

Mainstage interviews kick off Global EXPO 2025 in Long Beach

Last updated: Tuesday, September 9, 3:35 p.m. PST. Find updates below.



Ben Thompson, BBC, introduces the CEO keynotes at APEX Global EXPO 2025

[APEX Global EXPO 2025](#) is bringing the industry together in Long Beach, California, this week from September 9 to 11 at the Long Beach Convention Center. The event kicked off this morning with a welcome and opening keynote in the auditorium. Ben Thompson, BBC, welcomed industry suppliers, airlines and press and introduced the Dominic Green, Director Inflight Entertainment & Connectivity, [United Airlines](#) to the stage.



Dominic Green, Director Inflight Entertainment & Connectivity, United Airlines at APEX Global EXPO 2025

Green thanked BBC News for its event sponsorship of the 2025 event. He also extended thanks to [FORMIA](#) for providing products for attendees and sponsoring APEX/IFSA Global EXPO 2025.

He then welcomed Kurt Weidemeyer, Vice President, Product Management, [Thales](#), to the stage and expressed gratitude to Thales for its Gold level event sponsorship and sponsoring the c-suite of panelists this morning.

"It is a true pleasure to be here to welcome our esteemed leaders of the airline industry," says Weidemeyer. "I speak to you today with a great sense of enthusiasm because the signs are clear. The IFEC industry is undergoing a transformative period, driven by the increasing demands of our passengers and their expectations. The modern traveler is less willing to compromise. They expect the same service they get on the ground to continue at 35,000 feet."

Weidemeyer emphasizes that the commitment to creating an extraordinary inflight experience serves as the foundation of Thales' business, as he showcased FlytEdge, Thales' cloud-native platform, via video presentation.



Dr. Joe Leader, CEO, APEX/IFSA presents the APEX Awards for World's Most Improved APEX Four Star Global Airline to Air India in Long Beach, CA

Dr. Joe Leader, CEO, APEX, welcomed the first CEO keynote speaker, Campbell Wilson of [Air India](#), presenting the airline with an APEX Award for World's Most Improved APEX Four Star Global Airline.

"One out of every two people here is an airline, that is the highest ratio we have ever achieved," says Leader of this year's APEX Global EXPO attendance.



Campbell Wilson, CEO, Air India, speaks with BBC's Ben Thompson during CEO Keynotes

Wilson joined BBC's Ben Thompson on stage for "Building India's Flag Carrier with Purpose, Trust, and Innovation" to share how Air India's transformation blends heritage with forward momentum to redefine the passenger experience.

"There's really such a deep level of support to deliver the airline the nation wants it to be," says Wilson. "I think people are very invested in the outcome."



BBC's Ben Thompson speaks with David Neeleman, CEO and Founder of Breeze Airways on the mainstage

Next, David Neeleman, CEO and Founder of Breeze Airways joined Thompson on stage for the CEO Keynote session "Connecting the Unconnected: Breeze's Mission for Market Transformation."

Neeleman revealed how Breeze reimagines the journey for mid-sized markets by combining intuitive technology, low fares and a fresh approach to flexibility and onboard comfort.

When asked what tech is allowing Breeze Airways to do differently, Neeleman points to the growing prevalence AI.

"From getting to know our guests and their preferences to predicting an issue with maintenance and pre-emptively avoiding that, to the way we market and see revenue," Neeleman says of AI's role in elevating the passenger journey, "It is astounding what is going to happen over the next short period of time to improve the guest experience."



Dr. Joe Leader, CEO, APEX/IFSA, speaks with Dina Ben Tal Ganancia, CEO of EL AL

Dina Ben Tal Ganancia, CEO of EL AL spoke with Leader about the vision for redefining the airline's global standing in the session "Elevating EL AL into a New Era of Excellence."

Following a networking break for refreshments, Rossen Dimitrov, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Saudia Airlines and Steven Greenway, CEO, Flyadeal took the stage for a focus on aviation in Saudi Arabia.

The CEO keynote session "The Kingdom of Travel for All: Saudia and flyadeal Powering a New Era of Aviation" saw Dimitrov and Greenway join BBC News' Ben Thompson to showcase how Saudia Group combines award-winning premium hospitality with the rapid growth of Saudi Arabia's leading low-cost carrier.



(From left) Rossen Dimitrov, Chief Customer Experience Officer, Saudia Airlines; Steven Greenway, CEO, Flyadeal; Ben Thompson, Presenter, BBC News

From Saudia's transformation in guest experience, digital services and global recognition to flyadeal's expansion into international markets and ambitious plan to serve 100 million travelers, the session highlighted how two distinct strategies converge to redefine air travel under Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030.

"Especially in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia is known for hospitality. The Saudi people are very warm," says Dimitrov. "The crew onboard the aircraft want to provide an experience as if you are visiting their homes."

"You've got a booming domestic market," Greenway explains about the growth in the country's air travel, citing Jeddah to Riyadh as the third most traveled route in the world.

Thompson asks how Flyadeal and Riyadh fit together in terms of the country's growth term, to which Dimitrov replies, "We're a family."

"Our mission is to take Saudis to the world and the world to Saudi Arabia, that is very clear," Greenway says. "We play a key role in that in terms of opening up the Kingdom."

Greenway refers to Flyadeal as a "bus", emphasizing the two different products the respective airlines offer.

"We get people from A to B on time, but if you want premium, go to Saudia," he explains.

Dimitrov and Greenway highlight the complementary roles the two airlines play to each other, rather than seeing one another as competition. Greenways positions Flyadeal's value proposition as affordable, on-time service on short-haul routes.

Saudia offers a different product in terms of connecting Saudi Arabia to the rest of the world. "Our mission is to really show the world what Saudi hospitality is about with consistency of quality and service," Dimitrov says.

"You've got the population of highly educated people, but now you've got people from key economies around the world coming back to participate as well," Greenway says of Saudi expats choosing to return to Saudi Arabia as the country works towards its Vision 2030 initiative.

"We have the infrastructure and everything that is needed to take us into the future," Dimitrov says of Saudia.



Andre Viljoen, CEO, Fiji Airways with Ben Thompson, Presenter, BBC News

Thompson then welcomed Andre Viljoen, CEO, Fiji Airways, to the stage for the final CEO keynote of the day.

The session, "From the South Pacific to the World Stage: Fiji Airways' Story of Excellence," focused on the airline's global growth. Operating a fleet of less than 20 mainline aircraft, Fiji Airways this summer became the smallest airline in the world to introduce Dining on Demand in Business Class, redefining passenger choice and premium service.

"[Dine on Demand] is all about that personalization, giving people the choice of what they want to eat," explains Viljoen.

"We bring in 70 percent of arrivals into the country," he adds. "We are custodians for the strategy of the country. Simply, we fly for Fiji."

He emphasizes the advantages to the passenger experience that come from being a smaller airline.

"Being small and being able to personalize a lot more takes that service to another level," he explains. "Every quarter, we take every employee through a service training program. This program is not about the service procedures, it is about education."

Fiji Airways has recently adopted the AAdvantage loyalty program and became a member of the OneWorld alliance earlier this year, which Viljoen says is "quite an achievement for an airline of our size."



Rex Richardson, Mayor of Long Beach

The CEO keynotes concluded with Leader welcoming Rex Richardson, Mayor of Long Beach, to the stage.

"It is an honor to welcome APEX to the city of Long Beach one more time," he says. "This is your tenth time selecting Long Beach to host this convention."

As to why Global EXPO continues to be a good fit for the city, Richardson says, "Aviation is such a

huge part of who we are in the city of Long Beach."

Ribbon cutting signals opening of exhibition show floor



The ribbon cutting at Global EXPO 2025

The ribbon cutting in the lobby of the Long Beach Convention Center marked the official open of the exhibition show floor.

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