

deSter to emphasize care in onboard experience at WTCE 2026

This is a special feature from the [April 2026 WTCE Hamburg issue](#) of *PAX International* on [page 72](#).



Ruud Vanderheyden, Director Design House, deSter

Passengers are increasingly seeking comfort, emotional balance and experiences that resonate on a deeper level when traveling. Forward-thinking carriers recognize that care is no longer optional—it is a strategic driver of loyalty, brand differentiation and long-term value. *PAX International* spoke with [deSter](#)'s Ruud Vanderheyden, Director Design House, and Daniel Knies, Design Director, to explore how the company is placing care at the heart of onboard experiences and what visitors can expect at its WTCE 2026 showcase.

***PAX International:* What is the theme of deSter's WTCE 2026 booth?**

Ruud Vanderheyden: The theme is called 'Care Fueled Journeys.' Travelers today seek more than transport—they want recreation, emotional balance and meaningful experiences. Our theme offers airlines a blueprint to nurture passengers, making care a transformative driver of loyalty.

***PAX International:* Can you give us a glimpse of the experience concepts you are presenting at WTCE?**

Vanderheyden: While we are keeping the full framework under wraps, the experience centers on the shifting needs of travelers. Sometimes passengers crave extraordinary care; other times, they want space and quiet. One concept emphasizes pure comfort, another focuses on intuitive, effortless design, and the third highlights meaningful human connection. Together, these concepts reflect what today's travelers value most.



Daniel Knies, Design Director, deSter

PAX International: Which innovation or highlight are you most excited to showcase at WTCE?

Daniel Knies: We are thrilled to introduce a collaboration with designer Gert Voorjans who will create a dedicated space within our booth. He will explore how color, material and atmosphere influence comfort and well-being, and will give a keynote on April 14 at our booth in Hall 2. Visitors can expect a distinctive, creative world brought to life through form, craft and emotion—our first-ever collaboration of this kind at WTCE.

PAX International: Are there any products or concepts you are especially proud to highlight?

Knies: Our 'A Tray That Cares' product is a good example. Optimized for crew efficiency and passenger comfort, the tray is fully customizable in size, color and material, addressing diverse

operational and traveler needs.

***PAX International:* What is the biggest challenge for airlines when designing next-generation travel experiences?**

Knies: Airlines face constraints of space, time, and cost alongside rising passenger expectations. The challenge—and opportunity—lies in delivering meaningful experiences through material innovation, cross-sector collaboration and smart use of technology for personalization at scale.

***PAX International:* How do you see care shaping the future of onboard travel?**

Knies: We believe that care will define premium and mainstream travel alike. Curated environments, well-being rituals, AI-driven personalization and emotional connections will impact the transformation of the passenger experience. We look forward to connecting with everyone in Hamburg.