

## Get funded, GC

**GOLD** Coast business owners are being invited to find out what a nature-based tourism grant can do for their business.

See **page seven** for details.

## A&K 2026 journeys

**ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K)** is showcasing its small group journeys for 2026, including the 'Ultimate Great Migration Safari'. Find out more on **page eight**.

## Luxperience to expand?

### EXCLUSIVE

**LUXPERIENCE** may expand in future years - potentially beyond Sydney, or beyond one event - as the showcase seeks to become the flagship platform for luxury travel across Oceania.

Although unable to confirm specifics, Luxperience Event Director Lynn Ormiston (**pictured**), speaking exclusively to **Travel Daily**, primed Australia's luxury travel sector to "watch this space".

"We want to be *the* Oceania event," Ormiston enthused.

"Australia is important to us, but so is New Zealand, so is Fiji, so is Tahiti...we want to be that one-stop shop."

This desire to push the capabilities of the platform has seen Luxperience begin to offer bespoke events outside of its traditional showcase, such as a Vivid Sydney event it is hosting next week with PassportCard.

Canvassing other luxury travel events, Ormiston said Luxperience wants to differ itself by offering genuine connection, as opposed to a more conference-style showcase.

"We want to be the platform that connects a partner and a buyer together, building those relationships," she said.

"I've been to other luxury events, and what we do different



is personalise conversations, one-on-one, so the partner can understand exactly what the client wants or needs, or who their clientele is - not like a one-way presentation."

This year's Luxperience will feature around two-thirds new exhibitors, including delegations from Sri Lanka, Africa, and Thailand (**TD** 26 May).

In response to feedback from last year's show, the platform will include more social interaction, and less panels and presentations, Ormiston added.

Luxperience 2025 will also include brainstorming sessions, which will see delegates connect, and share insights and knowledge - head to [luxperience.com.au](https://luxperience.com.au) to find out more. **MS**

## FJ CEO steps down

**FIJI** Airways head Andre Viljoen is set to return to Air Mauritius as its Chief Executive Officer from Oct (**TD** breaking news).

Viljoen was CEO & Director of Mauritius' flag carrier from 2009-2015, before Fiji Airways recruited him as its Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer - a position he has now held for almost 10 years.

FJ said it will start "an extensive search" for a replacement.

## SELL YOUR WAY TO THE SINGAPORE FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX

EARN DOUBLE ROOM-RES REWARDS ON ALL SINGAPORE PRODUCT BOOKINGS

Boost your Singapore bookings and race towards exclusive rewards.

Room-Res.com  
for WINNING AGENTS

SG SINGAPORE  
Passion Made Possible

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features six pages of news, including our **Corporate Update** plus full pages from:

- City of Gold Coast
- Abercrombie & Kent
- Emerald River Cruises

find your

## Outback Spirit

### WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WALKING ON A DREAM

📍 Ningaloo Reef | Ningyngulu

### Pilbara & West Coast Expedition

☀️ 14 Days ☑️ All-inclusive

Perth | Monkey Mia  
Exmouth | Broome

**SAVE ON 2026 TOURS NOW**

LEARN MORE

JOURNEY BEYOND

## SOLO TRAVEL

2025/26 Brochure Out Now



Wendy Wu Tours

DISCOVER MORE

## Travellers feel fleeced

**ALMOST** three-quarters of Australian travellers feel they are “getting fleeced” on international trips when it comes to food and tourist experiences.

The Sheer Madness Index published by money app Wise and YouGov also showed around 70% of Aussies feel they have paid too much for tourist activities compared to its value, while close to a third said the location was “overhyped” and failed to match their pre-trip expectations.

For foodies the results were not much better, with 70% of respondents stating they had been overcharged or misled by restaurants when travelling, and a third complained that food quality did not match the price.

The perception of value also



showed variance across age demographics, with Millennials the most confident of avoiding any overcharging (68%).

Gen Z was close behind on 67%, well ahead of Gen X (54%) and Baby Boomers with 52%.

When it came to transacting overseas, around half of Aussies said they are aware of bank fees but conceded they did not know the exact amount charged.

Just shy of 30% of Aussies said they were “very surprised” by the cost of overseas bank fees while travelling, with 58% also suggesting their banks are opportunistically charging higher foreign transaction fees and exchange rates.

Only 11% of Aussies are unaware of bank fees. **AB**

### Explore with rail

**EXPLORE** Worldwide has announced a new partnership with International Rail Australia, allowing agents to connect multiple Explore tours by rail.

More than 30 tours can now be accessed by rail as part of the new partnership.

For example, travellers can move from the Amalfi Coast Walking tour to the Hiking the Dolomites tour without taking a flight - a unique selling point for eco-conscious clients.

“We know how much our customers love travelling by train - not just as a way to lower their carbon footprint, but as an opportunity to slow down and take in the scenery as it unfolds outside their window,” said Ben Ittensohn, Regional Director AUNZ at Explore Worldwide.

Agents can find out more **HERE**.

VIEW DEAL

**WWT** TOURS

**PRICES FROM**  
**\$8,479**  
PER PERSON TWIN SHARE  
 LAND ONLY  
 \*Surcharges may apply

**BEST OF DESERT DELTA**  
**Botswana**  
**FLY-IN SAFARI**

**DURATION: 7 DAYS**

## AAT spotlights reconciliation



**AAT Kings** marked National Reconciliation Week by hosting a special afternoon tea at its Sydney offices, following the launch of its Reconciliation Action Plan last week (**TD** 26 May).

The event featured a fireside chat between AAT Kings CEO Ben Hall and Shane Phillips, CEO of Tribal Warrior, an Indigenous organisation focused on creating leadership opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Phillips (**pictured** left with Hall) shared his insights on the role of community healing and the importance of empowering the next generation to continue the work of reconciliation.

“National Reconciliation Week is a powerful reminder of the importance of understanding, respect, and shared responsibility,” Hall said.

“Today’s conversation with Shane Phillips was a testament to the incredible work being done by Tribal Warrior.

“AAT Kings is committed to ensuring that reconciliation is not just a week-long observance, but a continuous journey of learning, respect, and meaningful engagement.” **JM**

### CANADA & ALASKA 2026

**Full Program  
OUT NOW!**



**Super Earlybear Savings**

**CLICK FOR  
NEW BROCHURE >**

**CANADA &  
ALASKA 2026**

**11 Day Tour from  
\$9,195pp\***  
 Including  
**Rocky Mountaineer**

\*T&Cs apply

**CLICK FOR  
NEW BROCHURE >**

### Hyatt House open

**AUSTRALIA'S** first-ever Hyatt House Hotel is now open for bookings, and will begin welcoming guests from 01 Jul (**TD** 26 Sep 2023).

Ideal for independent travellers and corporate guests, Hyatt House South Melbourne features 97 rooms and is pet-friendly.



## Window Seat

**WHEN** you imagine sunbathing at a beachfront resort, you may imagine drinking a pina colada on the soft white sand...not coming across human remains between your toes.

But tourists in South Carolina recently came across 200-year-old human remains, including a skull, at a beachfront resort at Edisto Island.

According to the sheriff, they may have come from a long-forgotten burial site.

In fact, in the 1800s, the resort was a settlement called Edingsville Beach and was popular with wealthy Charleston families.

A coroner told *Newsweek* that the "rare" discovery could possibly be from the Revolutionary or Civil Wars.

## Cutting through negative news

**IN THE** current geopolitical climate, consumers considering visiting Disneyland in the US need travel agents who can "cut through the negative news", emphasised Director of Walt Disney Parks and Resorts, Andrea Robinson (**pictured**).

In a panel discussion about the importance of Australian consumers at Sydney's Disney Days trade event, several industry experts shared their observations of travel to the US right now.

"Your knowledge, your expert advice, your insider tips are so important right now, and there are headwinds out there that we can't control," Robinson said.

"Travelling to Disneyland Anaheim is safe.

"It's secure, it's magical.

"Right now, clients really need your reassurance; there is a lot of negative noise out there and we need to cut through."

According to stats from IATA,



there was an 8% year-on-year increase in travel to California from Australia in Apr, she added.

United Airlines' Regional Manager Tim Wallis noted "that negative sentiment is not resonating in our numbers yet".

In terms of Aussies flying to the US, Apr was a strong selling period and "all things point to positive flight performance and demand for the US".

"Demand is still very strong.

"I was having a look at Los Angeles in particular, and it is five to six points up in load factors over the next couple of months

in terms of where we were at the same time last year," Wallis said.

Meanwhile, Robinson noted that at Disneyland Resorts, Australia is the third-largest international market, with an average stay of 2.8 days - longer than any other market.

More broadly speaking, Michael Young, Director from Visit Anaheim, added that on average, Australians spend 6.3 nights in the region during their Disneyland trip, followed by New Yorkers, who stay for 3.5 nights.

"You stay longer, you spend more, and you're experienced travellers," Young said.

"Travel's in your DNA, and it's just been a symbiotic relationship from the get-go."

The panel also spoke about Disneyland's 70th anniversary and travel trends, from the growing demand for luxury and the rise of multi-gen travellers and DINKS (dual-income, no kids). JHM

## EXPLORE NEW ZEALAND ON YOUR DREAM SELF-FAMIL

Access over 370 discounts on the Explore Programme, ranging from 30% to free of charge across airfares, accommodation and experiences.



Redwoods Treewalk  
Rotorua

**APPLY NOW**

**100% PURE  
NEW ZEALAND**  
traveltrade.newzealand.com

## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Airfare inflation pleasing

**DOMESTIC** and international airfare inflation has risen by half the average rate of all purchases in the five years since the pandemic, according to new figures from Flight Centre's Corporate travel division.

While overall inflation has skyrocketed by 20% since COVID, causing financial headaches across the globe, the cost of air tickets has increased by roughly 10% during the same period.

FCM Consulting said that international business class tickets have fared the best, with

an overall increase of around 7%, marginally ahead of domestic economy air tickets, which have risen by around 8% since 2019.

Those travelling in international economy have felt a little more of the inflation pinch, with fares increasing by 12% compared to pre-pandemic levels.

"When you compare the increase in the cost of travel against the rise we've seen for fuel, milk, bread, even a bag of apples, it really puts things into perspective," FCM Consulting Director APAC Felicity Burke said.

"This comes while the cost of jet fuel increased by 25% in 2024, but that does appear to be easing back towards 2019 levels."

Looking into the future, Burke said Aussie corporate travellers should expect airfares to plateau in the short-to-medium term, with fares predicted to remain steady outside of the standard seasonal variations. **AB**

### Win \$25k travel fund

**QANTAS** Business Rewards is giving members the chance to win a share of \$40,000 into their Travel Fund, with a first prize of \$25,000, a second prize of \$10,000, and a third prize of \$5,000.

To enter, travellers must book an eligible Qantas flight via participating CT Partners agencies before 20 Jul.

Every booking counts as one entry into the draw - register for the competition **HERE**.

### Hona joins QF Corp

**QANTAS** has expanded its corporate sales team with the appointment of Steve Hona (**pictured**) as Business Development Manager.

Hona, who is based in Melbourne, brings extensive experience in the travel industry, most recently as Strategic Sales Manager at APTI Australia.

He has also held roles at Helloworld Travel, Corporate Travel Management, Cathay Pacific Airways, and 1000 Miles Travel Group, where he was GM Australia between 2018-2020.



Travel Daily  
SHARPEN YOUR  
KNOWLEDGE ON  
TOKYO WITH  
TRAVEL DAILY  
TRAINING ACADEMY  
Click here to discover



### TIME grad makes connection



**ANOTHER** agent has successfully graduated from the Travel Industry Mentor Experience in New Zealand - Nina Kerby (**pictured**) from Corporate Travel Management.

During her graduation speech at a recent networking event, Kerby revealed that when she first entered the program, she was unsure of what to expect, but was inspired by her mentor, Jamie Swan from QT Auckland, who helped shape the next steps in her career journey.

Kerby was previously a corporate travel consultant at Orbit World Travel, then joined CTM in February last year.

She said that one of her biggest takeaways from the program was the importance of connection.

"The travel industry is built on it; not just connecting people to places, but people to people - that's what makes this industry whole," she said.

"And those connections, like the one I've had with Jamie, are what stay with you."

"For the first time, I could see a future version of myself in this industry, not just working in it, but thriving, contributing, leading," Kerby added. **JHM**

### FCM Th!nk series

**FCM** Travel kicked off its Th!nk series of leadership events this week in Sydney, and will next go to Melbourne on 03 Jun and Brisbane on 05 Jun.

The events feature guest speakers covering emerging trends in business travel.

"The series brings together industry leaders to explore current travel trends, exchange ideas, and keep ahead of the curve in business travel," explained FCM Travel GM ANZ Renos Rologa.

To book your spot, **CLICK HERE**.

## TAKE A LOOK AT

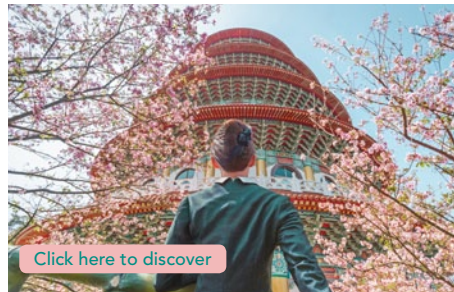
**OCEANIA**  
CRUISES®

YOUR WORLD. YOUR WAY.®

**HOME** **EX**

HOME AGENT  
VIRTUAL  
EXPERIENCE

**CLICK TO VIEW  
THEIR BOOTH**



## VA staff share offer

**AN INTERNAL** email to staff from Virgin Australia CEO Dave Emerson suggests the carrier is gearing up to announce its return to the ASX, with employees reportedly being offered equity.

While the internal communication to 8,000 VA employees did not fully commit to IPO plans, Emerson did confirm all staff will have the opportunity to obtain \$3,000 worth of share rights if it goes ahead.

The 'takeoff grant' will convert to ordinary shares after a two-year vesting period, provided staff remain employed with VA.

"This takeoff grant represents an opportunity for you to become a shareholder in the company you have helped build [and] directly benefit from VA's future performance," Emerson said.

## Ama's new skipper

**CHANGES** at the top of AmaWaterways this year have continued this week, with the CEO and President swapping hats as part of a new restructure.

Current Chief Executive Rudi Schreiner will step away and become President of the luxury river cruise brand, while newly appointed President Catherine Powell (**TD** 12 Feb) will take on the CEO role from 01 Jul.

Kristin Karst will remain in her role as Chief Brand Ambassador and retain her seat on the board as part of the change-up, and follows her vacating the Executive Vice President position in Feb.

The latest development was described as a "dynamic moment" for the company and the broader river cruise sector by Powell, a former senior Airbnb executive, with the brand priming itself for expansion in the midst of a flurry of growth activity in the European river cruise space.

"The company is strategically expanding into new destinations and markets while making substantial investments in technology," Powell said.

## Smooth sailing for rebrand



**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line Hotel Director Melissa Yates (**pictured**) was kind enough to take some time out of her busy schedule to speak with **Travel Daily** aboard *Carnival Adventure* this week.

While the big swell off the NSW coast rocked the ship en route back to Sydney from Qld, Yates was calm and collected, confirming the early reaction

from passengers aboard the former P&O Cruises vessel had been very positive.

"We know how much the P&O brand was loved in Australia, and what those guests will see when they step aboard [the Carnival rebranded ships] is that we still have a lot of the amazing crew that have looked after them on previous voyages," she said.

"We have also kept plenty of Aussie favourites, such as Luke's Bar & Grill, the fabulous Dragon Lady East Asian restaurant, as well as Angelo's Italian dining."

Yates added the two ships - *Carnival Adventure* and *Carnival Encounter* - have also retained comedy nights and deck parties, with the future of cruising in Australia for Carnival to see the company inject even more 'fun' into its offering in the future. **AB**

See the full interview **HERE**.

## AA in line for tech

**AMERICAN** Airlines has started to roll out touchless ID lanes in the United States, starting with Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport.

The lanes eliminate the need for physical IDs and allow travellers to pass through airport security using facial recognition, with the tech to bring AA in line with competitors UA and Delta.

US reports suggest the next airport to be added will be Atlanta (ATL), New York LaGuardia, and Salt Lake City (SLC), with Dallas-Fort Worth, Chicago O'Hare, and Miami (MIA) also on the radar down the track.



## More US declines

**TRIVAGO** is the latest travel brand to relay issues with US visitation, with internal figures showing double-digit declines in bookings from source markets like Canada, Mexico and Japan.

The majority Expedia-owned business also suggested anxieties over President Trump's economic policies have curtailed overseas travel plans, with more US residents opting for domestic holidays in recent months.

## 40% drop in NZ calls

**NEW** Zealand Cruise Association CEO Jacqui Lloyd has confirmed a massive 40% decline in port calls from cruise lines.

Recently speaking with *The Platform*, Lloyd said that despite strong demand, a rise in regulatory changes and costs has created a disincentive for cruise lines, with brands unable to pass costs to passengers within the 18 to 24-month booking window.

## Hamilton jets ahead

**AIR** New Zealand will introduce 171-passenger A320 aircraft to its growing Christchurch to Hamilton route from 18 Sep, operating alongside existing ATR 72 turboprop services.

When the larger planes touch down in Hamilton, it will mark the first time in 25 years the carrier has operated domestic jets to the North Island regional destination.

Outgoing Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran said the launch of jet services reflected the airline's ongoing focus on building greater connectivity between the North and South Islands, and supporting growth where there is clearly established demand.

"The A320 will provide more seats at key travel times, particularly for business and leisure travellers and those with onward connections, while our ATR aircraft remain a vital part of the schedule, giving customers flexibility across the day."

The addition of A320s will add around 25,000 seats a year to the route, while a pair of ATR aircraft will be redeployed across the regional network.

Air NZ has already enjoyed success with the same strategy, having maintained strong passenger demand after introducing Invercargill-Auckland jet services in 2019.



## SPECIALS

Send your special deals to:  
specials@traveldaily.com.au

An earlybird sale for **Railbookers** ends COB today, offering major savings across 2026 trips at 2025 rates. The promotion includes discounts of \$700 per couple for the brand's 15-day 'Grand Tour of Switzerland' itinerary, covering eight destinations. Discounts of \$600 per couple can also be accessed for the company's 'Grand Alaska Adventure with Alaska Railroad Southbound' trip. The sale ends close-of-business today. **CLICK HERE** for further details.

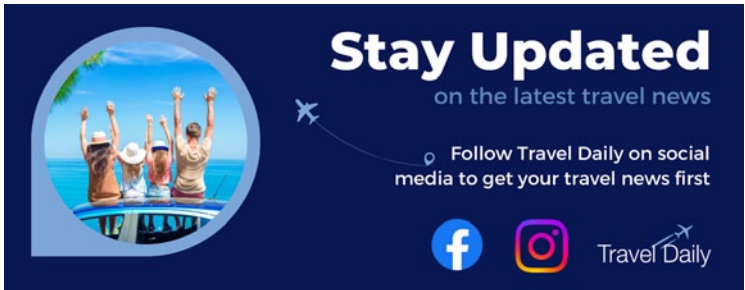
**Celestial** has rolled out a new promotion featuring savings of up to 60% across 87 sailings between Jun 2025 and Mar 2027. For travellers curious to explore the Arabian Gulf, there are 19 discounted departures on offer for its seven-night 'Desert Days' itinerary, which sails roundtrip from either Dubai or Doha. There are also 13 cheaper departures on the brand's new shorter 'Iconic Arabia' cruises, voyaging roundtrip from either Abu Dhabi or Dubai. Prices lead in from \$969 per person, twin share for a seven-night cruise. All offers are available to book from 01 Jun to 31 Aug, 2025. Call 1800 648 737 for more details.

Time is running out to access **Oceania Cruises'** Fleetwide Sale, offering cruise travellers up to 30% savings on all 2027 sailings. When booked by COB today, the cheaper rates will also include a free beverage package featuring champagne, wine and beer by the glass during lunch and dinner in all onboard restaurants. Passengers will also take advantage of up to US\$800 in shipboard credit and 50% reduced deposits. **CLICK HERE** to learn more about the promo before it ends.

Save up to \$7,000 per couple on an **APT** outback tour for trips that depart in Aug and Sep. The 15-day 'Kimberley Complete' adventure includes a helicopter flight over Mitchell Falls, trips to the Bungle Bungle Range, and exclusive access to wilderness lodges. The deal is available until 30 Jun. Call APT on 1300 278 278 to find out more details. Meanwhile, the company's **Travelmarvel** brand is also offering big discounts of \$2,600 per couple on its 'Reflections of the Rockies and Alaska Cruise' trip. The 21-day land and cruise journey explores the alpine resorts of Whistler and Blue River, and takes in a ride on the Rocky Mountaineer. The special deal is on offer until 30 Nov. Call 1300 300 036 for more details.

Savings of up to \$1,275 per person are on offer across **Contiki's** Top 10 Ultimate Trips for 2026. Available to book until 31 Jul, the sale includes one of the operator's most popular multi-country Europe itineraries, as well as \$595 off the price of some Thailand, Cambodia and Lao package trips. Access the TTC agent portal **HERE** to book.




Access \$75 off return flights to South Australia with **Qantas** for flights departing direct from all Australian capital cities when using the code 'SA7'. But agents will need to hurry to take advantage of the deal, which ends by COB on 01 Jun. See more details **HERE**.



## Stay Updated

on the latest travel news

Follow Travel Daily on social media to get your travel news first

## Utah lights up in Sydney



**THE** Utah Office of Tourism with Ski Utah hosted a number of industry executives aboard luxury yacht *Ghost 2* this week to take in the sights and sounds of Vivid Sydney.

A rainy night in the Harbour City didn't dampen the fun as delegates heard about Utah's continued push to attract Australian skiers to its slopes, which see 500 inches of snow each year and have 15 resorts to cater for a variety of needs.

Ten of the resorts on the ski fields are less than an hour's drive from Salt Lake City Int'l Airport.

The state has created an itinerary specifically for advanced skiers called the Interconnect Adventure Tour, which allows them to ski six resorts in one day, including back-country traverses between them.

In attendance on the night were representatives from Ski Utah, Park City, Heber Valley and Brian Head, with representatives from Greater Zion and Delta Air Lines also there.

Stephanie Laurenson from SkiMax was the lucky winner

of a prize pack given out on the night, which included two-night stays in the Greater Zion area of Springdale, Zermatt Resort, Park City and Brian Head; a variety of ski passes for the various locations; a return flight for two from Sydney to Salt Lake City on Delta Air Lines; and more.

This year's cruise on *Ghost 2* during Vivid marked the second year that Utah's Office of Tourism has run the industry event. *DF*

## GC women's retreat

**JW MARRIOTT** Gold Coast Resort & Spa has launched a new women's wellness retreat in partnership with Female Physio Co, taking place 01-03 Aug.

The retreat includes two nights' luxury accommodation; expert-led workshops; restorative experiences like sound-healing breathwork; daily Pilates; spa treatments; curated dining; and a one-on-one post-retreat consult voucher with Female Physio Co.

The package is priced from \$1,199 per person - bookings go live 02 Jun, **HERE**.



Your business  
before a  
nature based  
tourism grant

and after.

**Gold Coast**  
nature based tourism  
grants now open

Tourism is in our nature

[Apply now](#)

CITY OF  
**GOLDCOAST.**

# Small Group Journeys

*Our most epic journeys are back for 2026*



Adventures are always better in good company. Our 2026 Small Group Journey 'Greatest Hits' offer a glimpse of what makes travel with A&K so distinctive: intimate group sizes averaging 14 guests, insider access, expert-led exploration and guaranteed departures with just two guests. From tracking Africa's iconic wildlife across Kenya's golden savannahs to exploring the ancient temples of Egypt, each itinerary is designed to bring like-minded travellers together for something truly special.

Ultimate Great Migration Safari  
14 days from \$30,605 pp

Ultimate Botswana Safari  
10 days from \$22,800 pp

Egypt and The Nile  
10 days from \$15,760 pp

Petra, the Pyramids and a Nile  
Yacht Cruise  
13 days from \$26,780 pp

Wonders of Morocco: From Souks  
to the Sahara  
12 days from \$16,830 pp

Classic Japan  
9 days from \$24,730 pp

Taj Mahal and Treasure of India  
14 days from \$21,115 pp

Peru: Machu Picchu and Amazon Cruise  
13 days from \$25,705 pp

Spain and Portugal:  
10 Extraordinary Cities  
14 days from \$24,180 pp

TO BOOK YOUR CLIENTS CALL A&K'S  
TRAVEL SPECIALISTS ON 1300 589 717

## ABERCROMBIE & KENT

LIFE, WELL - TRAVELLED



# LUXURY EUROPE RIVER CRUISES

## 2026



Watch & Share Getaway this weekend  
Saturday 31 May at 5.30PM on Nine Network

**Featuring 15 Day Splendours of Europe (EWCR)**

Hosted by Shaynna Blaze (from The Block)