

Win a \$5k Prezzy

ROCKY Mountaineer is offering a \$5,000 Prezzy voucher as a reward for the top-selling agent of selected itineraries booked through Viva Holidays by 30 Apr.

The wholesaler has a range of travel packages available to help drive bookings - see **page eight**.



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Aussies on fast track to US

ELIGIBLE Australian travellers can now apply for the United States Global Entry Program to gain access to faster Customs lanes when entering the USA.

Announced one day before the government was dissolved ahead of the upcoming election, the legislation will benefit regular visitors to the US including

business and corporate travellers.

Entry to the program comes six years after it was first mooted (**TD** 06 Jun 2019) and after more than a decade of lobbying from several Australian governments.

Under the legislation, access is now available to the TSA Pre-Check Program available to low-risk travellers, who will be subject to background checks by both countries as part of the process.

"This means shorter queues for Australian business travellers so they can spend their time working and building business links rather than waiting in line," said Federal Minister for Home Affairs, Tony Burke.

VA/QR green light

VIRGIN Australia and Qatar Airways have received authority from the ACCC to cooperate and boost competition under an integrated alliance for five years.

Following a draft authorisation issued last month (**TD** 18 Feb), VA can now fly 28 weekly services to Doha using aircraft leased from Qatar Airways, on top of services already operated by QR.

The ACCC said the tie-up will put downward price pressure on this route and give greater choice.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from **Ponant** plus our **Corporate Update** and a full page from **Viva Holidays**.

Egglestone switches

FORMER Zenith Payments CEO Peter Egglestone has moved into the medical device field, taking on a position as a non-executive Director at ParagonCare Limited.

Egglestone will depart Zenith Payments in the coming weeks following a handover (**TD** 11 Mar).

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Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

PENRITH

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Pullman Sydney Penrith and Western Sydney Convention Centre, which are hosting trade and media on a VIP showcase.

WE CHECKED into the Pullman Sydney Penrith yesterday, where we enjoyed a private buggy tour of the WSSC and Panthers Precinct, followed by a game at Aqua Golf.

It was then on to sunset drinks at Squires Terrace Bar, before heading to Marcel Bar & Bistro for a modern European dinner with matching wines.

Today was equally jam-packed, with the group enjoying a tour of the Penrith Panthers Academy, before a thrilling indoor skydiving session at IFLY.

TravelManagers' cruise tool

CAPITALISING on the significant interest in cruise, TravelManagers has announced a new customer-facing platform designed to compliment in-house cruise wholesaler, Fastbook, launched in Sept 2024.

The platform enables clients to search for their perfect cruise depending on location, departure date, and cruise line.

It will provide real-time inventory from 32 different cruise lines including a detailed range of ocean cruises and cruise tours.

"Fastbook provides our PTMs with a wholesale platform that offers live, 24/7 availability and integrates with our back-office system," TravelManagers Cruise Product Manager Lia Malone (pictured) said.

"Now each PTM can also customise their website to extend that seamless online experience to their clients."



Tasmanian PTM Ange Bowerman added, "The new platform means [clients] can now access a wealth of information through my own website.

"I can also send recommendations via the platform so my clients can study the options I've selected for them in more detail."

Malone revealed that the platform will soon be extended to include river cruises. *DF*

DNSW targets US

NINETEEN NSW visitor economy operators have taken part in the Destination NSW 2025 North American roadshow.

The full-day workshops and networking events in Los Angeles and New York City provided an opportunity to engage directly with influential wholesalers, product managers and travel advisors from the US and Canada.

The US was NSW's second largest market for visitors and third by expenditure in 2024.

Egypt sub disaster

SIX people have died after a tourist submarine sank off the coast of Hurghada, Egypt.

A further nine were injured while emergency crews managed to rescue 39 in total.

All 45 passengers on board were Russian tourists visiting Hurghada, 460km south-east of Egypt's capital, Cairo.

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Agents get their kicks on '66



EIGHT sports-mad agents from Australia and New Zealand have returned from an exciting sports-themed famil to the USA.

Running from 28 Feb to 08 Mar, the self-drive road trip (**TD** 14 Nov 2024) saw agents take the wheel, with the trip spanning two states, nine cities and more than 1,500km of open highway.

The trip was hosted by Lexie Miliatis from Brand USA, with flights provided by Delta Air Lines and further support coming from Arizona Office of Tourism, Infinity Holidays, Sports Where I Am and Alamo Rent A Car.

In addition to exploring part of Route 66, which celebrates its 100th anniversary next year, the group took in a sports event at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas.

Other highlights from their time in Sin City included a helicopter flight over the Strip, a foodie tour, and a look inside the city's captivating giant sphere.

From there, it was onwards to

Arizona where the group enjoyed a sunset hike in Sedona, a look through American history at the Western Spirit Museum in Scottsdale, and a hot-air balloon ride in Phoenix.

While in the Arizona capital, the group also took in an NBA match between the Los Angeles Clippers and the Phoenix Suns.

Final stops on the adventure included Winslow and Flagstaff in Arizona, where the group met the city's first Native American to be elected Mayor and even had a snowball fight at Buffalo Park. **ML**

Pictured above from left is the group, which comprised James Mallett, Travel Associates; Trenea Moore, Galaxy Travel World Travellers NZ; Jasvinder Singh, FC Riccarton Mall Christchurch NZ; Alana Pilcher, Flight Centre Luxury, Queensland; Corinne Heveldt, Flight Centre; Krystal Cooke, Helloworld Charlestown; Brian Caddle, Reho Travel and Fiona Gent, MTA Travel.



Bag TTC famil spots

TIME is running out to secure entries to TTC Tour Brands' Top Achievers Famil for 2025, which will take agents on a European adventure from Prague to Croatia.

Each new booking made across the TTC Tour Brands portfolio earns an entry into the draw, with 33 spots up for grabs for agents to enjoy the trip which departs on 12 May.

Eligible TTC brands participating in the incentive include Luxury Gold, Insight Vacations, Trafalgar, Costsaver and Contiki.

MEANWHILE, Insight Vacations is seeking expressions of interest for a special limited-edition *White Lotus* tour visiting filming locations featured in season three.

Two departures of Insight's new 'Thai Lotus' itinerary have been scheduled for 26 Feb and 12 Apr 2026, with travellers to visit Bangkok, Samui and Koh Phangan, as well as Wat Phu Khao Thong temple and the city's famous Fisherman's Village.

Travel Daily

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Window Seat

IF YOUR name is Mark and you think you're pretty good, Virgin Australia wants to hear from you.

As the official sponsor of the AFL's Mark of the Year Award, the airline is on the lookout for Australia's best Mark, who can win a trip for two to Melbourne to attend the AFL Grand Final including flights and hotel.

The contest isn't just open to people named Mark - if you work in 'Mark'eting or have a unique birth 'Mark', you can also be in the running to win.

To enter the contest, follow Virgin Australia on TikTok, change your display name to Mark and comment on one of the airline's four participating Mark of the Year videos with a reason in 25 words or less why you are Australia's best Mark.



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Learn at lunch with Steve



LUXURY Travel Collection has lunched and learned with Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) Senior Vice President and Chief Sales Officer, Steve Odell, in its Leaders Who Lunch series.

Hosted at Chiswick, Woollahra, a select group of industry leaders were invited to join the event to hear Odell take a deep dive into his career journey, one that

has seen him recognised as a leader in change and champion of diverse workforces.

He also provided details on forthcoming launches for RSSC as well as an insider's perspective on recent ship renovations, and further information and insight into its brand refresh.

LTC General Manager, Nikki Glading, said, "To have our LTC members hear his profound insights into the shifting preferences of high-net-worth travellers first-hand, and how Regent Seven Seas' unwavering commitment to crafting deeply immersive experiences will benefit the end client underscores why it's so important for both sides of the industry to come together, so we can all excel in luxury travel."

Odell added that today's affluent travellers were seeking travel that sparked emotion.

Odell is pictured with Glading (left) and RSSC Vice President Sales and General Manager, Asia Pacific, Lisa Pile (right). *DF*

O'Connell promoted

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group veteran Allisa O'Connell has been promoted to Global Lead of People and Culture (P&C) after 37 years with the travel giant.

In her new role, O'Connell will drive the transformation and expansion of the company's HR program Workday.

O'Connell has spent the past five years in a variety of P&C roles, saying she has always "been given opportunities to step into roles and acquire new skills, while bringing leadership and the desire to contribute".



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Travel Daily

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Travel Daily Training Academy

Training for new markets

TWO new training programs have been launched by the Federal Government to help Australian tourism businesses tap into the rapidly growing Filipino and Thai visitor markets.

The new Philippines Host and Thailand Host programs will equip Australian businesses with cultural insights, knowledge, and skills needed to cater to travellers from the two countries.

Both programs will be delivered in partnership with the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC).

Arrivals from the two countries have rebounded strongly following the pandemic, with Australia welcoming 171,900 Filipinos and 95,100 visitors from Thailand last year alone.

Modelling from Tourism Research Australia is predicting the two markets will grow by 42% and 47% respectively by 2029, with airlines expanding networks to meet the demand.

Qantas resumed flights between Brisbane and Manila in Oct last year (*TD* 14 May 2024) after more



than a decade, while Cebu Pacific has also expanded services from both Sydney and Melbourne to the Philippines.

Additionally, Jetstar now offers 22 flights per week between Australia and Thailand, recently launching direct services from both Brisbane and Perth.

Tourism businesses can learn more about the new programs and register via ATEC's Tourism Training Hub - **CLICK HERE**.

US demand falling

AIRLINES in the United States are cutting Q1 profit forecasts in response to plummeting travel demand across the country.

The slump comes as tourists and businesses are reassessing plans to visit and do business in the US in the wake of President Donald Trump's broad tariff agenda and slashing of government spending.

The S&P 500 Passenger Airlines Index has dropped 15% this year, with shares in Delta Air Lines and United Airlines falling by 20%.

Airlines are responding to the low demand by cutting capacity in an effort to avoid lowering fares and to protect margins.

Intrepid in Seattle

INTREPID Travel's new President of the Americas, Leigh Barnes, has completed his relocation to Seattle to head up the company's US headquarters.

Barnes said his top priorities are to connect with Seattle-based travel and non-profit business leaders in an effort to build the business in the Northwest region.



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Friday 28th Mar 2025

PONANT Explorations Group's new event series wrapped up successfully with a final event in Newcastle this week.

Across five cities, seven Discovery Sessions showcased sister brand Paul Gauguin Cruises, giving trade partners and their clients exclusive insights from product specialists.

Stay tuned for the next round of events coming in June.

OVER 60 agents and their clients were hosted across five cities.

Ponant Explorations' Tahiti showcase

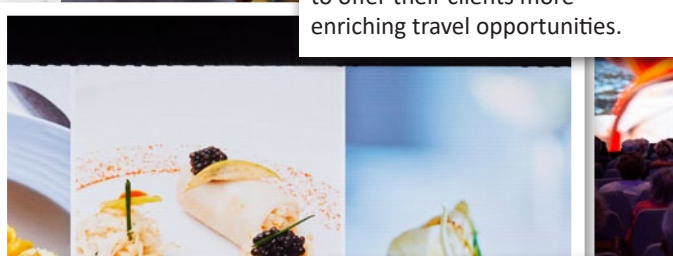


THE Tahitian performances captivated guests with traditional dance and music



THE expert PONANT team brought the Discovery Sessions to life.

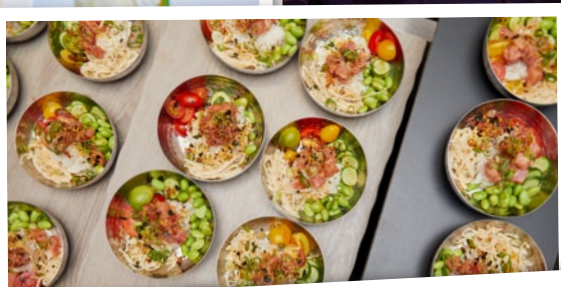
TRADE partners explored new land package options, including immersive experiences in Japan, to offer their clients more enriching travel opportunities.



TRADE partners and their clients enjoyed exclusive access to special offers reserved for attendees, along with insights into new promotions.

STATE Manager NSW & ACT, Kristina Sambaher, shared her Kimberley expertise.

THE exquisite delights of onboard gastronomy were not just showcased, they were tasted!



VISITING Antarctica Expedition Leader Ryo Ijichi from Japan shared his adventures.



CORPORATE UPDATE

CTM CEO to step down

CORPORATE Travel

Management CEO Australia and New Zealand, Greg McCarthy, will step down from his position at the end of Jun after seven years leading the company's local ops.

McCarthy's role will be assumed by former American Express Global Business Travel GM and Regional Vice President, Jo Sully, according to a statement posted on the ASX this morning.

The company said McCarthy will remain with the business until 30 Jun, with Sully joining on 05 May to undertake a full handover.

Corporate Travel Management Founder and Managing Director, Jamie Pherous, paid tribute to McCarthy for his "unwavering commitment" to clients and the business over seven years.

"His leadership has enabled the business to navigate periods of



significant disruption and change, and come out stronger, more connected, and more valued than ever before," Pherous said.

Sully joins Corporate Travel Management armed with many years leading a large business across the Asia Pacific region.

Pherous described his incoming CEO as "a people leader, renowned for building high-performance teams that deliver transformative results".

"Jo is well-known to many inside CTM and her skill set is aligned to execute to strategy," he said. *ML*

Wi-fi well received

QANTAS' roll-out of free wi-fi on international routes directly answers the most in-demand need of business travellers, a new Corporate Traveller survey found.

Asked what would be the biggest flight improvement, 35% of Corporate Traveller clients said onboard wi-fi was a clear winner.

"The data from our experts tells us that connectivity is key, and it's a must-have for corporate travellers needing to make the most of idle time in the air," said Corporate Traveller's Global Managing Director, Tom Walley.

Qld Star suspension

THE Queensland Government has deferred the suspension of The Star Gold Coast's casino license until 30 Sep in recognition of progress made towards remediation and suitability.

The original suspension of 90 days was due to take effect from 31 Mar, with the government to closely monitor ongoing progress.

An appointed Special Manager overseeing its progress will also remain on until at least 30 Sep.



Discover our River Cruise Special Report

Click here

Emirates' luck for the Irish



EMIRATES has committed to work closely with Tourism Ireland to boost inbound visitor numbers from Australia and New Zealand for a further two years.

The agreement will see both organisations work to amplify Ireland's appeal as a leisure destination, flying via Dubai, with marketing including co-branded advertising and other initiatives.

Emirates Divisional Vice President Australasia Barry Brown said the partnership underscores Ireland's strategic significance as a premiere European gateway that offers unique cultural experiences and heritage landmarks.

Since Emirates began flights from Dubai to Dublin, the carrier has transported more than three million travellers on what is one of its most successful routes.

Travellers from Australia and New Zealand can connect through Dubai to two daily flights

to Dublin on Emirates' wide-body Boeing 777-300ER aircraft. *ML*

Brown is pictured above with Tourism Ireland Manager Australia and NZ, Sofia Hansson.

ATEC says 'ni hao'

THE Australian Tourism Export Council has wrapped up a week-long trade mission in China to ignite links to one of Australia's most valuable source markets.

The mission featured over 20 China-focused inbound tour operators engaging in a program of meetings and networking events with local distributors eager to connect with Australian products and suppliers.

ATEC MD Peter Shelley said the mission was supported by the government's Reviving International Tourism Grant but rebuilding the China market required a greater commitment.



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All-inclusive premium resort brand Club Med is offering up to 30% off at resorts around the world in its Early Bird 2026 sale. Deals are available for travel from 29 Nov to 30 May 2026, with blackouts at some resorts. Full details on the Club Med Travel Agents Portal - [CLICK HERE](#).

Small ship cruising wholesaler **Unforgettable Croatia** is taking up to \$800 per stateroom off the price of one of its seven-night Dalmatian coast sailings. Departing 29 Jun 2025, the voyage from Dubrovnik to Split includes calls at Slano/Ston, Mljet National Park, Korcula Island, Vis Island and Hvar and is priced from \$4,379pp twin share - [CLICK HERE](#).

Only a few days remain to secure the absolute best price available on a range of **HX Expeditions** voyages in various parts of the globe departing in 2025, 2026 and 2027. The company's Price Promise expires on 31 Mar so now is the time to book - [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

If you're unsure about your winter holiday plans, the Northern Territory is calling and **AAT Kings** is helping you get there with a range of tours all priced from under \$2,000 per person. The tour operator's latest deals include a four-day adventure to Kings Canyon, Uluru, and Kata Tjuta priced from \$1,979pp, with more great prices on tours in Kakadu, Arnhem Land, Katherine Gorge and the Tiwi Islands - [CLICK HERE](#).

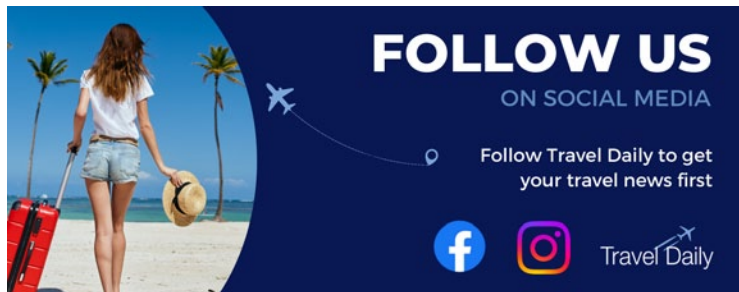
Thousands in bonus commissions are available from **Crystal Cruises** as part of its Sensational Savings offer. Simply book an Aquamarine or Sapphire Suite before 30 Apr and your clients can enjoy up to \$6,000 off their suite plus US\$500 in onboard credit. For more details, [CLICK HERE](#).

For a truly unique Easter, consider the luxury private eco-resort **Bawah Reserve** in the Anambas Archipelago in Indonesia. The resort has a six-day itinerary from 16-21 Apr loaded with highlights including Easter events, culinary classes, dinners under the stars, spa treatments and even an Easter egg hunt. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.

Selected **Trafalgar** departures in Sep 2025 have been discounted by 15% via a new sale from the guided holiday operator. Available itineraries include the 10-day 'Contrasts of Italy', a 13-day 'Iconic Rockies and Western Canada' and even the 16-day 'Britain and Ireland Panorama', valid for new bookings deposited by 29 May. [CLICK HERE](#) for details.

Cruise Traveller is unlocking parts of Japan few travellers see with a big discount on a Heritage Expeditions voyage. The new fly/cruise package onboard *Heritage Adventurer* includes airfare, pre-voyage accom and an eight-night 'Sacred Japan and South Korea' cruise, taking guests to 11 ports including Sado Island and the castles of Matsue. Savings of nearly \$6,000 are on offer for bookings by 30 Apr. [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

For a midweek getaway, **Discovery Parks** is offering camping sites for \$20 per night or cabins from \$99 at participating locations in SA, NSW, Vic and Tas for stays between 01 May and 25 Sep. Full details [HERE](#).



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Doubts over int'l travel

NEARLY 30% of Australians are not planning any international travel at all in 2025, including more than 50% of those aged 50 and over, according to a new survey from Allianz.

The new market study of 1,000 Australians and New Zealanders conducted earlier this year by the insurance giant found financial reasons were cited as roadblocks by 79% of survey respondents.

Two top reasons identified in the poll were 'I don't have the money', which was selected by 56% of respondents, while 23% chose the similar 'travel is too expensive' option.

Older demographics were found to be most unwilling to travel in 2025, with the same said by 20% of those aged 30-49 and 15% of 18-29 year olds.

Women were more likely to balk at the cost of travel, at 61% compared to 48% of men.

The survey also found getting sick while overseas was another major reason to defer travel, with 49% selecting this option, while another 45% said running out of money was a chief concern along with flight cancellations, being pickpocketed or robbed, luggage



going missing or extreme weather interrupting their trip.

The majority of travellers (87%) said they are likely to purchase travel insurance if they go away, with this metric climbing to 90% among higher salary earners.

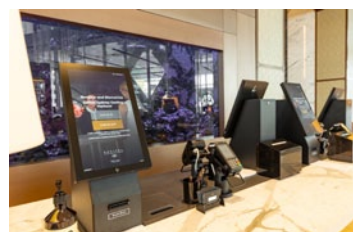
One in five of those polled said they relied on complimentary insurance provided by their credit card for their overseas trip. *ML*

Sofitel's self-service

GUESTS arriving at Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour can now speed up their check-in formalities via five new assisted kiosks installed in the hotel lobby.

The kiosks (**pictured**) have been developed by Kiwi technology firm Liverton and allow guests to check in and out of the hotel, make payments and quickly collect their room keys.

"This technology allows us to provide a faster, more convenient experience for our guests while maintaining our commitment to exceptional service," said Sofitel Darling Harbour GM, Greg Brady.



LA codeshare grows

LATAM Airlines has expanded its codeshare agreement with Qantas to cover additional domestic routes in Australia.

Through-fares can now be sold covering Qantas operated flights between Melbourne and Alice Springs, Cairns, Darwin, Devonport, Launceston and Mildura, and also between Sydney and Alice Springs plus Darwin.



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