

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news including our **Luxury** feature page, plus full pages from:

- Entire Travel Group
- Tokyo Tourism

WIN with Tokyo

TRAVEL advisors who complete the new Tokyo Tourism Expert program can win a trip to Japan flying with ANA and staying at a Mimiru Hotel - see the **last page**.

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Positivity for Rex at AGM



REX Group provided a positive outlook at its AGM that took place this morning in Sydney in the presence of Executive Chair Lim Kim Hai and Deputy Chair John Sharp (**pictured**).

In the presentation, it was noted that Group revenue is expected to increase due to the addition of up to four Boeing 737-800NGs to its fleet, with three of those in service by the end of the year.

The presentation also noted the commencement of the Ambulance Victoria contract and new FIFO/charter contracts for National Jet Express (NJE) in Western Australia.

There has also been an influx of foreign cadets into the pilot academies and a ramping up worldwide of pilot training, with

the Group confirming that close to 100 new cadets from China have already arrived in FY24.

Despite the positivity, the Rex Board did not provide any profit guidance for FY24 "due to extreme volatility of the global geo-political / economic environment" currently.

Rex celebrated the results of FY23 at an impressive Board dinner last night at The Branksome Hotel in Sydney, for which *Travel Daily* received an exclusive invitation to attend.

During the dinner, Sharp and Kim thanked the many partners in the room as well as the trade media, and farewelled Executive Director Christopher Hine.

More coverage from the Rex Board Dinner on **page four**. *DF*

New KLS director

KELSIAN Group Ltd, the parent company of SeaLink, today announced the appointment of Jackie McArthur as an independent non-executive director of the business.

McArthur, who will join the Kelsian Board on 15 Jan, is currently on the boards of Cleanaway Waste Management and Qube Holdings, and was formerly Managing Director of supply chain service provider Martin-Brower.

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NCL names Viva

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) this morning formally named its new *Norwegian Viva* in a Miami ceremony presided over by the ship's godfather, singer Luis Fonsi.

CEO Harry Sommer highlighted a "banner year" for parent company Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, which for the first time ever is introducing new ships across all three of its brands: Norwegian, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

"As I look across our company and all three of these markets and brands, there's so much to be proud of," Sommer said, paying tribute to the fleet, his team, on board amenities, destinations and itineraries across the portfolio.

He also hailed the company's travel agent partners, noting their increasing importance to all three brands as the fleet expands and committing to ongoing support.

"Simply put, we will win together," Sommer said - more in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

Cocos Keeling rediscovered

COCOS Keeling Islands, one of the most remote island getaways in Australia, has launched a new tourism push, with a revamped brand and online presence.

The tropical destination comprises 27 islands, just two of which are inhabited, and is located 900km from Christmas Island and a half-day flight from the Western Australian capital.

Branding the refreshed look 'Australia's last unspoilt paradise', the website greets visitors with drone-shot and underwater footage, providing travel information, booking options and experiences on the islands.

Mike Kirkpatrick, Chair of the Cocos Keeling Islands, enthused the new online presence will aid in educating and informing travellers to promote the islands.

"Visitation has really been from word of mouth, even when Cossies Beach on Direction Island was named Australia's best beach

a few years back, many travellers don't know we're here or that we're an Australian territory."

Cocos Keeling only has the capacity to host up to 144 visitors at a time, offering "a rare opportunity to explore a place that's so beautiful, yet so undeveloped," he said.

Virgin Australia currently offers twice-weekly services to the islands from Perth, travelling via a stop at Christmas Island. *MW*
See cocoskeelingislands.com.au.

CX adds Disney+

CATHAY Pacific is claiming a regional first by becoming the first Asia-Pacific airline to bring Disney+ original titles to its inflight entertainment system.

Effective 01 Dec, customers on CX flights will enjoy over 100 hours of programming from Disney, Pixar, Marvel, Star Wars and National Geographic.

VS flies 100% SAF

VIRGIN Atlantic has successfully completed the world's first transatlantic commercial flight powered by 100% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

The Boeing 787 took off from London Heathrow and landed at New York JFK yesterday, powered by a unique dual blend of SAF supplied by Virent.

As well as demonstrating the capability of SAF as a safe drop-in replacement for fossil-derived jet fuel, the data from Flight100 will also be used to assess how SAF affects non-carbon emissions.

The brains behind the Virgin brand, Sir Richard Branson, was naturally aboard the milestone flight, which he enthused "sets the path for the decarbonisation of long-haul travel".



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Tourism Aus plots a big 2024

TOURISM Australia (TA) has locked in dates for key events next year, with 2024 to kick off with Destination Australia, which will take place on 13 Mar.

The theme for the conference will be 'The next chapter for sustainable growth', and will provide an opportunity to come together to focus on the future of the country's tourism industry.

Destination Australia will take place at ICC Sydney, and include industry leaders and topic experts sharing evolving trends, and talking about key areas of focus.

"In the year we hope we will exceed 2019 levels of visitation and spend; not only can we stop using pre-COVID figures as a reference point, we can evolve the conversation around what the sustainable growth of Australian tourism looks like, as we enter the next phase for our industry," Tourism Australia said.

CLICK HERE to register to attend

Destination Australia.

MEANWHILE, other key events already scheduled for next year include Australian Tourism Exchange, which will take place in Melbourne from 19-23 May; and Australia Next, which will take place in Cairns from 08-11 Sep.

Overseas, there will be three Australia Marketplace events next year - one in Japan (26-27 Aug), and one in Korea (29-30 Aug), as well as one in London, which will take place in Nov, starting on a yet-to-be-announced date.

Next year will also feature the G'Day Australia event, which will take place in mid-Oct at a yet-to-be-revealed location.

"The events provide an opportunity for the Australian tourism industry to meet with distribution partners, qualified Aussie specialists and business events planners from Australia key international markets," a TA spokesperson told *TD*. MS

TFE international exchange program

TFE Hotels has debuted a new Go Global international exchange scheme allowing staff from Australia and Germany to "swap" their home countries.

The program aims to help nurture young leaders within the business, with a strong focus on cultural immersion and learning best hotel practice.

An internal call to action has already generated an "incredible response" according to TFE Chief People Officer, Michelle Bevan.

Viking 25/26 open

VIKING Cruises has opened its 2025/26 Antarctic season for booking, as it kicks off its third expedition program visiting the White Continent.

The release includes a new 87-day voyage from the Arctic sailing from Nuuk, Greenland to Ushuaia, Argentina in Sep 2025.

AA's big carbon deal

AMERICAN Airlines has become the launch customer for an environmental innovator offering technology that removes carbon dioxide from the environment.

Graphyte's Carbon Casting process uses "readily available biomass, efficient processing and state-of-the-art monitoring" to make CO2 removal "quantifiable and permanent", the companies said, permanently storing the greenhouse gas using less energy and at a lower cost.

AA has agreed to buy 10,000 tonnes of permanent carbon removal, to be delivered in early 2025, as part of its long-term goal to reach net zero by 2050.

The first commercial-scale deployment of Carbon Casting will take place in Arkansas, where biomass is readily available.

Graphyte is a startup backed by Breakthrough Energy Ventures, with its platform combining photosynthesis with practical engineering - see graphyte.com.



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Rex models excellence



REX Group last night hosted a Board Dinner in Sydney, with special guests including **Travel Daily** publisher Bruce Piper honoured for their contribution to the aviation and travel sector.

The gathering was also the swansong for the airline's outgoing Executive Director and Group Flight Operations Advisor,

Chris Hine, who is retiring after 28 years with Rex and its predecessor, Kendell Airlines.

Rex Deputy Chairman John Sharp presented Piper with a commemorative Boeing 737 model, and he's **pictured** with Rex Group GM of Sales, Anne Elliott, and the airline's Executive Chairman Lim Kim Hai. *BP*

A&K appoints

KATRINA Thirkell has taken a new role with Abercrombie & Kent as Regional Sales Manager for Qld/WA/NT.

Thirkell joins A&K after a decade with APT Travel Group, with her career also including roles with Cox & Kings and Qantas.

New safari brand

MINOR Hotels has announced a new Explorer by Elewana collection of upscale African safari lodges, with the portfolio aiming to cater to a wider audience via a "more moderate price point".

The first lodge, Serengeti Explorer, is set to open in Mar next year, followed by Ngorongoro Explorer later in 2024 and Tarangire Explorer in 2025.

The new offering is an offshoot of Elewana which has been delivering experiences through its collection of 16 luxury East Africa properties for almost 20 years - explorer.elewanacollection.com.



AN UNFORTUNATE translation error in the Business class menus aboard a recent China Eastern Airlines flight has gone viral, after a pax posted an image of the bill of fare (**pictured**) detailing "imported dog food with okra" as one of the entree choices.

The post on Facebook saw hundreds of comments and shares, with some noting that those in Economy class presumably only got served less-fancy domestic dog food.

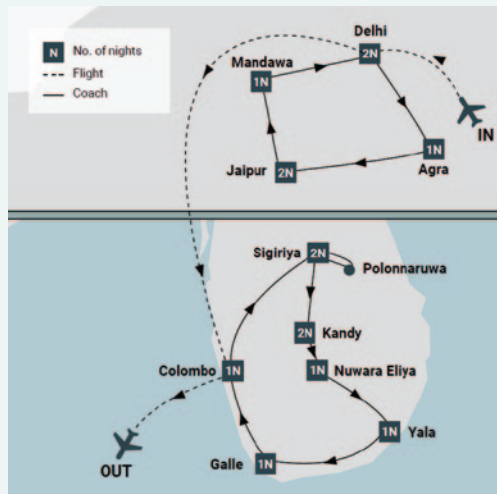


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Cruise sector slams Vic Government

CARNIVAL Australia has blamed recent unexpected fee increases by Ports Victoria for the cessation of homeporting for Princess Cruises and Cunard vessels in Melbourne from 2025.

The company has been operating there for almost 15 years, with Carnival Chief Strategy Officer, Teresa Lloyd, saying the pull-out was “not made lightly”.

“We love Melbourne and so do our local, interstate and international guests...the cultural capital of Australia is the gateway into southern Australia but also a much-loved destination for millions of tourists,” she said.

The significant increase to fees “will be ongoing and will largely go towards the ongoing costs of maintaining Station Pier”, Carnival Australia believes.

The Tourism and Transport Forum has also expressed dismay - more in today’s *Cruise Weekly*.

Finnish closure

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has updated its Smartraveller advice for Finland, confirming that all of the country’s land border crossings with Russia will close tomorrow.

Australians needing to depart Russia are now advised to cross into Estonia instead, with the train service between St Petersburg and Helsinki also suspended at present.

Hilton ups Turkey

HOSPITALITY giant Hilton has announced several new properties in Turkey, including the 491-room Hilton Istanbul Airport.

A total of 11 new hotels are now in the pipeline across the country comprising brands such as Curio Collection, DoubleTree, Hampton and Tapestry Collection.

Set to open in mid-2025 directly across from the terminal, the Hilton Istanbul Airport will be the aviation hub’s first hotel.

Plaza Athenee’s Dior delight



PATRICK Benhamou, ex-local head of Atout France and innovator behind new venture SHOW 7 Events (**TD** 07 Nov), recently hosted a fabulous fashion show at DIOR’s exclusive boutique in Sydney.

The glamorous event promoted the Plaza Athenee in Paris, a favourite hotel among high-end travellers from Australia.

Sarah Built from Etihad along with Uniworld’s Alice Ager and Club Med’s Michelle Davies were among the attendees, with all three agreeing with Benhamou that “peach and pale apricot will be the on-trend colours this summer”. *JM*

Looking very classy, the ever-energetic Benhamou is pictured with some of the Dior models.

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Luxury Gold on sale

TTC Tour Brands has launched a rare "Invitation Only Friends & Family Private Sale" on its upmarket Luxury Gold portfolio.

Available for bookings until 31 Dec on selected 2024 departures, the offer allows agents to save their clients up to \$2,800 per couple.

TTC Tour Brands MD Toni Ambler said luxury travel was continuing to grow into 2024, with the deposit-only and pay-later option allowing advisors to access savings now, with clients paying final balances 120 days prior to departure and TTC's 5% past passenger discount also applicable - agents.ttc.com.

SA private island

DETAILS of South Australia's first luxury eco resort were unveiled this week, with the \$40 million project to be located on the private Louth Island which is 10 min from Port Lincoln.

Dubbed Rumi on Louth, it's the brainchild of entrepreneur Che Metcalfe, and when it opens in 2025 will comprise a series of fully off-grid accommodations, two fine-dining culinary offerings, a day spa and immersive activities.

For more details see rumionlouth.com.au.

SONEVA DRIVES SUSTAINABLE LUXURY

LUXURY resort brand Soneva has been awarded the 2023 Terra Carta Seal from the Sustainable Markets Initiative, which recognises its efforts to create a more sustainable future.

The achievement is awarded to companies that have demonstrated the success of a high-impact, large-scale company-wide project, initiative or strategy which aligns with one or more of the Sustainable Markets Initiative's 10 Terra Carta Articles.

Soneva was selected by a panel of environmental, business, political and philanthropic experts from around the world, and is just one of 83 companies globally to have ever attained the seal.

"The Sustainable Markets Initiative's Terra Carta Seal recognises those companies which are taking great strides in delivering real-world outcomes to create a more positive future that we can all embrace," Sustainable



Markets Initiative CEO Jennifer Jordan-Saifi explained.

"The calibre of the projects and initiatives being driven by these companies sets the standard for us all as we push forward to a more sustainable future."

Soneva's Social & Environmental Conscience Arnfinn Oines said Soneva is honoured to receive the prestigious seal.

"We are dedicated to leading the way in responsible tourism and championing the transformative power of travel and tourism in global conservation efforts," he shared, pointing out that Soneva resorts have been carbon neutral since 2012. *JM*

Pictured: The Soneva Soul wellness concept at Soneva Jani in the Maldives.

Le Ponant sailings unveiled for 2024 and 2025

PONANT has released details of 29 Northern Hemisphere voyages aboard its *Le Ponant* three-masted sailing yacht, as well as a newly formalised long-term relationship with the Relais & Chateaux portfolio.

The vessel will cruise in the Mediterranean from Jun to Sep next year, and then once again relocate to the Caribbean and Cape Verde for the 2024/25

northern winter.

After four years of regular ad-hoc partnerships, Ponant has also strengthened its ties with Relais & Chateaux, with *Le Ponant* now a full member and included in the group's catalogue of the "finest travel addresses in the world".

Ponant sales chief Deb Corbett said the pact "solidifies Ponant's ethos of exclusive luxury".

Ubud BASE debuts

TWO-MICHELIN starred chef Syrcobakker will this week open a new Syrcobase restaurant in Ubud, Bali.

The culinary destination sees Chef Bakker forge "equitable partnerships with local farmers, producers and communities" with the offering including an exclusive 14-guest Chef's Table experience - syrco.com.

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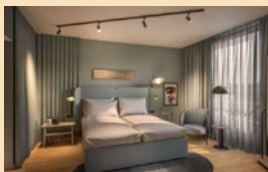
Amora Hotel Brisbane has introduced a new luxurious conference and event area to its property, as part of an extensive \$30 million refurbishment. The 1,148m² conference and event floor is complemented by 11 open rooms, which include traditional boardrooms, cabaret and theatre set-ups, as well as a Pool Terrace. These venues can host a variety of events, including weddings with over 250 attendees.



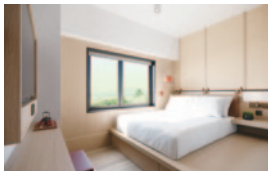
To accommodate its guests during the bustling summer period, Luci at **Hilton Little Queen Street** in Melbourne has launched its Afternoon Aperitivo with a new lunch menu, which includes decadent focaccia. Meanwhile the hotel's bar, The Douglas Club, has introduced an array of exotic cocktails and snacks. The new menu at the signature restaurant includes oysters spiked with gin and cucumber, dry gin-cured Tassie salmon, and much more.



The four-bedroom **Villa Mayavee** has debuted in Thailand as the first Mandarin Oriental Exclusive Homes property in the country. Situated in Phuket, Thailand, the property is only a 45-minute drive from the airport. Travellers can enjoy the resort's breathtaking views across the Andaman Sea via sprawling terraces and expansive floor-to-ceiling windows, which seamlessly connect the outdoor and indoor spaces.



Holiday Inn City Centre in downtown Helsinki, Finland, will begin works to transition from its current operator IHG to Scandic Hotels. The 174-room urban getaway will undergo a property-wide renovation from Sep 2024 on its facade and interiors, as well as sustainability-related upgrades. The hotel rooms will also be furnished in alignment with Scandic's Room Collection brand.



Nozo Hotel is opening just in time for Japan's ski season in Furano, Hokkaido. Welcoming guests from 19 Dec, the design of the 78-room resort is inspired by the deep roots of Japanese culture, and will offer an exclusive lounge, bakery, spa area, fitness centre, and the signature Shirakaba Restaurant, which serves a fusion of Western and Japanese cuisine.

Emirates is seeing stars



EMIRATES this week teamed up with the Mohammed Bin Rashid Space Centre (MBRSC) to operate a special one-off flight to celebrate the UAE's milestone achievements in space exploration.

Featuring a specially designed astronaut decal, the A380 wide-body aircraft took off from Dubai International Airport yesterday to fly across all seven Emirates of the nation.

Two national heroes were invited onboard as guests of honour, including Dr Sultan AlNeyadi, who recently returned from a six-month mission on the International Space Station, and Hazzaa AlMansoori, the first Emirati astronaut in space.

Joining them on the flight were Salem Humaid AlMarri, Director General of MBRSC; Emirates' Chief Operating Officer Adel AlRedha; and crew members of Expedition 69 along with close to 200 employees from MBRSC.

The employees had the once-in-a-lifetime chance to join a Q&A followed by a meet-and-greet with the two guests of honour.

"We are honoured to celebrate the successful mission and return of Dr Sultan AlNeyadi, as well as the ground-breaking work of MBRSC to propel the UAE's flourishing space sector," Emirates COO Adel AlRedha said.

"Whether it's soaring through the skies or rocketing into the atmosphere, Emirates pilots and MBRSC astronauts share a passion for discovery and are a source of innovation and inspiration for all." JM

Pictured: Dr Sultan AlNeyadi and Hazzaa AlMansoori ready to board the special Emirates flight.

French smoke ban

AUTHORITIES in France have announced plans for strict new health rules, banning cigarettes from the country's beaches and other public spaces such as parks.

Single-use e-cigarettes will also be banned under the regulations, with the nation's Minister for Health, Aurelien Rousseau, saying tobacco products cause 75,000 avoidable deaths each year.



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