



VIRTUOSO

VIRTUOSO SHARES GLOBAL LUXURY TRAVEL OUTLOOK AT 2026 SYMPOSIUM IN SEOUL

SEOUL (April 21, 2026) – [Virtuoso](#), the leading global network specializing in luxury and experiential travel, hosted its 2026 Symposium April 15-19 at the [Conrad Seoul](#). The Symposium welcomed 360 leaders from Virtuoso travel agency members and preferred partners across 33 countries. The annual gathering focused on strategic insight and meaningful connection, bringing together senior decision-makers to align on the trends, data and shared priorities shaping the future of luxury travel.

During the Symposium, Executive Vice President, Strategic Communications David Kolner presented the latest leisure travel outlook from *Oxford Economics*, highlighting continued global growth through 2028 despite revised projections. Since December 2025, international forecasts for 2026 have been adjusted lower, while domestic travel has edged slightly higher, with continued growth in both segments still expected through 2027 and 2028. In the U.S., forecasts for both international and domestic travel were revised downward for 2026, though overall growth remains stable. China recorded the strongest gains in the update, with international leisure travel revised higher across all three forecast years and domestic leisure travel for 2026 also raised, with overall growth projected at up to three times the global average.

Against a backdrop of mostly single-digit leisure travel growth projected by *Oxford Economics*, Kolner said performance across the Virtuoso network is running at roughly double that pace. Booking data from its U.S. travel agency members showed preferred partner sales increased by 20 percent year-over-year in both January and February 2026, followed by a 14 percent increase in March. Demand for future travel also remains strong, with preferred bookings made one to two years in advance up 23 percent in the first quarter compared to 2025. Average daily rates for preferred partners increased between 10 and 12 percent per month during the quarter.

Live polling conducted during the Symposium offered a real-time perspective on the current business conditions and expectations for the year ahead. When asked how their business has been impacted by the Middle East crisis, 70 percent of Virtuoso member agencies and 66 percent of partners said clients are rerouting or choosing alternate destinations, while low cancellations at 11 percent among member agencies and eight percent among partners reflect luxury travel's continued resilience. When trips are postponed or canceled, concerns around personal safety and the risk of being stranded are the primary drivers, cited by 66 percent and 64 percent of member agencies, respectively. As travel plans shift, member agencies reported demand being redirected to other regions, led by Continental Europe at 59 percent, followed by North and Southeast Asia at 39 percent and Latin America and the Caribbean at 35 percent.

Additional insights came from the global Owner/Manager Outlook Survey, conducted earlier this year during Virtuoso Forums across the network's nine regions. The findings point to widespread confidence among agency leaders, with 78 percent of global respondents expecting sales to increase in 2026 – 41 percent projecting double-digit growth, 12 percent of which forecast gains of 21 to 50 percent. Outlooks were largely consistent across regions, though respondents in Australia & New Zealand and North & Southeast Asia expressed slightly more caution, while agencies in Greater China reported the strongest growth expectations, with 26 percent anticipating sales increases of 21 to 50 percent. When asked which factors are expected to impact luxury travel in 2026, geopolitical conflicts ranked highest across all regions at 88 percent, followed by political uncertainty at 75 percent. Artificial intelligence was viewed more optimistically, with nearly twice as many respondents viewing it as an opportunity (35 percent) rather

than a threat, led by agency owners in Canada and the U.S.

That confidence is also evident in hiring plans for the year ahead. Globally, 81 percent of respondents said they plan to hire in 2026 to meet demand. Hiring intentions vary slightly by region, with 28 percent of agencies in North & Southeast Asia and 25 percent in Australia & New Zealand and Continental Europe reporting no hiring plans, while independent contractors remain a priority in key markets such as the U.S., Canada and the United Kingdom/Ireland, where roughly 60 percent of agencies expect to add ICs.

Agency leaders also weighed in on the evolving traveler preferences expected to shape demand. Globally, discovering new destinations ranked as the top trend, cited by 72 percent of respondents, ahead of returning to familiar places (21 percent), signaling continued appetite for exploration. Immersive and slower-paced travel followed, selected by nearly half of respondents (49 percent) and led by more than 60 percent in Australia/New Zealand, the U.S. and Canada. By contrast, price-driven behaviors such as lower-cost accommodations, shorter trips and increased price sensitivity ranked near the bottom of the list, reinforcing how the Virtuoso traveler continues to differ from broader market trends.

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 2,800 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. 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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