

## On location: Air New Zealand serves up taste of authentic Kiwi at Toronto event



The Air New Zealand team alongside its tourism partners at the March 26 event in Toronto, Canada

*TORONTO, CANADA*—[Air New Zealand](#) hosted an event at [Hotel X](#) in Toronto, Canada yesterday to highlight all that the country has to offer. Invitees were treated to a three-course lunch, featuring New Zealand salmon, cultural song and dance and a presentation about Kiwi heritage and attractions, as well as Air New Zealand’s upcoming products.

“We want you to get a taste of quintessential authentic Kiwi,” said Ben Evers-Swindell, General Manager, the Americas, Air New Zealand, in his opening speech. “The feedback that we get from North American passengers about our crew is that they are very good at interacting with passengers—genuine human beings, and that’s what we are all about.”



Ben Evers-Swindell, General Manager, the Americas, Air New Zealand during his welcome speech

### **Lunch and a show**

The event brought together several of the airline's tourism partners, including [Hobbiton Movie Set](#), [Ngai Tahu Tourism](#), [Marlborough Tour Company](#), [Park Hyatt Auckland](#), [RealNZ](#), [Te Puia](#), [Distinction Hotels](#) and [Totally Tourism/The Helicopter Line](#). A representative from each company presented an overview of its offering, highlighting important connections to culture and the must-see New Zealand visitor experience.

Guests enjoyed a three-course lunch during the presentations, along with traditional cultural Māori song and dance. The lunch included a first course Rasa salad, with fresh vegetables, jalapeño feta, chickpeas and sumac in a red wine vinaigrette. Hints of mint and parsley brought out a flavourful zest. The main featured a lemon pepper salmon imported from New Zealand. This same salmon is also served at Toronto's [Diana's Seafood](#), [Kasa Moto](#) and [Black & Blue](#) restaurants.

For non-salmon eaters, there was the option to substitute salmon for a grilled Maitaki mushroom dish, with mapo tofu, smoked sweet potato and black truffle purée. The dessert was a delightful strawberry lemon pavlova, with fresh strawberries and microgreens. Two New Zealand wines were served with lunch, [Oyster Bay](#) Sauvignon Blanc and Oyster Bay Pinot Noir.



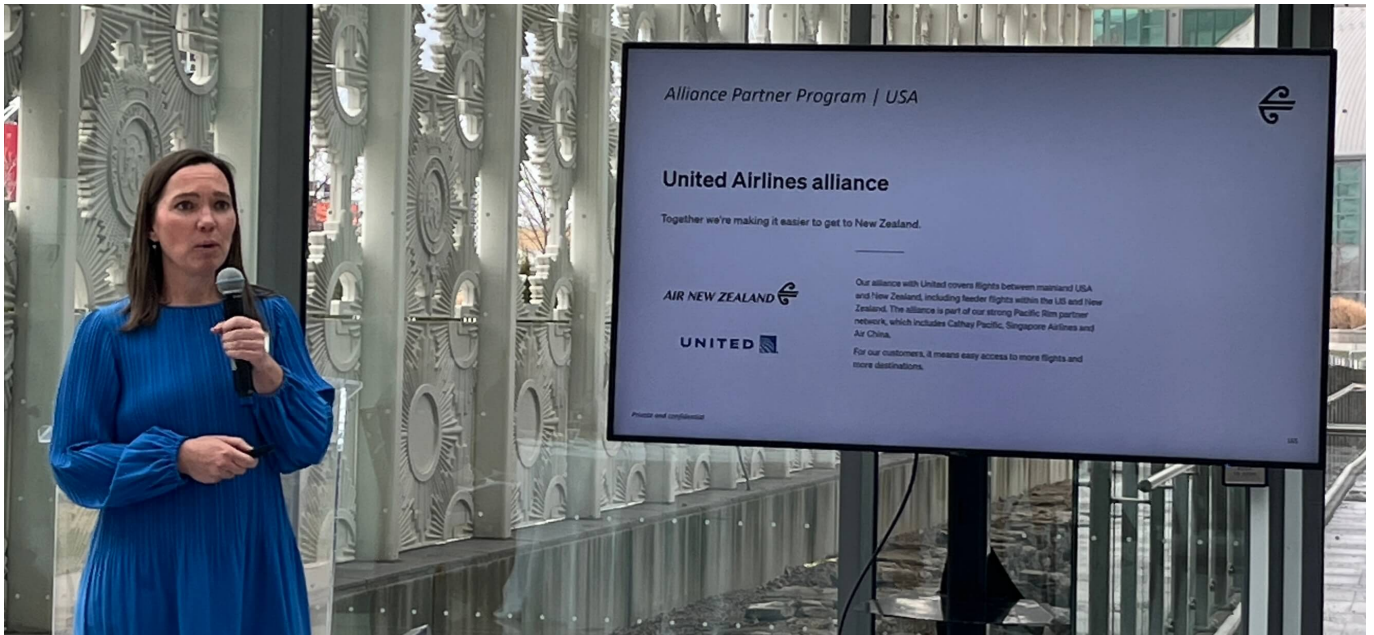
The appetizer salad on the left and dessert on the right



A traditional cultural Māori song and dance during lunch

### Upcoming products from AIRNZ

Katie Olsson, National Account Manager, Air New Zealand, highlighted some upcoming products from the airline, including the Business Premier Luxe which is due to launch on its fleet of retrofitted 787s at the end of this year. The product includes a lie-flat seat with a memory foam mattress and feather pillow, as well as a 24-inch screen.



Katie Olsson, National Account Manager, Air New Zealand, gives a presentation on the airline's upcoming products

Olsson then gave a sneak peek of the new retrofit Premium Economy cabin, one of the only Premium cabins located distinctly from the rest of the Economy cabin. It features a shell seat that enables passengers to recline without taking up any living space of the passenger behind them.



The Air New Zealand Premium Economy seat with shell



Economy SkyCouch in Air New Zealand

She also highlighted the airline's Economy SkyCouch product targeting families with young children, couples looking for extra legroom or people who want to stretch out. Available for the last decade, the SkyCouch features a row of three standard seats that transforms into a large lie-flat bed due to foot rests that extend in line with the seat to create more space. The product is available in the first seven rows of the Economy cabin—a unique offering for a long-haul aircraft.

### **Interview with Ben Evers-Swindell**



Ben Evers-Swindell, General Manager, The Americas, Air New Zealand

In an interview during the event, Evers-Swindell tells *PAX* the airline hosted the Toronto event to demonstrate its appreciation for the Canadian market.

“We have a strong belief that the passenger’s vacation starts as soon as they step onboard the aircraft. We’ve got unique, authentic style with our crew, cuisine and the overall passenger experience. It’s Kiwi hospitality—that’s why people fly with us,” he says.

The airline’s recent partnership with [Starlink](#) is all about investing in the onboard experience. The partnership introduces free internet onboard Air New Zealand’s domestic turboprop aircraft.

“Starlink has the greatest constellation of satellites on the planet. You’ve got connectivity all over the globe, so you’re not dropping out right mid-flight,” Evers-Swindell explains, adding that the reliable connection offers convenience for parents who need to entertain young children inflight and people travelling for business.

The airline will continue to offer connectivity at no additional charge to passengers. “We’ve never charged for Wi-Fi. It is part of the service we provide, part of our overall value proposition,” he says.

Starlink offers reliable high-speed, low-latency inflight internet, as low as 30 milliseconds. All

passengers will be able to use internet during the flight; streaming video content, working and messaging on multiple connected devices. Installation of the product is expected later this year. Evers-Swindell says successful trials could lead to the rollout of Starlink on its A320s and eventually across its entire network.



Air New Zealand now flies non-stop from Vancouver to New Zealand

On the catering side, Air New Zealand has introduced new onboard snacks following last year's Great Kiwi Snack Off which called for a nationwide search for onboard snacks.

"We had 400 submissions. It's not a huge country—5.5 million people—so to get 400 suppliers submitting, there was a lot of engagement," Evers-Swindell said with a smile. He says the airline showcases New Zealand businesses as part of its integrated approach to sustainability. Locally produced snacks help reduce the carbon footprint while supporting the local businesses, he explains.

"It really does promote the whole ecosystem," he says.

Also coming up this year is the introduction of new crew uniforms in partnership with Kiwi fashion designer [Emilia Wickstead](#). The designs are timeless yet modern and will be rolled out to more than 5,000 Air New Zealand cabin crew in late-2024. Evers-Swindell could not share any additional information during the interview.