



GATE 7

VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

Australia Destination Representation

Monthly Report, April 2026

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1.

TRADE & CONSUMER ACTIVITY REPORT

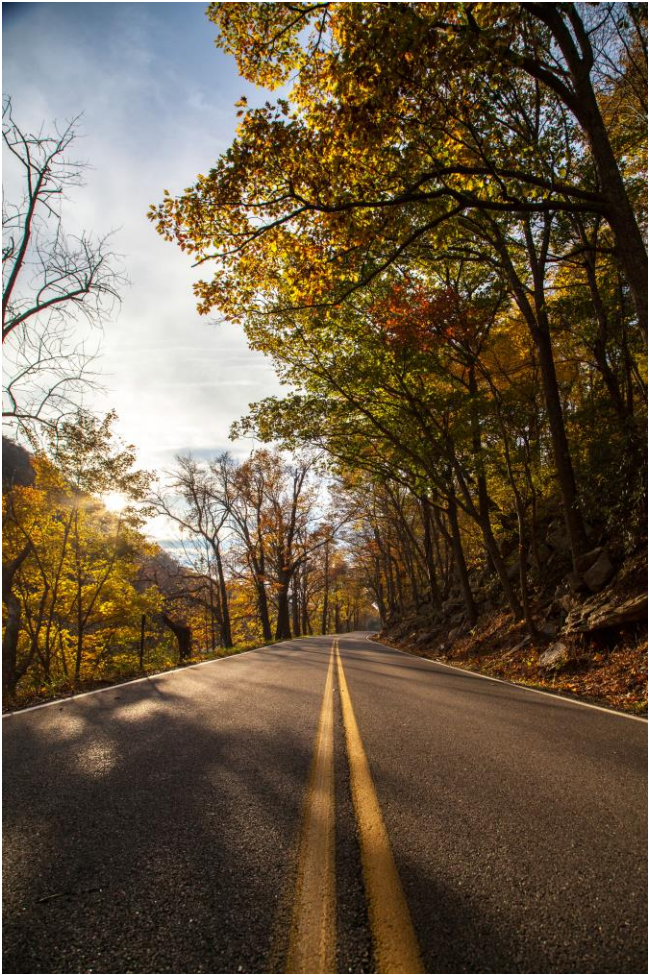
APRIL 2026



OVERVIEW

Please note April activity focused on **building partnerships** by securing a marketing campaign with potential partners and **progressing the Virginia Product Audit**.

Activity	Completed this month
Meetings & Sales Calls	5
Highlight(s)	Secured Travel Associates Campaign incl. The Concierge Magazine Editorial



TRADE & CONSUMER ACTIVITY REPORT

KEY MEETINGS / LEAD

Agency / Partners	Name / Title	Activity
Infinity Holidays	Nicholas Hawksley, Product and Marketing Manager Ashley O'Reilly, Marketing Manager	Discussed Virginia campaign. No availability for this FY 26. Sent a proposal for second half of year. Will include a suggested itinerary for VA in the next edm. Infinity Holidays has Self-Drive itineraries in their USA Brochure. There is an opportunity to promote Virginia and raise destination awareness. Suggested Self-drive itinerary to include Alexandria, Colonial Williamsburg, Monticello, Shenandoah National Park.
Room Res	Kellie Smith, Head of Business Development	B2B platform. Have 9,000 users in AUS / 6,000 subscribers to edm. Started with Hotels, now include Attractions, Tours & Transfers. Agents can build an itinerary/proposal and send it directly to clients. Rates are shown Nett to agents. Preferred with all except Helloworld and FLC brand. In 2025, USA was No 1 In 2026, Japan No 1, USA No 2.
Expedia TAAP	Kirsty Kortum, Marketing Executive AU NZ PH	Expedia TAAP (Travel Agent Affiliate Program) is a multi-award-winning booking experience that connects travel agents to Expedia Group's global portfolio of accommodation, flights, packages, car rentals, and activities. They can offer direct marketing to over 6,000+ travel agents. Due to high volume & reach Expedia TAAP could be a great wholesaler to partner with in the future. See Marketing Opportunities in Appendix.
HTG Travel	Lisa Tjandi, Head of Retail	Discussed event format and setup to connect with all HTG Travel Agents in Newcastle area.
MTA Travel	Mel Sherry, Mobile Travel Agent	Liaised with Mel to send all collaterals including rollout videos, logos for MTA Travel Expo in Newcastle (B2C only) + discussed the opportunity to connect directly with local MTA Agents over breakfast for training.

2.

RESOURCE CENTRE UPDATES

APRIL 2026



What's On



June 19, 2026

Sail250® international fleet anchors in Virginia Beach

For ten days in June 2026, 10,000 officers, cadets, and crews of more than 60 ships from 20 nations will lead a maritime celebration of liberty on the Chesapeake Bay and at Affiliate Harbors including Alexandria, Cape Charles, Chesapeake, Hampton, Onancock, Portsmouth and Richmond. For this milestone occasion, a fleet of the world's most magnificent international tall ships and military ships, in an epic peacetime gathering, will sail into the Port of Virginia as part of Sail250® America. In the tradition of the past five iconic OpSail events held in the Norfolk/Hampton Roads/Chesapeake Bay region since 1976, the fleet will once again bring extraordinary experiences and opportunities to every community, both on and offshore.



June 12, 2026

Summer of Steam Railroading

All aboard for a once-in-a-lifetime journey!

This summer, Virginia's "Summer of Steam" brings the legendary N&W Class J 611 back to life — a true icon of American railroading. From June 12 to July 5, experience the sights, sounds, and power of steam travel on historic mainline tracks, with departures from Staunton and Louisa. Don't miss the special extended excursion on June 22, featuring a scenic run through the Blue Ridge Mountains and a stop in Gordonsville for photos, lunch, and a front-row view of the 611 in action. Tickets on sale from April 15 – these rides are expected to sell out fast! Learn more and secure your seat at the Virginia Scenic Railway website.



September 11, 2026
**Sierra Ferrell to Headline
Bristol Rhythm & Roots
Reunion 2026**

Bristol Rhythm & Roots Reunion celebrates its 25th anniversary from September 11-13, 2026, returning to Historic Downtown Bristol, Tenn.-Va. This milestone year will be led by acclaimed folk-roots artist Sierra Ferrell, returning to the festival after her breakout 2021 performance. Known for her captivating vocals and genre-blending style, Ferrell headlines a standout lineup.

(more...)



September 5, 2026
**Super Girl Festival Coming
to Virginia Beach in 2026**

The world's largest female surf, music, and lifestyle festival is heading to Virginia Beach for the first time, September 5-7, 2026. Celebrating its 20th year, the Super Girl Festival Series will feature a WSL QS4000 women's surf competition, live concerts, wellness classes, mentorship programs, and more - all free and open to the public. With over 1,000 athletes, 18 live shows, and family-friendly activities, Virginia Beach will host an unforgettable celebration of women in sport, culture, and entertainment.

What's New

+ April 2026

America Turns 250 - Come Celebrate Where it All Began

As the nation commemorates 250 years of American independence, special exhibitions, reenactments, and once-in-a-generation programming energize Jamestown, Williamsburg, and Yorktown—making now the perfect time to experience the complete American story. Step into America's story with three unforgettable days in Virginia's Historic Triangle. Walk down the same cobblestone streets as the forefathers and watch waterfront sunsets over historied waterways. From Jamestown's first settlement to Yorktown's final victory and Williamsburg's revolutionary ideas, the Historic Triangle tells the full arc of America's founding. Experience it all during Williamsburg 250. See suggested itinerary.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Rooted in the 1976 Bicentennial, American Revolution Museum at Yorktown Marks 50-Year Milestone in 2026

As America commemorates the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown is marking its 50-year milestone this year and celebrating the museum's 1976 origins rooted in America's Bicentennial. April Kicks Off Golden Anniversary Year during America's 250th Celebration The occasion launches an anniversary year showcasing the museum and marked with special exhibitions, events and programs as America commemorates its semiquincentennial. How to Visit Admission with a Virginia 250 Passport: Individual admission to the American Revolution Museum at Yorktown is \$20.00 for adults and \$10.00 for ages 6-12. A value-priced combination ticket with Jamestown Settlement, a museum of 17th-century Virginia, is \$34.00 for adults and \$17.00 for ages 6-12. This year, a Virginia 250 Passport, available at the admission desk, encourages visitors to explore history together by visiting 70 historic sites and museums.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Gate 7 AUS / NZ Facebook Group



Sandrine LG

Admin · April 16 at 12:17 PM · 🌐

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Don't miss the special extended excursion on June 22, featuring a scenic run through the Blue Ridge Mountains and a stop in Gordonsville for photos, lunch... [See more](#)



[View insights](#)

82 post reach >



Belle Goldie

This would be amazing

4w Like Reply

3.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE

APRIL 2026



ECONOMY, VISITATION & MARKET UPDATE

Visitation to the USA.

March 2026 i-94 arrival data (released in April)

Australia:

- 57,637 arrivals in March, down -4% for the month YoY, and YTD down 6.5%
- Australia ranked 13th among long-haul markets for the month, slipping out of our usual top 10 position, but March is historical a low season month for travel to the USA from Australia.

Global Travel Demand from Australia.

February 2026 data has been released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) showing where returning residents spent most time abroad.

891,460 Australians returned from an overseas trip in April, down -3.5% on one year earlier. This is the first recorded year-on-year decline since the borders opened and may indicate a slight softening of international demand due to geo-political tensions and consumer confidence. Despite this year-on-year decline, Australians continue to travel in record numbers.

Port of entry	March arrivals	March 2026 vs 2025 difference
California	29,520	1%
Hawaii	6,026	-20%
New York	3,949	-21%
Texas	8,328	11%
Florida	2,149	-10%
All other ports	7,665	-8%

ECONOMY, VISITATION & MARKET UPDATE

The top 10 countries as follows:

- Value, close to home, and VFR ties driving demand for NZ, Japan, India, Vietnam and China.
- Thailand has lost market share to Vietnam, as low-cost carrier VietJet has increased airlift to Vietnam driving demand and effectively positioning Vietnam as the alternate to Thailand.

Rank	Country	February Visits	Percentage growth YOY
1	New Zealand	113,460	2%
2	Japan	103,360	6%
3	Indonesia	101,630	-5%
4	India	88,680	6%
5	China	48,710	-31%
6	Thailand	43,770	-5%
7	Vietnam	40,100	-12%
8	USA	36,740	-10%
9	Philippines	30,710	0%
10	Malaysia	26,600	-23%

TRADE UPDATE

Travellers shifting away from Europe? A Shift away from Europe is already beginning to be witnessed by Globus family of brands (GFOB), with managing director Chris Hall telling Travel Daily two of the company's top three destinations for last month were in other parts of the world. While the United Kingdom & Ireland were still the second most popular destinations in March, Canada filled the top slot, followed by **Japan** in third..... "We were looking for indicators as to where we should swing our focus if we need to kind of pare back a little bit on Europe. "**Japan** has gone crazy, [and] it's typically not our type of touring destination from ANZ, but we have seen that spike over the last month," he said. "I think we also have opportunity with Africa and **South America**, and Asia and Southern Hemisphere products." [Source](#)

Societe cracks 1.3m Luxury Escapes' rewards program Societe has accrued 1.3 million members in less than a year after launching to the market. [Source \(page 3\)](#).

Luxury outpacing the market: Virtuoso posts 20% sales growth and 23% forward bookings surge

Luxury travel is running at roughly double the broader leisure market growth rate, with Virtuoso's global network recording 20 per cent year year preferred partner sales growth in the first two months of 2026, even as Oxford Economics revised international leisure forecasts lower for the year. [Source](#).

Signature Travel Network continues to expand across Australia

Signature Travel Network has added new preferred partnerships and members in a bid to expand its presence across the Australian market. [Source](#)

Viva Holidays spotlights Louisville, Kentucky with new Aussie-ready packages

Do you know which US city blends Southern charm, modern creativity, bourbon heritage, and a 2-minute sporting legacy? If you said, Louisville, Kentucky, top marks! Known globally as Bourbon City, it's an ideal destination for travellers seeking a lively vacation and Viva Holidays' have [new packages](#) to make booking Louisville a breeze. [Source](#)

CONSUMER INSIGHTS

CONSUMER INSIGHTS / TRAVEL TRENDS

“Deathly silence”: Aussie US travel slides again to start 2026, but it’s not all bad news

Fewer Australians continue to travel to the United States, with US travel down around 8 per cent to start the year. According to data from the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) – part of the International Trade Administration (ITA) – 131,156 Australians travelled to the US in January and February 2026, compared to 142,008 arrivals in the corresponding period in 2025. This reflects a significant 7.64 per cent drop and marks the ninth straight month of decline. [Source](#)

The Rise Of The Female Traveller And Why It Matters

... Women are travelling more often and increasingly choosing to travel alone, redefining how journeys are planned, experienced and shared. Recent insights from Trip.com Group show flight bookings by women have risen by 13 per cent year on year. At the same time, global search interest in **“solo female travel”** has surged, increasing by more than 800 per cent since 2020, according to digital marketing agency Adido. [Source](#)

US at a crossroads: WTTC while the global travel market enjoyed its biggest year in 2025, the United States finds itself at a crossroads after it lost market share during the period, figures from the World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) have showed. Despite the negative trend, the US remains the most valuable tourism and travel market in the world, but according to WTTC CEO Gloria Guevara, if that mantle is to be retained, big changes are needed from American tourism policy-makers. [Source](#)

Travellers still flying, just not that way: Aussies continue to reroute amid shifting demand

The overwhelming majority of Aussie travellers are still jetting abroad despite the Middle East conflict - but they’re choosing their flight paths more carefully, a new study suggests. [Source](#)

AIRLIFT & AIRLINES NEWS

BAD NEWS: Ticket Prices To Rise AS Airlines Hike Airfares.

Travellers can expect higher ticket prices for flights in the months ahead with Australia's two largest airlines announcing airfare increases. Qantas and Virgin Australia say soaring global fuel prices have placed significant pressure on operating costs. The price hikes come amid a sharp escalation in jet fuel costs, driven largely by ongoing instability in the Middle East, which has disrupted global oil supply chains. [Source](#)

Sunrise milestone In a landmark moment for Qantas, its Airbus aircraft designed to service ultra-long haul Project Sunrise flights has emerged from a factory in France and will begin test flights... Qantas indicated it remains on track to launch Project Sunrise in the first quarter of 2027, starting with London or **New York** from Australia's east coast. [Source](#)

United wanted an airline mega-merger with American, but got shut down fast

United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby has confirmed he approached American Airlines about a potential merger, revealing plans for what he described as a growth-focused airline powerhouse before the proposal was shut down. [Source](#)

UA cuts headwinds

United Airlines has achieved its highest revenue first quarter ever, despite a US\$340 million increase in fuel expense compared to the first quarter of 2025. [Source](#)

The Walshe Group revamps commercial and sales team for Delta Air Lines

The Walshe Group has announced a series of strategic personnel changes across its business, including a new commercial leadership appointment and several new and expanded roles within its sales team supporting long-term partner Delta Air Lines in Australia. [Source](#)

4.

MAY FOCUS



MAY FOCUS

Activity / Company	Details
MTA Travel Expo & Hunter Travel Group (HTG) Training 7th & 8th May	Engage with Trade & Consumer in Newcastle incl: - Lunch & Learn (open to All Travel Groups) - HTG Evening Presentation - MTA Agents Breakfast - MTA Travel Expo
IPW Post Famil 22 – 27 May 2026	Host 3 Travel Agents in Virginia
Travel Associates	Liaise with TA for June Campaign in conjunction with launch of The Concierge Magazine (Jun 5 th).

