

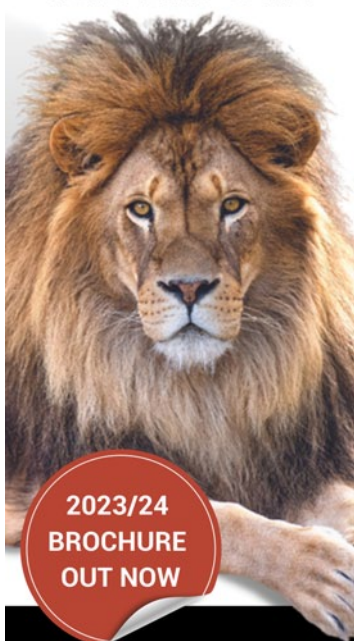
Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a **Disney Moments** page, a photo page from **Atout France**, and our **Corporate Update**, plus full pages from:

- Viking Cruises
- Celebrity Cruises



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QF/EK strike back at AFTA

EXCLUSIVE

QANTAS and Emirates have urged the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) to “give no weight” to AFTA’s controversial submission on the proposed extension of their alliance in the Australian market (**TD** 30 Jan).

The carriers’ response accuses the Federation of making “a range of contentions which are inaccurate, distorted, selective and/or irrelevant”, with QF and EK insisting that their proposed conduct is “fundamentally pro-competitive and clearly meets the test for authorisation”.

They say the proposed alliance “continues to represent the most effective way to rebuild, sustain and ultimately grow their combined network and capacity to the benefit of Australian consumers and businesses”.

Although significant portions of the airlines’ response relating to market share and distribution are redacted due to commercial confidentiality, QF and EK take exception to AFTA’s suggestions about entrenchment of market power, noting that “market shares are not themselves representative of market power”.

The airlines insist that all relevant markets are highly contested and say there is no impact of their alliance on the domestic market, while the response also provides a detailed explanation of NDC, the Qantas Distribution Platform and the Emirates Gateway as part of claims that AFTA “seems to oppose the use of enhanced technology”.

QF and EK also note that their coordinated distribution activities offer significantly more flight combinations, which in turn gives the “opportunity for agents to generate more backend override commission”.

Journey Beyond TVC

THE campaign video to accompany Journey Beyond’s 2024 season launch (**TD** yesterday) has been released, with the new Australia By Train TVC now available for viewing at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

New Viking voyages

VIKING Cruises is today showcasing its massive 2024 and 2025 portfolio of almost 290 ocean cruises which are now available for booking along with significant savings - see **page 8**.

Travel Daily on location with itravel

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of itravel, which is hosting its 2023 conference in Sydney's Richmond at the Crowne Plaza Hawkesbury Valley hotel.

A HEALTHY mind, body and business will be the focus of itravel’s conference in western Sydney, where two full days of conferencing will take place.

But it won’t all be business, with attendees able to indulge in some relaxing yoga on Sat morning before they gear up for a loaded day of company updates, supplier speed dating sessions and a black tie cocktail party on Sat night.

Founded in 1995, itravel is one of the fastest-growing independent travel networks in the country.

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See what Everybody is talking about

Collette recovery "dramatic"

COLLETTE Tours chief Dan Sullivan says the company continues to see surging demand, with the group's overall revenue up between 50% and 100% on a weekly basis since Sep last year.

Particularly strong recovery in the USA has seen full year figures for 2022 up about 15% on the 2019 record for Collette, with Sullivan telling *Travel Daily* he believes Australia is set for a similar surge in demand - although the local market is still 9-12 months behind the US.

He has been visiting travel agencies this week during a visit Down Under, and said one of the key recurring themes has been how time-poor agents are - and in turn how much they value

Collette's quick response to phone queries, with an average wait time under three minutes.

The company has been rebuilding its local workforce, and as well as an expanded sales team has also boosted call centre capacity in preparation for an expected surge in business.

Other key factors included the more than \$260 million refunded by Collette during the pandemic, the company's 24-hour "cancel for any reason" policy, and the fact that the tour operator's comprehensive worldwide itineraries are now preferred with all major Australian agent groups.

"We'd really like to thank Aussie travel advisors for their support and the way they have embraced Collette," he said.

Collette's small group departures are resonating strongly with the market, he noted, with Europe (Italy and Croatia) the standout performer but also keen interest in Japan and increasing enquiries for North America, Sullivan added.

Scout out of GC

SCOOT Airlines will suspend its Gold Coast-Singapore flights from Jul this year, as part of a network review announced by parent firm Singapore Airlines this week.

The carrier said it was adjusting capacity in response to demand, with other Scoot changes including flight resumptons to Haikou, Xian, Nanning, Ningbo and Shenyang in China as well as increased frequencies to Perth, Athens, Langkawi and Taipei.

Celebrity is a star

CELEBRITY Cruises says it's the "first and only Relaxed Luxury Resorts at Sea" to be star-rated by the respected Forbes Travel Guide - for details see **page nine**.



Albatross seeks MD

ALBATROSS Tours founder Euan Landsborough has signalled his intention to appoint a new Managing Director to take the company forward, after its successful recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The well-known Landsborough said he would remain actively involved, but focus his efforts on new product development and spending time with clients and customers across Australia & NZ. "I'm looking forward to handing over the reins and working with a new leader to free me up to do what I love doing most," he said.

An executive search for the new Albatross MD role has been initiated through U&U Recruitment Partners.

Jayride results

JAYRIDE has posted a loss of \$2.7m for the six months to 31 Dec 2022, with the global airport transfers marketplace generating \$2.5m in total revenue and other income, double the previous corresponding period.

The company's revenue from net commissions and fees booked was up by 170%, and it expanded its revenue base beyond Oceania, North America and Europe to see strong growth in Asia.

The period saw Jayride raise \$4.39 million from new share issues, enter a new \$1 million credit line facility and also sign a deal to acquire the assets of AirportShuttles.com for \$303,000.



AN AUTHOR on a flight to Scotland to promote his new novel took to Twitter to share a "very funny moment", when he realised the passenger next to him was reading none other than his new book.

New York-based Joseph Fasano posted a picture of his book *The Swallows of Lunetto*, being devoured by the older lady sitting next to him, asking his followers, "Should I say anything?"

Not wanting to make her feel obligated to talk to him, Fasano ended up asking the passenger, whose name was Jan, if she was enjoying the book, to which she responded, "I think so, have you read it?"

Jan put two and two together when he replied, "Yes, I've read it about a hundred times...just to make sure everything was right!"

The pair shared a laugh over the serendipitous moment, and Fasano signed her book, writing: "To Jan, Thanks for taking me on your journey - your seat-mate".



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Plateau luxury roadshow wraps up



UPMARKET representation agency Plateau International successfully concluded its Australian roadshow in Sydney last night, after a series of events aiming to raise the profile of their clients and enhance product knowledge of its portfolio of tour operator partners.

Gatherings also took place in Brisbane and Melbourne, concluding at Watersedge at Campbell's Stores in Sydney's The Rocks precinct.

Plateau founder Marco Rosa (pictured far right with all of the event partners) introduced each

session, with attendees enjoying in-depth presentations from suppliers along with drinks and canapes.

Working with an extensive network of tour operators and travel designers in the luxury travel sector, Plateau International brings together a sophisticated portfolio of boutique hotels, authentic river cruises and innovative DMCs - see plateauinternational.com.

Trip attractions deal

TRIP.COM Group has designated Barcelona-based B2B tours and activities platform Globick as its global connectivity partner for direct connections with operators of tours, events, theme parks and activities.

Globick will provide aggregated API integrations for Trip and Ctrip, to offer "premium products for the Chinese and other important global source markets".

Lee to join TTC

GTI Tourism's longstanding Group Account Director, Anne Lee, has been appointed to lead trade marketing across the Travel Corporation's TTC Tour Brands portfolio.

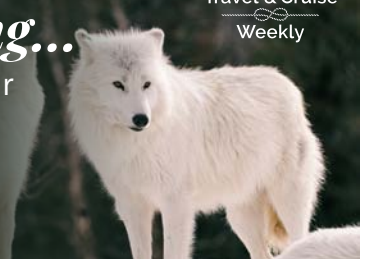
She commences in the new role next month after 12 years at GTI.

keep dreaming...

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Travel & Cruise Weekly



COVID-19 anxiety falls

AUSTRALIAN travellers are far less concerned with catching COVID-19 while on holiday than they were last year, according to new data released by nib Travel.

Aussies interviewed as part of a global survey suggested that fewer than 9% of travellers are now concerned with getting sick with COVID while overseas, while even fewer people said they were worried about international border restrictions (4.5%).

The new figures suggest that there are few hurdles in the minds of Aussies planning travel, with 73% of respondents confirming "nothing" was a barrier to embarking on a trip, an increase on the 44% who said there were no barriers to taking a holiday in 2021.

In further good news for travel sentiment, more than 90% of people said they would take between one to three trips this year, while an active 10.5% indicated they were planning to take four or more trips this year.

Nib Travel Chief Executive Officer, Anna Gladman, said

the data showed that Aussies are ready to become more adventurous now that the lingering effects of COVID have largely dissipated.

"Not only has int'l travel bounced back, Australians are becoming more daring in their travel plans, with 62% indicating that they are looking for new travel destinations," she said.

Hunter Valley resort switches to EVT

JERRY Schwartz has today announced the rebranding of his Hunter Valley Resort as Rydges Resort Hunter Valley, switching the property's management to EVT Limited.

The 414-room hotel is currently operated by IHG Hotels & Resorts as Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley, and will become the fifth property managed by EVT for the Schwartz Family Company.

The companies also announced an extension of EVT's existing management contracts for Rydges World Square and Rydges Sydney-central, with EVT Director of Hotels & Resorts, Norman Arundel, saying "as an Australasian owner-operator we are recognised for the strength of our commercial results and ability to maximise assets".

"We have developed a highly effective relationship with Dr Schwartz and his company, a relationship built on mutual trust and strong performance."

Vietjet addition

VIETNAMESE carrier Vietjet has added its fifth Airbus A330, with the 377-seat configuration including the exclusive SkyBoss business class cabin.

Vietjet has announced new non-stop flights from Sydney and Melbourne to Ho Chi Minh City starting in Apr (TD 17 Feb).



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Excitement now at fever pitch

WITH just three weeks until the highly anticipated Disney100 mega famil to Disneyland Resort in California next month, Disney has revealed two more winners (right), with the last few spots on the momentous trip currently being finalised.

It's been an honour for *Travel Daily* to showcase some of the industry's 'Magical Moments' of professionalism in recent weeks, showing how travel advisors go above and beyond for their customers.

In partnership with Anaheim and United Airlines, the incentive trip will see 100 agents from Australia and New Zealand enjoy the experience of a lifetime.

Some of the participants in the trip have qualified by submitting their Magical Moments, while others are joining after booking Disneyland tickets as well as United Airlines flights to the USA.

Two more Disney100 winners revealed!

THEY'RE almost the lucky last, with Disney today confirming two more travel advisors joining the upcoming Disney100 mega famil in Disneyland next month.

It was an especially magical moment brewed up by **Tanya Barker from TravelManagers**, which saw her earn a spot on the life-changing trip.

In Jan 2019, Barker did a group presentation at a local dance school in Cranbourne in the south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne, where she offered dancers the once in a lifetime opportunity to dance in the Main Street Parade at Disneyland with Dance The Magic.

Within four weeks, 25 dancers and their families (a total of over 100 people) committed and paid a non-refundable deposit for the Dec 2021 tour, which was then paid to the suppliers.

The long-awaited trip was postponed after COVID hit, and

even after travel had opened up again, many of the families were unable to travel due to the financial impact of the pandemic.

Fortunately, Barker had encouraged most of the families to purchase Covermore's travel insurance, so they were able to recover their deposits.

As soon as she could, Barker did another presentation to the dance school and in good faith kept the 2019 price for the group, taking the \$20,000 financial hit personally.

"I couldn't take the magic and the dream from these families by charging them extra for the increased airline prices," she said.

In Dec 2022, Barker took the first international dance group post-COVID to perform in the Dance The Magic Main Street Merry Holiday Parade, with 20 dancers able to accomplish their dream.

"I got satisfaction from seeing the pleasure and tears on not

only the dancers, but their parents' and teachers' faces," she enthused.

"It made all my hard work, commitment financially and emotionally worth it...I made a commitment to this group to share my love of Disney and that's what I achieved!"

Courtney Williamson-Hatcher from Champagne Travel in Mandurah, WA has also won a spot on the magical famil after making one big family very happy.

The dedicated agent secured all 19 family members, ranging from ages two to 76, across five cabins onboard *Disney Magic at Sea*.

"We contacted the grandmother and she teared up as she didn't think this was actually going to happen for her and her family.

"It was just a magical experience all around and I am so happy I was able to make these dreams come true for so many families!" Williamson-Hatcher said.

Disney 100 | Disneyland Resort California

DISNEY100 MEGA-FAMIL

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CORPORATE UPDATE

FCM "outpaces industry"

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) corporate operations made a significant contribution to the company's first half results (**TD** 22 Feb), delivering record TTV of around \$5 billion - up almost 150% on 1H FY22.

The company said the result reinforced its position as "one of the world's leading travel management companies" and laid the foundation for a record full year, well above the \$8.9b in corporate TTV that FCTG recorded in the 2019 financial year.

FCTG's global corporate business also posted \$80 million underlying EBITDA, compared to a \$31 million loss for the previous corresponding period.

The company's corporate arm recovered to 88% of pre-pandemic levels, with transactions returning to 90% and

TTV reaching 103% - results which see it outpacing the broader industry's recovery, according to FCTG CEO Graham Turner.

"Our corporate business is trading...ahead of industry growth rates, and winning large volumes of new accounts because of its compelling FCM and Corporate Traveller customer offerings," he said.

In TTV terms, FCM Travel earned 57% of the \$1.25b in account wins for the half year, while 43% went towards Corporate Traveller.

The company predicts a sustained rise in corporate profit, propelled by Asia's reopening, as well as investments it made ahead of the recovery in new platforms, products, rebranding and people, as part of its Grow to Win strategy.

FCTG has also poured significant investment into the North America market to boost growth, including a new Corporate Traveller sales hub in New York City, which will open during the second half of the year.

SIA axes Canada

SINGAPORE Airlines is pulling out of the Canadian market, with the suspension of its Singapore-Vancouver route in Oct this year.

The carrier said it was "adjusting capacity in response to demand", having relaunched YVR just over 12 months ago, initially as a stopover on SIN-SEA and then going non-stop in Jun 2022.

BCD, Amadeus deal

BCD Travel has signed a new agreement with Amadeus, with the expanded pact seeing the companies "partner on multiple initiatives, each designed to provide BCD Travel with a platform for growth, productivity improvement and technological innovation".

The deal includes incorporating Amadeus' NDC content and end-to-end workflow capabilities within BCD's operations, as well as increased business for Amadeus in the UK, Ireland and North America.

Keep up to date with Travel Daily on the go



Travel Daily



COMO kicks off roadshow



COMO Hotels and Resorts has marked the start of its 2023 roadshow, kicking off with a Perth event on Mon this week before heading to Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Auckland.

Jonica Paramor, Global Director of Sales - Australia, New Zealand, is leading the roadshow alongside COMO sales and marketing directors from around the world, who came together to provide updates on the COMO portfolio to travel industry partners.

Corporate lag: LHR

THE operator of London Heathrow Airport says business travellers represented 28% of passenger numbers during the Sep-Dec 2022 quarter - down significantly on the 32% recorded for the same period in 2019.

Pent-up demand for leisure travel is driving demand, with LHR CEO John Holland-Kaye saying he believes major corporates are "pulling back on travel as they're making cost reductions".

"Business demand is probably the only area that is lower than we would have expected," he said, with LHR's overall 2022 traffic amounting to 62 million pax, 75% of pre-pandemic levels.

The directors in attendance included Gabi Vincent (Perth); Jocelyn Whiteside (Fiji, Thailand and Bhutan); Eugene Feklistov (Bali); Nuass Mohammed (Maldives); and Katherine Gordon (UK/Europe).

Last year **Travel Daily** exclusively revealed that COMO is preparing to open a 150-key new luxury hotel property in Singapore's city centre later this year, marking the brand's debut in the country (**TD** 26 Oct 2022).

Pictured in front of the entrance to COMO The Treasury are Jocelyn Whiteside, Katherine Gordon, Gabi Vincent, Nuass Mohammed, Jonica Paramor, and Eugene Feklistov.

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Fun and Games in Paris, at Sofitel by Atout France

THE President of Paris Region, Valerie Pecresse, made a flying visit to Australia this week to be the MC at a tourism luncheon hosted by Patrick Benhamou, Director of Atout France and Christophe Decloux, Director of Paris Region tourism - and it looks like everyone literally had a ball!

Guests gathered at the Sydney Sofitel Wentworth to discuss the upcoming sporting events that Paris Region will host in the two coming years, which include the 110th edition of the iconic Tour de France cycling race, Rugby World Cup 2023, and of course the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024.

More than 600,000 spectators are expected for a unique Olympics opening ceremony scheduled for 26 Jul 2024, which will take place in the heart of Paris.

About half a million Australian travellers go to Paris every year.



PATRICK Benhamou, Atout France and Valerie Pecresse, Paris Region keeping all the balls in the air.



CHRISTOPHE Decloux, Paris Region Tourism and NSW Government Minister Natalie Ward.

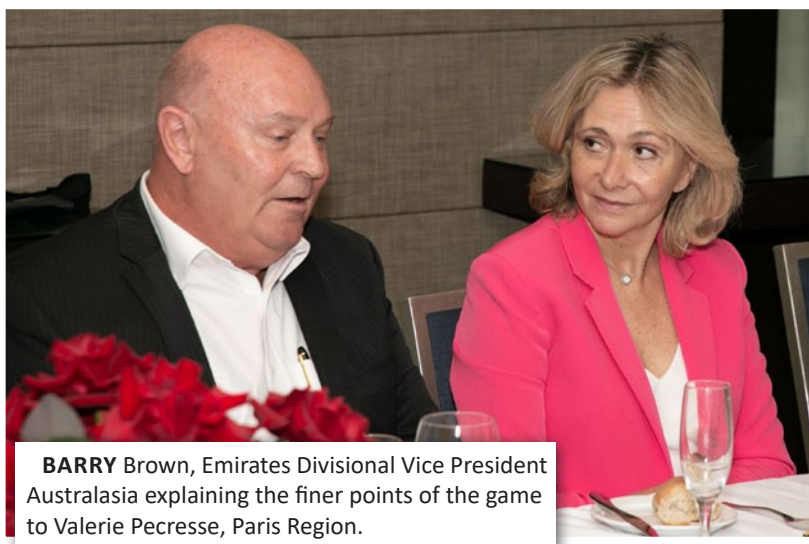
GEORGIA Blackburn, Qantas.



LEE Tulloch, Travel Writer with Anthony French from Rugby Australia and celebrity chef Guillaume Brahimi.



MORGAN Turinui, Channel Nine with Lisa Pile, Regent Seven Seas Cruises.



BARRY Brown, Emirates Divisional Vice President Australasia explaining the finer points of the game to Valerie Pecresse, Paris Region.



CLAUDIA Rossi Hudson from Mary Rossi Travel with Ofa Fainga'anuku, Gullivers Sport Travel.

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TRAVEL SPECIALS

WELCOME to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to specials@traveldaily.com.au

Aussies and Kiwis can save up to 10% off when booking multiple trips with European walking specialist **On Foot Holidays**. Travellers can explore the authentic, immersive and eco-sustainable experiences on over 30 hiking routes in 11 countries across Europe including an extensive offering in Spain - **CLICK HERE** to learn more.

Savings of over 20% are on offer from Mar to Apr on trips aboard the Sunshine Coast's **Mary Valley Rattler's** Tasting Train. The "Red Rocket" passes through the Mary Valley to the heritage village of Amamoor, with a tasting plate served on the way, followed with a two-course lunch on return at Gympie Station's Rusty Rails Café. Book **HERE** and apply the promo code TASTE to take advantage of special offers.

Back-Roads Touring is offering \$400 per couple savings on 2023 trips to the UK and Europe, as part of a "Discover a New Local" promotion. The offer is valid for bookings on selected departures until 02 Mar - for more details contact tradesales@backroadstouring.com.au.

New Sydney hotel

PROPERTY developer Holdmark has lodged an application for a \$700m 59-storey hotel and commercial tower in the Sydney CBD, designed by global architecture studio Woods Bagot.

The plan for the 4-6 Bligh Street site, on which office building Bligh House currently stands, details a 200-room luxury hotel complete with a rooftop bar and views of the city, in addition to eight levels of premium office space, meeting and event rooms, retail, restaurants, and bars.

QR Scotland boost

QATAR Airways will continue operating 10 flights per week between Doha and Edinburgh from 26 Mar, rather than the previously scheduled reduction to daily services, according to travel agent reservation platforms.

Tourism strong for Kelsian Limited

KELSIAN Group Limited yesterday revealed a strong result for the six months to 31 Dec, citing a rebound in domestic tourism which led to a 6.2% growth in overall company revenue to \$678.3 million.

The Sealink Travel Marine and Tourism division recorded a hefty 41.3% increase in revenue to \$167.56 million, with CEO Clint Feuerherdt saying the result "demonstrates the benefits of our diversified businesses to delivering growth overall".

Kelsian also won several new bus contracts but noted an ongoing shortage of skilled drivers and mechanics which led to increased costs in its Australian Bus business - pressure which is expected to ease as migration levels normalise, Feuerherdt said.

Yeehaa for Bonza in Qld



THIS week Bonza touched down on the tarmac in Townsville for the first time in its short history, flying its new route from the Sunshine Coast to the major regional Qld hub.

The latest route is the airline's fourth to launch and will be followed by its first-ever flight between Townsville and Rockhampton today, with Bonza drumming up plenty of interest with its Australiana-style celebrations taking place across the state.

Customers on board the first flight were treated to a warm Townsville welcome, touching down into the newly transformed Townsville Airport, with recently completed upgrades to its security screening zone, check-in areas and adjoining retail space.

"The introduction of two brand new routes from Townsville comes at a time where demand is at an all-time high for Aussies to explore their own backyard," CEO Tim Jordan said (**pictured** top left), adding its "team of legends"



were humbled to play a role in connecting more Aussies with low cost flights.

Townsville is also a major rugby league heartland, with the North Queensland Cowboys taking the NRL season by storm last year, getting one game away from a grand final berth.

More than one million passengers already fly between Townsville and Brisbane each year, and that number is tipped to grow, with Bonza stating the new link between North and South-East Queensland will provide its customers and community with another option.

Jordan believes not only Aussie leisure travellers will be jumping aboard the carrier's iconic purple planes, with NRL fans also likely to take advantage of its ease of connection in the Sunshine State.

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NEW ITINERARY



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WEST INDIES & PANAMA CANAL PASSAGE

SAN JUAN – LOS ANGELES or vice versa
18 DAYS | 7 GUIDED TOURS | 8 COUNTRIES
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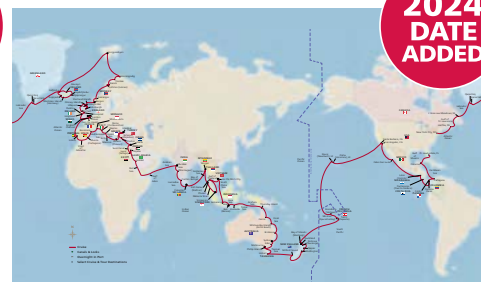
ATHENS – MUMBAI or vice versa
21 DAYS | 9 GUIDED TOURS | 7 COUNTRIES
NEW DATES 21 OCT 2024 & 4 APR 2025
From \$12,995pp in Veranda stateroom
SAVE up to \$1,800 per couple



2024 & 2025 DATES ADDED



2025 DATES ADDED



2024 DATE ADDED

VOYAGE OF MARCO POLO

ATHENS – BANGKOK or vice versa
36 DAYS | 16 GUIDED TOURS | 10 COUNTRIES
NEW DATES 21 OCT 2024 & 20 MAR 2025
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SAVE up to \$3,600 per couple

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BERGEN – NEW YORK or vice versa
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