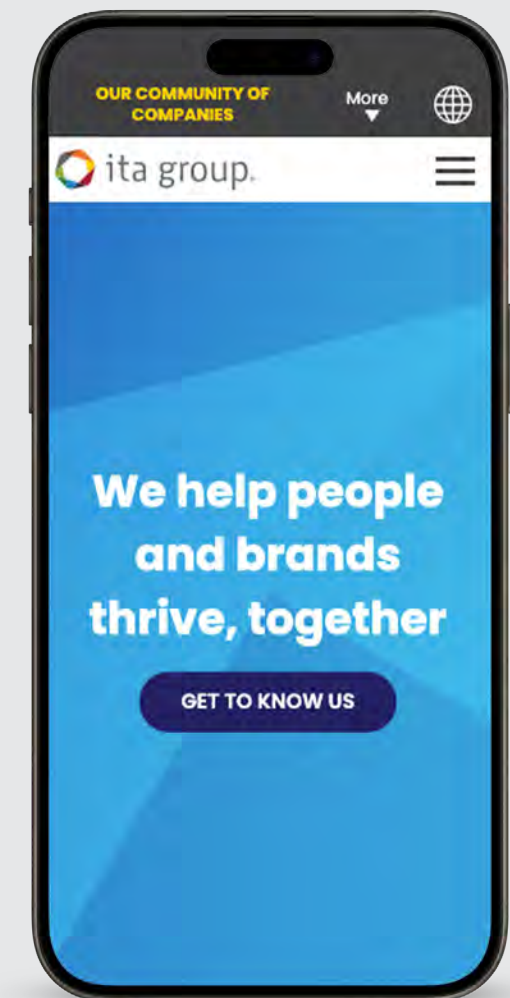
Industry update

Direct to your inbox on a bimonthly basis

Questions?

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