

AUNZ REPORT

APRIL 2025



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ABOUT TSUSA

Global Partner Programming

In April, Australia's economic landscape was shaped by a volatile currency, easing inflation, and political shifts ahead of the upcoming federal election. The Australian dollar plunged below 60 US cents—a five-year low—following U.S. President Donald Trump's "Liberation Day" tariff announcements, though later in the month it rebounded to a much more palatable 64c after a partial tariff reversal. Inflation indicators offered some relief, with both headline and underlying rates falling within the RBA's 2–3% target band for the first time in over a decade, prompting speculation of multiple interest rate cuts in the months ahead. Politically, the Australian Electoral Commission released updated guidelines for social media influencers, reflecting their growing role in public discourse. With the federal election set for May, cost of living remains a dominant voter concern, influencing both consumer confidence and discretionary travel decisions.

Australian visitation to the USA dropped for the first time since the pandemic, with 59,859 arrivals in March, a 7% decrease compared to the same month in 2024. New Zealand also posted a decline, with 13,303 visitors travelling to the USA in March, down 10% year-on-year (Source i94 arrivals).

Travel South USA was not impacted by this drop and instead continued to gain traction. In March, 2,809 Australians listed a Travel South state as their first intended address, representing 5% of total U.S. arrivals and flat on last year (Source i94 arrivals).

Several factors appear to be influencing this trend: the shift in Easter from March (2024) to April (2025), suppressing March travel and rising cost concerns amplified by the AUD/USD exchange rate. Texas and the South arrivals increasing, possibly due to lower costs and new direct routes.

April media coverage in Australia was dominated by negative stories about U.S. border experiences, with headlines highlighting Australians being detained, deported, or denied entry, often for vague reasons or past infractions. Reports also focused on invasive phone searches and heightened scrutiny at the border, contributing to a narrative that travel to "Trump's America" is riskier and more intimidating, even though official U.S. entry policies remain unchanged.

These headlines were compounded by economic concerns, including a plunging AUD, supplier price hikes, and renewed tariff tensions. While the volume and tone of coverage are creating hesitancy, it's important to recognize that the loud voices of a concerned few shouldn't overshadow the majority, whose preference for the USA remains unchanged. The industry is responding with data-driven reassurance, consistent messaging, and trusted voices to restore confidence and protect long-term demand.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Brisbane Sales Calls
- Cruise and Travel Show Video podcast – [It's the Perfect time for Aussies to Visit the American South](#)
- Travel USA New Zealand – State coverage of Mississippi & Georgia, plus individual city buy in program with Memphis, Kansas and Louisville.
- Global Week attendance.
- Where Music Was Born Presentation.
- Global Week media and partner follow-ups.
- First GMM Coverage.

Australia		Jul- Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	FY 25 Total
10 Partners AL KY LA NC SC TN WV MO MS ROTS	Travel Trade								
	Trade Meetings	172	13	19	17	17			238
	Number of Agents Trained	432	14	4	56	15			521
	Media Meetings	72	5	22	16	9			124
	Total number of articles published	79	11	28	8	8			133
	Impressions	40,116,936	9,804,021	8,246,930	2,308,761	4,756,026			61,700,729

II. COMMUNICATIONS & PR

- Global Week attendance.
- Global Week media and partner follow-ups
- Earned media Coverage Book
- Global Market Media Place 24 media Coverage Book

COVERAGE:

Travel South USA's most 'Instagrammable' spots

| DAILY NEWS / USA |

AUTHOR: Amy Reynolds | 07/04/2025 | 2 min. read



In recognition of the ways social media is increasingly informing and motivating travellers in their holiday destination selections, Travel South USA has curated a list of 'Instagrammable' places across southern regions of the USA.

Not only will visitors to these regions experience the characteristic charm of the South, but they will also have the perfect photos to share from their trip!



Visit Alley Spring and Mill, Missouri

Alley Spring and Mill is heaven for Instagram enthusiasts, with bright green grass, blue waters, and an iconic red mill the perfect background for striking shots. Beyond posing, visitors will also delight in discovering the history of the mill and the flour-making process.

Experience Southern charm in Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans

Atlanta, Nashville, and New Orleans each have distinctive attractions, but are linked by their Southern appeal. Jackson Street Bridge in Atlanta is a bucket list photo opportunity for fans of *The Walking Dead*, having featured prominently in the show. Visitors to the site can attempt to replicate the show's iconic marking poster (though they might be hard-pressed to find a nearby steed). Jackson Square and the French Quarter in New Orleans present a unique combination of a rich cultural history and a bustling street performing culture. In Nashville another bridge, the John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge, is the perfect vantage point to capture the Cumberland River and city skyline.

Natural wonders of North Carolina

An incredibly underrated travel destination, North Carolina features stunning natural landscapes perfect for living up your holiday snaps, including more than 300 waterfalls statewide!

Louisiana State University (LSU), Louisiana

Sporting enthusiasts can't miss the chance to take a photo outside LSU's Tiger Stadium in Louisiana. The campus's stunning grounds are also home to a live tiger, Mike, the only animal of his kind with an on-campus enclosure!

Guntersville, Alabama

Lake Guntersville, located within Guntersville State Park, makes the perfect background for your next post. With lake views, hills, trails, shorelines, overlooks, and many more scenic spots, you may even want to pack some outfit changes to make the most of the beauty!

Lake Malone State Park, Kentucky

The woods aren't just for hikers – they also make the perfect selfie spot! While the area's natural landscapes are undeniably gorgeous, the Big Twigs in Lake Malone State Park are a particularly fun photo op.

Harpers Ferry National Park, West Virginia

Harpers Ferry National Park is ideal for perfecting your posing, with a wealth of stunning spots to shoot. Visitors to the park will also see the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers from a beautiful new perspective.

The Natchez Trace Parkway, Mississippi

Tourists travelling to Natchez will be greeted with sweeping views of swaps, hills, and man-made landmarks alike. The vibrant buildings at riverfront district Natchez Under the Hill also offer a great addition to your page.

Explore historical Charleston, South Carolina

Charleston offers a combination of heritage and vitality which is reflected in its colourful historical buildings. Rainbow Row on East Bay Street perfectly captures the charm of this unique mixture, sure to spice up the monotony of a dull feed.

Discover murals in Knoxville, Tennessee

Knoxville is home to stunning murals, the perfect backdrop for your next post or even a feed picture in its own right. Mural tours around the town spotlight local artists, with popular works including those in Strong Alley and Weaving Rainbow Mountain.

To discover more travel photo ops for your feed, visit [Travel South USA's website](#).

TAGS SOUTH USA SOUTHERN USA TRAVEL SOUTH USA USA



AMY REYNOLDS

Amy Reynolds is a Brisbane-based Junior Travel Journalist at Captured Travel Media. Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Communication at Queensland University of Technology, Amy is passionate about stories — living her own to the fullest, and sharing those of others. She loves exploring new places and

POPULAR ARTICLES

[TravelManagers NTIA win celebrates group effort](#)

ch-loved Akaroa couple named as victims of fatal car crash [Read more](#)

Rattlesnake Saloon, Alabama: Beers and country music in one of the most unique places I've ever visited



Alan Granville

April 28, 2025 - 5:29pm

Share



Welcome to the Rattlesnake Saloon, Alabama

VIDEO CREDIT: STUFF

It is safe to say the members of our group weren't quite expecting what was about to unfold as the large truck pulled up in front of us.

The cigar-chomping driver ambled out of the converted pick-up, ushering us to sit on the open-air wooden benches on the back.

"You better hold tight," was the simple instruction. We didn't need telling twice. As we approached a steep decline, nervous laughter emanated from my comrades.

This unusual taxi is the only way in and out of one of the most unique bars I have ever visited - part dining room, part live music venue, and all set under a rock bluff in a remote part of northwestern Alabama.



The Rattlesnake Saloon opened in 2009.
ALAN GRANVILLE

As the pick-up truck slowly worked its way down the track, the incredible setting opened out in front of us.

A band was belting out country music while some folks enthusiastically danced. The ever changing colourful lights showcased the dramatic nooks and crannies of the gnarly natural rock features. At the side, a mini waterfall flowed.

All the while, food servers were buzzing around the many tables loaded down with beers and heaving plates of food.



The Saloon Taxi arriving at the Rattlesnake.
SUPPLIED

This land has been in the Foster family for generations. The cave was once used to home pigs, until it took some lateral thinking by Danny Foster and his youngest son, William Gordon Foster to turn this particular location into a saloon and restaurant.

The story goes it took 49 days to create this watering hole in a cave, with the discovery of a rattlesnake den during the construction leading to its eventual name.

That was in 2009 and the venue has become one of the most popular drawcards to this part of northwestern Alabama, and I can see why.



The saloon is one of the most popular drawcards to this part of northwestern Alabama.
ALAN GRANVILLE

The menu is very much a 'if it ain't fried, it ain't food' style of dining but is certainly tasty. My BBQ sandwich of pulled pork in a brioche bun hit the mark, while the deep fried cheesecake is a heart-stopping highlight.

But it's the overall atmosphere which draws visitors.

All through the evening it was difficult to wipe the smile off my face at the audacity of the setting. The cheap beers probably helped too.

If anyone ever asks me to paint a picture of what hospitality in the Southern USA looks like, I think I have found my inspiration.



[Destinations](#) > [North America](#) > [USA](#)

I toured Louisiana's plantation houses, it was deeply moving

Why experiencing this aspect of American history will enrich your understanding of the South.

Eliza O'Hare

2 min read April 22, 2025 - 11:05AM

ESCAPE

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In these massive mansions, the past can be confronting.

In Louisiana, all was not well before the Civil War. Or after the war either. But the sugar-coating around slavery is finally over for some of the great plantation houses of the state. I was invited to tour three estates in the Saint James parish and I wondered how they might approach the confronting heritage of slavery that built the extraordinary wealth across the south. Here's how the descendants of three plantations on the banks of the Mississippi are reckoning with the past.

Oak Alley Plantation



Avenue of slave huts at the Oak Alley Plantation.

Tourists take selfies on the oak-lined driveway to the big house, and why not? It's gorgeous, as is the impeccably preserved interior, gold-rimmed crockery and original hand-stitched French linens, but step into the antechamber and you'll also see a set of cast-iron ankle shackles on display. This self-guided tour plays it as it lays, deftly revealing the extraordinary wealth that was once here alongside the true histories and daily indignities of the enslaved who built the house and worked the sugarcane and pecan fields. It includes a walk through a restored workshop and slave quarters. The wall engraved with names of the slaves who passed through [Oak Alley](#) is particularly moving. Tickets from \$US29 (\$A45); allow two hours.

St Joseph Plantation



The expansive grounds of St Joseph Plantation.

The sugarcane plantation next door may be less manicured, but is still in the imposing Grecian style, all white columns and expansive verandas, and all built using slave-made mud bricks and labour. Hollywood came calling in search of a spooky colonial location for the 2005 film *The Skeleton Key*, which afforded the family the resources for extensive renovations required to keep this mansion-museum standing. Tours here are guided mainly by the descendants of the original family and start with a quick video before we head out for a solemn walk through quarters, kitchens, sheds and schoolhouse. [Tickets](#) from \$US22 (\$A34); allow one hour.

Laura Plantation



Laura Plantation is an architectural highlight.

By the time I arrive at the third plantation of the day, I'm overwhelmed. It's a lot. But tour guide Joseph Dunn is so passionate that I am immediately swept up in the saga of the Duparc family. This is a Creole plantation – weatherboard architecture painted pale yellow, blue, green and terracotta – and the tour is delivered through the eyes of Laura, granddaughter of the first Duparc.

The discovery of records dating back to 1808 means the available histories of the hundreds of slaves who lived and died on Laura are more accessible. And more real. Stories of children fathered by the owner with his own slaves, then sold are heart-breaking and while the slave quarters are stark and confronting, the grounds remain breathtaking – as conflicting and confronting as the history of Louisiana's plantations. [Tickets](#) from \$US28 (\$A44); allow one hour.

Getting there

The three plantations are next door to each other in St James Parish, a 50-minute drive from New Orleans. Hire a car and see one plantation or hop on a round-trip tour from New Orleans and see all three. If you're self-driving you can also overnight at Oak Alley in one of its weatherboard cottages; including breakfast, starting from \$270 a night.

More Coverage



10 best road trips to take in the USA



5 most underrated cities in the USA

Communications & PR

Media Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings)

Contacts	Interest/Status	Follow-up/Next step
Kate Cox, Explore	Discussed upcoming American travel plans	Will reconnect once confirmed on potential famil interest.
Tom Nicol, Lead Story	Presented their offering – an On-Demand Personalized News Streaming Platform that curates your news as part of their algorithm. Includes paid programmatic travel and lifestyle segments.	None currently
Susan Skelly, Freelancer	Reached out re: piece in The Australian on New Orleans 20-year anniversary since Katrin and the growth and evolution of the city through the lens of tourism.	Engaged with New Orleans & Company
Helen Hayes, Freelancer	Helen is Freelance Editor - Digital and Print Magazines - Travel Associates Editor: Ski and Snowboard annual Editor at Large: Vacations & Travel Contributor: Escape + Explore + Vacations & Travel + Australian Geographic + Australian Geographic Adventure + Beyond + Nautilus Marine Insurance Magazine Co-host of Travel Writers Radio	Coffee catch-up, educated on the region, no next steps currently.
Bonita Grima, Freelancer	Writes for the Australia Traveller	Coffee catch-up as above
Jeremy Drake, Editor Peaked Media	Connect on Travel South, walked him through each state – was interest in outdoor and culinary offerings.	Added to all mailing lists, will draft a press office pitch.
Carrie Hutchison, Freelancer	Writes for Escape – was at GMM 24. I let her know that Escape declined this year due to a large portion of “Southern Content”.	Will reconnect for GMM 26 plans.
Craig Tansley, Freelancer	Inquired on famil opportunity – in conversation about suitable destinations.	Will reconnect closer to IPW.
Kristie Kellahan, Freelancer	Coffee catch-up. Followed-up on potential coverage.	TBC

III. TRAVEL TRADE

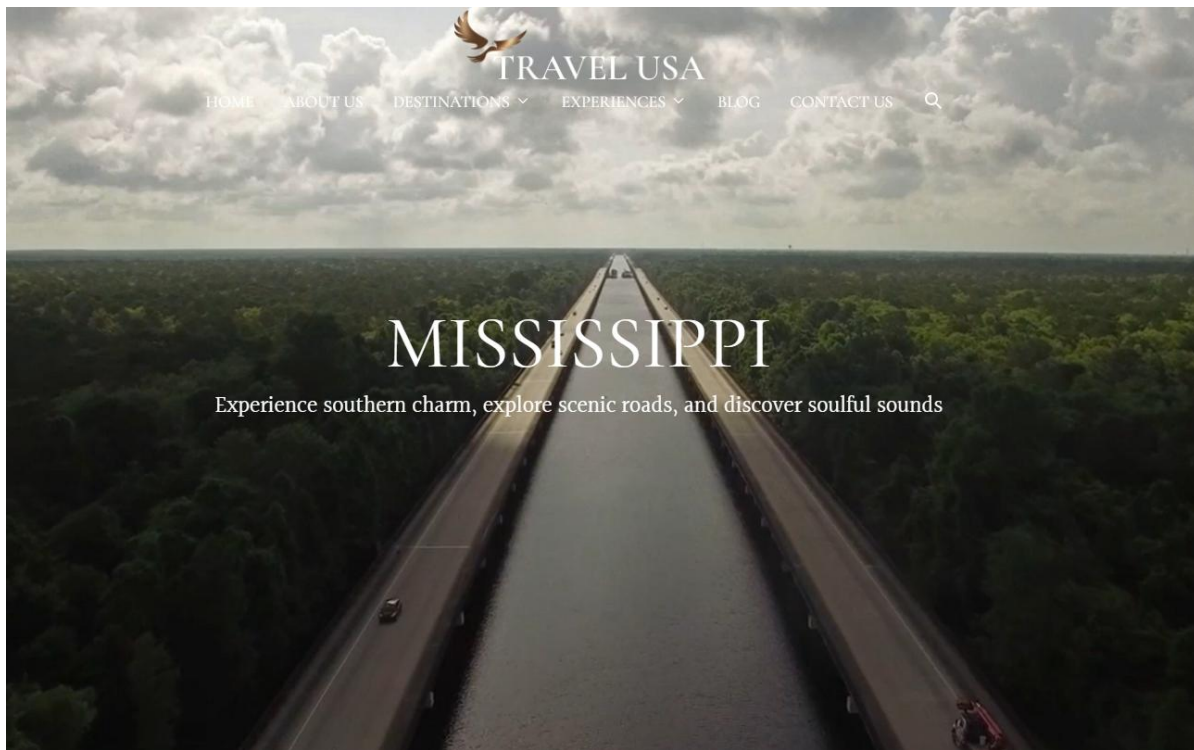
Trade Contacts (phone calls, emails, personal meetings).

Contacts	Interest/Status	Follow-up /Next step
Lauren Wicker Principal Client Partner Trip Advisor	Update on trends and information on Trip Advisor use by the Australian market	N/A
Emma Guant - Qantas Molly Maquire – MR Melanie Colwell – MR Kristen Galliot – MR Qantas & Medium Rare Agency	Update on Qantas campaign programing and buy in opportunities. They work with Medium Rare Agency as their marketing partner and offer very targeted programs leveraging off Qantas Frequence Flyers. They also target via EDM's, social and room night bookings from Qantas Holidays.	N/A
Toni Launi Area Leader NSW South Flight Centre	Discussion on Flight Centre training programs and hosting team leader meeting in June	Ongoing
Alex Brennan Head of Commercial Sports Where I Am	Update on 'Sports Where I Am', wholesaler of sporting tickets through both Flight Centre Helio and Infinity Holidays. Sports Where I Am sell all types of tickets throughout the south from college sports, to national games in all disciplines.	Ongoing
Bridget Avery Suzanne Gower MacDonald Product Designers The Luxury Collection	Training on breath of Travel South region on diversity of product available to the luxury network Suzanne and Bridget.	Ongoing
Shannon Foggerty Head of Product The Luxury Collection	Discussion on The Luxury Collection and update on Southern product. I have invited Shannon or one of her team to come to International Showcase in Nov.	Ongoing
Adam Townsen Product Manager Travel Associates	Update on Travel South product.	Ongoing
Lisa Wright National Events & LSM Manager The Luxury Collection	Update on 2026 program of events and educational program with The Luxury Collection, Flight Centre owned overarching segment of Luxury agencies – includes Travel Associates & Link Travel.	Ongoing
Blake Newell Marketing Manager Paul Murrell National Product Leader Envoyage	Update on Envoyage's network in Australia. Envoyage have moved into storefronts as well as incorporating their independently branded agents. Brief on their national conference and marketing opportunities.	Ongoing

Claire Bradley Wholesale Business Development Manager Luxury Escapes	Update on Luxury Escapes B2B wholesale business model. They have grown a lot since their launch and have been embraced by the Australian and NZ agent community.	Ongoing
Brand USA	Update on Brand USA Road trips expos/shows in Perth Adelaide and Gold Coast in July – Interesting as they are hitting the secondary markets that Visit USA do not go to.	Discuss with TSUSA
Dee Parkes-Finch National Account Manager – Flight Centre United Airlines	Meeting with Dee to discuss United Airlines and co-op Flight Centre opportunities to the South.	N/A
Belle Goldie Owner Cruise and Travel Shop	Recorded podcast as well as update and training with the team of 6 on the Southern States. Support with itinerary ideas. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HIBkXVG_YsM	N/A
Pamela Goldsbro Lux By itravel	Support, Training and itinerary ideas for client trip through North Carolina, Kentucky and Missouri.	N/A
Dani Tuffield General Manager Karryon	Discussion on US sentiment, positive angels that Karryon can follow up on as well as potential for Karryon campaign at International Showcase with post fam.	N/A
Maria Sumners Independent Travel Advisor Envoyage	Training and information for client itinerary to the south with multi-state itinerary.	N/A
Janine Bubb Travel Advisor Allure Travel	Training and information for Janines trip to the South.	N/A
Karen Ridge Travel Agent – Food & Wine Specialist Food and Wine Travel	Discussions and training off the back of April Newsletter 'Eating your way through the South' on DMC's who will work with small owner operators to do a Southern Food Focused specialty tour.	Ongoing
Maylane O'Connell Senior Travel Consultant Flight Centre Cherrybrook	Training and information for client itinerary to the south with multi-state itinerary.	N/A
Lisa Wright Team Leader Travel Associates Cronulla	Training and information for client itinerary to the south with multi-state itinerary.	N/A

Samantha McCarthy Advisor	Information and training for a small group of 7 to New Orleans	N/A
Total Travel Management		

CAMPAIGNS & ACTIVITY



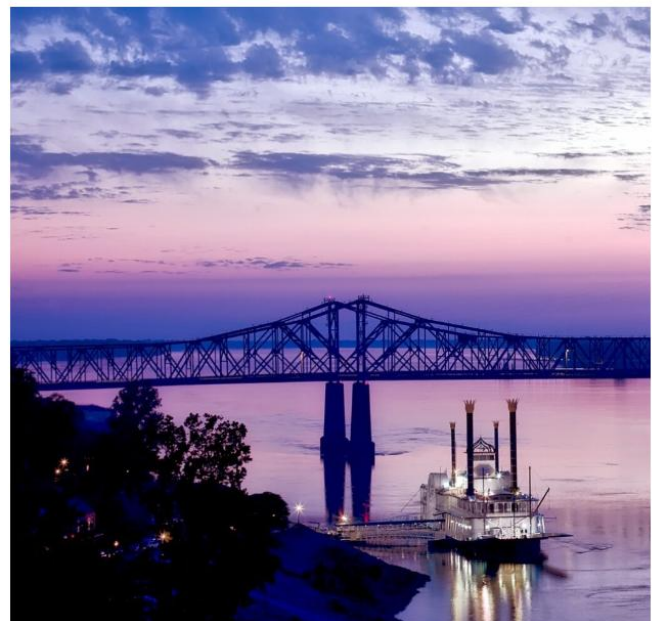
The birthplace of America's music – where soul, story and southern charm meet

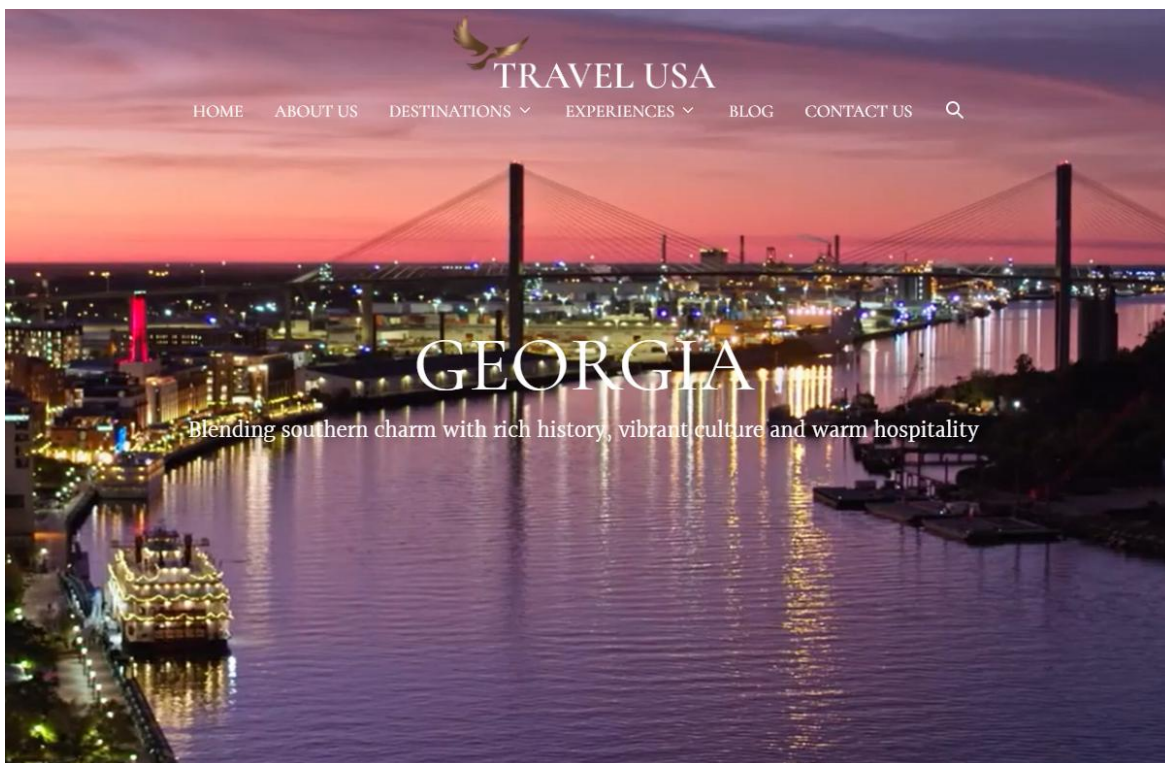
More than a century ago, the blues were born in Mississippi, shaping the sounds of country, R&B, jazz, and rock 'n' roll. Today, the legacy of this music continues to echo, inviting you to journey into the heart of American music, where every corner tells a story.

Every mile in Mississippi is a drive through time! Self-drive adventurers can travel along the Great River Road, one of America's most scenic byways, following the Mississippi River through charming towns like Natchez and Vicksburg. For blues lovers, Highway 61 – the iconic Blues Highway – offers a soulful journey through the Delta. Or switch gears to the Natchez Trace Parkway, a peaceful 715 kilometre route winding through forests, hills, and centuries of Native American and pioneer history.

Follow the Mississippi Blues Trail through the Delta to discover where legends like B.B. King and Muddy Waters found their sound. Visit Tupelo, the birthplace of Elvis Presley, or explore cultural gems like the GRAMMY Museum Mississippi and Rowan Oak, the literary home of William Faulkner in Oxford.

In Jackson, uncover powerful stories at the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum, then head north to Tishomingo State Park for hiking, waterfalls, and stunning views. Down south, unwind along the Gulf Coast with its white-sand beaches, fresh seafood, and small-town charm.





THE PEACH STATE

Where History, Sports, Culture, and Natural Beauty Come Together!

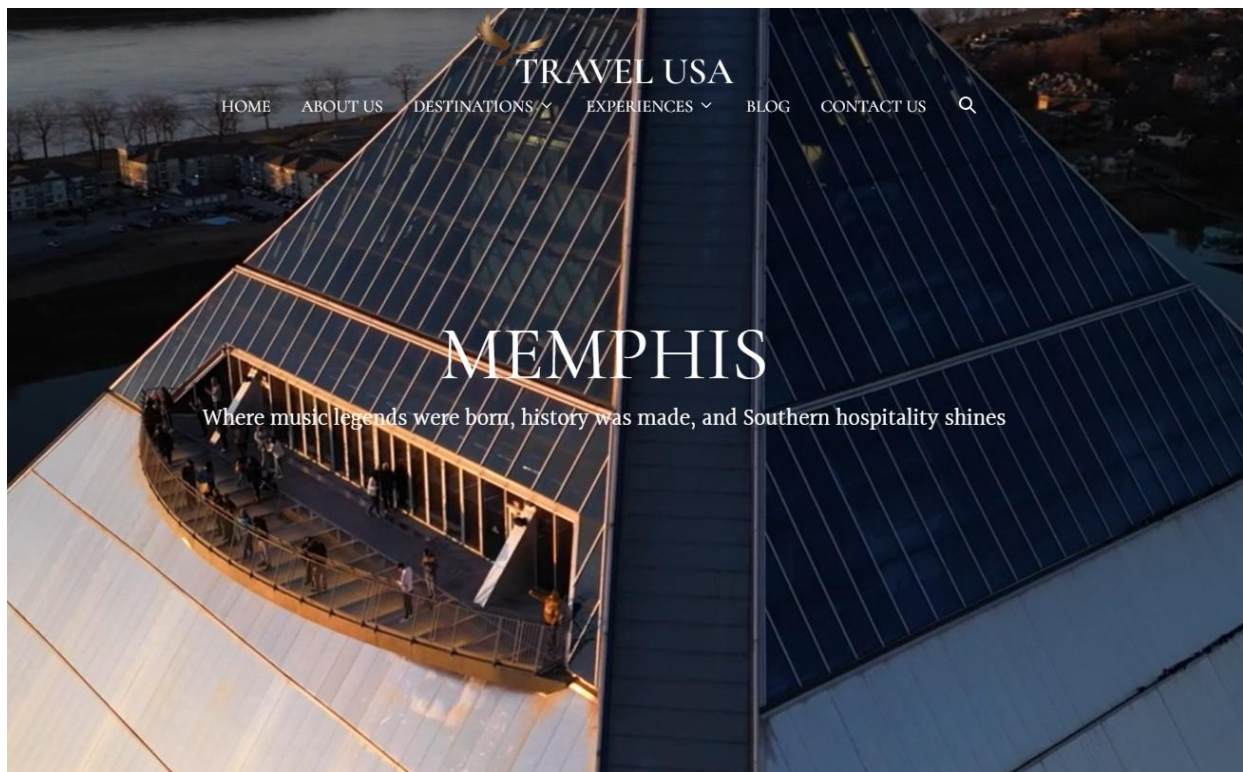
Georgia is a southeastern U.S. state rich in history, culture, and natural beauty. Its capital, Atlanta, is a major hub for business, entertainment, and civil rights history and home to must-see attractions like the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, Martin Luther King Jr. National Historical Park and the vibrant Midtown and Buckhead districts.

Beyond Atlanta, discover diverse landscapes, from the Blue Ridge Mountains in the north to the coastal marshlands and barrier islands in the east. Savannah, with its charming cobblestone streets, historic squares, and preserved antebellum architecture, is a favourite destination for visitors seeking an authentic taste of Southern charm. Whilst the Golden Isles, including Jekyll and St. Simons, offer pristine beaches and wildlife-filled marshes.

Georgia is also a sports powerhouse, home to passionate college football rivalries, the Masters Tournament in Augusta, and professional teams like the Atlanta Falcons (NFL), Atlanta Hawks (NBA), Atlanta Braves (MLB), and Atlanta United FC (MLS).

With its warm hospitality, world-class attractions, and a mix of urban energy and rural charm, Georgia offers something for every traveller. Whether exploring the Appalachian trails, tasting authentic Southern cuisine, or enjoying sports events, visitors will find plenty





HOME OF THE BLUES

Discover its rich music heritage, iconic Beale Street, Elvis Presley's Graceland, mouth-watering barbecue and the lively Mississippi Riverfront.

Memphis, Tennessee, is a city brimming with cultural heritage, soul-stirring music, and rich history. Known as the home of the blues and the birthplace of rock 'n' roll, it has shaped the world's music scene like no other. But what else would you expect from the city mentioned in more than 1,000 song lyrics and titles, more than any other in the world!

Beale Street, the heart of the city's music culture, comes alive every night with live performances, vibrant bars, and an undeniable energy. For Elvis Presley fans, Graceland offers an intimate glimpse into the King of Rock 'n' Roll's life. The Memphis Rock 'n' Soul Museum and famous Sun Studio, where legendary artists like Elvis, Johnny Cash, and B.B. King recorded, are other must-visit locations for music lovers.

Beyond its legendary music scene, Memphis offers so much more! It played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement with the National Civil Rights Museum, housed at the Lorraine Motel where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated, offering a profound journey through the struggle for equality. Outdoor lovers can explore the lively Mississippi





TRAVEL USA

HOME ABOUT US DESTINATIONS ▾ EXPERIENCES ▾ BLOG CONTACT US 🔍



TRAVEL USA

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THE CITY OF FOUNTAINS

Welcome to KC – where rich cultural heritage, world-class cuisine, and thrilling sports await in a city known for its jazz roots and impressive array of fountains.

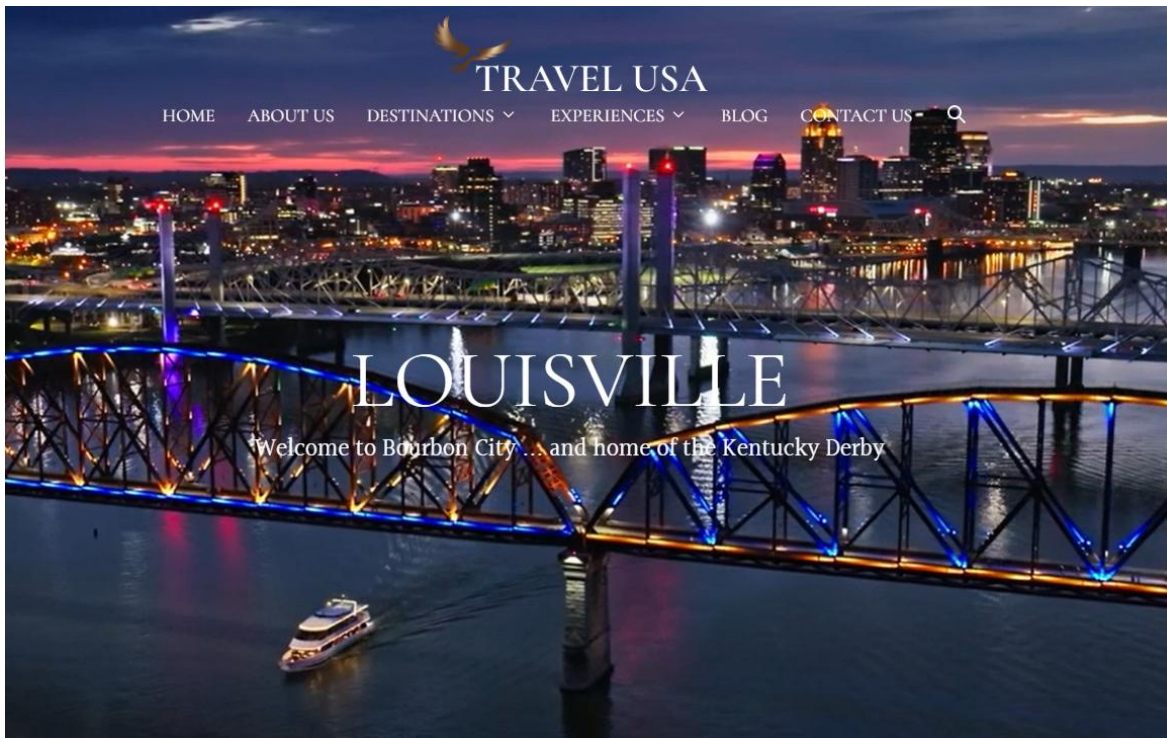
Kansas City, Missouri is a unique blend of Midwestern charm and urban sophistication! The city is famous for its jazz heritage, delicious barbecue, and impressive array of fountains – earning it's nickname "The City of Fountains."

Kansas City's food scene is renowned for its barbecue, with iconic spots like Arthur Bryant's and Gates Bar-B-Q leading the way. Adding to the city's culinary legacy is the world's first Museum of BBQ. Beyond smoked meats, KC offers a diverse range of dining experiences, from James Beard-awarded Voli Loncheria to trendy spots like Corvino and The Prospect.

Sports fans will feel right at home with both the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs and Major League Baseball's Kansas City Royals delivering thrilling live action during the year. Dubbed the "Soccer Capital of America," the city is also home to Sporting Kansas City (MLS) and the Kansas City Current (NWSL), offering excitement for both men's and women's soccer fans.

Getting around the city is easy with the KC Streetcar connecting neighbourhoods and key destinations, including the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art and the National WWI Museum





DERBY CITY

Louisville – where horse racing thrills meet world-class bourbon adventures.

Louisville beckons tourists with a blend of southern charm, vibrant culture, and exciting attractions. At the heart of the city lies the iconic Kentucky Derby, the world-renowned horse race that draws visitors from across the globe to Churchill Downs each May. The city's bourbon heritage is another major drawcard, with the Kentucky Bourbon Trail offering tours of historic distilleries and tastings of the state's signature spirit.

In addition to its famous events and bourbon heritage, Louisville boasts a diverse array of cultural attractions. The Louisville Slugger Museum & Factory celebrates America's favourite pastime, while the Muhammad Ali Centre honours the legendary boxer's life and legacy. Immerse yourself in horse racing history at the Kentucky Derby Museums, and visit the Frazier History Museum for a fascinating insight into Kentucky's rich history.

Outdoor enthusiasts will find plenty to love as well. The city's expansive parks system includes gems like Cherokee Park and Waterfront Park, offering opportunities for hiking, biking, picnicking, and more. The Big Four Bridge provides stunning views of the Ohio River and connects Louisville to Indiana, making it a popular spot for walking and cycling.

Foodies will delight in Louisville's burgeoning culinary scene, which is complemented by a



■ Resource Centre Updates

What's On:



May 9, 2025

54th Annual Charleston Greek Festival

The Charleston Greek Festival is a vibrant celebration of Hellenic culture, cuisine and community. Held annually since 1970, it's the region's longest-running cultural festival and now ranks as the third largest in the Lowcountry, drawing over 35,000 visitors in just one weekend.

Get ready to indulge in the rich flavours of Greece with a wide array of traditional dishes, drinks and desserts. From gyros and hearty platters to sweet pastries, Greek wine and coffee, there's something to satisfy every appetite, all accompanied by lively music and traditional dancing.

(more...)



May 10, 2025

West Virginia Strawberry Festival

The West Virginia Strawberry Festival is a long-standing celebration of community spirit, agricultural pride, and small-town charm. First held in 1936, the festival honours the region's strawberry growers and has since become one of the state's most cherished events. Each May, the town of Buckhannon transforms into a vibrant hub of activity, welcoming more than 60,000 visitors for a full week of festivities. From live music and parades to food vendors, competitions and a lively carnival, the event offers something for all ages. Set in the heart of West Virginia, it's a true showcase of local culture and hospitality.

(more...)

Whats New:

July 2025

🏠 The Printing House Hotel, Tapestry Collection by Hilton

Scheduled to open on 1 July 2025, The Printing House Hotel is a new addition to downtown Nashville's luxury accommodation scene. Part of Hilton's Tapestry Collection, the hotel will offer stylish rooms and suites designed for comfort and elegance. Guests can enjoy amenities such as an on-site café, room service, a fitness centre, complimentary Wi-Fi, business facilities and valet parking. With its central location and thoughtful amenities, the hotel aims to provide a refined yet relaxed stay for both business and leisure travellers.

[LEARN MORE](#)

March 2025

🔔 Renowned Alabama chef and six-time James Beard semifinalist to open new restaurant.

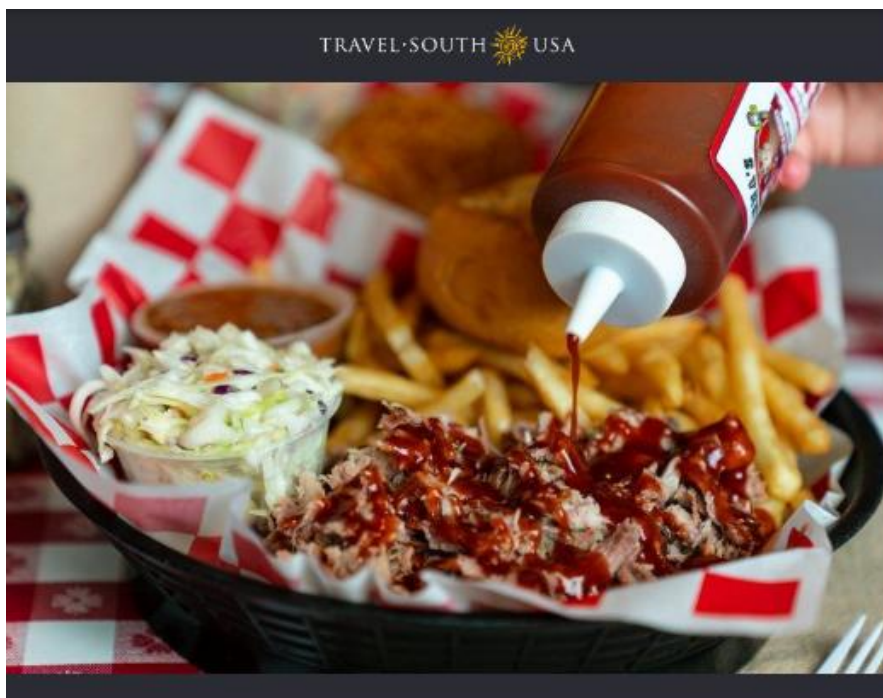
Bayonet, a new seafood restaurant and raw bar from Alabama chef and six-time James Beard Award semifinalist Rob McDaniel and his wife Emily, is set to open on 10 March in downtown Birmingham. Located in the Berry Building at 2015 Second Avenue North, it will sit next to the couple's first restaurant, Helen.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Newsletters – Eating your way through the South

TRADE Newsletter – Recipients: **4204** Open Rate: **1160 (21.60%)**

PR Newsletter – Recipients: **373** Open Rate: **187 (48.79%)**



The South is a place where food is more than fuel—it's a way of life. From legendary barbecue joints and family-owned diners to award-winning restaurants and coastal gems, each stop serves up something unforgettable.

Whether it's smoky, spicy, fried or fresh, every bite reflects the stories, traditions, and creativity that define this flavour-filled region. Ready to dig in? These are the dishes and destinations you won't want to miss.

Eating your way thru the South



TENNESSEE

Nashville Heat

No visit to Nashville is complete without tasting its iconic hot chicken, and there's no better place than the original: Prince's Hot Chicken. The dish's fiery origin story is as bold as its flavour. Rumour has it: Thornton Prince's lover spiced up his fried chicken out of revenge. Instead of burning with regret, he loved it. That accidental heat sparked a culinary legend, and today, Prince's remains the gold standard for Nashville hot chicken.

Nashville Hot Chicken



SOUTH CAROLINA

Barbeque Legacy

Barbeque runs deep in South Carolina, where centuries-old traditions still fire up pits across the state. Often called the true home of American barbeque, South Carolina is known for its regional variety, mustard-based sauces, and legendary pitmasters. Historic spots like The Pigs & Pigs BBQ in Charleston, serving pulled pork since 1946, help define its legacy. South Carolina's barbeque scene remains a Southern institution with flavour, history, and passion in every bite.

Barbeque Scene



MISSISSIPPI

Coastal Elegance

Mississippi's Gulf Coast blends Southern tradition with modern culinary artistry, and Vestige in Ocean Springs perfectly captures that. This James Beard-nominated restaurant offers a seasonal, ever-evolving menu inspired by Japanese and Southern flavours. Locally sourced ingredients take centre stage in dishes that highlight the region's bounty. Vestige reflects Mississippi's growing reputation for innovative, thoughtful dining honouring tradition while embracing creative, contemporary cuisine.

Modern Artistry



RHYTHMS OF THE SOUTH

Atlanta, Nashville, New Orleans

The South's top food cities serve up bold flavours and serious culinary cred. In Atlanta, MICHELIN-starred restaurants and buzzing food halls showcase a melting pot of global and Southern influences. Nashville brings the heat with hot chicken at Hattie B's and inventive dishes from James Beard-recognised chefs. In New Orleans, Creole classics like gumbo and po'boys meet iconic institutions like Commander's Palace, delivering a soulful, unforgettable taste of Louisiana tradition.

Southern Eats



KENTUCKY

Bluegrass Barbeque

Kentucky barbeque isn't just food; it's a vibrant tapestry of history and community. From classic pulled pork to uniquely Kentuckian smoked mutton, the Bluegrass State serves up a diverse culinary adventure. At Amazin-Blaze BBQ, part of the West Kentucky BBQ Belt, bold smoke and rich flavour take centre stage. This local favourite lives up to its name with no-fuss, big-flavour barbecue that's deeply rooted in tradition—and proudly pushing Kentucky's barbeque story forward.

BBQ Belt



LOUISIANA

Soul in a Bowl

Louisiana's food scene is as dynamic as the state itself—defined by bold Cajun and Creole flavours, timeless dishes, and local traditions. At its heart is gumbo, our official dish. Made with a dark roux and the "trinity" of onions, bell peppers, and celery, gumbo varies by region—think chicken and sausage at Commander's Palace in New Orleans or seafood at Pat's of Henderson in Lake Charles. Time it right, and you might even catch a gumbo festival.

Gumbo



West Virginia **Hearty Heritage**

You can't visit West Virginia without trying their unofficial state food—the pepperoni roll. What began as a practical lunch for Italian coal miners in the early 1900s has become a beloved local classic. They tucked pepperoni into soft rolls for an easy, filling meal underground. The idea took off in Fairmont, where it was first sold commercially, and today, pepperoni rolls are a must-try comfort food rooted in Appalachian pride and tradition.

Pepperoni Roll



NORTH CAROLINA **Oyster Culture**

Seafood lovers will find paradise along the NC Oyster Trail, where North Carolina's sustainable oyster industry takes centre stage. From estuary to table, these briny bites are served fresh at spots like The Oyster Bar in Wilmington and Saint Roch in Raleigh. October's NC Oyster Festival celebrates the harvest with live music, local art, and shellfish galore. It's a delicious way to support coastal communities while tasting the best of the Carolina coast.

Oyster Trail



MISSOURI **Midwest Barbeque**

You can't talk about food in Missouri without mentioning Kansas City barbeque—a style known for its slow-smoked meats and rich, sweet sauce. For a true taste, head to Jack Stack Barbeque – Freight House, where the industrial-chic setting pairs perfectly with plates of smoky goodness. Don't miss the city's signature dish: burnt ends—crispy, caramelised brisket pieces tossed in thick barbeque sauce. It's Kansas City BBQ at its finest, and absolutely worth the hype.

Kansas City Barbeque



ALABAMA

Southern Smoke

When it comes to barbeque, Alabama has so much to offer—from smoky roadside joints to historic institutions steeped in tradition. One of the state's most iconic spots is Big Bob Gibson's Bar-B-Q in Decatur. Founded in 1925, it's home to the legendary Alabama white sauce, a tangy, creamy twist that pairs perfectly with smoked chicken. With national acclaim and decades of pitmaster expertise, Big Bob's is a true taste of Alabama barbeque history.

[Discover more flavour](#)

FIND OUT MORE



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Market Update

Economic & Market Update

The following economic announcements were made in April:

- The Australian dollar plunged below 60 US cents—a five-year low—following U.S. President Donald Trump’s “Liberation Day” tariff announcements, though later in the month it rebounded to a much more palatable 64c after a partial tariff reversal.
- Inflation indicators offered some relief, with both headline and underlying rates falling within the RBA’s 2–3% target band for the first time in over a decade, prompting speculation of multiple interest rate cuts in the months ahead.
- Politically, the Australian Electoral Commission released updated guidelines for social media influencers, reflecting their growing role in public discourse. With the federal election set for May, cost of living remains a dominant voter concern, influencing both consumer confidence and discretionary travel decisions.
- Australian visitation to the USA dropped for the first time since the pandemic, with 59,859 arrivals in March, a 7% increase compared to the same month in 2024.
- New Zealand also posted a decline, with 13,303 visitors travelling to the USA in March, down 10% year-on-year (Source i94 arrivals).
- Travel South USA continued to gain traction in March, with 2,809 Australians listed a Travel South state as their first intended address, representing 5% of total U.S. arrivals and flat on last year (Source i94 arrivals).

Tour Operators & Travel Agencies

- Envoyage, Flight Centre Travel Group’s independent brand, has welcomed three new shopfronts in Sydney - Miranda, Drummoyne and Ryde. [Source](#)
- Helloworld Travel has agreed to acquire New Zealand-based Barlow Travel Group (BTG), an offshoot of Netherlands’ BCD Travel. The acquisition will be funded from Helloworld’s existing cash reserves, and will see two of the business’ key stakeholders, Peter Barlow and Ross Jamieson, remain as Executive Directors, working alongside HLO New Zealand Executive General Manager Chris Hunter. [Source](#)
- Travel Managers continues to improve year-on-year, with the agency network surpassing half a billion dollars in turnover for the financial year ending 31 Mar. According to Chief Operating Officer Grant Campbell, TravelManagers’ annual revenue has improved by close to 20% every year since 2008, at which time it recorded just over \$26 million. [Source](#)
- A Force for Good will be back in 2026, this time focusing solely on Sydney as it cuts Auckland from the schedule. Next year, the Sydney event will be shifting location from Dockside to the Sydney Wentworth Sofitel. Principal sponsor Helloworld has also been announced. Past keynote speakers included Uniworld MD Alice Ager; Ponant Asia-Pacific CEO Deb Corbett; Wendy Wu from Wendy Wu Travel; Crooked Compass CEO Lisa Pagotto; and more. [Source](#)

- Independent travel buying network CT Partners has posted a strong start to 2025, including a 10-15% growth in ticketed volumes for Q1. Detailed in its latest Member Quarterly Report, forecasts showed a 10% growth prediction in total transaction value (TTV), while CT Partners is also on track to achieve its ambitious \$3 billion TTV target by 2027. [Source](#)
- Nominations for the 2025 National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) will open on 30 Apr, with a three-week window for the industry to put forward its best and brightest for recognition. [Source](#)
- US Border warning: Australian travellers to the United States cannot be strictly denied entry for expressing anti-Trump sentiment, however they can be denied entry due to expressions of anti-US sentiment, according to a legal expert commenting on tougher border entry protocols enacted this year. [Source](#)
- Virtuoso Travel has recently welcomed a host of luxury hotels into its Preferred Partners network. [Source](#)
- FCTG has amended its 2025 fiscal year profit guidance this morning, expecting its underlying profit before tax to be between \$300 million and \$335 million, down from \$365 million to \$405 million. FCTG has conceded it is "unlikely to deliver the 14-26.5% year-on-year growth needed to achieve its initial FY25 targets", with short-term results volatility brought about by uncertain trading conditions, including the recent changes to United States' trade and entry policies. [Source](#)
- Phil Hoffmann Travel set to go nationwide. Retail travel brand Phil Hoffmann Travel (PHT) is preparing to switch on a comprehensive online cruise booking platform as the first step in a nationwide brand expansion. [Source](#)

Traveler Insights

- DFAT updates warning for USA, includes new advice for Australia's LGBTQIA+ community. "Although Australian passports comply with international standards for sex and gender, we can't guarantee that a passport showing 'X' in the sex field will be accepted for entry or transit by another country". [Source](#)
- Roy Morgan data shows that overseas travel is on the rise, with one in four (23%) Aussies planning an international trip, compared to less than one in six (16%) in October 2022, when Australia scrapped its final COVID-era travel restrictions. "the percentage of Australians intending to take a holiday overseas continues to increase – now at 5.2 million (up 5% from a year ago)". [Source](#)
- Aussies will travel in large numbers during the upcoming Easter holidays, with international flight bookings up 11% year-on year, according to Webjet. Booking data from the OTA showed one in three bookings for travel departing between 18-27 Apr are for overseas cities, up from 28% last year. Last-minute decisions to get away are also on the rise, with the last two weeks seeing a 31% spike in travel for the same dates. Los Angeles is ranked #4 destination behind Bali, New Zealand and Tokyo. [Source](#)
- Sports Tourism is Scoring Big Worldwide, Finds Expedia Group. Included in the findings 44% of sports fans travel internationally for events, rising to 56% among 16–34-year-olds, 3 in 5 sports fans stay outside of host cities, multiplying economic benefits, Average sports trip spending exceeds \$1,500 per person. [Source](#)
- Hilton has released their 2025 Trends Report showcasing New Vacation Trends Reshaping The Stay. Highlighting trends include Go Getaways, Sleep Tourizzm 2.0, Time Travel and Slow Travel. [Source](#)
- According to [Hilton's 2025 Trends Report](#) (also referenced in previous point) nearly one in five Australians are now regularly holidaying with "frolleagues" (friends who are also colleagues). The report shows gen Z are leading the charge, with this age group twice as likely (almost 40 per cent) to be jetting off with colleagues.

- Australians in the 25-44 age bracket are the keenest to get away this autumn, according to new research from the Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF). Eighty-three percent of this cohort are planning a trip between 15 Mar and 15 May - significantly higher than the national average of 71%. [Source](#)
- Opinion piece by Brett Jardine of CATO titled, Currency, not candidacy, the real US deterrent, notes that Australians are still travelling to the USA but not like they used to with the key factor influencing USA travel sentiment being the currency exchange rate. [Source](#)
- Sports tourism continues to score with a whopping 82 per cent of Australians planning to travel for a sports event in the next 12 months and half of Aussies (50%) keen to take in two or more sports-related trips aka sportscursions in 2026. According to UN Tourism, sports tourism now accounts for 10 per cent of global tourism spending and is projected to reach USD\$1.3 trillion by 2032 with several big-ticket events on the horizon. [Source](#)
- Travel deals remained resilient in Q1 2025, despite overall activity experiencing a 5% year-on-year decline, according to analytics company Global Data. The number of M&A agreements registered 4% growth, while venture financing deals fell by 44% and private equity deal volume was down by 25% compared to Q1 2024. [Source](#)
- 1 in 3 Aussies plan to head overseas in 2025. According to new Finder research, 15 per cent of Aussies are keen on holidaying in South-East Asia, which encompasses countries such as Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Japan rounds out the top three popular international destinations with 12 per cent of Aussies planning to visit the East-Asian nation in 2025. The US (7%), UK (6%), China (4%) and India (2%) are also popular with Australian tourists in 2025. [Source](#)
- 1 in 2 US tourism businesses report decline in present and future travel. conducted by the National Tour Association (NTA), American Bus Association (ABA) and Student & Youth Travel Association (SYTA), the survey ran from 25 March to 9 April. In the study, more than half (51%) of respondents say they have lost business, bookings or visitors from Canada or overseas, with just a quarter (25%) reporting no impact. One in six respondents (16%) say they are unsure, while the remaining respondents don't handle international travel. [Source](#)
- Australians are gearing up for another getaway, with Webjet revealing a 10% rise in international bookings for the next school holidays in Jul. [Source](#)

Air Lift

- United launches first direct flights to North America from beyond Australia's east coast. South Australians can fly from Adelaide straight to San Francisco later this year with United Airlines announcing the first-ever direct route to the USA, linking South Australia and North America for the first time on a 15-hour flight. [Source](#)
- Hawaiian Airlines will repeat its seasonal nonstop service between New Zealand and Hawai'i from 18 November 2025, linking Auckland and Honolulu directly with thrice-weekly services and catering to strong demand among Kiwi travellers. The full-service US airline has confirmed the start date for its 2025-26 season as the current period will pause as planned on 30 April 2025 before resuming on 18 November. [Source](#)
- Qantas has appointed Ash Howell as Executive Vice President of the Americas region. Starting later this month, Howell will play a key role in raising Qantas' profile ahead of Project Sunrise, offering nonstop flights between NY and Australia. [Source](#)
- American Airlines passengers will no longer need to collect and recheck their bags after a flight from Sydney to Los Angeles as part of a new expedited bag trial. [Source](#)

- American Airlines is the Official North American Airline Supplier of the FIFA World Cup 26, which will be hosted across Canada, Mexico and the US next year, joining Global Airline Partner Qatar Airways and offering match tickets to members. [Source](#)

Media

- RESPECTED senior cruise and travel industry leader Matthew Vince has joined Business Publishing Group (BPG), publisher of Travel Daily and Cruise Weekly, as General Manager and Publisher. [Source](#)
- All news sites rise with election tide: A pending election, Trump's political activity, and Cyclone Alfred all resulted in a 4.3% rise in total readership across Australian news sites, to 21.6 million people. All of the top ten outlets in the country gained readers during March. [Source](#).
- Drake Content Expands Tourism & Travel Portfolio With Significant New Client Wins: Boutique social content and performance agency Drake Content has announced a wave of new client wins across the tourism, travel and destination marketing space. Drake Content has also been appointed to lead search and social activity for Tourism Central Australia and The Red Centre, and is now the retained social and performance agency for several of SeaLink's marquee tourism brands across the East Coast. [Source](#).
- Travel Guides returns with new destinations and adventures: Travel Guides' eighth season is premiering on Monday, April 21, at 7.30pm on Channel 9 and 9Now. The new season promises a range of diverse travel experiences, spanning iconic global destinations and breathtaking local spots. The latest season will take viewers from the bustling streets of New York City to the natural landscapes of Kakadu in the Northern Territory. [Source](#).
- Vinyl Group completes acquisition of lifestyle outlet and destination guide Concrete Playground: Vinyl Group has acquired 100% of Concrete Playground for \$4.06 million in cash and \$1.5 million in Vinyl shares. With a market cap of just under \$92 million, Vinyl now ranks among the top ASX-listed media companies, behind only Nine, Domain, Ooh Media, Seven West Media, ARN Media, and Southern Cross Austereo. [Source](#).
- Disney+ launches ESPN in Australia: Disney+ has officially expanded its content offering in Australia to include ESPN, giving subscribers access to premium U.S. sports, Fight Nights, and every NHL game—marking the first time ESPN content is available directly on the platform. [Source](#).
- Influencers invited to Budget lock-up as government signals shift toward digital-first media: In a first for federal communications strategy, the Australian government invited social media influencers to its annual Budget lock-up—a highly controlled, embargoed environment where journalists receive early access to Budget papers ahead of the Treasurer's official address. Traditionally reserved for legacy outlets and major media networks, the inclusion of digital content creators reflects Canberra's growing recognition of their influence, particularly among younger demographics. Influencers such as Cheek Media founder Hannah Ferguson, who has 158,000 followers on Instagram, were among the new wave of attendees briefed under strict confidentiality. [Source](#)
- Battle over under-16s social media ban intensifies, with YouTube exempt and rivals pushing back: The federal government's proposed legislation to ban under-16s from accessing social media without parental consent has sparked a fierce industry response. YouTube secured a last-minute exemption following an intense lobbying effort, including direct appeals from global CEO Neal Mohan, who cited The Wiggles as part of its kid-safe ecosystem. The exemption has angered rival platforms—TikTok, Meta, and Snap among them—which are now pressuring Communications Minister Michelle Rowland over what they describe as a “sweetheart deal.” Critics argue the move gives YouTube an unfair advantage and undermines efforts to create a level playing field in Australia's digital landscape. [Source](#)
- Netflix eyes podcasters as next wave of premium content creators: During its Q1 earnings call, Netflix flagged interest in bringing select video podcasters onto the platform. Co-CEO Ted Sarandos said the company sees potential in podcast creators—if their content meets Netflix's 'premium' threshold. [Source](#)

- Stan leans into local as the last Aussie-owned streamer standing: With Binge now owned by the UK and Max entering the market under Warner Bros. Discovery, Stan is the last Australian-owned SVOD left. Acting MD Dan Taylor says Stan will double down on local storytelling, having commissioned more scripted Australian content this year than any other platform. [Source](#)
- ABC's names new cultural advisory role: The ABC has appointed Professor Jackie Huggins AM as its first Elder-in-Residence. The role is intended to support First Nations staff and advise on cultural protocols. [Source](#)
- Trump's new tariffs raise concerns among Australian filmmakers: U.S. President Donald Trump's proposed 10% universal import tariff, which may include creative exports such as Australian film and TV content, has sparked concern in the local industry. Filmmakers and distributors fear increased costs and reduced competitiveness in the U.S. market—Australia's most important screen export destination. Industry bodies are already lobbying for clarification and exemptions. [Source](#)
- DAZN acquires Foxtel in major shake-up of Aussie sports streaming: Global sports streaming platform DAZN has confirmed its acquisition of Foxtel, marking a seismic shift in Australia's broadcasting landscape. The move will consolidate major sports rights under one digital-first umbrella, with potential implications for pricing, content access, and competition with Stan Sport and Kayo. The reaction from media analysts and consumers has been mixed, with questions around local production commitments and platform changes. [Source](#)

Actions

- Melbourne Sales Calls and Meeting
- IPW Event follow up
- Product Audit
- Trade & PR Newsletter
- International Showcase Invitations
- Global Week & Media Follow-Ups
- Where Music Was Born presentation