

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of travel news.

AFP twist at Rex

THE saga over the ongoing viability of Rex has taken yet another turn, with media reports suggesting the Australian Federal Police were recently called in to investigate an alleged illegal recording of a board meeting.

According to the AFR, police are investigating whether former Chairman, Lim Kim Hai, recorded the carrier's final board meeting without the consent of directors.

According to The Australian, it is understood Director John Sharp filed the complaint with the AFP last Mon after learning that Lim had allegedly offered a recording of the final meeting to an unnamed journalist.

The claims come amid an acrimonious split between Lim and the board, and both Rex and EY have declined to comment.

Trade votes NTIA finalists

AFTER more than 8,200 votes were cast by the travel industry, ATIA has revealed the next tranche of finalists for the 2024 National Travel Industry Awards (TD breaking news).

Similar to the People categories announced last week, a minimum of five finalists will contest categories 21-31, which recognise the best ATAS-accredited tour operators, wholesalers, tourism offices, airlines, hotels, cruise lines and car rental brands.

Qantas, Virgin Australia, Qatar Airways, Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines were voted by the industry as contenders for Most Popular Airline - Online.

The Most Popular Ocean Cruise Operator category will see APT, Norwegian Cruise Line, Ponant, Princess Cruises and Viking battle it out on the night of nights.

APT and Viking will meet a second time in the Most Popular River Cruise Operator category,



joined by Avalon Waterways, Scenic and Uniworld.

Finalists in the People's Choice categories are yet to be revealed. See [HERE](#) for the latest list. ML

Envoyage in NZ

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) formally welcomed its Envoyage NZ independent division late last week.

New Kiwi members were embraced as part of an official welcome ceremony, attended by Global MD Luxury and Independent brands, Danielle Galloway, and General Manager Envoyage NZ, Jason Buckley.

Uniworld at the flicks

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises is encouraging travel advisors to bring their clients along to its upcoming roadshow events in Australia, taking place in Oct and Nov.

Called 'Aperitivo at the Pictures', the series of events will be hosted in cinemas around the country, forums for Uniworld to preview its latest documentary and share insights about new experiences in its 2026 itineraries.

Exclusive deals for 2025 and 2026 river cruises will be on offer, as well as prizes and giveaways.

Tickets are \$15 plus booking fee with ticket discount codes for agents - for full details about event times, see [HERE](#).



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Farewell to the paper trail?

THE Australian Border Force (ABF) and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry have partnered with Qantas on a trial to roll out a digital alternative to the paper Incoming Passenger Card.

Later this year, eligible adult passengers on select Qantas flights from New Zealand will be invited to complete the new Australia Travel Declaration through the Qantas app, 72 hours prior to departure.

Once completed, passengers will receive a digital pass through the Qantas app and to their nominated email, which will include a QR code that can be shown to ABF officers on arrival.

The pilot follows a recent call by the Australian Chamber of Tourism (**TD** 05 Aug) to scrap the paper version of the document to place Aussie hubs on the same footing with the rest of the world.

Multiple stakeholders have been

calling for the paper version to be overhauled in recent years, with many advocating for a streamlined process that both improves data quality and offers a more seamless travel experience.

The ABF has also flagged the expansion of the trial to other airlines if the program run with Qantas is successful.

Aussies will be able to access the trial thanks to the Trans-Tasman Seamless Travel Group, a body which was the prime mover in bringing leaders and experts from across government and industry to launch the pilot.

"We are excited by the possibilities this pilot program can open up for the future traveller experience - both in and out of Australia - especially as Australia prepares to welcome travellers from around the world when Brisbane hosts the Olympics in 2032," ABF Commissioner Michael Outram said. *AB*

ANA hosts big Japan Night



ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) hosted travel agents from the Newcastle & Canberra regions at its inaugural 'Japan Night' seminars last week, organised by Sales Manager Kevin Peng from the ANA Sydney Team.

Attendees received the latest news from Japan's largest airline, learning all about one of the latest international holiday destinations, and hearing from a range of Japan suppliers, from destinations Okinawa, Oita & Kyushu Tourism and bespoke


tour operators Wendy Wu, Inside Japan & MW Tourse (JNTO), Club Med, rail provider JR Central, and travel insurer Go.

Luxury cruise line Ponant also added some French flair to the Newcastle evening with its unique Japan itineraries.

The thirst for knowledge was reflected in the large turnout, with over 80 attendees at Noahs on the Beach in Newcastle, and more than 50 attending at "59" rooftop Conference Centre in Belconnen, Canberra. *JM*

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North Korea trips likely from next year

WHILE the destination may not be every Aussie traveller's cup of tea, the clandestine state of North Korea will partially reopen to tourists from Dec after five years of hard border closures.

Two China-based operators will commence operating tours to the northern city of Samjiyon under a pilot trial, before what many are predicting will be a phased rollout to the other areas, including the capital Pyongyang.

Speaking with **TD** on Fri, Crooked Compass founder Lisa Pagotto (**pictured**) said the trial was a welcome development, with the operator maintaining plenty of local interest over the intervening years.

"A lot of [our customers] have put down fully refundable deposits so they can be first to depart," Pagotto explained.

"In 2019, we ran at full capacity, and in 2020 we had full capacity before being cancelled, and in terms of our wait list, our maximum group tours are 12 people and we have enough to fill nearly five tours," she added.

Crooked Compass currently has departures listed on its website



to visit multiple regions in North Korea from Apr 2025, however, Pagotto said they will likely need to be pushed back in line with a strictly controlled relaunch of the country's tourism sector by the Kim Jong Un regime.

"I don't think our 2025 Apr tour will be possible, but we will just shift the dates once we get official opening confirmation about when it is possible to do full country tours," she said.

"I think [North Korea] will have a trial period and wants to see how things go, whether it's COVID related or there's some other reason behind the scenes...but I would say by the second half of next year, we'll be able to run full tours, just without the Day of the Sun festival, and by 2026, we're

fairly confident it should be back to normal."

While there is excitement about the limited trial in the northern city of Samjiyon in Dec, Pagotto said the "missing piece of the puzzle" will be access.

"In terms of accessing the north, it's going to be quite difficult after flying into Pyongyang," she said.

"There is a train running up in the north, and I think that will be the only access point at this stage, and it hasn't actually been confirmed as to how you can enter this part of the country that will be open," Pagotto said.

"But this is definitely progress and quite significant for us because we actually have something to take people on, as opposed to just whispers...but how to access that part of the country is what nobody knows at this stage," she added.

Pagotto also stressed North Korean trips "are definitely not for everybody", but added the country offers travellers unmatched pristine landscapes, as well as a rare opportunity to engage with North Koreans and see how they live. **AB**

Bali dengue advice

DFAT is warning Australian travellers to ensure they take precautions when travelling in Bali following a rise in dengue fever cases over recent weeks.

Australian health authorities have also reported a broader rise in dengue infections among returning Aussies between 2022-2024, with DFAT reminding travellers to use insect repellent, wear long, loose, light-coloured clothing, and book hotels with mosquito-proof features.

Moreton's People

MORETON Bay Region Industry & Tourism (MBRIT) has appointed The Comms. People as its new PR and video content partner, with the aim of assisting Visit Moreton Bay in future campaigns.

The Comms. People will highlight the region's food producers, family-friendly events, accommodation providers, experiences, and manage video content for media and Visit Moreton Bay's owned channels.

A Treasure map to the future

THE Treasures of the South Pacific has concluded its national roadshow across six major Aussie cities, hosting a record-breaking 700 travel agents.

National tourism offices from 10 destinations combined efforts to showcase the latest attractions in places like Norfolk Island, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Niue, and Tahiti.

The roadshow also saw the small nation of Palau make its debut with trade partners.

Supported this year by the Australian Tourism Industry Association, the Pacific Tourism Office, and Pacific Trade Invest Australia, organisers of The Treasures of the South Pacific are already planning an even larger event in 2025, using feedback from this year - stay tuned **HERE**.

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Culture vultures in flight

AUSTRALIAN travellers are capitalising on the affordability of holidaying in Japan amid the sluggish Japanese Yen as visitor numbers to the Land of the Rising Sun soar in 2024.

According to ATIA's *Travel Trends Report* for the year ending Jun 2024, outbound travel to Japan rose by 125.9% compared to the previous year.

Similarly, the endearing value and popularity of Indonesia is luring more Aussies, leading to a 35% spike in visitation.

ATIA's report also highlighted South Korea as another destination offering great holiday value, with visitation up 24%.

Despite a weaker exchange rate, Aussies remain drawn to the USA, with figures up 17.3%.

ATIA's report, which draws on data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, suggests Aussie travellers are more savvy with their holiday budgets and are willing to exchange popular markets like New Zealand for unique cultural experiences and adventure tourism in Asia.

Holidays were cited by ATIA as the primary reason for travel, followed by visiting friends and family and travelling for business.

ATIA Chief Executive, Dean Long, said Aussies are once again travelling the world with vigour and the data reflects a demand for international diversity.

"If it feels like everyone is in Japan at the moment, it's because they are," Long said.

"At the same time, fewer Australians are New Zealand bound, with 103,850 travellers this year compared to 206,720 in 2023 - a 27% decrease." ML

Sabre inks Westjet

SABRE Corporation and WestJet have signed a multi-year renewal of their distribution agreement, providing agents access to the complete range of the Canadian carrier's NDC offers and traditional content.

Once NDC is implemented, Sabre-connected travel agencies will be able to shop, book and service WestJet's NDC offers, alongside its EDIFACT content, through the Sabre global distribution system.

EY pax up by 33%

ETIHAD Airways served 1.7 million passengers in Jul, achieving an average load factor of 89% for month, preliminary traffic figures show.

"Our passenger numbers in Jul surged by 33% compared to the same period last year, underscoring our continuing strong growth," said the airline's CEO, Antonioaldo Neves.

K'gari dingo attack

A FOUR-YEAR-OLD girl has been hospitalised after being attacked by a dingo on K'gari.

The incident happened when a large group were approached by dingoes while fishing in a tourist area, with one biting the child's chest area and leaving her with scratches and bruises.

Paramedics assessed the girl before flying her to Hervey Bay Hospital in stable condition.

As a result, rangers are now monitoring the male dingo responsible for the attack.

SYD storm impacts

SEVERAL domestic flights in and out of Sydney Airport were cancelled on Fri evening due to severe storm activity.

Five outbound flights were scrapped and seven inbound were cancelled, causing lengthy delays for some passengers.

Some travellers reported having to spend more than four hours on the tarmac in Melbourne on planes bound for Sydney.



Window Seat

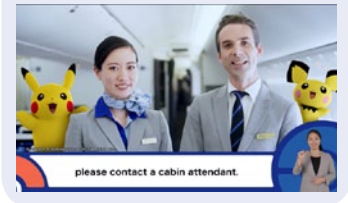
ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) has enlisted the help of some adorable friends for its new in-flight safety and disembarkation videos.

The Japanese carrier teamed up with the Pokemon Company to create the films, which rolled out last week on its two specially painted aircraft for international flights, 'Pikachu Jet NHblank' and 'Eevee Jet NH'.

Appealing to kids and adults alike, the ANA x Pokemon In-Flight Safety Video features many unique Pokemon characters, who help demonstrate safety-related information and precautions in various in-flight situations.

"The partnership with The Pokemon Company brings together two iconic brands to create a unique in-flight safety experience that seamlessly bridges generations, offering both fun and educational information," said Motoaki Ueno, ANA's Executive VP, Customer Experience Management and Planning.

See the video [HERE](#).



SeaLink ferry fire

AN INVESTIGATION is underway after a SeaLink ferry travelling between Darwin and the Tiwi Islands caught fire with 184 people on board last Fri.

The fire, which was extinguished and did not cause any injuries to those travelling on board, is understood to have started in the engine room due to a mechanical issue on the Tiwi Mantawi vessel.

In response, SeaLink Northern Territory temporarily shut down its Mandorah Ferry Service, but reinstated its normal operating schedule on Sat morning.

NT police said they are looking into the cause of the fire.



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Sydney 12 September, Dockside Cockle Bay Room, Cockle Bay Wharf

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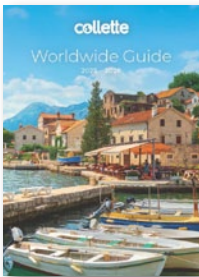
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THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by **Collette**.



Collette - 2025/26 Worldwide Guide

More than 170 individual tours feature in Collette's latest comprehensive worldwide guide, covering all seven continents. Among these are 13 brand-new itineraries exploring some mysterious regions not often visited by Australians, including Namibia and The Balkans in Eastern Europe. Other enticing new prospects for 2025/26 include Portugal's Old World Charms, Kings Canyon National Park, the 'Mighty Five' of Utah and Alaska's Inside Passage.

To celebrate the launch of the new guide, Collette is offering 10% off all 2025 departures, except Antarctica, for new bookings made by 30 Sep.



Hurtigruten Expeditions - Americas 2025/26

The ever-growing Norwegian exploration line is ready to take travellers deeper into the Americas than ever before. In its new guide, eager explorers can learn more about HX's itineraries to Alaska and British Columbia, South and Central America and the wondrous Galapagos Islands. The brochure is available in both print and digital form and is littered with extraordinary images designed to change the way we see the world. Travellers can

learn more about HX as a brand, what life is like on board, meet some of the expedition team and discover its fleet of environmentally friendly ships and how the line gives back to the destinations it visits.



Wendy Wu Tours - Japan 2025/26

The captivating islands of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan feature in the latest guide released by the all-inclusive tour operator. In response to strong demand, more than 100 new departures have been added to the selection of 13 itineraries, some featuring visits to the bustling metropolises of Tokyo and Osaka while others venture off the beaten path to serene retreats in Kyoto and Nara. Travellers can explore Japan by coach, rail, and

for the first time, by sea. Highlights in the guide include an updated Christmas tour, which takes guests to the Shirakawago for the first time.

Hawaiian bets big on sport



SPORTS and games were on tap in Sydney last week at a typically colourful and flamboyant American travel agent social affair hosted by Hawaiian Airlines.

The carrier was celebrating its own milestone, chalking up 20 years of flying to Australia in 2024, for which it thanked the trade for enduring support through various highs and lows during that time.

In those two decades, Hawaiian has expanded service to Brisbane and increased frequencies to Sydney to daily at peak times.

The airline operates an ever-growing network of destinations on the US mainland, and regularly promotes Honolulu as an ideal entry point for Aussie travellers to skip onerous immigration lines at mainland entry gateways.

Last Thu, representatives from many of those US mainland cities joined Hawaiian's party, inviting agents to try their hand at a variety of miniature games and tabletop sports to win prizes.

Each activation also featured

destination trivia to test agents' knowledge, with many unknown facts picked up on the night.

Destinations on show included Anaheim, Los Angeles, Seattle, San Francisco, Oregon, Nevada, Arizona, Texas, New York City and Utah, with Salt Lake City the latest destination now enjoying direct HA service to Hawaii.

Games included miniature versions of popular US sports including baseball, basketball and ice hockey through to classic party games such as giant Jenga, fuseball and mini golf.

There were also quirky games, with Nevada playing 'Pin the tail' and requiring agents to find the state on a map; while Los Angeles tested agents' celebrity trivia on its Walk of Fame Game.

Park City and Deer Valley offered prizes to agents who could eat a s'more in 35 seconds or less, representing its 35 minute drive from Salt Lake Int'l Airport.

The US representatives are **pictured** above at the event. *ML*