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**Emirates**

## EK's big sports trip

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## CTM out of ASX200

**CORPORATE** Travel Management (CTM) has fallen out of the ASX200 in the wake of its ongoing auditing scandal. The business is one of six companies that will be officially removed from the Index just before Christmas.

## VA, CZ sign codeshare

**CHINA** Southern and Virgin Australia have signed a codeshare agreement, launching early 2026 (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

The partnership will boost CZ's network coverage in Oceania, allowing passengers to travel to Australian cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Darwin, from which they can access 17 destinations in Vanuatu, Australia and New Zealand.

"Going forward, CZ and VA will continue to explore new opportunities for international



cooperation, unlocking more appealing destinations for our passengers," Zhang Dongsheng, CZ's Deputy Director General of the Commercial Steering Committee, said.

Meanwhile, Alistair Hartley, VA's Chief Strategy and Transformation Officer, noted the importance of the fast-growing China tourism market for Australia.

"This partnership will open up more opportunities for visitors arriving on China Southern's services to effectively connect across the Virgin Australia network" he said.

It is VA's first codeshare agreement with a Chinese carrier since Bain bought it in 2020 (**TD** 07 Sep 2020). *JHM*

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features eight pages of industry news, including our **Sustainability** page, a cover wrap from **Emirates**, plus a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

## Ponant incentives

**TRAVEL** advisors are being given the chance to turn their peak season bookings into the ultimate reward.

Every traveller an advisor books on Ponant Explorations or Paul Gauguin Cruises through the company's holiday offer will see them entered into a bucket-list Arctic expedition in Jul.

Discover all the voyages applicable to the offer **HERE**.

## Inspiring Black Fri

**INSPIRING** Vacations' Black Fri sale is in its final days, with 10% off sitewide ending tomorrow.

Travellers can score an extra 5% on last-minute savings - **page 10**.

## Gregor & Lewis

BESPOKE TRAVEL

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Gregor & Lewis Bespoke Travel is an awarding winning boutique travel agency located in Noosa Heads on the beautiful Sunshine Coast. We are family owned, specialising in small ship & expedition cruising, as well as luxury travel to all corners of the globe. We are looking for an experienced leisure travel consultant to join our team. We are part of the LINK Travel Group and a Virtuoso member.

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when experience matters

## Intrepid's buy goes wild

**INTREPID** Travel's acquisition quest has continued this week, with the Aussie operator purchasing Wild Bush Luxury from Experience Co for \$5.1 million (**TD** breaking news).

The divestment to Intrepid was made via a share purchase agreement following a strategic review of Experience Co's assets started last year.

Alongside the tourism assets acquired, Intrepid has also purchased the rights to develop future experiences in New South Wales and Tasmania.

Wild Bush Luxury's portfolio of experiences include the Arkaba Homestead and Walk in South Australia, Bamurru Plains in the Northern Territory, and The Maria Island Walk in Tasmania.

Experience Co CEO John O'Sullivan said that while Wild Bush Luxury had been a "much-loved" part of its portfolio since 2021, it is a boutique asset which the company no longer considers to be core to its operations.

O'Sullivan also noted Intrepid's strong eco credentials in being able to take the Wild Bush Luxury brand to new heights.

"Intrepid Travel has a global reputation for sustainable tourism, a commitment to conservation, and deep expertise in delivering immersive, nature-based travel experiences - qualities that make them the right partner [for the brand] in the longer term."

The current General Manager



of Wild Bush Luxury is Ben Brown, and Experience Co's announcement has confirmed he will shift across to Intrepid as part of the acquisition.

Intrepid has been beefing up its portfolio over the last couple of years, most recently taking full control of Kiwi small group operator Haka Tours (**TD** 06 Aug).

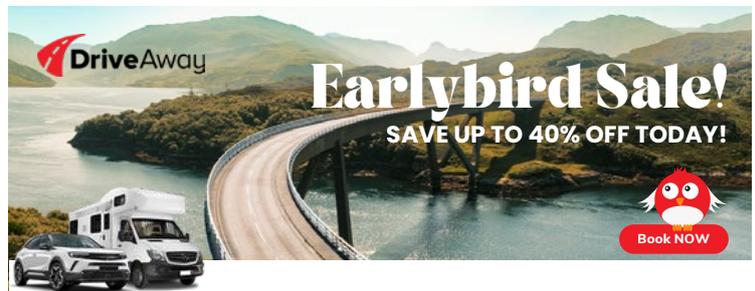
The operator also took full ownership of WA-based adventure tourism business and DMC Jump Out Of Bed in Jul (**TD** 01 Jul), and Dutch tour operator Sawadee Reizen at the start of the year (**TD** 05 Feb).

Boutique properties are also high on the radar for future acquisitions, with Intrepid flagging 20 planned purchases over the next three years. **AB**

### QF eyes Vegas direct

**QANTAS** CEO of International Cam Wallace has hinted a direct flight linking Australia and Las Vegas is on the road map after seeing solid demand for the city spurred by sporting events.

Speaking with *Executive Traveller*, Wallace confirmed Vegas was a "target city" for both Qantas and Jetstar, but conceded it was unlikely to be on its network in the near-term.



### TruTravels sales head

**TRUTRAVELS** has appointed James Lavin as its new Head of Commercial Australia & New Zealand, relocating from the company's UK head office to take up the newly-created position.

Lavin will be charged with driving brand growth, deepening relationships with retail partners, and providing dedicated face-to-face support to agents.

"Back in the UK, I focused on sales support and training, now I get to take everything I was doing there and actually put it into practice on the ground," he said.

TruTravels noted the appointment will play a key role in strengthening the company's global strategy, ensuring the ANZ market receives the dedicated representation it deserves.

"It's a big step in making sure all our key regions feel connected, supported and heard, and I'm really excited to meet as many agents as possible and show that we're here to be genuine partners," Lavin added.

### SQ adjusts Oz in 26

**SINGAPORE** Airlines has made several adjustments to its 2026-27 schedule for Australia, providing added frequencies.

From 03 Dec 2026 to 31 Jan 2027, the carrier will increase its Adelaide services to 12 times weekly, up from the current 10, while Cairns flights will shift to daily from four times a week from 01 Dec 2026.

Premium economy class options will also touch down in Brisbane from 01 Nov 2026, with a 24-seat premium cabin to be offered on one of SQ's four daily BNE flights.

### Half price Celestyal

**CELESTYAL** has unveiled a new seasonal campaign offering with savings of up to 50% on 2026 sailings departing between Dec 2025 and Oct 2027.

The promotion also offers select sailings with additional bonuses of up to €500 in CelestyalPay credit, which can be used on the ship and on land excursions.



## The new art of travel

A NEW brand called The Artful Travellers is aiming to combine Australia's major events and festivals with adventure and boutique travel experiences.

Founded by producer, performer and Wynnum Fringe Director Tom Oliver, The Artful Travellers' itineraries offer guests insider access to events, such as invitations to opening nights and dinners with performers.

The brand's first itinerary, developed with Ghost Light Global NYC, will take a small group of 16 guests on a six-day immersion of the Adelaide Fringe in Feb 2026.

"Festivals are living ecosystems built by artists, locals and the teams who bring the work to life," Oliver said.

"When travellers get to meet those people, share a meal with them or experience a show through their eyes, the journey becomes personal."

Click **HERE** to find out more.

## Crompton in da house

TRAVELMANAGERS parent company House of Travel Australia has appointed a heavy hitter as its new Chair, with Judith Crompton (**pictured**) replacing NZ-based David Coombes.

Crompton has been on the House of Travel board as a Non-Executive Director since Feb (**TD** 13 Feb), and brings to the table extensive travel executive experience in the Aussie market.

That included over four years as Virgin Australia's Chief Commercial Officer before it was bought by Bain Capital, and most recently as CEO of APAC for Cover-More Group's travel insurance business.

TravelManagers CEO Joe Araullo said Crompton's focus on unlocking growth and innovation opportunities cemented her as the best candidate for the role.

"We are confident that Judith's new leadership position will play a major role in shaping



TravelManagers' and Hoot Holidays' next phase of growth and ensuring that we remain strongly positioned for the future," Araullo said.

Her remit will also include growing its in-house wholesale division Fastbook, which plays an important role in House of Travel Australia's broader offering.

Crompton said she is also proud to become the first woman to hold the Chairperson role, which she described as marking "an important milestone that signals a positive future for the leadership of the organisation."

Her board experience is varied, currently sitting on six, including BESydney, SkyBus, and Europ Assistance ANZ. AB

## Passport fee waiver

CONTIKI is offering to cover the \$412 passport fee for its guests without a passport who wish to book a European trip of 13 days or longer.

The new initiative follows Contiki's research revealing that the passport process is a key barrier for 94% of 18-35-year-old travellers who want an overseas holiday, while 20% said they struggle with the cost of it.

In fact, 38% of the survey respondents said they had cancelled, delayed or reconsidered travel because of the cost of getting a passport.

"Covering the world's most expensive passport is our way of helping young people take that first step towards the adventure of a lifetime - building on everything Contiki stands for in terms of making travel more accessible to young people," Toni Ambler, Chief Customer Officer for Contiki explained.

Click **HERE** for more details.

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## Explore more of the odd

A NEW Australian player has launched, pledging to deliver travellers unique small-group experiences to some of the quietest corners of the globe.

Oddtrips is based in Melbourne and founded by Kazakhstan-born Sasha Fidler (pictured), who was inspired to start the business based on her “deep personal connections to places that often sit off the typical tourist map”.

The boutique operator offers travellers private self-guided, small-group journeys across destinations such as Kyrgyzstan, Japan, and Indonesia, seeking out remote villages, nature trails and coastlines away from the mass tourism market.

Oddtrips has appointed former Inspiring Vacations Senior Product Manager Paul Hocking as its General Manager, who also brings experience to the table from brands such as Uber and APT. The brand said it is backed by



a team of industry experts with more than 15 years of experience in tourism, operations, and product development, and is accredited by the Australian Travel Industry Association.

“We wanted to create something that gives smaller operators a voice and gives travellers more meaningful options,” Fidler said.

“There’s so much beauty beyond the usual tourist routes, and we want people to see that travel can be independent, local, and deeply human,” she added.

For more details, check out the Oddtrips website [HERE](#). AB

## Sydney's festive rush

SYDNEY Airport is preparing for the annual rush of festive travellers, with 5.84 million passengers expected to pass through the airport’s gates over the holiday season.

This year is anticipated to be the busiest Christmas period for international travel ever, with 2.7 million passengers expected, as well as 3.14 million domestic pax.

Sydney in particular is experiencing record international demand, up 6.5% year-on-year, while domestic numbers are up 3% on the same period last year.

The peak day for international travel will be 03 Jan 2026, while domestic travel will be busiest 12 Dec 2025.

The most popular destinations include New Zealand, China, the United States, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, Chief Executive Scott Charlton explained, with many passengers continuing on to Europe, Africa, or Asia.

## TransNusa domestic

INDONESIAN airline TransNusa is ending the year with the launch of four new domestic flights from Bali to Lombok and Bima, as well as Manado to Sorong, and Sorong to Timika.

The airline is focusing on international tourism destinations to offer international foreign travellers increased connectivity.

Sales started last week, while flights will launch on 15 Dec.

## TIME for a change

THE Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) has appointed a new Program Manager, with Belinda Montgomery to begin her role this month.

She brings more than two decades of travel industry experience, spanning general sales agents, wholesalers, technology platforms, and more.

Montgomery replaces Marie Allom, who held the position for 15 years.

“It’s real exploration, an expedition.”

*Philip*

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## Reinvigoration lies ahead for Princess

**EXCLUSIVE**

A **BRAND** reinvestment is on the horizon for Princess Cruises, as the business deep dives into understanding its core guests, Global President Gus Antorcha revealed to *Travel Daily*.

“We’ve done a lot of consumer research and I’ve spoken to a lot of guests - I’ve been on a lot of ships to really understand what makes Princess unique and where we have an advantage,” said Antorcha, who joined a year ago (*TD* 27 Nov 2024).

“Our organisation has gained a greater understanding of our core guest [and] we’re really outlining a path to reinvigorate the brand and that’s not just out of North America - that’s globally.”

Known as ‘voyagers’, Princess’ core customers are over 50 and passionate about cruising and connecting with different cultures, as well as other passengers and crew - it aligns



with the findings that came out of its research into Australian visitors who like to travel in an “elevated and elegant” way.

Given this appetite for travel, now that *Discovery Princess* is homeporting in Australia until April next year (*TD* 08 Dec), it also makes fly-cruise a great opportunity for local passengers, noted Antorcha, whether they want to explore Europe, Alaska, Japan or the Mediterranean, where the cruise line is deployed.

The Princess chief also commented on the “remarkable” innovation coming out of the

sector more widely, particularly Carnival Cruise Lines (“I mean, they put a rollercoaster on a ship”), as well as Princess’ Royal- and Sphere-Class vessels.

“The market has really become more differentiated,” he said, pointing to how Carnival serves a contemporary market and Princess is more premium, while Holland America Line offers long, grand journeys.

“Each of us has really evolved the product and our messaging and marketing for different segments,” Antorcha observed.

“I want to make sure that as we continue to innovate, we’re doing it with the right lens, [making] sure we understand our target guests and innovate and improve on experiences that match that segment,” he said. *JHM*

**Pictured:** Antorcha on board *Discovery Princess*, which celebrated her 50th anniversary in Sydney on the weekend.

## IndiGo still in chaos

**INDIAN** carrier IndiGo is now in its eighth day of cancelling hundreds of flights, leaving thousands of passengers stranded due to pilot shortages.

IndiGo failed to plan for new rules limiting pilots’ work hours, with the gov offering relief and additional training to assist with what has been reported as Indigo’s biggest crisis ever.

On Sun, the airline said that its operations would fully stabilise by 10 Dec and that most of its network had been restored.

However, almost 500 IndiGo flights were cancelled yesterday at various airports, including Mumbai and Kolkata, which experienced major disruptions.

The airline is offering refunds and full waivers on cancellations and reschedule requests for bookings until 15 Dec.

Given the cancellations, fares on flights operated by other airlines has risen, although the gov is capping fares to manage prices.

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## Asia leading for Xmas hols

**AMONG** the 27% of Australians heading off internationally over the Christmas holidays, travellers are mostly venturing to popular Asian destinations, according to new data released by Webjet.

Asia dominated the top 10 destinations booked for the festive season (13 Dec-24 Jan), with Bali (**pictured**), Tokyo, the Philippines, and Ho Chi Minh City taking out the top four spots.

Fiji rounded out the top five, with six through to 10 populated by Bangkok, London, Singapore, Los Angeles, and Samoa - new to the list this year.

Urban destinations reign supreme on the domestic front, with Melbourne, Brisbane, Sydney, the Gold Coast, Adelaide, Perth, and Hobart occupying the top seven spots, with Cairns, the Sunshine Coast, and Launceston rounding out the top 10.

Those headed farther afield are observing the "go hard or go



home" motto, Webjet observed, with travellers staying on average 16 days in international destination, versus an average of seven days for domestic trips.

Solo travellers are most likely to be jetting away, making up 47% of flight bookings made for the festive period so far, followed by couples (27%), families (14%), and groups (12%).

"Aussies are eager to go somewhere for the festive season, and we're seeing strong demand both at home and overseas," Chief Executive Officer and MD Katrina Barry said.

"Long-haul hotspots like London and LA remain popular, but we're also seeing growing love for the Pacific Islands," she added. *MS*

## itravel rocks Xmas

**ITRAVEL** has celebrated a year of growth at its annual Christmas celebration this year in Sydney.

The travel agency network came together for its annual commemorations at Barrio Cellar, bringing in advisors from around Australia, as well as members of head office and supplier partners.

Important milestones were marked during the celebratory evening, including the growth of the network, which added four new mobile members just last month (*TD* 14 Nov).

"It was great to bring our network, supplier partners, and head office team together to acknowledge a standout year for itravel," Chief Executive Officer Steve Labroski said.



## Window Seat

**A CONTROVERSIAL** six-metre statue has once again been erected in Manchester, after the local council had previously banned it.

The dubious landmark (**pictured**), which depicts a naked man in a state of arousal, has returned to its locale outside a vintage shop.

It was first hoisted in the location three years ago before complaints saw the statue go flaccid.

While it is unclear whether the town is excited about its return, it's clear the statue certainly is.



## Explore Italy in Style with Trenitalia Frecciarossa.

The high-speed Frecciarossa train connects major Italian cities such as Milan, Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples.

### Executive: the pinnacle of comfort and exclusivity.

The Executive Carriage accommodates 10 passengers on the beautiful 74 cm wide armchairs covered in champagne-coloured leather. Armchairs are arranged on two rows, guaranteeing a window seat with 1.5m distance between chairs and the possibility to rotate them 180° to allow choice of direction of travel. All inclusive catering at seat provides exclusive menus for different times of day and an open bar with service in the style of the finest restaurants: with porcelain plates, steel cutlery and real glass.



### Business: the ideal journey for work or pleasure.

Leather armchairs are 69 cm wide and placed on rows of 3. The distance between chairs is over a metre and the reclining backrest (up to 109°), provides a high travelling comfort also for those who want to rest. Crystal dividers are used for added privacy, and the wide space for luggage further improves the comfort while travelling. From Sunday to Friday Business customers are provided with a welcome service. Choose from five different varieties of snacks, the offer includes a bottle of water, a soft drink or an Illy coffee.



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### eVTOL takes off

**ANOTHER** eVTOL producer has made strides in development, with Chinese company TCab Tech having successfully completed transition flight tests for its full-scale E20 demonstrator.

The company is looking to produce the six-rotor eVTOL for air taxi use and has carried out around 1,000 tests since 2021 for various versions of the aircraft.

Designed to seat four passengers, the E20 features gull-wing doors, luggage compartments, panoramic glass, and can fly at a top speed of 320kph with a range of 200km.

A fast-charging system will be able to recharge the craft from 20% to 85% battery life in 20 minutes allowing for quick turnarounds.

## Sustainable travel appetite growing

**SUSTAINABILITY** is becoming a driving factor in how Australians travel, according to local market findings harvested by Virtuoso from its *2026 Luxe Report* for Australia and New Zealand.

Taken from more than 300 local luxury travel advisors, findings revealed that 35% of advisors believed their clients were actively changing travel plans due to climate impacts, and that nearly half are willing to pay more for operators that benefit local communities (46%) and protect cultural/natural heritage (45%).

The research also found that 84% of Aussie and Kiwi luxury travellers were shifting their travel plans to shoulder or off-peak while 67% were seeking temperate-climate destinations.

“Travellers are asking smarter questions, seeking deeper connections and expecting



their journeys to make a positive impact,” Virtuoso’s Vice President, Sustainability Javier Arredondo said.

“As interest in sustainability continues to build, our role is to meet that momentum with real solutions, and we take that responsibility seriously.”

June this year marked the first-ever Virtuoso Impact Summit, held in Lake Louise, Canada, which brought industry leaders together in the Canadian Rockies to advance sustainability and amplify travel’s positive impact.

The event was attended by 105 industry professionals. *DF*

### Cairns carbon caught by mangroves

**A NEW** study has found that the 300 hectares of mangrove forest around Cairns Airport stores more than 2,000 tonnes of carbon each year.

The research was co-designed by the Yirrganydji Land and Sea Ranger Program, along with Cairns Airport and scientists from Blue Carbon Lab plus RMIT University, and underlined the importance of maintaining the wetlands around the international airport to slow climate change.

“Critically, almost two years ago, we experienced firsthand the effects of severe natural

disasters through the floods, and we understand how important it is to reduce our risks by strengthening our natural defences,” Cairns Airport Chief Executive Officer Richard Barker said.

“The landscapes of Tropical North Queensland are world-renowned and our natural attractions, like the Great Barrier Reef and Daintree Rainforest, are key drawcards for visitors.

“Mangroves play an important role in the health of the overall system and protect the airport physically,” he added.

### Whale watchers balk at paying more

**DESPITE** a growing interest in sustainable travel from the luxury sector (see above), a new study has revealed that tourists with an interest in whale watching do not want to pay more for taking part in an eco-certified experience.

The research, from the University of Queensland and Tangalooma, also showed that the majority of whale watchers were highly educated and already made some environmentally-friendly decisions but were motivated to learn more.

“There are a growing number



of businesses acquiring eco-certification and I think it’s the way forward to highlight your company as the ‘real deal’ in caring for the environment and wildlife,” Dr Aaron Tkaczynski of the University of Queensland Business School said.



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## MONEY

**WELCOME** to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

### AU\$1 = US\$0.662

**THE** Australian dollar looks as if it may extend its recent gains against the USD, as it rises to 66 cents against the greenback.

This strongest run of gains in years comes ahead of the Reserve Bank of Australia's policy meeting, with the "perky" AUD expected to continue its rally.

The RBA is expected to strike a slightly more hawkish tone, *The Wall Street Journal* believes, with Governor Michele Bullock's press conference to potentially prove market-moving, despite the likelihood of unchanged rates.

Local jobs data on Thu will also drive the pair, added Westpac analysts.

AUD posted a 1.5% gain on the USD last week, putting it atop the G20 leadership board.

Additional support for the AUD comes from China, *FXStreet* wrote, with national statistics out of the country reporting a much larger-than-expected trade surplus for Nov Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.662
UK	£0.497
NZ	\$1.150
Euro	€0.569
Japan	¥103.3
Thailand	฿21.14
China	¥4.685
South Africa	11.28
Canada	\$0.918
Bitcoin	0.0000073

## CZ celebrates 25 years



**CHINA** Southern Airlines celebrated the 25th anniversary of its Guangzhou-Sydney route with a glittering gala last night at Doltone House in Sydney.

Since the route first took off on 05 Dec 2000, CZ has maintained uninterrupted operations between the cities, and from 13 Dec to 24 Feb 2026, it will introduce four daily round trips, just in time for Christmas, New Year and Lunar New Year.

The glamorous event was attended by several high-profile industry leaders, including Ye Wei, Counsellor-rank Consul for Economic and Commercial affairs of Consulate-General of The People's Republic of China in Sydney; Robert Dougan, Executive General Manager at Tourism Australia; Sue Doyle, Director of Partnerships & International Markets at Destination NSW, and many more.

"For 25 years, we have stayed true to our mission," said Jason Sun, Regional GM for CZ in ANZ, who affirmed the airline's commitment to growing its presence in the region.

"We deeply appreciate the trust and support of our partners and passengers, and we will continue to build on this success."

Meanwhile, Sydney Airport's Chief Aviation Officer, James Botham, noted the half a million passengers that CZ flies each year, making it Sydney's largest mainland Chinese carrier.

"And the momentum continues, thanks to the 30-day visa-free policy," he said.

Botham also noted that the number of Australians travelling between Sydney and China has increased by over 22% year-on-year to over 370,000 passengers in the last year.

"China Southern continues to lead the way, carrying nearly 30% of these travellers beyond Sydney," he added.

"We're proud of what we've achieved together, and we cannot wait to deliver the next chapter with you."

The Chinese carrier also announced a new codeshare agreement with VA - see **p1**. *JHM*

**Pictured:** Sun addresses attendees at last night's gala.

## THL shuts factory

**TOURISM** Holdings Limited (THL) has advised it will be closing its RV manufacturing factory in Brisbane following a comprehensive review.

The facility will close on 19 Dec, with all production to transition to Action Manufacturing in NZ.

Chief Executive Officer Grant Webster acknowledged the large role played by the broader downturn in the Australian RV manufacturing for the closure of the facility.

THL recently rejected a BGH-led consortium takeover offer, which it labelled as "opportunistic and undervalued" (*TD* 04 Aug).

## Lapping up Lapland

**ADVENTURE** World has launched an exclusive Lapland itinerary for Christmas 2026, inviting guests to visit Santa Claus Village and meet his reindeer.

The five-day itinerary has one exclusive departure on 23 Dec 2026, which blends festive tradition with Arctic exploration.

Guests will be able to visit the iconic village to meet Santa Claus himself and stop by the Main Post Office to send letters home with a special Arctic Circle postmark.

There will also be a reindeer farm visit and sleigh ride, allowing travellers to immerse themselves in Lappish culture, complete with a serene sleigh ride through the snowy landscape.

Another highlight will be the Arctic Circle crossing ceremony, which will reward guests with a diploma to commemorate their achievement; while a snowmobile safari will offer guests the thrill of navigating Lapland's frozen river valleys and forests.

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