

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features seven pages of the latest news, including our **Corporate Update** plus a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

## Darwin says G'day

**AUSTRALIA'S** Top End has been locked in to host 300 travel agents from key international tourism markets around the world in Oct 2026, as Tourism Australia holds its signature event, G'Day Australia.

It will give advisors access to tourism operators from around the country and offer further opportunities through a familiarisation program supported by various state and territory tourism organisations.

The agents are part of Tourism Australia's Aussie Specialist Program, which is made up of around 36,000 travel sellers from more than 100 countries.

Federal Tourism Minister Don Farrell said, "We know this event works, driving some \$30 million in spend, and we can't wait to welcome 300 agents to Darwin next year".

He added that the specialist program gives Australia an edge over other global destinations. *DF*

## Inspiring big savings

**FOR** a limited time, Inspiring Vacations is offering 20% off its hottest tours departing in 2026 and 2027.

See the **back page** for details.

## Google chases thrifty air

**GOOGLE** has announced a new AI-powered search tool within its Google Flights offering that seeks to save travellers money in a more intuitive way.

Flight Deals was unveiled in a blog post overnight, and is targeted at "flexible travellers whose number one goal" is to book the cheapest flights.

The tech giant said its new AI service upends the search models traditionally used in flight platforms, dispensing with the need to enter specific dates, destinations and filters to uncover the best flight deals on offer.

Travellers using the app can now describe when, where and how they would like to travel - as though they were chatting with a friend - and Flight Deals will return the thriftest options.

According to Google's own terms, no carriers can pay to

appear higher in search rankings, with the primary drivers being price and convenience for users.

"What makes Flight Deals unique is that it uses Google's advanced AI to understand the nuances of what you're looking for and identify matching destinations," the company said.

"Then, it will tap into real-time Google Flights data to quickly show you relevant, up-to-date options from hundreds of airlines and booking sites."

The updated search tool will first roll out in the US, Canada and India, with no Australian launch date confirmed. *AB*

## Rex, Bonza sting AU

**FAILED** Australian airlines Bonza and Regional Express (Rex) have been singled out in a report that revealed the collapse of high-profile companies have slugged Aussie taxpayers in the hip pocket to the tune of \$260 million.

According to *News.com.au*, the airlines took out second and third spots when it came to payouts from the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) scheme.

More than 310 former employees from Rex received \$7.3 million worth of entitlements, while the defunct Bonza business recorded 300 claims, amounting to \$6.9 million paid out to employees.

## Q'town goes luxury

**QUEENSTOWN** will soon get a new NZ\$130 million luxury resort, with the team behind Kamana Lakehouse announcing NOCTIS by Kamana, set to open in 2027.

The elevated site, neighbouring Kamana Lakehouse, has uninterrupted Lake Wakatipu and mountain views, and will feature 10 luxury villas including three-bedroom junior suites (289m²), four-bedroom executive residences (670m²), and the a 10-bedroom presidential penthouse (1,200m²).

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## POWER UP YOUR BOOKINGS

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**FIND OUT MORE**



**Wendy Wu Tours**

## Fiji Airways flies bespoke

**FIJI Airways** has launched its new, dedicated online tour booking platform, tours. [fijiairways.com](http://fijiairways.com), allowing travellers to book curated adventures and activities in Fiji and other destinations the airline serves, including the US.

Built in collaboration with AncillaryBox and using AI, the platform is able to suggest the best-rated and most trusted experiences to the traveller.

Bookings through the site gain flexible cancellations up to 24 hours prior for most bookings.

There are currently a range of options on the site already,



including for Sydney, Melbourne, Los Angeles, Vancouver, San Francisco, Honolulu, Tokyo, Singapore and more.

Fiji Airways Managing Director Andre Viljoen told local media that the platform makes it convenient for customers to plan tours before or during their trip, supports local operators, and adds extra value for travellers. **DF**

## Coral offers more int'l

**TRAVELLERS** will soon have the opportunity to deeply immerse themselves in fascinating destinations as part of Coral Expeditions' new range of international adventures, each designed to connect with communities and discover more remote territories.

Coral's fleet of three expedition ships will take travellers through Papua New Guinea and Melanesia, exploring New Zealand and the Spice Islands, as well as remote Indonesian regions like Flores, Ende, Komodo and Sulawesi.

"We are proud that Coral Expeditions' 2026/27 program firms up the line's deep and lasting relationships with remote communities, as well as being a pivot to more capacity to explore the enriching and exotic places close to home for Australia," said Coral Expeditions Chief Commercial Officer Jeff Gilles.

## Hop on commission

**PRIVATE** jet tour operator Captain's Choice has launched a one-off trade incentive for its upcoming 'Pioneering Spirit of the Kangaroo Route' (see **HERE**).

Agents will earn 10% commission on every booking for the 14-day itinerary, which departs Sydney on 03 Feb 2026 on a privately chartered QF A330-300 aircraft.

## Slicing into flexibility

**TRAVEL** finance provider Slice Pay has teamed up with Zenith Payments to embed its service into the TravelPay ecosystem.

The result means agents can now offer their clients a flexible lay-by payment plan for their holidays, allowing them to lock in today's price and pay their trip off in interest-free instalments.

Slice Pay said the move will help agents improve conversion rates.

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## Emmylou on Murray

**TRAVELMARVEL'S** beautifully restored *PS Emmylou* embarked on her first Murray River cruise last week, sailing through pretty landscapes and river towns.

She is a re-creation of the 19th-century paddlesteamers that once sailed down the river, and combines classic charm with modern comforts, including eight deluxe cabins with private ensuites, balconies and various luxury amenities.

A highlight of the *PS Emmylou* season is the eight-day 'Reflections of the Murray River', travelling from Melbourne to Adelaide, with a five-day cruise through guided tours of Perricoota Station and visits to rural towns like Echuca.

**CLICK HERE** to find out more.

## Eurostar challenged

**VIRGIN** Trains is set to compete with Eurostar, with plans to order 12 new high-speed trains on cross-Channel routes from 2030.

The company has signed an agreement with French manufacturer Alstom and secured exclusivity for the Avelia Stream model, the latest generation of the Pendolino tilting trains that Virgin introduced to the United Kingdom 20 years ago.

Proposed services depart from London St Pancras to Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam, which will be followed by France, Germany and Switzerland.

"For too long, passengers have had no choice and even less joy," wrote Sir Richard Branson in *The Times*, "we're not here to copy".

"We're here to raise standards, spark innovation and give people a better way to travel."

**Travel Daily**  
ON LOCATION

**COCOCAY**

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Royal Caribbean, which is this week hosting us on board the inaugural voyage of its new ship *Star of the Seas*.

**WE HAVE** arrived at Royal Caribbean's private Bahamian island, Perfect Day at CocoCay, which is the first-ever port of call the cruise line's new Icon-class *Star of the Seas*.

Fun in the sun will be the order of today, with highlights of Cococay including Hideaway Beach (an adults-only party spot); Cove Beach (a secluded getaway); and South Beach (for active travellers).

Back on *Star*, passengers are being invited to taste-test meals and drinks from the brand-new ship's wide variety of specialty dining options.

Stay tuned to **Travel Daily** for more updates, and read our sister title **Cruise Weekly** for the latest news from on board.

## Click Frenzy returns

**ONLINE** sale event Click Frenzy Travel is making a return this month, offering travellers exclusive deals from more than 15 providers across flights, accommodation, experiences.

The four-day sale will begin on Wed 27 Aug at 7pm AEST and end on Sun 31 Aug at midnight.

Last year, brands included Qatar Airways, Inspiring Vacations, Malaysia Airlines & more.

To access the event click **HERE**.

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## TC hails smooth transition

**THE** first 20 graduates from Travellers Choice's ProStart training program are now using their newfound skills in the workplace, while another 30 are set to complete the three-month course this year.

According to Sonaii Witchard, Branch Manager of Canberra Witchard, agency, Weston Cruise & Travel, the program has played a major role in onboarding the business' new team members.

"Not only did our new entrants quickly gain the knowledge and



skills necessary to excel," said Witchard, "but ProStart also provided them with a confidence boost and helped foster a sense of belonging and collaboration within the team, ensuring a smoother transition into our workplace culture".

Launched last year, the ProStart program was designed to accelerate agents who are new to the industry, and is focused on building on-the-job skills and covering topics like industry fundamentals, products and destinations, sales techniques and management.

"Training a novice requires a significant investment of time and resources - two things agencies sorely lack," said Travellers Choice GM - Sales, Nicola Strudwick.

"By outsourcing that process at no cost to the agency, ProStart allows owners and managers to focus on what they do best - selling travel and servicing customers," she added. *JHM*

**Pictured:** ProStart graduate Hannah Earley from Holiday Your Way in Western Australia.

## Princess' ties to NZ

**PRINCESS** Cruises is expanding its Princess Local Partnership program in New Zealand, which will now include both the preservation of its cultural heritage and local environmental conservation initiatives.

The first cultural partner to join the program is Te Kura Waka, a school dedicated to the revival of traditional Pacific celestial navigation to guide journeys across the ocean.

Meanwhile, Bay Bush Action in Northland and Natures Wonders in Otago will continue to receive support through the program.

"We are honoured to work alongside these remarkable organisations...as they protect what makes New Zealand so unique," said Matthew Rutherford, Princess Cruises' Vice President Asia Pacific.

## CVFR enjoys winning dynasty



**CVFR** Consolidation Services has received the Dynasty Award from China Airlines for the third consecutive year, in recognition of the strong revenue and growth it has delivered to the carrier.

Ram Chhabra, CVFR Travel Group Chief Executive Officer, accepted the accolade this week from Eddie Yeh, China Airlines' Vice President Oceania (**pictured**).

In a post shared to LinkedIn, Chhabra said the award was "great recognition for our Consolidation business, which continues to grow from strength to strength".

The companies' partnership was extended earlier this year, when China Airlines appointed Airline Rep Services - a division of CVFR Travel Group - to represent its pax business in Fiji (*TD* 21 Jan). *JM*

## Globus goes small

**GLOBUS** has released three new small group tours to North America for 2026.

The 'Coastal California, Napa and the Central Valley' trip explores destinations and experiences from the Channel Islands to lavender fields, local olive oil estates and wineries.

Meanwhile, the 'Colourful Colorado: Peaks, Parks and Panoramas' itinerary showcases the beauty of the Rockies, and 'Winter in Montreal and Quebec' offers guests the charm of European-style holiday markets.

"We believe North America holds some of the world's most surprising stories and stunning scenery - and these new tours are built to unlock both," said Chris Hall, MD APAC at Globus.



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## Uzbekistan to open

**INTREPID** will expand its destination management network with the opening of a new DMC office in Uzbekistan towards the end of the year.

Based in Tashkent, the DMC will be led by a country general manager and supported by a small operational team and regional trip leaders.

## Broome back on bus

**THE** WA Government is set to introduce a public transport service in Broome on 18 Aug, following the collapse of the privately-operated Broome Explorer Bus this week.

Running until the end of the year while a permanent option is considered, the service will follow the same route as the Explorer, travelling between Cable Beach, Chinatown and Town Beach, providing access to key attractions, accommodation and businesses for tourists.

## Aussies flock to the UK

**THE** historically strong Jun school holiday period proved a major driver of Aussie trips to the United Kingdom, with the market leaping from seventh to third spot for the month.

New ABS figures show that just over 65,000 trips were made by Aussie travellers to the UK, up from the roughly 48,000 who made the journey in May.

Jun continues to be a purple period for British bookings, historically capturing more than 60,000 Aussie trips - even prior to the pandemic.

School holidays were one major driver of Jun bookings, alongside the warmer UK weather and a flurry of key events like the Glastonbury Festival (**pictured**) & the early stages of Wimbledon.

Meanwhile, the same ABS report showed Aussies took a step back from Japan in Jun, following a bumper year to date.

Jun saw the popular Asian



market drop back from third to fourth, recording just over 56,000 trips, throttling back significantly from the close-to 83,000 notched up in May.

While there may have been a month-on-month fade, Japan remains well ahead of historical volumes, with just 32,000 trips made in Jun 2023.

Further insights showed a month-on-month dip in visitation to the United States, with trips declining from around 70,000 in May to just over 54,000 in Jun.

While the US has endured a sharp drop in tourists this year, Australia has generally bucked that trend in 2025. **AB**



## Window Seat

**EVER** had that experience where you have gone to Westfield, parked your car, gotten out, and then realised you inadvertently went to the wrong Westfield, 50km in a different direction?

No, neither have we, but replace car with aeroplane and Westfield with airport, and you have the story of AirAsia D7 506 from KL to, supposedly, Seoul Incheon.

Due to turbulence around the airport, the flight diverted to Seoul Gimpo before heading to Incheon.

The only problem was that media reports suggest AirAsia failed to adequately inform the passengers, who arrived in Gimpo thinking they were landing at Incheon.

Hashtag awks.

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## A "staggering" opportunity

**TRAVELLERS** with accessibility needs and their companions spent \$29.2 billion across the 2023-24 period, representing 22% of all domestic travel and 17% of total tourism expenditure, according to a new report from Tourism Research Australia.

There are 5.5 million Australians living with disability, approximately a fifth of the population, but key executives in the accessibility and disability space still believe the travel industry is not catering for this significant demographic.

CEO of Spinal Life Australia, Mark Townend, said that inclusive tourism should be treated as a central economic driver, not an afterthought.

"These numbers are staggering, and they prove what we've said all along - inclusive tourism isn't charity, it's good business."

"Queensland and Australia have a once-in-a-generation opportunity with the 2032 Games to position ourselves as world leaders in accessible tourism, but that means putting access front-and-centre and not just as a box



to tick," Townend added.

Spinal Life Australia has called on all levels of government to work in partnership with the disability and tourism sectors to deliver lasting change.

In a release, the organisation pushed for immediate action to embed accessible tourism as a core economic pillar in long-term destination strategies; support the nomination of 2026 as the National Year of Accessible Tourism; and fund practical, on-the-ground improvements to infrastructure, digital accessibility, staff training, and inclusive experiences. *DF*

### Half price for agents

**WENDY** Wu Tours is offering half-price trips for travel agents on more than 80 itineraries departing in 2025.

The trade incentive is available to book until 31 Aug, with agents who take up the offer asked to share their experiences via social media and in-store training.

**CLICK HERE** for more details.

### Win a resort stay

**ALMA** Resort in Vietnam has announced an exclusive 'Sun & Sea Family Retreat' for Australia and New Zealand travellers.

Agents who book the package will enjoy a chance to win a five-night stay at the property - email [louise@uniquetourism.com](mailto:louise@uniquetourism.com).



### AirBooking TK NDC

**TRAVEL** advisors and corporate clients can now access exclusive Turkish Airlines NDC fares alongside full GDS inventory on a single platform, with the carrier announcing IATA-certified distribution platform, AirBooking, as an NDC partner.

The integration eliminates the US\$24 GDS surcharge applied since Oct 2024, as well as enhancing ancillary sales capabilities, real-time dynamic pricing, and comprehensive market coverage.

AirBooking offers 50-70% cost savings compared to traditional GDS solutions.



### Farewell voyages

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Navigator* will be sailing her final voyages through a 'Farewell Season' trio of commemorative itineraries from Aug through Oct 2026.

To honour her legacy, the sailings will feature nostalgic onboard celebrations, surprise guest appearances, tributes, gala dinners, auctions of ship memorabilia, panel discussions, and much more.

*Seven Seas Navigator's* final sailing on 02 Oct will also mark the retirement of Cruise Director Ray Solaire, who has spent 18 years at the luxury cruise line.

### Ross drops cruise gig

**MUSIC** megastar Diana Ross will no longer be the godmother of Royal Caribbean's *Star of the Seas* "due to unforeseen circumstances", the singer's agent has confirmed.

A spokesperson for the cruise line expressed disappointment in the development, but said the industry should stay tuned for a replacement godmother "soon".

Ross was scheduled to celebrate the new Icon-class ship's showcase cruise out of Port Canaveral on 20 Aug.

**Travel Daily** is currently sailing aboard her inaugural cruise.

### SGN change afoot?

**HO CHI** Minh is set to get a new airport next year, Long Thanh International Airport, which could be designated as the international hub for the city.

The Airports Corporation of Vietnam (ACV), with analysis from South Korea's Incheon Airport Consortium, has proposed two scenarios, both of which would change how Australians travel to the region.

The first plan involves redirecting all international traffic to the new airport, while the second divides by route length, allocating the current Tan Son Nhat most domestic and short-haul international flights.

If either option is actioned, it will likely mean that flights to and from Australia will land at the new airport, which is 40km away from downtown Ho Chi Minh.

## DISCOVER

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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Biz chop for public servants

**THE** Federal Government has confirmed public servants typically allowed to fly business on domestic trips will be restricted from flying the class between Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra from 07 Sep.

A statement issued by the Remuneration Tribunal confirmed the new policy, which is aimed at keeping government's travel-related costs down.

Chief executives of various government agencies and second tier commissioners like eSafety and privacy are among those to be impacted by the change, with some media reports suggesting the decision is likely to place pressure on more government servants to do the same.

The tribunal also said access to first-class international air travel for all officeholders will be prohibited after the aforementioned date, citing a need to fall in line with evolving community expectations.

The determination follows a call by the Department of Finance to improve flight bookings through



its TMC to ensure a wider and cheaper selection of flights are on offer for govt travel (**TD** 06 Aug).

That review also recommended government officials be banned from accepting any upgrades to first class, with the report concluding that upgrades more broadly should not be accepted unless required for important operational reasons.

While there is no word yet on any changes regarding lounge access, the Department of Finance also suggested exclusive lounge access was unduly influencing travel patterns in favour of major Aussie players Qantas and Virgin Australia. **AB**

### New lounges for KE

**SOUTH** Korea's Incheon Airport has debuted its fully redesigned Miler Club and Prestige East (Right) Lounge as part of the airport's expansion.

The revamped facility features high-end furnishings, enhanced dining options, and a hotel-style lobby segmenting guests into areas for relaxation, meetings, wellness or to enjoy a meal.

Incheon has also opened two new Prestige Garden Lounges at the far ends of the terminal.

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### AKTG returns home in style



**A&K** Travel Group's (AKTG) luxury lodge and camp collection, A&K Sanctuary, has announced the launch of a new property in Kenya's Amboseli region - the travel company's birthplace.

Flagged at the beginning of the year (**TD** 06 Jan), Kitirua Plains Lodge now has an opening date - 01 Jun 2026.

The safari retreat is set on a 128-acre private concession bordering Amboseli National Park, overlooking Mount Kilimanjaro and offering a front-row seat to see the herds of free-roaming elephants.

Kitirua features 13 sustainably designed standalone suites, including two with two bedrooms, as well as communal areas, a spa, gym, and swimming pool.

Guests can embark on daily game drives through open plains and seasonal wetlands, encountering elephants, lions, cheetahs, and an array of birdlife.

The new resort also offers cultural visits with the local Maasai community and experiences such as hot-air

ballooning over the savannah.

"Kitirua is a return to our roots, and a bold leap forward," said Cristina Levis, Chief Executive Officer of A&K.

Guests can experience Kitirua Plains Lodge as part of A&K's signature Tailor Made journeys or Small Group Journeys. **JM**

### Dinner fit for king

**HOLLAND** America Line (HAL) has introduced Koningstafel, a new six-course dining experience that offers a regal twist on the cruise line's Chef's Table offering.

Dutch for 'king's table', Koningstafel blends behind-the-scenes galley access with a multi-course feast, where each dish is introduced by the chef and paired with a wine selection, and kicking off with a cocktail reception.

Available on cruises 14 days or longer, the experience debuted on *Oosterdam* in Jul and will expand to *Westerdam*, *Zaandam* and *Volendam* over the next three months, with the rest of the fleet to follow in autumn 2026.

### Hickey FACTS talk

**WESTERN** Sydney International Airport CEO Simon Hickey will address the Festival of Aviation and Corporate Travel Summit (FACTS), which takes place from 25-26 Nov at ICC Sydney.

Hickey will share key milestones, operational insights and details ahead of WSI's opening in 2026.

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## SPECIALS

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**Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL)** is shining a spotlight on its collection of South Pacific cruises, which are currently on sale. Travellers can save up to \$2,500 on all sailings, while enjoying a bonus US\$200 onboard credit. The offer is available until 25 Aug - call 1300 255 200 for details.

Travellers can save \$4,800 per couple when they add a pre- or post-extension to a **Viking** river voyage by 01 Sep. There is also the option to book an extension to an ocean or expedition voyage, and save \$3,000 per couple. The incentive is available across Viking's wide range of 2026, 2027 and 2028 itineraries. Find out more [HERE](#).

**Laguna Lang Co**, an integrated resort in Vietnam, has unveiled summer 'Stay & Play' packages designed for golfers and families. Guests can choose from two value-packed golf holiday options: a three-night luxury getaway or an extended seven-night escape - both available at either Angsana Lang Co or Banyan Tree Lang Co. The packages are available to book now for stays until 31 Mar 2027. Visit [lagunalangco.com](http://lagunalangco.com) for more.

Cruise-goers can score 30% savings on combination sailings on select 2026 voyages with **Regent Seven Seas Cruises'** latest promotion. Available until 31 Aug, the discounts are available across multiple destinations, from Amsterdam to Rome, Vancouver to Seattle, Bali to Sydney, and more. Call 1300 455 200 for more information.

**Raffles Cambodia** has launched a new seven-day stay package, 'A Tale of Two Cities', which combines stays at Raffles Hotel Le Royal in Phnom Penh and Raffles Grand Hotel d'Angkor in Siem Reap. The experience includes an exploration of the ancient Khmer archaeological site of Angkor, a hot-air balloon ride above the temples of Angkor, and a private helicopter transfer between the two hotels. More details [HERE](#).

For bookings made by 31 Aug, travellers will receive a bonus luxury hotel stay with the latest offer from **Scenic**. On selected 2026 France river cruises, the brand is offering a bonus night in a luxury hotel plus economy flights included up to the value of \$2,900 per person. [CLICK HERE](#) to discover more deals from Scenic.

**Intrepid Travel** has kicked off its August World Sale, which offers up to 20% off some of its most popular small group trips. Savings can be enjoyed on trips across Asia, Central America, Africa, and beyond. The sale ends 22 Aug 2025, with travel dates available from 01 Sep to 14 Dec 2025. To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).

Until 31 Aug, travellers can save up to 40% on **Aurora Expeditions'** select 2026 small ship cruises. The promotion includes itineraries like the 12-day 'Valletta to Venice: An Adriatic Renaissance', which departs 17 Jul 2026 and calls into Split, Dubrovnik and San Marino. The savings are also available on the 10-day 'Classic Greece: To Antiquity and Beyond' cruise, which departs 07 Sep 2026. Contact 1800 637 688 to learn more.

## AW gives the VIP treatment



**ADVENTURE** World hosted a select group of NSW travel agents at a luxurious dinner at the QT Sydney earlier this week.

Attendees, who were selected for their performance and partnership, were treated to a Latin American-themed experience, from margaritas on arrival to lively Latino music and mindfully-made gifts from Ethik.

The highlight of the evening was the announcement of a major prize for an Ecuador and

Galapagos cruise, won by Maria & Turner Travel Associates.

"This evening is our way of saying 'thank you' to the advisors who are truly the heartbeat of our business," shared Elsa McLean, the new Head of Sales at Adventure World.

"Their dedication and passion for crafting incredible South American journeys for their clients inspire us every day." *JM*

## Diamonds on board

**OCEANIA** Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) have welcomed Diamonds International as their latest retail partner.

The jeweller debuted on board Oceania Cruises' recently launched ship *Oceania Allura*, giving guests access to more lifestyle brands, timepieces and a selection of jewellery in the fleet's onboard shops, including Swiss watchmaker Breitling.

Diamonds International will also be introduced by RSSC aboard *Seven Seas Mariner* following her upcoming refresh in late 2025.

## 70 expedition options

**SEABOURN** has unveiled its 2027-28 sailings, with 111 departures across 72 itineraries featuring 71 countries.

Highlights include the cruise line's first-ever pole-to-pole grand expedition - a 94-day journey from the High Arctic to Antarctica - and a 14-day solar eclipse sailing from Monte Carlo to Dubrovnik.

The season also features Antarctica and Arctic expeditions with ice landings, rare wildlife encounters and 'Caviar on the Ice' experiences, as well as remote Australian wilderness and cultural encounters in Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, and Easter Island.

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