



VIRTUOSO

VIRTUOSO HOSTS 2025 SYMPOSIUM AT SEA, ENGAGING LUXURY TRAVEL'S TOP DECISION MAKERS ABOARD THE CRYSTAL SERENITY

BARCELONA (May 15, 2025) – [Virtuoso](#), the leading global network specializing in luxury and experiential travel, is hosting its annual Symposium May 13-17 aboard the privately chartered Crystal Serenity with 375 of the industry's most prestigious professionals from 38 countries. Symposium is a high-level business meeting that brings together the most influential decision-makers of the luxury travel industry, including Virtuoso's top leadership and management from the network's travel agency members and preferred partners. The event features industry discussions, thought leadership sessions, deep dives into travel trends and one-on-one networking as well as relationship-building through immersive experiences. Attendees are empowered with actionable business ideas and knowledge to enhance future success while also reinforcing human connections with their peers, all while reveling in Crystal Serenity's offerings with picturesque stops along the way.

Guests embarked in Barcelona and will enjoy shore excursions in Portofino and Monte Carlo before disembarking in Marseille. During a day at sea, Virtuoso executives took the stage for the Opening Session, including Chairman and CEO Matthew D. Upchurch and Executive Vice President David Kolner. Senior Vice President, Global Events Jennifer Campbell opened the session with a look at the evolving future of Virtuoso events, highlighting how they reflect broader transformations in the luxury travel industry – particularly in the areas of personalization, sustainability, exclusivity and technology. Attendees also heard from Senior Vice President, Technology Paul Kearney regarding Virtuoso's latest technology enhancements focused on data privacy and quality, as well as its philosophy around providing a choice of customizable solutions for the network, as opposed to a single tool for all.

A panel of Virtuoso's senior leadership team comprised of Michael Londregan, senior vice president, global operations; Helen McCabe-Young, senior vice president, global marketing; Cheryl Cheney-Bunker, senior vice president, global memberships; Thatcher Brown, senior vice president, global products; and Cory Hagopian, senior vice president, global partnerships, provided visibility into the continued strategic focus on membership and partnership quality and network engagement. Reflecting the foundational belief that "together is better," they also discussed Virtuoso's shared focus on the co-creation of new product solutions and tools that drive additive impact and business results, including the recently launched Social Media Content Center enabling more hyper-focused content solutions for members and partners around the world.

Upchurch discussed the top factors influencing luxury travel this year, according to a Virtuoso survey of agency owners and managers, which included geopolitical conflicts, political uncertainty, labor and staffing challenges, stock market volatility and more. Notably, half of respondents indicated they see AI as an opportunity, as opposed to a threat.

"In the midst of another tech inflection – or as some call it, a disruption – with AI, I love how optimistic Virtuoso members are about its potential," he said. "Starting in the onset of the millennium, we have seen how these disruptions make travel – and the professional, knowledgeable, well-connected travel advisors – all the more important in people's lives."

He noted the three fundamental trends that he believes contribute to the continued strength of luxury travel: six generations from the Silent Generation to Generation Alpha all traveling simultaneously for the first time in history; the prioritization of experiences over goods; and the rise of global wealth.

“Through our membership with Altagamma and its research with Bain, we are also tracking the shifts in how generations are valuing luxury,” Upchurch said. “We’re tracking everything from AI’s role in augmenting the workforce to the evolving definition of luxury itself. While headlines often suggest AI is replacing human jobs, the reality is our profession is booming – LinkedIn lists ‘travel advisor’ as the fifth fastest growing career. At Virtuoso, we’ve long embraced what’s now called ‘prompt engineering’ as the art of asking the right questions. At its heart, luxury is the ‘how did you make me feel business,’ a highly defensible business model that’s deeply personal and human-led.”

Kolner then revealed insights into Virtuoso’s recent sales and trends among the network’s advisors and high-value travelers. He shared that first-quarter 2025 sales surpassed the first quarter 2024 by 14 percent, and that sales were up across all categories within the same time frame. Hotel sales increased nearly 30 percent when comparing Q1 2025 and 2024, followed by service, cruise, on-sites and tours. When looking at year-over-year spring break travel between February 28 and April 20, Virtuoso saw an increase of more than 20 percent. As for future leisure sales, travel booked this year for travel in 2026 and 2027 has increased 17 percent year-over-year.

He also presented global findings from the Owner/Manager Outlook Surveys, live questionnaires of those who attended Virtuoso Forums across the network’s nine regions. The majority of surveyed advisors indicated they are optimistic about their agency’s sales for 2025, with 39 percent of respondents noting they expect sales to increase anywhere from 11 to 20 percent, while 16 percent of respondents expect a 21 to 50 percent increase. Across all regions, owners and managers are planning on hiring in 2025 to meet consumer demand, with the overwhelming majority indicating they plan to hire full-time advisors, independent contractors and/or support staff.

Lastly, Kolner addressed luxury traveler trends, many of which he noted are remaining steady for the rest of the year, including coolcations (with Scandinavia seeing a 79 percent increase for June through August, the popularity of the European summer (up 25 percent year-over-year with hotel ADRs up four percent), U.S. travel (hotel bookings are up nearly 20 percent year-over-year) and the White Lotus Effect (sales to Thailand increased over 27 percent from January to April year-over-year). Sustainability remains a key factor in travelers’ choices, with over 40 percent willing to pay more to support companies that adopt environmentally friendly practices, particularly Millennials and Gen Z. And nearly two out of three luxury travelers said they are interested in making sustainable travel choices during their trips (*source: 2025 Virtuoso Brand and Travel Tracker Study*).

An increasing priority for luxury travelers – also according to the 2025 Virtuoso Brand and Travel Tracker Study – is safety and security. One-third of luxury travelers said an extra layer of protection is a top benefit of working with a travel advisor, even above perks like upgrades and VIP access.

An impressive roster of guest speakers also joined the General Session. Jessica O. Matthews, founder and CEO of Uncharted, a sustainable infrastructure company on a mission to raise the public standard of living, discussed the key to breakthrough innovation and “the power of taking it personally.” Anant Sharma, founder of luxury design consultancy Matter of Form, covered luxury consumer trends and changing behaviors and expectations, including the need to stand out in an increasingly complex world and the importance of businesses’ identities; Gilad Berenstein, tech entrepreneur, investor and Virtuoso board member talked about emerging travel technology and referenced his essay on the Agentic Era and AI evolution; and Dr. Jill Schiefelbein, an award-winning business owner and author, discussed Humanizing Automation, noting that data is “the great equalizer” and the right human prompts produce the best AI results.

Developing relationships through shared experiences is a hallmark of the annual Symposium, and attendees will have a chance to select excursions that immerse them in some of the area's most dynamic offerings. With the help of on-the-ground Virtuoso partners throughout the various ports of call, activities in Portofino range from a historical tour of Genoa to kayaking in Portofino Bay, cooking classes or hiking to Santa Margherita Ligure. Meanwhile in Monaco, guests can partake in a day trip to Nice, tours of the Prince of Monaco's personal car collection, walking tours of the Prince's palace and Oceanographic Museum and more.

Virtuoso wishes to thank its partners that aided in the success of 2025 Symposium: Abercrombie & Kent, Crystal, AmaWaterways, Barcelona Turisme, The Bicester Collection, Visit Monaco and Princess Cruises.

For more information on Virtuoso and its events, please visit www.virtuoso.com.

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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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