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Back-Roads allows travellers to discover crafted small group tours of Iberia - see [page nine](#) for info.

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TIME is a career advancement path for all employees in tourism, travel, hospitality, cruise, and aviation - see [page 10](#) for all of the latest information.



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TA employee faces fraud

AN UNNAMED former senior Tourism Australia staff member has been accused of defrauding the tourism agency out of \$49,000, according to court documents seen by *Crikey*.

The former employee was charged in early May after a year-long investigation by the Australian Federal Police, which alleged the sum was used to pay for several business class flights and hotels on non-work related trips abroad.

The AFP also accused the former staffer of falsifying a visa letter to support a claim that she was travelling for work, and also arranging a false document for a foreign national to obtain a visa for entry into Australia.

When contacted by *Travel Daily* for comment, Tourism Australia said the organisation had self-reported the breach when the alleged fraud came to light.

"In Oct 2023, Tourism Australia identified breaches relating to travel expenditure by a senior officer, and as a result of the breach, TA recovered the monies from the individual and



referred the matter to the AFP," a spokesperson said.

"This resulted in an investigation which is now before the courts."

A lawyer for the female defendant, who departed Tourism Australia between late 2023 and early 2024, said her client has denied all of the allegations.

The latest development follows an audit conducted by the Australian National Audit Office late last year (*TD* 17 Dec 2024), which found TA had failed to find the best value for money when appointing contractors. *AB*

Ama recruits NZ head

AMAWATERWAYS has appointed Tracey Brennan as its first-ever New Zealand-based Regional Sales Manager.

The move marks a key milestone for the luxury river cruise operator, which launched in the ANZ markets directly representing itself in early 2024.

Based in Auckland, Brennan joins AmaWaterways' growing local team with extensive travel industry experience and a strong network of trade relationships.

She is tasked with strengthening relationships with travel partners throughout NZ and driving growth across AmaWaterways' portfolio.

"Tracey's appointment is a testament to how much we value the Kiwi business and want to support them in growing their river cruise sales," said Steve Richards, MD AU/NZ.

Beauty of the Baltics

DISCOVER the beauty of the Baltics with Exoticca, with a fully guided journey through this Northern European region - see [page 11](#) of today's *Travel Daily*.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of news, plus a product profile from Exoticca, and full pages from:

- Back-Roads Touring
- TIME

New Eclipse class

SCENIC Luxury Cruises & Tours is currently developing its next generation of Scenic Eclipse vessels, which will be the eagerly anticipated follow-up to the first two ships in the class.

The company's General Manager Sales & Marketing Anthony Laver said the next ship in Scenic's pioneering Discovery Yacht class will spearhead her own vessel platform - to read the full story, see today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

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Botanica plants 2026

APT Travel Group's Botanica World Discoveries brand has launched its 2026 collection, featuring three new small ship itineraries alongside a full suite of garden-focused journeys.

Highlights include a chartered 12-night Mediterranean cruise aboard the *MS Caledonian Sky*.



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IPW makes its opening pitch



WRIGLEY Field, the famous grounds of the Chicago Cubs Major League Baseball team, has played host to the opening press brunch for IPW 2025, with Brand USA President and Chief Executive Officer, Fred Dixon, taking the podium to welcome media from around the world to the conference and expo.

However it was not Dixon who took centre stage, but rather two of the most famous baseball players in the world in Chicago Cubs - centre fielder Pete Crow-Armstrong and fielder Seiya Suzuki, who both spoke to the delegates just hours before taking the field for a match between the Cubs and the Pittsburgh Pirates.

"I grew up understanding big cities, but to talk about how great this place is, I get to work here every day," Crow-Armstrong said.

"There is no better place to be every day than here, so I just wanted to welcome you guys to our home, and I hope you have a wonderful time in the city because there's so much good stuff going on."

While the shy Suzuki did not address the crowd, instead preferring to bow and wave, Dixon did address media briefly prior to the Brand USA formal press briefing this morning.

Although he did not address any of the talk about budget cuts for Brand USA, he took time to acknowledge the large numbers of media who have attended in a challenging environment.

"To have over 500 of you here...is a powerful reminder of what brings us together, the narratives that you tell, that we tell together," he said.

"At Brand USA, we deeply value our relationship with you, and we recognise that meaningful stories create meaningful journeys.

"Through your work, you bring the spirit and the uniqueness of the United States and great cities like Chicago to life by helping travellers around the world discover the richness of the American experience."

Brand USA will hold a formal press briefing tomorrow before the expo gets underway. *DF*

GTI rocks account

GTI is now representing major New York City tourist attraction, the Rockefeller Center, for its PR and trade marketing in Australia.

The icon offers tourists panoramic views of Manhattan, its famous ice rink during winter, and Christmas festivities throughout the Dec holidays.

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Indonesia on top, US slides

INDONESIA retained a comfortable cushion as Australia's most popular outbound destination in Apr 2025, according to the latest data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Australia's northern neighbour recorded just short of 140,000 arrivals, followed by New Zealand at just over 131,000.

Indonesia's result was its second-highest month for departures this year, following 170,000 recorded during the peak holiday month of Jan.

Japan saw another meteoric month as well, with 107,130 Aussies departing for the Land of the Rising Sun - the second time this year departures have surpassed the 100,000 mark.

Total outbound travel by Australians hit just over 12 million for the year-ending Apr - up 12.5% year-on-year - with the most popular destinations being Vietnam (+28.5%), Japan (+17%)



and China (+12.7%).

Destinations on the decline included the USA, which suffered another inconsistent month with 56,770 departures, despite improving slightly from the 55,480 recorded in Mar.

The result was still a far cry from the 85,010 departures seen in Jan, but above the 40,690 recorded in Feb.

Inbound travel continued to perform strongly as well, with a total 641,150 arrivals recorded - up 8.1% on the prior year but still 8.5% lower than pre-COVID.

New Zealand was the largest source country, making up 19% of the total arrivals. *ML*

Pip makes the list

TOURISM Australia Managing Director Phillipa Harrison was named the winner of *Australian Financial Review's* Women in Leadership Award, in the government, education and not-for-profit category.

"Phillipa Harrison has helped lead Australia's tourism industry during a tumultuous period," the judges said.

"She has demonstrated the ability to engage effectively and to reposition her organisation to support her industry."

New Eurostar cities

FRANKFURT and Geneva will be added to the Eurostar network in coming years as the high-speed rail operator continues to grow to meet demand.

With a fleet of up to 50 new trains expected to hit the tracks by next decade (**TD** 20 May 2024), the new services will see London connected as a direct service to both Frankfurt and Geneva.

A third new route from Amsterdam and Brussels to Geneva will also be introduced.

The order of 50 new trains will take the company's fleet to 67, operating alongside the current fleet of 17 rolling sets.

The news featured in Eurostar's full-year financial results for 2024, which saw the company achieve an EBITDA of €346 million (A\$613 million) and revenue of €2 billion, which it cited was due to growing passenger volumes and focused cost management.

Trump hotel impact

PRESIDENT of the United States Donald Trump has acknowledged the dilemma faced by the country's hotel industry, as his deportations deplete the sector of long-time workers.

Trump declared "changes are coming" in response, but did not expand further on his thought.

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Sailing to a greener future

THE Port of Brisbane has unveiled its Vision 2060 plan, which will seek to make the facility more sustainable as cruise ship passenger volumes quadruple over the next 35 years.

One of the key pillars identified as part of the 2060 blueprint includes expanding capacity while also integrating solar, wind and hydrogen energy solutions.

"This is an opportunity to create a port that is cleaner, smarter and more connected, and one that will drive Qld's prosperity for generations to come," the port's CEO Neil Stephens said.

"Australians are passionate about cruise, we know the demand is there for more cruising and we believe additional capacity will help Brisbane become the national capital for cruising in the decades to come.

"Ultimately, [Vision 2060] is about ensuring Brisbane's port of the future is driven by seamless



connectivity, powered by clean energy and designed for future generations," he added.

Among the green initiatives highlighted in the plan is support for ship-to-shore power, access to cleaner fuels for cruise lines, and overall net-zero port operations.

Waste from vessels will also be processed using on-port waste-to-energy solutions under the plan, eliminating the need for traditional landfill.

Other planks of the 2060 plan include developing an integrated, intelligent logistics ecosystem that unlocks new efficiencies, upskilling staff, championing broader conservation projects, and investing in more resilient port infrastructure. AB



Window Seat

ELVIS Presley's former top-floor residence at the Westgate in Vegas is now open for guests to enjoy, celebrating the king of rock 'n' roll's 90th birthday this year.

Originally built when the Westgate opened in 1969, the room was once Elvis's suite, where he lived during his legendary Vegas residence.

The lavish 1220sqm space fits 10 people and features jacuzzis in every room, private elevator access, a bar and dining room, artwork commemorating the man himself, and views of the city skyline.

The room is available to book for a measly \$20,000 a night.

Fried chicken and peanut butter and banana sandwiches are not included.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

Chicago

Today's issue of *Travel Daily* is coming to you from the largest inbound travel conference for the US, IPW.

THIS year's IPW is being held in the Windy City, and we are on the ground and ready to report on all the action.

The official activities kicked off on Sun at the famous Wrigley Field with the press brunch (see p2), gathering the world's trade and consumer travel media who have made the pilgrimage.

A range of famils for media have taken place before the kick off later today.

While there is undoubtedly a bigger police presence on the ground here, the city still feels safe.

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Travel Daily

Princess hones in on SE Asia

PRINCESS Cruises has signalled a renewed focus on Southeast Asia, announcing almost 30 cruises from Singapore for the 2026-27 winter season.

Sapphire Princess will home port in Singapore for the first time in five years, sailing 18 cruises ranging from round-trip voyages to the Far East to more extensive explorations of Southeast Asia, including extended stays in destinations like Ha Long Bay, Bangkok, and Hong Kong.

Joining her will be *Diamond Princess*, which will embark on 11 sailings from Singapore starting in Nov 2026, before heading back to Japan in Mar 2027.

The 2,600-passenger vessel will operate itineraries ranging from seven to 28 nights, taking travellers to 28 destinations across eight countries.

Princess Cruises will also offer festive voyages in Southeast Asia, including a 14-night cruise



celebrating both Christmas and New Year on board *Sapphire Princess*, visiting destinations such as Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Langkawi, and Sihanoukville.

Additionally, *Sapphire Princess* will sail another 14-night cruise to celebrate the Chinese New Year in early 2027.

The special voyage will feature visits to 10 ports in Southeast Asia, providing a cultural experience for travellers as they explore the rich traditions and festive celebrations in the region. *JM*

Intrepid on the rails

GROWING demand for slow and more meaningful travel has led Intrepid Travel to boost its collection of global rail journeys, with the portfolio now featuring more than 50 experiences.

New additions include Kenya's Madaraka Express, Malaysia's Jungle Railway and scenic rail trips in China, Laos, Vietnam and eastern Canada's remote islands.

Another new itinerary in northern Sweden takes travellers to villages near the Arctic Circle.

Trains feature in set itineraries ranging from nine to 11 days, with no internal flights in line with Intrepid's environmental pledge to remove air travel from many tours (**TD** 31 Jan 2024).

"Rail travel has taken off in the past couple of years and for good reason," said Intrepid Travel GM of Experiences, Erica Kritikides.

"In a world that feels like it's always going at full steam, rail travel provides ease, convenience and a slower pace."

UK flight path fix

A REVIEW into flight paths across the UK will begin under the newly-established UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS), a new government agency which will be operational by year's end.

The agency plans to "tweak" what it said were outdated flight paths in changes intended to speed up journey times, reduce delays and reduce CO2 emissions.

The move has been welcomed by many airlines, while trade body Airlines UK said it was looking forward to working with the government on what it hopes will be a "once-in-a-generation infrastructure program".

Changes will take some time to come into force however, with the complex review expected to run several years and not come into force at busy hubs such as Heathrow until next decade.

UKADS said amended flight paths into other UK airports are likely to be approved and implemented before London.

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CVFR recognised, again



CVFR Consolidation Services was recently recognised by Malaysia Airlines at its annual Trade Elevation Summit.

For the second year running, CVFR was honoured with an award for Strategic Route Excellence in the Australian market, with CEO Ram Chhabra on hand to accept the accolade.

“This award showcases the strength of our consolidation business and the great team we have behind it,” Chhabra said.

The honour builds on growing momentum for the company, having recently launched in New Zealand, with ambitions to be the largest independently owned travel businesses in the country.

Chhabra is pictured above centre with Syazwan Sabri, Dersensih Aresandiran and Datuk Captain Izham Ismail from Malaysia Airlines and Nidhi Nijhawan from CVFR Group.

WSI flights on sale

JETSTAR will begin to sell seats on flights departing Western Sydney International Airport later this year, the carrier has confirmed, making it the first carrier to go live with tickets.

According to *The Australian*, the Qantas low-cost offshoot will base 10 aircraft at WSI, along with five from Qantas itself, plus a base for pilots and crew.

“We will have a presence in Western Sydney that will be significant from day one,” Qantas CEO Vanessa Hudson said.

“As we get closer [to the opening of WSI] our plans will firm up and we will announce our [full] schedule.”

Jetstar’s declaration comes days after Air New Zealand became the latest airline to commit to serving WSI, with flights to and from Auckland set to take off from the middle of 2027 (*TD* 11 Jun).

Korea airfare sale

JETSTAR and the Korea Tourism Organization have unveiled a sale offering one-way fares to Seoul (Incheon) from Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, with prices starting from \$269.

The promotion has already kicked off and will end on Sun 22 Jun at 11.59pm (AEST).

Last year, the low-cost carrier began operating 10 return services a week between Australia and Seoul.

Click [HERE](#) for more details.

Protests in Europe

ANTI-TOURISM protests have taken place in Italy, Portugal and Spain over the weekend.

From Granada and Ibiza to Genova, Venice and Milan, locals protested against the rise in tourist numbers, which they said has placed untenable pressure on housing and the cost of living.

“We say enough to the destruction of the territory, to the precariousness, to the housing crisis, to the loss of rights,” said one campaign group in Mallorca.



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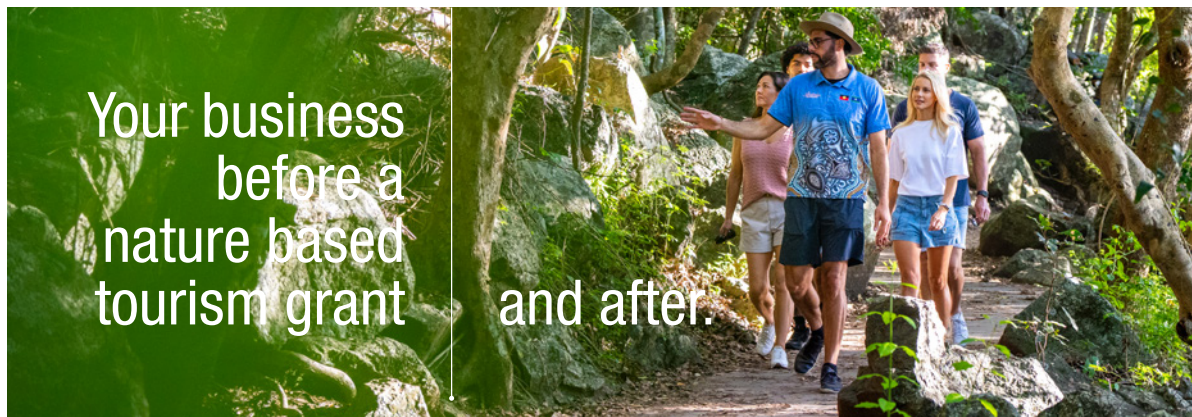


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Operating for over 19 years: originally launched as Ski & Snowboard with Kids, expanded in 2025 to serve the wider snow travel market. Editorial focus: Global ski destinations, gear reviews and expert advice.



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EU tweaks disruption rules

EUROPEAN transport ministers have agreed to amend regulations relating to the circumstances that must be in play for travellers to claim compensation from delayed or cancelled flights.

According to the Council of the EU, the new framework works to create simpler and clearer rules while ensuring consistency and fairness for airlines.

The new model features several changes, with compensation for delays and cancellation now based on advance warning time and the distance to be travelled.

Journeys under 3,500km or wholly within the EU will attract a minimum penalty of €300 - up from €250 - for delays of four hours, replacing the previous benchmark of three hours.

Flights over 3,500km will require a €500 payment if delayed by six hours or more, a reduction from the former penalty of €600.

For flights cancelled 14 days or less in advance, airlines must now provide pre-filled forms for pax to claim compensation.

Carriers will also only have three hours in the event of a disruption to re-route a passenger, whether on another flight, with another carrier, or via other transport.

After three hours, passengers can themselves lodge a reimbursement claim for up to 400% of the original ticket cost.

Airlines for Europe, a trade body representing carriers, condemned the plan, stating their preference for a five-hour minimum delay



threshold on short-haul, and nine hours for long-haul.

"The revised rules will bring over 30 new rights to the air passengers, applicable from the moment when they buy a ticket, until they arrive at their destination, and in some cases even beyond," said Poland's Minister of Transport and Infrastructure, Dariusz Klimczak.

The proposed changes will now go before the European Parliament for review. *ML*

Air NZ gets inclusive

AIR New Zealand has hosted a flight for neurodivergent children and their families, reaffirming its commitment to inclusivity.

Held at the carrier's training facility in partnership with Autism New Zealand and Acorn Neurodiversity, the experience simulated key stages of the air travel process, including check-in, security screening, boarding, and in-cabin procedures.

The event aimed to equip neurodivergent children with confidence ahead of their travels, and echoes similar air travel accessibility initiatives, including VA and Adelaide Airport's 'Try Before You Fly' simulated travel program (*TD 03 Jun*).

Bunnik ramps up Latin America



BUNNIK Tours has unveiled its 2026 South & Central America program, featuring eight culturally immersive itineraries and a boost in departures for its deluxe In-Style range.

The 2026 season features a record 49 departures, including special dates to coincide with Mexico's Day of the Dead and Peru's Inti Raymi celebrations.

Additionally, the South America and Peru In-Style itineraries feature a two-night rail journey through the High Andes on board the luxurious Belmond Andean Explorer.

Bunnik said the additional departures are in response to growing interest from Australian travellers seeking premium, small group adventures through Latin America.

"Even seasoned travellers will find something new in South and Central America," said Sacha Bunnik, joint-Chief Executive Officer of Bunnik Tours.

"From luxury rail journeys and ancient festivals, to soaring landscapes and incredible cuisine, this region blends colour, culture

and adventure like nowhere else.

"Our 2026 program offers unforgettable experiences with authenticity at their core - the kind that keep travellers coming back," Bunnik added. *JM*

Signatures on safari

WILDLIFE photographer Jason Edwards will host a new nine-day African safari itinerary under Luxury Escapes' Signature Series tour collection.

The one-off adventure - the first safari in LE's Signature Series - will depart in Apr 2026, is limited to 22 guests and is priced from \$14,499pp twin share, inclusive of return Qantas flights.

Travellers will visit Kruger National Park, Victoria Falls and the Chobe River in search of photo opportunities, with Edwards providing expert advice.

Luxury Escapes' growing Signature Series features a growing range of special interest tours including food with former *Masterchef* personality Matt Preston and Gary Mehigan or golf with PGA Tour pro Nick O'Hern.

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THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by
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Albatross Tours - Europe & UK 2026

Albatross Tours has published its latest brochure, which showcases two brand-new tours to the Balkans, they include Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia plus Greece - featuring longer stays and small groups. The operator has also unveiled two new luxury tours of Italy and Switzerland, featuring five-star hotels and first-class rail. Additionally, the brochure (find it **HERE**) includes a tour planner containing all itineraries and dates. Earlybird discounts of \$350pp are on now until 31 Jul for the summer 2026 collection.



Wendy Wu Tours - Solo Travel 2025-26

Catering to rising demand for solo adventures, Wendy Wu Tours has launched a dedicated solo travel brochure. Available in both digital and print, the new guide showcases a curated selection of popular tours for independent travellers for 2025 and 2026, featuring destinations like Japan, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka. It highlights three flexible ways to travel solo: pay a single supplement for a private room, join the Happy to Share program to be matched with a same-gender guest, or choose from exclusive solo departures. Check out the 48-page brochure **HERE**.



Journey Beyond - Issue 14

The new edition of Journey Beyond Magazine has gone to press, exploring the brand's ever-evolving portfolio of Australian experiences, as well as its latest announcements. From the immersive encounters at Monarto Safari Resort, where the wild meets refined relaxation, to local UNESCO World Heritage wonders, and the unveiling of the new Aurora Australis Suites, edition 14 is a curated collection of stories that celebrate best in Australian travel. View the digital magazine, or request a print copy, **HERE**.

Going bonkers for Honkers



AUSTRALIAN visitor numbers to Hong Kong climbed 37% year-on-year in Apr and 38% in May, leading Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) to celebrate with its trade friends at an industry event.

Hosted at Cruise Bar at Sydney's Circular Quay, the gathering marked the ongoing momentum of Hong Kong, which saw a 32% increase in visitation in Q1.

Emblematic of Hong Kong's own nightly multimedia light show, A Symphony of Lights, the event coincided with Vivid, with attendees well placed to enjoy the lights on Sydney Harbour.

Airlines are ramping up capacity as a result, with Cathay Pacific to restore seasonal services to Adelaide and Cairns from 11 Nov and 09 Dec respectively.

Hong Kong Airlines is raising its profile too, with Sydney flights beginning later this month and Melbourne expected to follow later this year on top of existing seasonal flights to the Gold Coast.

"Tonight is not just a celebration of Hong Kong and all it has to offer but also a huge, heartfelt 'thank you' to our incredible

industry partners for their ongoing support," said HKTB Director for Australia, NZ and South Pacific, Karen Macmillan.

The HKTB team of Karen Prideaux, Toni Fan, Olivia Zeaiter, Karen Macmillan and Jessica Rowden are **pictured** above. *ML*

NSW Great Walks

THE NSW Government is showcasing the state's nature-based visitor experiences via a new 'Find Your Path on a NSW Great Walk' campaign.

The marketing push highlights multi-day walking tracks across regional NSW that have opened to the public in the last two years.

The campaign encourages visitors to explore the Snowy Mountains, Tweed/Byron Hinterland, Sapphire Coast, Port Stephens, the Blue Mountains, and the Northern Tablelands.

Last year, 9.9 million international and domestic visitors to NSW headed to a national park or state park and spent more than \$11.7 billion across the state during their trip.

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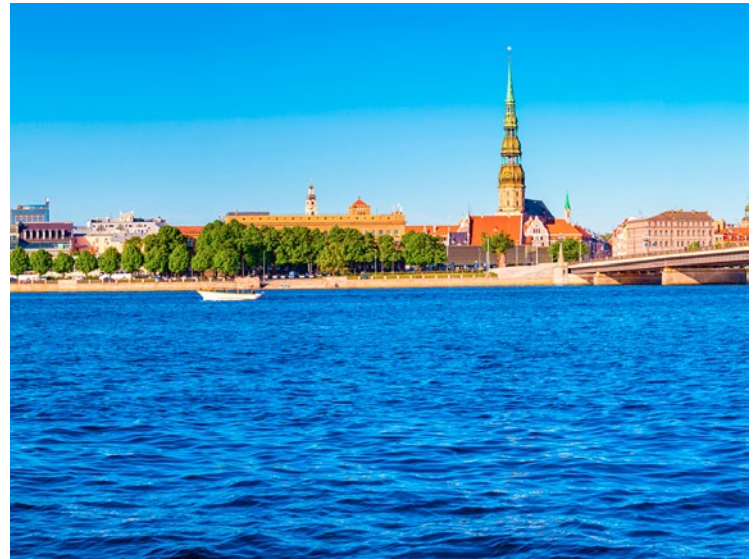
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Baltic Beauty: A Fully-Guided Journey Through the Baltics:

Discover Northern Europe's hidden gems with this captivating 9-day tour across Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – a cultural journey that is fast becoming one of Exoticca's standout European experiences.

Why this tour sells itself:

This meticulously designed itinerary explores the heart of the Baltics, blending rich medieval heritage with stunning landscapes and vibrant capital cities. With handpicked accommodation, guided tours, daily breakfast, and all transfers included, this package offers agents a seamless product to sell – and travellers an enriching holiday to remember.

Vilnius: The Baroque Capital

The journey begins in Lithuania's charming capital, Vilnius. Famed for its well-preserved Old Town, this UNESCO-listed city charms with cobbled streets, spired churches and a flourishing arts scene. Your customers will enjoy a panoramic city tour that covers Cathedral Square, Gediminas Castle, the Gates of Dawn and the bohemian Uzupis district – a self-declared republic within the city.

Riga: The Art Nouveau Jewel:

Next, travellers head to Latvia's capital, Riga – known for having Europe's largest collection of Art Nouveau architecture. Here, a guided walking tour showcases the UNESCO-listed Old Town, including the House of the Blackheads, the Freedom Monument, and the Central Market. There's ample free time for guests to explore trendy cafés or cruise the Daugava River.

Tallinn: Fairytale Meets Modernity:

The final stop is Estonia's capital, Tallinn – a perfect blend of medieval magic and Nordic innovation. Highlights of the guided tour include Toompea Castle, Alexander Nevsky Cathedral, and St Catherine's Passage. Travellers will love wandering the fortified walls and artisan boutiques, or opting for an optional excursion to Kadriorg Palace or the picturesque coastal village of Pirta.

Effortless to sell, unforgettable to experience:

With three fascinating countries in one smooth itinerary, this journey is ideal for culturally-curious travellers seeking a lesser-known European adventure. Flights,

daily breakfast, some transfers, and expert guides are all included – ensuring a premium experience without the premium price tag. Whether for a first-time Europe visitor or a seasoned explorer, this tour ticks all the boxes – and promises plenty of repeat business for agents. led by experts, and convenient transfers—that elevate the experience of visiting Java and the Island of the Gods.

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