VOLUME 3, ISSUE 6

ita group®

Events & Incentive Travel

Industry update

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

CONTENT MARKETING AWARDS 2026 FINALIST

Hello!

The arrival of sweater weather here in the Midwest signals a shift into one of the industry's busiest and most influential seasons. Participating in key forums like IMEX America, annual MPI events and more creates opportunities to exchange ideas, explore emerging trends, strengthen partnerships, and shape the future of meetings and incentives alongside brilliant colleagues. Thanks to continued investment across the hospitality and travel sectors, there's a sense of optimism in the air.

This issue introduces renovated luxury properties, a new fleet of cruise ships designed to serve corporate event charters (see p. 13) and spotlights Seattle—a destination we experienced during a DMC Network event. I look forward to these bustling months that prove the continued value of face-to-face experiences to boost connection, engagement and business results.



Monica Fasse

Monica Fasse

Industry & Partner Relations Manager

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

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Around the industry

What's happening

Journeying through the Fast Company Innovation Festival

Beyond our hub at Convene in the Financial District, Fast Company Innovation Festival organizers made New York City the venue with many workshops and sponsored events across the city. Great experiences result from intentionally designing participant journeys, environments and moments of discovery.

The festival's strongest message highlighted successful brands winning not through technology alone.

- **Story drives strategy.** Brands are anchoring growth and innovation around a clear narrative rather than products or features. Event teams should continue strengthening outcome-driven storytelling.
- **Human connections are gaining value as digital interactions increase.** Rather than leading with technology for technology's sake, build community to drive behavior change.
- **Purpose must be built-in, not bolted on.** More organizations are seeking experiences that authentically connect business objectives, culture and social impact/sustainability. Integrate this intention into event design.
- **Creators contribute ideas and shape conversations while influencers simply amplify messages.** Test organically, learn what resonates, then invest in proven engagement.





Ashley Bohnenkamp
Senior Manager, Events
7 years at ITA Group

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Around the industry

What's happening (cont.)

site

'Purposeful experiences' at SITE Classic in Puerto Rico

This year's SITE Classic emphasized similar messages that Ashley heard from Fast Company—event planners must embrace intentional program design to capture and keep attendee attention.

- **Technology enables experiences, but human connection drives impact.** The most successful programs leverage tech to create efficiencies and personalization, keeping meaningful relationships, emotional connections and participant experiences at the center of event strategy.
- **Purposeful experiences inspire action.** The keynote speaker, former Google leader Julian Pistone, reminded us how experiences that evoke emotion and connect people to something bigger than themselves can have a lasting impact long after the event concludes.

Beyond the sessions, SITE Classic reinforced Puerto Rico's resilience. From Old San Juan's walkable charm and history to rainforest adventures and beach experiences, the destination remains a strong contender for meetings and incentive travel. El Conquistador stands out for its conference capabilities and stunning views. Wyndham Grand Rio Mar impressed with renovated guest rooms, seamless group arrival experiences and convenient airport access for groups.



Mackenzie Dierks
Senior Global Expansion Manager
6 years at ITA Group



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Around the industry

What's happening (cont.)

Discussing destinations and collaboration in Alaska

Conversations at Hosts Global Forum, held at Alyeska Resort in Anchorage, centered on topics increasingly important to clients and attendees.

- **Secondary and emerging destinations:** Organizations are exploring alternative meeting locations in search of greater value and opportunities to surprise and engage attendees. Look for destinations capable of supporting overall program objectives, plus a compelling combination of accessibility, affordability and uniqueness.
- **Early and strategic collaborations:** As client expectations evolve, successful events depend on building relationships among planners, hotels, destination marketing organizations, DMCs and local partners. These relationships drive innovation, improve attendee experiences and strengthen program execution.

While there, I connected with Colours of Malta DMC, gaining valuable insight into what makes this Mediterranean destination an exceptional option for corporate meetings, incentives and events.

In addition to educational content, an outstanding Alaska destination experience showcased breathtaking landscapes and glacier views, plus included wildlife encounters and cultural immersion.



Jill McClurg
Senior Manager, Meetings & Events
11 years at ITA Group



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DESTINATION DISCOVERY

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

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Seattle

Making meetings a breeze





Why it's trending

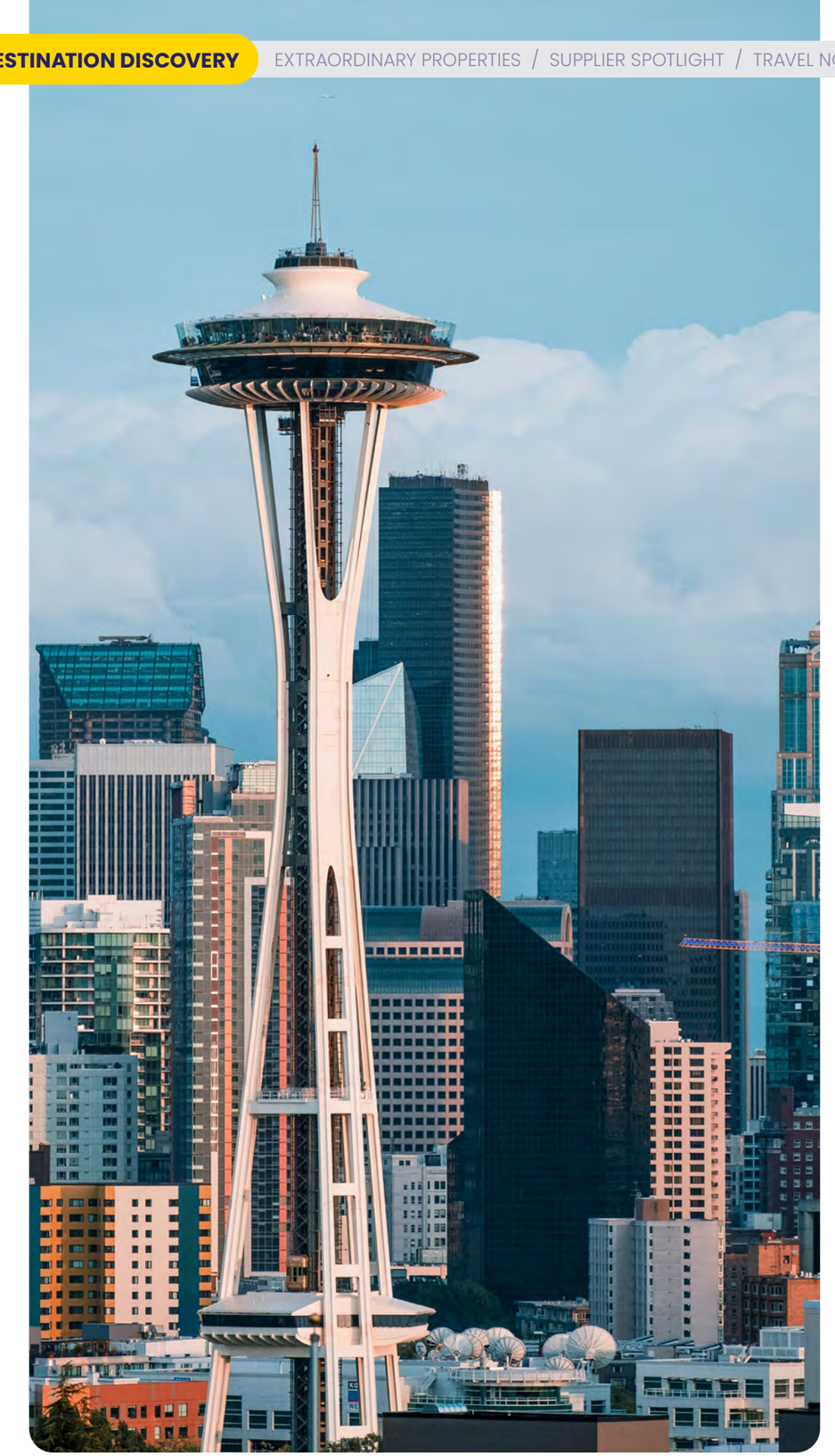
Seattle offers a refreshing taste of the Pacific Northwest, combining the waterfront, meeting infrastructure and easy access to outdoor experiences. The Emerald City's strength as a meetings destination comes from its convergence of urban energy and natural beauty.

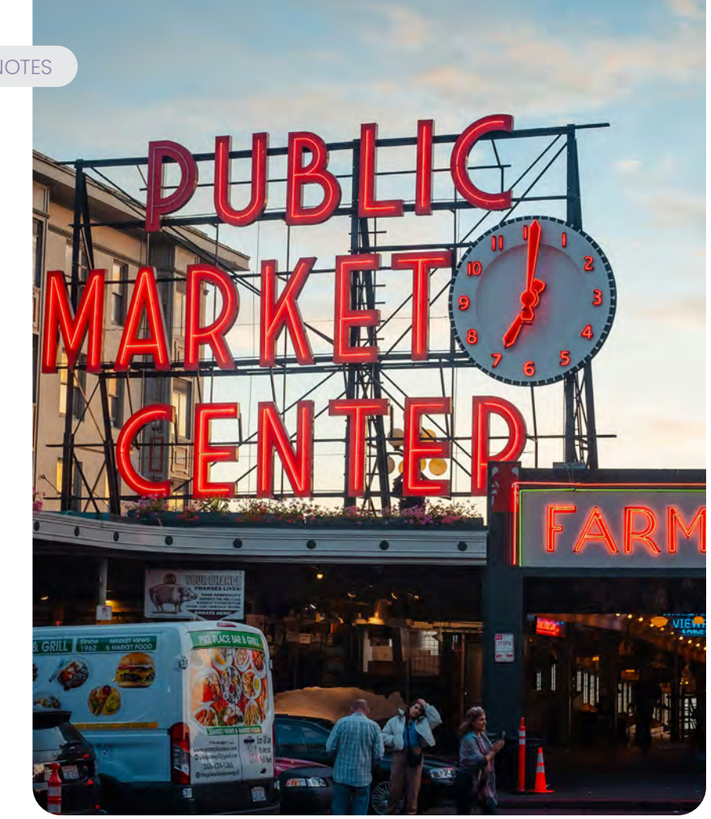
Why choose Seattle?

- **Accessibility and walkability:** The Seattle Convention Center's Arch and Summit Buildings sit in the heart of downtown, surrounded by major hotels, restaurants and entertainment options. Active and easy to navigate, attendees can stroll between venues, Pike Place Market and the waterfront. They can also easily navigate to attractions such as the Space Needle via the city's historic monorail.
- **Approachable and welcoming:** Seattle's Downtown Ambassador Program provides an added layer of hospitality, with local representatives available to assist visitors in a 300-square-block area downtown. The mobile Convention Perks Pass offers meeting attendees discounts with local retailers and restaurants.

Best time to host

- **Peak season:** Corporate events peak in spring (April to June) and fall (September to October); summer months are alternate options
- **Travel time:** 20 minutes to Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA)







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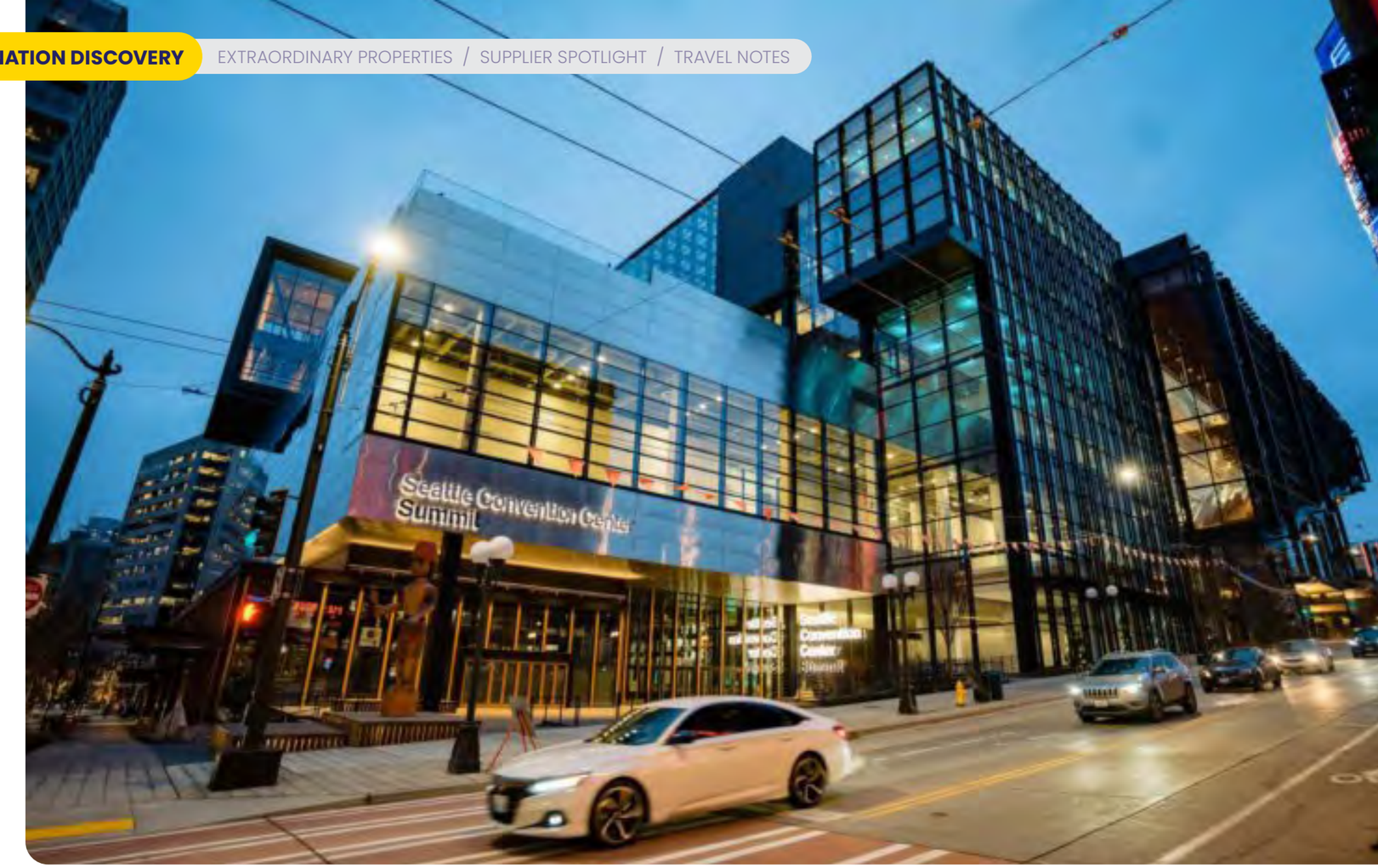
Where to meet

Summit Building at the Seattle Convention Center

Opened in January 2023, this LEED Platinum-certified venue earns a spot among the industry's most impressive convention facilities today. (The Summit Building was designed by LMN Architects, the same firm transforming Austin Convention Center.) Floor-to-ceiling windows flood the building with natural light, while thoughtfully integrated sustainable design features and extensive use of repurposed materials create a modern and welcoming atmosphere.

This facility's 14,000-square-foot garden terrace uniquely extends the meeting experience, giving groups the option to move between indoor and outdoor environments. Culinary offerings further elevate the experience, with a scratch kitchen and bakery showcasing locally sourced Pacific Northwest ingredients.

Meeting space: 573,770 total sq. ft. (248,450 sq. ft. of exhibition space, 58,000 sq. ft. Ballroom, 65+ breakout rooms)



Hyatt Convention Alliance Hotels

Seattle is particularly well-suited for programs with 500–1,500 attendees. Near the Summit Building, three Hyatt properties work together under a single contract, creating a highly efficient convention campus.

- **Hyatt Regency:** Host hotel with 1,260 rooms
- **Grand Hyatt:** Executive or sponsor room block with 457 rooms
- **Hyatt at Olive 8:** Wellness/lifestyle hotel with spa and indoor pool with an additional 346 rooms





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EXTRAORDINARY PROPERTIES

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

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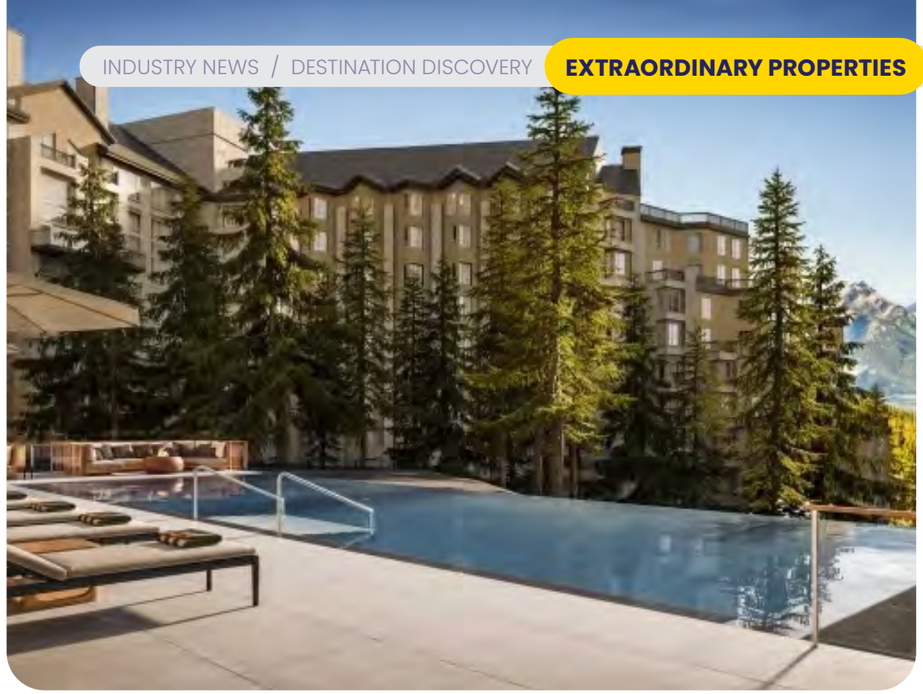
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RIMROCK | ACCOR

Rimrock Banff

Banff, Canada

Carved into Sulphur Mountain, Rimrock Banff exemplifies mountain luxury. North America's first Emblems Collection offers an historic hot springs hotel in the Canadian Rockies with wellness-oriented hospitality. Surrounded by the pristine wilderness of Banff National Park, it's minutes from town, the Banff Upper Hot Springs and the Banff Gondola, providing a balance of exclusivity and convenience incentive winners appreciate.

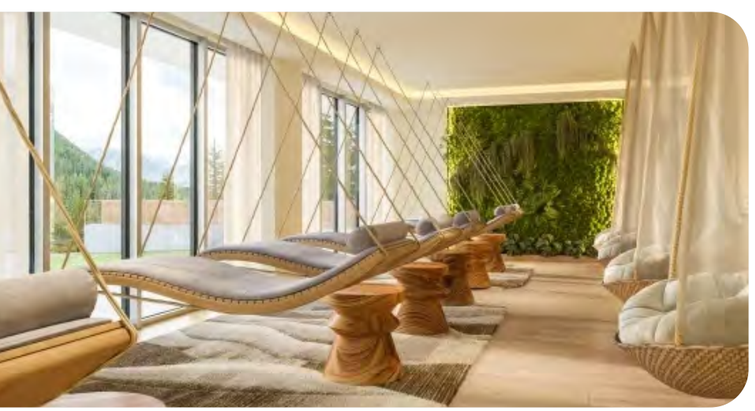
- **Dramatic views:** Arrival at the hotel delivers a major first impression, with many guest rooms offering dramatic views over the Bow Valley and soaring peaks surrounding the property. This area is a UNESCO World Heritage Site celebrated for its glaciers and wildlife. Private guided hiking, biking, skiing, snowshoeing and other alpine expeditions get guests into the landscape.
- **Wellness tradition:** Since a small, six-room inn was first built here in 1895, water has shaped the experience.

Property highlights

Accommodations: 230 guest rooms and suites

Airport transfer: 90 minutes to Calgary International Airport (YYC)

Click to see property







Grand opening intel

Hailey Jackman, Manager, Event Solutions, was on site for the grand opening where she got a firsthand look at the new property. We'll share details soon!

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transcend

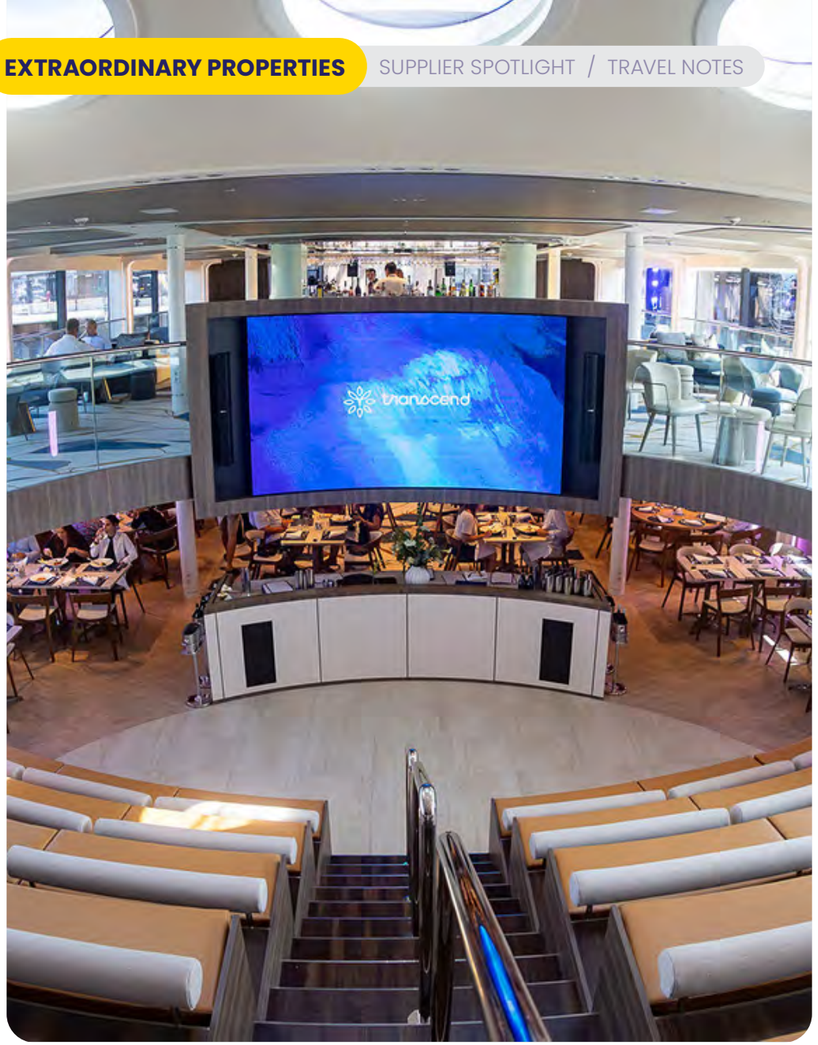
Transcend Cruise line

Transcend Cruises is a new brand designed for fully custom corporate event charters, with voyages along the iconic waterways of Europe. Innovative features, like extensive ship-wide branding and digital presentation technology, tailor corporate events, retreats, incentives and meetings for up to 120 attendees. Charters include the same 54-person dedicated crew, whether you bring 30 people or fill the ship.

European itineraries: Transcend's first ship is already sailing the Rhine. Three more will join by the end of 2027, expanding to the Danube, with 12 ships anticipated by 2030. Because it's a full charter, the itinerary is built around your program length and dates. Whether booking a two-night board meeting or a multi-week trip, budget around the same flat rate.

Accommodations and event space: Up to 60 flexible, 210-square-foot staterooms feature a full-width French balcony with sash window, open bath design, walk-in closet, complimentary internet access and minibar, among other amenities. Public space includes 15 distinct venues. The lounge, main restaurant and tiered forum all hold your full group for plenary sessions, and the sundeck and outdoor cinema function well for a reception. For breakouts or VIP moments, the library, aft lounge, spa and main lobby each fit 20–30 guests.

Culinary experience: Choice is built into dining offerings, with menus, seating and service options tailored specifically to your group's tastes and preferences. Up to four beverage locations are available across the ship. If your itinerary takes attendees ashore for a dining experience, Transcend offers dining credits.







By the numbers

Accommodations: 60 guest rooms and suites

Event space: 15 venues covering about 24,000 sq. ft.

Click to see property



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SUPPLIER SPOTLIGHT

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

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Standout supplier partners



Jandir Moquete

Secrets Tides Punta Cana

From my initial last-minute request for a site visit, Jandir demonstrated exceptional responsiveness and unwavering partnership. He navigated contract negotiations efficiently while accommodating multiple rounds of rooming adjustments. When the hotel proposed releasing space and changing room categories, Jandir recognized the importance of maintaining consistency and worked collaboratively to protect the integrity of the process. Given the client's extensive contract approval process, his patience, persistence and positive attitude were critical.

—TIFFANY CLARK, MANAGER, EVENT PURCHASING



Kleandros Chatzisavvas

Horizon DMC

Kleandros researched easy routes on the steep hills of Santorini and ensured ADA access from arrival to departure and everything in between. Their team's knowledge of the destination meant questions never went unanswered and they found solutions for any issues we had during planning and operation. Horizon DMC went above and beyond to work with our many vendors.

— LINDI NELSON, EXECUTIVE PRODUCER

Faus DMC

Partnering with Faus DMC on two upcoming programs in Buenos Aires and other regions of Argentina, I've found their team has been outstanding. They demonstrate exceptional attention to detail, thoughtfully listen to our clients' needs and welcome us with genuine hospitality during site visits. I am continually impressed by their ability to pivot quickly and fulfill requests within minutes. Every member of the Faus team is exceptional!

— ALLYSSA KOHNERT, BUYER

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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

More than a mountainous escape, a recent ITA Group discovery tour at The Broadmoor immersed our team in "The power of personalization" through exceptional event design. Held in collaboration with Incentive Research Foundation, PRA, RMC and Visit Colorado Springs, the three-day experience presented industry learning and themed events within extraordinary spaces at the legendary resort. Kayla Metli, Senior Buyer, Event Purchasing, shared how ITA Group's partners infused every moment with meaning.



Q: What positions The Broadmoor as a meeting or incentive travel destination?

A: The Broadmoor is among ITA Group's longtime hospitality partners. It's an elegant, historic property that first opened in 1918. In fact, it's the longest running 5-star, 5-diamond resort in the world. I'm impressed by the way they balance luxury with authentic Colorado experiences and how The Broadmoor preserves stories from the visionary founders, Spencer and Julie Penrose, while continuing to build on its legacy.

We toured main areas at the 5,000-acre resort, which now includes 784 rooms and suites, and 92 meeting rooms and venues with 315,000 sq. ft. of total event space, including a convention center. Beyond the lakeside rooms, golf course-adjacent cottages and Broadmoor brownstones lie all-inclusive wilderness properties. Remote venues like their intimate Cloud Camp lodge on Cheyenne Mountain provide distinct views in the Pikes Peak region. A group can host general sessions and meetings at the resort, then transition VIPs or top performers to a completely different environment without requiring additional transportation logistics or supplier contracts.

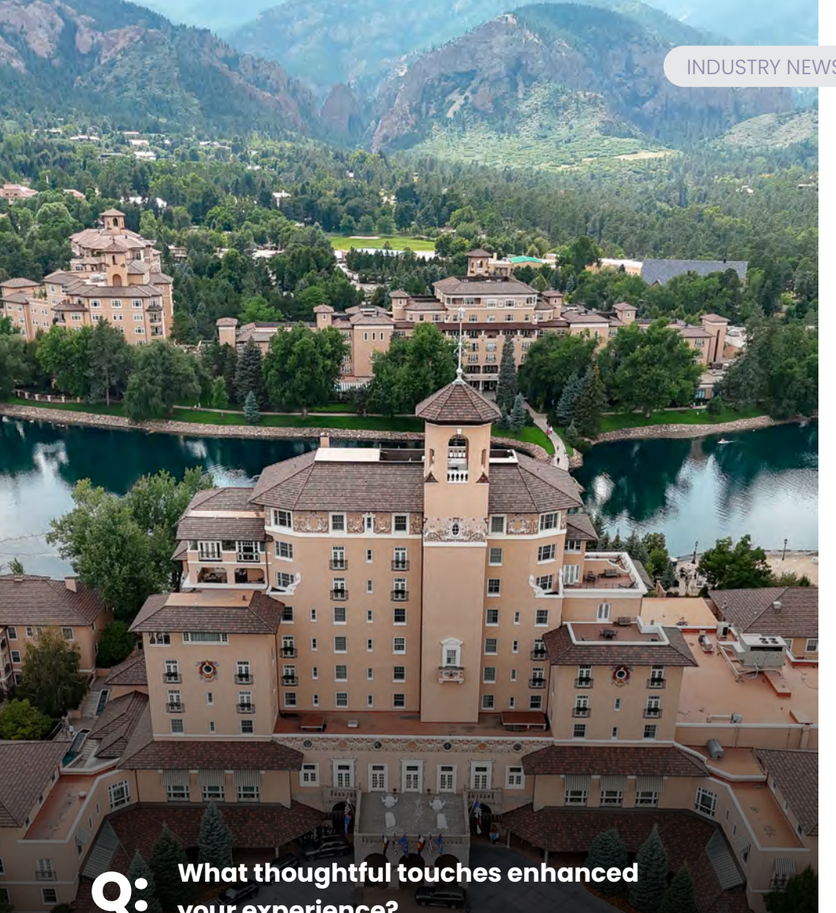


Q: How did partners spotlight some of these spaces?

A: For a "first taste" of the destination, RMC set up a relaxed lunch in the 1,800-square-foot Gaylord Suite, a guest accommodation with one of the property's best balcony views. Then, they welcomed us with "Beneath the Broadmoor sky," an outdoor reception that played to the Mountain Clubhouse's panoramic sunset views. Guests received customized star maps highlighting the constellations visible that evening. One of my favorite details from the celestial-inspired event was a crystal reading station that tied into the theme.

Our second evening, PRA hosted "Untamed elegance," a cocktail reception envisioned to connect the resort's refined luxury with Penrose's reputation for curiosity, conservation and discovery, which led to the founding of the Cheyenne Mountain Zoo. Interactions with ambassador animals, including birds of prey, reinforced the evening's spirit of adventure. It was the perfect transition to an on-site dinner at The Penrose Room, which received MICHELIN Guide recognition. Try the tableside flambé desserts.

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Q: What thoughtful touches enhanced your experience?

A: RMC hosted a "finishing touch lounge" with hair stylists and makeup artists who helped us transition from a full day of meetings and activities to our evening event. Another day, I climbed the 224 steps at Seven Falls and enjoyed panoramic canyon views, several colleagues took part in a zipline experience they described as one of the best they've ever done, complete with a rappel down the mountainside. I also spent time in the spa's pink Himalayan salt-infused dry sauna and the oxygen room.

Even the in-between moments, like a late-night singalong at The Golden Bee, a reconstructed 19th-century British pub on the property and popping into Café Julie's for pastries, showed how committed the resort team is to hospitality.

Q: Key takeaways from your time in Colorado Springs?

A: What impressed me most weren't just the venues, but how seamlessly The Broadmoor, PRA and RMC worked together to create a cohesive attendee journey. Every event felt connected to the overall story and theme. The experience was a powerful reminder that great events aren't built by a single partner. They're built through strong partnerships working together toward a shared vision.







Property at a glance

THE BROADMOOR

Click to see property



Kayla Metli
Senior Buyer
9 years at ITA Group

Kayla Metli enjoys turning complex event visions into reality. She works behind the scenes to source destinations, negotiate contracts and develop strategic solutions for meetings and events around the globe. When she's not planning programs, you'll likely find her chasing outdoor adventures in Colorado or researching her next leisure trip.

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Trending keynote

Mark Duplass



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.

Award-winning actor, filmmaker and entrepreneur Mark Duplass blends his storytelling ability with a surprisingly relevant business message about resourcefulness, innovation and collaboration. As co-founder of one of Hollywood's most successful independent production companies, Mark built a creative business by embracing constraints rather than waiting for perfect conditions. His candid style and signature "$3 film" philosophy challenges audiences to rethink limitations as catalysts for change.

Accolades

- Earned multiple nominations for his performance on Apple TV+'s The Morning Show
- Credits span blockbuster dramas, independent films and prestige television

Keynote topics

- Balancing commerce and creative integrity
- Thriving through constant change
- Why constraints create greatness
- Building resilience in high-pressure careers

Quick facts

- **Preferred format:** Keynote; fireside conversation/interview
- **Budget range:** $45,000 for U.S. events, inclusive of all travel besides hotel

Learn more

Why we recommend

Mark's Hollywood stories and creative perspective make the content entertaining and memorable. He's especially compelling for organizations focused on doing more with less, navigating disruption or building resilient teams.

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Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks

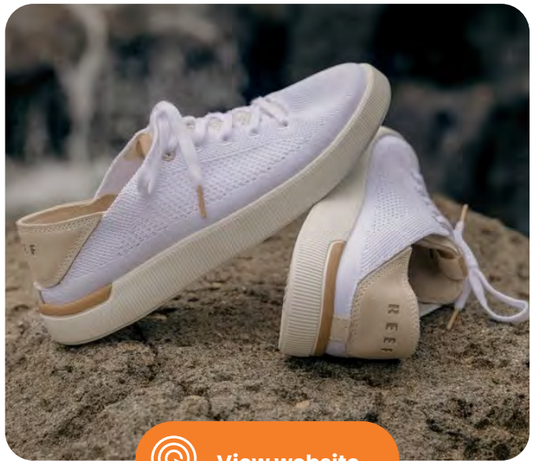
What's in your travel bag?



View website

soundcore Sleep A30

Snooze easier with these smart earbuds. The triple noise reduction system and curated sleep stories create a calming environment, no matter what's happening beyond your hotel walls. Tracking data reinforces healthy habits.



View website

REEF 'Neptune' sneakers

These lightweight kicks easily slip into your carry-on and onto your feet. The stretch knit upper and crushable heel offer breathable comfort without sacrificing style.



View website

Jo Malone London cologne

Spritzing the Wood Sage & Sea Salt scent transports wearers to the British coast. Jo Malone fragrances also come in lotions, candles, room sprays and diffusers.

Bio insights showcase: Events Buyer



Kennedy Kramer

Senior Product Buyer, Event Gifting
7 years with ITA Group

Kennedy feels inspired by ITA Group's impact. After seven years, she still enjoys being part of experiences that create lasting memories for attendees by sourcing the perfect gift for an incentive trip, helping bring a client's vision to life, or discovering new products and suppliers. Newly engaged, she's also eagerly planning her 2028 wedding.

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Trending content

Resources, tips and tricks (cont.)

From around the industry

How planners adapt to tighter budgets

Click to read

50 new hotels meeting planners should know about

Click to read

How to build a strategic event sponsorship program for every incentive trip phase

Click to read

6 trends shaping pharmaceutical event planning and management

Click to read

Sustainability in event goal setting, execution and reporting

Click to read

On topic

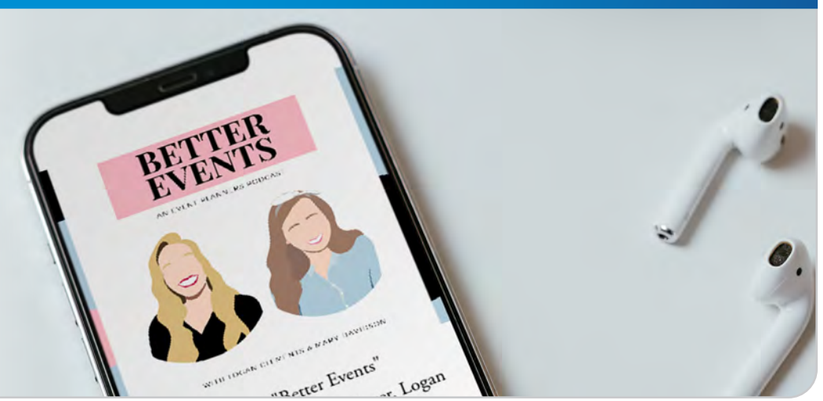
Listen

"Better Events" podcast

Listen here

I found this planner-to-planner podcast focused on creating more intentional, engaging events highly relevant for meeting professionals looking for new ideas. Event Producer Logan Clements and Event Director Mary Davidson cohost, covering practical topics like alternative session design and earning the referral with accessible and engaging conversations.

—MONICA FASSE, INDUSTRY & PARTNER RELATIONS MANAGER, EVENT SOLUTIONS



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Events & Incentive Travel

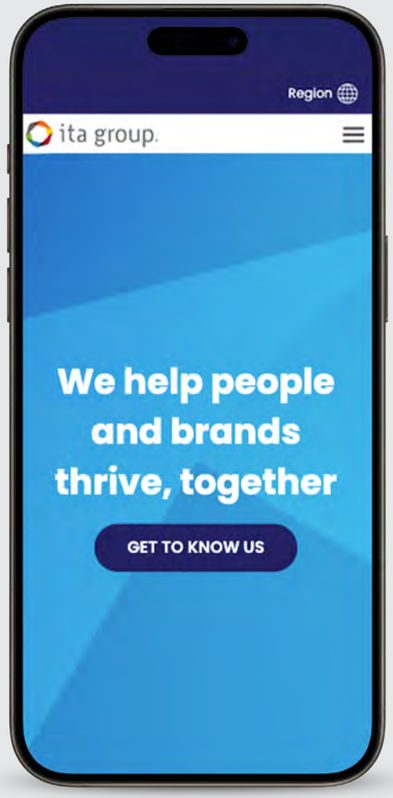
Industry update

Direct to your inbox on a bimonthly basis

Questions?

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