

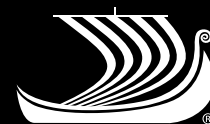
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VIKING

Viking's new Explorer Sale is here with **Fly Free*** offers until 31 March 2025. Leverage the offers with a library of free marketing assets available on the Marketing Centre.

Call 138 747 to book or visit viking.com/travel-advisor to book online and download assets.

See website for T&Cs

VIKING EXPLORER SESSIONS

44 FREE CLIENT EVENTS

Viking's popular Explorer Sessions are hitting the road, coming to 44 regions across Australia from February to April.

Don't miss this chance to engage your clients and let Viking inspire them to book their next voyage with you.

Sessions fill up fast and registration is necessary.

[REGISTER HERE](#)

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a front cover page from **Viking**, and our **Luxury page**.

Tap into discounts

TRAVEL advisors can unlock at least 25% savings for their clients thanks to Expedia Travel Agent Affiliate Programs (TAAP) 2025 New Year Sale.

The limited-time promotion offers discounts on thousands of hotels in popular destinations around the world.

The sale is available to book until 26 Jan, with travel dates through 14 Sep 2025.

Expedia TAAP works with over 140,000 travel advisors globally - find out more **HERE**.

New Indian Pacific

TRAVELLERS can now enjoy a new itinerary aboard the Indian Pacific, which has announced its first extended eastbound journey.

The five-day ride takes guests from Perth to Sydney, featuring off-train experiences in Kalgoorlie, Cook on the Nullarbor, the Barossa Valley, Broken Hill, and the Blue Mountains.

The price of the journey includes meals, fine wines and beverages, and experiences, such as a scenic outback drive to the Living Desert State Park and a 'paint and sip' session in Pro Hart's original studio in Broken Hill; and plenty more.

Design your rewards

EXCLUSIVE

DESIGNER Journeys has announced the launch of a new travel agent loyalty scheme that will offer generous bonuses to advisors enquiring and making successful bookings on the company's bespoke platform.

The loyalty scheme offers three tiers, with travel sellers able to qualify for either Platinum, Gold or Silver categories.

Platinum agents will receive a \$50 gift card for each genuine enquiry and a \$250 gift card for each qualifying booking, in addition to standard commission.

Meanwhile Gold agents will earn \$35 gift cards for each genuine enquiry, plus a \$150 gift card for every qualifying booking, in addition to commission.

Silver members will land a \$25 gift card for each enquiry.

Designer Journeys CEO Matt McCann (**pictured**) said the introduction of the company's first advisor loyalty scheme is a "significant step forward" in its broader objective to reward its most successful sellers.

"This scheme recognises the value of our agent partnerships and rewards our best performing agents," McCann said, adding that it arrives at a time when tailored travel demand is "surging".

After debuting its first custom group service for travel sellers in Australia and New Zealand last year (**TD** 04 Aug 2023), Designer Journeys now has more than 7,000 travel advisors utilising its



custom platform.

Travel agent enquiries that convert to bookings have also grown to a rate of 25%, while overall enquiries have skyrocketed by 415% over the past 12 months.

More than 85% of enquiries receive an itinerary within 48 hrs.

By connecting travel agents with a network of local travel experts in 75 countries, Designer Journeys assists agents to create unique itineraries that highlight the best of each destination, from landmarks to hidden gems. **AB**

Explore with Viking

VIKING is kicking off its Explorer Sessions next month, with 44 free client events coming to locations across Australia - see the **cover page** for more information and to register before spots fill up.

Lim asked for \$10m?

FORMER Rex Executive Chairman Lim Kim Hai allegedly sought a \$10 million cash injection from Hong Kong-based investment firm PAG, less than two months after the company said it would finish the year in profit, documents filed in the NSW Supreme Court show.

"On 14 Apr 2023, Lim made a request by email...[for] \$10 million in funding from PAG, describing the company's cash reserves as 'critically low', domestic sales as 'disappointingly and bewilderingly bad', the Feb results as having 'crashed' and a lack of recovery in Mar," ASIC claimed in court documents submitted this week.

AIR NEW ZEALAND

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Sargent ready for orders



TRAVEL management company Travel Beyond Group (TBG) has appointed Michelle Sargent as Managing Director of its MICE arm, Events Beyond.

Bringing more than 30 years of corporate travel and events experience, Sargent (**pictured**) has moved across from CWT Meetings & Events, where she was the Director for close to seven years.

The Sydney-based professional's previous roles includes a stint as General Manager at Platinum Event Solutions, and Corporate Sales Manager at Flight Centre Travel Group.

In her new post at TBG, Sargent is charged with driving growth, diversifying service offerings, as well as strengthening client and supplier relationships, with the aim of elevating the Events

Beyond brand locally and globally.

"Michelle's visionary approach and unmatched expertise make her the perfect fit to drive Events Beyond forward," said Tim Lane, CEO of Travel Beyond Group.

"Her leadership will not only enhance our service delivery but also strengthen our position as a leader in Australia's meetings and events sector."

Commenting on her new role with TBG, Sargent said, "joining an agile and passionate organisation like Travel Beyond Group is truly exciting".

"Their commitment to exceptional service standards is unparalleled, and I'm thrilled to lead one of its dynamic business units, working with a team that shares my dedication to delivering extraordinary experiences," she added. *AB/JM*

SENIOR RESERVATION CONSULTANTS



Senior Reservation Consultants Wanted

Due to rapid sales growth across our key destinations, we are seeking experienced and passionate **Senior Reservation Consultants** to join our dynamic team!

If you have in-depth knowledge of either Europe, Canada & Alaska, Islands, or Asia, and are driven by exceptional customer service and have strong sales skills, we would love to hear from you. As a key member of our team, you will play a vital role in helping us deliver dream holidays to our industry partners.

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A&K unifies brand focus

A&K Travel Group (AKTG) has restructured its local management team, with two high-profile execs evolving roles to include both the Abercrombie & Kent and Crystal brands.

Susan Haberle has been appointed Vice President Sales for Australia and New Zealand for both divisions, while Tony Archbold has added A&K to his new remit as VP of Sales for Asia.

The changes are in line with AKTG's 'one company' strategy, which will see the premium Crystal cruise brand it purchased in 2022 (*TD* 23 Jun 2022) positioned with greater synergy to

AKTG's core luxury products.

"With Susan and Tony at the helm of our sales team in AU/ NZ and Asia, we are confident that we will continue to lead the way in the region's luxury travel market," EVP Sales APAC - A&K and Crystal Debra Fox said.

In further recruitment news, Sada Memic has assumed the newly created role of Director of Sales and Reservations Centre APAC, for AKTG brands.

The appointment follows the promotion of Ann-Marie Chapman to the role of Global VP Education, Sales and Service.

Sada joins AKTG with extensive experience in both the travel sector and the luxury property market, specialising in channel engagement and service. *AB*

New Kakadu Chair

KAKADU Tourism has announced Lauren Ganley as its new Chair, following the retirement of Rick Allert - also the former Tourism Australia Chair - who held the role for a decade.

Ganley, who has served on the Kakadu Tourism board since 2012, is the Head of Telstra's First Nations Strategy & Engagement, and also holds director roles on several NT community boards.

The new Chair flagged the upgrade of tourism infrastructure at Kakadu National Park as a major focus for 2025.

Rotty plane crash

THREE people are missing and four have been seriously injured in a Swan River Seaplanes Cessna crash near Rottneest Island.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau Chief Commissioner Angus Mitchell has confirmed a transport safety investigation into the incident has commenced, with witness testimonies suggesting the seaplane nose-dived into the sea shortly after take-off from the popular tourist destination in Western Australia.

Unconfirmed reports indicate the plane involved in the crash had only been recently added to Swan River Seaplanes fleet.

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Travel tops savings goal

CLOSE to half of Australians are making travel saving their number one priority, a new report from Money.com.au shows.

Despite the high inflationary environment, the desire for a holiday is ahead of other major savings goals for Aussies, such as buying a house or investing.

Reflecting on the report's findings, finance expert Sean Callery said the planning time Aussies are taking to save for a trip also demonstrates the high importance of travel to people.

"A third of people we surveyed said they spend up to a year saving for a trip, which shows just how much value Australians place on travel and the time they're willing to invest to make it happen," Callery said.

Across the states, Western Australians led the pack with 54% prioritising travel savings, followed by Queenslanders (53%), South Australians (47%)



and residents of New South Wales (46%), who were the least likely to focus on travel savings.

MEANWHILE new figures from Webjet show the Xmas holiday period saw a greater number of overseas bookings for Jan & Feb.

There was a 31% increase in flights booked to international destinations between 26 Dec and 02 Jan, adding to a more moderate jump of 10% noted during the same period last year.

Bali, Auckland and Tokyo saw the biggest rises, up 17%, 12% and 9%, respectively.

New Zealand also performed well, with both Queenstown (+5%) and Christchurch (+4%) enjoying spikes in bookings. *AB*

MSC in the fast lane

MSC Cruises has announced it will be the title sponsor of three Formula 1 Grands Prix this year, as part of the group's partnership with the championship.

The cruise line will be the primary naming rights partner of Grands Prix taking place in Austria, the United States, and Brazil - the first time the MSC brand will be included in the names of the races.

MSC's sister brand, Explora Journeys, will also bring its new ship *Explora II* to the Monaco Grand Prix, docking at Port Hercules to offer a prime position for race fans.

Explora II will also play host to a series of events during race week.

The move comes in addition to the distinct track branding as part of MSC's Global Partner status (*TD* 23 Mar 2022).

The partnership also sees MSC present on select Grands Prix weekends, allowing travellers to attend the races.



Window Seat

A SOUTHWEST Airlines passenger has been kicked off a flight after their cat pooped in its pet carrier.

The passenger claimed Southwest would not let her board her connecting flight after the kitten committed the sinful act of pooping on the prior service.

The cat's owner claimed on X her animal became alarmed during a rough landing, leading it to temporarily lose control of its bowels.

She disposed of the waste in the aircraft's bathroom trash can, but apparently, the refuse caused such a smell the aircrew would not let her board her next flight on the same plane - leaving her and her cat s*#t out of luck.

Welcome

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Book by 19 February.



T&Cs apply

See Africa in style

SAFARI Guru has unveiled its ultimate luxury guide to travelling in Africa this year. This travelogue highlights the continent's most iconic wildlife spectacles, cultural festivals, and culinary events, offering travellers and agents the inspiration and insights needed to craft a premium African adventure in 2025. Travellers can witness the Great Migration's river crossings in Kenya and Tanzania, where millions of wildebeest and zebras brave crocodile-infested waters in one of nature's most dramatic spectacles. Rwanda's annual Kwita Izina gorilla-naming ceremony will offer cultural performances, and the chance to name a baby gorilla.

UPGRADE YOUR HORIZON WITH RSSC

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has announced its 'Upgrade Your Horizon' offer for selected sailings in 2025 and 2026.

The deal is available on more than 350 ultra-luxury, all-inclusive voyages, offering a free two-category suite upgrade, and savings of up to 40%.

Passengers can also take advantage of a reduced 7.5% deposit on new bookings made between 01 Jan and 28 Feb, valid for select cruises departing in 2025 and 2026.

A suite upgrade also gives travellers the chance to enjoy additional benefits, such as an included one-night, pre-cruise hotel stay when booking a concierge suite, or the enhanced service that comes with a personal butler when staying in a penthouse suite.



"With generous suite upgrades, a low booking deposit and the added benefit of up to 40% savings on select voyages, now is the perfect time to book an unforgettable adventure aboard 'The World's Most Luxurious Fleet,'" outgoing President Andrea DeMarco said.

"'Upgrade Your Horizon' is designed to offer our guests even more opportunities to experience an ultra-luxury, all-inclusive Regent cruise while exploring the most exotic and exciting destinations the world has to offer," she said.

Pictured: Seven Seas Explorer.

New LTC team member

BRIGID Avery has joined the Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) product team, bringing more than 30 years of travel industry experience to the network.

Avery most recently worked for two years with Main Beach Travel as a luxury travel specialist.

She also previously worked with Travel Associates, with Flight Centre's luxury brand describing her career as "nothing short of inspiring", adding: "Brigid is a powerhouse in the global luxury travel industry, and a passionate advocate for mindful...travel."

Qatar Executive adds two Gulfstreams to fleet

QATAR Executive has added two Gulfstream G700s to its growing premium fleet, which has expanded to 24 aircraft.

The two extra planes will increase the total number of Gulfstream G700s (**pictured**) in Qatar's fleet to six, with an additional four scheduled for delivery in 2025 and 2026.

Qatar's fleet also includes 15 Gulfstream G650ERs.

"We are incredibly proud to continue growing our fleet with the groundbreaking G700,



which delivers an innovative and exceptional experience for our customers," Qatar Airways Group CEO Badr Mohammed Al-Meer said.

"These aircraft represent our passion for redefining private aviation and offering the best possible luxury experience."

Goodbye to Miami

MANDARIN Oriental, Miami is closing after 25 years of offering luxury hospitality in South Florida.

The hotel will shut its doors on 31 May to make way for a new Mandarin Oriental hotel and residential development on Brickell Key in 2030.

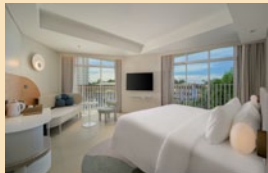
"We are deeply grateful to our guests, colleagues, and the Miami community for their loyalty," General Manager Flavia Daudan-Caponi said.

ACCOMMODATION

Send your accommodation updates to:
accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au



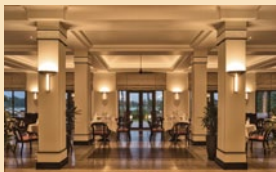
W Hotels has debuted in Brazil with the unveiling of **W Sao Paulo**. Perched above the heart of the city in a modern skyscraper, the hotel aims to offer "reimagined luxury" by drawing inspiration from Sao Paulo's vibrant art, music, and architectural heritage. The 179-room hotel offers breathtaking views of the Pinheiros River and the city skyline. The hotel occupies the 25th floor and up, and includes 16 suites.



Centara Karon Resort Phuket has reopened after a dramatic transformation, introducing three distinct zones, aimed to "cater for every vacation", including family breaks and romantic escapes. The hotel, located just minutes from Karon Beach and the Andaman Sea, invites travellers to enjoy its new Terrace, Lagoon, and Tropicale zones. Highlights include new, spacious rooms, which feature city and sea views; and one-, two-, & three-bedroom pool villas.



Radisson Blu Hotel, Conakry has opened, elevating the accommodation sector in Guinea's capital. The beachfront property is located in the bustling Kipe neighbourhood, combining modernity and ocean views, to appeal to both business and leisure travellers. Situated just 10 minutes from key attractions, the hotel features 282 stylish rooms, suites, and apartments.



Azerai La Residence, Hue has introduced new spa and dining menus, along with specially tailored culinary experiences. The 122-room heritage hotel has updated the menu of its main restaurant - named Le Parfum, for the Perfume River it overlooks. Thirty new dishes have been introduced, showcasing a menu with Western and Asian cuisines, as well as local Hue and Vietnamese tastes. Le Parfum has also elevated the 'Healthy and Vegetarian Corner'.



A new saltwater pool has opened at **Reflections Hawks Nest - Holiday Park**. The heated, hourglass pool features a long underwater "bench" on one side, and sun lounges for park guests to enjoy. The \$1.4 million upgrade also includes the refurbishment of existing amenities near the pool, with plans to install a native garden and cultural trail later this year.

Combining for premium dining



TRAVEL Associates recently held a dinner series in collaboration with The Travel Corporation (TTC), for the companies' high-value clients.

The Travel Associates Dinner Club invite-only fine dining events visited Brisbane, Melbourne, and Sydney, for a hand-picked group of 30 top clients in each city.

The intimate events were held at Entrecote in Melbourne, TAMA in Brisbane and Public Dining Room Balmoral in Sydney.

Guests enjoyed a three-course fine dining experience inspired by travel, while also learning about the destinations and experiences offered by Luxury Gold and Insight Vacations.

Travel Associates General Manager Rachel Kingswell said the boutique-style dinners (**pictured**) have proven to be an incredibly successful way for the brand to engage and thank its high-value travellers, adding: "it's our way of making sure they feel like they're part of the Travel Associates family". *MS*

Feel better in 2025

COMO Hotels & Resorts has announced a series of COMO Wellness Journeys for early 2025.

Managing Pain with Kim Kusters, at COMO Cocoa Island, began late last month, and will run through to the end of Feb, helping guests manage and alleviate chronic pain through expert-led therapies.

The program combines therapeutic massage, corrective exercises, and tailored movement classes to release muscle tension, improve mobility, and support overall recovery.

Also being held on COMO Cocoa Island is Balance and Harmony with Kimberly Rose, which will be available from 05 Mar to 27 Apr.

This Wellness Journey combines traditional therapies like cupping and Qi Gong with modern techniques such as facial rejuvenation acupuncture - all ground-breaking alternatives to invasive clinical treatments.

Other Wellness Journeys are available - **CLICK HERE**.