

WTCE 2023: Q&A with Polly Magraw



Polly Magraw, Event Director, WTCE

How is the prep for this year's event going?

With less than two weeks left to go, this year's [World Travel Catering & Onboard Services Expo](#) (WTCE) is on track to exceed expectations. As the leading global event for inflight catering, onboard services and passenger comfort, we're expecting around 5,000 attendees to visit the show over the three days.

Plans for the exhibition are almost complete and we're excited to welcome a host of first-time exhibitors, each of which will bring fresh ideas and innovations to the show floor. I'm particularly looking forward to seeing smoothie pioneers [innocent Drinks](#), plant-based chocolate truffle makers [Cocohagen](#), [Silwy](#) which produces non-slip tableware and [The Drinks Bakery](#), which formulates biscuits that specifically pair with drinks onboard.

What's been the most exciting part?

It's always encouraging to see our exhibitors and visitors preparing for the event ahead. Seeing the ideas from the initial planning stages come to fruition as we edge nearer to June is really rewarding.

One of the things we've seen a lot of interest in is our Wellbeing Walkthrough — a new feature for this year's event. The special trail will signpost visitors to 32 different stands, with a variety of exhibitors specializing in products, services, and solutions suited to passenger wellbeing, including active noise cancelling headphones, jet lag solutions, amenity kits, luxurious bedding, and functional food and drink offerings.

Personally, I'm excited to demo [Azusa Corporation](#)'s range of noise-cancelling headphones which help passengers enjoy the sensory experience of music and food together to bring out the flavours whilst maximizing relaxation. Plus, [The Saviourists](#) is a trending healthy snacks brand that will showcase its Crunchits range, made from edamame, black beans and puffed rice. I'm also looking forward to seeing [Buzz Products](#) return to the show, as the team is due to be showcasing the luxury amenity kits that feature products made with the planet in mind.

For new exhibitors or attendees, can you tell us a bit about how the WTCE Connect app works?

The WTCE Connect tool was hailed as a “huge benefit” by those at the 2022 show and helped to form new relationships as well as reconnect long-standing ones. The tool helps visitors to find the products most suited to their needs and arrange meetings with the relevant exhibitors at the event, meaning that they arrive at WTCE with a personalized schedule to help plan their time at the show. The WTCE Connect tool will also help to match visitors with exhibitors that best suit what they are looking for at the event, helping to discover new suppliers that match their specific needs.

The themes of this year's show are “wellness on board,” “creating memorable experiences” and “sustainability.” How did you arrive at these themes?

Sustainability is a major talking point in the industry, and WTCE 2023 will build on the insight that was shared at last year's event to ensure we help businesses meet their sustainability goals.

The focus on wellness comes in response to a raft of fantastic new innovations in this space. Wellness is a trend that is present within other industries, and it was crucial that we include it as a theme at WTCE to provide airlines with the insight and product knowledge that will help to drive passenger loyalty.

Finally, we have chosen to focus on creating memorable experiences at WTCE this year as we want to give the industry the tools it needs to get passengers excited about travel once again. So much of how an airline is perceived by the public is based on what happens onboard, and “wow” factor experiences can really make a difference in repeat customers and positive reviews. We're keen to see the experts come together at the event to share ideas on how to put this into practice.

What wellness trends do you think will be displayed at the Expo?

As always, there will be a huge number of innovative, on-trend products launched at the event, with passenger wellbeing at the core.

Across all areas of WTCE, including food and drink, amenities, hygiene, skincare, oral hygiene and entertainment, wellness is a massive trend. Whether it's specific products formulated to reduce jet lag, items to aid sleep onboard, food and drink to support gut health, or products to rehydrate skin, there's so much to look forward to.

The [Humble Co.](#) is a good example of a company revolutionizing health and wellness onboard by providing eco-friendly and innovative oral hygiene products for travelling. In addition, we're excited to welcome start-up business [Elevate Granola](#), which is a brand catering to the vegan market and health-conscious passengers with its range of better-for-you granolas. [Formia](#) is another exhibitor involved in the wellness space, with its tailor-made amenity kits that help to create a healthy and relaxing environment for passengers onboard.

How is the industry as a whole focusing on sustainability? Why is this so important?

Sustainability is one of the biggest areas of discussion, not only in the onboard services industry, but almost every other industry is talking about it and coming up with solutions to tackle the climate crisis together. We know that our visitors have sustainability targets at the core of their strategies, so we will address the topic in detail at WTCE and Passenger Experience Conference, to promote discussion and collaboration, ensuring that we support the sector in meeting its targets.

We recently partnered on a roundtable discussion all about bringing the “wow factor” to the inflight experience, how have you seen the industry focus on this, on creating memorable experiences?

The industry has moved on from recovery and the focus now centres around getting people excited about travel once again. The roundtable was a brilliant way to bring some of the key industry players together to discuss how caterers, suppliers and airlines can enhance the passenger experience by bringing back the “wow factor.”

Brand loyalty is in decline, especially when we look at Generation Z. As Kelly Stevenson, a former British Airways buyer and brand consultant, pointed out during the roundtable, the customer experience has shifted in a much bigger way since 2020 than we've seen over the last two decades. And I know Anne de Hauw agreed that air travel has undergone, and is still undergoing, a massive transformation because various societal shifts impact the way we think about hospitality. The discussion was enlightening and I'm looking forward to seeing the conversation continue at WTCE this year.

What can attendees expect from the PEC conference?

[Passenger Experience Conference](#) (PEC) is the sister event to WTCE and AIX which will take place at the state-of-the-art Congress Center Hamburg (CCH) on Monday, June 5, 2023. The conference will bring together experts and visionaries from airlines, airframers, OEMs, suppliers and design organizations to network and discuss the future of the passenger experience, onboard environments and services.

Networking is an essential part of everyone's time in Hamburg which is why our Welcome Party, following PEC, is the perfect environment to make new contacts, strengthen existing relationships and meet with friends, old and new, in a relaxed atmosphere.

This year, the conference will deliver more sessions geared towards WTCE attendees than ever before — focusing on inflight catering, onboard services and passenger comfort — with delegates able to immerse themselves in the latest insights, ideas and analyses that will enable them to get ahead in an increasingly competitive industry.

I'm particularly looking forward to the session “*Preparing for 2030 and A New Travel Landscape*” and hearing about how best to meet the expectations of the passengers who will be travelling in the second half of this decade. “*Energising Cabin Waste*” will also be a compelling session, exploring how we can transform cabin waste into a resource that will help reduce the carbon footprint of travel.

To register to attend, visit the [Passenger Experience Conference website](#).