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Hanoi, Vietnam

New river ships for APT

EXCLUSIVE

APT Travel Group (ATG) is set to custom-build its own European river ships, with the first two new vessels to launch in 2025.

ATG CEO David Cox said “this marks the next steps for the business after a highly successful partnership with AmaWaterways across 10 years”, with Ama to now establish its own operation in Australasia (TD 17 Aug).

“The time is now right for the APT Travel Group to lead the way once again,” he said.

“No one knows the Australian traveller better than APT, and no one is better placed to custom design quality luxury ships

Fitzgerald departs

CARNIVAL Australia and P&O Cruises Australia President Marguerite Fitzgerald has announced her immediate departure due to family reasons.

Peter Little, P&O Cruises Senior Vice President of Guest Experience, will step up as leader for the interim.

For the full details, see today’s issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

specifically for our market.”

APT’s pair of newbuilds will complement its other vessels, including the brand-new APT *Mekong Serenity* which sets sail next month, as well as the Portugal-based *MS Estrela* which makes her maiden voyage in 2024.

ATG also operates three of its own Travelmarvel-branded river ships in Europe, which Cox said had been receiving “incredibly high praise from travellers”.

The McGeary family said across the company’s almost 100-year history, APT had continually evolved to stay ahead of the changing needs of the customer.

“After a highly successful partnership with Ama, APT is delighted to design and build what will be the most innovative and luxurious ships on the river.”

Today’s issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news including our **Sustainability** page plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Entire Travel Group
- Emirates

HAVE CLIENT’S HOLIDAYING IN THE USA?



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Entire Rail Journeys

ENTIRE Travel Group (ETG) has introduced Entire Rail Journeys, a new division providing a selection of rail voyages across Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Described as a “one-stop-shop” for Aussie travel agents, the program includes all of the rail experiences featured on the Entire Travel Group website, along with a dedicated phone line and email (rail@entiretravel.com.au) and brochure to be released in the coming months.

Entire Rail Journeys is headed up by Sana Malihi, who played a key role in creating Rail Plus’ luxury rail program; she will be assisted by luxury rail expert Zoe Condon, who worked at Rail Plus and Rocky Mountaineer before joining ETG last year.

QF denies credit milking

QANTAS “completely rejects” claims that it unlawfully profited off the pandemic, after class action proceedings were lodged against the carrier in the federal court yesterday by Echo Law.

The Sydney-based law firm has accused the carrier of misleading or deceptive conduct in the way it communicated with customers in early 2020 regarding their rights to be refunded for flights that were cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Echo Law partner Andrew Paull alleges that Qantas “took advantage of its customers and effectively treated them as providers of over \$1 billion in interest-free loans”, and believes it should cough up refunds for all remaining flight credits, as well as compensate customers for lost interest on the withheld money.

In response, Qantas said it has “already processed well in excess of \$1 billion in refunds from



COVID credits for customers who were impacted by lockdowns and border closures.

“The majority of customers with COVID credits can get a refund and we’ve been running full page ads and sending emails to encourage customers who want a refund to contact us directly.”

The airline also stressed that during the pandemic, the business lost more than \$25 billion in revenue and posted statutory losses of \$7 billion.

MEANWHILE, Qantas has added 250,000 international seats on flights to New York City, Los Angeles, Johannesburg, and Bali (TD breaking news yesterday).

Read more about the added capacity on [page five](#).

VA, LE golden offer

VIRGIN Australia’s (VA) Velocity Frequent Flyer loyalty program has officially kicked off its partnership with Luxury Escapes today, allowing Velocity members to earn 1 Velocity Point per \$1 spent on eligible Luxury Escapes’ bookings (TD 30 May).

To celebrate, VA has launched a new fast-track Discover Gold trial membership, with Gold (or higher) frequent flyer members of other Australian airline loyalty programs able to apply for Velocity Gold Status.

The carrier is also giving away 100,000 Velocity Points to five lucky members who make a booking at Luxury Escapes’ new flagship shop at Chadstone Shopping Centre in Melbourne, using their Velocity number by 6pm AEST 27 Aug.

WILD Awaits
AATKings

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*T&C's apply. Valid for land only tours.

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Rail
Europe



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Simplifying the Eurail Pass

♦ **Eurail Pass:** The Eurail Mobile Pass offers unlimited rail travel across 33 countries and has two options - Continuous or Flexi. The Continuous option allows you to travel every day for 15 and 22 days for 1, 2 or 3 months, while the Flexi options offers 4, 5 or 7 travel days within 1 month or 10 or 15 travel days over 2 months.

♦ **User Guides:** Click [here](#) for the full “Getting started with your Mpass” user guide; and watch this [short video](#) for the Pass setup process the mobile phone.

♦ **Seat reservations:** These are compulsory on most high-speed trains, but don’t worry, the App states which services require seat reservation. Discover [how to book seat](#) reservations through Rail Europe, or if your clients prefer to self-manage their seat reservations, [here’s how](#).

♦ **Expert Tip:** All of the above can be downloaded in PDFs and shared with your clients.

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FIND OUT MORE

Te Puia, New Zealand

Te Puia, New Zealand



Rex soars ahead of rivals

REX Airlines led the pack for on-time operations in Jul, performing well ahead of rivals for both departures and arrivals, according to new figures from BITRE.

The carrier managed to land 74.5% of its arrivals and 77.4% of its departures on schedule, while also performing the best regarding cancellations, only scrapping 1.8% of flights.

It was a very different picture for Virgin Australia however, which continued its tardy run for the second consecutive month.

VA only managed to achieve an average of 59.1% of all services on time for the month, while its cancellation rate rose from 4.1% in Jun (TD 24 Jul) to 5.6%.

Commenting on the poor showing, VA told *Travel Daily* that air traffic controller shortages, weather, and crew resourcing were primary drivers of the tardiness, pointing to early Aug internal figures which are already



showing "positive results".

"Delivering a safe, reliable and stable operation is a top priority at Virgin Australia and we continue to work hard to improve our performance," a spokesperson said.

Meanwhile, Qantas and Jetstar managed to fare slightly better than VA, cancelling 3.8% and 3.3% of all flights respectively.

Overall, major Aussie carriers delivered 68.2% of arrivals on time and 68.1% of departures, while the industry-wide cancellation rate was 4%.

Among the most efficient airports for Jul were Mount Isa, Port Lincoln, Emerald, Port Macquarie and Wagga Wagga.

Delicious Indochina

ADVENTURE World is rolling out more of its signature community-based products in Indochina, with new immersive culinary tours in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia introduced.

Itineraries include the Authentic Vietnam tour, taking guests to dine at KOTO Van Mieu in Hanoi, where all meals served help support disadvantaged and at-risk Vietnamese youths.

In Cambodia, travellers will ride the famous Bamboo Train and enjoy some cuisine at the Jean Bai restaurant in Battambang, served up by Australian chef David Thompson.

Part of the revenue will go toward supporting the Cambodia's Children's Trust.

The third culinary adventure takes guests to Laos' ancient capital of Luang Prabang Province, where travellers will feast on sweet treats and engage in a local goodwill ceremony.

For details, call 1300 363 055.

25% off Intrepid

INTREPID Travel is offering 25% off select trips departing between 01 Oct and 20 Dec when bookings are made from 21 Aug to 04 Sep.

Some small group tours also have 15% discounts departing between 01 Sep to 20 Dec and 15 Jan to 30 April 2024.

Taiwan comes to Oz

TAIWAN Tourism has announced it will host a series of roadshows in Australia & New Zealand in Sep, informing the trade about the destination's food, arts and cultural appeal.

Taiwan is also bringing a range of key stakeholders to present, including airlines, tour operators, and travel associations, while attendees will also have a range of networking opportunities.

The tour will visit Auckland first on 04 Sep, Sydney on 06 Sep and Brisbane on 07 Sep - register by emailing Ganessan@GSAHospitality.com.

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Travel Daily
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Star Alliance gold

MORE Australians can now achieve Star Alliance Gold status thanks to the global airline alliance's new HSBC credit card, which offers perks across 26 international carriers, including Air New Zealand.

Customers can fast-track their way to Gold status, which offers reciprocal lounge access among other benefits, by spending \$4,000 or more on eligible purchases within the first 90 days of opening HSBC's Star Alliance credit card.

Travellers will automatically receive six months interest-free when they use their card to purchase a flight directly through any of the participating carriers' websites - for further information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Travelmarvel on track

TRAVELMARVEL has boosted its Great Rail Journeys portfolio with two new itineraries as part of its 2024 program, which offers 19 journeys across Europe, the USA and Asia.

The new nine-day Glacier Express & St Moritz journey takes in the stunning scenery of Switzerland including picturesque Zermatt, priced from \$7,595pp.

Also new is the 15-day Discover Southern India and Kerala trip, which includes a journey on the World Heritage Toy Train, a Kathakali performance, a cruise on the famed backwaters of Kerala, priced from \$4,195pp. See the 2024 program [HERE](#).

A stay with plenty of Moxy



MARRIOTT Bonvoy has opened the doors to its first Moxy-branded property in Australia, Moxy Sydney Airport (**TD** 05 Jul), described as having a playful vibe and industrial-chic design.

Located in Mascot close to the airport, the new hotel offers 301 rooms featuring modular furniture designed to maximise space, plus motion-activated LED lights, keyless entry, 55-inch flat-screen TVs, complimentary wi-fi,

Sabre inks SK deal

SABRE has announced a multi-year distribution agreement with Scandinavian Airlines, which will see travel agencies provided with more options to access the Nordic carrier's content.

The partnership gives Scandinavian Airlines the ability to distribute future NDC content in addition to EDIFACT.

and a "retro phone" where guests can listen to a bedtime story.

Moxy Sydney Airport also contains a laid-back communal space, a bar serving cocktails, wines and local brews as well as meals, a streetside cafe, and five meeting studios adorned with contemporary Australian artwork.

Rates start at \$209 per night - for more info, [CLICK HERE](#).

QR fills Big Apple bite

QATAR Airways has moved quickly to fill the void left by American Airlines' withdrawal on the Doha to New York City route, with the Middle Eastern carrier increasing services to three times a week from 30 Oct.

The move follows AA switching services from New York's JFK Airport to Philadelphia International Airport as part of a recent network restructure.

Window Seat

A VERY unimpressed German Foreign Minister was recently forced to abandon plans for a diplomatic trip to Australia after her plane experienced mechanical problems.

Annalena Baerbock (**pictured** po-faced) was forced to turn back twice from Dubai after the German air force Airbus A340 she was travelling on had trouble with its landing flaps.

Taking to Twitter to announce her cancelled plans, Baerbock said "we tried everything, unfortunately it was not logistically possible to continue my Indo-Pacific tour - that is more than annoying".

Germany has historically enjoyed a well-earned reputation for its aviation manufacturing prowess, but the latest incident caps off a string of humiliating issues with its government's fleet of aircraft, including in May when Baerbock had to extend a trip to the Persian Gulf by a day because of a damaged tyre on an aircraft in Qatar.



TODAY IS CHOOSE DAY

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Qantas boosts capacity

THE Flying Kangaroo has announced an extra 250,000 seats to international destinations, including New York, Los Angeles, Johannesburg and Bali, which is set to boost its capacity from 80% of pre-COVID levels to beyond 100% from Jul 2024 (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

The announcement comes after Qantas welcomed three Boeing 787s back into its fleet in recent months, while also returning more of its Airbus A380s to service after post-storage maintenance.

Flights on the Sydney to New York via Auckland route will increase from four per week to daily from Aug 2024, while services from Sydney to Bali, Johannesburg and LA will also

gain more capacity.

Additionally, the carrier will also operate more A380 flights on the Melbourne to LA route from Jul 2024, increasing capacity by around 20%.

"We know our customers are looking for great value and this additional capacity will put more downward pressure on fares," Qantas International Chief Executive Cam Wallace explained.

"The additional capacity will largely be made possible through our final two A380s returning to the Qantas fleet following heavy maintenance and cabin improvements," he added.

The move comes as the carrier prepares to release its results for the 2023 financial year tomorrow.

Cheering on the Red Sox



THE Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) hosted a group of lucky agents on an eight-night itinerary earlier this month through East Coast USA, as part of its Leading Famils program.

The trip kicked off in Washington DC, where the cohort explored the sights of the city as well as a private tour of Arlington Cemetery.

The agents then made their way to New York City, where they visited and dined at LHW's The Knickerbocker and The Lowell, and embarked on an architectural tour around Manhattan.

The famils wrapped up in Boston, where the group enjoyed a stay at The Newbury Boston before watching a memorable game of baseball between the Boston Red Sox and The Detroit Tigers at Fenway Park.

Pictured at the Boston Red Sox game: Carlos Bueno and Melissa Kelly from The Newbury Boston; Dale Wood, Travel Beyond; Tim Chatfield, LHW; Josephine DeMuth, Bayview Travel; Louise Brown, Spencer Travel; Karen Majsay, Travel Associates; and Carissa Johnson, Spencer Travel.

ATIA UPDATE

from Richard Taylor, Director of Membership Experience



I WAS fortunate to be at Express Travel Group's conference in Singapore last Fri and Sat.

Watching agents, suppliers and various others

reconnect with each other after many months in their individual trenches is a real tonic for the soul, and perhaps my favourite thing about our industry.

After they had finished hugging and kissing each other I looked for opportunities to chat with them, and when conversations inevitably turned to the current challenges facing business owners, it was their difficulties in hiring staff that repeatedly surfaced near the top of everyone's list of important concerns.

While ATIA has had some recent success in gaining additional funding for entry qualifications, this win will take some time to close the shortage we now have.

But aside from attracting new people, what's more painful has been the realisation that many businesses have not collectively been able to retain a connection to the thousands of people that exited travel in recent years that we'd all love to welcome back.

I'm sure you'll know several people like this, and also understand their love for the industry that will likely remain with them forever. If we could somehow find a way to bottle that emotion, we'd have people queuing up to get involved.

As an industry - the travel industry, to be clear, meaning people working in the business of selling international travel and domestic corporate travel, for anyone that's confused about who we're talking about here - we've made a pretty poor job of keeping people connected.

With the utmost respect to some brilliant folks that created the assorted Facebook groups that have popped up in recent years, they were never going to provide that all-important feeling of an official connection to travel that many people sought and needed.

It's for this reason, amongst quite a few others, that creating a membership for individual people as part of our transition to ATIA is something close to my heart.

It will take time to find its feet and gather pace but the hope is that, one day, joining the Association becomes an automatic thing that everybody does when starting their career.

We need to promote the industry better and bring in more faces. That's well known and a topic for another day, but in the meantime I hope you'll understand my unbridled delight at there now being an Association that is open to everyone who'd like to join, creating a two-way connection that benefits our industry in both the short and long term.

It's open to you, whoever you are. With lots of exciting announcements to come, now is the time to sign up and get involved.

CLICK HERE to find out how!

Amtrak fleet boost

US RAIL operator Amtrak has overnight signed a contract for 10 additional "Airo" trainsets, bringing its total order book to 83 of the new train type.

The first Amtrak Airo trainset is scheduled to commence operation in 2026, with the expansion part of a response to soaring demand for passenger rail travel within the USA.

The American-made trains will operate on routes across the country, with modern seats, a cafe car and full 5G connectivity.

Monarch relaunch?

DEFUNCT UK charter holiday specialist Monarch Airlines may return to the market, according to recent posts on social media.

A new website is on the way at letsmonarch.co.uk, six years after the company's tour operating parent company collapsed (**TD** 03 Oct 2017), triggering Britain's biggest-ever peacetime repatriation mission to fly over 85,000 holidaymakers home.

Prior to its shutdown, Monarch carried six millions passengers annually with over 2,100 staff.



Win an eco trip!

YHA Australia is giving one lucky person the chance to win a sustainable adventure Down Under thanks to its 'No Worries' competition.

The profit-for-purpose organisation has collaborated with the South Australian Tourism Commission and Tourism and Events Queensland to create an itinerary in Queensland and South Australia featuring First Nations experiences and eco-friendly adventures.

The prize includes accommodation from YHA, a \$2,000 flight voucher, seven days each in SA and Qld, carbon offset with GreenFleet, and more.

Enter **HERE** by 22 Sep.

TOURISM FIJI UNVEILS NEW EV SUPPLY DEAL

FIJI has bolstered its tourism sustainability credentials in the last week, welcoming its inaugural fleet of electric vehicles (EVs) to the country.

Local tourism operators will be encouraged by Tourism Fiji to adopt the use of the new additions, which the small Pacific nation said were introduced in light of increasing demand from travellers for more environmentally responsible transportation options.

The vehicles have been sourced through a new deal with EV Direct, and represents a key step in the country's sustainability strategy, which Fiji is pushing harder than most, in part because of its own precarious state in relation to climate change.

"This is an important step in our



commitment to our sustainability roadmap," Tourism Fiji Chief Executive Officer Brent Hill said.

"Even our approach to acquiring the vehicles has been sustainable - utilising sponsorships and partnerships to help bring the vision to life and deliver long-term cost savings as well as reduced environmental impact,"

he added.

The newly launched EVs are fully electric and are equipped with portable chargers that utilise solar charging.

Pictured: Sangita Chand, Solar Hub NZ & FJ; Yogesh Chand, Solar Hub NZ & FJ; Brent Hill, Tourism Fiji; Minister Viliame Gavoka; Noelle, EV Direct Australia.

Hurtigruten nabs ESG gong

HURTIGRUTEN has received the best ESG ranking a cruise company has scored with researcher Sustainalytics.

The cruise line earned the industry's lowest "Risk Rating", scoring 19.7, which placed it fourth in the 'travel, lodging, and amusement' sub-category.

"This rating is a result of our company-wide focus on emissions, nature, community and people," Chief Executive Officer Daniel Skjeldam said.

The rating means Hurtigruten is unlikely to experience ESG-related financial impacts.

WA Govt to fund Kimberley clean-up

THE WA Government has partnered with the Federal Government to fund the clean-up and repair of marine, conservation and national parks in the Kimberley region, after they sustained damage during the record-breaking floods earlier this year (*TD* 21 Mar).

The jointly funded program will support debris clean-up as well as the repair of visitor infrastructure so that the region's most iconic national parks, including Danggu Geikie Gorge and Bandilngan

(Windjana Gorge), can be safely reopened to visitors.

"Unfortunately, the flooding has significantly damaged access roads, fencing, walking trails and essential utilities in National and Conservation Parks," Western Australian Emergency Services Minister Stephen Dawson said.

"We need to repair and reopen these attractions, so local tour operators can get back to business," he added, highlighting that the region attracts tens of thousands of tourists every year.

TAT goes organic

THE Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is promoting a series of new low-carbon Amazing Organic Trips, with an emphasis on farming activities and healthy gourmet experiences.

Initially launched in Chiang Mai and Phuket, the Amazing Organic Trip routes are tailor-made under a pact between the TAT and its local partners.

The Amazing Organic Trip project forms part of TAT's plan to integrate sustainable tourism into the country.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.642

AMID the cost-of-living crisis, the Australian dollar has been hit by a massive sell-off over the last week, as well as weaker wage and employment data.

The result of these factors has seen our currency dip by over one cent against the American dollar, while at the same time also sinking by close to a two-cent deficit against the Chinese yuan and the British pound this past week.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.642
UK	£0.503
NZ	\$1.082
Euro	€0.589
Japan	¥93.79
Thailand	฿22.59
China	¥4.640
South Africa	12.18
Canada	\$0.869
Crude oil	US\$84.12

Chimu golden ticket

CHIMU Adventures is encouraging travel advisors to check out its brand-new Antarctica brochure to see if they've won a 'Golden Ticket' to the great white continent.

The coveted tickets have been randomly inserted into two of the brochure deliveries, with the two winners to join Chimu on the Sporting Legends in the Antarctic voyage in Jan 2024.

View the brochure online **HERE** for hot-off-the-press info and tips.

PTMs' stellar time in Sri Lanka



TRAVELMANAGERS recently whisked five personal travel managers (PTMs) away on a nine-day famil to Sri Lanka, hosted by Travel Sapphire.

The group had the opportunity to experience the destination's beaches, mountain landscapes, cuisine and friendly locals, giving them a first-hand understanding of what their clients can expect when visiting Sri Lanka.

Victoria-based PTM Sinead Phillips was treated to a memorable elephant encounter during an overnight stay at the luxurious Cinnamon Wild Yala near Yala National Park.

MEL monitors noise

MELBOURNE Airport has installed three portable noise monitors following community feedback on its plans for a third runway, slated to open in 2027 (**TD** 15 Nov 2022).

Positioned in the nearby suburbs of Keilor, Sunshine and Bulla, the monitors collect aircraft noise data, which can be viewed online.

"Our guide took me under one of the chalets to watch him up close, then later, while sitting out on my balcony listening to the monkeys in the trees, I turned around and there he was, so close I could have reached out and touched him," she enthused.

Pictured picking tea leaves in the highlands of Sri Lanka: TravelManagers' Sinead Phillips, Kirsten Rheinlander, Tanya Barker, John LaBella and Valerie Ireland.

HKG on the rise

HONG Kong International Airport (HKG) has recorded substantial growth in passenger numbers in Jul, rising by 14.9% when compared with the same month in 2022.

Around 3.8 million pax passed through the hub, with daily passenger numbers averaging over 120,000, representing 60% of pre-COVID numbers.

HKG has also processed over 20 million passengers across the first seven months of 2023, 15 times more than its 2022 figures.

Website frustration

AROUND a third of Asia Pacific travellers were frustrated when visiting travel and hospitality websites last year, according to new findings from Contentsquare.

The 2023 Travel and Hospitality Digital Experience Benchmark report, which analyses 20.6 billion page views across 106 sites, found that slow page loads were the leading cause of frustration.

The data also shows that while overall traffic to travel sites shot up by 77% year-over-year, conversion rates fell by 1.4%, with users spending less time per session and scrolling less further down the page.

Notably, most travel site traffic was organic & came from mobile devices, yet desktop and paid traffic saw better conversion rates.

Many near misses

AIRCRAFT close calls in the United States happen far more often than previously known, a stunning *New York Times* report has revealed.

The large number of recent incidents, highlighted in preliminary Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) safety reports, are part of an alarming pattern of safety lapses and near misses, the investigation found.

Potentially dangerous incidents are occurring far more frequently than almost anyone realises, which many insiders describe as a sign of the safety net under mounting stress.

The incidents often occur at or near airports, and are the result of human error, the FAA's internal records show, with one major factor being a nationwide air traffic controller shortage.



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Alright Swifties, Let's create a Love Story and Win a Private Suite ticket to **Taylor Swift** in Sydney*

Shake it off and find out how to enter

Issue 1 (one) Adult Return ticket from Australia to anywhere on our Emirates Network between **1 August 2023 - 30 September 2023** for travel departing between **1 October 2023 - 30 November 2023**.

Be one of the top 38 (thirty-eight) selling agents during the competition period to win!*

Every eligible ticket you issue is an entry!

Your Wildest Dreams AKA The Prize

1 (one) Private Suite ticket to see **Taylor Swift | The Eras Tour** concert on one of the dates below:

- ◆ Friday 23 February 2024 at Accor Stadium, Sydney; or
- ◆ Saturday 24 February 2024 at Accor Stadium, Sydney

The ticket includes premium food and beverage, an outstanding view of the concert with an exclusive outdoor balcony and seating.

To ensure there's no Bad Blood, let's get to the End Game!

Head to our **Emirates Partner Portal** for further details on how to submit your eligible bookings.

[Find out more here](#)

*The prize is a single concert ticket only. Competition terms and conditions apply.