



From \$100M to \$20M; Brand USA faces major budget gutting. USTA expresses 'deep concern'

The U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce has proposed slashing Brand USA's annual budget from USD 100 million to just USD 20 million as part of a wider effort to reduce national deficits. The move, tabled by Senator Ted Cruz, comes amid broader cost-cutting legislation and has prompted strong concern across the global travel industry. Brand USA, the country's official destination marketing body's promotional work has long been considered vital to maintaining the U.S.'s competitive edge in attracting inbound travel. Industry bodies, including the U.S. Travel Association and the Travel Technology Association, have warned that the proposed 80% funding reduction could severely impact tourism recovery efforts, particularly with international arrivals forecast to decline by 5.1% this year. Tourism Economics now projects a loss of USD 12.5 billion in international visitor spending in 2025. With the U.S. preparing to host the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the America250 celebrations, and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, industry leaders argue the cut is poorly timed and economically short-sighted. Los Angeles Tourism CEO Adam Burke noted the country had already lost an estimated USD 100 million in service exports since the pandemic and urged strong support for Brand USA as a critical recovery tool. The cut if implemented will compound greatly to issues that are already posing a challenge for inbound travel to the US such as evolving immigration rhetoric, travel bans, and limited visa-free access. This development is of concern not only U.S. tourism officials but also international travel advisors, wholesalers, and partners who rely on Brand USA's destination marketing to drive bookings. The move comes weeks after The Department of Commerce dismissed five key members from the Brand USA board including its CEO, Elliot Ferguson. [Read More](#)

Qantas Group to shut down Jetstar Asia



Qantas will wind down operations of its Singapore-based low-cost carrier, Jetstar Asia. The closure, set to take full effect by 31 July 2025, will see Jetstar Asia progressively reduce its flying schedule over the next seven weeks. Sixteen intra-Asia routes will be impacted, although Jetstar Airways and Jetstar Japan services into Asia will remain unaffected. The aviation landscape in the APAC region has shifted considerably, with overall airline capacity now surpassing pre-Covid levels. This growth has been largely driven by the rapid expansion of regional low-cost carriers such as Scoot and AirAsia intensifying competition across short-haul markets. As a result, fare levels have been pushed down, placing increased pressure on yields and profitability. Jetstar Asia has struggled to remain sustainable amid these conditions. The airline has faced sharp increases in operating costs, including supplier expenses rising by up to 200% and significant hikes in airport fees. It is forecast to record an underlying loss of around A\$35 million this financial year. The financial impact of the shutdown is estimated at \$175 million in underlying earnings, with one-third expected in FY25 and the remainder across FY26. As part of the transition, 13 Jetstar aircraft will be redeployed to Australia and New Zealand, strengthening domestic and trans-Tasman capacity. [Read More](#)

Latin America emerging as key growth region for 2025, LATA Expo 2025



Latin America is showing strong momentum in international tourism, with six key destinations Mexico, Costa Rica, Argentina, Brazil, Peru, and Ecuador accounting for 86% of the region's 76.4 million international arrivals in 2024. New insights released by travel intelligence firm Mabrian at LATA Expo 2025 outline five trends shaping the region's growth and highlight clear opportunities for the travel trade. Improved air connectivity is playing a critical role in driving tourism recovery. Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina are expanding both domestic and international routes, while Costa Rica remains heavily focused on inbound traffic making it a compelling option for long-haul travellers. Tourist satisfaction and safety perceptions remain high, especially in Costa Rica, Ecuador and Peru, although product authenticity and cultural depth are key areas for enhancement creating room for curated and immersive experiences. Cultural experiences continue to be major travel motivators, particularly in Argentina and Brazil, while Costa Rica leads in nature-based tourism. Segment-specific behaviours are also emerging. Couples dominate arrivals in Costa Rica and Ecuador, families are more common in Mexico and Brazil, and solo travellers particularly wellness and self-discovery seekers are a key audience in Peru and Ecuador. Importantly, the region benefits from multiple seasonal peaks, allowing travel advisors to drive bookings beyond the traditional high season.

Intention over Extravagance - How GenZs are re-defining luxury travel



Globally, Gen Z travellers are rewriting the rules of luxury embracing deeper purpose, cultural immersion, and minimalism over material excess. The definition of luxury travel is undergoing a generational shift, and it's being led by Gen Z. This globally connected generation born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s is reshaping travel expectations across borders, favouring emotionally rich experiences, cultural depth, and sustainable choices over traditional markers of opulence. Gone are the days when luxury was defined solely by five-star hotels and first-class flights. For Gen Z, true indulgence lies in experiences that feel personal, intentional, and authentic. From off-grid retreats and local homestays to eco-lodges and design-forward hostels, accommodation choices are being guided less by prestige and more by a sense of connection to place. [Read More...](#)

Mondrian Gold Coast makes Australian debut



Mondrian Gold Coast has officially opened, introducing the renowned lifestyle brand to Australia for the first time. Situated on the southern Gold Coast's

Burleigh Heads, the 208-room hotel marks a significant addition to Queensland's accommodation landscape. The hotel comprises 132 Studios, 63 Suites, 10 residential-style homes, two luxury Beach Houses with private plunge pools, and the signature Sky House penthouse offering expansive Pacific Ocean, hinterland and Burleigh Headland views. Culinary offerings span two distinctive venues led by acclaimed chefs namely LiTO featuring a Med spirit and Haven for elevated dining offering local produce. [Read More](#)

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ATPAP famil connects travel agents to culture and country in the Northern Territory



Tourism NT recently hosted its inaugural Aboriginal Tourism Product Awareness Program (ATPAP) famil, offering a select group of top-performing travel agents a deep dive into the cultural and natural wonders of the Northern Territory. Spanning Darwin, Kakadu, and Arnhem Land, the famil brought together seven agents from New Zealand and Australia, all of whom earned their place through active engagement in ATPAP’s webinar series and knowledge assessments.



Highlights included a sunset cruise with the Aboriginal-owned Sea Darwin Sea Tiwi, an emotional day in Litchfield National Park with Indigenous guide Tess Atie, and immersive rock art experiences in Kakadu and Injalak Hill. The journey culminated with a stay at Davidson’s Arnhemland Safaris, where participants explored ancient rock galleries and connected with the family behind the eco-lodge. Throughout the week, the group engaged with Aboriginal-owned operators, gaining powerful cultural insights and forming a close-knit bond that reinforced the value of responsible, Indigenous-led tourism.

New Beach House in Canggu offers Kiwi travellers a stylish slice of Bali’s coastline

New Zealanders heading to Bali now have a fresh beachfront gem to add to their itineraries. Beach House, the newest lifestyle venue at the Regent Bali, Canggu, has officially opened offering a seamless blend of coastal elegance, bold flavours, and front-row views to Bali’s famous sunsets. Perched on the sun-drenched shores of Canggu and directly overlooking the iconic Echo Beach surf break,



Beach House is redefining barefoot luxury. Whether it’s a long lunch, signature cocktails by the infinity pool, or sunset sessions under swaying palms, Kiwi travellers will find a refined yet relaxed sanctuary to unwind. The menu celebrates the flavours of the Indonesian archipelago with standout dishes like Tuna Tataki, Spicy Shrimp with tobiko, and a zero-waste roasted cauliflower. An open-air BBQ highlights daily seafood catches. Behind the bar, inventive cocktails like The Waves and Surf Garden mix tropical ingredients with expert technique, perfect for sipping poolside or in the “Cocktail Cabana” experience. Guests can also opt for a sparkling “Effervescent Escape,” pairing a bottle of Billecart-Salmon champagne with curated bites for a luxe afternoon indulgence. For active travellers, a partnership with Rip Curl offers private surf classes and multi-day surf packages tailored for all levels—an ideal way for New Zealanders to tap into Bali’s world-renowned wave culture. Just 20km from Denpasar International Airport and set within the prestigious Regent resort, Beach House combines contemporary Indonesian design with world-class hospitality. It’s the perfect place for Kiwi travellers seeking both inspiration and indulgence on Bali’s trendsetting coast.

Shaikha Al Nowais nominated as first female Secretary-General of UN Tourism

In a historic move for the global tourism sector, Shaikha Nasser Al Nowais has been nominated to serve as the next Secretary-General of UN Tourism, marking the first time a woman has been put forward for the role in the organisation's 50-year history. Elected by the UN Tourism Council following official protocol, Al Nowais is set to assume office in January 2026, pending final approval by the UN Tourism General Assembly. An accomplished Emirati business leader, Al Nowais brings over 16 years of experience in the global hospitality industry. As Corporate Vice President at Rotana Hotels, she has led owner relations across key markets including the Middle East, Africa, Eastern Europe, and Turkey. Her influence extends beyond corporate operations she currently chairs the Abu Dhabi Chamber's Tourism Working Group and holds board positions with the Abu Dhabi Businesswomen Council and Les Roches Hospitality Academy.



SQ confirms 2025/2026 northern winter schedule

From 26 October 2025 to 17 January 2026, Singapore Airlines will see the return of its summer capacity, reintroducing three daily flights between Auckland and Singapore, which will also see the return of First Class with the Boeing 777-300ER recommencing on SQ285/286 services. Further to these changes, from 18 January 2026 until 28 March 2026, the Airbus A380 will be back. This will return the Auckland-Singapore v.v. schedule to two daily flights a day. In addition to the services between Auckland and Singapore, the airline will continue to operate supplementary services between Christchurch and Singapore over the peak summer season, from 24 November 2025 until 13 February 2026. These supplementary services will be expanded to four per week, an increase from previous year's three supplementary flights a week, 24Nov - 30Dec25 and 12Jan - 14Feb26. Complete schedules on your GDS or chosen NDC platforms.

New account managers from Hapag-Lloyd Cruises

Luxury Travel Marketing has confirmed the appointment of Rachel Harrigan and Erin Kramer as joint Account Managers for Hapag-Lloyd Cruises in the



Australia and New Zealand market. The dual appointment reflects the brand's strengthened focus on trade engagement and its long-term commitment to growing the luxury cruise segment in the region. Both Harrigan and Kramer bring extensive industry experience, having held roles across premium and luxury cruise sales and marketing. In their new position, the pair will work closely with travel advisors, offering product training, sales support, and strategic marketing guidance to enhance Hapag-Lloyd's visibility and performance in the local market. Their appointment is seen as a strategic step by Luxury Travel Marketing, the regional representative for Hapag-Lloyd Cruises, to support trade partners with dedicated on-the-ground expertise. "We are delighted to welcome Rachel and Erin to the team," said Lauren McAlpine of Luxury Travel Marketing.

Club Med appoints Michelle Davies to lead growth across expanded Asia-Pacific markets

Club Med has confirmed an expanded leadership role for Michelle Davies, who will now oversee operations across New ESAP (East & South Asia and Pacific) Markets, in addition to her current responsibilities as General Manager for the Pacific region. The appointment follows a strategic restructure of Club Med's Asia-Pacific business, which has seen the consolidation of three regional business units into two: Greater China and the newly formed ESAP unit. The move is designed to streamline operations and accelerate growth across key markets including Thailand, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, Myanmar, and Cambodia. Her remit will include brand development, strategic partnerships, customer acquisition, and planning for new resort openings.



AmaWaterways appoints ASTA's Sarah Little as Godmother of new Danube vessel *AmaSofia*

In a strong show of support for the travel advisor community, leading river cruise line AmaWaterways has



named Sarah Little, Senior Vice President of Business Development at the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), as Godmother of its upcoming ship *AmaSofia*. The announcement was made during the Travel Leaders Network EDGE Conference in Las Vegas, with the official christening set to take place at the 2026 ASTA River Cruise Expo in Amsterdam. Scheduled to debut in spring 2026, *AmaSofia* will be the tenth AmaWaterways ship to operate on the Danube—Europe's most commercially significant river for the cruise sector. The vessel will operate a selection of seven-night itineraries, including flagship sailings such as *Melodies of the Danube* and *Romantic Danube*. The godmother appointment recognises Little's long-standing contribution to advancing the travel advisor profession and her pivotal role in strengthening ASTA's influence within the global industry. "Sarah's enduring commitment to the advisor community and her genuine passion for the travel industry make her an ideal choice to serve as Godmother of *AmaSofia*," said Kristin Karst, Co-Founder and Chief Brand Ambassador of AmaWaterways. "To honour her at ASTA's River Cruise Expo, surrounded by more than 1,600 travel professionals, will be a particularly meaningful celebration." Little, who has played a central role in expanding ASTA's outreach and industry partnerships, said the recognition highlights the shared values between ASTA and AmaWaterways. "I'm incredibly honoured to serve as Godmother of *AmaSofia*," said Little. "This appointment is a testament to AmaWaterways' unwavering support of travel advisors, and I look forward to marking this milestone with so many industry colleagues in Amsterdam." *AmaSofia* will deliver the line's signature blend of immersive shore excursions, regionally inspired fine dining, wellness programming, and attentive service hallmarks that continue to distinguish AmaWaterways in the competitive European river cruise landscape.

India's international visitor spend surges to record \$37 Billion



India's Travel & Tourism sector is experiencing a major resurgence, with the latest data from the World Travel & Tourism Council revealing international visitor spending reached an all-time high of ₹3.1 trillion (approx. USD 37 billion) in 2024, 9% above its pre-pandemic peak in 2019. The figures, published in WTTC's latest Economic Impact Research (EIR), signal a dramatic revival in inbound tourism following years of reliance on the domestic market. While domestic travel spend remains a vital contributor soaring to ₹15.5 trillion (approx. USD 187 billion), 22% above 2019 levels the return of international visitors has firmly placed India back on the global tourism map. India welcomed 20 million international tourists last year, an increase of 2.3 million on 2019, reflecting growing confidence in the country's tourism offering and global appeal. The WTTC emphasises this trajectory could be further accelerated through strategic infrastructure investment and streamlined visa policies. With India's youthful and highly educated population facing disruption from AI-driven automation, Travel & Tourism remains a critical engine for job creation and economic opportunity. WTTC has underlined the importance of strengthening national infrastructure such as high-speed rail, digital mobility, and sustainable transport to unlock the sector's full potential and increase its GDP contribution towards 10–11%. Looking ahead, 2025 is set to be another record year. WTTC forecasts that the sector's total economic contribution will exceed ₹22 trillion (approx. USD 265 billion), supporting over 48 million jobs. International visitor spending is expected to reach ₹3.2 trillion (approx. USD 38.5 billion), while domestic spend is projected to rise to ₹16 trillion (approx. USD 193 billion).