

How One Luxury Brand Is Designing The Future Of Immersive Travel

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Luxury used to be about the big and the bold. Today, it's about the intimate, the thoughtful, and the highly curated. No brand embodies that shift better than Tauck, a family-owned luxury travel company that's quietly shaped the high-end group travel experience for the past century.

I recently sat down with Jennifer Tombaugh, [Tauck's](#) CEO, who brings a deep well of perspective—and passion—for how luxury travelers are evolving. The conversation was rich with insight about everything from solo travel to river cruising, to how group experiences are being reimagined to feel deeply personal.

From Pause to Passion: A New Era for Luxury Travel

As Jennifer shared, “We’ve gone from *pause* to *passion*.” In the wake of global lockdowns, travelers aren’t just returning to the world—they’re returning with urgency, purpose, and increasingly, a desire to travel *better*, not just *more*.

Tauck is having its best year ever celebrating its 100th anniversary with double-digit growth, sold-out Christmas market cruises in 2025 and on pace to do the same in 2026, and the upcoming christening of new river ships on the Rhône and Seine. That doesn’t happen by accident. It happens when a brand listens carefully and [adapts boldly](#).



Acropolis at sunset.
TAUCK

Small Is the New Big

Jennifer explained a simple yet powerful idea that sits at the heart of Tauck's strategy: "Small is big."

On Tauck's European river cruises, for example, ships max out at 130 guests. On Portugal's Douro, that number is even smaller. The focus isn't just on comfort—it's on immersion. The rivers of Europe were once its highways of commerce, philosophy, and art. Tauck brings that cultural history to life, often docking right in the heart of town, where guests can step off the ship and into living history—be it a local tavern, cathedral, or seasonal celebration.

And this isn't just a river cruise renaissance. The brand has seen a 140% increase in demand for small group land journeys since 2018. In response, Tauck recently launched even smaller groups—just 15 guests per departure in some cases.

"People are willing to pay more to travel with fewer people," Jennifer noted. "It's about intimacy, access, and connection."

The Rise of the Wellness-Luxury Hybrid

One of the most important luxury travel trends Tauck is responding to? Wellness.

That doesn't mean green juice and hot yoga on a Danube deck (though those options exist). It means flexibility, choice, and a conscious design for how travelers feel throughout the journey.

On Tauck's new ships, "The Retreat" area includes spa treatments and expanded fitness spaces. Travelers can bike at port stops or opt for leisurely museum visits. "We're seeing more demand for movement and agency," Jennifer said. "People want to maintain their wellness routines but not feel like they're on a regimented retreat."

Luxury That Flexes With You

One of the quiet innovations Jennifer highlighted is "personalized group travel." That may sound contradictory, but Tauck is threading the needle.

Travelers move together through an itinerary, but each day offers choices—bike or hike, guided museum tour or free afternoon, history lecture or wine tasting. It's all designed to make you feel like an individual *within* a group.

“We’ve worked really hard so that people don’t feel like part of a herd,” Jennifer said. “No name tags. No flag-waving guides. Just seamless, curated moments that adapt to the guest.”

The Solo Luxe Boom and the End of the Supplement

Another macro trend Jennifer sees. Solo [luxury travel](#)—especially among women.

From Tauck’s Christmas market cruises to land journeys in Europe and Japan, solo travelers—many of them women over 60—are becoming a bigger slice of the customer base. So Tauck is responding in kind. On their newest ships, Category One cabins are now designed *specifically* for solo travelers—with no single supplement.

“That’s a huge shift,” Jennifer said. “We’re seeing solo travelers not just welcome but celebrated.”

Cold Is Hot: The Rise of Arctic Luxe

Tauck’s fastest-selling product for 2026? A Northern Lights voyage through the [Arctic Circle](#).

“That itinerary sold out before we had even priced it,” Jennifer shared, still a bit amazed. “Destinations like Tromsø and Hammerfest are suddenly in demand.”

She’s not alone in observing that trend. Cold-weather destinations like Iceland, Norway, and Finland are becoming coveted luxury escapes—where scarcity, spectacle, and serenity collide.

The Resilience of Luxury Amid Uncertainty

Despite headlines of macroeconomic volatility, Jennifer is bullish on luxury travel.

“In our space—front of the plane, premium accommodations, experience-first demand is thriving,” she said. “Luxury travelers tend to be more insulated from market noise, and they’re eager to explore now, not wait.”

Indeed, Tauck’s Japan product has become one of its top sellers. Greece is trending upward. And the company’s family-focused “Bridges” line is growing as multigenerational travel continues to surge.

Luxury as a Conduit for Human Connection

Jennifer left me with a simple yet profound insight: the most important luxury may not be a suite or a sommelier—it may be belonging.

“In this age of digital overload and social disconnection, people are craving human connection,” she said. “That’s what group travel offers—not in spite of its structure, but because of it.”

And if Tauck’s next 100 years look anything like the last, luxury travel won’t just be about where you go. It’ll be about how you feel—and who you become—along the way.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jefffromm/2025/07/08/how-one-luxury-brand-is-designing-the-future-of-immersive-travel>