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Titan's Mar madness

TITAN Travel is offering agents an extra 5% commission on all bookings made by 31 Mar, as well as 10% savings for travellers on 2024 tour departures.

The sale includes the 17-day Deluxe Alaskan Voyage - to learn more, see [page seven](#).

CATO's Touring Academy

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has unveiled a new Touring Academy it believes will help improve the knowledge travel agents have of land-based tour operators and wholesalers.

Modelled on the education formula used by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia, CATO's Academy will launch on 01 Apr and seek to keep travel sellers up-to-date with the latest trends in touring - especially those agents who are new to the industry.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* prior to the announcement, CATO Managing Director, Brett Jardine, said the new education platform will be vital in combatting critical skills shortages that are currently impacting all segments of travel.

"The Academy is going to play a role in filling that void and from our side help retailers elevate their skills," Jardine believes.

"The Academy will also play its part to support business owners

that are potentially being forced to bring in newcomers to the industry," he added.

Designed to be flexible and self-paced, participants of the Touring Academy will become 'CATO Certified' upon the accrual of 200 points earned in various modules.

These include mandatory modules (20 points), elective training (15 points), destination training (10 points) and famils longer than five days (10 points).

The platform has been created in partnership with learning software provider ABSORB, with CATO members also able to build white label training content.

"Members will be able to upload their own training that sits within our platform and we will probably end up with between 50-100 tour operators with their own brand training," Jardine said.

"That will allow agents to understand the wide breadth of product available...under their noses here in Australia." AB

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel industry news, plus full pages from:

- Titan Travel
- CLIA Australasia
- Hurtigruten

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S Korean demand K-pops

EXCLUSIVE

STRONGER than anticipated demand for Contiki's first trip to South Korea next month (**TD** 02 Aug 2023) has led the youth operator to add new departure dates in 2024 and 2025.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** while in Australia late last week, Global CEO, Adam Armstrong, confirmed the volume of departures this year has been boosted to 11 trips from an originally scheduled nine.

Contiki has also doubled down on 2025, increasing South Korean departures from 11 to 22.

When asked why younger travellers have responded so well to the prospect of South Korea, Armstrong said there were a few reasons, but namely the country is "simply trending".

"Between K-pop, beauty and *Squid Game*, these elements just all came together to create this buzz around South Korea and Gen Z in particular have been really

drawn to the country," he said.

"We knew we needed to get on that coach pretty quickly and we are the first TTC Tour Brand to ever have an operation there."

The massive response to its South Korean product, Armstrong concedes, took him by surprise.

"If I'm really honest, I wasn't convinced it would be a big part of our program, I thought we would run a couple of trips a year...but I'm happy to say I was wrong," he said.

The first departure of Contiki's nine-day 'South Korean Soul' tour departs from Seoul on 22 Mar.

While Europe has historically been the mainstay destination for Contiki, recent bookings have been softer following a bumper period of revenge travel, opening up more product avenues in Asia.

The push into Asia has also seen Contiki launch its first foray to the Philippines, with departures now open for bookings. **AB**

Hawaii visitors drop

AUSTRALIANS have been slow to return to Hawaii following last year's Maui wildfires, with official figures for Jan 2024 showing an almost 11% drop in visitor numbers from Down Under.

The latest statistics from the State Department of Business, Economic Development and Tourism (DBEDT) show a 3.6% decline in total visitor arrivals into Hawaii, as well as a 4.5% fall in visitor spending year-on-year.

The decline marks the sixth month in a row of lower visitor spending in Hawaii since the Aug 2023 fires.

CLIA says thanks

WITH less than a week to go until the Cruise Line International Association's (CLIA) 21st Cruise Industry Awards take place in Sydney, the association is thanking the event's sponsors, which includes **Travel Daily** - see who the rest are on **page seven**.

Dive in with Hurti

AGENTS are being invited to "dive into" to Hurtigruten Expeditions' biggest-ever Galapagos famil trip, with more than 100 places up for grabs.

See the **back page** for details on how to win a spot.

RCI cruise rerouted

ONGOING unrest in the Red Sea continues to wreak havoc on cruise lines transiting the region, with Royal Caribbean's Ultimate World Cruise next to reroute.

The nine-month *Serenade of the Seas* voyage will no longer transit the Suez Canal and after departing Dubai on 09 May, will instead route around the African coast, calling in ports in the Seychelles, South Africa, Namibia, Angola, Senegal and more.

The change means a variety of originally scheduled eastern Europe ports will now be missed to ensure the cruise gets back on track in Barcelona on 09 Jul.

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***Some positions are open to hybrid and or working from home arrangements**

Tinker Bell gets her own ride



DISNEY has unveiled concept art for its first ever ride themed entirely on Tinker Bell, which will open at Tokyo DisneySea's new themed land, Fantasy Springs, scheduled to open in Jun.

Tinker Bell's Busy Buggies will see riders escorted by Peter Pan's fairy sidekick through Pixie Hollow in all four annual seasons. True to Tinker Bell's miniature

size, sets are designed in a larger than life scale to present riders with a fairy's perspective, with giant sunflowers, picnic baskets and lamp posts decorated to look like tall blades of grass.

Alongside Peter Pan Land, guests exploring Fantasy Springs can wander zones themed on *Frozen* and *Tangled*, each featuring sets and characters. *ML*



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Silver screen on ice

EMIRATES is getting into the annual Hollywood awards season, screening the best of Tinseltown's 2023 movies on its 'ice' inflight entertainment system this month.

The new 'Award Winners' section will feature BAFTA winner *Oppenheimer* alongside Martin Scorsese's *Killers of the Flower Moon*, plus many more.

Uber appoints

UBER has announced Nicole Bardsley as its new Head of Marketing ANZ, replacing Andy Morley, who has stepped up to become Director of Marketing, Uber & Uber Eats APAC.

Reporting to Morley, Bardsley commences her new role today, and is tasked with leading the Australia and New Zealand marketing teams.

She joins from Cashrewards, where she played a key role in the brand's relaunch as Chief Marketing Officer for two years.

White Island verdict

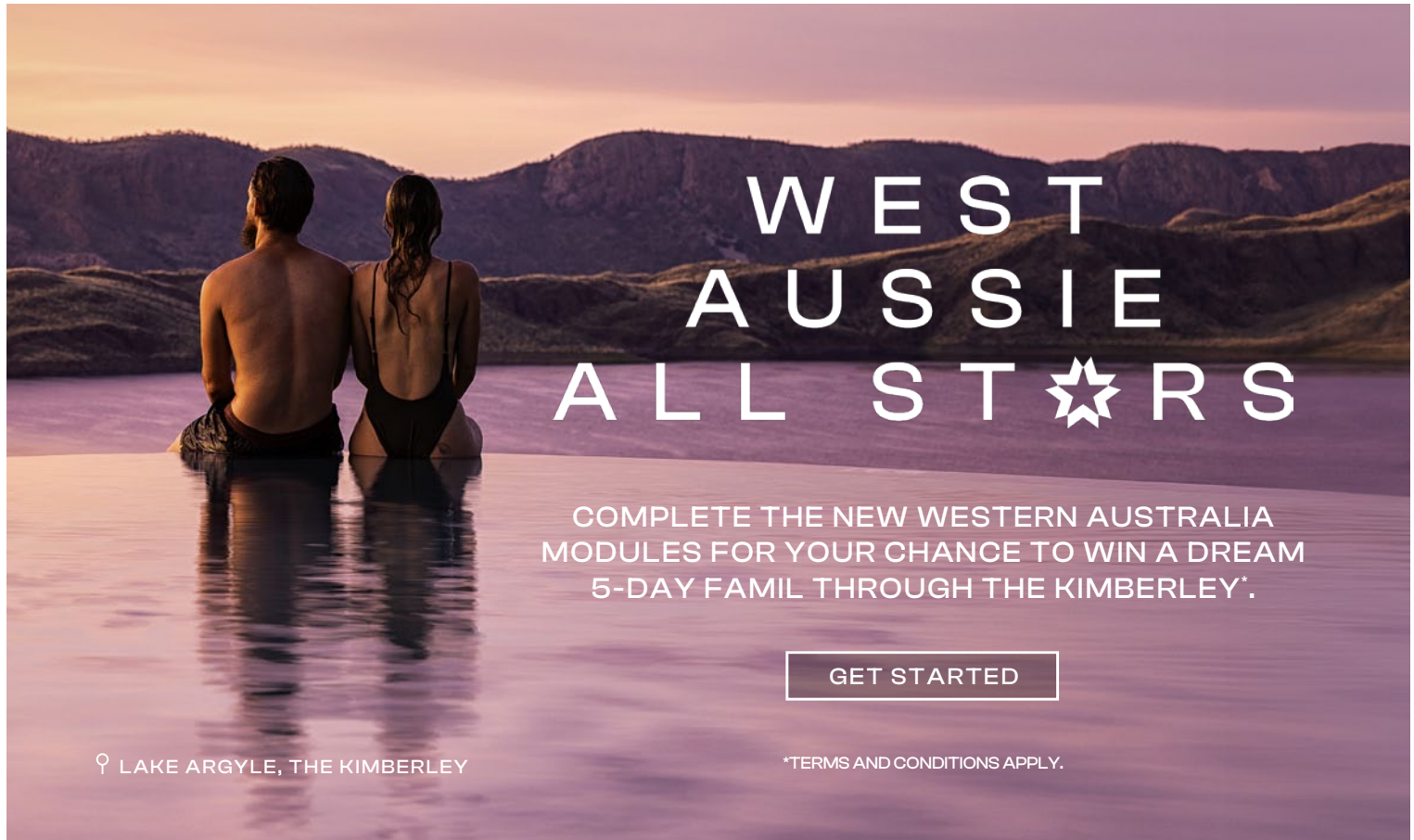
A **DISTRICT** Court Judge in New Zealand has awarded NZ\$10.21 million (AU\$9.56 million) to the families of those impacted by the 2019 White Island eruption, with five parties sentenced to pay.

In a ruling handed down on Fri, Judge Evangelos Thomas ordered Whakaari Management Limited, the company held by the owners of the island, to pay reparations of NZ\$4.8 million.

White Island Tours to pay \$4.68 million of the total figure for its disregard of New Zealand's workplace health and safety laws and failing to communicate the safety information to visitors.

Three other parties - Volcanic Air Safaris, Aeries Limited and Kahu NZ Limited - were also fined between NZ\$196,000 and \$506,000 for various degrees of negligence in the disaster.

At the time of the eruption, 47 people were exploring parts of the island, with 22 losing their lives, including 17 Australians.



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Agent burnout warning

EXCLUSIVE

ITRAVEL Australia CEO Steve Labroski has heralded significant opportunity in 2024 but suggested that advisors would have to walk the tightrope between burnout and success in order to capitalise on it.

Speaking to **TD** at the company's 2024 conference in Canberra over the weekend, Labroski said that ittravel had spent significant time finding efficiencies for advisors so that they could work faster and grow revenue, while not running the risk of burnout during a period of such significant growth.

"If we can't help our agents be better, more efficient and make more money in what they do, then it's irrelevant because at the end of the day, they're still doing the same thing again and again and again and burnout will catch them," Labroski asserted.

"If we can create efficiencies that saves [agents] an hour, two hours, a day, whether they want to make an extra two or three bookings, or want to sit down and have some time

off for themselves, that's the key because burnout is a big nightmare."

Labroski cited the relaunch of HQ, an increased focus on tech, and a wholesale DMC as just a few of the areas where ittravel had managed to find significant efficiencies for its advisors.

He was adamant that finding efficiencies was a crucial mission for 2024 in light of significant growth opportunities.

"The reality we sit in, there's only 45% of us left today of what we had pre-COVID, so when there's only 45%, and 90% of volume pre-COVID is coming at us, how do you sustain that?"

"You're never going to get a better opportunity to make more money than where we sit today, it's as simple as that - we are in a unique position to make more money than ever before," Labroski added. *DF*

Bone up on Canada

AGENTS are invited to join the 2024 Canada Specialist Program webinar series this Wed 06 Mar, hosted by Destination Canada and Air Canada.

Updates about the latest destination experiences available in the Great White North will be relayed during the session.

There will be two live 30-minute sessions, one at 8.30am and the other at 12pm AEDT - **CLICK HERE** to register.

Four Seasons Dalian

FOUR Seasons Hotels and Resorts has entered China's Northeast with the opening of Four Seasons Hotel Dalian.

Offering 254 guest rooms and suites, the luxury hotel features a spa and wellness centre, indoor pool, and a Japanese restaurant.

COMO updates Aussie agents



COMO Hotels and Resorts hosted 60 travel agents at an intimate sit-down dinner, which took place at Sydney's Establishment last week.

On arrival, attendees were guided through a Qi Qong healing session by Director of Wellness at COMO Shambhala Estate, Kimberly Rose Knier.

Next, agents received updates and insights about COMO's ever expanding global network from the group's sales and marketing directors, who are currently in the country for a roadshow.

The COMO group has recently opened two new properties - COMO Alpina Dolomites,

situated in Northern Italy's South Tyrol, and COMO Metropolitan Singapore, which is located in COMO Orchard. *JM*

Pictured: Nuaas Mohamed, Kimberly Rose Knier, Adeline Loh, Gabi Vincent, Jonica Paramor, Jocelyn Whiteside, Steve Nunan, and Eugene Fekilstov.

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Ascott Unlimited

THE Ascott Limited is marking 40 years in hospitality with the launch of a new year-long campaign 'Ascott Unlimited'.

As part of the pitch, the company will be offering 'Unlimited Opportunities', delivering enhanced value to owners, investors and associates and 'Unlimited Choices', offering guests a range of experiences.

Further, 'Unlimited Freedom' offers owners flexibility to realise potentials, and travellers unparalleled possibilities to stay their way; while 'Unlimited Good' features a commitment to a culture of care and hospitality backed by a spirit of innovation.

The campaign was unveiled this week at the Asian Hotel Industry Conference & Exhibition.

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Window Seat

HOLIDAY parks are the perfect location for making new friends and finding love, a new report from BIG4 Holiday Parks has revealed.

According to the survey of more than 2,000 Australians who have stayed in a holiday park in the last five years, holiday park guests are 50% more likely to experience romance while on vacation.

Interestingly for these blossoming romances, the data hints the relationships are 50% more likely to last.

Meanwhile, 56% of respondents said they had made new friends during their travels, and 57% of those connections have continued beyond their trip.

While in holiday mode, 84% of Aussies said they are more open to meeting new people and 75% are more likely to lend a helping hand.



ASTW feasts on a 'big apple'



THERE was a lot of love for New York City at a recent luncheon for the Australian Society of Travel Writers, with the 'Big Apple' presenting at the grand occasion.

Hosted at the Hamptons-inspired restaurant The Butler in

Sydney's Potts Point, the event featured a presentation by New York State Division of Tourism Executive Director, Ross Levi.

The gathering took place during a big week for US representation, with the Visit USA roadshow hitting three cities in three days to meet agents across the country.

Attendees were in fits of laughter during a hilarious game requiring proper pronunciation of places around Greater New York that don't sound as you'd think.

Levi was joined by Duchess Tourism NY Managing Director of Tourism Market Development, Dawn Hopper, together regaling the room with stories and history from New York State.

Attendees also learned more about all the grand sights to be enjoyed outside the five boroughs of New York City itself. *ML*

Hopper is **pictured** above second from left with event emcee Kylee Kay, Linkd Tourism; Caroline Gladstone, ASTW Secretary and Trina Shepherd, Linkd Tourism.

Goumas at the wheel

CAR rental agency DriveAway has welcomed new NSW Business Development Manager, Suzie Goumas, to the business.

She arrives with previous BDM experience at various airlines, including Air Canada, and during the pandemic, extended her skills to corporate sales at the Crowne Plaza in Terrigal.

"My background in the travel industry has instilled in me a deep appreciation for fostering meaningful connections and driving positive change.

"I am eager to leverage my experience to educate and collaborate with industry partners," Goumas said.

Sun rises for Princess

PRINCESS Cruises' new *Sun Princess* has set sail on her maiden voyage on a 10-day Mediterranean journey from Rome, visiting ports at Naples, Crete, Kusadasi, Athens, Sicily, Mallorca and Barcelona.

With a 4,300-guests capacity, the vessel features debut experiences including a geodesic, glass-enclosed enclosure at the top of the ship, inspired by the terraces of Santorini.

There's also the suspended Sphere Atrium, where guests can admire ocean views and relax in indoor and outdoor living.

A range of food and beverage options are also on offer, including the new three-storey Horizons Dining Room and a high-end boutique restaurant called Love by Britto.

Sabre AI on show

SABRE Corporation will outline its latest developments in the world of Artificial Intelligence at this year's ITB Berlin Convention.

Situated across two expansive stands, tech buyers attending the show can see the latest updates to the Sabre Red 360 NDC content, Sabre Content Services for Lodging and the end-to-end Sabre Virtual Payments solution.

Several Sabre executives will also take the stage to share data on AI and how its systems learn from consumer behaviour.

ITB Berlin runs from 05-07 Mar, with more than 24,000 attendees expected across the three days.

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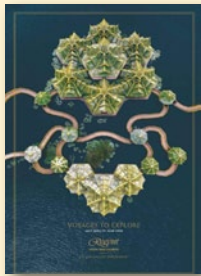
THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by Collette.



Collette - Explorations 2024-2025

The new Explorations brochure from Collette features over 40 small group Explorations tours, each of which is comprised of a maximum of 24 travellers to ensure every individual is well taken care of. Some of the most popular itineraries in the category include Exploring South Africa; Victoria Falls & Botswana; Treasures of Turkey; Old World Sicily & Malta, and much more, with each of the offerings earning an "excellent" rating from guests.

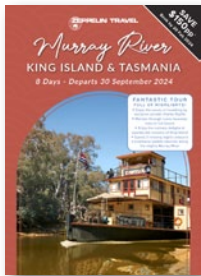
The brochure also unveils Collette's new batch of Exploration tours set to debut next year, featuring destinations like Namibia, South Africa, Greece, Portugal, The Balkans, and South America.



Regent Seven Seas Cruises - Voyages to Explore

Predicted to offer guests an unforgettable experience with its luxury cruises, Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has released a comprehensive 292-page brochure to depict highlights of some of its most acclaimed and voyages around the world. While perusing the highly detailed guide, keen sailors can get a glimpse of the upgrades, suites and amenities across the line's luxurious fleet consisting of *Seven Seas Explorer*, *Seven Seas Voyager*, *Seven Seas Mariner*, *Seven Seas Navigator* and *Seven Seas Splendor*.

As an all-inclusive line, guests can also enjoy unlimited shore excursions, beverages, and Wi-Fi on all voyages.



Zeppelin Travel - Murray River, King Island & Tas

Departing 30 Sep, Zeppelin Travel has released a short but sweet guide for its unique eight-day adventure exploring northern Tasmania and Victoria. Beginning with a two-night stay at Hotel Grand Chancellor in Launceston, travellers then board a private charter flight to explore King Island before continuing on to Echuca in Victoria for three nights on the Murray River aboard the PS Emmylou. Highlights of the adventure include an expedition to see iconic lavender rows on King Island, a visit to an UNESCO World Heritage site, native wildlife encounters and more.

NCL takes clean-up further



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) is expanding its shore excursion program on board *Norwegian Spirit* with the launch of three new complimentary beach clean-up opportunities.

The cruise line will offer the excursions in Melbourne and Fiji, following the success of its inaugural clean-up in Eden, NSW in Dec 2022, which booked

out in just 24 hours with cruise travellers eager to help tidy up part of Australia's scenic coastline.

Guests will be able to enjoy fresh air, ocean views and a sense of camaraderie as they improve the local environment by collecting rubbish from the beachfront, while an expert from NCL partner 'Take 3 for the Sea' will discuss the impact of plastic pollution on oceans and wildlife.

The program begins with a beach clean-up excursion in Eden at Cocora Beach, followed by one at Melbourne's Brighton Beach on 07 Mar and then at Wailoaloa Beach, Fiji on 03 Apr when *Norwegian Spirit* calls at Lautoka.

"We are delighted to further expand our partnership with Take for the Sea to bring its important message to life in a meaningful way for a growing number of guests, and to help preserve the environment in more of the destinations we visit," said Ben Angell, VP and MD, NCL APAC. *JM*

Pictured: Participants at the 2022 Eden beach clean-up *Norwegian Spirit* shore excursion.

Ryanair beach break

IRISH low-cost carrier Ryanair has buried the hatchet literally in the sand, reaching terms with the On The Beach online travel agent to list its flights and products.

Ryanair has long-held concerns with numerous OTAs over how it presents its services to customers, accusing many of selling without permission, imposing hefty mark-ups and struggling to obtain all passenger details in the process.

According to *Yahoo News*, the airline said the new deal with On The Beach will ensure consumers are not overcharged and will have full transparency with ancillaries.

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