



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Business Events News** page, plus full pages from:

- Scenic River Cruises
- APT

Cruiseco luxury collection embarks

HELLOWORLD'S recently unveiled Signature Collection by Cruiseco brand (**TD** 06 Jun) has formally launched to the market.

The new venture is designed to elevate luxury cruise offerings through a curated portfolio of premium cruise packages.

Among the introductory itineraries on offer is a 14-night 'Eastern Elegance' cruise-and-stay package with Seabourn, as well as a 13-night 'Tulip Gardens & Alpine Allure' voyage with Scenic.

Every Signature Collection package includes exclusive bonuses such as premium hotel accommodation, land tours, and transfers, and all have been crafted by a team of Cruiseco luxury cruise specialists.

"Luxury has been a core part of the Cruiseco product range for many years, and our Signature Collection brings that into focus for agents," Helloworld Head of Cruise Steve Brady said.



Spencer sells corporate

SPENCER Travel has made the decision to sell its corporate division after more than a quarter of a century (**TD** breaking news).

LodgeLink, a Black Diamond Group company and Spencer Travel partner, bought the business for an undisclosed sum, a decision that was made by founder Penny Spencer as part of a broader strategic restructure.

Spencer Travel will operate as two distinct entities: Spencer Group of Companies (SGC) - Corporate Travel Division, and Spencer Travel Holdings (STH) - Leisure, Wellness, and Independent Contractor Model.

Spencer said she will work closely with the teams over the coming months to ensure a smooth transition, and will also assume a position on the LodgeLink Australia board.

"This is both a reflective and exciting moment," Spencer said.

"After 26 incredible years, I've chosen to transition the corporate division to a trusted partner who shares our values and commitment to service.

"This evolution enables me to focus on the future of leisure and wellness travel, and to support the next generation of travel

entrepreneurs through new and emerging business models."

Both parties are committed to a seamless transition for existing clients, staff, and suppliers.

"This isn't a farewell - it's the beginning of a bold new chapter," Spencer concluded. **AB**

Webjet's Kiwi boss

TARAS Lee has been appointed General Manager of Webjet Group New Zealand, in which capacity he will oversee strategy and operations for its car and motorhome rental brands.

Previously based in Munich, Lee's career highlights have included introducing the Domino's Pizza brand to Germany, as well as heading up the accessories division of online pet supplier business Zooplus.

"[Lee] brings a wealth of international e-commerce experience, sharp commercial instincts, and a deep understanding of digital customer behaviour, making him ideally placed to help scale our cars and motorhomes rental brands," Webjet Group CEO and MD Katrina Barry said.



Danube in-depth

FOLLOW the journey as Channel Nine's *Getaway* host Catriona Rowntree continues her European voyage with Scenic Cruises, with the next episode exploring the Danube.

Tune in on Sat 19 Jul at 5.30pm on Nine Network - more on **p8**.

CANADA



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Wednesday, 03 September 2025
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Focus Canada Australia

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ARKABA
Wild Bush Luxury

Carnival closes US\$3b

CARNIVAL Corporation has closed a US\$3 billion senior unsecured notes offering, with the proceeds to be used to fully repay the borrowings under its first-priority senior secured term loan facility maturing in 2028 in line with a debt reduction plan.



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HLO counters US trend

HELLOWORLD'S wholesale brands Viva Holidays and ReadyRooms have bucked a global downturn in US travel sentiment, recording a 77% increase in bookings to the country in the first half of Jul.

The pleasing result followed a financial year 2025 growth of 48% for US bookings - increases achieved in a climate that Helloworld conceded still involves "complex" sentiment toward the major North American market.

"Right now, we are seeing a clear message that the appetite for leisure travel to the US continues to be strong," Helloworld's Chief Operating Officer and Executive Director Cinzia Burnes said.

"Even with mixed global perceptions, the booking activity we have seen over the last 12 months, and more significantly the last two weeks, is suggesting that Australians are continuing to have an enthusiasm for US travel experiences," she added.

Helloworld attributed the surprising growth to a combination of factors, including competitive airfare deals, added air capacity, strategic marketing activity, and its enhanced product range and competitive packages.

The results followed ABS figures this month that showed Aussie travel to the United States in May grew by 12,600 visits on the previous month (**TD** 15 Jul).

More broadly, the latest figures from within the US show

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the country continues to see YoY volume dips, exacerbated by major cuts to its tourism marketing body Brand USA, and a planned doubling of the ESTA fee from US\$21 to \$40 (**TD** 07 Jul). **AB**

Holafly Aussie debut

GLOBAL eSIM provider Holafly has debuted in Australia, offering local travellers the option of buying unlimited data prior to departing to over 200 countries.

The company said activation takes just minutes and can be done on arrival in destination for immediate data access.

SIM plans start from \$45 for seven days, covering places like Europe, Indonesia, Japan, the United States, UK and Thailand.

McKisack joins ETC

EVOLUTION Travel Collective (ETC) has recruited Richard McKisack (**pictured** left) as its Regional Business Development Manager based in NSW.

He was previously at touring company Deanes Coaches Group, and also once worked with ETC co-founder Ingrid Berthelsen, as a BDM for Rail Plus.



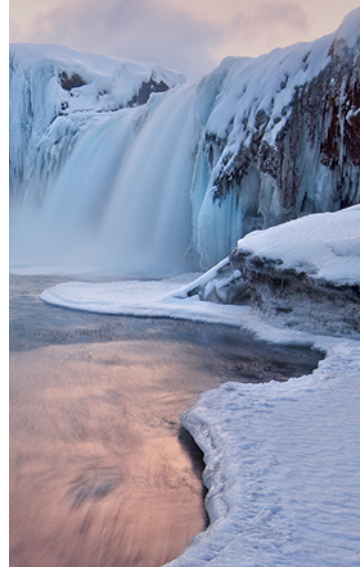
Get inside the game

INSIDE Travel Group will launch a new advisor webinar series from 20 Jul to boost confidence in selling its Asian tours.

The parent group of InsideJapan Tours and InsideAsia Tours will start with a 'Japan vs Korea' session on 30 Jul - register **HERE**.



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Rentals are roaring

THE British & Irish Lions rugby tour to Australia is driving a surge in short-term rental demand, according to Key Data Dashboard.

The first test will kick off on Sat in Brisbane, with the Queensland capital, as well as Melbourne and Sydney, all seeing booking uplift.

Ama's biggest incentive yet

AMAWATERWAYS has launched 'River of Rewards', a full-ship mega-famil incentive for Australian travel advisors.

The eight-month campaign is described by AmaWaterways as its "most ambitious trade incentive to date", culminating in a famil on the Danube aboard the line's brand-new ship *AmaSofia* (pictured), which launches early next year (TD 03 Jun 2024).

Advisors can qualify by being a monthly top FIT or group booker, or by engaging in brand-aligned challenges, which will see participants earn points.

Sellers can also work with their Regional Sales Manager to promote AmaWaterways and win their way onto the famil.

The campaign runs from today

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A flood of new dates

WILD Bush Luxury has added new dates to its Arkaba and Lake Eyre package so more travellers can see the rarely seen flooding of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre.

The limited-time itinerary includes a guided Lake Eyre tour & scenic flight - call 1300 997 321.



until 28 Feb, with the famil to take place from 02-09 Aug 2026 on the popular 'Melodies of the Danube' itinerary from Budapest to Vilshofen.

The campaign is open to all Australian travel agents, with winners able to bring a travel companion along.

Advisors are invited to register now at riverofrewards.com, and take part in the first challenge: a 10-question quiz designed to test knowledge of AmaWaterways and the Danube.

AmaWaterways operates a number of ships on the Danube, including the recently introduced *AmaSintra* (TD 23 Apr). MS

Club Med Prez gone

CLUB Med President Henri Giscard d'Estaing has exited his role with the resort business after more than 20 years.

Giscard d'Estaing claimed he has been "de facto dismissed" after several months of tensions with Club Med's main shareholder, Chinese conglomerate Fosun.

The company's long-time head managed to hang onto his role during the company's restructure late last year.

All-Inclusive
 River Cruising
 Celebrate France Month

**SCENIC GROUP
REWARDS**

A Star of the stage

PRINCESS Cruises' Star Princess will debut a range of new entertainment offerings, including two theatre productions, a candlelight concert series, and an ensemble of global performers.

Star will set sail on 04 Oct with its entertainment program to blend grand-scale productions in its Princess Arena theatre, live music in the glass-enclosed Dome, and pop-up performances in the Piazza.

One of the highlights will be Princess' new show *Meridian*, a spectacle of "longing and liberation" set to an original score and reimagined pop hits.

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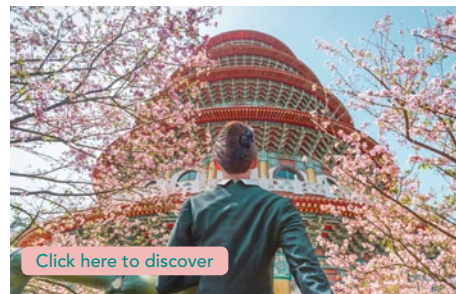
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Find Wilson to win

TOURISM Fiji is offering Australians the chance to score a free trip to the tropical destination if they find a popular *Castaway* character washed up on an east coast beach today.

The 'Wilson's Happily Ever After' campaign will see three volleyballs with Wilson's face (**pictured**) floated at Bondi Beach in NSW, St Kilda Beach in Vic, and Gold Coast Main Beach in Qld, with the first to spot him at each location earning a Fijian holiday.

"[Wilson] broke hearts around the world 25 years ago, so when we realised it had been a quarter century since he was last seen drifting out at sea, we thought what better time to give Wilson the ending he deserves?" Tourism Fiji CEO Brent Hill said.



Policy unfeasible: Burnes

HELLOWORLD COO and Executive Director Cinzia Burnes is the latest senior travel exec to lambast the notion of abolishing credit card surcharge fees.

The policy suggestion put forward by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) this week (**TD** 16 Jul) has been met with broad disappointment from travel agencies and industry groups, with Burnes labelling the idea "simply not feasible".

"These costs will inevitably get passed onto clients in other ways, which is far from ideal," she said.

"Small business owners are already grappling with high compliance costs, and any additional financial burden - such as absorbing increased payment processing fees - is simply not feasible," Burnes added.

The Helloworld executive said the scrapping of surcharges in the pursuit of assisting consumers was misplaced, arguing the focus

should be put on the top end of town and not small businesses.

"Attention should be focused on the banks and financial institutions that impose these fees," Burnes said.

"If there is to be a reduction in credit card and Eftpos surcharge fees, it must be matched by corresponding cuts in bank fees and interchange fees, otherwise it is the small business owners who continue to shoulder the cost."

In defence of the RBA, the policy suggestions also advocated to lower the cap on interchange fees paid by businesses.

It predicted such a move could save businesses around \$1.2 billion in fees a year, estimating that around 90% of Australian businesses would be financially better off under the change.

The RBA said interchange caps would benefit small businesses the most, as they tend to pay fees closer to the existing caps. **AB**



Window Seat

A QANTAS passenger who claimed her foot was ravaged by a merciless gang of fleas was awarded 5,000 frequent flyer points by the carrier as an act of goodwill.

What made the incident more unusual was that the complainant, Kathryn Hall, was sitting in business class.

"The presence of bites around your ankle is concerning, and we understand how distressing this must have been," the QF Customer Care team said.

Qantas said that on average, its aircraft are sprayed with pest control treatments every 45 days, and that upon inspection of Hall's seat, it was unable to find any evidence of flea infestation.

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AMEX ceases packages

AMERICAN Express Travel will stop selling combined flight and hotel packages from 31 Jul as part of what it said is an overhaul of its online booking experience.

According to *Skift*, the rejig comes as part of a more comprehensive process designed to make it easier to book entire trips through its website.

To do this, flight and hotel bundles in their current form needed to be "sunset".

A secondary reason provided by the company is that cardholders were not earning or utilising certain benefits on the packages.

These included \$100 credits toward bookings for its Fine Hotels & Resorts program, and American Express' international airline partner fares.

Currently, AMEX's Flight + Hotel bundles are powered by Expedia, a relationship that dates back more than two decades.

A statement from Expedia said the two organisations have built a longstanding partnership.

"There are no changes to our relationship, and we remain fully

committed to supporting AMEX Travel in every way possible," the statement read.

A source at American Express told *Skift* packages were only being booked by a small percentage of cardholders.

American Express was keen to point out that members will still be able to book flights and hotels beyond the 31 Jul date, but must book them separately. *ML*

AI restores schedule

AIR India will restore some of its routes to normal schedules following the AI171 disaster last month ahead of a full return by the beginning of Oct.

Following a "Safety Pause" introduced by the carrier after last month's tragedy, the carrier has completed safety checks across its Boeing 787 fleet and will phase its fleet back to service.

Some flight frequencies will return to pre-crash normality from the start of Aug, with more than 525 int'l services a week planned for Aug and Sep to more than 60 destinations.

A new service from Ahmedabad to London Heathrow will run in Aug and Sep, replacing a five-times weekly service to Gatwick.

Flights from Delhi to Paris, Milan, Toronto and Chicago will remain at reduced frequencies for the time being, while Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Vienna and Vancouver will all be suspended at least until the start of Oct.

Luxair tech partner

LUXEMBOURG national carrier Luxair has renewed a partnership with Amadeus which will see the tech giant continue to power its Passenger Service System.

Luxair will also adopt a range of new Amadeus services to enhance its customer experience and operations.



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New Novotel coming to Syd



WESTERN Sydney Hotel Cabra-Vale Diggers has undergone a major transformation, marking its 100 year anniversary this week.

With the aim to become a landmark lifestyle destination, the historic institution is now called the Cabravale Club Resort, featuring developments including a Novotel hotel; a signature dining precinct; enhanced communal spaces; and entertainment spaces.

The property is now open with a few limited experiences, but the full list of amenities will be revealed at an official grand opening later this year.

A celebration of the Diggers' centenary took place at a lavish gala dinner last night.

Cabra-Vale Diggers was established after WWI by 20 returned servicemen who were seeking friendship and support.

"Diggers' carries deep meaning - it honours our founders and

our legacy," said Club President Walter Robinson.

"We're not leaving that behind; we're carrying it forward into a new era of greater opportunity, inclusion and connection." *JHM*

Pictured: A rendering of the resort pool at the Cabravale Resort Club.

FCTG head departs

FCTG Global Head of PR and Communications Sarah Quinn has left her role to take up a new position at City of Gold Coast, where she is now Director of Media and Communications.

Quinn was previously at FCTG for 18 months, where she worked across brands including Flight Centre, Travel Associates, Scott Dunn, Envoyage and more.

Prior to FCTG, she held roles at organisations including Destination NSW, Visit Victoria, Air Asia, and Perth Airport.

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Brissy events pop

REGISTRATIONS are now open for Brisbane Pop-up, the city's flagship trade event, which will unite more than 70 local venues, hotels, and service providers under one roof on 26 Aug.

Taking place at Sofitel Brisbane Central, Brisbane Economic Development Agency's (BEDA) signature trade show will showcase the city's business event capabilities to decision-makers and industry leaders.

"From award-winning venues and accommodation to unforgettable visitor experiences, events like Brisbane Pop-Up highlight the depth and diversity of Brisbane's offering for business events," said BEDA CEO Anthony Ryan.

For more information or to register, click [HERE](#).

IN-PERSON EVENTS BETTER FOR YOU

REGULARLY attending in-person events can significantly boost wellbeing, a new study from the University of South Australia (UniSA) has found.

The findings were made by tourism and event management experts at UniSA and Flinders University, who conducted a survey of more than 350 South Australians about how often they attended face-to-face and online events, and how it related to their wellbeing.

The results demonstrated a link between the frequency of attending in-person events and higher wellbeing through increased levels of positive emotions, such as joy, happiness and excitement, as well as a stronger sense of being absorbed in an activity.

Comparatively, the only positive effect of attending virtual events was providing people with a



sense of accomplishment.

"We found evidence that attending events can meaningfully improve individuals' wellbeing, encouraging communities to leverage events to improve general wellbeing," said UniSA's Associate Professor Sunny Son.

"This gives us another strong reason to support events, not just for visitors, but for the benefits of locals as well," he added.

Flinders University Senior Lecturer Dr Eliza Kitchen said

organisations can leverage the benefits of in-person events by incorporating them into employee reward programs, inviting clients, partners or other stakeholders to events or distributing free event tickets to staff.

"These strategies not only enhance employee satisfaction and morale but also foster a more engaged and productive workforce," Kitchen said.

The research paper can be viewed [HERE](#). JM

WA precinct coming

PERTH'S new entertainment and sporting precinct is a step closer to reality, after the WA Government awarded a contract to progress the planning and design of the new area.

A WA-based team will integrate ideas and feedback gathered from community consultation and stakeholder engagement in recent weeks, with construction work expected to wrap in 2027.

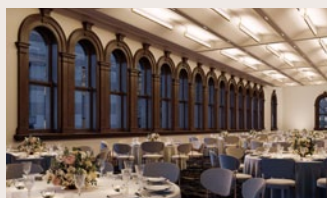
The project aims to boost Perth's capacity to host a range of arts, cultural and sporting events.

Sydney's new luxe hotel to target events

SYDNEY'S upcoming luxury hotel, The Lands by Capella (TD 27 May), aims to set a new benchmark for premium events.

Due to open in early 2026 within the historic Department of Lands building, the second level of the hotel will offer a range of venues, including two ballrooms, three unique event spaces, and a collection of meeting suites.

"The Lands by Capella offers event organisers a



rare combination of heritage elegance paired with cutting-edge facilities, all set within one of the most beautiful and historic buildings in the country," said Lyn Lewis-Smith, CEO of Business Events Sydney.

Geelong cooks

NYAAL Banyul Geelong Convention and Event Centre has appointed Andreas Gober as Executive Chef.

Gober brings extensive global experience spanning fine dining restaurants in Europe, premium cruise lines and luxury hotels to the venue, which opens in 2026.

The chef said he will focus on creating a locally grounded, culturally inclusive, seasonal menu.

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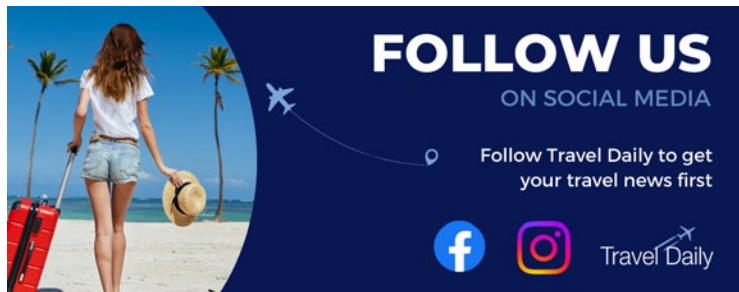
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APPOINTMENTS

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Beginning next month, **Launceston Airport** will welcome its new CEO **Katie Cooper** to lead the team. Serving most recently as Chief of Metro Tasmania, Cooper is highly passionate about the state and brings years of experience at airports and airlines around the world to her new post.

Experienced B2B professional **Nick Talbot** has joined the team at **Unforgettable Travel Company** as its new Head of Marketing. Moving across from his most recent role at Canadian Affair, Talbot also holds experience with B2B operator Funway Holidays. His new role will involve brand marketing, customer relationships, content and website building.

CLIA Global has strengthened its leadership team with two executive appointments, led by **Niels Wammen-Jensen** as its new Executive Vice President, International Regions. In his role, Wammen-Jensen will collaborate with CLIA leaders in various global regions outside North America, including Australasia. CLIA has also promoted **Nikos Mertzaniadis** to the role of Executive Director for Europe permanently, having served in the position in an acting capacity in recent months.

Seasoned hotelier **Nick Downing** has been named General Manager at **The Langham Custom House, Bangkok** ahead of the new riverside resort's grand opening late next year. Downing brings more than three decades in hospitality to his new role and holds a strong reputation for developing guest experiences at luxury hotels worldwide.

Brisbane Economic Development Agency has promoted **Tas Webber** as its new Head of Destination. Webber has been with the organisation for three years, formerly as Head of Tourism and Partnerships, & brings extensive experience with various Queensland tourism organisations, including Mackay Tourism and Fraser Coast Tourism and Events.

Sarah Nash has taken on PR and communications for **Hawke's Bay Tourism** and will work to elevate the region's presence among travellers. Nash brings over 25 years in media to her new client, including six years in London overseeing high-end travel and luxury goods clients.

Marriott International has restructured one of its key executive roles into two, with **Jen Mason** taking on the duties of Chief Financial Officer and **Shawn Hill** becoming Chief Development Officer. The change comes in response to the pending retirement of **Leeny Oberg** after nearly three decades with the global hotel giant.

Ahead of crucial certification and market launch, **Adriano Di Pietro** has taken control of hydrogen-electric powered vertical take-off and landing aircraft company **AMSL Aero**. Di Pietro will also oversee the company's ongoing growth along with development.

Aircraft manufacturer **Airbus** has recruited **Lars Wagner** as its new CEO for its Commercial Aircraft division, effective from Nov this year. Wagner is currently the head of MTU Aero Engines AG in Munich.

New villas for the gorillas



ABERCROMBIE & Kent has revealed the first look at its newly upgraded Gorilla Forest Lodge in Uganda, one of the first properties in its rebranded A&K Sanctuary portfolio (**TD 06 Jan**).

Central to the lodge is a palm-thatched, open-sided lounge (**pictured**), which features pale terracotta and is decorated with traditional African elements and local artworks.

The lodge sits within the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, which is home to more than half of the world's 700 remaining wild mountain gorillas, and features 10 luxury renovated villas.

Guests at the lodge are granted excellent viewing opportunities of these creatures and by staying at the property, are helping various conservation projects and local Batwa communities.

These adventures can include a visit to a Bwindi Women's Bicycle Enterprise and local nurseries.

In addition to gorilla trekking, guests can also enjoy guided forest walks to view wild birds or stay back for a spa treatment. **ML**

Skal off to Adelaide

TRAVEL industry networking and business development brand Skal Australia will host its 2025 National Assembly in Adelaide, with all members invited.

Running from 05-07 Sep, the event will bring members from across Australia and the Oceania region together.

Activities planned include a visit to Adelaide Zoo, enjoying local viticulture at the National Wine Centre, and a networking event at Crowne Plaza Adelaide.

"Come for the conference, stay for the camaraderie," the organisation said.

Registration for the event closes on 18 Aug - **CLICK HERE**.

Intrepid academics

INTREPID Travel has rewarded three emerging academics and business leaders with fully-funded scholarships under its Homeward Bound program, which works to inspire women and non-binary change-makers.

The three recipients - Leticia Benavalli from Brazil, Kohinoor Darda from India and Karen Cherotich from Kenya - will be sponsored for a year-long virtual leadership program, culminating in a major summit in Tanzania.

SCENIC°

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19 July - Danube In Depth - Episode 3

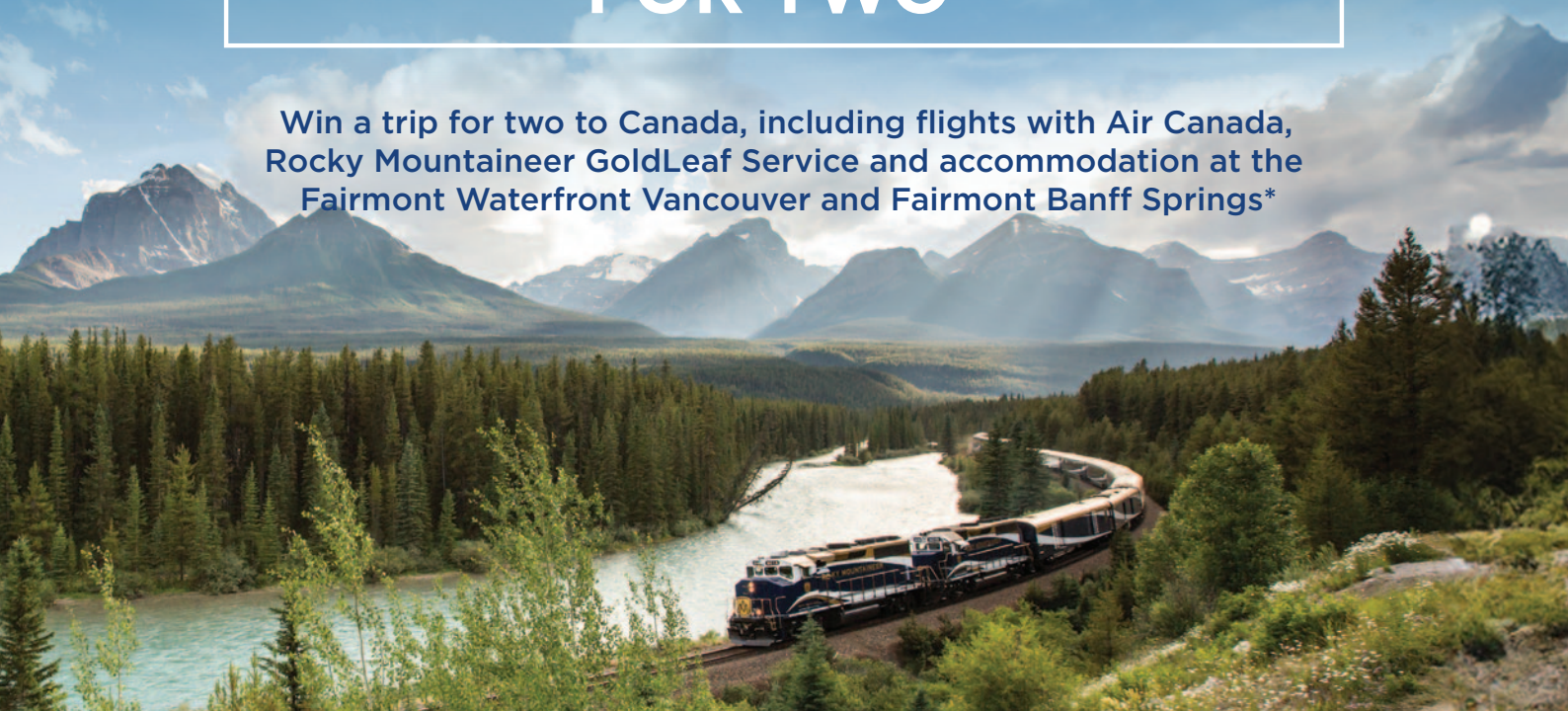
Catriona Rowntree continues her European journey by experiencing the allure of Ljubljana and Zagreb, on a captivating journey of culture and history.



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*Terms and conditions apply. The exclusive incentive is open to active travel advisors in Australia, and we reserve the right to alter the prize. The promotion is only available to active travel advisors, who book and deposit APT and Travelmarvel tours including Canada during the campaign period, 17 July to 14 August 2025. The prize will be awarded to the travel advisor who makes the highest number of bookings. In the instance that more than one adviser books the same number of tours, the prize will be awarded to the highest revenue value. The prize consists of: Air Canada Economy Flights from Sydney or Brisbane, for two people. Rocky Mountaineer GoldLeaf Service for two people including breakfast and lunch. Accommodation at Fairmont Waterfront, Vancouver for two nights including parking and daily breakfast and accommodation and Fairmont Banff Springs for three nights including parking and daily breakfast. Prize components can be used in conjunction or separately based on availability. Blackout dates apply and will be confirmed by individual suppliers. The prize is based on double occupancy; additional occupancy charges may apply. This prize is not redeemable for cash and is nontransferable. Travel insurance, incidentals, and transport other than international flights are the responsibility of the prize winner. The winner will be notified via email by 28 August 2025. The winner will have 7 days to accept the prize in writing. If the prize is not claimed within 7 days, the prize will be offered to the runner up. For any questions, email inside.sales@aptravelgroup.com or visit www.atgconnect.com.au. Australian Pacific Touring Pty Ltd. ABN 44 004 684 619. ATIA accreditation #A10825. MULTI-809