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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, a cover wrap from **Disney Destinations**, our **Luxury** page, plus full pages from:

- Mauritius
- ATIA Beyond Borders

Viking Northwest

VIKING Cruises will operate an expedition voyage through the Northwest Passage next year, with the new itinerary revealed in Shanghai last night by founder Torstein Hagen.

The 12-night "Into the Northwest Passage" 2025 itinerary will operate roundtrip from Nuuk, Greenland, crossing Baffin Bay to Beachey Island, Dundas Harbour, Cape Hay, Ummannaq, Ilulissat, Sisimiut and Illiteq Fjord.

Charter flights from the USA will carry guests to and from Nuuk.

More from Viking on **p4** and **p6**, as well as today's **Cruise Weekly**.

ATIA: "No place for fraud"

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIAN Travel Industry Association CEO Dean Long says alleged fraudulent activity by Travel World Sydney must be punished to the full extent of the law if found guilty.

Travel World Sydney Director Zahra Rachid is facing dozens of charges for allegedly taking payment for flight tickets and holidays (**TD** 30 May) but failing to make bookings and other arrangements for her clients.

Speaking to **Travel Daily**, Long said ATIA regularly works with law enforcement authorities when there are potential examples of illegal activity taking place to ensure they are fully investigated.

"It's difficult for us to comment on the specifics of a case that's currently under investigation, but what we fundamentally believe as an association is that there's no place in our industry for any fraud or criminal behaviour.

"[And] if they're found to have breached the law, they are given the full sentences that the courts choose to impose - we have no space or tolerance for any of that behaviour in our industry."

Travel World Sydney was once ATAS-accredited but failed to provide financial details to ATIA as part of its renewal criteria, leading to its accreditation being cancelled on 24 Jul 2019.

Long said ATAS has a rejection rate of around 25% and that its strong oversight model means that if things start to go wrong "we can follow them". **ML**

Sail with Disney

TRAVEL agents now have the opportunity to explore each of Disney Cruise Line's ships via the brand's new *Magic Ahoy!* virtual voyage - not to mention the chance to win great prizes.

See the **cover page** for details.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



CAIRNS

Today's **TD** is coming to you courtesy of **TravelManagers**, which is hosting its annual conference in Cairns.

TODAY we are flying to the tropical northeastern city of Cairns for this year's TravelManagers conference, themed 'Working Smarter'.

The three-day conference at Cairns Convention Centre will feature plenary sessions, trade shows, functions, sightseeing, workshops, and more.

Former Olympic sprinter and Queensland Cathy Freeman will appear as a Q&A speaker during the week, while journalist Jordana Borensztajn will emcee the conference, and motivational speaker Chelsea Pottenger will provide a keynote.

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Splendor back in Sydney

TO CELEBRATE the return of the newly revamped *Carnival Splendor* to Sydney following her dry dock in Singapore (TD 26 Aug), the cruise line hosted 50 trade partners onboard this week for a special event.

The group, which included representatives from Flight Centre, Helloworld, I Love Cruising, Global Travel Group and more, were given a tour highlighting the ship's new upgrades, as well as enjoying lunch and entertainment.

The day kicked off in the main theatre for speeches by Kara Glamore, Vice President of Carnival Cruise Line Australia, and Captain Ivan Mladina, who celebrated his 15th anniversary with the line on the same day.

The festivities continued with an exclusive performance of Carnival Splendor's latest production, *Dear Future Husband*, before trade partners were treated to a three-course lunch at Fahrenheit 555 Steakhouse.

Carnival Splendor now boasts



new dining venue Mad Sizzle and a refurbished Masala Tiger restaurant; upgraded staterooms, fitness and wellness amenities; a refreshed mini-golf course; revamped Carnival WaterWorks and Splashy Cove; as well as upgraded kids' clubs. JM

VA Amadeus deal

AMADEUS has renewed its long-term distribution agreement with Virgin Australia which will enable travel agents to access an expanded range of fares and ancillaries on booking channels.

The deal brings VA content to Amadeus Selling Platform Connect, the Amadeus Travel API and Cytric Easy, with an option for NDC content in the near future.

Win a French pack

HAUTS-DE-FRANCE Tourism has teamed up with Mat McLachlan to offer agents the chance to win one of three prize packs containing French champagne, coasters and Mat McLachlan's Western Front guidebook.

To enter, watch the new online video event 'How to visit the Australian battlefields of the Somme' HERE and answer one or both of the following questions:

"Where would you most likely accommodate travellers to explore the Australian battlefields of northern France?" and "What four-day tour allows you to explore the Australian battlefields of the Western Front, with weekly departures Apr to Nov?"

Send your answer to jess@mclachlantours.com.au by Mon 23 Sep - the winners will be announced the next day.

Beyond Borders '24

DISCOVER what's in store for the future of travel at the Australian Travel Industry Association's Beyond Borders Travel Summit, which takes place 25 Oct at the ICC Sydney.

Head to the [back page](#) to find out more.

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Jetstar to Vegas?

AFRICA, the US, India and Sri Lanka may be in the pipeline for budget airline Jetstar, CEO Stephanie Tully has hinted. "Places like Vegas and Cape Town are not out of reach," she teased, adding new international routes will be announced shortly.

Britain's regions in focus

TRAVELLERS can expect to see Great Britain's regional areas take more of the spotlight in future as VisitBritain accelerates its efforts to promote cities beyond London.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, VisitBritain Chairman Nick Du Bois said the organisation has signed destination development partnerships (DDPs) and local visitor economy deals which will promote cities outside the capital.

A pilot campaign featuring the UK northeast will bring together



decision-makers on local councils with local tourism businesses to develop "as competitive an offer as possible".

"That means they'll be sitting down, talking about connectivity with key people, from the railways to airlines and so forth," Du Bois said.

Another DDP that has been signed is with Visit Birmingham and the West Midlands, a region that is part of a trade delegation visiting Australia this week.

A key theme for regional cities such as Newcastle upon Tyne, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and Edinburgh will be promoting one-stop connections with airlines such as Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways, making access easy for Australians.

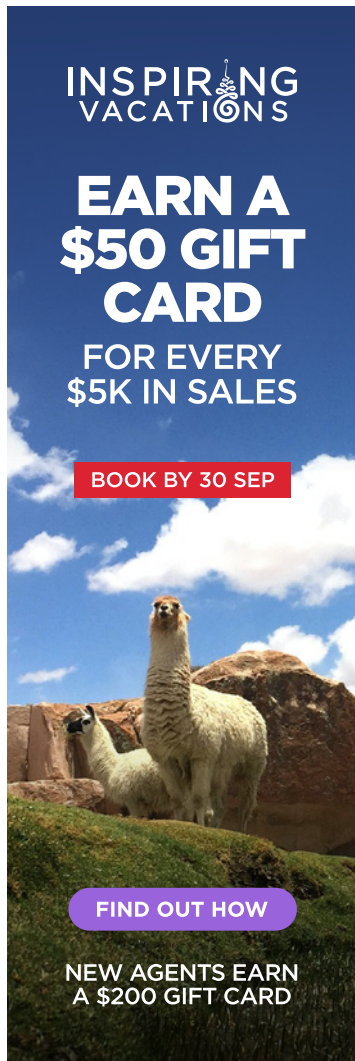
"In terms of the regional spread, pretty much everything we do in terms of marketing and business support that is less visible is aimed at shaping our regional offer and driving people to experience outside the hot spots," Du Bois added.

"So we will continue to maintain that effort to make sure international visitors understand that and take advantage of it." ML

Qantas lands in VLI

VANUATU has joined the Qantas network, with the Flying Kangaroo operating its maiden service from Brisbane to Port Vila.

Qantas is now offering three flights per week between the two cities, with Jetstar set to add four extra weekly flights from Dec.



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VTIC slams levy

NEW research from the Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) has revealed that the state's new 7.5% short-stay levy will struggle to address its housing crisis.

Introduced into Parliament last month in an effort to ease the housing shortage, the "Airbnb tax" will apply to short-term accommodation providers and kick off from 1 Jan.

According to the research, 1 to 6 per cent of short-stay property owners are likely or very likely to shift their short-stay properties to the long-term rental market when the levy takes effect.

It was also revealed that more than half of respondents (51%) will reduce how often they travel and how much they will spend, while 55% said they may consider shortening their stay, potentially impacting coastal and regional areas the most.



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Virtuoso on tour sets off

THE Virtuoso on Tour: Destinations showcase event kicked off at ICC Sydney yesterday with 275 travel advisors and 36 partners in attendance, of which 40% travelled from interstate.

Speed networking was the name of the game, with advisors moving between destinations in sessions lasting 10 minutes each, with networking drinks following.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, Virtuoso General Manager for AU/NZ, Greg Treasure, said consumers are looking for “what the next new thing is” and that the On Tour event brought together destination suppliers with its luxury advisors.

“We are trying to work with our destination partners to showcase their products in this environment to advisors who, like anyone in any profession, are on a continual learning and understanding mission,” he said.

Treasure asserted that now was



not the time for anyone in travel to be complacent, as “there is so much new product offering and new content coming online that these types of events are vital to helping showcase that and build opportunities”.

He added that having the right type of advisors attend these events was also key.

“It thrives when our luxury partners come along to be educated and they are only going to get a return on coming to these events if they have the right types of advisors in front of them - I’m really happy with the turnout and energy.”

Virtuoso on Tour: Destinations continues today. *DF*



Window Seat

AFTER the debacle of Boaty McBoatface, asking the public to name a new product should be fraught with danger for marketing folk everywhere.

But this hasn’t stopped hotel operator Crystalbrook launching a new competition asking the public to name its new beer brand.

The hotel operator has joined with craft beer maker Stone & Wood to introduce its own brand of suds, and it needs a name, with the winning entrant to be treated to a luxe stay at Crystalbrook Byron.

The new blend has been crafted with sustainable grain, finger lime and Lilli Pilli, and has a fruity flavour profile with a hint of cinnamon spice.

CLICK HERE to cast an entry - we suggest Beery McBeerface.

CHINA

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Viking Cruises, operating its inaugural **China Discovery voyage** aboard the *Viking Yi Dun*.

SETTING sail early this morning down the river from Shanghai to the coast, *Viking Yi Dun* is now enjoying its privileged position, which allows it to take foreign pax between Chinese domestic ports.

We head south today, with a day at sea as we approach our first port of call, Zhoushan.

On the way, there are onboard enrichment lectures from Viking’s Resident Historian, Michael Hick and other experts, as well as plenty of opportunities to while away the time in many of the spacious public areas.

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with Jenny

Travel Daily
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ATIA UPDATE

from Jenny Le, National Manager Events & Corporate Partnerships



WEEK two of National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) judging is currently underway and so far, we have received nothing

but positive feedback from our esteemed panels of judges, who have applauded the impressive calibre of 2024 finalists.

This reflects the rigorous finalist determination process we have in place.

For this year's NTIA, we received over 180 video submissions and 170 written submissions.

A panel of two independent, university-level assessors were then tasked with scoring all these submissions to determine the leaderboard for each category.

Both assessors have a background in tourism and travel, meaning they have the appropriate knowledge to review the submissions.

To further ensure the integrity of the awards, a third independent assessor was brought on to review any

submissions that were tied or had closely matched scores.

The top five scoring nominees from each category were then announced as finalists.

In doing so, we ensure that our finalists are truly the best in the travel industry.

Finalists will then attend a virtual judging interview with a panel of judges, which is made up of current and former executives from the travel, tourism and hospitality industries.

We acknowledge that not all the judges have a travel background; however these judges bring their own expertise and are focused purely on what the finalists themselves have to say, minimising any potential bias.

Throughout the judging process, the NTIA events team (myself, Amanda, and Bec) have remained impartial as to who proceeds to the finalist stage and is confirmed as the category winner.

We are the facilitators of this amazing awards program and are wholeheartedly committed to the integrity of the awards.

Our finalists represent the best of the travel industry; they have all worked hard to earn their finalist status, so I end my message with the following scout's chant: B-R-A-V-O!

Next stop is Melbourne



THE supercharging of the local events sector will continue next year, with Business Events Australia's incentive showcase, Australia Next, last night confirmed for a return to Melbourne in 2025.

When the gathering kicks off in just over 12 months' time, it will mark the third consecutive year the showcase has been held, indicating just how important the incentive is to building a valuable pipeline of events for the country's economy.

Tourism Australia Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison, said after pausing the showcase for four years, it is key to make up lost ground and highlight new events product on offer around the country.

"The leads generated from Australia Next are driving real business outcomes, which continue to play a critical role in the recovery of the business events industry," Harrison said.

It has been 11 years since Melbourne has played host to Australia Next (formerly Dreamtime), and Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO, Julia Swanson, said the city is perfectly placed to demonstrate Australia's diverse range of experiences to international buyers.

"Melbourne is the ideal city to promote our country; it's vibrant, welcoming and well-connected, offering a multitude of ever-changing and exclusive experiences to accommodate everyone," Swanson said.

Australia Next 2025 will be

held from 01-03 Dec, and will be preceded and followed by a familiarisation visit in key incentive destinations across Australia for buyers & media. **AB**

Pictured: Phillipa Harrison flanked by key business partners and her Tourism Australia team at the concluding dinner for Australia Next in Cairns.

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Aqua to launch into East Africa

AQUA Expeditions is preparing to expand its fleet with a new ship, which will lead the luxury cruise line's entry into Africa with four different itineraries.

Marking Aqua's sixth vessel, the newbuild will operate all-new sailings in Seychelles and Zanzibar, Tanzania, with inaugural departures slated for Dec 2025.

The explorer yacht will offer five- and nine-night itineraries exploring Seychelles' inner and outer islands respectively, which can be combined for a complete 14-night exploration of the Seychelles archipelago.

Travellers can also opt for 10- and 11-night sailings exploring both the Seychelles and the Tanzanian islands.

The upcoming Aqua vessel will boast a 1:1 crew-to-guest ratio, personalised service, premium cuisine crafted by world-renowned chefs, and small group expert-guided excursions.

Guests will have the opportunity to visit biodiversity hotspots like Aldabra, Cosmoledo, Astove, Furquhar Atol, Kilwa Kisiwani, and Pemba, as well as destinations such as the African Banks, which are rarely explored by other cruises in the region.

VIKING EMBRACING LUXURY STATUS

VIKING Cruises founder Torstein Hagen has finally begun to embrace his company's status as a luxury cruise operator, but still insists he is not keen on using the term "luxury" to describe the line.

Speaking this week aboard the *Viking Yi Dun* in Shanghai, Hagen said until now, "Viking has not used the word 'luxury', because it means so many different things to so many people".

However, highlighting the company's number one *Conde Nast Traveler* 2023 Readers' Choice Awards ratings for river, expedition and ocean (500-2,500 passenger) cruises, Hagen noted "we are far above people who would normally consider themselves superior to us".

"This has given us somewhat of a dilemma, because in the cruise line industry, one classifies operators as budget, premium/contemporary, and luxury."

"Some of our lesser competitors say 'look at Viking, they don't even consider themselves luxury'...so I think we have to own up to it, even though we don't like using the term," the Viking Chairman said.

"We have to redefine ourselves [and] if we are going to talk about ourselves in the travel space, we are luxury.

"But I think we should be careful using the term, and we shouldn't over-promise," he added.

Guests certainly seem to agree, with Hagen noting exceptional



Net Promoter Scores from internal surveys which backed up the *Conde Nast* data.

He said that despite the company's IPO earlier this year, Viking is determined not to change its key values.

A&K mulling an IPO

LUXURY tour operator Abercrombie & Kent has begun talks with investment bankers about a potential initial public offering listing on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE).

According to *The Telegraph*, the company has set an early target listing in around 18-24 months' time.

Abercrombie & Kent Chief Executive Cristina Levis said the brand's intention was to develop into "the Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy" of luxury experiential travel.

"We will continue to obsess about our customers, take great care of our staff, look after the environment and make sure we are here for the long-term - not be driven by Wall Street and quarterly earnings statements," Hagen promised.

"Viking is a clear market leader both on European rivers and in the luxury ocean market," he added, highlighting the ongoing rapid growth of Viking's fleet, which now comprises 81 river ships plus a further 17 to be delivered by 2026.

There are also currently nine Viking ocean vessels, with a further eight on order for delivery by 2029 - some of which will be equipped with 6MW of hydrogen power (*TD* yesterday). *BP*

Club Med S. Africa

CLUB Med's first South African resort (*TD* 18 Sep 2023) on the north coast of KwaZulu-Natal is on track to welcome its first guests in Jul 2026, the company said.

Construction of the hotel has now reached the first floor of the main building, which will comprise 345 rooms, a main welcome area and a state-of-the-art conference venue with space for 500 delegates.

There will also be a pool, restaurant and bar, kids' club, and sports area.



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ACCOMMODATION

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JW Marriott has debuted in Ho Chi Minh City with the opening of **JW Marriott Hotel & Suites Saigon**. Located within District 1, the city's commercial and cultural hub, the dual-tower property comprises a 21-storey hotel with 305 rooms and suites, and a 31-storey residential tower with 260 one- to three-bedroom residential suites. Guests can relax in the elevated outdoor pool, exercise in the state-of-art fitness centre, and treat themselves at Spa by JW.



Visitors and guests staying at **Drifter Christchurch** will soon enjoy an additional onsite dining option, with Rambler set to open tomorrow on the hotel's ground floor. Open seven days a week from 7am until the early hours, the new dining and drinking destination features huge industrial-style windows, a long L-shaped bar, lounge and table spaces, and a DJ booth. Rambler will offer breakfast, all-day snacks, a drinks list, and a roster of live local DJs and musicians.



Oasia Resort Sentosa by Far East Hospitality has unveiled a new room category and refreshed Junior Suites. The Singaporean hotel is now home to 19 new Courtyard Premier rooms, which are equipped with a spacious alfresco area with bean bags and a dining table. Meanwhile, the resort's 62 Junior Suites have been updated with new wooden panelled headboards and in-room TV fitness programs, complemented by Lululemon fitness mats.



Guests will once again be able to stay at the iconic **Dusit Thani Bangkok**, which is on track to re-open on 27 Sep after being rebuilt from the ground up. Blending traditional elegance with modern luxury, all 257 rooms boast uninterrupted views of Lumpini Park, and start at a spacious 50m². The revamped hotel also features a spa, 10 restaurants and bars, and a massive grand ballroom.



The Singapore EDITION opened Wonder Room last week, a new nightlife destination and 'micro-club'. After entering through a bronze mirror tunnel, guests will find themselves in a glamorous space characterised by plush red and gold velvet, dramatic drapery, a charcoal concrete dome ceiling, and a gold bar serving cocktails and gourmet bites, against a backdrop of live music.

Aussie agents see stars



A FORTUNATE group of Australian travel advisors and their partners were treated to a Mediterranean adventure last month by Star Clippers.

The tall ship cruise line whisked the advisors away on the seven-night 'Riviera & Corsica In-Depth tour' voyage aboard *Star Flyer*.

On the journey from Cannes to Rome, the group explored the charming port towns of Monaco, Corsica, and Elba, soaking up the rich history, culture, and breathtaking scenery of the Mediterranean Sea.

"Travelling with Star Clippers was one of the best trips I have ever taken," said Lauren Ashworth of The Departure Lounge in Victoria.

"The friendly, almost family-like crew, the fabulous food, and the unique and beautiful ports completely took me by surprise. "Will we be back? Absolutely."

Pictured: Jo Robinson, The Departure Lounge - UK office; Michelle Barker, Jayes Travel;

Sami Kreltszheim, Helloworld Wangaratta; Liesel Brown, Figtree Travel; Roger Condon, Star Clippers; Jasmine Miller, Travel Associates Toronto NSW; Lauren Ashworth, The Departure Lounge, Melbourne; Bianca Newlands, Where2travel; and Julie Marshall, The Travel Studio.

Presley for a day

ELVIS Presley fans can now enjoy unprecedented access to the late singer's Graceland estate in Memphis, thanks to an all-new exclusive tour.

The seven-hour 'Presley for a Day Tour' includes golf cart rides around the grounds; a horse photo op and guided walk through the home's front pasture; a high-end dinner at the newly renovated Moriah's House; an after-hours tour of the mansion; a 'swag bag' of goodies, and more.

The experience is priced at US\$6,000 for groups of up to four people - learn more [HERE](#).



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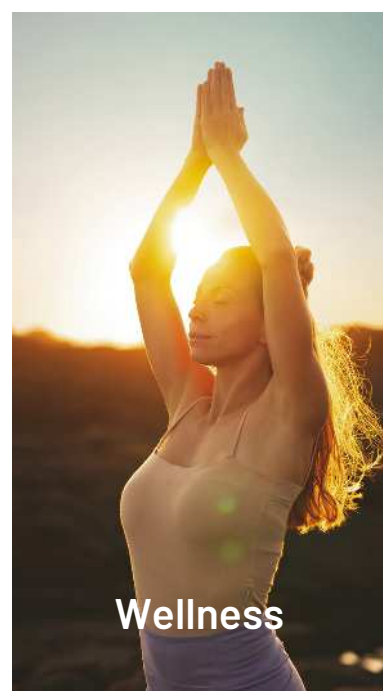
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To find out more from Richard and view the current line-up of all our speakers, [click HERE](#).



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9am-5.30pm