NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA's Inaugural Agent Ambassador Panel Showcases the USA with Transformative Destination Immersion Trip

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SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA (December 9, 2025) — Brand USA's Inaugural Agent Ambassador Panel Program has celebrated its first destination immersion trip in partnership with Air New Zealand. Twelve passionate travel agents from across Australia and New Zealand embarked on an educational adventure in the United States, experiencing the range of destinations first-hand.

Two tailored itineraries were developed, starting in the Air New Zealand gateways of New York City, NY and Houston, TX. The Northeast itinerary highlighted the iconic sights, history and culture of New York and Massachusetts and the Southwest itinerary was a road-trip discovery of famous attractions and hidden gems in Texas and Oklahoma. Both itineraries merged for a celebratory finale in Anaheim, California.

Malcolm Smith, Senior Vice President, Global Markets & Chief Trade and Product Development Officer at Brand USA said: "Our inaugural Agent Ambassador Panel Destination Immersion trip was a productive way to showcase the many facets of the USA. From bucket list attractions to off the beaten track experiences, the trip provided our ambassadors with valuable insights that will help them craft unforgettable holiday experiences for their clients."

The Brand USA Ambassador Program is designed to strengthen U.S. destination expertise, foster mentorship, enhance knowledge-sharing, and build a connected community of high-performing industry professionals. It also fostered real-time destination development in partnership with key stakeholders.

The ambassadors travelled with Air New Zealand, showcasing the airline's comfort, culinary excellence and exceptional service standards. Across the outbound and return flights, agents sampled a range of long-haul products, including Economy Stretch, Skycouch, Premium Economy, and Business Premier.

An Air New Zealand spokesperson said: "Air New Zealand is proud to partner with Brand USA through the Agent Ambassador Panel Program. We value the opportunity this initiative provides to strengthen our shared commitment to promoting exceptional travel experiences to the United States. This collaboration reflects our ongoing commitment to supporting our trade partners and growing travel to the United States."

East Coast: Bright Lights, History, and Heartfelt Hospitality

From the moment the ambassadors arrived in New York City, NY, discovery was at the heart of every experience. The trip kicked off with dinner on the Upper East Side at Felice on Columbus and an elegant stay at Hotel Beacon. The group took in a wide spectrum of experiences including a playful journey through Mercer Labs at the Museum of Art and Technology, VIP views from Top of the Rock observation deck at Rockefeller Centre, a flavour-packed 'Man with a Sandwich' tour led by Aussie expat Ben Gollan and a dazzling Broadway performance of Chicago. In a moving moment for the ambassadors, they also visited the 9/11 memorial and paid tribute to those impacted.

Committed to living like locals, the ambassadors embraced the New York and Boston public transport systems, discovering the efficiency of subways and the convenience of Amtrak, which showcased the ease of exploring regions beyond New York City - including Long Island, Hudson Valley, and Buffalo Niagara.

Upon arrival in Massachusetts, the warmth of Gloucester welcomed the group with fine dining at Oak & Ember and a relaxing stay at Beauport Hotel and a visit to the grand Hammond Castle. Wandering the storied streets of Salem, the team enjoyed a little "make-believe" at Witch Pix before concluding their journey in Boston with lanterns in hand along the Freedom Trail, as the city and country gear up for America250 celebrations next year. Visits to the Boston Tea Party Ships & Museum, the iconic markets, and historic city sites

rounded out their East Coast chapter.

Texas & Oklahoma: Road Trips, Culture, and the Oklahoma Standard

The second group touched down in Houston, TX where they were greeted with a welcome feast at the legendary Ninfa's on Navigation. The food exploration didn't stop there, with a Gulf-side lunch showcasing Houston's proximity to Galveston that featured a mix of local seafood and southern-inspired dishes. The next frontier was space, with the ambassadors visiting Houston Space Centre followed by a captivating tour of Houston's thriving arts scene. While in Houston, agents stayed at the incredible Houstonian Hotel, Club & Spa that has a stunning country club vibe in the heart of Houston's Galleria district.

In Fort Worth, the ambassadors learned to line dance, met the mayor, and witnessed the iconic and widely regarded stock yards and daily cattle drive of Texas Longhorns – captivating experiences that left the team eager to return.

Crossing into Oklahoma City, ambassadors were embraced by the famed Oklahoma Standard and a heartfelt welcome from the Chickasaw Nation. Next was a surprise private tour with local artist and icon, Kevin Stark at the Toy and Action Figure Museum in Paul's Valley. From the historic reflection at the Oklahoma City National Memorial Museum to a steakhouse dinner at Cattlemen's, ambassadors were greeted as friends at every stop. Ahead of the centenary next year, visits to Route 66 icons such as Chicken Shack and Pops added extra excitement. The journey culminated with a magical evening beneath the famed Chickasha leg lamp and a private preview of the city's stunning Festival of Light.

Anaheim Finale: Celebration, Connection, and Lasting Impact

Both groups reunited in Anaheim, Orange County, for the grande finale. Agents were split between the Howard Johnson, the Anaheim Hotel and the Castle Inn and Suites all in very close proximity to Disneyland and Greater Anaheim. The Anaheim leg included two magical days at Disneyland Resort with character dining at Storytellers Cafe, Lightening Lane multi passes for the park's rides and witnessing the fireworks and World of Colour shows. All with expert local hosting from Disney icon, Dusty Sage.

They also enjoyed California wine tasting while networking with Visit Anaheim partners at Pali Wine Company and then in the evening, cheered on the Anaheim Ducks to a magic point win as newly appointed number-one fans. The ambassadors completed a final celebratory shop at Citadel Outlets before returning home as a community bonded through mentorship and memories made in the USA.

Brand USA's Senior Director, Global Trade Development (APAC), Suzy Shepard said: "This famil provided a timely and immersive preparation for America 250, allowing agents to explore historic and culturally significant sites. Ambassadors are now better equipped to inspire their networks and clients who seek meaningful and commemorative itineraries during this landmark year. Beyond history, the trip showcased the diversity, unique experiences and local characters that bring the spirit of America the Beautiful to life for Australian and New Zealand travellers."

To discover more about the diversity of experiences available within the USA, and for more travel agent resources, please visit americathebeautiful.com/travel-trade.

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About Brand USA
Brand USA is the nation's destination marketing organization, dedicated to attracting legitimate international inbound travel to strengthen the U.S. economy, increase exports, create quality jobs, and promote community prosperity. By running data-driven campaigns and unifying messaging across industry and government, Brand USA positions the United States as a top global destination while providing current visa and entry information.

Over the past 13 years Brand USA has driven 11.3 million additional international visitors who spent $38.1 billion in the United States, leading to $82.9 billion in total economic impact and sustaining an average of more than 40,000 jobs each year. These efforts have generated nearly $11 billion in attributable tax receipts at the federal, state, and local levels.

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