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Travel Daily

First with the news

Wednesday 20th August 2025



MTA MOBILE TRAVEL AGENTS

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of industry news, plus a cover wrap from **Regent Seven Seas Cruises**, our **Luxury page** and a photo page from **Qatar Airways**.

AC gets airborne

AIR Canada is flying again after days of cancelled services due to an attendant strike surrounding wages and unpaid labour.

The resumption process includes flights departing Sydney (AC34) and Brisbane (AC36) on Fri 22 Aug.

The airline said it participated in mediation discussions on Tue, on the basis that the union commits to the airline's 10,000 flight attendants returning to work.

There are 155 flights scheduled to depart on 19 Aug from Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver across North America and to Europe, Asia and the South Pacific, including to Australia.

Inspiring more solo travel

INSPIRING Vacations will look to ride the wave of solo travel demand through its new range of small group tours designed exclusively for single travellers.

The operator's new Solo Journeys range provides those seeking to see the world alone with surcharge-free holiday options across popular destinations in Japan, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Africa and South America.

Included in the new travel category are return airfares, a guaranteed solo room with no single supplement, airport transfers, and expert local guides.

"Demand for solo travel is growing, and people of all ages, whether they are single or want to visit a destination their usual travel partners aren't interested in, for too long meant putting their dream holiday on hold," Inspiring Vacations Chief Executive Officer Paul Ryan said.

Prices lead in from \$4,495pp



for the 13-day 'Inspired Sri Lanka - A Solo Small Group Journey' trip, with extra costs applying for flights departing from hubs outside of SYD or MEL. **AB**

Passing the Batten

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has appointed Fiona Batten to the role of Senior Vice President, North America for its luxury touring brand Scott Dunn.

Batten has relocated from Australia to New York City for her new position, jumping across from a senior executive position within FCTG's growing independent Envoyage division.

Batten will bring plenty of travel experience to expanding Scott Dunn's reach in North America, having previously held the role of Director of Operations Australia at CTM for close to two years, as well as being Chief Operating Officer for Travel Beyond Group.

"With a strong foundation already established in San Diego and New York, I am excited to help drive Scott Dunn's expansion across the US," Batten said.

FCTG is currently pursuing a strong expansion strategy in the United States, which has included folding Liberty Travel into its Envoyage division this year to make it the principal leisure brand (**TD** 22 May).

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CLIENTS can enjoy big savings when they combine two consecutive sailings with Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

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AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND UNLOCKED

TTC unveils power play

THE Travel Corporation's (TTC) Uniworld, Contiki and Trafalgar are set to become "power brands", as private equity firm Apollo pours further investment into the businesses as part of a restructure, announced by Uniworld Managing Director Alice Ager last night.

While the travel giant was previously organised around its brands and travel style, the restructure will put the guest "even deeper at the heart of our business", Ager said.

At Uniworld, the team will oversee the Luxury Gold hotel business, giving the river cruise line the "superpower" to combine the experiences together from 2027 onwards.

"It's fabulous, it's beautiful,



five-star boutique hotels, [with] Michelin star dining experiences included, and this will become part of our portfolio," Ager said.

In addition, Uniworld will increase its ship capacity by 40% over the next five years and currently has eight new-build ships under order, including the *SS Emilie*, arriving in Mar.

Apollo is also keen to beef up Uniworld's marketing and tech systems in order to "bring our brand to life".

Partnerships will play a major role in Uniworld's future, such as its new collaborations with Seabourn and Aqua Expeditions.

The line has already chartered an Aqua ship to Peru, and next will be *Aqua Blu* in Indonesia, with departures in 2027.

Uniworld will also focus on India this coming year, a destination that Ager described as "transformational" and one that "just cracked my heart open".

"Uniworld is going to be taken to another level - we'll be chasing the luxury traveller like never before," said Ager.

"We're evolving into a travel company that offers all the things to a luxury guest." JHM

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Wonder no more

THE mystery about where *Disney Wonder* will be redeployed after she indefinitely exits the Australian market is over, with Disney Cruise Line (DCL) confirming she will service Californian waters in 2026/27.

After her final Aussie deployment this summer (**TD** 11 Aug), *Wonder* will join *Disney Magic* in San Diego, offering three- to seven-night itineraries between Oct 2026 and Apr 2027, stopping at Catalina Island in California, as well as Cabo San Lucas, Ensenada and Mexico.

DCL is offering Australians a range of attractive promotions to enjoy *Wonder* while she still in local waters - see **HERE** for more.



Get priority access

PRIORITY booking access for inaugural sailings with Celebrity River Cruises in 2027 will open at 11pm AEST on 03 Sep.

Guests who place a refundable \$800 deposit will receive early access to book a 2027 sailing ahead of the general public, and be among the first to receive the highly anticipated itinerary and stateroom details.

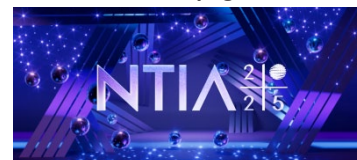
To join Priority Booking Access, visit **HERE** for more details.

Clean Cruising cleans up at NTIAs

CLEAN Cruising has enjoyed stellar recognition at the NTIAs, being nominated for four categories at the 2025 ceremony.

The full judged list - which was released today (**TD** breaking news), has the agency in the running to win Most Outstanding Travel Consultant Leisure, Sam Renvoye; Most Outstanding Employee Engagement and Recruitment Program; Most Outstanding Independent Leisure Travel Agency; and Sustainability Award - ATIA Accredited Agency.

More details on **page four**.



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eRoam seeks investor

EXCLUSIVE

TRAVEL tech start-up eRoam is hopeful of finding a suitable investor to get its business back on track after recently entering voluntary administration (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

A marketing campaign is now running through its administrators Worrells to encourage interested parties to take a close look at investing in the business, with Chair Martin Cowley (**pictured**) stating the struggling business has plenty of positive growth attributes.

"We just got to a tipping point in terms of uptake where we really had a very strong pipeline, multiple clients on approach in Europe, the Middle East and in Australia, and we were taken out mid-flight really," Cowley explained to **Travel Daily**.

One of the reasons for eRoam management pulling the trigger on voluntary administration was operating losses associated with scaling the business, which Cowley conceded had become unsustainable.

"These things can happen in early-stage tech companies which can run out of runway for various reasons, but the prudent thing when you are a director of a company is when you realise that you are going to run out [of runway], you take the necessary steps to try and protect the company," Cowley said.



The development has seen the majority of its staff become no longer formally employed by the business while it searches for key investment from the market.

Staff impacted include General Manager Commercial and Operations Paul Hole, Product Lead David Hunter, IT and Business Manager Graeme Meacock, Global Head of Commercial Maxine Wiggs, and Regional Sales Manager Issy Limn.

Cowley said one of the objectives of future investment will be to bring the team back together and keep delivering eRoam's technology to its growing up-take of users.

One of the major selling points of eRoam is its technology that reduces the time to create complex itineraries from six to eight hours to under 10 minutes.

"The tragedy is we are at that point where we have got a fantastic technology product.

"Anybody we demonstrated this technology to loved it...and eRoam is really answering all the questions that travel agents are asking," Cowley added. **AB**

Tourism high quality

AUSTRALIAN tourism operators are punching well above their weight according to data from the latest Shiji Reviewpro Reputation benchmarking data.

Operators that are part of the Quality Tourism Framework (QTF) earned Global Review Index (GRI) guest satisfaction scores of 89.5% - that's compared to the global average of 86.9% and the regional benchmark of 83.8%.

The GRI is a score that combines and averages guest ratings and reviews from multiple online platforms, providing an overall measure of a business's reputation and customer satisfaction rating.

As part of their participation in the QTF, businesses receive complimentary access to Shiji Reviewpro Reputation, enabling them to easily monitor online reviews across multiple platforms and respond promptly.

New Celestyal tool

THE new 'Celestyal Sail & Stay' tool on the cruise line's trade site now allows agents to easily book cruise and land packages both at time of booking or at a later date.

Agents have the ability to book pre- and post-cruise hotel accommodation for their guests at 18 properties in Athens, with private transfers included.

Helpful downloadable guides are also available for several of the Athens locations where the hotels are situated, including Omonoia Square, Metaxourgio and Glyfada Riviera.

"We've launched this new solution specifically with our valued travel agent community in mind," said Jarrod Zurvas, Director of Business Development Asia Pacific.

"All elements of our 'Celestyal Sail and Stay' packages are commissionable so advisors can reap the rewards alongside delivering exceptional value and peace of mind for their guests."

Click **HERE** to visit the site.

Travelmarvel offers

TRAVELMARVELS' 'Fly Free Europe 2026 Sale' is on now, offering river cruise guests free return flights on Qatar Airways.

Available from 19 Aug to 10 Sep 2025, the initiative features cruises starting from just \$6,795 per person.

The travel brand also recently launched its brand new 2026/27 small group tours collection, offering guests a more intimate way to travel on a wide range of new itineraries across Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.

Each tour has a maximum of 24 guests, focusing on more local, authentic experiences, exploring plenty of sites that are inaccessible for larger groups.

Click **HERE** to explore the tours.



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with AAT Kings Head of Product, John Navarro

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Boomers budgeting

MOST Australian seniors believe holidays are becoming more difficult to afford, with nine in 10 admitting they select travel destinations with strict budgeting in mind.

The *Grey Gap Year Report 2025* commissioned by Australian Seniors found that despite cost constraints, 92% of older Aussies are willing to cut back on other spending to prioritise travel.

While 70% of seniors are tapping into their savings to fund travel plans, many other areas of spend is being curtailed to free up the travel budget.

These include clothes, dining out, entertainment, subscriptions, coffee, and home renovations.



NTIA judged noms out

THE finalists for the most outstanding (judged) categories for the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) have been revealed, in what ATIA has described as one of "the closest-run competitions in recent memory" (*TD* breaking news).

So close was the judging in some categories that an additional round of examination took place for the hotly contested categories of Most Outstanding Sales Executive for Air, Cruise, Tour Operator and Wholesaler.

"The closeness of the scoring - in some cases only a handful of points between finalists - speaks to the exceptional talent, innovation and dedication driving our industry forward," ATIA CEO Dean Long said.

Some of the hard fought contests on travel's night of nights will include Most Outstanding Travel Agency Manager, with Christine Bottrell, Ashmore,



Harris & James Travel Associates; Kerby Hasler, Sanford Travel; Michael Schischka, Mary Rossi Travel; Michelle Everson, Jamison Travel; and Sonia Jones, Sonia Jones Travel battling it out.

The coveted Most Outstanding Branded Travel Agency Group award will see Flight Centre, Helloworld Travel, itravel, and Travel Associates vie for the nod.

Meanwhile, the Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Global award will be decided between APT Luxury Travel, G Adventures, Intrepid Travel, Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, and TTC Tour Brands.

View the complete list all of the nominations **HERE**. AB



Window Seat

THE African Union believes the continent is being short-changed by old maps that make the destination look smaller than it really is.

Pointing to the commonly used 16th-century Mercator map (**pictured**), the Union said it exaggerates regions near the poles like North America and Greenland, while shrinking Africa and South America.

The Union argued for a replacement map which does not make Africa look "marginal", despite being the second-largest continent.



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A&K's got five on the Nile



A&K Travel Group's luxury safari camp brand, A&K Sanctuary, has unveiled its fifth luxury Nile riverboat, first announced last year (**TD** 11 Jan 2024).

Launching in 2026, *Nile Seray* (pictured) will sail between Aswan and Luxor on four-night voyages that "transport guests back in time to Ancient Egypt".

With a capacity of 64 guests across 32 generously sized suites, each has a seating area beside floor-to-ceiling windows,

a waterside Juliet balcony, and large bathroom.

Nile Seray also boasts two restaurants, a spa and gym, and a top deck with canopied daybeds, a swimming pool, and an outdoor bar and lounge.

Each sailing will take guests to some of the most iconic tombs on the West Bank of the Nile, including Nefertari, Seti I, Ramses VI, and King Tutankhamu.

"*Nile Seray* represents the evolution of our nearly five decades of pioneering river cruising in the waters of Egypt," Cristina Levis, Chief Executive Officer of AKTG enthused.

"This vessel embodies our understanding that luxury today is defined not by excess, but by space, authenticity, and the quality of experience."

To get notified when bookings open, travellers can register their interest **HERE**. *JM*

A320 flies past B737

THE workhorse of Australian skies, Boeing's 737 family of planes, is set to be eclipsed as the most-delivered commercial airliner in the world, according to media reports.

Airbus' A320 series of planes, set up as a challenger to the 737 back in 1980, is about to surpass its nemesis, with data from Airbus showing it has delivered around 12,155 A320-family jets as of mid-August 2025, while Boeing's 737 program, which was launched in 1967, has delivered roughly 12,171 aircraft since launch.

It is expected that within weeks, Airbus will take the crown.

Qantas has helped somewhat with its backing of the A320 family, having placed orders for 45 A320neos, 28 A321LRs and 36 A321XLRs, with the first of the latter arriving recently.

Virgin Australia, meanwhile, has backed the Boeing 737 with orders of the MAX 8 and 10.

Less-known Europe

AGENTS are invited to tune into the 'What's new at Ormina' webinar next week on 27 Aug at 4pm AEST.

During the 30min session, agents will hear about the tour brand's newest 2026 itineraries designed to explore Europe's lesser-known regions, including Puglia and Sardinia.

The webinar will also cover Ormina's expanded Port Series, which combines river and ocean cruises with exclusive land tours.

Click **HERE** to register.

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ATIA UPDATE

from Jenny Le, National Manager Events & Corporate Partnerships



THE excitement almost never ends for the ATIA member services team as we celebrate some key milestones.

We have launched the People's Choice Competition with News Travel Network, sold out for Beyond Borders, and announced the NTIA finalists for the voted and judged categories. Phew! And with eight weeks to go until our national headline events, things are only going to get busier.

Soon, we will be announcing the details of our NTIA Finalist Celebration, an exclusive cocktail event for our finalists and industry leaders.

This networking opportunity, supported by Viking, is designed to celebrate their achievements in anticipation of the main event.

We are also gearing up for the second round of NTIA judging.

Finalists in the Most Outstanding categories undergo a rigorous two-step judging process which speaks to their achievements over the past 12 months and their future ambitions.

This approach truly ensures that the best of the best go on to become NTIA winners.

Demand for this year's NTIA gala dinner tickets have also been remarkable, with 600 tickets currently sold and a growing waitlist, putting us on track for another sold-out event.

It is with this level of demand, and support from major sponsor Singapore Airlines, that reinforces NTIA's reputation as the travel industry's night of nights - to stay up to date with all things ATIA and NTIA, follow us on Facebook **HERE** and LinkedIn **HERE**.

It is here where we will be rolling out teasers, behind-the-scenes action, and other exciting announcements.

New BDM drives in

DRIVEAWAY has hired a new Business Development Manager for Queensland and the Northern Territory in Simone Barnett.

Her role will focus on providing training, sharing insights and working closely with agents.

Barnett has 20 years of travel industry experience under her belt and has worked at Discover the World and Philippine Airlines.

"[Barnett's] extensive industry knowledge, passion for sales, and strong relationships within the trade make her an invaluable addition," enthused Nathan Baber, National Industry Sales Manager at DriveAway.

Nordic roadshow

TIME is running out to register for 50 Degrees North's Nordic Roadshow, taking place in Melbourne (21 Oct) and Sydney (23-24 Oct).

The event will feature leading operators from Norway and Finland including Arctic TreeHouse Hotel, Aurora Village, Destination Lapland (Nivunki Village), Hattvika Lodge, Nordic Hotels and Resorts and more.

Also on offer will be networking lunches, expo-style sessions and evening events to give attendees the opportunity to connect and build relationships with suppliers.

Click **HERE** to register by 01 Sep.

Qatar Airways cheers on the Sydney Swans at the SCG

AS THE official international airline partner of the Sydney Swans for nine consecutive years, Qatar Airways proudly celebrated the Sydney Swans' final home game of the AFL season at the iconic Sydney Cricket Ground over the weekend.

Qatar Airways was joined by key trade and corporate partners for a memorable match-day experience.

Congratulations to the Sydney Swans on a great season and good luck to the team for their final game this weekend in Perth.

THE 'Get Travel Ready' final race winner will enjoy economy-class flights to Europe.



QATAR Airways' guests enjoy the Chairman's Lounge.



QATAR Airways' guests cheer on the Sydney Swans during the Guard of Honour.



HANGING out with Sydney Swans' Robbie Fox.



A MEET-AND-GREET with Sydney Swans player, Robbie Fox.

A&K SNAPS UP BIG BRAND COLLAB

ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) has confirmed a significant brand collaboration with high-end camera manufacturer Leica Camera AG.

Guests staying at A&K's Sanctuary portfolio of camps, lodges and riverboats will be provided with Leica equipment that is generally only used by professionals and enthusiasts.

The partnership will provide A&K guests with access to Leica Camera's renowned optical technology, giving them opportunities to catch lasting memories of the wildlife around them in sharp detail.

Each guest and guide will be equipped with a pair of Leica binoculars as well, for close-up encounters with some of the unique animals in the areas - from big cats and great apes



to herds of elephants and the abundant colourful bird life across Africa and South America.

To ensure guests get the most out of the Leica equipment, A&K will provide specialised Leica training for its guides so they can assist their guests.

Cristina Levis, CEO of A&K Travel Group, said, "This partnership will allow our guests to connect with the natural world on a deeper level and create memories that

will last a lifetime."

MEANWHILE, A&K's luxury riverboat in the Amazon Basin, Pure Amazon, has begun sailing on the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve in the Peruvian Amazon.

As reported previously (**TD 17 Jul**), the riverboat comprises 10 suites and two single cabins, indoor and outdoor lounges, a dining room, a wellness room plus gym, and offers three- and four-night voyages. *DF*

VIRTUOSO WINS

AUSTRALIA has performed on the global stage at the Virtuoso Travel Week Annual Gala & Cruise Awards.

Two Australian agencies were recognised, with Best Agency Culture going to Spencer Travel, while Donna Jones of Mobile Travel Agents walked away with Most Admired Advisor for the Australasia region.

"It's an incredible honour to be recognised on such a respected international stage," Jones said.

"Being part of the MTA family has given me the support, flexibility and global network to deliver the very best experiences for my clients and I couldn't be more thrilled."

WIN FOR SKIERS TO THE ASPEN SLOPES

TRAVELLERS heading to the popular US ski destination of Aspen, Colorado, will get a welcome upgrade if they are flying with Delta Airlines.

A haven for the luxury traveller with a skiing habit during the Australian summer, Aspen will now be served by more spacious Skywest-operated Embraer jets from Los Angeles and Atlanta, replacing the smaller CRJ-700s.

The aircraft offers a larger interior, more luggage space,



a more comfortable ride into the mountainous areas, and are easier for baggage handlers to load and unload quickly - important when you're in a rush to hit the slopes.

Safari on the up

SIX figure bookings have increased 26% year-on-year (YOY) for SmartFlyer travel advisors, according to the business in its latest travel trends report.

The report singled out safari itineraries as creating a significant amount of that surge, up 22% YOY alone.

Safari provided "transformational travel", the report stated, fostering "a deep connection to conservation efforts".

ATLAS CALLS JEEVES

ATLAS Ocean Voyages has announced the Concierge Collection accommodation category that adds an upgraded level of amenities.

Beginning 02 Apr 2026, the enhancement reclassifies three existing stateroom categories under a new Junior Suite designation.

The new amenities include welcome canapés, priority access to a behind-the-scenes gallery tour with tasting, one complimentary bag of wash-and-fold laundry service, and more.

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ACCOMMODATION

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Minor Hotels has opened its first hotel in Peru. With 243 rooms across 13 floors, **nhow Lima** merges creativity, local culture and avant-garde style, with a focus on comfort and wellbeing. The property features Zonico, a fine dining restaurant that offers a reinterpretation of Latin American cuisine, and an outdoor pool bar. The hotel also places a strong emphasis on the MICE segment with 11 multifunctional event spaces.



Chedi Hospitality has announced its debut in Japan with **The Chedi Niseko**, a boutique hotel in the alpine skiing region of Hirafu, Niseko. Set for completion in Jun 2029, the property marks the brand's re-entry into Asia, providing travellers with access to world-class slopes, culinary offerings, and year-round outdoor activities. As part of the pre-opening strategy, Chedi Hospitality will unveil a series of seasonal culinary activations over the next three winters.



Melia Pattaya Hotel has unveiled a 'hotel within a hotel' called The Level, which sets apart 38 rooms and suites as well as a private lounge and a host of privileges. Guests staying in The Level - which is housed on the upper floors of the new 12-storey hotel - experience extra benefits, including exclusive lounge access, a private breakfast service, flexible check-in and check-out in a private reception area, use of a meeting room, and more.



La Residence Phou Vao in Luang Prabang has closed to undergo a renovation. Upon reopening in Nov 2025, the heritage boutique hotel will boast updated interiors, with all suites to receive a complete makeover, featuring rebuilt bathrooms and bespoke furnishings. Other updates include a new French restaurant and a refreshed cultural program, led by local historians and tastemakers.



Part of Accor's Ennismore collective, hotel brand **Mama Shelter** will make its debut in Asia next month, with the opening of **Mama Shelter Singapore**. Located in the Somerset district, the 115-room property will feature a vibrant design, with neon signage, colourful murals and eclectic furnishings. Guests will find an open-plan lobby, restaurant and island bar, arcade games, and regular live entertainment.

A Brilliant breakthrough



VIRGIN Voyages has announced the debut of its long-awaited fourth vessel, *Brilliant Lady*, after a series of delays.

Initially flagged to launch around two years ago (**TD** 28 Apr 2022), the cruise line was forced to push back the date of the ship's maiden voyage due to construction, supply chain, and staffing challenges.

This week, *Brilliant Lady* arrived at Portsmouth International Port in the UK, ahead of her first commercial sailing, which departs for New York tomorrow.

"Portsmouth has become a meaningful part of our journey; it is where we introduced *Scarlet Lady* to the world and - four years later - where we're celebrating the arrival of *Brilliant Lady*," said Nirmal Saverimuttu, Chief Executive of Virgin Voyages.

While in the city, the ship's crew will host 20 careers specialists from schools and colleges from across England, so they can educate their students on careers in the cruise industry.

Brilliant Lady, which can accommodate around 2,770 passengers, will embark on four

'MerMaiden' voyages, starting on 05 Sep from New York City to Bermuda, before heading to Miami, where she will offer a Caribbean cruise from 17 Oct.

The ship will then sail from LA to west coast destinations from 05 Apr 2026, and from Seattle to Alaska from 21 May 2026.

There are currently no announced itineraries that include Australia or NZ, which is not surprising given Virgin Voyages' decision to cancel *Resilient Lady's* 2024/25 season (**TD** 27 Feb 2024). *JM*

Aurora sale still on

AURORA Expeditions has extended its Antarctica sale, which offers up to 40% off select 2025/26 voyages.

Now available until 30 Sep 2025 due to popular demand, the discounts apply to bookings made in select category B staterooms and above.

There are also special offers up for grabs for solo travellers on select 2025/26 Antarctic and Arctic & Beyond voyages.

CLICK HERE for more details.