



VIRTUOSO

VIRTUOSO'S INAUGURAL GLOBAL IMPACT SUMMIT INSPIRES AND UNIFIES TOURISM LEADERS AROUND A SHARED GOAL OF DRIVING MORE RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

ALBERTA, CANADA (June 9, 2025) – [Virtuoso](#), the leading global network specializing in luxury and experiential travel, hosted its first-ever Impact Summit June 2-5 at Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise with 105 attendees from nearly 20 countries. A by-invitation-only event, the Impact Summit brought together a curated group of Virtuoso's most engaged sustainability-focused advisors and partners to discuss solutions for furthering progress around what Virtuoso has identified as the three pillars of sustainability: supporting local economies, celebrating culture and protecting the planet. For two and a half days, Virtuoso fostered a collaborative environment for inspiring peer-to-peer discussions on best practices, industry challenges and new opportunities, while also enjoying and exploring the stunning surroundings of Lake Louise, Alberta.

During the event's Opening Session, Virtuoso's Vice Chair and Sustainability Strategist Jessica Hall Upchurch welcomed attendees. "Our efforts to educate advisors and amplify the work of our partners to Virtuoso travelers started 15 years ago," she said. "Our principals when it comes to implementing sustainability in travel have always been 'no shame, no blame' and 'start where you are,' meaning we'd rather see 95 percent of the world take one step forward than five percent trying to get it perfect."

Hall Upchurch continued, "The idea of the Impact Summit was a seed planted over a decade ago that's been fed and nurtured, and after continuous alignment and a labor of love and passion amongst our network, it's an honor to see the inaugural event come together. We all know travelers want a great experience, but making it easy for them to feel good about who they give their money to adds an emotional element that's a powerful differentiator." Speaking of the purpose of the event, she continued, "This is a space for exchanging ideas, having future-focused discussions and engaging in meaningful collaborations. This event was designed to create stronger connections in our co-created ecosystem and to accelerate and amplify our collective journeys to making the world better."

The event's positive impact began even before the Opening Session. Virtuoso Senior Vice President, Global Events Jennifer Campbell shared that using emissions data gathered from attendee travel and event operations, Virtuoso had offset 64.6 metric tons of CO₂ through Planetair's verified Canada Tree Portfolio reforestation project, ensuring a carbon-neutral footprint for this year's Impact Summit.

Vice President, Sustainability Javier Arredondo then moderated a panel of Virtuoso senior executives in which they provided a view into how the entire Virtuoso organization supports, amplifies and incorporates sustainability into the group's business practices and network offerings. The panel included Chief Operating Officer Brad Bourland; Senior Vice President, Global Products Thatcher Brown; Senior Vice President, Global Marketing Helen McCabe-Young; and Senior Vice President, Global Events Jennifer Campbell.

With a schedule designed to ignite ideas and meaningful dialogue, the programming included three distinct panels aligned with Virtuoso's core sustainability pillars. An interactive Ideation Session followed each panel, where participants collaborated on key topics. Virtuoso leveraged cutting-edge AI technology to capture and analyze these discussions, resulting in multiple hours and hundreds of pages worth of insights to help shape and inform future initiatives.

Panelists included a diverse mix of Virtuoso members, partners, and media guests, such as:

- Supporting Local Economies Panel, led by Senior Vice President, Global Products Thatcher Brown
 - Christian Wolters, Intrepid Travel
 - Marc Telio, Entrée Destinations
 - Kristin Winkaffe, an independent affiliate of Avenue Two Travel
 - Juliet Kinsman, freelance journalist
- Celebrating Culture Panel, led by Senior Vice President, Global Marketing Helen McCabe-Young
 - Tietse Stelma, 50 Degrees North
 - Keith Sproule, Abercrombie & Kent
 - Yvonne Verstandig, Y Travel
 - Maryam Siddiqi, freelance journalist
- Protecting the Planet Panel, led by Senior Director, Global Brand & Marketing Media Paula Franklin
 - Nicole Robinson, andBeyond South Africa
 - Marina Elsener, Accor Hotels
 - David Tanguay, Aurora Expeditions
 - Marina Gouvea, PrimeTour Agencia de Viajes e Turismo
 - Klara Glowczewska, Town & Country

A variety of guest speakers took the stage as well, including tech entrepreneur, investor and Virtuoso board member Gilad Berenstein, who discussed the role of AI in furthering sustainability efforts, and Chris Imbsen, director of sustainability for the World Travel and Tourism Council, who shared data and insights on the public and private sector's support for sustainable tourism. Virtuoso Chairman and CEO Matthew D. Upchurch, who also serves as WTTC's vice chair of membership, as well as WTTC's Together in Travel vice-chair and CEO of IC Bellagio Andrea Grisdale discussed their work lifting up and providing a voice to the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that have an outsized role in serving the travel industry.

Virtuoso Vice President, Global Public Relations Misty Belles also led a panel of the aforementioned media in attendance, in addition to Marika Cain, editorial director of *Virtuoso, The Magazine*. The conversation touched on best practices and language choices for communicating sustainability to readers, guests and travelers, how to tell more engaging sustainability stories and how companies can successfully become part of the sustainability conversation.

The Impact Summit was rounded out with *Design Your Day* activities each afternoon, in which attendees could choose from a variety of sustainability-focused activities such as hikes to Emerald Lake or Johnson Canyon, learning the process of making natural salves, volunteering with local charity Soup Sisters to combat food insecurity, a tour of Lake Louise's water treatment plant or a warrior women tea ceremony.

Virtuoso wishes to thank the sponsors of its inaugural Impact Summit: Abercrombie & Kent, Travel Alberta, Destination Canada, Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise, Madrid Tourism, PONANT, Discover Puerto Rico, Visit Rwanda, Singapore Tourism Board and Wilderness.

About Virtuoso

Virtuoso is the leading global travel agency network specializing in luxury and experiential travel. This by-invitation-only organization comprises over 1,200 travel agency locations with more than 20,000 travel advisors in 58 countries throughout North America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East. Drawing upon its preferred relationships with 2,300 of the world's best hotels and resorts, cruise lines, airlines, tour companies and premier destinations, the network provides its upscale clientele with exclusive amenities, rare experiences and privileged access. Normalized annual sales of (U.S.) \$35 billion make Virtuoso a powerhouse in the luxury travel industry. For more information, visit www.virtuoso.com.

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