

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news including a photo page from **Bunnik Tours** and our **Business Events News** plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Disneyland Resort California

Vancouver sails in Oz

DESTINATION Vancouver has joined Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) as an executive partner in Australasia.

Highlighting one of Canada's key cruise hubs, Destination Vancouver will work with CLIA to boost the city's standing within the international cruise industry and showcase its pre- and post-cruise experiences.

The DMO will take part in a series of upcoming CLIA initiatives, offering agents dedicated training, marketing and sales resources, and the opportunity to join famils through the Vancouver Specialist Program.

Sun sets on Sunrise '26

QANTAS' highly anticipated Project Sunrise ultra-long-haul flights have been delayed yet again, with the carrier confirming a new start date for early 2027.

Previously Qantas had hoped to introduce nonstop routes between Sydney and London and NY from mid this year (**TD** 22 Feb 2024), however the date was scuttled again after supply chain issues, and Europe's regulator asking Airbus to redesign fuel tank on its A350-1000s.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Airbus Summit in France, CEO Vanessa Hudson said more time will also be needed for Qantas to carry out local certification flights to ensure the carrier's crew become familiar with the first batch of 12 jets when they arrive.

Hudson added Qantas will need three A350-1000s to operate a daily service from Sydney to either New York or London, followed by other unnamed routes when the remainder of the

aircraft are received.

MEANWHILE, Qantas has confirmed expressions of interest will open for agencies to join its Premium NDC on 01 May.

The carrier said benefits of joining include zero distribution surcharge on NDC bookings regardless of the technology partner; lower domestic NDC fares when compared to standard NDC and all published NDC sale fares; as well as free standard seat selection from Bronze Frequent Flyers on NDC bookings.

Qantas has also introduced new NDC service features in the lead-up to the carrier's new distribution model launching on 01 Jul (**TD** 27 Nov 2024), in a bid to ensure a seamless transition.

The new features include:

- Live Assist - a live chat that connects agents to the Qantas Agency Connect team for real-time conversations;
- Booking & technical support - 24/7 access to self-service resources and troubleshooting;
- Contact us form - a quick way to report technical issues and receive expert support answers.

Qantas has also boosted the Qantas Agency Connect team, with additional consultants joining to help meet the predicted surge in demand. **AB**

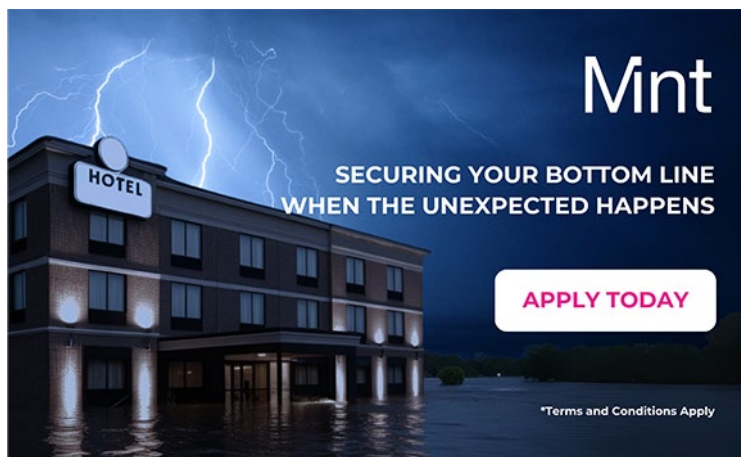
Disneyland Oz offer

DISNEYLAND Resort has launched a special offer for Australian and New Zealand travellers - details on **back page**.

Big Silversea savings

TRAVELLERS can save up to \$7,000 on hundreds of Silversea voyages, as well as enjoy US\$1,000 shipboard credit and 15% reduced deposit.

The offer is available for a limited time - see **page eight** for more details.



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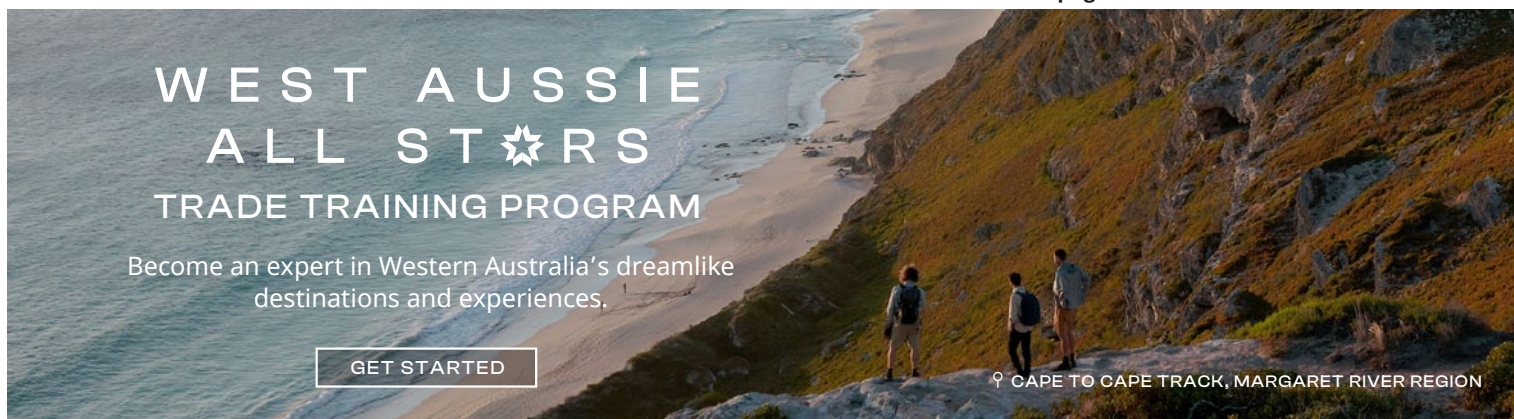
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Airnorth Wanderlust

AIRNORTH has launched its 'Wanderlust' sale, with fares starting from \$162 one-way to destinations across Australia.

The promotion ends 03 Apr, and applies to select travel periods between 28 Apr and 20 Jun.

For more information on the full list of deals, see [HERE](#).

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Jayride audits technology

STRUGGLING Australian airport transfer company Jayride has engaged an external consultant to improve its technology, only a month after appointing high-profile tech entrepreneur Randy Prado as its new Chief Executive Officer (**TD** 24 Feb).

Data analytics company InFocus Group will first conduct a full tech audit of Jayride, with the dual aim of eliminating manual processing on the back end, as well as making the business a more attractive partner for suppliers.

Prado said that stripping out older manual processes would help Jayride scale growth faster and drive down costs, while making interactions with suppliers more seamless would also lead to more competitive rates and improve its margins.

Jayride also conceded delayed payments to suppliers in the past had made partners less willing to work with the business.



"We are in the early stages of exploring future payment processing technologies that could significantly differentiate Jayride from other ground transportation aggregators," Prado said.

The review payment processing will initially examine how Jayride takes payments on its website, with the audit to take around a month to complete.

Jayride will also seek advice from InFocus on the development of a future technology roadmap.

Jayride has struggled to maintain market share in recent years, ultimately leading to a new corporate and funding strategy to steer future recovery. **AB**

Martin blows in

TRAVEL the World Group has appointed Shelley Martin as the Sales Manager for Windstar Cruises in Australia.

The GSA for the small ship luxury cruise line said Martin, who joins from Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, will help grow agent relationships.

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Window Seat

FROM blocked up to locked up was the story for one angry United Airlines passenger who was allegedly hauled out of the bathroom by the pilot on a flight between Mexico and Texas after taking too long to do his business, *News.com.au* has reported.

After spending more than 20 minutes in the loo, and explaining to concerned cabin crew that he was suffering from constipation, Yisroel Liebb said the pilot appeared on the scene and demanded he urgently exit the bathroom.

When he failed to respond in time, the captain knocked down the door and pulled him out with his pants still down.

Liebb was detained on arrival but released soon after, and is now suing for crappy service.

25 years for EK/SYD

EMIRATES has celebrated 25 years of flying into Sydney after launching its initial service in Mar 2000, just prior to the Sydney Olympic Games.

Over the years, the Middle Eastern carrier has flown 35,000 flights to the Emerald City, carrying over nine million pax.

In 2023, the airline shifted all Sydney services to A380s and today offers three daily flights on four-class super jumbos.

Riviera ready for Oz

OCEANIA Cruises 1,250-guest *Riviera* is prepping to begin its first-ever season of voyages in Australia and New Zealand.

The gourmet food-focused itineraries will range from 14-35 days and include stops in smaller ports like Mystery Island in Vanuatu, Dunedin in New Zealand, and Kangaroo Island in South Australia, as well as mainstays including Sydney.



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Tourism accounts cash in

LEISURE travel surpassed VFR as the primary reason to visit Australia in 2024, according to the latest *International Visitor Survey (IVS)* results published by Tourism Research Australia.

The data revealed 2.1 million trips to Australia were taken in Q4 2024, with total spend hitting \$12.2 billion, up 5% on Dec 2019.

Australia's top five international source markets were New Zealand, China, USA, UK and India, while total trips from all corners of the world amounted to 7.6 million for the calendar year.

Total nights spent in Australia in 2024 was 294.9 million, while spend hit \$48.9 billion, up 8% on Dec 2019.

On the domestic front, total overnight trips by Australian residents amounted to 29.1 million, while both overnight spend and nights away closed on par with 2019 figures.

For the calendar year, Aussies



spent 115 million nights away, with spend tallying \$110.3 billion, up a modest 1% on 2019 marks.

On a regional level, Whitsundays was one of Queensland's top performing regions, hitting \$1.65 billion in expenditure across both domestic and overseas visitors.

The UK and US were the two highest source markets for the North Queensland island region.

Farther south, the Gold Coast set a new record for visitor spend with \$8.1 billion passing through the cash registers.

"It's fantastic to see the Gold Coast outperforming both Queensland and Australia in expenditure growth for domestic overnight," said Experience Gold Coast CEO, John Warn. *ML*

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VARA unveils E190-E2 interior



VIRGIN Australia's regional arm, Virgin Australia Regional Airlines (VARA), has released the first images of its new Embraer 190-E2 jets which will fly the skies of Western Australia, largely in the lucrative charter market.

Inside will feature a dual-class layout with both business and economy, the latter also including rows of VA's Economy X extra legroom product.

Assembly of the first aircraft, 'Coral Bay', will begin this month, and VARA expects four of the eight E190-E2s to be delivered in the next 12 months.

"We have had very positive feedback since we announced the acquisition of these aircraft, especially as these will be the first brand-new aircraft in the WA charter market this century," VARA Executive General Manager, Nathan Miller said.

"Our customers are excited

about the two-plus-two layout in our economy cabin, which means there are no middle seats.

"There is enough room in the cabin for every guest to have a bag in the overhead bin."

The E190-E2s will replace the ageing Fokker 100s, a mainstay on charter routes in WA.

Thanks to the dual-class layout, VA will also be able to make use of the E190-E2s on WA leisure routes in times of less charter demand for VARA.

"The first aircraft will operate primarily on our current charter routes and to the intra-WA commercial passenger airports we service, but there is definitely growth opportunity as the fleet grows," Miller added.

The E190-E2 will feature high-bandwidth wi-fi and in-seat power, and will reduce emissions by up to 30% compared to the Fokker 100s. *DF*

ATIA UPDATE

from Ingrid Fraser, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy



WHAT'S in the Federal Budget for travel?

This week in Canberra, Dean and I heard directly from the Treasurer on this year's measures.

With the federal election approaching, it's an unusual moment for a Budget.

The Government has already flagged much of its spending, but it's holding some cards close ahead of the election in May.

This caution shows in the Budget Papers - just 93 pages, the thinnest in 20 years.

This brings mixed news.

There's limited new measures for travel, with emphasis instead on cost-of-living relief and previously announced measures, like extending traineeship incentive payments for businesses to the end of the year.

The silver lining is that there's a \$1.5 billion "war chest" for initiatives still to come in the lead up to the election.

This means strong advocacy is needed to ensure there are policies and programs to support travel businesses in the next term of government.

ATIA recently launched its election asks (see [HERE](#)), calling on all political parties to back policies that strengthen accredited travel businesses, further enhance airline competition to deliver lower fares, fewer disruptions and a better experience for your clients, and address critical workforce shortages.

To increase traction, ATIA's Election Hub will offer toolkits to help members engage with their local Member of Parliament.

We'll work with travel businesses in key areas where votes are tight, to boost our shared push for what the industry needs.

While Dean and I have already been engaging with both sides of Parliament, there is something particularly impactful about elected politicians hearing directly from businesses in their electorate.

Your views matter, and ATIA is here to make sure they get heard.

So stay tuned - ATIA's Election Hub will be launching very soon.

Minor's major news

MINOR Hotels has announced its fifth franchised hotel in Australia, as part of its global expansion strategy.

The new Oaks Redcliffe Mon Komo Suites will join Minor's Oaks Toowoomba Hotel, Oaks Townsville Metropole Hotel, and the soon-to-open Avani Mooloolaba Beach Hotel in Qld.

Minor has also appointed Russell Cool as its new Director of Franchising to spearhead its expansion plans in the region.

QF launches Asia sale

QANTAS has introduced a major Asia sale today, with return fares starting from \$519.

Sale prices are available across 80,000 discounted seats to eight destinations, including Bali, Tokyo, Manila, and Hong Kong.

The sale will be live for seven days for select dates during key travel periods, including Bali's popular dry season; the start of Japan's ski season; and Qantas' newest international route, Darwin to Singapore.



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Bunnik Tours celebrates three decades

AUSTRALIA'S original small group touring experts have wrapped up a month of celebratory events to mark 30 successful years in the travel industry.

Hundreds of travel agents, industry representatives, suppliers, media and special guests joined the festivities across the country, which kicked off in Adelaide with a VIP soiree at the Bunnik Ballroom.

Next up were cocktail events at The Tea Room QVB in Sydney and QEvents in Melbourne, where emcee Mark Carter hosted an entertaining panel discussion with founder Marion, along with her sons and joint-CEOs, Dennis and Sacha, who shared inside secrets and insights into the family-run company.

Cheers to 30 years!



SACHA, Marion and Dennis Bunnik celebrate 30 years of success.



NICOLE Romanini, Lauren Thomas, Lisa Phillips, Emma Morrison and Brad Hutchinson - Sydney.



JUSTINE Lally, Zoe Francis & Alicia Triggs are all smiles in Adelaide.



CHLOE Marshman, Chanelle Mihailoff, Kate Sharpe and Amie Bunnik dressed to impress in Adelaide.



ALISON and Phil Hoffmann at the Adelaide event.



MATT Masson, Beatrice De Leon and Tanyu Cilek at the Sydney celebration.



MELBOURNE Panel Session - MC Mark Carter with Dennis, Marion and Sacha Bunnik.



DEB Moffatt, Alison Lord & Wendy Macfarlane at the Sydney event.



BRIDGET De Maine and Sarah Harding in Sydney.



PRISCILLA Aster and Chris Read in Adelaide.

THE incredible two-tiered cake featuring caricatures of the Bunniks.



MATT Grigg and Diana Chan enjoying refreshments in Melbourne.



MEA ENTERS VOLUNTARY ADMINISTRATION

MEETINGS and Events Australia (MEA) has announced its closure after 50 years of service to the Australian events industry (**TD** breaking news).

Australia's peak body for the meeting and events sector has appointed an administrator, after revealing it is no longer in a position to continue operating.

The shock announcement comes as the Association marks its 50th anniversary, making it the country's longest-standing events industry body.

A decline in government and corporate financial support, coupled with rising operating costs, was cited as the reason behind the closure.

Over its fifty years of operation, MEA has relied on a mix of membership income, ticket sales,



and cash sponsorships from corporate partners, convention centres, and state and federal government bodies, using the contributions to deliver national programs, including events qualifications, professional development events, and awards.

"It is with great sadness and immense pride that we share this news," MEA Chair Vanessa Green said in a statement released to the industry this morning.

"MEA has been a cornerstone of the Australian events industry for half a century.

"We close this chapter with gratitude, for the extraordinary legacy and community we've built together," she added.

MEA Board Vice-Chair, Megan Peters, commented: "This is not the outcome any of us wanted, but we are deeply proud of what MEA has delivered for the industry, from nurturing

careers and shaping education, to building networks and recognising excellence through our national awards.

"The relationships, learnings and legacy of MEA will endure."

The board also acknowledged the contributions of members, educators, volunteers, staff, sponsors, partners and industry supporters over the years.

"As we close this chapter, we do so with pride in MEA's legacy and confidence that the events industry in Australia will continue to thrive through the passion, creativity, and professionalism of its people," Green added.

The association said it will provide an update on this year's MEA Awards, which are set to take place in Sydney on 18 Jun (**TD** 27 Feb), over the coming days. **JM**

AIME '25 rakes in

THE Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) 2025 is projected to generate \$400 million in business transactions between exhibitors and buyers within the next year.

Based on independent post-show research and analysis, the figure represents a 21% increase compared to AIME 2024.

This year's event set a host of new records, including for its number of hosted buyers, exhibitors, and attendees.

Minor Hotels maximises MICE offering

MINOR Hotels has launched a new MICE campaign across Australia and New Zealand, providing a streamlined booking process for event organisers.

The campaign is being rolled out across the company's key regions - Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East - providing a live booking tool for instant reservations and a dedicated events team.

"Businesses today need more than just an event space - they need an efficient, end-to-end solution that allows them to

focus on delivering experiences with an impact," said Daniel Csorban, Head of Commercial at Minor Hotels Australasia.

"Minor Hotels streamlines the process with flexible booking, premium venues, and dedicated support, ensuring planners can plan and run events with ease."

Planners who confirm corporate events by 31 Aug 2025, for events held by 30 Jun 2026, can take unlock extra benefits - for more information, click **HERE**.

New Bris stadium?

THE Queensland Govt has accepted a proposal for a new 63,000-seat stadium to be built in Brisbane's Victoria Park for the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

The plan was unveiled this week following a 100-day independent review into venues, infrastructure and transport, and means the Gabba - once touted as a future Olympic stadium - will be demolished after the Games, due to there being no time to upgrade it.

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Adelaide Festival Centre has announced a new Chief Executive Officer, **Kate Gould**. A renowned and passionate arts leader, Gould brings extensive experience to the position, and is known for her innovative approach to program development, event management, and venue leadership, from her time as Chief Executive Officer & Artistic Director of Brisbane Powerhouse.

Fusion Hotel Group has appointed a new Regional Director for Southeast Asia, **Markus Gloor**. He has three decades of experience in the hospitality sector in Switzerland, as well as Thailand, where he previously served as Director of Operations for Fusion, until this most recent promotion.

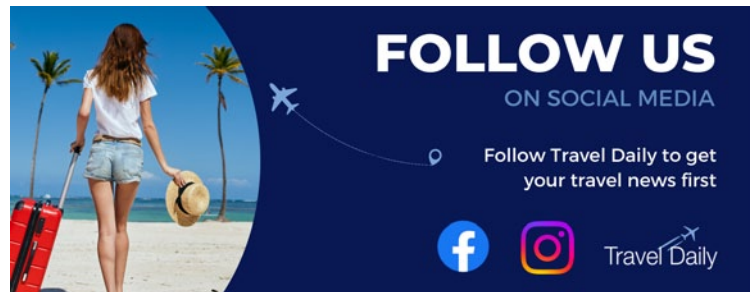
Charles Young has taken on a new General Manager role with **Pullman Sydney Penrith** and **Western Sydney Convention Centre**. Young brings more than 30 years of hospitality management experience from diverse international and local markets, with a proven track record in successfully growing established hotels and launching new brands in emerging markets. He most recently served as General Manager of Fairmont Blue Mountains Resort by MGallery.

Harvey Thompson has been appointed Managing Director of The Langham, Sydney by **Langham Hospitality Group**. Thompson joined the company in 2022, served as the General Manager of the Eaton Hong Kong, as well as Managing Director of Eaton Workshop - a role he will continue in with his move to Sydney.

Wendy Wu Tours has expanded its sales team with two new State Account Manager appointments. **James Phillips** joins as State Account Manager for Victoria & Tasmania, while **Owen Boyce** will serve as State Account Manager for Western Australian & South Australia. Phillips is well-known to the travel industry from his long tenure with Flight Centre Travel Group, while Boyce has broad experience with companies such as American Express Global Business Travel, Carlson Wagonlit Travel, Insight Vacations, and Europcar.

Well-known aviation leader **Ed Sims** has been named Chair of **Southern Travel Holdings**, as part of the company's new strategic growth strategy. Sims has held prominent leadership positions in the airline industry, including as President & Chief Executive Officer of WestJet, and Group General Manager of Air New Zealand. The move will see Jacqui Walshe, the current Executive Chair, transition into Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director.

Infinity Holidays has appointed a new Senior Marketing Manager, Ashleigh O'Reilly. She joins Infinity with more than 15 years' experience in trade marketing, partnerships, and digital marketing, having most recently worked as the Marketing Manager of DriveAway.



Accor unpacks trends in APAC



ACCOR has successfully concluded its 2025 Pacific Franchise Conference in NZ. The event brought together franchise partners, hotel general managers, industry leaders, and executives for two days of insightful discussions, networking, and presentations.

The event was hosted at Pullman Auckland Hotel & Apartments, and reinforced Accor's commitment to franchise growth and partnerships.

The conference, which kicked off on 25 Mar and concluded today, featured an agenda covering industry performance, commercial strategies, and investment opportunities.

Delegates were also relayed exclusive insights into the evolving hotel landscape, with panel discussions and workshops addressing hot topics such as market-leading performance, loyalty, and sustainability.

"The energy and engagement at this year's conference were a testament to the strength of Accor's franchise network in the Pacific," said Duncan O'Rourke, Chief Executive Officer for Accor's Premium, Midscale & Economy Division in the Middle East, Africa, Asia and the Pacific.

"We are focused on fostering sustainable, long-term franchisee partnerships that create value for both owners and guests." *MS*

G knocks up a ton

G ADVENTURES is continuing its new product drive and increased community impact with over 100 new trips for this year.

The expanded roster, G's biggest new product drive yet, significantly increases product offerings across all of the company's travel styles.

Highlights include new trips in the Balkans, Finland, and Africa across G's Local Living, Solo-ish, Geluxe, Classic, and 18-to-Thirtysomething options.

"We are being very intentional about new product development, noting regions where our offerings can benefit from more flexibility as well as expansion into regions where we haven't been in the past," Vice President Product Yves Marceau said.

"As with all of our itineraries, our priority is supporting local communities, and we're thrilled that our new offerings will expand that positive impact, while offering travellers some incredible new ways to explore."

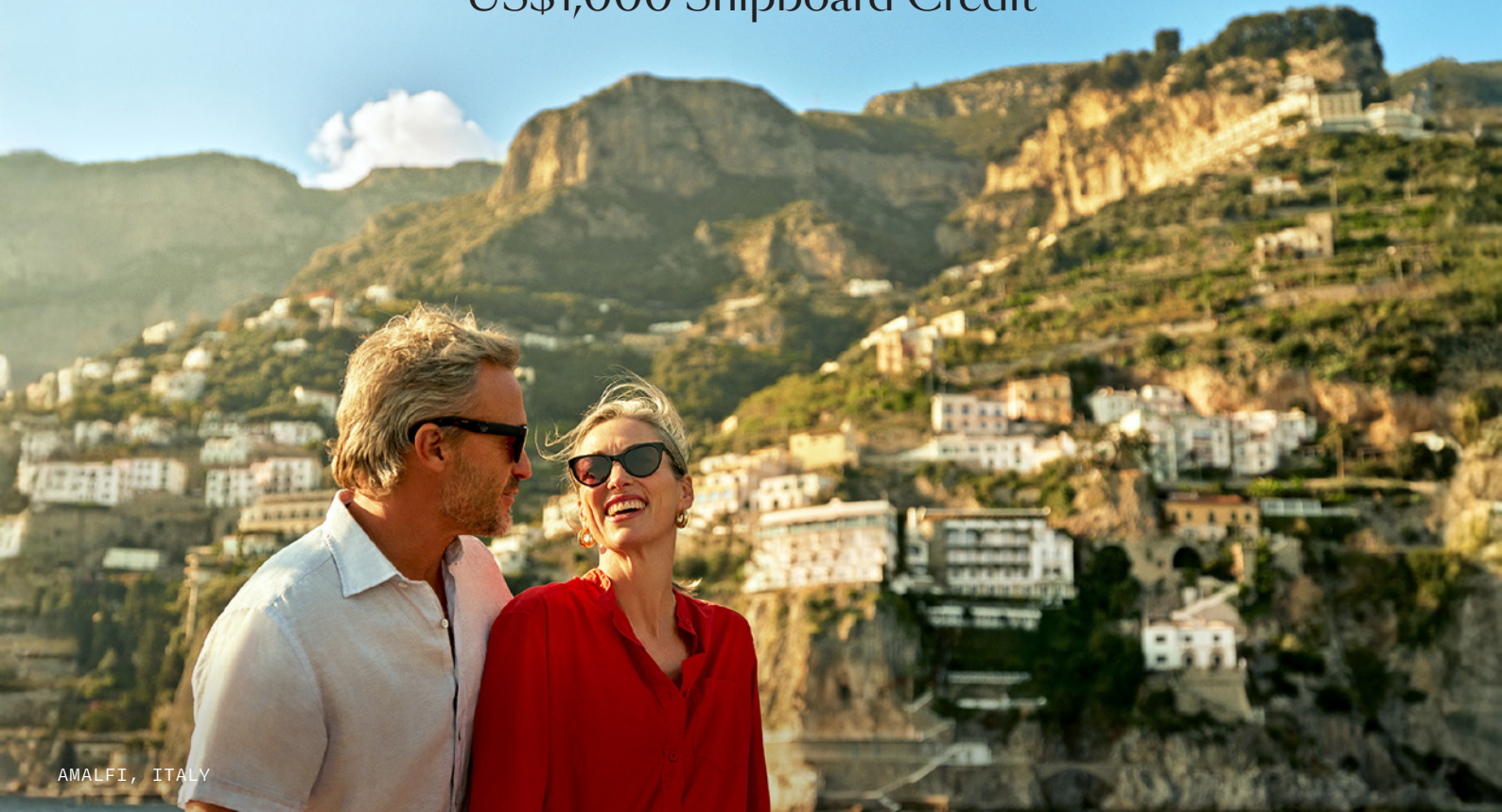


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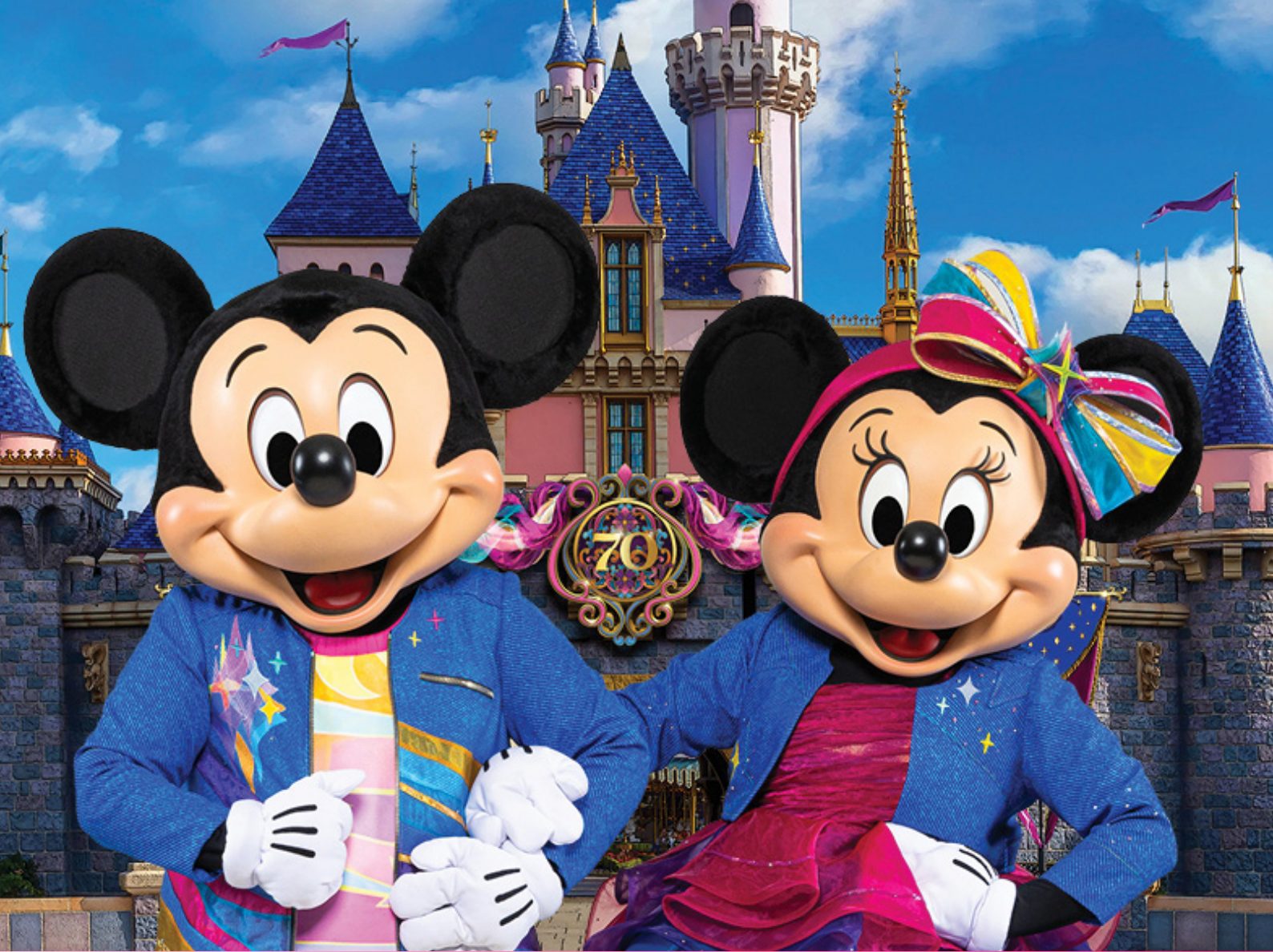
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