

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news including a photo page from **AAT Kings**, plus a full page from **Norwegian Cruise Line**.

Welcome back China

CHINESE group tours are once again able to visit Australia from today after a long hiatus from China's Approved Destination Status scheme (**TD 11 Aug**).

"The government has worked with industry to ensure we are well positioned to welcome back Chinese group tours, including putting in place the relevant agreements between both governments and industry for ADS visa processing," Federal Tourism and Trade Minister Don Farrell enthused this morning.

QF pumps \$80m into rehab

QANTAS has announced it will hack into its surging profits to make key customer service improvements to the business, revealing an extra \$80 million will be stumped up by the carrier in addition to its previously budgeted \$150 million.

In an update to the market this morning, the airline said extra funds were needed to address "pain points" plaguing the company, flagging "more generous recovery support" for when things go wrong as vital among customer reforms.

Qantas also noted more spending will be made to improve contact centre resources and training, create more loyalty seat redemption opportunities, as well as lift the standard of food served up during flights.

A review of Qantas' 'policies of fairness' will also take place.

In addition to new customer service initiatives, the carrier also revealed it will look to accelerate existing programs, such as the revamp of the Qantas app, with more details to be released in the coming weeks.

Batik commish up

IN A win for travel agents, Batik Air Indonesia has announced its standard BSP commissions will be increased from zero to 3%, effective immediately.

Parent company Lion Group reiterated that any of its group flights on OD (816) ticket stock can now claim commission, including Thai Lion Air, Lion Air, Batik Air, and Wings Air.

The timing of the increase in agent commissions coincides with Batik Air Indonesia continuing its rapid Australian expansion, earlier this month revealing the upcoming launch of a new non-stop service between Adelaide and Bali (**TD 08 Sep**).

While 3% is now offered across all Lion brands, Batik Air Malaysia had offered 5% BSP until a recent cut to 3% (**TD 30 Aug**).

However it might not all be bright news for Qantas passengers, with the company also flagging a possible rise in the price of air tickets if fuel prices continue to spike amid a weakening Australian dollar.

The airline noted that oil prices have increased by 30% since May, and could see the Group's fuel bill rise by \$200 million to \$2.8 billion, alongside a \$50 million slug from non-fuel related foreign exchange rates.

While Qantas said its preference was to "absorb these higher costs", if the trajectory was to continue, the business noted it will be forced to adjust settings.

"Any changes would look to balance the recovery of higher costs with the importance of affordable travel in an environment where fares are already elevated," Qantas said.

Meanwhile, Qantas also pointed to new aircraft deliveries and wet-lease agreements lifting its capacity by 12 percentage points by the end of year, equivalent to around 50 extra flights a week. **AB**

Rex takes delivery

REX has taken delivery of the airline's ninth Boeing 737-800NG that it says will further increase its domestic footprint across all the capital cities in Australia.

More about Rex on **page two**.

Queenstown is back

DESTINATION Queenstown has declared the Kiwi city is back and open for business for visitors after adverse weather conditions forced the closure of tourism sites late last week (**TD 22 Sep**).

"Guests to our town can be confident they will have a true Queenstown experience, despite the recent bump in the road," Queenstown Mayor Glyn Lewers said, adding the city is expecting to welcome over 40,000 international and domestic arrivals in the next two weeks.

Now that's some step-tacular progress

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's highly anticipated Walk For Wellness month has already cracked an impressive 1,500 registrations.

The cruise line's philanthropic challenge allows members of the travel industry to have fun, keep up their fitness, and help raise awareness for mental health issues within the sector.

While mental health awareness is reason enough to jump on board, the Walk for Wellness event will this year also push to break an official world record for distance walked by participants.

There is less than one week to get as many of your industry friends enrolled for Oct - for more details see the **back page**.

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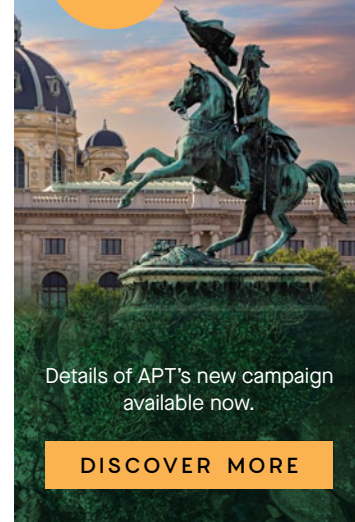
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Virgin is last, again

VIRGIN Australia has again trailed its competitors in both on-time performance and flight cancellation rates in Aug.

New figures from BITRE show VA only managed to achieve just under 69% of its arrivals and departures on schedule, below the industry average for the month, which was about 73%.

Close to 5% of all VA services were also cancelled, a full percentage point above rival Qantas and well behind Rex Airlines (1.8%) and Jetstar (2.9%).

In terms of routes, cancellation were highest on the Canberra to Sydney flight path at 11%, followed by Sydney to Canberra (10.8%), Melbourne to Sydney (9.5%), and Sydney to Melbourne (9.3%) rounding out the poorest four routes.

VA extends COVID credits

VIRGIN Australia has become the latest carrier to extend its COVID credits, confirming to **TD** this morning that its customers will now have until 30 Jun 2025 to use any outstanding issuances.

The extension applies to standard credits issued on or before 31 Jul 2022 for bookings made from 21 Apr 2020 through to 31 Jul 2022, and follows a call by the ACCC a week ago (**TD** 18 Sep) for VA to follow Qantas in extending the time customers have to book flights in the interests of fairness.

A spokesperson for VA said that while the extension will be automatically applied to all COVID credits, the new expiry date may take up to eight weeks to appear in guests' Travel Banks.

"We have started communicating this info directly with our customers by email, on our website and through our trade partners," VA said.

Credits can be used to book travel on all VA flights and can be redeemed with no minimum spend and is not limited to pax named on the original booking.

For indirect bookings, T&Cs may differ so VA advises guests to check with their travel agent.

MEANWHILE VA's Velocity program has launched its first cruise for points offer with its sister cruise line Virgin Voyages.

The newly unveiled cross-promotion offers the opportunity to book an Aussie Virgin Voyages cruise using 79,999 Velocity

TK flies a step closer

DESPITE delays to its Aussie expansion plans, Turkish Airlines is pushing ahead with ambitions to fly Down Under directly, submitting an application to fly to Sydney and Melbourne to the Federal Transport Department.

If granted regulatory approval, TK could operate as many as five weekly roundtrip flights between Turkiye and Australia before the end of the year.

points, with sailings also including wi-fi, food, selected drinks, and unlimited fitness classes.

A number of three- to six-night Melbourne and Sydney departures this summer are eligible for the "cashless cruise" deal, including Melbourne to Hobart return and Sydney to Burnie return. **AB**

Rex reduces routes

REX Airlines has taken an axe to a number of its regional turboprop routes from Sydney, announcing late last week it will reduce flights on seven more services to cope with a lack of pilots (**TD** breaking news Fri).

The changes will come into effect from 30 Oct and impact the following routes: Sydney-Albury, Sydney-Coffs Harbour, Sydney-Griffith, Sydney-Narrandera, Sydney-Orange, Sydney-Parkes and Sydney-Port Macquarie.

Rex also revealed it will need to temporarily suspend services between Sydney and Armidale until at least 30 Mar next year and withdraw from the Cairns-Bamaga route in Far North Queensland altogether.

Qantas was again listed as the primary culprit for the cuts, with the carrier accusing the Flying Kangaroo of "pillaging" its pilot stocks and preventing its network from operating reliably.

"Unlike other carriers, we prefer to reduce the scheduled services so that our passengers can be assured of fewer disruptions and more reliable services," Rex General Manager of Network Strategy Warrick Lodge said.

"We intend to return to the standard flight schedules from 31 Mar, however this is subject to the situation improving."

In more bad news for the airline, service reductions on seven other regional routes announced on 21 Apr will continue "for at least another five months" Rex said, as well as the suspension of flights between Adelaide and Mildura.

Hilton clears the air

HILTON Worldwide has confirmed that it is working to ensure mandatory fees are displayed more prominently on all its websites and apps after criticism of hotels levelled by lawmakers in the United States.

The major resort brand also said it was pushing for all platforms that distributes its inventory to display all fees to ensure the consumer sees consistent information wherever they book.

Sicily wildfire evac

HUNDREDS of tourists have been evacuated from a hotel in the tourist resort of Cefalu in Sicily, after wildfires threatened their safety on the Italian island.

Two residents died in the blaze, which is now under control.

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Travel Daily ON LOCATION



DENMARK

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of **MSC Cruises**, which is showcasing its groundbreaking new **MSC Euribia** on a North Sea voyage.

HAVING recently undertaken a groundbreaking bio-LNG powered net zero delivery voyage from St Nazaire to her Copenhagen homeport, *MSC Euribia* is now in service and *TD* is lucky enough to be on board to experience her this week.

It's hard to know where to start with this high-tech vessel, which offers seemingly endless entertainment, dining and activity options.

The ship is named after the ancient goddess Eurybia who "harnessed the winds, weather and constellations to master the seas" and she certainly is masterful, featuring 2,419 passenger cabins.

The fifth in MSC's Meraviglia-class series, *Euribia* has been designed with a stringent focus on optimised efficiency and reduced environmental impact.

MSC says the use of LNG and other technology means *Euribia* will emit 44% less greenhouse gas emissions per guest per day than ships built just a decade ago, while other sustainability features include shore power capability, heat recovery & advanced wastewater treatment.

Aussies stuck in Vanuatu

UNSCHEDULED technical work on its only Boeing 737 has led Air Vanuatu to cancel or reschedule all flights since Fri, leaving hundreds of Aussie travellers stranded in the South Pacific destination.

The airline released a statement noting that it was currently working with impacted passengers and would be covering the cost of

accommodation and meals.

"The cause of these disruptions is unscheduled technical work that is required on the aircraft," Air Vanuatu said.

"This urgent engineering work is needed to ensure that the long-term schedule integrity is restored moving forward.

Air Vanuatu added that it was regretful the breakdown had caused disruptions to the travel plans of guests but that passenger safety and the integrity of its planes would always take precedent over schedules.

Around 26 flights to Australia and New Zealand have been cancelled or rescheduled over the last three days. *AB*

Crown wants change

AFTER a checkered few years dealing with organised crime issues, Crown Resorts has launched its first marketing campaign in a decade to breathe new life into the brand.

The new 'Here's Where Things Get Interesting' push is running nationally across television, outdoor, print, and social media, with Crown stating its aim of shifting the public perception of being a casino/hotel business to being a "world-class entertainment destination".

"Over the last two years, we have worked very hard as a business to set Crown on a path to fundamentally change for the better," Crown said.

"To us, 'interesting' is the promise of something unique, elevated, unexpected, and memorable...as we move forward, interesting experiences will be a critical part of our strategy to energise our cities and supercharge Australian tourism".

Vietjet embroiled in COVID scandal

VIETJET'S e-commerce boss is among four people placed under house arrest in Vietnam, accused of taking bribes in exchange for preferential places on COVID repatriation flights operated at the height of the pandemic.

Nguyen Manh Cuong's detention adds to a long list of Vietnamese citizens already sentenced for playing a role in an alleged bribery ring, which also included several high-profile govt officials such as the former Head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Consular Department Nguyen Thi Huong Lan.

Travel Daily has reached out for comment from Vietjet.

LA inks green bean

CREATIVE communications agency one green bean (ogb) has scored the local account for the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board.

The agency will be charged with handling all PR activities for the Australia and New Zealand market across both B2B and B2C.

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AAT Kings season launch



AAT Kings will for the first time ever introduce a new Aboriginal Culture & Australia Highlights tour as part of its 2024/25 touring season, with the operator partnering with Discover Aboriginal Experiences to identify and curate Indigenous providers and experiences.

MD Ben Hall unveiled the offering at a Sydney Opera House Event last Thu, saying the new limited-season Indigenous-focused guided holiday features must-see destinations in Melbourne, Uluru, Sydney and Cairns over 13 days, with a strong focus on "local connection, cultural immersion, sustainable footprints and wildlife & nature".

The trip includes Dreamtime Dive & Snorkel and Big Esso by Mabu Mabu, projects which are supported via AAT Kings Groups' Make Travel Matter Experiences and the TTC's Treadright Foundation, with Hall saying "AAT Kings is committed to helping drive Indigenous tourism and play a leading role in increasing understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal culture".

Pictured at the event are from left: Troy Ackerman, AAT Kings; Allie Sparr from Flight Centre; The Travel Corporation MD Australia, Dave Hosking; and Sue Graham from Flight Centre. *BP*

More from the AAT Kings event on [page five](#).

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Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted. Only applicants with the legal right to work and live in Australia will be considered. No recruitment agency submissions accepted.



Staywell and save

STAYWELL Holdings has announced a partner program in Australia that provides guests with a range of exclusive offers from local businesses.

The offers are unique to the individual Staywell properties and are available at Park Regis and Leisure Inn hotels around Australia when guests book directly with the property.

Offers include discounts on car hire, experiences, tours and more, usually in the vicinity of a 10% saving.

Delta to AKL daily

DELTA Airlines has announced it will fly the Auckland to Los Angeles route year-round with a daily service between Nov-Mar and three-time weekly service from Apr-Oct.

The US-headquartered airline also revealed that it will shift operations to the flagship Airbus A350-900 from Apr 2024 featuring Delta One suites, Delta Premium Select and Delta Comfort+ services.

"New Zealand has shown strong travel demand after we announced the new service between Auckland and Los Angeles," said Kelly Clive, Delta's Country Manager for Australia and New Zealand.

"With our extended service through the year, more passengers will be able to enjoy our best-in-class travel experience anytime in the year."



Window Seat

AROUND 18 people were intercepted everyday in 2022 carrying guns by the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA).

That equates to 6,542 guns intercepted that year at US airport security checkpoints.

Let's look at the positive side of that - 6,542 people attempting to smuggle arms on to planes in the US were stopped before they could do so - a win for the traveller.

It must be a flight attendant's worst nightmare to have to deal with an armed passenger when they have a limited amount of defences in their arsenal.

If you're looking for the typical Window Seat punch line, then here it is.

One of those 6,542 people apprehended by the TSA was a flight attendant.

According to a press release, "officers at Philadelphia International Airport prevented a flight attendant from boarding a plane with a loaded .380 caliber handgun on Fri, 15 Sep, two weeks after they prevented a man who worked at one of the airport retail concession shops from bringing his loaded handgun through the security checkpoint".

Weapons down, people.

The Chat

Travel Daily

with Jenny



A Conversation with Robyn Sinfield

Home Travel Company

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AAT Kings unveils Aboriginal experience

LAST week, AAT Kings unveiled the launch of its new Aboriginal Culture & Australia Highlights tour - **HERE**, as part of the group's new 2024/2025 touring season.

Over 30 trade partners and members of the media celebrated the announcement at Torres Strait Islander owned Big Esso by Mabu Mabu in Melbourne on Tue, followed by a cocktail-style celebration at Bennelong, Sydney Opera House on Thu, with over 60 guests gathering to hear about the new Australia-first Indigenous focused guided holiday.



BEN Allen, AAT Kings Group Global Sales Manager - ITO/OTA; Rebecca Setchell, State Sales Manager NSW/ACT; Troy Ackerman AAT Kings Group General Manager of Sales & Revenues; Michael Woods, AAT Kings Group Industry Partnerships & Marketing Manager; Margret Campbell, Dreamtime Southern X Managing Director; Ben Hall, AAT Kings Group CEO; Phil Lockyer, Head of Indigenous Affairs Tourism Australia; David Hosking, TTC Australia CEO; DI Morgan, AAT Kings Group General Manager Group Marketing; and Nikki Bruce, AAT Kings Group Head of Marketing.

GRAZIELLA Caruso Goway Travel; and Sandra Feustel Pan, Pacific Travel Australia.



BEN Hall; Alice Ager, Uniworld Managing Director, Troy Ackerman; David Hosking; Di Morgan; and Neil Rodgers, Adventure World Managing Director.



DI MORGAN and Phil Lockyer.



ALLIE Sparr from Flight Centre Independent with Alice Ager.



BEN Hall, Margaret Campbell and Phil Lockyer enjoying their time at the event.

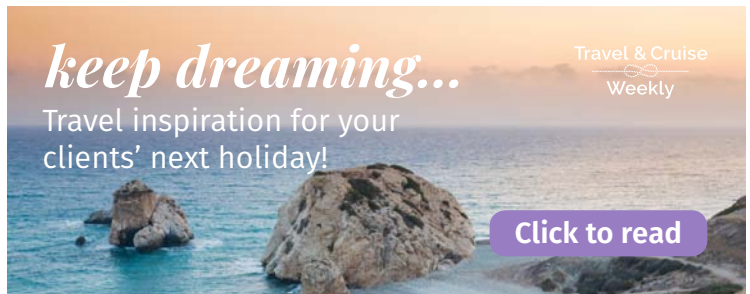


ALICE Fisher, Flight Centre Broadway; Emily Hill, Tourism NT; and Danni Newman, Flight Centre.



REBECCA Setchell and Ben Allen sharing a moment for a snap!





keep dreaming...

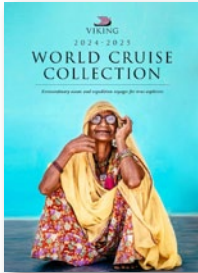
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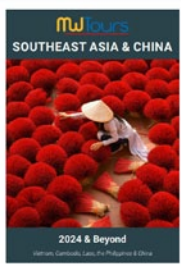
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Viking - World Cruise Collection 2024-2025

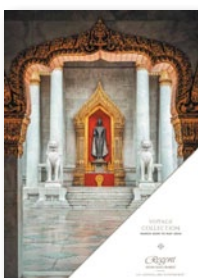
Viking has launched a new World Cruise Collection brochure for its 2024-2025 cruising season, with some of its popular and previously sold-out ocean world and expedition voyages highlighted throughout the travel guide. The brochure boasts a marquee tour, the 69-day Longitudinal World Cruise V, which departs Buenos Aires to visit nine countries. The voyage allows travellers to experience countless cities' heritage and wildlife sites throughout, before concluding via a final call in Milwaukee. Sailing on 26 Sep next year, travellers can save up to \$4,000 per couple for bookings made before 30 Nov, unless sold out prior.



MW Tours - Southeast Asia & China

To better showcase its itineraries for 2024, and beyond in the Southeast Asia and China, MW Tours has printed a 60-page brochure for keen travellers to take on their most ideal getaways. From journeying on the Great Wall and 7,000 Philippine islands to visiting the historic villages of Hoi An in Vietnam, MW Tours has many travel styles to suit all kinds of travellers. These include escorted tours, small group tours, personalised tours and more.

Discounts of up to \$150 per person are available if the tour was booked and paid for in full six months prior to the departure date. More T&Cs are viewable on the back page of the brochure.



RSSC - Voyage Collection 2025-2026

Regent Seven Seas Cruises has curated the ultimate voyage collection for the those that love to plan ahead, as the cruise line has published a 192-page brochure for voyages from Mar 2025 through to May 2026. The travel bible highlights itineraries spanning across the world, while boasting the Regent Experience where guests are invited to the "unrivalled comfort and space" on one of world's most luxurious fleet. Experience

the Southern Caribbean Beauty on a 16-night journey from Miami to Barbados with up to 116 excursions available throughout. Travellers are enticed by benefits of one-night pre-cruise hotel packages, free wi-fi, and a personal butler on selected voyages.

Travel & tourism take three for sea



SOME slightly chilly and even a little rainy spring Sydney weather last Fri morning didn't dampen the spirits of about 100 people who gathered at Manly Cove on the harbour for the 2023 Take Three for the Sea CEO Cleanup.

Participants included a large contingent from the travel and tourism sector (pictured), including representatives of cruise lines, tourism bodies, tour operators, suppliers and travel agency groups.

Norwegian Cruise Line was the official supporter of the event, and was well represented by MD Ben Angell and several of his team including Angela Middleton and Damian Borg, along with Stephen Mahoney from Destination NSW and The Walshe Group CEO Jacqui Walshe.

Tourism Australia MD Phillipa Harrison rolled up her sleeves together with Ponant CEO Chris



Hall (inset), while CT Partners chief Matt Masson got his hands dirty alongside Travel The World's Andrew Millmore, Aurora Expeditions' Michael Heath and Steve McLaughlin as well as Lisa Pile from Regent Seven Seas Cruises, CLIA MD Joel Katz and many more.

Despite the freshly-raked sand looking pristine, the participants were surprised at the huge amount of waste they picked up in just over an hour, with the event helping raise awareness of the huge problem of plastic pollution in the world's oceans.

Got a confidential tip? Contact Travel Daily via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#)

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