

WTCE issue: Aotearoa tours Toronto

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Economy SkyCouch in Air New Zealand

TORONTO, CANADA—Air New Zealand hosted an event at Hotel X in Toronto, Canada this spring to highlight all that the country has to offer. Invitees were treated to 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.



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

“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.”

Lunch and a show



Traditional cultural Māori song and dance during lunch

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 each 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 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. The main featured a lemon pepper salmon imported from New Zealand. For non-salmon eaters was the option to substitute for a grilled Maitaki mushroom dish. The dessert was a delightful straw- berry lemon pavlova, with fresh strawberries and microgreens. Two New Zealand wines were served with lunch, Oyster Bay Sauvignon Blanc and Oyster Bay Pinot Noir.

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

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



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

She also highlighted the airline's Economy SkyCouch 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 transform into a large lie-flat bed due to footrests 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 long-haul offering.

Interview with Ben Evers-Swindell

In an interview during the event, Evers-Swindell told *PAX International* 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.

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.

The Air New Zealand team took off to western Canada’s Calgary as the next stop on the airline’s North America tour.