Travel Daily First with the news

Wednesday 13th August 2025



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of the latest travel industry news hot off the press, including our Luxury page, plus full pages from:

- Tourism New Zealand
- Disney Cruise Line



Pagotto departs CATO

CROOKED Compass founder Lisa Pagotto (pictured) has announced she has stepped down from the board of the Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO), as well as her role as Vice Chair (TD breaking news).

The announcement was made this morning, with CATO lauding Pagotto for her "significant role in helping to evolve [its] strategic direction and deepen member engagement" during her five years on the board.

CATO Chair Dennis Bunnik said the industry body was "saddened" to see Lisa leave.

"Lisa's impact on CATO and its members cannot be overstated she was a mentor and advisor to many of our smaller members, supporting them through challenges large and small."

Bunnik added that he "greatly valued her opinions and input", and thanked Pagotto for her dedication over her tenure.

Pagotto said the reason for the departure was "to focus on a new chapter and ventures that require my full attention".

Recently, Pagotto has been in the headlines for multiple reasons, including Crooked Compass relaunching Adventures by Air (TD 14 Mar) earlier this

Find yourself in NZ

THE time is right for agents to find their 100% selves on a self-

See page nine for details.



year, before the business became a maiden partner of Brett Harvey's Altura Travel Group (TD 08 Jul) just last month.

In a LinkedIn post, Pagotto wrote, "This isn't about time pressure, it is about energy, impact, and the next chapter.

"As a founder and entrepreneur, I am stepping into a season of growth with new ventures that need my full focus as they evolve and scale," she said.

A CATO spokesperson told TD an interim Vice Chair will be confirmed at the next CATO board meeting on 03 Sep, and will serve through to the 2026 AGM, at which point the position will be open for nominations from eligible members. DF

Catch Disney soon

DISNEY Cruise Line (DCL) is encouraging Aussies to join the family brand on its final season Down Under.

To sweeten the deal, DCL is offering 50% discounts on the third and fourth guests booked on a select number of sailings across Australia and NZ - see the back page for more details.

Tassie in sharp focus

VICTORIAN carrier Sharp Airlines has signed a one-way interline deal with Qantas that allows pax to book connecting flights to Tasmanian destinations like King Island and Flinders Island on a single ticket.

Agents are the first to have access, with flights live now.



famil in New Zealand.



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Qantas app update

QANTAS has introduced a range of new updates to its app, allowing customers to view more detailed flight features.

These include aircraft livery, name, registration, wi-fi, entertainment type, and the seat power options available.



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A&K buys Nordic specialist

ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) has bolstered its Nordic luxury credentials by acquiring the Copenhagen-based Borealis DMC for an undisclosed sum.

The purchase will allow the operator to extend its travel connections in the region across indigenous communities and remote wilderness locations.

MW promotes Reid

MW TOURS has promoted David Reid (pictured) to the role of Director of Sales & Marketing, after previously holding the National Sales Manager position.

In his expanded role, Reid will assume full responsibility for overseeing MW Tours' marketing strategy, while also continuing to lead national sales initiatives.

Managing Director Navy Wang will remain actively involved in leading public relations with major tourism boards, and will now collaborate more closely with Reid on product development strategies.

"David's impressive track record and extensive experience across many sectors of the travel industry make him a strategic and critical resource as MW Tours strengthens how we promote our destinations and touring experiences," Wang said.





While the DMC is based in Denmark, its coverage spreads across the Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, providing A&K with greater opportunity to refine its luxury experiences - including popular Northern Lights tours.

"This acquisition aligns perfectly with our commitment to unlock impossible possibilities for both our discerning travellers and our trade partners," Chief Destination Officer of parent group AKTG, Rebecca Osman said.

"The Nordic region has become a guest favourite amongst luxury travellers seeking authentic wilderness experiences."

Prior to the purchase, Borealis had worked as a partner with A&K for several years.

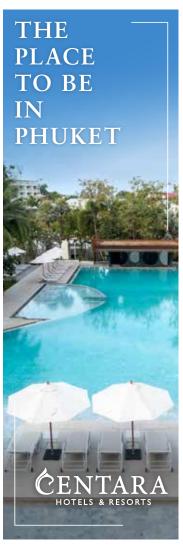
The latest acquisition is aimed at accelerating A&K's previously flagged strategic global expansion through DMCs, most recently recruiting experts on the ground in Mexico and Indonesia. AB

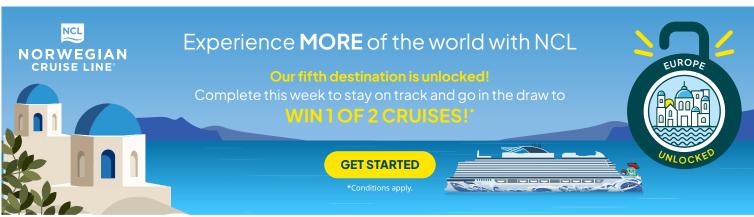
Trivia rego now live

REGISTRATIONS are now open for Norwegian Cruise Line's and The Travel Corporation's Worldwide Rendezvous 2026 - Travel Trivia Series (*TD* 06 Aug). See more details **HERE**.

First Nations forum

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has confirmed the Oaks Port Douglas Resort will host the 2025 Regional Destination IQ Forum on 18 Sep, a gathering aimed at helping to shape the future of the First Nations tourism strategy in Qld.







NTIA votes in its finalists

FINALISTS across 12 categories have been decided by popular vote, with wholesalers, airlines, cruise lines and car rental brands in contention for NTIA glory in 2025 (*TD* breaking news).

After tabulating the results from 8,365 votes cast across the industry, up to six finalists will now vie for the ultimate honour of being named NTIA champions.

Leading the way in the Most Outstanding Tour Operator – Global gong are APT Luxury Travel, G Adventures, Intrepid Travel, Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and TTC Tour Brands.

Specialised tour operators also well-backed by the sector include 50 Degrees North, AAT Kings, Albatross Tours, Back-Roads Touring, Vietnam Travel & Cruise and Wide Eyed Tours & Travel in the Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Specialised category.

The Most Popular Tourism
Offices for 2025 sees North
America well represented with
Brand USA, Destination Canada
and Hawaii Tourism Oceania all
selected as finalists alongside
Tourism Fiji and Tourism New
Zealand - Manaakitanga Aotearoa.

"Once again, we've seen a record turnout for the voting process, and I want to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to have their say," said ATIA Chief Executive, Dean Long.

"The enthusiasm and support from across the industry is a



testament to the passion and pride we share, and this year's finalists truly showcase the remarkable skill, innovation and dedication of our travel professionals," he added.

The 2025 NTIA Gala Dinner takes place at The Star Queen's Wharf in Brisbane on 18 Oct.

For the full list of finalists in voted categories, **CLICK HERE**. *ML*

Como Arctic safari

COMO Hotels and Resorts will again operate two exclusive itineraries taking travellers deep into the Arctic Circle to explore the region in elegant luxury.

Each itinerary is open to 12 guests, accommodated in seven suites on board *MS Polarfront*.

Setting off on 13 May, a 10-night journey captures the Arctic in the early summer when travellers can enjoy the midnight sun.

At the other end of the season, the second itinerary departs on 13 Sep and unlocks access to the Northern Lights.

Guests will be able to enjoy curated cuisine, onboard lectures including photography seminars and discussions on Arctic ecology along with wellness treatments.

CLICK HERE to find out more.







Princess sales change

PRINCESS Cruises has bolstered its sales team, officially announcing new appointments as part of what the cruise line described as "continued investment in trade partnerships and frontline capabilities".

Heather Pryde has been promoted to the role of National Sales Manager, while David Craven has stepped up to Field Sales & Key Account Manager, and Tyrone Jost has been positioned in the key position of Queensland State Manager.

Elly Eves also took on the role of Key Account and Operations Manager in May.

Nick Ferguson, Senior Director Sales & Marketing Asia Pacific, said, "With a strong sales leadership team in place, we're focused on delivering the level of service and strategic support our trade partners expect from Australia's leading premium cruise brand."

WWT festive in Asia

CHRISTMAS has come early to travellers eyeing Asia in Dec thanks to the tour operator's new Southeast Asia brochure.

Departing on 20 Dec 2026 and 19 Dec 2027, the new 20-day 'Christmas on the Mekong' trip will see travellers welcome Santa from on board a seven-night cruise on the four-star Victoria Mekong as it sails from Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City.

Also new in the latest brochure is a 15-day adventure through Malaysia, Borneo and Singapore; a 15-day exploration of Indonesia and a 15-day Angkor and Mekong trip including a three-night cruise along the Mekong River.

"From cruising through Borneo's lush jungles, exploring ancient temples in Java, or celebrating Christmas on the Mekong, each itinerary is designed to connect guests in a way that's both enriching and effortless," said Wendy Wu Tours Australia Managing Director, Simon Bell.

Africa tourism push

THE goal of making southern Africa a more competitive, sustainable, and unified tourism destination on the global stage is in the sights of a new steering committee formed on the continent this week.

The Southern African
Development Community's new
alliance is comprised of senior
tourism figures from countries
like South Africa, Madagascar,
Malawi, and Namibia, and will
seek to address air connectivity
issues, skills shortages, and
infrastructure shortfalls.

A push for greater regional collaboration on tourism follows a recent report unveiled at WTM Africa (*TD* 16 May), which found the continent had been pricing itself out of billion-dollar international tourism markets.



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Aussies in Anaheim

ANAHEIM has seen increased visitation from Australians according to new figures from Azira, which used anonymised mobile data to track visitor behaviour in the US city.

The data showed that Australians were choosing to extend their holiday time in the Californian destination, with an average length of stay up from four-and-a-half nights to six nights year-on-year in 2024.

It also showed that overnight stays in the city continued to increase, with 91.3% of Aussies visitors choosing to make it their overnight holiday base.

Overall, Anaheim recorded growth in international visitors, up from 1.7 million in 2023 to 3.6 million in 2024, according to a Tourism Economics report.

Earlier this year, a delegation from Anaheim took part in a dedicated Australia mission, led by Visit Anaheim's Tourism Director, Michael Young. *DF*

MEL the least convenient

MELBOURNE Airport has been handed the undesirable title of Australia's least convenient airport, with a new iSelect study calling out the Victorian hub's high cost of transport and long distance from the city.

The report also looked at factors like airport parking, the number of daily passengers, and queuing time to determine an index score, with Melbourne Airport lagging behind the field on 1.86.

Travellers have long complained about the lack of speedy connections from the airport to the Melbourne CBD, with many booking Ubers, taxis, or SkyBus trips for the 30-minute journey.

In Mar, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Federal Government, the Victorian Government, and Melbourne Airport to arrest the sluggish delays in building a fast rail system to the hub.



The Federal Government has also pitched in an extra \$2 billion for new train platform construction, with the service due to be operational around 2030.

When contacted for comment, a spokesperson for Melbourne Airport told *Travel Daily* the hub was intentionally built away from heavily built-up areas, and that the delivery of public transport to and from the airport was a matter for government.

"Melbourne Airport offers a range of parking options, starting from just \$12 a day, which is the cheapest of any capital city airport in Australia."

Sydney Airport was ranked the next worst, with a 2.43 score. AB

Preferred leaders

PREFERRED Hotels & Resorts, representing 600 luxury hotels, resorts and residences in more than 80 countries, has announced a raft of new leaders.

Laurence Onfroy has an expanded role of Vice President, Business Development, Asia Pacific, Eddie Wong becomes Area Managing Director, Greater China & Australia, and Midori Kataoka has been promoted to Area Managing Director, Japan.

C360 pushes river

AFTER testing the waters last year, Cruise360 will lean even more into river cruising by featuring the River Takeover.

Three back-to-back sessions will make up the River Takeover on day two of Cruise360, beginning with a focus on the latest trends in the booming sector.

The 10th Cruise360 in Brisbane will be the biggest cruise event ever held in this region.











Travel Puglia sells out in '25

EXCLUSIVE

BOUTIQUE travel operator Travel Puglia has celebrated a record-breaking, sold-out season in 2025, demand the company said is being driven by a surge of interest from younger travellers.

The impressive sales have seen Travel Puglia pile on 28% yearon-year increases in demand for its custom itineraries in Italy, with younger Aussies joined by couples and friendship groups as primary drivers.

Specialising in off-the-beatenpath adventures that focus on personalised local experiences, Travel Puglia co-founder Monique Fabris said connecting clients deeply with the region's traditions, food, and culture was key to local sales growth.

While 2025 may be sold out, bookings for 2026 are now live, with the company revealing plans to grow its curated portfolio of experiences, including vineyard



tours, cooking classes, wellness escapes and village immersions.

Founded by Australian-Italian duo Fabris and Andrea Farina, Travel Puglia offers luxury itineraries that include bespoke accommodation, private experiences, and 24/7 Englishspeaking local support. AB

Scooting to Asia

SINGAPORE Airlines' budget subsidiary Scoot will launch routes to Chiang Rai in Thailand and Okinawa in Japan, as well as expand services to Tokyo Haneda.

The new routes take off towards the end of 2025.



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New NT connection

QUEENSLAND-BASED National Travel has launched a partnership with Probus South Pacific, building on sister brand Trade Travel's 20-year relationship with the retiree association.

The new relationship now gives parent company National Travel Group (NTG) the opportunity to connect with 100,000 mature-age Aussie travellers in the country.

"Having partnered with Probus through Trade Travel since 2005, we understand what truly inspires their members to explore the world," NTG Managing Director David Sumich said.

"This expansion not only reinforces our connection with the Probus community, but also gives our travel partners a trusted pathway to reach this highly engaged audience," he added.

NTG connects with Probus' older travellers through escorted group tours, independent leisure holidays, and a range of premium cruise experiences.

Latest ATIA pullouts

FIVE more travel agencies have failed to meet requirements to have their ATIA accreditation renewed and have been removed from the scheme, with a sixth opting to voluntarily withdraw.

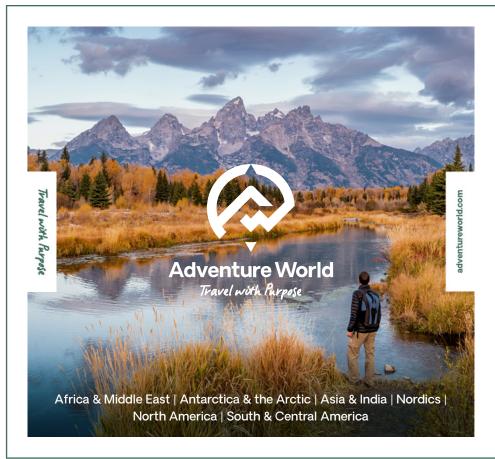
The latest update to the removals list includes Travel On Tracks, Vanga Travel, Sina World Travel Logan, Holiday We Go, Helloworld Travel Seymour, and Broadway Travel & Cruise.

The industry association removed 17 businesses from the accreditation scheme in Jul, all due to it being unable to adequately assess the information provided for renewal.

Death at Perisher

A MAN died yesterday in a snowboarding accident on advanced terrain in Front Valley at Perisher Sky Resort.

It is unclear how he passed, but the terrain features "the biggest jumps and rails in the resort".



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Naumi up for sale

NAUMI Auckland Airport Hotel is up for sale and being managed by CBRE on behalf of Naumi Hotels via an International Expressions of Interest campaign.

The upper-midscale property was originally constructed in 1973, but it was refurbished in 2018, when it re-opened with a refreshed identity and significantly upgraded facilities.

"The incoming purchaser will have full flexibility over future management strategies including owning and operating the hotel themselves," said CBRE's Pacific Head of Hotels, Michael Simpson.

Airline loyalty pays

WHEN deciding on international flight bookings, 30% of frequent flyer members surveyed in Australia said that they typically start off by searching the airlines in which they are already a member, details within a new ACCC report indicated.

Around 15% confirmed they will generally choose between flights only offered by such airlines, while one in five indicated they first search for flights that fit their travel schedule before using loyalty membership to decide between suitable options.

Loyalty is big business for Aussie carriers, with Qantas loyalty earnings representing 22.4% of the Qantas Group's total underlying EBIT, which was greater than that of Jetstar domestic and int'l combined.

Meanwhile, VA's Velocity program generated revenue of \$409 million and made an underlying EBIT of \$115 million in 2023-24 period, representing 23% of its total underlying EBIT.

TM attends luxury forum



TRAVELMANAGERS Operations Manager Troy Coelho recently attended the Accor Luxury Collective (ALC) Advisory Board event at Raffles in Singapore.

Coelho was one of three members who represented luxury travel brands from Australia.

It was the first ALC Advisory Board event that was held in the APAC region, where attendees discussed the challenges of agents, booking patterns, and advisor concerns when dealing with hotels directly, Coelho said.

Additionally, the group heard from Accor about various luxury brand developments.

"The event was much more than just business, it was about collaborating to deliver meaningful, curated experiences that reflect the essence of the brands and the destinations they represent," said Coelho.

"In Australia alone, the luxury leisure travel market is estimated to be worth close to ten billion dollars this year.

"We value our strong partnership with brands like Accor, which enable us to participate in visionary initiatives, like the ALC Asia Pacific Advisory Board, that look to actively shape the future of luxury and lifestyle travel," Coelho concluded. JHM

Pictured at the event in Singapore: Ludivine Zangerlé, VP Luxury and Lifestyle ME, India & APAC; Coehlo and Pascal Visintainer, Global Chief Sales Officer, Accor Luxury & Lifestyle.

Sheraton Kiwi return

SHERATON Hotels and Resorts is set to make a return to New Zealand off the back of a recently signed agreement between parent company Marriott International and Emmons Developments.

The first property will open in Christchurch in 2027, offering 240 guest rooms and suites.

"As a commercial hub, the major gateway for tourism on New Zealand's South Island, and the main departure point for travel to Antarctica, Christchurch has a need for more internationally recognised accommodation," said Richard Crawford, Marriott International's Vice President Hotel Development.



Window Seat

TRAVELLERS who are over the dating apps now have a new forum to meet that special someone, with the phenomenon of 'mountain Tinder' gaining traction around the globe.

The notion of meeting a partner while mountain climbing was given some very thin oxygen by Cathy and Patrick (pictured), who have become a couple after some high altitude love notes.

Cathy clambered up The Wandflue in the Swiss Alps and came across a red notepad near the summit, feeling emotionally adventurous, she jotted down that she enjoyed relaxed hikes and would love to have a drink with someone afterwards.

Patrick was climbing the same mountain a week later and found the note, prompting him to track Cathy down for that special drink.

"It was just a beautiful way to meet," Cathy said, with the pair still together and taking on many more hikes.

The concept of mountain Tinder was first coined by hiker Thibaud Monney in 2023, who has since admitted he posted about it as a "joke".



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ANZ DOWN FOR SPRING, US INTENTION STRONG

AUSTRALIA and New Zealand are the only markets projected to see a fall in bookings for Virtuoso members in the upcoming spring period, figures released at Virtuoso's Travel Week in Las Vegas have revealed.

For the southern spring months, ANZ is expected to be down by 18%, while all other regions for the luxury network will increase.

On a positive note, despite the recent flurry of negative headlines, Australian luxury travellers are choosing the States above any other market for the upcoming spring period.

The United States was ahead of Italy, Fiji, domestic trips, and France as most popular markets.

A presentation delivered at Travel Week also explored the biggest trends among luxury travellers in Australia, with



increased interest in cruising noted as a key observations, alongside two-thirds of respondents who cited safety concerns associated with travel.

More than a third of Australians also said they expect to book more luxury travel over the coming years.

In terms of motivations for taking a trip, 65% of Aussies said they wanted to seek joy and happiness, ahead of other factors like gaining a mental reset, curiosity, and the awe of nature.

While on trips, most Aussies want to disconnect - a common theme among all markets - as well as explore adventure options, different cultures, and romantic getaways.

When it came to what Australian travellers want from their advisors, the answer varied depending on age.

Baby boomers and generation x are most concerned with attention to details and familiarity with legal requirements, while gen z and millennials had a stronger value attached to advisors who have more cultural sensitivity and are ambitious.

Overall, Virtuoso's sales are up by 12% for the period of Jan through Jun when compared to the same period last year.

Hotel bookings have led the way in terms of growth, recording a 26% increase on 2024, with that growth trend set to rise to 33% in the second half of the year.

Cruise and tour bookings are also projected to see a steady rise throughout the year, with Virtuoso's future cruise sales that are one to two years out and exceed US\$50,000 per booking up 43% on last year.

Overall, future travel bookings in the \$50,000 and above category are up 35%. AB

SLH adds Vic hotels

VICTORIA'S Levantine Hill Estate in the Yarra Valley has become a member of the prestigious Small Luxury Hotels of the World portfolio.

The 33-room boutique resort is one of two in the state to be added to the global SLH network during the first half of 2026, the other being Lon Retreat & Spa in Point Lonsdale, located at the mouth of the popular Port Phillip Bay near Geelong in Victoria.

Swan Hellenic outlines Minerva's Pacific plan

LUXURY expedition operator Swan Hellenic has opened bookings for seven voyages in the Asia Pacific on board its recently re-added SH Minerva.

Following the conclusion of the ship's multi-year ownership dispute, Minerva will emerge from a new Antarctic season and sail five expeditions from Honiara to explore the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea.

The season will begin with a 13-night island-hopping journey to Jayapura, featuring immersive exposure to local tribes, villages and Polynesian culture.

From there, Minerva will begin a 10-night adventure to Sorong and an 11-night voyage through Raja Ampat, ending in Manila.

A further 11-night sailing from Manila to Japan will visit the north of the country before concluding in Hiroshima, with the final 10-night navigation from Hiroshima to Otaru.

Five voyages have been

Benefits for a week

PERKS including return boat transfers and a wellness voucher will be offered FOC to guests staying seven nights at the luxury Maslina Resort in the Croatian city of Hvar.

Guests will also receive a private sound healing concert by their in-villa pool and a private olive oil and wine tasting experience.

The resort is located near Stari Grad, one of the oldest towns in the eastern Adriatic. overlooking Maslinica Bay.



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ACCOMMODATION



It's full steam ahead at The Langham Melbourne with loved children's character Thomas the Tank Engine chugging in as part of a new children's afternoon tea. Available across two sessions daily from 19-25 Sep during the school holidays, the

experience features fun kids train sets and activities, and plenty of treats themed after Thomas and his friends. A birthday cake add-on is available for families looking to make the session extra memorable.



Couples seeking a private, intimate retreat in Bali have a new option in Seascape Uluwatu, a new resort promising ocean views and serene surroundings. Room options include a Cabana Room with private pool through to a two-bedroom villa, each

designed to evoke calm and relaxation. The resort also features an elegant Japanese restaurant and Svaha Spa Bingin, an authentic Balinese spa facility designed to revitalise and absorb life's everyday stresses.



Journey through the zodiac and have your star signs interpreted at InterContinental Sydney with a new astrology hour coming to the hotel's Aster Bar. Hosted by famous astrologer Grace Tebble, the hour features a four-part cocktail and snack series

themed on the four elements of air, water, fire and earth. Guests can expect playful interpretations of their birth chart in a social setting.



Accor's Peppers brand has returned where it all began with the opening of Peppers Hunter Valley following a major renovation at the former Grand Mercure The Vintage. Featuring a new-look reception area and a redesigned selection of one-, two- and

three-bedroom villas, the resort will also soon debut a Mediterranean inspired restaurant and Mezze bar. The property is surrounded by numerous vineyards and a Greq Norman championship golf course.



A series of new wellness retreats have been introduced at three Fusion Resorts in Vietnam aimed at balancing physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Available at Fusion Da Nang, Alba Wellness Valley and Maia Resort Quy Nhon, each retreat

features sessions such as sound baths, herbal therapy, plant-based meals, meditation, and activities, including painting and spa rituals.



Riverside luxury in lights



A NUMBER of luxury travel agents are currently on a memorable seven-day sailing down the Rhine from Amsterdam to Basel on Riverside Luxury Cruise's Riverside Debussy.

Advisors and their clients enjoyed a specialty themed cruise while witnessing the spectacular annual event, Rhine in Flames.

The event features five different fireworks displays along the Rhine across five nights.

Thousands of visitors crowd along the river banks each year, taking part in wine celebrations, as they watch the displays.

During the sailing, the Riverside Debussy was placed front and centre in a parade of over 50 ships as the sky lit up with fireworks and drone shows.

According to Susie Coughlan from Riverside Luxury Cruise, one of the agents described the experience as "a pinch-me week - completely unreal and so much more than I imagined". JHM

Pictured: Kristy Jenkins, My World Travel Concierge; Tracey Moore, Croydon Cruise & Travel; Sarah Crowe, House of Travel High Street Lanes; Jo McFayden,

MTA Mobile Travel Agents; Lisa Tuckman, Riverside Luxury Cruises; Tania Fath, Luxurious Travel; Teresa Hodge, House of Travel Merivale; Nicole King, Holiday and Cruise Centre; and Cheryl Edwards, HOT Albany.

HAL sees more stars

TWO renowned astronomy experts will take part in Holland America Line's 2026 Solar Eclipse cruises, conducting lectures and sharing expertise with guests.

Boston University Professor Meers Oppenheim will join Zuiderdam's 18-day 'Voyage of the Vikings: Solar Eclipse' cruise from Rotterdam to Boston, departing on 04 Aug.

Additionally, University of California San Diego Professor Adam Burgasser will be on board Oosterdam for its 13-day 'Mediterranean Solar Eclipse from Lisbon to Athens on 09 Aug 2026. Lastly, former professor at University of Toronto, Tom Vassos, will present to guests on board Nieuw Statendam's 28-day 'Legendary Solar Eclipse' sailing

round-trip from Dover on 24 Jul.

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