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HLO weathers US storm

DESPITE the well-documented impacts economic and border changes in the United States are having on visitation, Helloworld revealed the fallout has delivered only marginal effects on its earnings (**TD** breaking news).

The company's half-year results in Feb (**TD** 26 Feb) suggested underlying EBITDA for FY25 would be between \$56-\$62 million, however an update today has revised the range to \$52-\$56 million, subject to no material adverse change in operating conditions in 2025.

Outbound volumes to the US are broadly holding in line with expectations, HLO noted, adding air sales are only marginally down on the previous year.

The United States also remains HLO's number one destination for land sales, piling on 4% in year-on-year growth.

Outside of North America, the company has seen sales to Europe and the UK drop by 3% on last year, while total air sales to NZ also decreased by 2.1%, with

margins holding steady.

In encouraging news, HLO's wholesale arms are performing well, with sales in Australia up 30% to the end of Apr, while NZ wholesale is up over 40%.

Cruise sales have continued to increase over the year, with 40% growth noted across its top 20 destinations and cruise lines, while total forward bookings for FY26 are also experiencing 15% growth as at the end of Apr.

Meanwhile, 96% of agents across the networks have resigned for terms of between one and five years, allowing HLO to maintain 2,700 members in its franchise, buying group and travel broker networks across ANZ.

A further 10 new agencies are expected to open during the first half of FY26. AB

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of news including a photo page from **Journey Beyond** and our **Business Events News** page, plus full pages from:

- **CLIA Memberships**
- **G'Day Group**
- **Scenic**

Oaks now full-service

MINOR Hotels has announced a strategic repositioning of its Oaks brand, which will shift away from serviced apartments to become a full-service hotel, resorts and suites guest offering.

Unique operating hallmarks and an updated brand identity will be gradually rolled out across existing properties and new acquisitions, including a refreshed food and beverage concept.



Wendy Wu Tours

SOLO TRAVEL



2025/26
Brochure Out Now

DISCOVER MORE

G'day new horizons

G'DAY Group is inviting travellers to unearth awe-inspiring destinations across outback Australia - more on **p10**.

Scenic Discoveries

SCENIC has unveiled its sailings for 2026-28, encompassing Antarctica, the Americas, Europe, and more - see the **back page**.

TRAVEL DESIGN POSITION

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CX on the Bridge

CATHAY Pacific's redesigned The Bridge lounge in Hong Kong Airport has re-opened, the first stage in the airline's wider lounge enhancement plan.

Further renovations and new flagship locations are in the pipeline, with the airline preparing to renovate The Wing First lounge, which will close later this month and reopen next year.

Cathay will also be launching new flagship lounges in Hong Kong, Beijing and, for the very first time, New York City, over the next two years.

The lounge investments come as Cathay prepares to spend more than HK\$100 billion on new aircraft, cabin products, lounges and digital innovations.

The carrier has also made good booking ground in Australia.

Land tours up by 50%

THE number of Aussies booking land-based multi-day tours rose by 48% last year compared to 2023, according to new figures released by The Australian Tour Operators (CATO).

The industry body's annual *Australians on Holiday Report* showed that while numbers were up, spend dipped slightly to be valued at just over \$5 billion.

One in four of all outbound holidaymakers in 2024 booked with a CATO member, the group's independent financial analysis indicated, equating to around 1.7 million Aussie travellers.

Further insights garnered from the study showed tour operators are seeing strong growth in the areas of small group, active, and luxury touring - particularly the 50+ market and adventure-driven travellers under 40.

The trend toward shorter trips was another key takeaway from the report, with holidays under seven days surging by 31% last year compared to 2023.

Trips between seven and two weeks saw some growth as well, up by 27%.



In line with other studies, CATO's report suggested Asia continues to benefit from a growth in short-haul travel among Aussie travellers - especially in northeast Asia (+73%).

ABS figures over recent months concur that Japan and South Korea have become major draw cards for leisure travel.

Trips to southeast Asia were also up by 25%, while south and central Asia surged by 31%. *AB*

Spice up your cruise

VIRGIN Voyages is turning up the heat, with two of the world's most famous girl band singer-songwriters set to join the line.

Melanie C of the Spice Girls and Kathy Sledge of Sister Sledge are set to headline its 2025 Celebration Voyages, newly named the 'Red Hot Sailing Club'.

Hilton to max India

HILTON Hotels & Resorts is planning a major India expansion, with a target of more than 300 locations slated across the country over the next decade.

The bold expansion play includes the introduction of five additional Hilton brands into the Indian market, as announced during the company's first brand showcase in the country, held in Bengaluru earlier this week.

President & Chief Executive Officer Christopher Nasetta believes the Indian market has greater growth opportunities than anywhere else in the world.

"We believe that India is still an underpenetrated market compared to other parts of the world, offering terrific opportunities for everyone," Nasetta said.

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Antarctica



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16 Days

TRAVEL PARTNER TOOLKIT



Window Seat

TRAVELLERS to the Turkish town of Lice may have felt more than the sheer exhilaration of tourism recently, as 20 tonnes of confiscated cannabis was torched by the police.

Reports on the ground suggest residents were high for nearly a week as the smoke took quite a while to clear.

"The smell of drugs has been enveloping the district for days," a local man complained to local media, adding he could not open the windows in his house for fear of becoming totally baked.

Adding insult to very mellow injury, cops seemingly organised the bags of cannabis into flame letters spelling out the town's name, creating what appeared to resemble some kind of nefarious cooked Batman signal.

Local stakeholders and towns people have now suggested authorities cease burning drugs like this out in the open in the future, and instead use factories with filtered chimneys...totally dude.



Noosa sweetens the deal

TOURISM Noosa is inviting travellers to discover 'The Sweet Life in Noosa', positioning the destination as an ideal winter escape in its latest campaign, which rolls out this month.

The fresh marketing push highlights the resort town's natural beauty, relaxed luxury and local experiences through a 60-second destination video (see [HERE](#)), targeted at domestic and trans-Tasman audiences.

Tourism Noosa's Destination Marketing Manager, Helen Mitchell, said the campaign is about "reinforcing Noosa's unique appeal as a place where you can truly enjoy the sweet life, even in winter".

The campaign activity includes television commercials and digital adverts across Nine Now; a national print and digital campaign with *Australian Traveller*; a dedicated Noosa episode being filmed for Channel Seven's *The*

MH gains points

MALAYSIA Airlines has introduced a new Pay with Points feature to its travel and lifestyle program, Enrich.

Marking the first solution of its kind in Malaysia, the new functionality allows members to instantly redeem their EnrichMoney Points via DuitNow QR at participating merchants.

EnrichMoney is a multi-currency e-wallet and Visa prepaid card designed to offer Enrich members greater flexibility and value.



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Weekender; and more.

Tourism Noosa has also partnered with Sunshine Coast Airport and Jetstar to elevate Noosa in the New Zealand market, including a destination takeover of overhead lockers of a Jetstar's A320 domestic NZ aircraft. *JM*

Hertz's new leader

HERTZ General Manager Australia and NZ, Damien Shaw, has been promoted to Vice President APAC at the company. He replaces Eoin MacNeill, who is stepping down after 13 years.

Ryanair slugs late pax

RYANAIR'S tough approach to customer service has been ratcheted up a notch, with the Irish budget carrier implementing a €100 penalty on late pax.

From now on, travellers who arrive less than 40 minutes before the flight departure time and want to be placed on the next available flight will have to fork out the tardy levy.

Passengers can also opt in to pay the €100 fee if they arrive up to an hour after their flight time and want to be placed on an alternative service.

Ryanair is no stranger to tough customer tactics, with the latest move viewed as an attempt to improve the carrier's on-time performance, which has been lacking across Europe in the face of chronic staff shortages.

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APT goes big on small



SMALL group tours capped at 24 participants - down from regular group sizes of up to 40 - have been added as part of APT's Canada/Alaska program for 2026.

Leading the new small group program is a 12-day 'Rockies Explorer from Victoria' itinerary, which takes the scenic route from Victoria to Vancouver via the majestic Rocky Mountains.

Guests enjoy a GoldLeaf Rocky Mountaineer adventure to Banff during the Western Canada adventure, with the small group journey priced from \$15,695ppts.

APT's flagship 'Rockies Odyssey and Alaska Cruise' tour is back for 2026 and features a GoldLeaf train journey, a stay at the iconic Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise and Fairmont Banff Springs, along with an Inside Passage cruise with Holland America Line in a guaranteed Verandah stateroom.

Travellers eager to see more of Alaska can opt to supplement their cruise with an extension to Talkeetna, Denali National Park and Fairbanks, turning their tour into a 25-day adventure.

The 17-day 'Eastern Canada and USA with New England' sees guests admire Niagara Falls from a Fallsview hotel room, enjoy a HAL cruise and cross the US border to conclude the journey in Boston, with savings of up to \$2,600 per couple now available.

Bookings are now open for the new season. *ML*

QF to expand AF?

QANTAS has filed an application with the International Air Services Commission to widen Air France's codeshare on services between Paris and Perth on the current allocation valid through to 2028.

The expanded arrangement will allow Air France to independently price and market seats on the route to improve choice for flyers.

Qantas will provide Air France with access to free sale inventory for its three-times weekly seasonal services between the two countries, which have kicked off again for the 2025 season.

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Travel vital to performance

MILLENNIAL and Gen X business travellers are eager to travel more, seeing it as crucial to professional performance and career development, according to Corporate Travel Management.

A new study by the business travel giant surveyed 702 employees in Mar, finding 70% expect the importance of business travel to increase as their experience and seniority grows.

Of those surveyed, 86% flew for business at least once per year, with 70% taking to the sky between one and five times.

However, more than half said they would like to travel more.

Top reasons given included the chance to experience new destinations, collaborating with colleagues and partners, as well as breaking from routine.

Australian respondents were the most active in the air, with their British counterparts expressing a desire to fly more often.

The survey found just under half of business travellers coupled on a leisure extension to their work trip, a figure that climbed to 55% for Asian respondents but fell to 29% for those in North America.

Nearly 60% book their own



travel, while 42% use a travel management company.

Curiously, 70% of respondents said their business has a corporate travel policy, but only 54% see it as aligning with their personal travel expectations.

Corporate Travel Management COO Eleanor Noonan said with 75% of the global workforce being made up of Millennials, it is critical to understand their unique views and expectations.

"Our research has uncovered critical insights into how younger business travellers view the business travel experience, which is driving an evolution in how we design impactful, relevant travel management services for the future," Noonan added.

Neither sustainability or loyalty programs were among the top three considerations for how respondents chose travel suppliers, with special offers deemed to be higher priority. *ML*

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T&CS APPLY

Wyndham's latest Mission

TRAVEL Leisure & Co. has announced its acquisition of a resort on North Queensland's Mission Beach, a seaside town between Cairns and Townsville. Currently known as Castaways Resort & Spa Mission Beach, the property will be renamed Club Wyndham Mission Beach, which will see it become part of the vacation ownership brand's South Pacific portfolio.

The closest access point to the Great Barrier Reef, the beachfront resort features 48 apartments, plus two swimming pools with ocean views, a restaurant and bar, and a spa.

Travellers can explore the UNESCO World Heritage Listed Wet Tropics, snorkelling sights near Dunk Island, and enjoy an array of adventure activities.

"Mission Beach is a tropical North Queensland gem lending itself both to the growing number of travellers who simply want to unplug and relax, and those who want to experience Australia's incredible natural wonders," said Barry Robinson, President and



MD, International Operations, Travel + Leisure Co.

Marking the 67th property in the Club Wyndham South Pacific portfolio, Club Wyndham Mission Beach will soon undergo a staged refurbishment. *JM*

Further US drops

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) CEO Graham Turner has revealed Apr saw a further drop in leisure and corporate bookings to the US from Australia.

Speaking with *news.com.au* today, he added the downward trajectory is expected to "accelerate" in the following months for both leisure and business travel.

"We expect...the corporates will be down significantly, not just because of what's happening in the States, but because there's a general feeling of unsettlement in corporate business," Turner said.

However, the FCTG chief added he is hopeful Australian travel to the US will start to recover between Jul and Sep, but conceded that uncertainty around Trump's tariffs and any possible further policy changes could impact sentiment.

Potique prefers ITR

POTIQUE Hotel, a five-star property in Nha Trang, Vietnam, has appointed International Travel Representation (ITR) as its trade partner in Australia.

The 151-key hotel will work with ITR to build stronger relationships with local travel agents, tour operators and wholesalers

itravel agents take charge



SEVERAL itravel advisors have recently been invited to take their seat at the table to help shape the future of travel.

Lauren Zanesco from itravel Griffith (**pictured** right) has been appointed to the first-ever Brand USA Ambassador Panel (**TD** 31 Mar), an initiative designed to bring together advisors to help shape and promote travel to the United States.

Meanwhile, Luxe by itravel advisor Megan Catterall (**pictured** left) now serves on the advisory board of Cruise Lines International Association, demonstrating her leadership and expertise in the cruise sector.

Catterall was also recently featured on the *Offloaded Podcast*, giving her insights on all things cruise.

"It's incredibly rewarding to see our advisors invited to share their perspectives on these panels," itravel Chief Executive Officer Steve Labroski said.



"Their involvement speaks to the quality and calibre of people we have across our itravel network," he added. *MS*

Great Rail bought


UK-BASED escorted tour business Great Rail Journeys has been acquired by Vitruvian Partners for an undisclosed sum.

Great Rail Journeys CEO Dave Riley will continue to lead the company, which is currently focusing on growth in international markets - in particular the United States.

The company has been actively scaling its business globally since 2018, investing in its tech platforms by building out its digital marketing capabilities.

Great Rail offers travellers all-inclusive travel packages combining land and rail.


New owner Vitruvian has already made investments in travel tech with brands such as Klook and Skyscanner.




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Storytelling with Journey Beyond

LAST Wed night, Journey Beyond hosted industry friends and colleagues attending the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) at its annual event, sharing three unique stories narrated by frontline staff under Brisbane's Story Bridge.

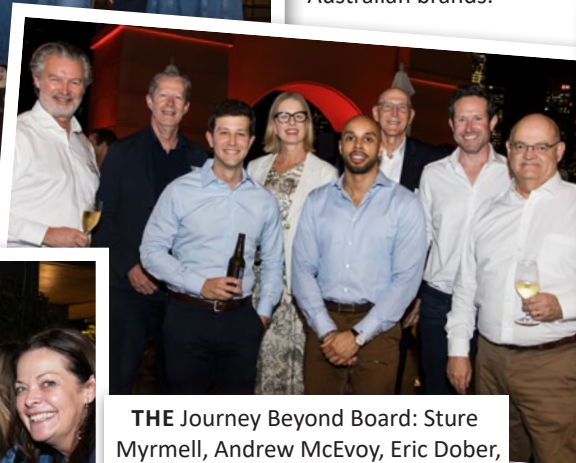
Key speakers were brought in from Horizontal Falls, Sal Salis Ningaloo Reef, and the iconic rail journey, The Ghan, to join the Journey Beyond Team, with Champagne Bollinger in hand, to highlight the importance of storytelling in the Australian tourism landscape.

During the event, CEO Chris Tallent highlighted the new level of luxury in rail travel with the upcoming launch of the Aurora Australis Suites in Apr 2026, available on board The Ghan, Indian Pacific, and Great Southern.

He also discussed Journey Beyond's expanding global presence, noting the team's strong participation at ATE25, where they secured over 1,000 appointments with 17 iconic Australian brands.



CHEERS to the Journey Beyond team.



THE Journey Beyond Board: Sture Myrmell, Andrew McEvoy, Eric Dober, Giselle Collins, Bradford Williams, Michael Issenberg, Brian Cassidy and Chris Tallent.



MANDI Stefanak, Tourism Northern Territory and Josh Basir, Journey Beyond.



JUSTINE Lally, Journey Beyond; Ana Sofia Ayala, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia; Liza Muller, Journey Beyond; Hannah Dare, Journey Beyond; and Narelle Ross, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia.



ROB Dougan, Tourism Australia; Michael Issenberg, JB Board; and Peter Shelley, ATEC.



JOURNEY Beyond storytellers - Layla Henson, Nick Day and Yasmin Hobbs.



LOUISE Hughes, Ann-Marie Kerry and Emma Dixon, Luxury Escapes.



ALICIA Triggs, Journey Beyond.



PHILLIPA Harrison, Tourism Australia.



YASMIN Hobbs, Journey Beyond Rail.



CHRIS Tallent, Journey Beyond.



Hallmark events

VICTORIA'S most impactful events will now be recognised in the 2025 Victorian Tourism Awards, with the launch of a new award category.

The Hallmark Events category will celebrate major events that significantly contribute to the state's visitor economy, enhance its national and international brand, and create lasting economic and social impact.

"Victoria is known around the world for its enviable calendar of major events," Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) Chief Executive Felicia Mariani said.

"This new category provides an opportunity to recognise these unique events that drive tourism, stimulate economic growth, and leave a lasting brand legacy for our state."

To be eligible, events must attract an average attendance of 100,000; draw in interstate and international visitors specifically travelling for - or extending their stay - due to the event; a measurable economic impact to Victoria; and exceptional media reach.

Nominations are now open, with entries closing on 28 May and final submissions due by 26 Aug.

CLICK HERE to find out more about the Victorian Tourism Awards.

VIVID LIGHTS UP FOODIE SCENE

A NEW outdoor food destination is set to debut at the Vivid Sydney festival this year, which kicks off on 23 May and runs through to 14 Jun.

Located at the Sydney Opera House, the new Forecourt Food Village will offer Cuban and Korean street-style bites from renowned chefs Danielle Alvarez and Jimmy Ryu.

The open-air food hub will feature La Cubanita, a bold new pop-up led by Alvarez, who will serve up a soulful menu starring fried fish and pulled pork sandwiches; Caribbean-style sweet potato fries; and a tropical-themed kids' menu.

Festival attendees visiting the new venue can also indulge in the K-Town Bites pop-up curated by Ryu, which serves up Korean fried favourites inspired by Seoul's street markets.



Complementing the food offering is a range of local wines, spirits and beers at The Bar, which is hosted in collaboration with the Archie Rose distillery.

As part of the Vivid food program and for two nights only, Alvarez will also present Dance of Dreams - an immersive three-course dinner accompanied by live music and a performance by

emerging dance collective, New old Now, in the Opera House's Yallamuni Rooms.

The experience will feature a locally sourced menu with wine pairings, with tickets available for \$329pp for 13 and 14 Jun.

The Forecourt Food Village, which is free to enter, will open nightly from 5pm to 10pm for the entire duration of the festival. *JM*

Extreme weather lashes live music sector

ONE third of Australians are more cautious about purchasing tickets to live music events due to extreme weather, new research has uncovered.

According to the *Rain, Heat, Repeat: How Music Fans Are Experiencing Extreme Weather* report from Green Music Australia, climate change and unpredictable weather are set to worsen challenges already faced by the live music sector.

Eighty-five percent of festival-goers have experienced what

they consider to be extreme weather at a music festival in the past 12 months, with 13% choosing to attend fewer events in light of this.

Extreme heat is the most common weather event noted by attendees, with 68% saying they have experienced it over the past year at a music festival.

The recently released report also found that 81% believe governments are not doing enough to protect the music scene from climate impacts.

Landslide victory

QUEENSTOWN New Zealand has secured the rights to host an inaugural conference on landslide risk and geo-education.

The First International Joint Workshop of JTC1 & JTC3 on Landslide Risk Assessment, Communication and Geo-education will take place at in Apr 2026, attracting up to 350 delegates and delivering NZ\$900,000 in economic benefit during the resort town's off-peak season.

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Experienced aviation industry professional **PK Lee** has returned to **Malaysia Airlines** to take up the role of Regional Manager ANZ for the carrier. Lee previously spent more than nine years with the airline in a variety of roles, including Head of Regional Sales, and has been based in Sydney, Kuala Lumpur, Hong Kong, Singapore, Tokyo and Bangkok.

Marriott International has appointed **Sid Bhatia** as the new General Manager at **Moxy Sydney Airport**. Working across Australia and New Zealand over the past 20 years, Bhatia joins Moxy from his most recent role as Cluster GM for TFE Hotels in the Northern Territory.

Luxury agent network Virtuoso has welcomed **Una O'Leary** as its new Vice President Global Partnerships. The newly created position comes following an expanded remit for **Cory Hagopian**, to whom O'Leary will report. Her new duties will primarily consist of overseeing the expansion of Virtuoso's preferred partner portfolio worldwide.

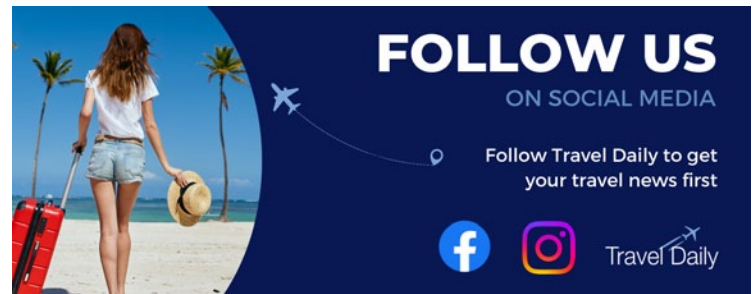
The Australian sales team of **Regent Seven Seas Cruises** has been strengthened with the addition of **Anji Montgomerie** as Senior Business Development Manager. Montgomerie will lead the Queensland and Northern Territory markets in her role, and she brings 15 years' experience in sales, most recently with Globus family of brands.

Stacey Plaine has joined the team at **The Langham Gold Coast** as Director of Marketing and Communications. Plaine has held senior roles in hospitality marketing in Australia, the UK, the Maldives and Japan with Marriott International prior to moving to Langham Hospitality. Her new post sees her aiming to elevate the brand positioning of the five-star beachfront property both domestically and internationally.

Highly experienced travel expedition leader **Mick Fogg** has joined the team at **Pearl Expeditions** as its General Manager and Head of Sustainability. In his new role, Fogg will oversee deployment, itinerary planning, government liaison and destination stewardship.

A number of personnel have joined New Zealand-based **Capstone Hotel Management** as the company continues to expand its portfolio. Based in Auckland, **Matt Nicholas** has come onboard as Group Operations Manager, bringing 20 years with leading hospitality brands including Adina and Millennium Hotels. He will be joined by **Katherine Wilson** as Group Marketing Manager and **Akshay Bangari** as Cluster Sales Manager, Western Markets. Elsewhere, in the company's Nelson office, **Chiqui Sayson** comes onboard as Marketing Executive.

Bringing two decades of hospitality experience, **Peter Laird** has taken up the role of Food & Beverage Director at the new **Melia Pattaya Hotel**. Laird will drive the development of menu concepts at the 234-room property and oversee all dining venues, including the Yitong rooftop restaurant, Sanehh Sarae seafood eatery and Japanese restaurant Den.



Wallabies off to a flyer



FLIGHT Centre Travel Group and the Wallabies are continuing their naming-rights partnership for another three years.

In addition, the travel giant is now the official partner of the team for this year's British and Irish Lions Series.

The Wallabies' tournament against New Zealand, South Africa and Argentina will continue to be called the Flight Centre Rugby Championship until at least 2027.

"This collaboration reaffirms our commitment to supporting global sporting teams that embody the same values we cherish and that resonate deeply with our customers," said Flight Centre Global MD Andrew Stark.

"We look forward to an exciting journey ahead." JHM

HA loves Lilo & Stitch

HAWAIIAN Airlines is celebrating the live-action release of Disney's *Lilo & Stitch* with new livery designs on three aircraft, including the Airbus A330 as of today, the Airbus A321 next week and the Boeing 717 in June.

Stitch is also HA's new Travel Pono ambassador through a digital travel guide and the star of the airline's in-flight video.

Meanwhile, the film will be aired on board and exclusive *Lilo & Stitch*-themed apparel and merchandise will be available on select flights and online.



Silversea social media

TRAVEL agents will now be able to easily publish Silversea-branded content across their social channels, thanks to a new partnership between the cruise line and tech company, Rallio.

From this week, agents will have free access to use the platform, which offers a centralised dashboard where they can schedule posts, track engagement and monitor performance.

Much of Silversea's content will be already created and ready for agents to use, too.

To use the platform, click **HERE**.

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