

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Luxury page**, plus a product profile from **Exoticca**.

RSSC's grand launch

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has launched both its 2028 World Cruise and 2027-2028 Grand Voyages this week.

The 'Legends of the Pacific' World Cruise will set sail for 133 nights aboard *Seven Seas Splendor* on 05 Jan 2028, from Los Angeles, California.

The cruise line has also introduced five extended sailings as part of its 2027-2028 Grand Voyages collection, ranging from 61 to 92 nights in length, including a 174-night 'Grand European Discovery' voyage.

Noms for fresh NTIAs open

A **REFRESHED** line-up of categories for the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) has been revealed by the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) (**TD** breaking news), with the changes aimed at celebrating the diversity, strength, and innovation of the local travel sector.

Four categories have been retired under the revamped list of awards, including the Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Hotels/Car Hire award; Most Outstanding Business Events Travel Agency; Most Outstanding Leisure Travel Agency - Single Location; as well as Most Outstanding Leisure Travel Agency - Multi Location.

In a bid to shift away from the number of locations to branding, the latter two awards have been replaced, one being the Most Outstanding Independent Leisure Travel Agency - agencies operating under a unique trading name that does not include a brand or consortia.

The second is the Most Outstanding Branded Leisure Travel Agency - businesses operating with a recognised brand within its trading name, and up to a max of 20 locations.

Other new additions include Most Popular Reservations/Groups Team, while the Most Outstanding Travel Industry Training Institution award will now be the Most Outstanding Travel Industry Training Program, reflecting a transition to honour the courses themselves rather than the organisation.

Further changes will see the Most Outstanding Branded Travel Agency Group to require nominees to operate a minimum of 20 locations, with all locations consistently branded, emphasising the strength of national brand presence.

Accreditation changes will also require nominees for Most Outstanding Mobile/ Home Based Travel Advisor to be ATIA

accredited, or at least a current ATIA Individual Member who is part of a network.

The Most Outstanding Sales Executive - Tour Operator and Sales Executive - Wholesaler nominees will also need to be employed by an ATIA-accredited tour operator or wholesaler.

The changes have been guided by input from the NTIA Custodians, with the changes seeking to uphold the integrity and credibility of the awards program into the future.

Nominations open today and close on 21 May, with the NTIA Gala to be held at The Star Brisbane on Sat 18 Oct, following the Beyond Borders Summit on 17 Oct - more details **HERE**. **AB**

Wendorf departs

PRINCESS Cruises Head of Sales Operations Brett Wendorf (**pictured**) will exit the cruise line on 09 May under a strategic restructure of its sales division.

In a move the Carnival brand said will strengthen support for travel agents and better align resources to business priorities, the outgoing sales chief's position will now be split into two.

The changes include the creation of a new Senior Sales Manager that will cover field sales and key account management.

Meanwhile, a new sales support role will provide assistance to the sales team and drive efficiency across key processes, as well as add resourcing at trade events.

Wendorf has been with Princess Cruises for over 12 years.



Qatar's new PAL

TRAVELLERS to the Philippines will soon have access to more connections via a new tie-up between Qatar Airways and Philippine Airlines.

From 16 Jun, QR will codeshare with PAL on seven weekly flights between Manila and Doha as part of the first phase of a newly-linked strategic cooperation deal.

The airlines have also flagged exploring more long-term collaboration, including the addition of new destinations and loyalty cooperation.

Asian adventure

EXOTICCA is inviting travellers to experience the rich culture and nature of Malaysia and Borneo on its 11-day adventure combining the two destinations - see **p8**.



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Budget not an issue: TA

THE static budget attributed by the Federal Government to Tourism Australia is enough to get the job done, according to Tourism Australia Managing Director Phillipa Harrison.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* on the sidelines of ATE in Brisbane, Harrison was not shy when it came to discussing Tourism Australia funding, which has remained at the same level after the last federal budget.

"It's not my job to comment on how much budget we get, it's my job to make sure that we use our budget to its best and highest purpose," Harrison clarified.

"I think we've got enough money to do the job that we need to do right now in all of the markets that are really important to Australia," she added.

While the budget may have remained unchanged, Tourism Australia has not, with Harrison pointing to the growing



opportunities it has uncovered.

She said the DMO is represented in 80% of the inbound markets into the country.

Specifically, Harrison highlighted the fact that Tourism Australia had added a new market to its focus group.

"This year we're also in a 16th market, which is Vietnam, so we're going to start doing more activity in that market because that's a real growing market for Australia in both directions."

Meanwhile, Tourism Australia confirmed mascot Ruby the Roo will continue in its marketing for the foreseeable future, despite Accenture Song taking over as agency of note. *DF*



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Tonga now on show

TONGA Tourism Association has joined the Treasures of the South Pacific collective - a group of national tourism offices working together to promote the region to travel advisors across Australia and New Zealand.

As part of this alliance, Tonga will be featured in two major roadshows spanning eight cities in Australia and New Zealand, targeting over 1,000 retail travel agents in 2025.

Later this year, Tonga will also take its message directly to the trade in a joint roadshow with the Solomon Islands, scheduled to visit Auckland, Sydney, and Brisbane, with hopes of building strong relationships and ensuring the destination remains top-of-mind for agents booking South Pacific escapes.

To support these efforts long-term, a dedicated online training portal for travel agents is in development and scheduled to launch in Australia soon.

A very beautiful OTA

EXPEDIA Group is partnering with content agency Beautiful Destinations to boost travellers' booking and planning experience.

The partnership will also take advantage of Expedia Group Media Solutions' in-house creative studio, media buying capabilities and data insights to create a larger array of 'shoppable' advertising campaigns on a global scale.

Solara makes history

APT Solara has officially set sail on her maiden voyage of the 'Magnificent Europe' itinerary.

"We've poured years of thought, passion and precision into bringing *Solara* to life," said APT Travel Group CEO, David Cox.

"Watching our guests step aboard for the very first time - exploring the design, savouring the cuisine, soaking in the views - it's a proud moment for the entire APT team," he added.

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Hapag joins CLIA

GERMAN expedition cruise line Hapag-Lloyd has joined Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) as a Regional Member in Australasia, enabling the brand to better represent its interests with policy-makers and increase its awareness with travel advisors.

Hapag-Lloyd joins CLIA during a strong local uptake in luxury expedition voyages.

The news coincides with the line launching a new spring campaign that aims to appeal to a younger demographic of cruisers looking for experience-led sailings.

Travel advisors also form a major pillar of the campaign, with Hapag-Lloyd flagging the launch of a dedicated trade toolkit, which will include POS materials, social media content, and multi-channel marketing support across digital, print, and streaming.

The brand also confirmed a trade incentive will run soon, while up to 35% in savings can be also be accessed on some cruises.

RCG increases projections

ROYAL Caribbean Group (RCG) has reported better than expected financial results for Q1 on the back of stronger short-lead time pricing and lower costs.

Load factors across the fleet hit 109% with gross margins up 13.9%, helping the company to hit total revenues of US\$4 billion (A\$6.2 billion) and an adjusted EBITDA of US\$1.4 billion.

Total passenger volume climbed 9% to 2.2 million travellers, helped by record bookings taken during the US wave season.

Onboard guest spending levels also exceeded prior years, driven mainly by higher participation rates and higher prices.

Further boosted by favourable exchange rates and lower fuel prices, the company has increased its forecast earnings per share (EPS) by 28% for the full year from US\$14.55 to US\$15.55.

Royal Caribbean Group CEO and President, Jason Liberty, said the



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results were testament to the brand portfolio's enduring appeal and attractive value proposition.

"This year continues our guest experience innovation with the debut of *Star of the Seas*, *Celebrity Xcel*, and the opening of Royal Beach Club Paradise Island by year-end - all of which continue to generate consumer excitement and strengthen our competitive moat," Liberty said.

"With our industry-leading brands, state-of-the-art ships, exclusive destinations, and a fortified balance sheet, we will continue dreaming and innovating to win a greater share of the growing \$2 trillion global vacation market," he added. *ML*

MH says 'oui' to Paris

MALAYSIA Airlines and Atout France have signed a strategic memorandum of understanding to boost travel to France.

The three-year agreement is aimed at enhancing tourism promotion and increased visitation to Paris via Malaysia's global network.

The airline recently returned to France, with seven weekly flights to Paris (*TD* 25 Mar).

Samoa dengue alert

SAMOA'S Ministry of Health has declared a dengue outbreak in the country, with DFAT warning Aussie travellers to take extra steps to protect themselves against mosquito bites by using insect repellent.

The latest health alert is the second hit to visitation this month, after Samoa declared a state of emergency due to regular power outages, which impacted some essential services.

 **AGENT INCENTIVE**

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Greener pastures for HX

HX (HURTIGRUTEN

Expeditions) has published its inaugural independent Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) report.

Titled *Navigating for a Greener Future*, the 2024 ESG report is the first fully independent publication since HX's formal separation from the Hurtigruten Group (TD 05 Dec 2024).

The paper outlines the company's progress in 2024, which included a record year for its science program.

An unprecedented 1,911 cruise nights were dedicated to guest scientists, who contributed to over 30,000 citizen science submissions across 3,425 sessions, supporting research on climate, microplastics, cetaceans, and more.

Additionally, more than 1,870 participants enrolled in HX's accredited university module for guests and staff - a six-hour Antarctic science and governance course, delivered in partnership with the University of Tasmania.

Other milestones highlighted in the report include HX's partnership with Ocean Bottle, which saw 40,000 reusable bottles distributed to guests and crew last year.

The cruise line also saw total CO₂ emissions drop by 27%

Brisbane even bluer

BLUEY'S World Brisbane is set for an extended season due to popular demand, with the new exhibit attracting 200,000 visitors in almost six months.

The attraction's stay in Brisbane will be extended until next year, with Queensland Minister for Tourism Andrew Powell delighting in the success of Bluey's World.

"The Heeler Family is one of Brisbane's greatest exports, and it's no wonder people are flying in from around the world to enjoy Bluey's World," he said.

"It has become one of the city's greatest family attractions."



in 2024, with it remaining committed to achieving carbon neutrality for Scope 1 emissions by 2040 and Net Zero across Scope 1, 2, and 3 by 2050.

Gebhard Rainer, CEO of HX, said the report "reflects not only the tangible progress we've made, but also our unwavering commitment to setting a new standard in sustainable expedition travel".

"Transparency, innovation, and responsibility are central to our operations, and we believe this report demonstrates how those values translate into real-world impact," Rainer added.

See the full report [HERE](#). JM

QTIC ad partnership

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has selected Bishopp Advertising as its out-of-home advertising partner for the 2025-26 period.

The partnership will see Bishopp support key QTIC initiatives including the Queensland Tourism Awards, with the company to provide outdoor advertising packages valued at \$50,000 each to three winners.

"This strategic partnership strengthens our shared commitment to not only enhancing Queensland's global tourism presence but also supporting the growth of local businesses, events, and destinations," said Natassia Wheeler, QTIC CEO.



Seabourn sees world

SEABOURN has announced its 2027 World Cruise - a 145-day roundtrip voyage from Miami, visiting 67 destinations across 19 countries including Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific.

Taking place aboard *Seabourn Quest*, the '2027 World Cruise: Australia & South Pacific Panorama' will sail between 05 Jan-30 May 2027, featuring two maiden calls, five overnight stays, and four immersive optional Seabourn Journeys.

Highlights include land-based, multi-day experiences in Machu Picchu, the Galapagos Islands, Easter Island, and Uluru, as well as the cruise line's signature Shopping with the Chef experience, offered in 11 ports.

The epic journey will also include port calls into Whangarei in New Zealand and Wallaroo in South Australia for the first time.

Guests can book either the full 145- or the shorter 126-day World Cruise, with discounted fares available until 14 May 2025.

More details in [Cruise Weekly](#).

10% holiday rise

AUSTRALIANS are gearing up for another getaway, with Webjet revealing a 10% rise in international bookings for the next school holidays in Jul.

Year-on-year numbers are up already, Webjet reported, with Bali and Queenstown leading the charge internationally.

The Kiwi resort town has risen almost 40% year-on-year.

Also in the top five are London, Fiji, and Auckland, while rounding out the top 10 are Phuket, Los Angeles, Singapore, Christchurch, and Greece.

Closer to home, Australians are embracing winter travel, with Brisbane, Melbourne, and Cairns proving especially popular for mid-year breaks.

Webjet is set to run a new sale, live from today, offering deals on both international and domestic destinations - [CLICK HERE](#).



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Window Seat

CLIMBER rescues on Mount Fuji occur with notable frequency, however one man needed to be saved twice from the face of the Japanese peak in the space of a week.

The 27-year-old mountaineer first made the ascent early last week, but had to be rescued after losing his crampons.

However, just days after being airlifted from the summit, rescuers were called again later in the week to rescue the same man - who had returned to look for his lost phone.

Given only 4,000 can visit the mountain a day, **TD** thinks this climber should be banned.

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EK puts Britain in spotlight



UAE flag carrier Emirates has concluded its roadshow across Australia, which it hosted alongside Experience Dubai, VisitBritain, and Tourism Ireland.

Taking place across six cities last month, the events aimed to boost travel to Britain and Ireland from Australia, with Dubai as the ideal stopover destination.

More than 650 travel trade consultants attended the roadshow, where they gained insights into the Emirates Dubai stopover Experience (DEX) program, as well as the debut of business and premium economy

cabins on the Dublin route from 25 Jun.

Emirates also announced the introduction of a retrofitted A380 with premium economy on the Manchester route from 06 Jun, and further investments in services to London Stansted, as well as Edinburgh.

"Emirates is deeply committed to fostering close relationships with our Australian travel trade partners, and the Dubai, Britain & Ireland Showcase was an opportunity to highlight our significant investment in enhancing the travel experience," said Emirates Divisional VP Australasia, Barry Brown.

"With London and Dublin being top destinations for Australian travellers, we're proud to work alongside our valued partners at VisitBritain and Tourism Ireland to unlock a world of possibilities for Australian travellers, offering effortless access to over 140 destinations worldwide." JM

QF drops int'l sale

QANTAS has launched a major one-week sale offering cheaper fares to its most popular international destinations.

Travellers can score discounted flights to London, Fiji, Vanuatu and Palau, as well as Honolulu and Johannesburg.

Economy return fares start from \$499 on flights from Brisbane to Noumea, with more than 35 routes including Sydney, Melbourne and Perth to London available from \$1,749 and Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide to Johannesburg from \$1,699.

The sale ends 11:59pm 05 May AEST, for travel during selected dates between 11 May 2025 and 31 Mar 2026.

Autograph on safari

MARRIOTT International will debut the Autograph Collection in Tanzania in the form of a safari camp along the Great Migration.

The Mapito Safari Camp will be located in the Serengeti ecosystem, near the Fort Ikoma Gate, and offer 16 tented suites with a retractable roof.

PONANT EXPLORATIONS FAMIL: ANCIENT WONDERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN



BOARDING luxury small-ship *Le Dumont-D'Urville* in Athens on 22 Apr, Ponant Explorations' State Manager for NSW & ACT, Kristina Sambaher, welcomed a select group of valued agents for a 12-night famil discovering the ancient wonders of the Mediterranean.

Their first stop was Patmos, where a sunny spring day set the scene for an alfresco lunch on deck, followed by an immersive shore excursion to the historic Greek Orthodox Monastery and exclusive access to the Cave of the Apocalypse. Thanks to the ship's small size, guests enjoyed direct port access, allowing them to explore the town at their own pace.

Day two saw the group dock in Kusadasi, Turkiye, for a guided tour of the remarkable Ephesus archaeological site and Roman villas

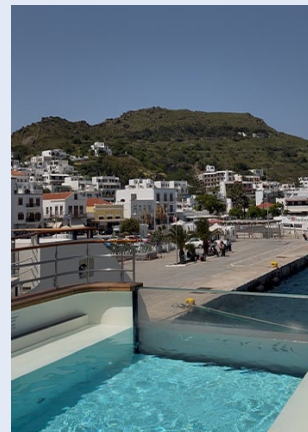
The expert-led excursion blended deep historical insight with local tips for exploring the bazaars, where agents spent a relaxed afternoon after returning to the ship for a traditional Turkish lunch.

Stay tuned as this six-part famil continues to showcase how to explore the Mediterranean, the Ponant way.

TOP: Exploring the ancient history of Kusadasi, Turkiye.

MIDDLE: Poolside lunch in sunny Patmos.

BOTTOM: *Le Dumont-D'Urville* docked in the distance as guests took in panoramic view of Patmos.



Famil IN FOCUS is our feature showcasing some of the photos from recent industry famils. If you'd like your famil to be featured, email advertising@traveldaily.com.au

TRAVELCALL INVITED TO NETWORK

GOLDMAN Group business Travelcall has been admitted into The Luxury Network - a high-end marketing collective designed to foster more partnerships between businesses.

The admission into the invitation-only group will allow Travelcall, also a member of Virtuoso, to broaden its corporate network among some of the leading brands in automotive, lifestyle and luxury travel.

With more than 40 offices worldwide, the group is designed to open doors for members to reach high net-worth potential customers currently outside of their regular business scope.

Active members can also host events in collaboration with like-minded brands to create mutually beneficial outcomes.

Brands and businesses currently



Director, Anthony Goldman (**pictured**), said he is thrilled to be one the group's exclusive travel booking partners.

"This membership not only acknowledges our dedication to excellence in luxury travel but also opens the door to powerful collaborations with the most respected names across high-end [luxury] industries," he said.

"Our valued clients can look forward to unique and exciting events and experiences in collaboration with new partners that reflect the very best in global luxury," Goldman added.

Travelcall will host a celebratory event later this month as it invites clients to take part in a private cooking demonstration with chef Tony Tan.

More events and collaborations are planned for later in 2025. *ML*

in the group include carmakers McLaren, Bentley and Rolls-Royce, along with jewellery and lifestyle brands Cartier, Elite Chefs Sydney, Pommery and more.

Travelcall is not the only travel member of the group, with A&K, Ponant, Seabourn and Mirvac also members.

Goldman Group Joint Managing

New Four Seasons

FOUR Seasons has signed a management agreement to take over a luxury beachfront resort in Al Zorah, a city in the Ajman emirate in the UAE.

Opening its doors in 2026, the new Four Seasons Resort Ajman at Al Zorah will feature 74 guest rooms and 23 villas, each with a private terrace and views of the Arabian Gulf.

Designed as an exclusive retreat, the property will now undergo a sweeping renovation to upgrade amenities, accommodations and wellness facilities.

Guests will be able to enjoy a private beach, an 85-metre infinity pool, adults area and diving excursions, along with preferential access to a championship golf course.

Calile into Virtuoso

ACCLAIMED Brisbane hotel The Calile has been welcomed into Virtuoso's portfolio of high-end products, brands, cruise lines and destinations.

The property will now gain access to the luxury network's member base as a preferred property.

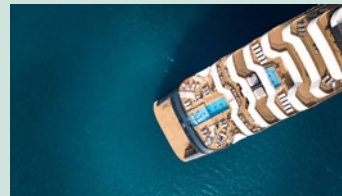
Virtuoso guests can also enjoy exclusive benefits with every stay including daily breakfast, airport transfers, a personalised welcome note & vouchers for local retailers.

Ritz-Carlton says yachts are 'Unlike The Rest'

A NEW global brand campaign entitled 'Unlike The Rest' has been unveiled by The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection to firm its place in ultra-luxury cruising and experiences.

The company said its new pitch illustrates its commitment to curating voyages that unlock meaningful moments and a sense of exploration.

The campaign also aims to highlight the brand's ongoing growth as it prepares to welcome *Luminara*, its third



superyacht in the fleet (**TD** 18 Mar 2022) due in Jul.

Cinematic visuals and lyrical narratives will begin to roll out to markets worldwide, pitching a tailor-made product to high-end consumers who may have never considered a cruise.

Birthday for Lodges

LUXURY Lodges of Australia has marked its 15th year of operation by showcasing how travellers can enjoy Australian landscapes and hospitality in style.

A new regional collection currently features more than 350 properties coupled with unique experiences designed to connect guests with a sense of place through partnerships with local producers, artists and guides.

Each lodge is independently owned and operated, united by compelling reasons for guests to visit and engage with locals.

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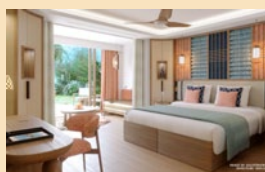
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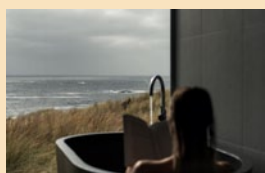
Hamilton Island has opened the doors to its newest boutique accommodation offering, **The Sundays**. Featuring 59 rooms decorated in beach club vibes, guests will find tropical gardens, sculptured stonework and a boardwalk leading to a private beach. Each room features either a balcony or terrace, with guest activities including sunrise yoga, moonlight movies or poolside Sunday 'sundaes'.



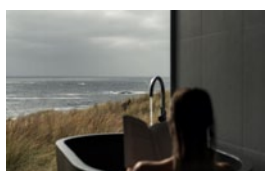
All-inclusive resort brand **Club Med** has launched a new family oasis property in Phuket known as **Lai Thai**. Located on Kata Beach, the company's first dedicated family property in the Asia Pacific region features a splash park for children with water cannons, splash buckets and more. Guests can select from 24 family rooms or eight themed rooms, each decorated in traditional Thai style.



In celebration of the forthcoming debut of *Beetlejuice: The Musical*, **Westin Melbourne** has transformed its lobby into a paranormal playground. The hotel has launched a special accommodation package featuring two tickets to the show, guaranteed room upgrade and more. A themed high tea is also available with a three-tiered feast with edible illusions, dramatic flavours and bespoke drinks.



IHG Hotels will introduce its voco brand to Bali's Seminyak region, located just a 20 minute drive from Denpasar Airport. The newbuild hotel will offer 162 rooms along with an all-day restaurant, lobby lounge and rooftop bar. There will also be a fitness centre and outdoor swimming pool. In line with brand hallmarks, rooms will feature bedding made from 100% recycled plastic bottles, with each also offering plant-based amenities.



Overlooking the Gulf of Thailand, **Melia Pattaya** has opened a new rooftop restaurant and sky bar known as 'Yitong'. Located on the 12th floor of the three-month old hotel, guests are greeted by contemporary black and gold calligraphy in its design, coupled with lush greenery. Groups can opt for traditional seating or 'wellness alcoves' - private pods for quieter conversations over dinner and drinks to encourage connectedness.

50 Degrees deerly committed



50 DEGREES North has launched a new animal welfare policy, which aims to set a new benchmark for responsible tourism in the Nordics.

Created by the operator's Sustainability Manager Jerrine Mullen, the new policy was developed with the understanding that animal welfare practices in the Nordics need to be specific to the unique challenges of the region.

Mullen based the guidelines on insights from experts at Sustainable Travel Finland and the Whale and Dolphin Conservation.

"We recognised that global animal welfare standards don't always work in the Nordic context," said Mullen.

"As a result, we've adopted a more tailored approach, recognising the complexities of animal welfare in the Nordics."

The tour operator has committed to preferring partnerships with operators who adhere to strict animal welfare standards and recognised certification schemes; not offering excursions and attractions where captive wildlife is held, except for activities that are properly

regulated and in compliance with local, national and international laws; and more.

To support its partners, 50 Degrees North has introduced a Supplier Code of Conduct that provides guidelines and educational resources to help improve animal welfare practices across the tourism industry.

The company is also educating travellers through a dedicated 'Responsible Travel Tips' page, which is shared in their online travel documents, to help guests understand how to interact with animals ethically during their trip.

Pictured: Reindeer at Aurora Village Ivalo (photo by Lari Laasjarvi). *JM*

Boeing China threat

BOEING has threatened to stop making planes for China due to the ongoing trade war with the United States.

"We are not going to continue to build airplanes for customers who will not take them," Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg said, confirming two aircraft were returned after Beijing ordered airlines not to accept deliveries of Boeing jets.



Malaysia & Borneo: Exoticca's best of wildlife and skylines

This 11-day adventure combines Malaysia's dynamic cities with Borneo's incredible wildlife, offering your customers an unforgettable blend of culture and nature. From the skyscrapers of Kuala Lumpur to the lush jungles of Borneo, this journey showcases the best of Southeast Asia's biodiversity and traditions.

Malaysia: A fusion of heritage and modernity

Your travellers will explore Kuala Lumpur's iconic landmarks, including the soaring Petronas Twin Towers, the grand King's Palace, and the historic Independence Square. Beyond the city, they'll visit the famous Batu Caves, climbing 272 colourful steps to its sacred temple, and gain insight into traditional crafts at a Batik factory and pewter workshop.

Borneo: A wildlife haven

In Kuching, history and culture take centre stage with visits to Fort Margherita, the Colonial Courthouse, and the Sarawak Cultural Village—an immersive experience showcasing the region's diverse heritage. Nature lovers will marvel at the Semenggoh Orangutan Rehabilitation Center, where rescued orangutans roam in a semi-wild environment. Travellers can also spot Proboscis monkeys and other rare wildlife in the lush rainforests.

Effortless to sell, unforgettable to experience

This itinerary offers an effortless way to explore the wonders of Malaysia and Borneo. With flights, accommodations, and expert-led tours included, it's a seamless package designed to inspire

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