



Events & Incentive Travel

Industry update

JUN-JUL 2026

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



Hello!

From major trade shows to curated partner events, ITA Group was capturing real-time insights, strengthening relationships and expanding our global network at high-impact industry gatherings this spring.

Through these collective experiences, our team stays ahead of industry trends, identifies emerging opportunities and strengthens relationships with our global partner network. We're always seeking to uncover strategic differentiators, new offerings and evolving capabilities.

This industry update gives you a peek into emerging destinations, newly opened luxury properties and recently refreshed hotels, providing destination inspiration and expanded options to elevate future programs.



Monica Fasse

Industry & Partner Relations Manager

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 3 **INDUSTRY NEWS**
- 7 **DESTINATION DISCOVERY**
- 11 **EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES**
- 15 **SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT**
- 17 **TRAVEL NOTES**

INDUSTRY NEWS

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

3 INDUSTRY NEWS

7 DESTINATION DISCOVERY

11 EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES

15 SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

17 TRAVEL NOTES

Around the industry

What’s happening



Insights from IMEX Frankfurt

IMEX Frankfurt brought together decision-makers from the global MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions) industry. I came away with insights on strategy, sustainability and AI. Here’s what I learned:

- > **High-impact events should be intentionally designed around clear behavioral and emotional outcomes, not just logistics.** Leading organizations are aligning content, format and environment to drive measurable ROI (engagement, retention, brand affinity). This elevates event teams from tactical planners to strategic business partners.
- > **Sustainability is shifting from messaging to measurable action.** There’s a strong industry push toward transparent and trackable sustainability practices such as carbon measurement, waste reduction and supplier accountability. Clients and attendees increasingly expect proof, not promises. This makes sustainability reporting and vendor alignment a competitive differentiator.
- > **AI and data are largely transforming personalization.** From attendee journey mapping to real-time engagement insights, technology is enabling more tailored and adaptive event experiences without adding operational complexity. Teams that effectively integrate data and AI into planning and on-site execution will drive stronger engagement while improving efficiency.



Kelli Brown
Manager, Event Operations
1 year at ITA Group



Around the industry

What’s happening (cont.)



Highlights from Meeting Planners International World Education Congress

Our industry is at a pivotal moment with experience design, operational realities and evolving attendee expectations reshaping how we define successful meetings and events. Conversations reinforced the need for planners to think more strategically, design more human-centered experiences and leverage the full ecosystem of resources available. We also covered more intentional approaches to networking and personalization, the growing role of digital tools and opportunities to strengthen destination partnerships.

Here’s what to know.

- > **Networking:** Leading organizations are planning networking with the same rigor as mainstage content. Incorporating micro-activations, activity-based engagement and facilitated interactions creates more meaningful connections and stronger attendee outcomes.
- > **Partnership:** Partnership is critical to balancing creativity with complexity. CVB/DMO and venue partners remain underleveraged resources for destination expertise and operational insights.
- > **Future:** The future of meetings is human-centered, digitally enabled and strategically driven.

While technology is streamlining execution, it is simultaneously elevating the need for strategic thinking, storytelling and relationship-building.



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



Around the industry

What's happening (cont.)



Familiar themes at Incentive Research Foundation Invitational

Messaging shared at the 2026 IRF Invitational in Scottsdale focused on where the industry is right now and what's next. These were my top three takeaways.

- > **Measurement strategy can't be based on "vibes."** Only 4% of program owners say they are "very confident" in their event measurement approach. Stephanie Harris highlighted the need for our industry to show the real business impact of incentive travel.
- > **The path to better program outcomes starts earlier** by aligning audience, goals and success measures before execution. ITA Group's EPIC Design approach addresses this by outlining a smarter way to design events that prioritize people: how they feel, what they need and what moves them.
- > **As AI gets embedded in daily life, human agency becomes the differentiator.** Zack Kass, speaker and author of "The Next Renaissance: AI and the Expansion of Human Potential," emphasized that we shouldn't outsource our thinking, values or responsibility, despite increased automation.

The future demands experiences that are measured well, designed with intention and built to expand human potential. IRF charged everyone to get outside and "go touch some grass."



Ashley Bohnenkamp

Senior Manager, Events
6 years at ITA Group

EXPERIENTIAL MARKETING SUMMIT 2026

Talking data at the Experiential Marketing Summit

My primary takeaway is the power of combining behavioral and first-party data with business outcomes to truly understand an event's success. We're shifting from asking, "Did people show up?" to asking, "Did this event influence change?" Approach evaluation with these three components:

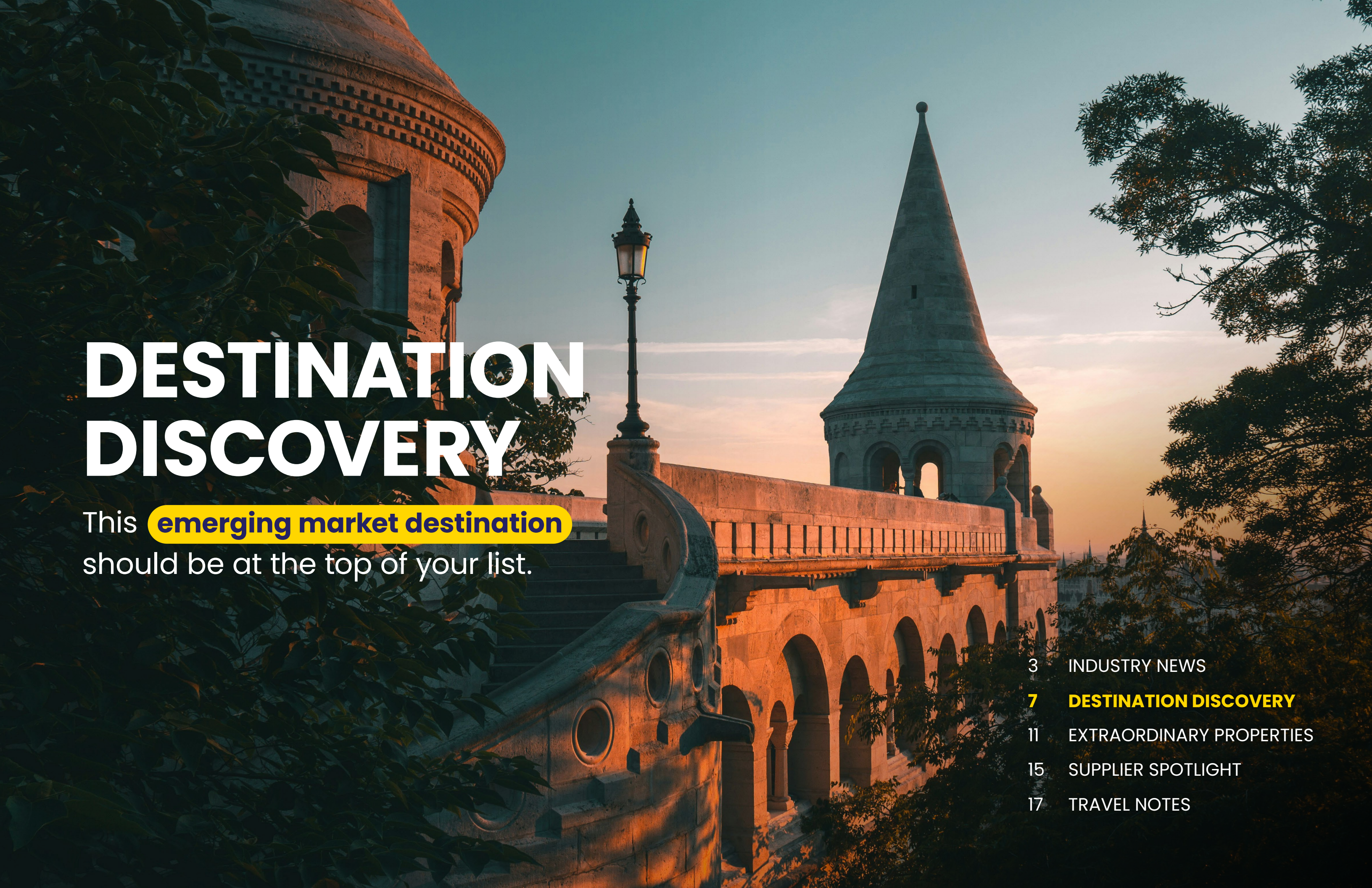
- > **Define success before the event.** Choose a small set of KPIs that tie directly to business goals and decision-makers. Then build your measurement plan around those.
- > **Design experiences with data capture in mind.** Focus on engagement (movement, dwell time, participation, content interaction). Behavior tells a clearer story than surveys alone.
- > **Think holistically.** The strongest programs connect pre-event, on-site and post-event engagement in one continuous journey.

AI can help, but it's not the strategy. The strategy is still human. Using the right data informs meaningful experiences and accomplishes desired outcomes. ITA Group is implementing these components through our EPIC Design approach (creating upfront alignment) and the Events 365 framework (encouraging ongoing engagement before, during and after events).



Anna Boggs

Analytics Advisor, Events
14 years at ITA Group



DESTINATION DISCOVERY

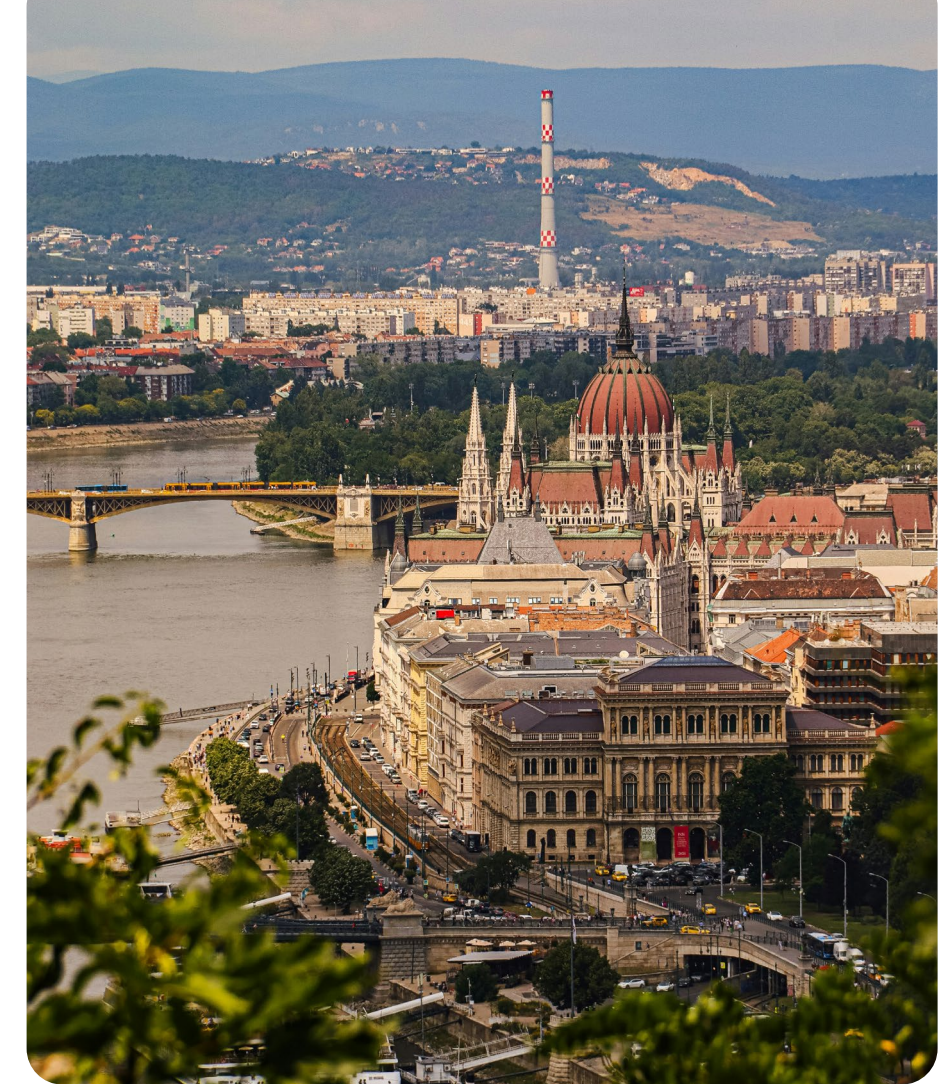
This **emerging market destination**
should be at the top of your list.

- 3 INDUSTRY NEWS
- 7 DESTINATION DISCOVERY**
- 11 EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES
- 15 SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT
- 17 TRAVEL NOTES

Budapest

Timeless elegance and expanding luxury

Strategic tourism investments are turning the Hungarian capital of Budapest into one of Europe's most compelling destinations for meetings and incentive travel. Renowned for thermal baths and spas, castles and palaces, the city and surrounding countryside are growing experiential wellness and soft adventure offerings. Downtown, the shoreline following the Danube River is a UNESCO World Heritage site, where historic architecture meets bustling daily life.

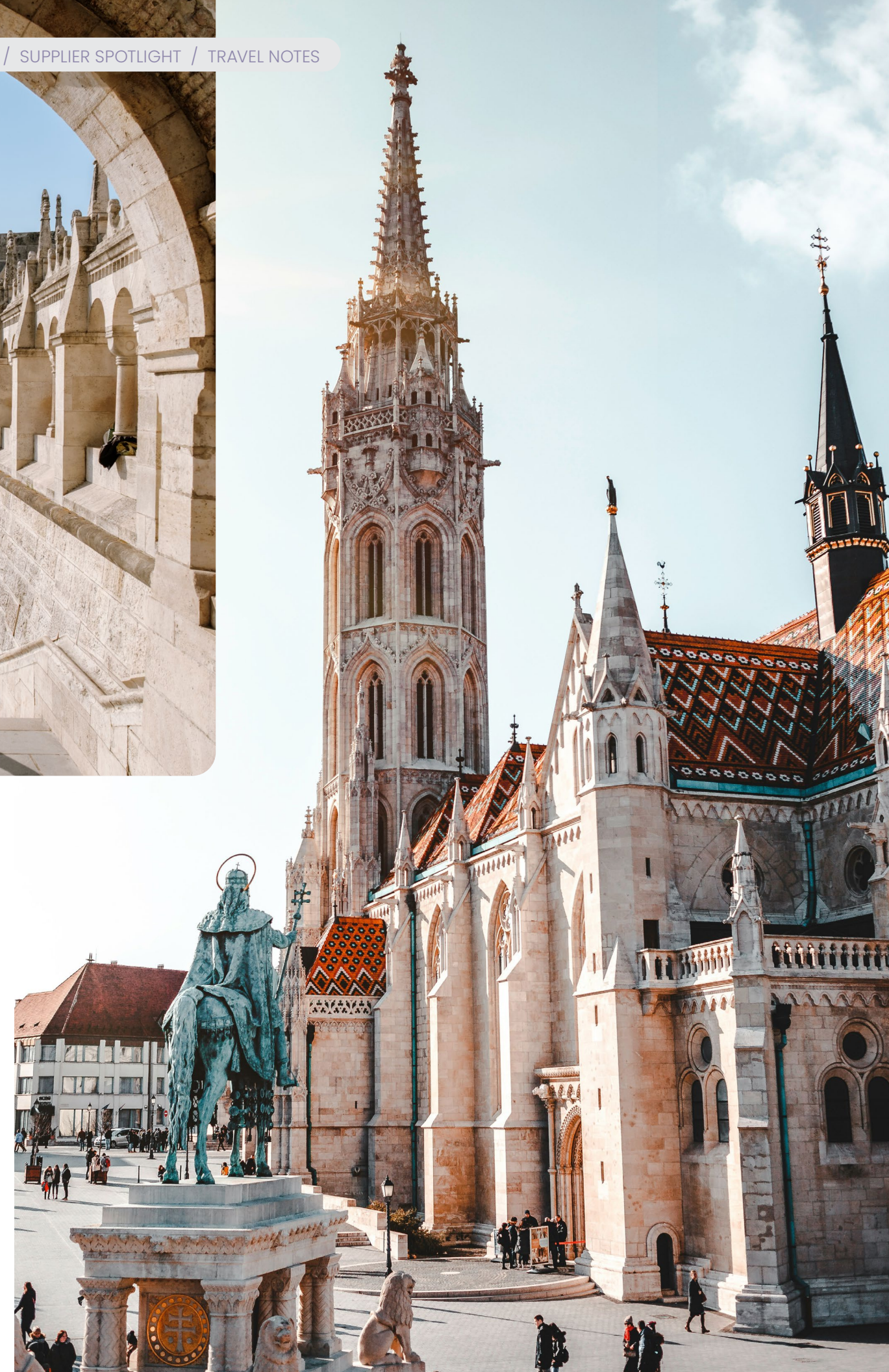
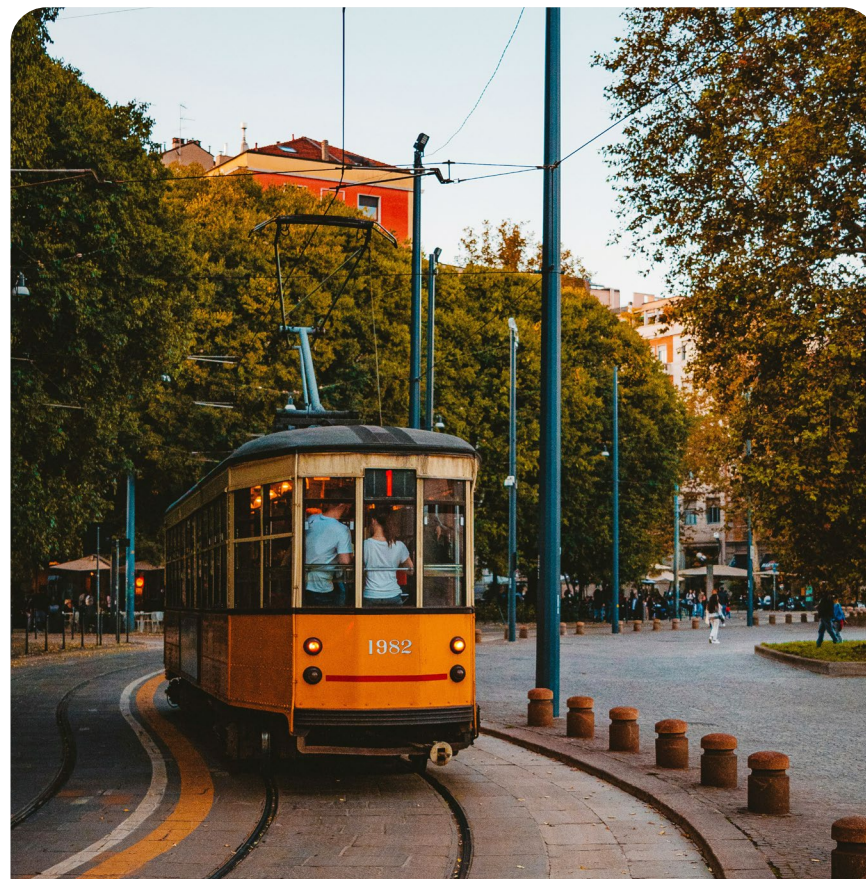


Why choose Budapest?

- > **A rapidly growing luxury hotel landscape:** Recent openings such as St. Regis Budapest and Radisson Collection Hotel, along with design-forward properties like W Budapest and Verno House, are elevating the city's appeal for premium programs. This momentum is supported by continued investor confidence, with additional openings and major projects in the pipeline, including the transformation of the iconic Gellért Hotel into a Mandarin Oriental.
- > **Dedicated MICE funding:** The city is actively positioning itself to attract international programs. A wave of government and private investment reflects Budapest's evolution from a value-driven option to a Central European luxury destination offering a unique combination of historic character, global brand presence and experience-driven hospitality.

Best Time to host

- > **Peak Season:** May–September
- > **Alternate:** Spring and fall shoulder seasons; winter markets



Where to stay



Four Seasons Hotel Gresham Palace Budapest

Iconic wrought iron peacock gates and a lobby adorned with more than two million mosaic tiles welcome guests into art nouveau luxury. The palace hotel's 179 guest rooms boast views of interior courtyards or the Danube River to encourage rest and relaxation. Seven distinctive function spaces are perfect for receptions of up to 280 attendees.

Dining experiences at KOLLÁZS, a contemporary French brasserie overlooking the Chain Bridge and the Danube River, highlight creative combinations. Beyond cocktails, bar MÚZSA offers Asian cuisine and a diverse mix of local authentic live entertainment.



Matild Palace, a Luxury Collection Hotel, Budapest

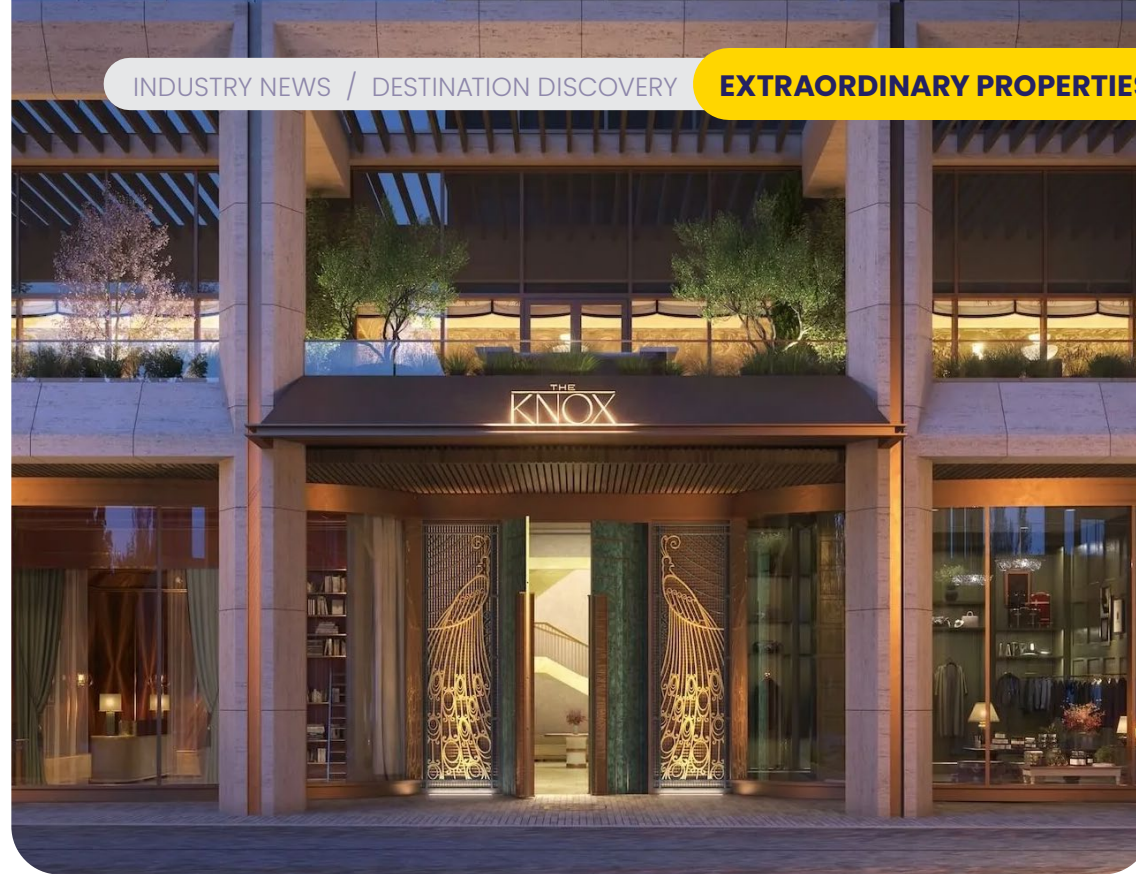
Hungarian heritage runs through the core of this city-center hotel, built in 1902 to serve as a palace social hub at the foot of the Elisabeth Bridge. Many of the 130 rooms and suites overlook the Danube River and mosaic tiles and marble surfaces adorn each bathroom. Refined finishes, grand staircases and high ceilings evoke the grandeur of Budapest's Belle Époque.

On-property restaurants are also a draw. Spago by Wolfgang Puck Budapest, a Michelin Guide restaurant, is the first European outpost of the world-renowned master chef's flagship restaurant. A secret liquor library hidden within Matild Palace's rooftop was once a rendezvous point for the Decadence Movement. The Duchess serves exceptional cocktails, wine and cinematic skyline views.

EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES

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

- 3 INDUSTRY NEWS
- 7 DESTINATION DISCOVERY
- 11 EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES**
- 15 SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT
- 17 TRAVEL NOTES



THE KNOX

AUBERGE COLLECTION

The Knox, Auberge Collection Dallas, Texas

Poised to welcome group travel in Spring 2027, The Knox, Auberge Collection takes cues from Dallas' vibrant Knox Street District. The hotel sits among walkable, tree-lined streets, designer boutiques, upscale restaurants and a busy social scene. Bold interiors incorporate rich textures and vivid color, lending atmosphere to gatherings.

Property highlights



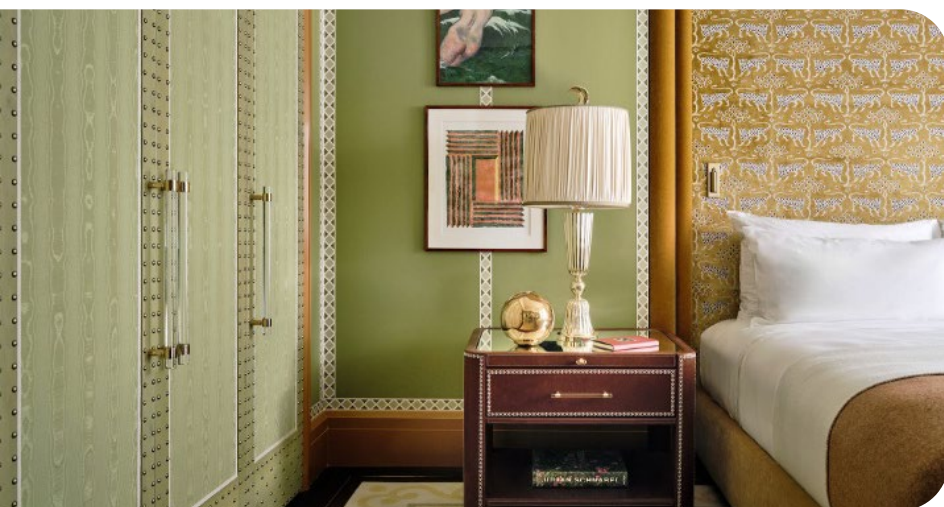
Accommodations: 140 guest rooms and suites



Airport transfer: 40 minutes to Dallas Fort Worth, 20 minutes to Dallas Love Field



[Click to see property](#)



- > **Sumptuous event spaces:** From apartment-style spaces designed for intimate gatherings to immersive, tapestry-covered parlors, to grand ballroom bathed in natural light and framed by a spectacular wrap-around terrace, The Knox comfortably hosts small groups up to several hundred attendees.
- > **Cocktail hour:** The Fringe Club serves a serious cocktail experience with the glamorous swing of '50s Vegas. Alternatively, the pool bar is a verdant and sun-soaked oasis with stunning views of the Dallas skyline.
- > **Wellbeing focus:** In addition to its spa treatments and fitness studio, The Knox features thermal suites and a dedicated space for retreats and gatherings.



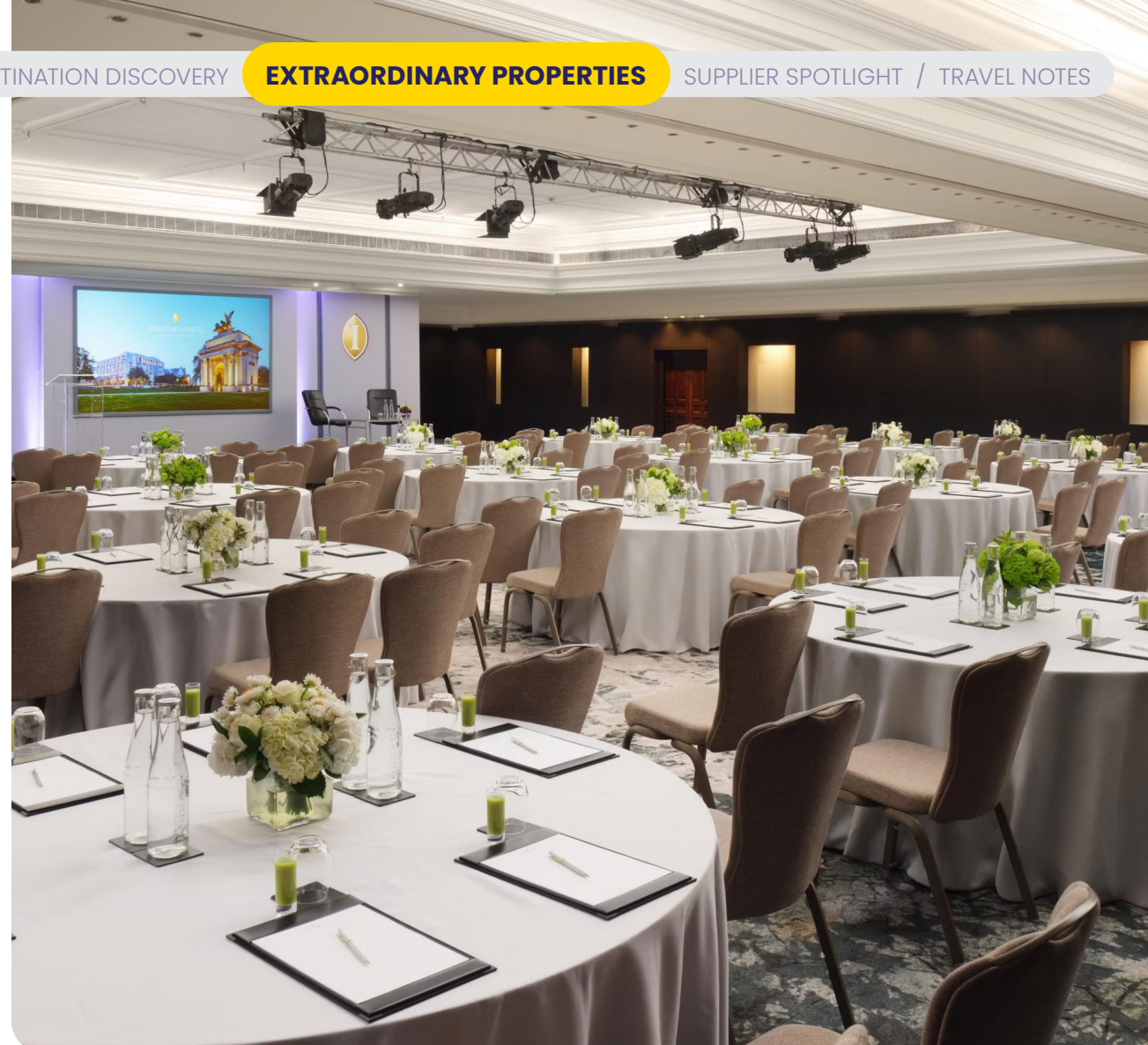
Park Lane Collection

London, England

Scale up a group travel experience in London without sacrificing charm, thanks to efforts of the London Convention Bureau and hospitality groups. Park Lane Collection brings together six distinctive hotels located within a six-minute walk: [JW Marriott Grosvenor House](#), [The Dorchester](#), [London Hilton on Park Lane](#), [Como Metropolitan London](#), [Four Seasons Hotel London at Park Lane](#) and [Intercontinental London Park Lane](#).

Mayfair neighborhood: Part of London's iconic West End, this upscale area is known for elegant Georgian townhouses and bordered by Hyde Park and internationally recognized shopping hotspots.

Connected resort experience: U.K.-based DMCS Spectra and 2B U.K. bring location-specific expertise to Park Lane Collection programming, offering attendees unrivaled access to amenities.



By the Numbers



Accommodations: Combined 1,931 rooms (349 suites)



Event spaces: 54 distinctive spaces totaling 111,391 square feet

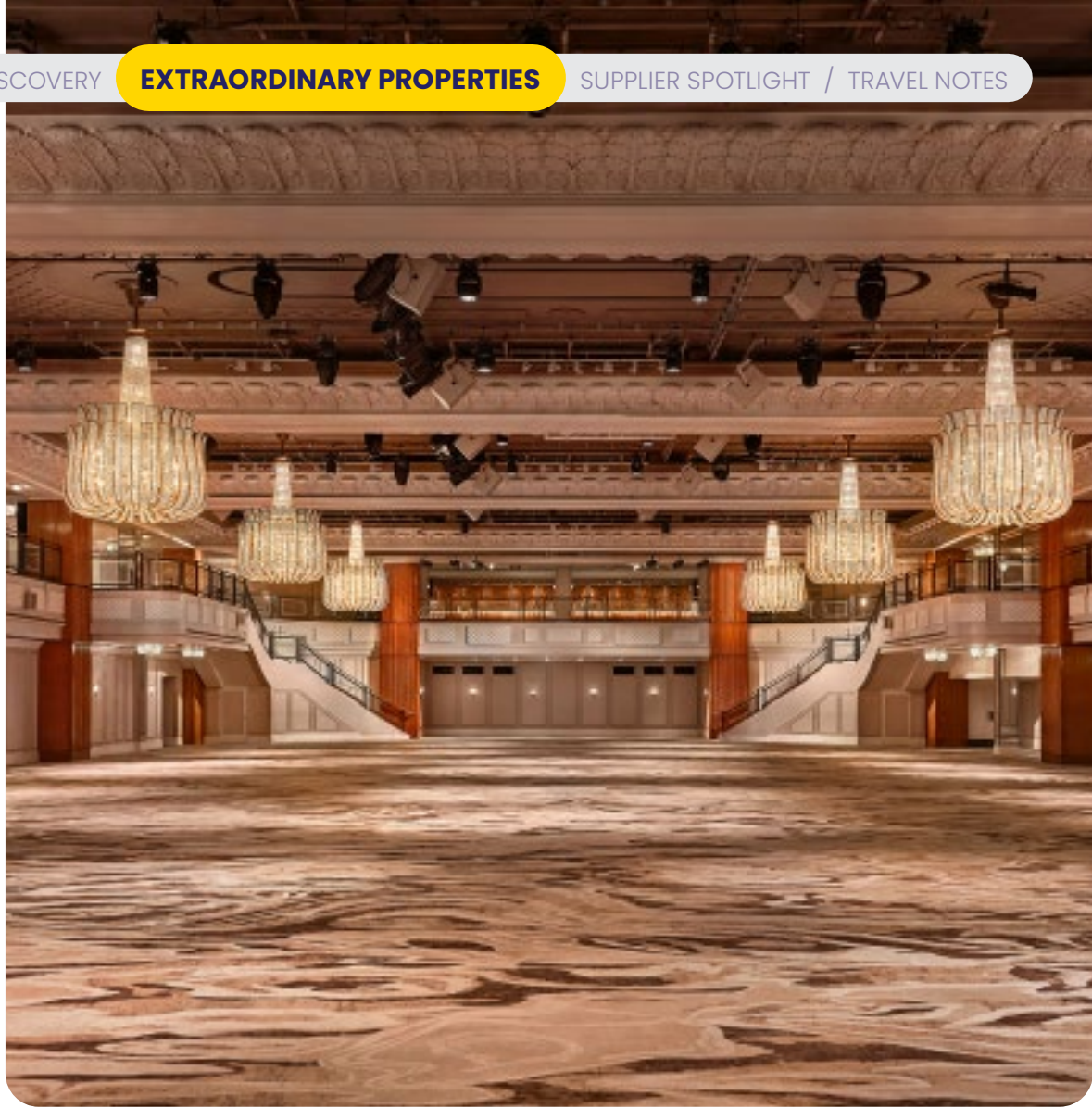


Event capacity: Up to 1,300 attendees

Airports: 6 with nonstop flights from 27 U.S. cities and direct flights to 395 global destinations



Park Lane Collection (cont.)



Insider tip

“To put the distance between properties in perspective, the walks from the guestrooms to the convention space at The Venetian or Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas are longer than the walk between the Park Lane Collection properties.”

— Kristine Forrett

SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

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

3	INDUSTRY NEWS
7	DESTINATION DISCOVERY
11	EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES
15	SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT
17	TRAVEL NOTES

Standout supplier partners



Tracy Kidd

Director of Global Sales, Midwest,
at AIC Hotel Group

Tracy went above and beyond to assist ITA Group in a highly competitive bid situation that ultimately resulted in winning the business. Her around-the-clock availability was critical. While navigating challenging contract terms, Tracy transparently outlined where the hotel could be flexible and where limitations existed.

Her clear communication and proactive approach have been instrumental in driving efficient collaboration and strong results.

—JEN SIECK, BUYER, EVENT PURCHASING



Maria Eugenia and Andrea Norfolk

Le Blanc Los Cabos

Maria and Andrea displayed exceptional partnership, responsiveness and operational excellence throughout the planning and on-site execution of our program. Maria's proactive communication and attention to detail enabled her to anticipate needs and coordinate vendor experiences that simplified client decision-making. On site, Maria and Andrea teamed up to provide outstanding support and quickly and gracefully resolve challenges, including a last-minute attendee dietary accommodation.

Maria and Andrea's flexibility, teamwork and commitment to service excellence meaningfully impacted the client experience and ensured the program's overall success.

—STEPHANIE DILTS, SMALL GROUP TRAVEL SPECIALIST



Mario Bucher

Bucher DMC

Faced with constant change and high expectations, Bucher DMC never missed a beat. Their team met every challenge with professionalism, flexibility and a solutions-first mindset, consistently going above and beyond in Montreux. Mario's hands-on leadership resulted in flawless execution on the ground, proving what true partnership looks like. We pushed this DMC to the limit, and they kept stepping it up to meet the need.

—LORI KUHLMAN, SR. EVENT MANAGER,
EVENT OPERATIONS

TRAVEL NOTES

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

catchall for 2026 success.

- 3 INDUSTRY NEWS
- 7 DESTINATION DISCOVERY
- 11 EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES
- 15 SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT
- 17 TRAVEL NOTES**

INCENTIVE TRAVEL

Insider perspective

Northern Italy : Immersive experiences and intentional planning cast Northern Italy in a new light for ITA Group Senior Event Manager, Elizabeth Bryant. Marriott Luxury Group and Mutika Group took her through several classic destinations well-suited for incentive trips.

Q: Your itinerary took you to Florence, Milan, the Tuscan countryside and Lake Como. What stood out?

A: Florence's narrow streets, beautiful architecture and statues showcased classic, historic Italy. For larger groups, I would start the trip in Milan, as it's easier to fly into and more chic and metropolitan. We also spent time at Lake Como. Though we didn't stay at The Lake Como EDITION Hotel, we toured the stunning property. The on-site pool floats on Lake Como for a relaxing escape surrounded by views of the Bellagio Hills.



Q: What was your favorite excursion?

A: On our second day in Florence, we drove to Torre a Cona, a farm in the Tuscan countryside with a winery and olive groves. The best part was going truffle hunting. Expert guides and Lagotto Romagnolo dogs helped us gather truffles we then used in our on-site cooking class. Our group made a traditional Italian pasta for lunch, which we enjoyed with a wine tasting.



Q: Tell us about the accommodations. What would appeal to groups?

A: The 119-room W Florence and the 116-room Casa Brera Hotel in Milan are beautiful new properties by Marriott Luxury. Both locations had beautiful bars and rooftop seating, where you can order drinks and a traditional aperitivo. Our expert hosts informed us that Hugo spritzes are trending among Italians, and I like that they're less sweet than Aperol. The W's restaurant served a Japanese tasting menu, which was very good and unique. Casa Brera served traditional Italian food with a seafood focus.



Q: How did Mutika Group make attendees feel special?

A: Intentional touches elevated every transition moment and gifting experience. It felt like we never walked into a room without a glass of champagne or a spritz handed to us. Prior to arrival, they set up an app where we could view our itinerary, and they collected information about our preferences. In Florence, we were gifted leather luggage tags and paper products from places we had seen on our tour. Our guides even created a playlist for the train ride from Florence to Milan, with Italian music perfectly complementing the scenery.

Properties at a glance

W HOTELS

[Click to see property](#)



[Click to see property](#)

EDITION

[Click to see property](#)



Elizabeth Bryant

Senior Event Manager
3 years at ITA Group

Elizabeth was well-versed in the luxury hospitality industry before joining ITA Group, planning high-end weddings, social events and large-scale corporate events for clients in New York and beyond in her previous roles. When she's not working or traveling, Elizabeth likes to spend time outdoors, hiking and camping with her family in the Pacific Northwest.

Trending keynote

Jon McNeill

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.

What does it take to engineer hypergrowth across some of the world's most disruptive industries? As a visionary entrepreneur, investor and operator, Jon employs a proven "algorithm for success" to build and grow innovative companies, creating tens of thousands of jobs and delivering 9x returns to investors.

After beginning his career at Bain, Jon founded, scaled and sold six companies before joining Tesla as president. He later served as COO of Lyft and now sits on numerous boards. Jon is a frequent guest lecturer at Harvard Business School, MIT Sloan and Stanford GSB.

Accolades

- > Author of USA Today best-seller "The Algorithm: The Hypergrowth Formula That Transformed Tesla, SpaceX, Lululemon and General Motors"
- > Helped grow Tesla revenue from \$2 billion to \$20 billion in under 30 months
- > At Lyft, he served as COO during a critical growth phase, doubling revenue and steering the company toward its IPO

Topic takeaways

- > AI, simplified: A practical guide for corporate leaders
- > Innovation in the boardroom: Building boards that drive impact
- > Mastering both innovation and scaling: Discover the proven algorithm for success



Quick facts

- > **Preferred format:** Keynote
- > **Budget range:** \$66,500 inclusive of all travel besides hotel



Why we recommend

In his talks, Jon distills hard-earned insights from his career into clear, actionable lessons for empowering leaders across industries to fast-track transformative growth.

Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks

What's in your travel bag?



 [View website](#)

Ringo Pro Water Bottle

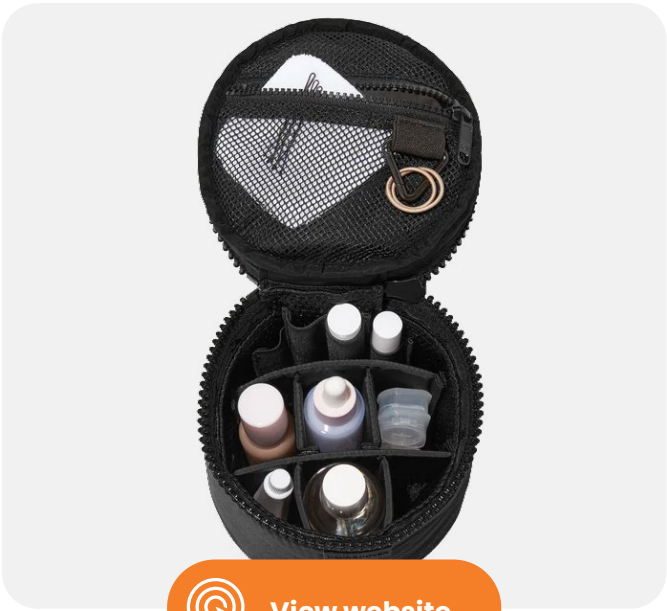
This stainless-steel water bottle and phone stand is good for more than staying hydrated on the go. Record a video, stream a show or join a Zoom call, hands-free.



 [View website](#)

Camp Snap 2

Photograph authentic experiences while staying in the moment. This screen-free digital camera comes with six different filters to preserve your travel memories.



 [View website](#)

Dagne Dover Mila Toiletry Organizer

With sleek, lightweight storage and plenty of room for all the essentials, you'll travel calmly knowing flight turbulence won't disturb your toiletries.

Bio insights showcase: Events Buyer



Tatum Jones

Buyer, Event Gifting
5 years with ITA Group

Tatum's role combines creativity with strategy in a tangible way. She loves the challenge of sourcing and curating gifts that reflect a client's brand and local brands, and create meaningful, memorable experiences for the recipients.

Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks (cont.)

From around the industry



Orlando tops Cvent 2026 meeting destinations list



How planners are extending impact to justify event spend



2026 incentive travel trends: Slow travel and soft adventure defined



4 sales kickoff tips from corporate event management experts



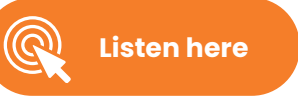
EIC sustainable event standards: What planners and suppliers should know



On topic

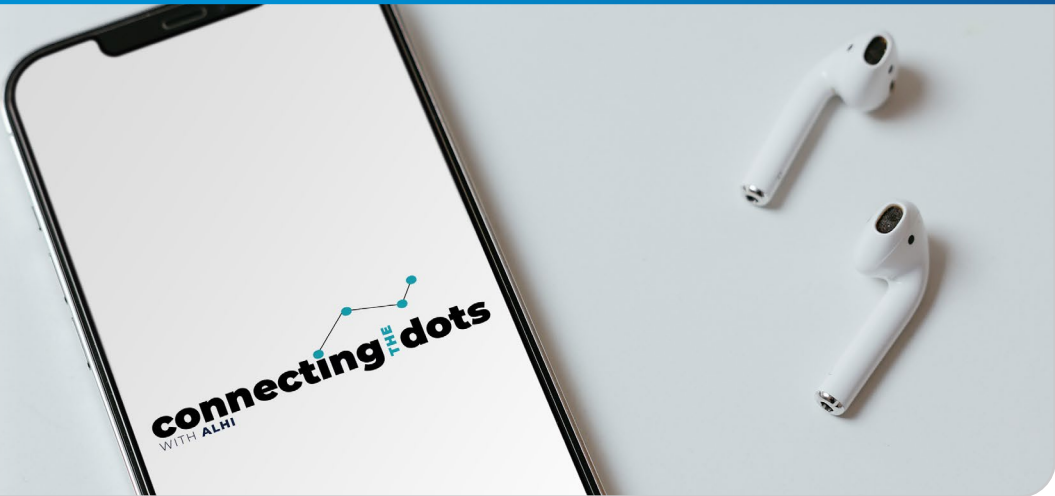
Listen

Connecting the Dots with Associated Luxury Hotels International



“ I enjoy Connecting the Dots podcast because, as President and CEO, Mike Dominguez brings credibility and perspective to every conversation. He uses his deep industry respect to translate global headlines into clear, relevant insights for the meetings and events space.

—MONICA FASSE, INDUSTRY & PARTNER RELATIONS MANAGER



Events & Incentive Travel

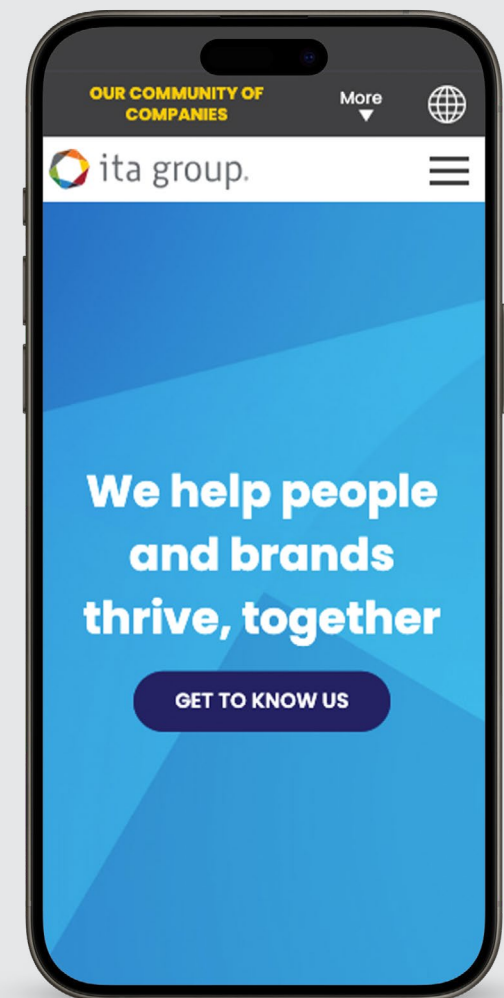
Industry update

Direct to your inbox on a bimonthly basis

Questions?

Monica Fasse

Industry & Partner Relations Manager
mfasse@itagroup.com | (515) 326 3097



Stay connected with
us by visiting
itagroup.com,
and head to
itagroup.com/insights
for the latest in
thought leadership.

Socials

