



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Louise Upston	Portfolio	Tourism and Hospitality
Title of Cabinet paper	Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026	Date to be published	30 June 2026

List of documents that have been proactively released

Date	Title	Author
January 2026	Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026	Office of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
27 January 2026	Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026 CAB-26-MIN-0006 Minute	Cabinet Office
May 2026	Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026	Office of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
18 May 2026	Report on Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026 CAB-26-MIN-0167 Minute	Cabinet Office

Information redacted

YES

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with MBIE's policy on Proactive Release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some information has been withheld for the reasons of commercial information and confidential advice to government.

In Confidence

Office of the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

Chair, Cabinet

Proposed Overseas Travel: Hon Louise Upston – April 2026

- 1 I seek Cabinet approval to travel to New York, New York; Miami, Florida; and Los Angeles, California, United States of America (USA) from Sunday, 12 April until Sunday, 19 April 2026 to strengthen New Zealand's tourism profile and partnerships across the USA through targeted engagements, including attending the annual Seatrade Cruise Global 2026 event.
- 2 The Prime Minister has approved the travel in-principle. I note that the House is not scheduled to sit during the period of travel.

Purpose of Travel

- 3 I propose to travel to the United States to advance New Zealand's position as a world-class tourism destination and to participate in Seatrade Cruise Global 2026. My objectives are to strengthen commercial partnerships, deepen relationships with global tourism leaders and to promote New Zealand's premium offerings to the USA, which is New Zealand's second largest market by visitor arrivals. This visit aligns with my Tourism Growth Roadmap objectives to double the value of tourism exports by 2034.
- 4 I intend to leverage this trip to build on recent positive engagement with industry and to address the decline in cruise visitation to New Zealand. Targeted meetings with media, trade partners and airlines will support broader market growth and unlock new opportunities for tourism connectivity and export value of the North American market. By attending Seatrade Cruise Global 2026 alongside these engagements, I aim to build on the positive sentiment built through recent Government actions to address the decline of cruise visitation to New Zealand.¹

Proposed itinerary

- 5 The following proposal is an intended itinerary (subject to securing meetings), and I intend to work with delegates to refine it to ensure it delivers maximum value for New Zealand and the tourism economy. If I cannot secure a meeting as outlined below, I shall seek alternative engagements which would deliver similar value for New Zealand and the objectives for growing cruise connectivity under my Tourism Growth Roadmap.

¹ Initiatives include the establishment of a biannual Cross-Government-Industry Cruise Forum, development of a prototype hull cleaning system to enable in-port hull cleaning and a system review of fees and levies.

- 6 I intend to travel first to New York to host business meetings on 13 April 2026 with tourism partners and incentive travel executives, supported by Air New Zealand and Tourism New Zealand (TNZ), including holding a roundtable with senior executives from top group-travel and incentive groups. Incentive travel, when companies offer all expenses paid trips to employees or partners to reward high performance or meeting business goals², delivers high-spend visitors, often in shoulder and off-peak periods. Currently, incentive travel is one of our untapped demand levers in New Zealand that has significant earning potential. Hosting a roundtable on incentive travel will therefore support my objective to double the value of tourism exports by 2034.
- 7 [SENSITIVE – COMMERCIAL] I intend to attend an Air New Zealand activation and trade event in New York to launch the Skynest on the Auckland Airport–John F Kennedy Airport route on 14 April 2026 to actively promote New Zealand as a world-class tourism destination and support Air New Zealand’s market activities in the USA. I understand that this event is provisional at this stage, with the venue and final details to be confirmed.
- 8 On 15 April 2026, I propose to attend Seatrade 2026 in Miami, where I intend to hold meetings with senior cruise executives and New Zealand Cruise Association, hold interviews with leading international cruise media and attend a co-hosted networking event with Australia. My attendance at these events can demonstrate the Government’s commitment to addressing barriers for cruise visitation to New Zealand, provide an opportunity for me to test how current interventions are working and strengthen cruise connectivity by encouraging the prioritisation of New Zealand as a destination for cruise deployments. My officials are also seeking a speaking slot for me, which will amplify New Zealand’s profile at this event.
- 9 My intention is to fly to Los Angeles on 16 April 2026 to attend a high-profile media event as part of Kiwi North’s³ tourism roadshow to showcase North Island tourism and promote the unique aspects of New Zealand tourism and cultural offerings, including te ao Māori. Ministerial attendance at this event in Los Angeles will assist in showcasing the value of New Zealand tourism with high-impact stakeholders.
- 10 On 17 April 2026 in Los Angeles, TNZ and Air New Zealand have offered to support several engagements to actively promote New Zealand as a welcoming and world-class tourism destination and demonstrate the strategic value of the New Zealand tourism sector to influential North American stakeholders. I intend to meet with influential North American firms such as:
 - 10.1 Expedia – To explore promotional partnerships to increase visitors from North America

² Note that incentive travel is playing a more distinct role in the motivation and workplace culture building in the USA.

³ Kiwi North is a newly formed partnership of 15 North Island tourism bodies, which collectively seek to showcase the North Island’s diverse offerings.

10.3 Open AI – To discuss ways to enhance trip-planning and visibility of New Zealand as a destination through artificial intelligence.

11 Overall, I expect this visit to deliver strong commercial and strategic outcomes. It will support cruise connectivity through direct cruise industry engagement, promote New Zealand’s premium tourism offerings and reinforce tourism’s role in export growth and regional development. This trip would therefore also align with our broader economic objectives to build a stronger, more productive economy that lifts real incomes and increases opportunities for New Zealanders.

Ministerial Party

12 I propose that one member of my staff accompanies me at a cost to Vote: Internal Affairs. This will help to keep costs to a minimum.

13 Up to two officials from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) will accompany me on the trip, as well as one official from TNZ. All costs for agency staff will be covered from within the relevant agency baseline budget. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade and TNZ will provide in-market support.

Travel Costs

14 Total estimated costs reflect a travelling party of two (myself and one member of my staff) and are comprised of:

Airfares:	\$33,000.00
Accommodation:	\$7,000.00
Meals and incidentals	\$3,000.00
Registration fees for Seatrade	\$5,000.00
Contingency (5%)	\$5,000.00
Total:	\$53,000.00

15 Costs associated with airfares, accommodation, registration fees for Seatrade conference, meals and incidentals will be funded out of the Ministerial travel budget at a total of \$53,000.

Acting Ministers

16 While the House will not be sitting during my proposed absence, I propose that the following colleagues act in my portfolios, subject to Cabinet approval and final confirmation:

- 16.1 Hon Penny Simmonds – Community and Volunteer Sector, Social Development and Employment
- 16.2 Hon Shane Reti – Child Poverty Reduction
- 16.3 Hon Matt Doocey – Disability Issues
- 16.4 Hon Tama Potaka – Tourism and Hospitality

Proactive release

- 17 I intend to proactively release this paper on the MBIE website subject to any necessary redactions, in a timely manner following consideration by Cabinet.

Recommendations

- 1 I recommend that Cabinet:
 - 1.1 authorise my travel to the United States of America, 12–19 April 2026, to promote New Zealand as a welcoming and world class tourism destination;
 - 1.2 agree that I will be accompanied by one member of staff from my office;
 - 1.3 approve the estimated expenditure of \$53,000 for the proposed travel expenses of the Ministerial party, as a charge to Vote: Internal Affairs;
 - 1.4 note that I will be accompanied by up to two officials from MBIE and one from TNZ, whose travel costs will be met by their respective agencies;
 - 1.5 agree that in my absence:
 - 1.5.1 Hon Penny Simmonds will be Acting Minister for Community and Volunteer Sector, and Social Development and Employment
 - 1.5.2 Hon Shane Reti will be Acting Minister for Child Poverty Reduction
 - 1.5.3 Hon Matt Doocey will be Acting Minister for Disability Issues
 - 1.5.4 Hon Tama Potaka will be Acting Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
 - 1.6 note that the House is not sitting during my absence.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Louise Upston

Minister for Tourism and Hospitality