



ONEWORLD MEETINGS AND EVENTS TRENDS 2027-2030

In association with

GLOBETRENDER

Foreword



ONEWORLD MEETINGS AND
EVENTS TRENDS, 2027-2030
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Welcome to this oneworld report on “Meetings and Events Trends 2027-2030”, produced in association with travel trend forecasting agency Globetrender, and published in October 2026.

Through seven trends – The Human Premium, The ROI of Presence, Experience-First Events, Destination as Content, Geo-Compression, Loyalty Ecosystems and Meet Me Airside – we explore the forces shaping the future of international gatherings and the journeys that make them possible.

2 There is a particular energy that comes from arriving somewhere with a shared purpose. A conference can open the door to a new market. An association gathering can renew relationships across continents. An international celebration can bring a community together in ways that become part of its collective history.

As appetite for these encounters grows, a new chapter for global meetings and events is coming into focus. Businesses are investing in face-to-face relationship-building to create resilience in an uncertain economic environment; professional communities are looking for opportunities to exchange ideas and strengthen their international networks; and event organisers are thinking more carefully about the destinations they choose, and whether the location earns its place on the schedule. These ideas and more are explored in this report’s seven trends.

For an airline alliance, these developments present an important opportunity. International events depend on people travelling from different places, often on different airlines, to arrive at the same destination. Making those journeys easier to arrange can help more organisations realise the ambitions they have for their gatherings.

That is the thinking behind the relaunch of **oneworld** Meetings

& Events, our new online portal for organisers of international meetings and events. It gives eligible organisations access to event-related fare products across the **oneworld** network through a dedicated booking link, and gives attendees the option to arrange their own flights from wherever they are travelling. It’s not just for corporate business travel: the proposition is designed for the breadth of organisations that convene people internationally, including associations and communities whose members may be spread across many countries.

We are launching the portal at a time of significant development across our alliance. Hawaiian Airlines joined **oneworld** in April 2026, strengthening our presence across the Pacific, while this summer Philippine Airlines announced plans to become our 16th member, bringing additional destinations into our Southeast Asian network. Looking further ahead, Qantas’s Project Sunrise will introduce nonstop services between Sydney and London in 2027, followed by Sydney and New York in 2028, reducing the time required to travel between some of the world’s most distant business centres.

Our partnerships are developing alongside our airline network. The launch of our loyalty collaboration with Taj InnerCircle – NeuPass in June 2026 extends recognition and benefits into hospitality, creating new opportunities for customers travelling to India and

other destinations across IHCL’s portfolio. A standout event is, after all, about so much more than the flight alone.

Combined, these developments invite a wider conversation about the future of gathering. Which destinations will attract the next generation of international events? How will organisers respond to changing expectations of attendance? And what role can airlines play in helping people make the most of the time they spend away?

We hope this report offers useful insight for everyone involved in creating international events. As we introduce **oneworld** Meetings & Events, we look forward to helping more organisations turn the ambition to gather into a journey people can make.

Ole Orvær, Chief Executive Officer, oneworld



Discover **oneworld** Meetings & Events and enquire about your next international gathering at **oneworld.com**.



Images: Unsplash

Introducing
oneworld Meetings
& Events

A world of connections.
One place to gather.

3



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Meetings & Events

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International events begin with a shared ambition: to bring people from across the world to one destination. Making that happen can be complex, particularly for organisations whose attendees are spread across multiple countries and need the flexibility to arrange their own travel.

Relaunching in October 2026, oneworld Meetings & Events is a new online portal designed to make international event travel easier to organise. It gives eligible event organisers access to preferential fares across the oneworld alliance, connecting delegates with a global airline network serving nearly 1,000 destinations.

How it works

Event organisers submit an enquiry through the oneworld Events portal. Once approved, they receive a dedicated booking link that can be shared directly with attendees or added to an event website.

Delegates can then arrange their own flights from their respective departure points, choosing journeys that suit their individual schedules. Organisers can manage multiple events through their account and access available booking analytics, without taking responsibility for every attendee's reservation.

This distinction is central to the proposition. oneworld Events is designed for independently travelling delegates converging on a shared destination, rather than conventional airline group bookings in which passengers travel together on the same flight.

The value of a global network

oneworld member airlines connect major business centres with destinations across six continents, giving organisers access to an extensive international network through a single event-travel proposition.

Eligible frequent flyers can also continue to benefit from their existing airline loyalty programmes, including

opportunities to earn miles or points on qualifying flights and access applicable status privileges.

As the geography of meetings and events evolves, organisers need travel solutions that reflect the international reach of their audiences. oneworld Events provides a practical way to support that ambition, helping organisations make their gatherings accessible to delegates wherever their journeys begin.

Discover oneworld Meetings & Events and enquire about your next international gathering at oneworld.com.



The New Value of Gathering

In a world where we can connect online from anywhere, being somewhere together is taking on new value.



The world is preparing for an extraordinary decade of gathering. In 2027, Belgrade will host a specialised World Expo devoted to sport and music, while Brazil welcomes the FIFA Women's World Cup and Australia stages the Men's Rugby World Cup. Los Angeles will host the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2028. By 2030, the FIFA World Cup will span Morocco, Portugal and Spain, with centenary matches in South America, while Riyadh opens a six-month World Expo. Each will attract an international audience whose presence is central to the occasion.

Alongside these spectacles, the established calendar of business events continues to draw people across borders. IMEX will return to Frankfurt and Las Vegas, while annual gatherings such as CES and Mobile World Congress provide focal points for industries whose participants increasingly collaborate across continents. The appeal of such events lies partly in their concentration of opportunity: a few days in one destination can create relationships and accelerate decisions that might otherwise take months.

The economic outlook supports this appetite for travel. According to the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), worldwide business travel spending is forecast to reach a record US\$1.71 trillion in 2026, an increase of 7.2% year-on-year. An estimated 1.84 billion business trips will take place, compared with 1.82 billion in 2025.

The difference between these growth rates is revealing. Business travel expenditure is rising considerably faster than trip volumes, reflecting higher

transport costs and growing pressure on travel budgets. For event organisers, the implication is that attendance must offer a persuasive return on the time and money invested in getting there.

The wider travel economy is expanding, too. The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) reports that global investment in the sector exceeded US\$1 trillion in 2025, up 8.5% year-on-year, while its contribution to world GDP reached US\$11.6 trillion. The United States, China, India and Saudi Arabia accounted for almost half of global travel and tourism capital investment. New infrastructure and destination development are helping to establish the conditions for future international gatherings.

Yet the geography of travel is becoming more complicated. The July 2026 Henley Passport Index reveals that the average passport now provides visa-free access to 108 destinations, compared with 58 in 2006. International mobility has expanded dramatically over two decades, although the benefits remain unevenly



distributed. Singaporean passport holders can access 192 destinations without obtaining a visa in advance, compared with just 22 for Afghan citizens.

At the same time, the Institute for Economics & Peace reports that 119 of the 163 countries measured by its Global Peace Index are less peaceful

than they were in 2008. For organisers bringing together delegates from multiple markets, geopolitical developments can affect destination selection, travel routes and the ability of participants to attend. Aviation innovation offers another perspective on this changing map. Qantas's Project Sunrise is scheduled to connect

Sydney with London nonstop from October 2027, followed by New York in mid-2028. The latter route is expected to save more than three hours compared with existing one-stop services. Philippine Airlines' planned entry into **oneworld** will meanwhile add 31 destinations not currently served by the alliance, strengthening its Southeast Asian reach.

Such developments could influence the locations that organisations consider practical for international events, particularly when attendees are travelling independently from widely dispersed origin markets. The definition of an event is also widening. Professional associations, fan communities and international celebrations bring people together around interests that extend beyond the workplace. Meanwhile, conferences are increasingly incorporating cultural experiences and opportunities to explore the host destination, giving delegates additional reasons to make the journey.

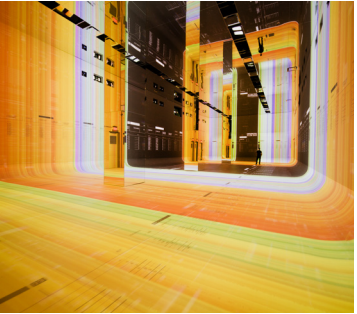
Artificial intelligence will

continue to change how events are planned and how participants navigate them. Its growing capabilities may also sharpen expectations of what physical attendance should deliver. When information can be accessed remotely and introductions arranged digitally, the value of gathering becomes more closely tied to what unfolds between scheduled sessions: a conversation that develops into a partnership, an unexpected encounter or a shared experience that strengthens an existing relationship.

For the meetings and events industry, the coming years present both challenges and opportunities. Organisers will need to make every journey count, while destinations and travel providers respond to the changing expectations of international audiences. The question facing the sector is increasingly specific: what becomes possible when these particular people meet in this particular place?

The answer will shape the next generation of global gatherings.

Seven Trends Shaping Meetings and Events, 2027-2030

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01.

The Human Premium

01. The Human Premium

Why face-to-face connection is becoming more valuable in an increasingly digital world.



7 The average human lifespan contains roughly 464,000 waking hours, so showing up in person counts for something. In a world where digital communication is easy and knowledge is cheap, sharing a meal, shaking a hand or diving into a multi-person conversation – still subject to digital friction on even the most advanced video calls – pays dividends both personally and professionally.

The demand is real. For American Airlines, premium corporate travel bookings were up nearly 15% year-on-year in the 12 months to May 2026. Lucas Martin, Senior Vice-President of Sales for American Airlines, says: “We’re continuing to see healthy demand for business travel tied to customer engagement, team collaboration and face-to-face meetings, reflecting the continued importance organisations place on bringing people together when it matters most.”

The deeper driver is reconnection. AI eases access to information but risks atomising people further, reducing the impetus to build relationships. Young professionals feel it most: a September 2026 LinkedIn survey found that 72% of Gen Z respondents feel disconnected from people who could help their careers, while 52% are unsure how to turn contacts into real connections. Separate Freeman and The Harris Poll research (2025) found that 89% of Gen



89% of Gen Z workers say live events are critical for building professional confidence



8 **“Some of the most valuable interactions at a convention happen quite naturally – the conversation you have with someone sitting next to you, the person you meet while looking at a project in our House of Friendship – Rotary’s humanitarian project exhibition – or the discussion that continues over dinner after a session.”**

Zs believe live events build professional confidence, and 86% want their companies to spend more on them.

Rotary International, a members’ organisation of 1.2 million people across 45,000 clubs, has watched the shift unfold. Since the pandemic, connection has overtaken learning and skills development as the main reason to attend its live events. “There is an energy and spontaneity that is very difficult to recreate online,” says Shannon Watson, Director of Meetings and Events. “Some of the most valuable interactions at a convention happen quite naturally – the conversation you have with someone sitting next

to you... or the discussion that continues over dinner after a session.”

The instinct runs deep in Fiji, where talanoa – the Pacific tradition of sitting together, sharing stories and building understanding through open dialogue – shows what gathering can achieve. “People are willing to travel when an event offers exclusive content, valuable networking and experiences that cannot be replicated online,” says Kamal Haer, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for Fiji Airways.

Digital tools, LLMs included, aren’t diminishing this value; they may be concentrating it.

Buyers can research suppliers and make first contact online, freeing face-to-face time for the harder work of building trust and challenging ideas. Carina Bauer, CEO of IMEX Group, says: “It’s during the face-to-face meeting that relationships are deepened, details are fleshed out and where both parties develop the trust and confidence to step into a commercial agreement.”

IBTM Exhibition Director Claudia Hall agrees: “You can research suppliers online, ask AI to compare technologies and access information instantly, but that doesn’t replace the value of seeing things in context.” For Hall, the physical event now

has a more defined role: “People don’t need more information for information’s sake. They want to leave with ideas and skills they can actually use, meaningful connections and fresh thinking – something genuinely worth the time and investment of being there.”

In an age of abundant AI-generated information, human attention is the scarcer commodity. The value of an event, therefore, will lie less in a painstakingly scripted programme and more in who you can meet, what you can experience together and the serendipity of simply being in the same room.

02.

The ROI of Presence

03. The ROI of Presence

Why international events must deliver more from every journey.

10



As global gatherings proliferate, the business case for attending them is coming under greater scrutiny. As budgets tighten and the cost of moving people around the planet climbs, international meetings and events must deliver a far more compelling return on the time, money and effort it takes to attend.

According to the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), worldwide business travel spending is forecast to reach a record US\$1.71 trillion in 2026, an increase of 7.2% year-on-year. Yet the number of business trips is expected to rise by just 1.3%, from 1.82 billion in 2025 to 1.84 billion in 2026. The disparity is telling: businesses are spending considerably more on travel without making many more journeys. As the cost of each trip rises, so does the pressure to justify it. For event organisers, this raises the stakes: attendance must deliver a persuasive return on the time and money invested in getting there.

For organisers, the stakes have never been higher. A conference



now competes with pricier fares, tighter travel policies, the time-out tax of several days away from the desk and the ever-present option of dialling in. Whether travelling for business or community, attendees are starting to ask a blunt question: what's the ROI? Or rather, the Return on In-Person?

“With the cost of travel on the rise, there is greater scrutiny on travel spending, which means organisations and their travel managers are looking closely at the outcomes generated by every trip,” says Fulvio Origo, Senior Director EMEA at GBTA. “Meetings and events need to contribute to clear business objectives, whether that’s knowledge-sharing, revenue generation, employee development or customer engagement.”

Business trips are being loaded with more purpose. Origo says organisations are increasingly stacking client meetings, team collaboration and training into a single journey, with a major event as the anchor. Instead of flying to Singapore for a conference alone, a delegate might add regional client meetings, a day with colleagues and a visit to a prospective partner before heading home.

Parveen Chander, Executive Vice President – Commercial for IHCL (The Indian Hotels Company Limited, of which Taj is a sub-brand), agrees. He says: “The future will not be about choosing between physical and



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11 “The value comes not only from planned meetings but also from the ad hoc conversations and opportunities that emerge when the industry comes together in one place.”

virtual formats. It will be about understanding where each format creates the greatest value and how they can complement one another.”

Large trade events have always played this role, but the economics make their power to compress business activity more valuable. At ITB Asia in Singapore, more than 60,000 business appointments unfold over three days. Meetings that might otherwise demand months of emails, video calls and separate journeys can happen inside a single 72-hour window. “The value comes not only from planned meetings,” says ITB Asia’s Darren Seah, Executive Director, Messe

Berlin Asia Pacific, “but also from the ad hoc conversations and opportunities that emerge when the industry comes together in one place”.

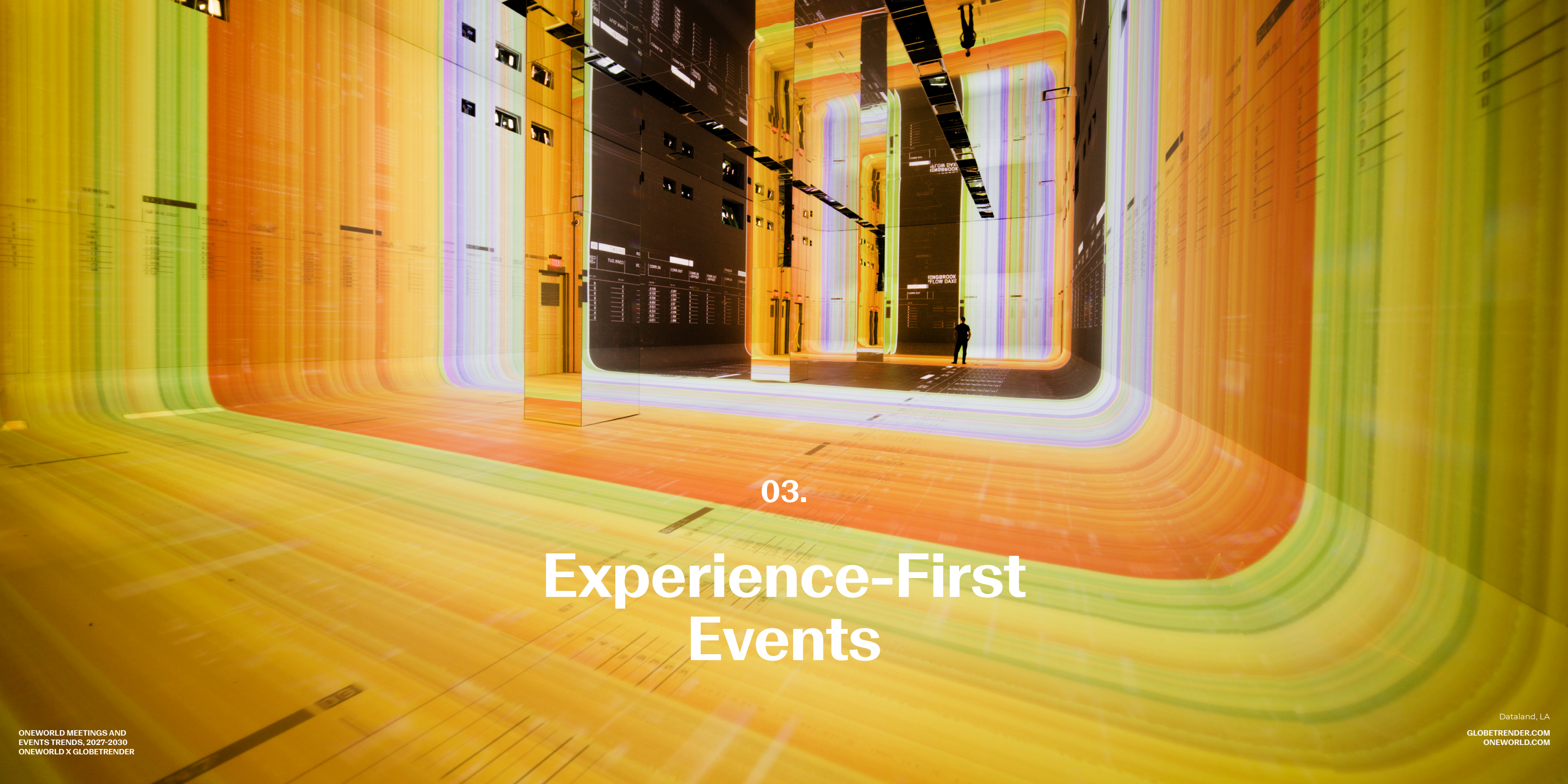
ROIP isn’t measured in networking gains alone. It also hinges on personalisation and the rarity of what’s on the schedule. Dersenish Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer, Airline Business at Malaysia Aviation Group, puts it simply: “For MICE, it is increasingly about asking: ‘What will I take away from being there?’”

oneworld’s relaunched Meetings & Events platform is built for attendees who travel

independently from different origins, giving organisers access to preferential fares across its member network. “Organising large-scale international events is complicated enough,” says Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at oneworld. “So we’ve designed the oneworld Meetings & Events product to be as simple as possible to use, giving access to a vast global network of 13,000 daily flights with preferential fare products for delegates who are coming from multiple international destinations and require travel on multiple airlines.”

Scale alone is becoming a blunt measure of success. A smaller

gathering that sparks contracts, collaborations, and lasting relationships may be worth more than a bigger one that delivers impressive footfall but little consequence. Increasingly, organisers will need to look beyond attendance figures and satisfaction surveys to understand what happens after delegates return home. Did the event generate new business? Strengthen professional networks? Accelerate decisions that might otherwise have taken months? Measuring these outcomes will require a longer-term view of an event’s value, as well as more deliberate thinking about how programmes are designed.



03.

Experience-First Events

04. Experience-First Events

How business gatherings are borrowing from entertainment, hospitality and participatory culture.



SoFi Stadium, LA © Steve Thrasher

For decades, the conference ran on a specific formula: stage, microphone, audience, coffee break, repeat. It made sense when expertise was scarce. It is far harder to defend now that a panel discussion can be streamed, a podcast can deliver an hour of specialist insight for free and AI can boil a 50-page report down in seconds. If information is easy, the physical event has to do something else with people's time. The shift from content consumption to participation is gathering pace, forcing organisers to think harder about how an event feels.

The trend also applies to private parties, weddings and other non-professional gatherings – nowadays, a four-walled venue and caterers doesn't go far enough when it comes to creating an impactful occasion. Around the world, a new generation of innovative event and entertainment venues are emerging – take the Sphere in Las Vegas, which hosts immersive shows complete with 4D effects such as wind and scent, and is available for buy-outs of up to 17,500 people.

Over in Los Angeles, Refik Anadol's Dataland (pictured page 12) is the world's first museum of AI arts – it opened in summer 2026 and has five multi-sensory galleries that can be taken over for events. Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium (pictured left) offers another glimpse of the future of experience-first events. The

70,000-seat venue, which can expand to accommodate more than 100,000 people, combines monumental architecture with immersive technology, including a vast, double-sided 360-degree video board suspended above the field. Set within the wider Hollywood Park entertainment district, it is designed to turn major sporting fixtures, concerts and corporate gatherings into destination experiences. As a host venue for the 2028 Olympic Games, SoFi demonstrates how the next generation of event spaces is being conceived around spectacle and audience engagement.

Experience-first design is no longer a luxury but an assumption, shaped by the consumer world, from the ritual of boutique fitness studios to the multi-sensory, phygital choreography of modern retail. Delegates carry those expectations into professional events. To meet them, organisers must design the end-to-end experience, from the moment guests book to long after they've returned home.

For oneworld, it starts with the flight. "While each oneworld member offers its own unique products and style of service, customers can choose to fly on any one of them knowing they are all premium, world-class airlines," says Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at oneworld. For organisers whose delegates travel independently from around the world, treating the journey as part

of the attendee experience makes for a more coherent proposition.

None of this means turning every business conference into a theatrical spectacle. Often, experience-first design means going smaller. IBTM World is testing the idea through its Skills Exchange, with formats such as Lunch & Learn, Brain & Brew and Sips & Skills that gather small groups around conversation and activity. "We're increasingly focused on creating a more immersive, engaging and human-centred experience, with greater attention to the environments we create," says IBTM Exhibition Director Claudia Hall.

Technology will play its part by lightening the cognitive load and keeping delegates present. Perspective AI turns attendees' objectives into data for smarter matchmaking, while tools such as Snapsight translate and synthesise sessions into key takeaways, freeing participants from frantic note-taking to focus on discussion, connection and the ideas in the room.

Hotels are already tuning in to the rise of Experience-First Events. IHCL (Indian Hotels Company Limited) reports growing appetite for interactive formats, smaller networking sessions and programmes that blend business with wellbeing and leisure. At London's Taj 51 Buckingham Gate hotel, the 170 sqm Cinema Suite (pictured overleaf) pays homage to 1940s and 1950s Hollywood and Indian cinema, making it

Comic-Con San Diego attracts more than 135,000 attendees annually

ideal for intimate screenings or after-parties.

"The expectation is no longer limited to a well-structured agenda; participants want opportunities to connect, learn, participate and experience something distinctive," says Parveen Chander, Executive Vice President – Commercial for IHCL. "We are seeing greater interest in interactive formats, smaller networking sessions and programmes that balance business objectives with wellbeing and leisure." Ultimately, sleep quality, food, outdoor space and room to decompress between sessions are becoming part of event design, not incidental hospitality.

Festivals, sporting events and fan conventions such as Comic-Con offer a useful lesson. Their power lies in participation, with audiences becoming part of the spectacle and creating a collective energy that cannot be replicated online. Attracting more than 135,000 attendees annually to San Diego, the convention transforms the surrounding city into a playground of immersive

brand activations, exclusive screenings and fan experiences, many accessible without a convention ticket. In 2025, Paramount+ created The Lodge, an interactive attraction inspired by franchises including Star Trek and Dexter. With Comic-Con confirmed to remain in San Diego until at least 2030, it demonstrates the commercial and cultural power of events that extend far beyond their official venues.

Crucially, fans are co-creators of the experience. Cosplay, community meet-ups, and spontaneous interactions give the gathering a life of its own. Corporate event organisers can borrow this psychology by giving delegates greater agency through collaborative workshops, peer-led discussions and opportunities to shape the agenda.

The future of experience-first events lies in cultivating that same sense of investment and belonging. By 2030, the most compelling gatherings will be those where attendees feel they have helped create something worth remembering.



04.

Destination as Content

05. Destination as Content

Why the host city is becoming part of the reason to attend.



Keynote speakers, move over. The headline act at your next conference might be the host city itself. For years, destinations competed for events with a familiar set of assets: convention centres, hotel capacity, transport infrastructure and enough airlift to bring everybody in. These fundamentals still matter, but they increasingly decide whether a destination can host an event, not whether anybody actively wants to attend one.

“The destination is often the first thing people notice when deciding whether to attend an event,” says Lucas Martin, Senior Vice President of Sales at American Airlines. “A compelling destination combines practical and emotional appeal. It

needs strong connectivity and infrastructure, but it also needs to offer something memorable. People increasingly want events that combine professional value with experiences they couldn't have somewhere else.”

Between 2027 and 2030, a packed calendar of international events will create powerful incentives for people to travel across borders, bringing new opportunities for destinations, airlines and the wider meetings industry. Major sporting spectacles include the FIFA Women's World Cup in Brazil and Rugby World Cup in Australia in 2027, the Los Angeles Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2028, and the FIFA Men's World Cup across Morocco, Portugal and Spain in 2030.

Meanwhile, Expo 2027 in Belgrade and World Expo 2030 in Riyadh will attract international visitors and business delegations.

Alongside these mega-events, established annual gatherings such as SXSW in Austin and London, CES in Las Vegas, Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Cannes Lions in France and GITEX Global in Dubai will continue to draw professionals from around the world.

Increasingly, the destination itself will become an integral part of the event experience, with local culture, architecture and attractions providing compelling content for delegates to discover, document and share. For event organisers,

this creates opportunities to extend engagement beyond the conference venue, turning the host city into both a stage and a source of storytelling.

Fiji shows what this looks like in practice. “The destination plays a significant role in driving attendance and is often the deciding factor for delegates weighing up whether to invest the time and resources to travel,” says Kamal Haer, Chief Sales and Marketing Officer for Fiji Airways. A conference based around Denarau or the Coral Coast can spill into the Mamanuca or Yasawa islands, with village visits, meke performances, lovo feasts and community projects woven into the itinerary. “In Fiji, the destination becomes part of the event itself



Sphere Las Vegas © Visit Las Vegas

17 “If people are going to invest the time and resources to attend an event in person, they want an experience that extends beyond what can be delivered virtually. Event planners want destinations that offer a true sense of place, with authentic experiences spanning dining, entertainment, culture, sports, wellness and opportunities to explore distinct neighborhoods.”

and starts the moment you board Fiji Airways,” Haer says. “Delegates leave with more than business outcomes. They leave with a genuine connection to the place and its people.”

The rise of Destination as Content changes how places pitch themselves to organisers. A city’s wider proposition, from access to local expertise and distinctive venues to cultural experiences and the chance for delegates to extend their stay, is becoming almost as important as capacity and price. Fulvio Origo, Senior Director, EMEA at the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), says: “Manchester is an increasingly popular city for events, as well as being a growing hub for UK technology innovation. Singapore is another good illustration, hosting more than 1,000 international business events every year.”

Malaysia Airlines is exploring a related idea with its “Bonus Side Trip” proposition, which lets eligible international travellers add a domestic destination to their itinerary. Dersenish Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer, Airline Business at Malaysia Aviation

Group describes the principle as turning “the journey into part of the experience, rather than simply a means of getting to the event”.

There is an economic upside too. Encouraging delegates to venture beyond the host city can spread visitor spending more widely and boost the economic return. For Malaysia, the prize is substantial: more than 400 international business events are already lined up between 2026 and 2030, with an estimated economic impact of RM3.98 billion (US\$974).

Dersenish Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer, Airline Business at Malaysia Aviation Group, says: “For Malaysia Airlines, this reinforces our belief that MICE will continue to be an important source of international and regional premium traffic, particularly as Malaysia strengthens its position as a business events hub.”

India’s event geography, meanwhile, is breaking out of the big-city circuit. IHCL (The Indian Hotels Company Limited) reports growing interest in Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur and Kochi alongside

established metropolitan centres, destinations that pair serious hospitality infrastructure with a strong sense of identity.

Los Angeles is a different story: a mature global events city on the cusp of reinvention ahead of the LA28 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Major events can catalyse new infrastructure and experiences, reshaping a destination’s proposition for the conferences and corporate gatherings that follow.

Mario Thompson, Chief Sales Officer for LA Tourism, notes that “destination appeal has become an increasingly important factor”. He says: “If people are going to invest the time and resources to attend an event in person, they want an experience that extends beyond what can be delivered virtually. Event planners want destinations that offer a true sense of place, with authentic experiences spanning dining, entertainment, culture, sports, wellness and opportunities to explore distinct neighborhoods. For LA, that creates a tremendous advantage because the destination itself becomes

an extension of the meeting experience.” He concludes: “The goal is for attendees to leave feeling that they didn’t simply attend a meeting in Los Angeles, they experienced Los Angeles.”

Airline alliances widen the scope for hosting events in more tantalising, lesser-visited destinations. Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at **oneworld**, says its network covers nearly 1,000 destinations, spanning established business centres and emerging event markets. “We also have deep coverage of emerging event cities,” he says, pointing to its presence across North America, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

The obvious global hubs remain powerful because they combine connectivity, accommodation and infrastructure at enormous scale. But as airline networks expand and secondary destinations invest in better facilities, organisers are free to look beyond them. The future events map will be shaped by two increasingly equal questions: can people get there? And will the destination steal the show?

05:

Geo-Compression

06. Geo-Compression

How aviation innovation and geopolitical uncertainty are changing where the world gathers.



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A map can be deceptive. Sydney and London will remain roughly 17,000km apart, but from October 2027 they are expected to feel several hours closer. Qantas's Project Sunrise is due to connect the two cities nonstop using specially configured Airbus A350-1000ULR aircraft, eliminating the traditional stopover and cutting up to four hours from current one-stop journey times. Sydney-New York is scheduled to follow from mid-2028.

For the international events industry, this is a signal of a bigger shift: Geo-Compression. It describes the way a destination's perceived accessibility grows as the time it takes to reach it collapses. A direct flight, a

seamless connection or a smartly placed hub can quietly redraw the practical geography of where people are willing to gather, even as geopolitics and border friction make mobility harder elsewhere.

Alliances are racing to capitalise. “oneworld offers nearly 1,000 destinations, meaning we can get delegates to meetings and events wherever they are in the world – including all the top cities for global gatherings,” says Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at oneworld. “Flying with oneworld also offers smooth connections between our 15 members, with customers enjoying benefits like the ability to earn miles on travel.” Dan Edwards, Heathrow’s Director of Airport Journeys,

says: “92% of the world’s economy can already be reached from Heathrow. But every new route creates opportunities that go far beyond aviation. A direct connection can open up new markets for trade, make it easier for businesses to collaborate internationally, allow universities to build research partnerships or help an entrepreneur attend an event that might previously have involved multiple stops and complex travel arrangements.”

He adds: “What excites me is how those connections increasingly support the exchange of knowledge as much as the movement of people. Major international events thrive when diverse

voices can participate, and increased connectivity enables that. Heathrow continually looks at how it can support those opportunities, not just by providing infrastructure but by creating journeys that are simpler and more predictable.”

Nowhere is the map shifting faster than the Pacific. Fiji Airways became a full oneworld member in 2025, plugging its Nadi hub into the network and opening onward links from North America, Asia, Australia and New Zealand to Samoa, Tonga, Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu. Hawaiian Airlines followed in 2026, bringing Honolulu in as another strategically placed Pacific gateway. Philippine Airlines has signed an MOU

to become **oneworld's** 16th member, deepening the alliance's footprint in Southeast Asia.

For planners, the metric that matters is increasingly the friction across the entire journey, not the kilometres alone. Geo-Compression can turn once-peripheral destinations into credible contenders for an international audience almost overnight. But the tailwinds come with turbulence. New visa rules, sudden geopolitical flare-ups and the knock-on effects for corporate travel policies all threaten to derail the best-laid plans, while a more erratic climate adds another layer of unpredictability. Connectivity is expanding; certainty is not.

Rotary International navigates

this complexity at rare scale, with conventions drawing delegates from more than 140 countries. “International air connectivity is obviously important, but so is the experience once someone arrives,” says Shannon Watson, Director, Meetings and Events for Rotary International, highlighting ground transport, accommodation and the ease of moving between airport, hotel and venue.

Watson's point is that Geo-Compression doesn't end in the arrivals hall. A 14-hour direct flight followed by a 20-minute train ride may make a destination feel closer than a nearer city that demands a connection, a visa and a lengthy airport transfer. For planners, the metric that matters

is increasingly friction across the entire journey, not kilometres alone. That's where airline networks are quietly rewriting the events map. **oneworld's** Blackburn says its network gives planners confidence that attendees “can get to the event, from anywhere in the world, and will be taken care of on their journey”.

Between now and 2030, route maps will increasingly be treated as strategic documents. As Geo-Compression and network expansion make distance elastic, cities once considered too remote for international gatherings could become viable contenders, while established hubs may find themselves competing with newly accessible destinations.



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CASE STUDY:

Qantas Project Sunrise: Rewriting the geography of long-haul travel

Qantas plans to launch nonstop Sydney-London flights in October 2027, followed by Sydney-New York in mid-2028.

The specially configured Airbus A350-1000ULR aircraft will accommodate 238 passengers across four cabins, with an onboard Wellbeing Zone designed for movement during ultra-long-haul journeys.

The planned Sydney-New York service is expected to save more than three hours compared with existing one-stop itineraries.



CASE STUDY:

Philippine Airlines: Expanding Southeast Asian connectivity

Philippine Airlines signed a memorandum of understanding in June 2026 to become **oneworld's** 16th member airline.

Its planned accession would add 31 destinations unique to the alliance's existing network, strengthening its presence across the Philippines and Southeast Asia.

The development could broaden the itinerary options available to international event delegates and create opportunities for organisers considering destinations beyond the region's established gateways.



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06.

Loyalty Ecosystems

06.

Loyalty Ecosystems

When status follows
the traveller

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A frequent flyer can be a VIP at the airport and a stranger by the time they reach the hotel. It's an odd blind spot for an industry that knows so much about its best customers. Airlines and hotels each hold a detailed picture, yet they have long lived in separate loyalty systems, even when the same traveller moves between them within hours. That wall is coming down. As standalone loyalty programmes give way to multi-partner ecosystems, recognition across airlines, airports and hotels is becoming the new status flex.

In June 2026, oneworld and Taj InnerCircle – NeuPass unveiled what they bill as the first loyalty collaboration between a global airline alliance and a hotel group. Eligible oneworld flyers can now unlock preferential rates and benefits at participating IHCL hotels, carrying air-earned recognition into hospitality.

The perks are welcome, but the precedent is the story: airline status now holds value long before take-off and long after landing. “For the individual traveller, loyalty is increasingly about recognition, convenience and consistency across the travel journey,” says Parveen Chander, Executive Vice President – Commercial at IHCL. “Guests value being understood and recognised, regardless of where

their journey begins or ends.”

Chander sees a wider shift towards connected travel. “As an industry, there is an opportunity for airlines, hotels and other travel partners to work more closely together to create a connected experience. Recognition of the guest across different touchpoints, integrated travel and accommodation arrangements, and greater personalisation can significantly improve the journey.”

For events, Loyalty Ecosystems matter because delegates don't travel as a pack. Hundreds or thousands may leave different cities, fly different airlines, land on different days and sleep in different properties. The event is shared; the journeys to and around it are anything but.

Airline alliances already solve part of the puzzle in the sky. Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at oneworld, says: “When they fly, customers earn frequent flyer points with their chosen oneworld member loyalty programme, and customers with Sapphire and Emerald status enjoy access to priority airport services, as well as access to oneworld's extensive network of lounges – including First Class lounge access for Emerald tier customers, regardless of the cabin they are flying in.”

Malaysia Airlines uses Enrich to stretch the relationship beyond a single event. “Loyalty will continue to play a key role in making MICE travel more valuable and building long-term relationships,” says Dersensih Aresandiran, Chief Commercial Officer of Airline Business, Malaysia Aviation Group. “For Malaysia Airlines, Enrich goes beyond rewarding individual delegates. It is part of the overall MICE value proposition, giving delegates additional value when they travel with us while also providing organisers with benefits and incentives for future events. Ultimately, we want to build relationships that continue beyond one trip.”

Fiji Airways makes the same case from the traveller's seat: through Tabua Club and oneworld, customers can earn and redeem across a far wider network. “As travel budgets come under closer scrutiny, loyalty benefits can be a meaningful differentiator in how delegates choose to travel,” the airline says.

Extending these benefits across the wider travel ecosystem requires closer collaboration between industries that have traditionally operated their loyalty programmes independently. Blackburn points to the 2026 oneworld Loyalty Summit as an example of this exchange of ideas. “Some of the most

exciting ideas happen when you bring people together. The 2026 oneworld Loyalty Summit convened leaders from airlines, hotels, banks, technology companies and start-ups in one room, creating a unique forum to exchange ideas and explore the future of loyalty. Ultimately, it's about building stronger connections.”

Technology could help turn these conversations into more connected customer experiences. Regulatory hurdles and data interoperability remain barriers, but AI could accelerate the shift, with APIs linking loyalty systems and protocols such as MCP allowing AI agents to interact with travel services on behalf of customers. Booking.com has launched an MCP server for partners, while Expedia Group is developing capabilities that would allow AI agents to access its services.

For events, that could mean a delegate's airline status, hotel relationship and reason for travelling finally speaking to one another. Connected ecosystems give travellers more reasons to remain within a network, while offering organisers new opportunities to create value across the entire event journey. The future of loyalty is less about collecting recognition and more about taking it with you.

oneworld

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Taj InnerCircle – NeuPass

From frequent flyer to recognised guest: How a new partnership is connecting airline loyalty with hospitality to create a more seamless experience for international event travellers.

A conference in Mumbai, a destination wedding in Jaipur or an incentive trip to Goa might bring together guests travelling independently from dozens of countries. While they share a destination, their journeys often involve different airlines, hotels and loyalty programmes.

Announced in June 2026, oneworld’s partnership with The Indian Hotels Company Limited (IHCL) offers a glimpse of a more connected future. By linking the airline alliance with Taj InnerCircle – NeuPass,

the collaboration extends the benefits of airline loyalty into hospitality, giving eligible frequent flyers preferential rates and benefits at participating hotels.

The timing is significant. IHCL reports growing demand for meetings, incentives and weddings in Goa, Jaipur, Udaipur and Kochi, alongside India’s established metropolitan business centres. As international events expand into culturally distinctive destinations, partnerships between airlines and hotels can help make these journeys more rewarding.

oneworld Emerald members can access 15% savings on eligible stays at participating IHCL properties, while Sapphire and Ruby members receive 10%,

with additional benefits spanning dining and spa experiences. The next phase will introduce reciprocal status matching between Taj InnerCircle – NeuPass and select oneworld airline loyalty programmes. Opportunities to earn airline miles through hotel stays are also being explored.

For event organisers, the opportunity extends beyond individual discounts. Delegates may arrive on different airlines and follow different itineraries, but connected loyalty ecosystems can create greater consistency across their travel experiences. They can also encourage attendees to extend their stays, combining a professional gathering with a wider exploration of the destination.





07.

Meet Me Airside

Trans World Flight Center
Dedicated May the Twenty-eighth, 1962
Eero Saarinen, Architect

07.

Meet Me Airside

Why airports and their surrounding hotels are being leveraged as meeting destinations.



What if the most efficient place to bring an international team together is somewhere none of them intends to stay? As businesses become more geographically dispersed, gathering colleagues can involve an odd inefficiency: everybody flies through a major international hub, travels another hour into the city, meets for a day and then retraces the same journey to fly home. For the right kind of gathering, that detour is starting to look unnecessary.

Major airports have been quietly acquiring the infrastructure of business districts: hotels, restaurants, workspaces, lounges and substantial meeting facilities. This is creating a new proposition around fly-in, meet, fly-out gatherings, where ease of access matters more than proximity to a traditional city centre.

“Major hub airports sit at the crossroads of the global economy. They connect people, industries and ideas,” says Lucas Martin, Senior Vice President of Sales at American Airlines. “Increasingly, the areas around those hubs offer world-class hotels, meeting facilities and business infrastructure.” American Airlines says more than one in five business trips are completed within a single day. That statistic changes the economics of ground time. A 90-minute journey into a city is relatively insignificant on a week-long trip; on a six-hour visit,

it can consume a substantial proportion of the working day. Malaysia Airlines sees airport precincts becoming useful for internationally dispersed companies for precisely this reason. “As organisations become more globally distributed, airports and airport hotels can become strategic meeting points, offering convenience, connectivity and time efficiency,” says Dersensih Aresandiran of Malaysia Aviation Group. “For airlines, this also creates opportunities to facilitate seamless meet-and-connect experiences, particularly for regional and international MICE groups.”

One of the most fully realised examples is already operating at New York’s JFK Airport. The TWA Hotel (pictured page 24) occupies Eero Saarinen’s restored 1962 TWA Flight Center and is connected directly to Terminal 5. Alongside 512 guestrooms, it offers meeting and event space across 45 event rooms and five hospitality suites, with capacity for gatherings of up to 1,600 people.

What makes the TWA Hotel particularly instructive is that convenience has not required the removal of experience. Its restored Flight Center, Sunken Lounge, rooftop pool overlooking the runway and 1958 Lockheed Constellation converted into a cocktail bar turn aviation history into the hotel’s identity. The result feels less like a compromise made to avoid travelling into

Manhattan and more like a destination in its own right.

Another standout example is AsiaWorld–Expo, located next to Hong Kong International Airport. Offering more than 70,000 sqm of rentable space for international conferences, trade shows and corporate gatherings, its proximity to the airport and direct connection to the Airport Express rail network make it particularly convenient for international delegates. Large-scale events can bring together attendees from across Asia and beyond, with minimal transfer times between arrival and venue.

Singapore Changi Airport offers a glimpse of how the airport-as-destination concept could evolve. Jewel Changi Airport already hosts corporate conferences, networking receptions and brand launches in spaces overlooking its spectacular indoor waterfall. In 2027, a new private terminal and lifestyle precinct at Terminal 2 is expected to introduce further facilities for premium travellers, including private suites and flexible event space. The development points towards a future in which airports become more sophisticated settings for business gatherings, with hospitality and entertainment integrated into the experience.

Elsewhere across the oneworld network, established hubs are already equipped to accommodate meetings without lengthy transfers into city centres. At London Heathrow, the

American Airlines says that more than one in five business trips are completed within a single day



British Airways Concorde Room, London Heathrow T5

Sofitel connected to Terminal 5 offers 45 meeting spaces for up to 1,300 delegates, while Qatar Airways' Al Mourjan lounges at Doha's Hamad International airport provide facilities for smaller business gatherings between flights. Airport hotels can host planned events for delegates arriving independently, while lounges offer more informal opportunities for eligible passengers whose journeys intersect at the same hub.

Roger Blackburn, Vice President of Loyalty and Commercial at **oneworld**, sees particular value in the opportunities created by the alliance's global network. "For delegates flying to an event from different markets, connecting through a specific hub – for example Doha – airport lounges provide an ideal space in which to meet prior to events, with all the facilities needed to ensure productivity."

The model has limits. Few people will choose an airport precinct

for a four-day congress if the host city is part of the attraction. Airside lounges also come with practical restrictions, including eligibility requirements and the need for participants to have compatible flight itineraries. But for board meetings, leadership sessions, interviews, project kick-offs and regional gatherings, the ability to step off a flight and into a meeting can be compelling.

The airport is also part of the experience for events taking place elsewhere. It is where an international delegate first encounters the destination and where their journey home begins. For organisers, this means arrivals, transfers and departures deserve more consideration as part of the event itself. Meet Me Airside reflects a different way of valuing business travellers' time. When the purpose of a journey is simply to get the right people around a table, the smartest meeting place may be the place their journeys already intersect.

The next generation of international meetings and events will be defined by how effectively organisers bring people together, justify the journey and make the experience worthwhile. For airlines, destinations, venues and event planners, seven strategic priorities emerge.

1. Design for connection, not just content.

As AI makes information easier to access remotely, the value of physical gatherings will increasingly lie in relationships, collaboration and shared experiences. Build programmes that create opportunities for meaningful interaction, including the conversations that happen beyond the main stage.

2. Make every journey work harder.

Rising travel costs and greater scrutiny of budgets will encourage delegates to seek more value from each trip. Facilitate pre-arranged meetings, professional development and opportunities to combine several business objectives within one itinerary.

3. Give people an experience worth travelling for.

Draw inspiration from entertainment, culture and hospitality to create events that reward participation. Distinctive experiences should reinforce the purpose of the gathering, rather than simply add spectacle.

4. Treat the destination as part of the programme.

Host cities can influence attendance, extend stays and create lasting memories. Work with local partners to integrate culture, food and experiences

into events, while considering climate resilience, seasonality and the impact on host communities.

5. Plan for a changing map of global mobility.

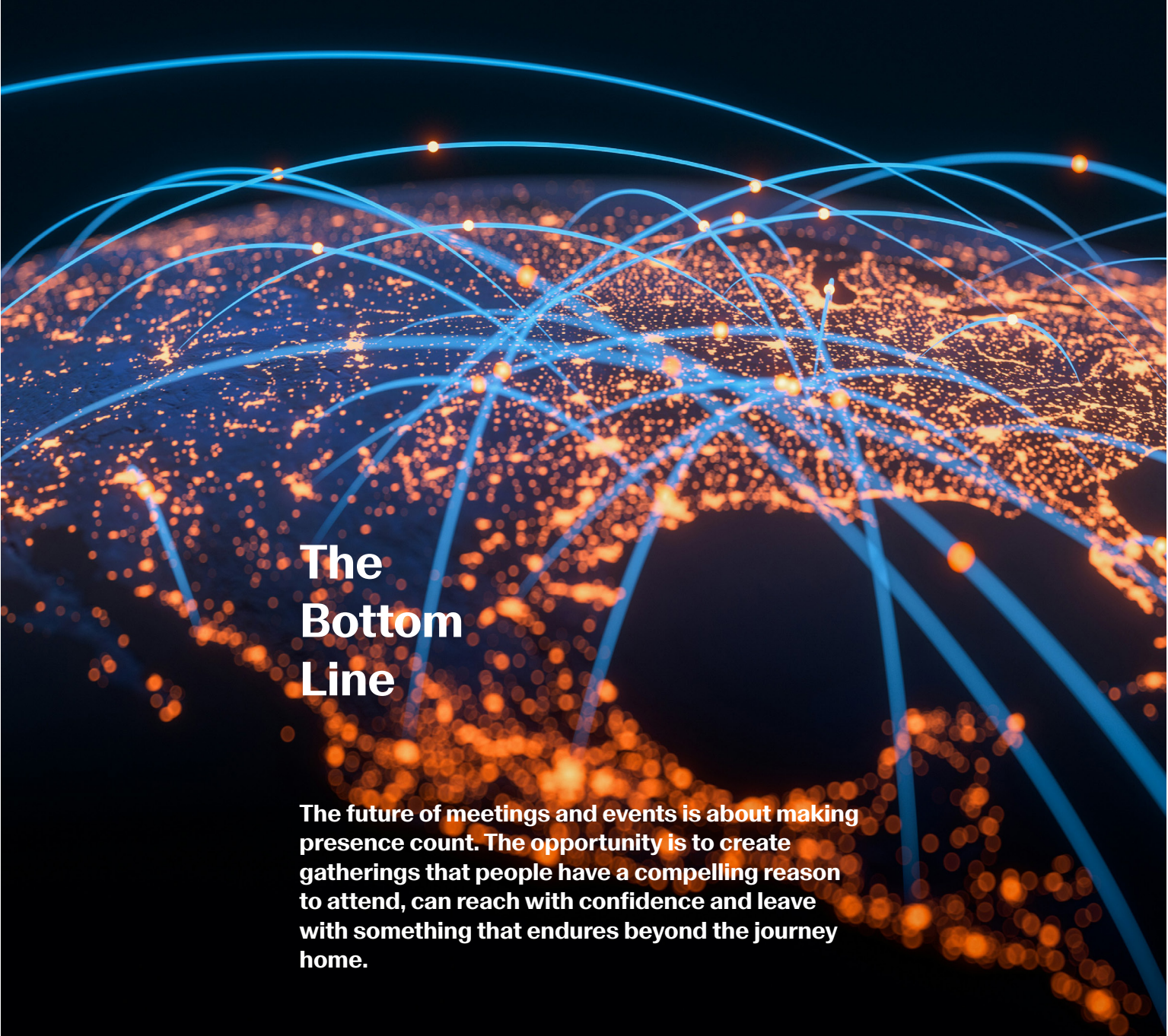
New airline routes and expanding networks will open opportunities for international gatherings in a wider range of destinations. Balance those possibilities against geopolitical uncertainty, accessibility, travel costs and the needs of delegates arriving from different markets.

6. Rethink where meetings happen.

As organisations become more geographically dispersed, airport-linked hotels and meeting facilities could offer convenient points of convergence. Consider the total journey when selecting a venue, while ensuring that efficiency does not come at the expense of meaningful time together.

7. Build partnerships that extend beyond the event.

Closer collaboration between airlines, hotels, destinations and organisers can improve the experience of international travel. Loyalty, recognition and connected services offer opportunities to create value for delegates across the entire journey, while building relationships that continue long after an event ends.



The Bottom Line

The future of meetings and events is about making presence count. The opportunity is to create gatherings that people have a compelling reason to attend, can reach with confidence and leave with something that endures beyond the journey home.



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