NEWS RELEASE

Brand USA Hosts Trade and Media Events in New Zealand and Australia Ahead of Landmark 2026

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SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA (February 26, 2026) — Brand USA, the destination marketing organisation for the United States, has wrapped up a successful series of trade and media events in New Zealand and Australia between February 18 and 27, 2026, as 2026 shapes up to be a once-in-a-generation year for U.S. travel with marquee-events and milestone anniversaries drawing global attention.

Australia and New Zealand remain key markets for U.S. inbound travel, delivering high-yield, long-stay visitors who increasingly explore beyond gateway cities. Supported by expanded air connectivity, streamlined entry, and a once-in-a-generation line-up of events including FIFA World Cup, America250, and the Route 66 Centennial, strong trade and media engagement ensures these markets play a key role in driving visitation across all 50 U.S. states, territories, and the District of Columbia. In 2026, growing demand for flexible, immersive itineraries is expected to keep the U.S. top of mind, with Australian visitation forecast to rise 5% to over one million.

“2026 will be a landmark year for the United States, and travellers from Australia and New Zealand remain critical to our inbound growth. A once-in-a-generation line-up of global events, coupled with new attractions and luxury hotel openings are fuelling fresh demand to explore the nation’s 50 states and territories. By working closely with trade and media across both markets, we’re focused on converting that momentum into visitation and inspiring travellers to experience the full breadth of the United States,” said Chris Heywood, Senior Vice President, Public Relations & Chief Communications Officer, Brand USA.

Brand USA hosted its “America the Beautiful Game” Expos in Auckland and Christchurch, connecting 37 U.S. exhibitors with more than 260 travel agents and media. A new sports-themed format featured pre-game and post-game press conference-style events, giving agents deeper product and destination insights. Eight prize bundles were awarded across both events thanks to the support of Brand USA’s valued exhibitors and partners.

In Sydney, 57 buyers from 37 organisations met with 46 U.S. partners at Brand USA’s Australia B2B Day, engaging in 25 12-minute meetings in a traditional marketplace format.

Suzy Shepard, Senior Director, Global Trade Development (APAC) at Brand USA, said “Our Australian and New Zealand trade partners brought remarkable energy and curiosity to our events. Their expertise is vital in guiding clients toward authentic, flexible and immersive U.S. itineraries that go beyond traditional gateway destinations. We’re proud to support them with the tools and insights to convert that demand into bookings. We were also thrilled to announce the expansion of the Brand USA Ambassador Panel in this market from 12 to 30 positions, as part of our global growth to 250 ambassadors.”

Brand USA also spent two days at International Media Marketplace (IMM) engaging Australia and New Zealand’s leading travel media. Day one featured the TravMedia Summit, where PR professionals and journalists explored industry trends and challenges, while day two included 22 pre-scheduled one-on-one meetings with editors, journalists, broadcasters, and content creators.

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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.

Media Contacts

Chris Heywood
Senior Vice President, Public Relations & Chief Communications Officer

Jennifer Tong
Senior Director, International Public Relations