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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily features six pages news, including a photo page from **NCL**, plus a cover wrap from **Tourism NZ**, and a full page from **Viva Holidays**.

CCL unpacks big plan

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has unveiled its strategic plans for the next five years, which will include new ships, fleet enhancements, exclusive destinations, and more.

The cruise line's 'Innovation Itinerary' will see it introduce fourth and fifth Excel-class ships, *Carnival Festivale* and *Carnival Tropicale*, which will debut in 2027 and 2028 respectively.

The debut of *Festivale* from Port Canaveral will see *Mardi Gras* shift to offering shorter cruises, with the new flagship to replace her on her week-long itineraries.

Carnival will then introduce a new ship platform, currently titled 'Project Ace', which will deliver new large-scale ships in 2029, 2031, and 2033.

The three new vessels in this class will be the largest in the Carnival fleet, boasting a capacity of almost 8,000 guests each.

CLICK HERE to read more in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.



US ramps up searches

US BORDER officials are intensifying the inspection of travellers' electronic devices, emails, text messages and social media accounts upon entry, in line with tighter visitor controls enacted under President Trump.

An updated warning by DFAT has alerted Aussies that refusing to comply with the tougher regulations could lead to denied entry, with people operating under the Visa Waiver Program generally refused access to an attorney or an appeal.

"The Australian Government cannot intervene on your behalf, and our ability to provide consular assistance in these circumstances may be limited," DFAT added.

"Entry requirements are strict, US authorities have broad powers to decide if you're eligible to enter and may determine that you are inadmissible for any reason under US law."

The warning follows a case of a French scientist being denied entry to the US last month after border control officers found text messages critical of President Trump on his phone.

According to an Australian Federal Police source quoted in *The Guardian*, US authorities accused the French researcher of "hateful and conspiratorial messages", and was also reportedly informed of an FBI investigation, but later told that "charges were dropped" before being expelled from the country.



The the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said that refusing to hand over a device and its password can have serious consequences for all travellers visiting on a visa.

In some cases, the ACLU said border officials may keep a traveller's device for extended periods - possibly multiple months - for further inspection.

Meanwhile, Canadian immigration lawyers have advised the country's citizens travelling to the US to take a burner phone with them amid the uptick in device searches at the border. *AB*

THL tariff uncertainty

TOURISM Holdings Limited (THL) said it is unsure as to what extent US tariffs will have on its North American operations.

THL said it had seen a downturn in bookings for the upcoming peak, but that it was still too soon to determine if the latest trend will be sustained.

Viva sell and spend

GIFTS for birthdays and major events can be sorted early this year with Viva Holidays' new Prezzy incentive with Rocky Mountaineer - see **page seven**.

Come & play in NZ

TOURISM New Zealand is celebrating its association with the new 'A Minecraft Movie' by giving away a trip to New Zealand.

The winner will receive flights, activities and accommodation, all valued at over \$9,500 - for more details, see the **cover page**.



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TTC selects touring CEO

DECORATED accommodation industry leader Simon Jones will take charge of The Travel Corporation's TTC Tour Brands division after being named last Fri as its new Chief Executive Officer (**TD** breaking news Fri).

While a start date is yet to be determined, Jones will soon take charge of brands including Luxury Gold, Insight Vacations, Trafalgar, Brendan Vacations, Costsaver, and Contiki, and will be based in TTC's office in London.

Speaking about his new role, Jones said he is "tremendously excited" to be joining The Travel Corporation as CEO of Touring. "The Travel Corporation has an incredible track record of growth, delivering world-class travel experiences across a diverse range of brands and markets, backed by a clear commitment to be a responsible leader within travel," said Jones (**pictured**).

"I am looking forward to



working with my new colleagues, and our suppliers and partners, to build on this strong foundation and deliver the next growth chapter for the business."

Jones will step into the role held on an interim basis by Melissa DaSilva, who will support the new recruit as Deputy CEO based in TTC's US office in California.

TTC Chairman Carl Leaver paid tribute to DaSilva for an exemplary job done in the interim period.

"Her permanent appointment reflects her outstanding contribution and the value she brings to the business," he said.

ATIA on the pulse

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has announced the next round of Pulse meetings, following positive feedback from their debut in Feb.

The events offer an opportunity for members to raise concerns, share insights, and engage directly with ATIA's leadership, and are tailored to the needs of four key member segments.

The Pulse meeting for single-location agencies will take place at 11am on 06 May, followed by a session for tour operators and wholesalers at 1pm, while sessions for multi-location agencies and independent contractors will take place on 07 May at 11am and 1pm, respectively.

"Pulse is about making sure every member, no matter their business size or model, has a clear channel to ATIA...[and this] round will go even deeper into the issues that matter," said Richard Taylor, ATIA Director of Membership and Industry Affairs.

Palau at your pace

PALAU has introduced a new self-famil program for Australian trade, allowing advisors to explore the destination on their own terms, the Palau Visitors Authority has revealed.


This flexible opportunity offers the chance to explore the destination alongside exclusive industry discounts, including an FOC offer on accommodation, activities, as well as a range of cultural experiences.

A variety of famil experiences are available for travel through to the end of the year, ranging from kayaking through the Rock Islands with Paddling Palau, to trekking and exploring waterfalls with local operator Fish 'n Fins.

Advisors can sign up **HERE**, with successful applicants to receive a list of bookable self-famil offers.

The destination is now only a six-hour flight from Brisbane, thanks to Qantas Airways' new 'Palau Paradise Express', introduced in Nov (**TD** 04 Feb).





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VIEW SELECTION

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*Advertised price is in Australian dollars (AUD), per person, and accurate at time of publishing, and based on PG210326 departure. Flight credit is in Australian dollars (AUD), per person and can be redeemed only when booking flights directly with Paul Gauguin Cruises/Ponant. Guests who book on the listed cruises receive AUD\$1,500 per person flight credit on select Paul Gauguin Cruises itineraries before 30 April 2025 including: PG210325, PG210326, PG210327, PG210328, PG210329, PG210330, PG210331, PG210332, PG210333, PG210334, PG210335, PG210336, PG210337, PG210338, PG210339, PG210340, PG210341, PG210342, PG210343, PG210344, PG210345, PG210346, PG210347, PG210348, PG210349, PG210350, PG210351, PG210352, PG210353, PG210354, PG210355, PG210356, PG210357, PG210358, PG210359, PG210360, PG210361, PG210362, PG210363, PG210364, PG210365, PG210366, PG210367, PG210368, PG210369, PG210370, PG210371, PG210372, PG210373, PG210374, PG210375, PG210376, PG210377, PG210378, PG210379, PG210380, PG210381, PG210382, PG210383, PG210384, PG210385, PG210386, PG210387, PG210388, PG210389, PG210390, PG210391, PG210392, PG210393, PG210394, PG210395, PG210396, PG210397, PG210398, PG210399, PG210400, PG210401, PG210402, PG210403, PG210404, PG210405, PG210406, PG210407, PG210408, 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2026 will be a marvel

TRAVELMARVEL has released its Europe season for next year, offering new small group tours across six destinations.

The season will see the launch of the brand-new *Travelmarvel Rigel*, which will sail the Rhine and Moselle between Amsterdam and Basel - the latter river being a new destination for the brand.

Also new for the season will be small group tours in Ireland, Scotland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Morocco, catering to growing demand for travellers seeking a more intimate experience.

Travelmarvel's new small group tours will embark with no more than 24 travellers per group.

There is also a new rail-based land extension in Switzerland, travelling for 15 days through Zurich, Lucerne, and Basel.

LH enjoys Aussie growth

EXCLUSIVE

TRAVEL demand from Australians booking trips to Europe with Lufthansa has increased by double digits in 2025 when compared to last year.

The encouraging trend was revealed by Vice President for APAC, Felipe Bonifatti (pictured), on a recent trip to Australia, with the executive telling *Travel Daily* the outlook for the rest of 2025 looked "very promising".

Bonifatti added the uptick in bookings versus 2024 is even more impressive in the context of last year already enjoying a significant sales recovery in APAC.

Lifting the lid on local travel behaviour, Lufthansa's internal figures also showed Aussie customers are spending less time abroad and are truncating the planning time to take trips.

"Whenever [travellers] fly out of Australia, they used to go for quite a long period of time, but that is no longer the case," Bonifatti explained.

"The other thing is that bookings are being done closer to the time of departure, a move away from the extremely long-term planning that we used to see from this part of the world."

Bonifatti reasoned that booking windows are now shorter because Aussie travellers are prepared to wait for the best deals to save money, while the shorter trips to Europe are likely the result of financial pressures exerted by factors such as unfavourable exchange rates.

Recent trends also show a shift towards more premium air tickets across first and business class in the local market, with Bonifatti stating its non-economy cabins are generally fully booked.

Lufthansa's new business class concept Allegris, which launched in May last year (*TD* 19 Apr 2024), has been well received by the market, boasting a customer satisfaction rate of above 90% since being launched.

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"[The satisfaction score] speaks to how good the product is and how individualised it can be.

"In [our] new business class cabins, we have up to nine different types of seats...we have double seats, we have the privacy seats, we have seats with more space to work, more aisle access.

"We have the extra long seats... that recline for sleep," he added.

While Lufthansa does not fly to Australia directly, it relies on a range of strong partnerships headlined by its joint venture deal with Singapore Airlines.

One of the carrier's major selling points is the size of its network, which is currently the largest in Europe. *AB*

CATO connections

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) recently completed a series of networking events across Australia, visiting Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

Hosted by CATO Managing Director Brett Jardine and several representatives of the CATO board, the events provided a platform for members to forge new connections, exchange ideas, and voice concerns.

Jardine said the meetings were "pivotal" to engagement strategy.



Thai arrival change

FROM 01 May, Australians travelling to Thailand must complete the new Thailand Digital Arrival Card (TDAC) within three days of arrival.

The document must be submitted through the Thailand Immigration Bureau website.

Click [HERE](#) for information on how to complete the TDAC.

Qantas Sniips deal

QANTAS has partnered with payments platform Sniip to add benefits for its loyalty members.

New customers who sign up to Sniip will receive 5,000 bonus points when they make three bill payments.

All customers will also earn one point for every \$10 spent on eligible payments via Sniip.

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Window Seat

AN AMERICAN tourist has taken the idea of seeking hidden gem destinations to notorious new levels.

Mykhailo Polyakov was arrested late last week for travelling to the remote North Sentinel Island in the Bay of Bengal in an attempt to contact an isolated tribe.

While the foolhardy tourist successfully reached the island, he does not appear to have made contact with the Sentinelese tribe, according to local authorities.

India administers the island and regularly patrols the area to ensure no outsiders make contact with the island's local inhabitants, which could pose a safety risk to both visitors and the local tribe.

If all of this sounds familiar, it's because an American tried to make the same trip in 2018, only for it to end in disaster.

John Allen Chau bribed local fishermen to take him to the island, but upon making landfall, he was shot by an arrow that failed to pierce a waterproof Bible he was carrying in his shirt pocket.

The Christian missionary proclaimed his survival a miracle in his diary, prompting an ill-fated return visit where he was unfortunately killed by the locals on the beach.

ASX volatility rocks travel

STOCK values from publicly traded travel companies dropped sharply this morning on the back of sweeping tariffs from US President Donald Trump.

While most travel stocks were not immune to a more widely publicised wipeout on the ASX, travel brands appear to have been less volatile, with many making moderate recoveries after a Mon morning meltdown.

The worst performing travel stock since Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariffs were announced was Kelsian Travel Group, whose share price fell 7% from last Fri to



midday today.

Major retailers Flight Centre Travel Group and Helloworld both saw falls of around 4%, while Corporate Travel Management saw a more subdued result, with its price down 3.4% to \$11.91.

Airlines saw mixed results, with Qantas dropping 4% to sit just above \$8 - a stock which earlier this year had set record value heights to surpass the \$10 mark.

The B2B focused Web Travel Group saw its share price tumble by nearly 6% to below \$4, while the consumer-focused Webjet Limited saw a more mild 3% drop.

Experience Co (-4.7%) and Alliance Aviation (-2.7%) are also trading down on earlier levels, while Air NZ also fell 3.6%. *ML*

EK's Aussie trends

EMIRATES has confirmed it will carry more than 120,000 Aussies to Europe in the northern summer on the back of a recent surge in bookings.

According to data released by the airline, the most popular destinations booked include London, Dublin, Rome, Athens and Paris, with year-on-year increases also seen to Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria.

More than 41,000 Aussies broke their journey to Europe in Dubai in Jan this year, which the carrier said highlights the city's appeal as a stopover destination.

Emirates said it had also seen a 15% uptick in bookings for premium economy, 4% for business class and 6% for first class as Aussies prioritise comfort for their flights to Europe.

MSC terminal open

MSC Cruises has opened its new cruise terminal in Miami, with a comprehensive biometrics process now in place to get guests from shore to ship in record time.

The new terminal will couple passenger biometrics at security, bag drop and check-in with digital ID verification for passengers embarking on MSC Cruises and Explora Journeys ships.

After checking in on the MSC website or mobile app and receiving a boarding pass, guests use it to drop luggage, bypass security and board the ship.

More than 36,000 travellers per day can be processed at the new facility, which will next week welcome *MSC World America* for its christening ceremony and maiden season to the Caribbean.

JQ links Cairns & NZ

JETSTAR has connected Christchurch to Cairns with the first flight on the new route touching down in Far North Queensland late last week.

The first-ever direct flights between the two cities are operating three days a week - Tue, Thu and Sun from CNS to CHC, then Mon, Wed and Fri from CHC to CNS.

Flights are being serviced by Airbus A320 aircraft as JQ135 and JQ136 respectively.

Jetstar's new route will provide around 70,000 seats annually, boosting tourism for New Zealand and Tropical North Queensland. Sales fares start at \$238.

Aranui shipping on

FRENCH Polynesia cruise line Aranui Cruises has announced it will add a second ship to its fleet.

Aranooa, a 116-metre long mixed passenger-freight vessel will sail from 2027, with the ability to carry 198 guests across 93 cabins, 62 of which will have balconies.

The ship will sail the South Pacific, offering passengers access to the remote Austral Islands.

Aranui Cruises will announce the 2027 schedule later this year.



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Norwegian Aqua welcomes first guests to experience even More at Sea



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) welcomed its first guests aboard the highly anticipated *Norwegian Aqua* in Lisbon on 20 Mar, with NCL team members hosting global trade partners and media for a five-day sailing to Southampton in the UK.

Despite the weather delaying the departure of the vessel from Portugal's capital Lisbon, *Aqua* did not disappoint.

The feedback from trade partners and media alike was overwhelmingly positive, from the elegant and upscale design to **more** wide-open spaces inside and out, and even **more** culinary experiences with 17 new and returning guest favourite restaurants including Sukhothai, NCL's first-ever Thai specialty restaurant, and the debut of Planterie - a plant-based eatery at the incredibly popular and innovative Indulge Food Hall.

Entertainment on board was varied and nonstop, with

the headline entertainment featuring NCL's world class in-house production ***Revolution: A Celebration of Prince*** as well as 'Elements and Rumours' - a Fleetwood Mac tribute experience in the Aqua Theatre & Club.

Guests on board were also the first to try the industry's debut hybrid roller coaster and water slide the *Aqua Slidecoaster*, the cutting-edge *Glow Court* and the *Aqua Game Zone*.



THE NCL team posing with the *Norwegian Aqua* Selfie Sculpture: back - Craig McLaurin and Angela Middleton; front - Ben Angell, Damian Borg, Megan Porter, Tara Clifford, and Leanne Fonagy.



DEBUT of NCL's in-house production of *Revolution - A Celebration of Prince*.

GUEST Experience Panel with VP & Managing Director, Ben Angell in the Aqua Theatre.



APAC media coffee catchup with NCL Exec leadership team - Ben Angell, Damian Borg and Angela Middleton - at the Metropolitan Bar.



CRAIG McLaurin, Megan Porter, and Tara Clifford as *Norwegian Aqua* entered Lisbon.



LEANNE Fonagy, Dilvin Yasa, Pallavi Pasricha and Amy Teofilo-Price at Los Lobos.

BROCHURES

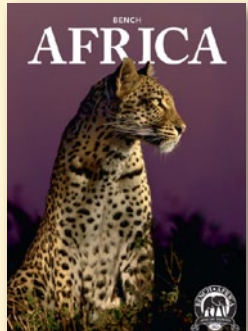
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Silversea - Voyages Collection 2025/26

Travellers can see all Silversea voyages on sale for 2025 and 2026 in the cruise line's latest brochure. For convenience and ease of reference, the itineraries are ordered by region, listing the sail date, followed by itinerary duration, ship, and ports visited, with readers able to find more details for each itinerary on Silversea's website. The 36-page guide covers the cruise line's offerings around the world, including Australia and New Zealand, the Mediterranean, Northern Europe and the British Isles, South America, and much

more. The handy itineraries-at-a-glance brochure is available to view or download online - [CLICK HERE](#).



The Bench Africa Travel Brochure

Bench Africa has officially released its latest brochure, which is packed with fresh itineraries and new adventures across the continent. The new edition reimagines the way travellers experience Africa, with a focus on authenticity and meaningful connection. Each itinerary is designed as a starting point and can be tailored to suit individual preferences. From small group tours to fully customised safaris, Bench Africa works closely with travellers to bring their vision to life.

Highlights include a new eight-day journey through Zambia's South Luangwa and Lower Zambezi, as well as a scenic air safari - more [HERE](#).



Crystal - Worldwide Voyages 2025/26

Crystal's new brochure is now available in Australia, showcasing an expanded collection of worldwide voyages. From the beaches of the Caribbean to the coastlines of Europe, the brochure highlights itineraries across the Mediterranean, South America, Southeast Asia, and beyond. Spanning 104 pages, the comprehensive brochure includes overviews of Crystal's ships, as well as the brand's unique experiences, entertainment and dining. Readers can also learn all about the brand's

new prestigious gaming room, Le Casino De Monte-Carlo, and the chefs and restaurateurs behind Crystal's new Beefbar. Request a copy [HERE](#).



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African adventures on show



FROM Maasai wanderings to the Victoria Falls and luxury glamping options, The Africa Safari Co Roadshow has showcased a diverse range of adventures for agents around Australia in recent weeks.

So far, the event has travelled to Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne this week, and it is heading to Adelaide tonight at the Pullman, then finally Perth at the Mercure on Wednesday.

A series of partners shared updates from their businesses with travel agents throughout the evening, including Melia Hotels International; Africareps; Personal Africa; Experience Morocco; Sun Africa Expeditions; African Sun, An African Canvas; Victoria Falls Safari Lodge; and plenty more.

"Our roadshows provide a great opportunity for our retail travel agent partners to get updates and valuable information from our Africa partners and showcases

why The Africa Safari Co is the successful award-winning wholesaler it is," Director of Business Development Darren Evans told *Travel Daily*.

CEO and owner Susie Potter founded The Africa Safari Co in 1997 and has personally taken more than 100 safari holidays to the continent in the last 35 years.

The business has since grown to a team of 10 people, some of whom have worked with the company for more than 16 years.

Evans joined the Africa Safari Co as Director of Business Development, following on from roles at Qantas Holidays and HLO.

The Sydney-based operator has won many awards over the years, last year making the finalist cut at the National Travel Industry Awards in the Most Outstanding Wholesaler - Destination/Experience category.

To register for Adelaide and Perth, click [HERE](#). *JHM*



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