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## 1000MTG preferred

GLOBAL distribution platform TBO has signed on as a preferred partner of 1000 Mile Travel Group to unlock access to a plethora of hotel and package content.

“This partnership reflects TBO’s commitment to expanding its presence and resources for the Australian travel market, offering a range of services and content to 1000 Mile Travel Group’s network of agents,” said TBO AU/NZ General Manager, Sabrina Ricci.

## Rex faces legal action

THE Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) has started legal proceedings in the Supreme Court of NSW against Regional Express Holdings Limited (Rex), alleging the carrier has engaged in deceptive conduct (TD breaking news).

ASIC has accused Rex of releasing a misleading ASX announcement on 28 Feb 2023, which stated the company was “optimistic” about having a positive operating profit for the full FY23 - barring any further external shocks.

However, Australia’s financial regulator said Rex did not have a “reasonable basis” for such a claim, citing incurred operating losses in the financial year to date and a lack of FY23 forecast as primary reasons.

Rex subsequently announced a downgrade on 20 Jun 2023,

forecasting a \$35 million operating loss for the financial year ending 30 Jun 2023.

ASIC will seek a declaration of contravention against Rex and not pecuniary penalties.

However, ASIC will pursue pecuniary penalties and disqualification orders against former director Lim Kim Hai Lim, as well as directors John Sharp, Lincoln Pan, and Siddharth Khotkar, for what it alleged were failures to take steps to ensure the market had accurate details about performance. AB

### Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of news including a photo page from Inside Travel Group and our Luxury page plus a full page from Treasures of the South Pacific.

## Boccia promoted

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited has promoted industry veteran Adrian Boccia to the role of GM of Network Development.

Boccia boasts strong experience with TMS Talent, STA Travel & Flight Centre Travel Group.

“Having been with the business for the past two years, I know our excellent Branded and Associate members well and look forward to the opportunity for growth of the HLO networks,” Boccia said.



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## Cheap tix for Xmas

JETSTAR Airways' Christmas sale launches today, with more than 140,000 fares available across 70 different domestic and international routes.

The Christmas promo includes domestic fares from \$35 and int'l fares from \$149 - [CLICK HERE](#).

## NSW leans on heavy hitters



**FORMER** NSW Tourism Minister Jodi McKay (pictured left) is one of two new appointments to the Destination NSW Board, with the announcement made yesterday by NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham.

McKay was leading the state's tourism industry at the time as the inaugural Vivid Sydney festival in 2009, and is currently the Director of the Australia-India CEO Forum with the Business Council of Australia.

She also holds the post of Vice Chancellor's Fellow for Western Sydney University.

Joining her on the board is Andrew McEvoy (pictured right), the former Managing Director of Tourism Australia.

McEvoy has more than 30 years of experience in the travel and tourism industry, and chairs



companies including Luxury Escapes, Camplify Holdings Limited and Travello.

He was also Steering Committee Chair of the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030 review, and Director at Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia for five years.

Speaking on her appointment to the state's tourism board, McKay stated on LinkedIn that she is "really excited to be working with a great board and a dedicated Minister to drive the visitor economy in NSW". JM

## Christmas Treasures

TREASURES of the South Pacific is wishing everyone in the Australian travel sector a Merry Christmas and a happy holiday break - see [page nine](#) to view its very festive message.

## Gray Dawes sails on

GRAY Dawes Travel has been named the official travel supplier of E1, the first-ever electric powerboat racing series.

The three-year contract will see Gray Dawes help E1 travel to races in Jeddah, Doha, Monaco, Lake Como, and more.

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## China up to speed by '27

A SLOWER than expected recovery by China as a source market to Australia is expected to gather pace in coming years and eventually surpass pre-pandemic levels, a Tourism Research Australia (TRA) report details.

The biannual *Tourism Forecasts for Australia* report published by TRA admits it misjudged the initial surge in arrivals from China in early 2023 as a sign the source market would quickly rebound.

In its latest five-year forecast, TRA has downgraded China's rate of recovery, but acknowledges growth "could be faster or slower than outlined", basing its forecast on a weaker Chinese economy.

Despite this, China is still tipped to deliver a greater number of arrivals over the five-year period than any other source market on



the weight of its population. TRA forecasts 811,000 additional arrivals from China by 2029 compared to 2024, accounting for one-quarter of the total increase across all markets.

While some country source markets have already surpassed their pre-pandemic arrival levels, the report noted China would hit its straps by 2027 and return to being Australia's leading source market, with 1.48 million arrivals.

This figure will swell to 1.72 million by 2029 and represent 15% of all arrivals to Australia.

China has already regained top spot as Australia's most lucrative source market by spend. *ML*

## VA Journey Tracker

TRAVELLERS can opt to receive real-time flight update notifications on their Apple or Android devices via a new tool launched by Virgin Australia.

The new Journey Tracker is operational across the VA domestic network and provides flight status updates from three hours prior to departure, including gate changes and delays directly on a device's lock screen.

Updates also provide direct access to boarding passes, with guests needing to have iOS 16 and higher or Android 8+ with push notifications enabled.

## Cruising for growth

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's Cruiseabout retail brand will double in size next year.

Strong demand for cruise bookings will see the brand open three more stores and build a second contact centre team in 2025, including a debut NSW location and a third store in Qld.

The expansion plan was revealed alongside the opening of a new location at Carindale in Brisbane, taking its current number to four nationally.

## Brissie travel reps get lei'd



A HANDFUL of Brisbane-based travel reps enjoyed a famil in Oahu, Hawaii last week, hosted by Hawaiian Airlines and Ignite Travel Group.

The group came from several companies in Queensland including My Hawai'i, Aldi Holidays, My Cruises and My Holiday.

On the first day of the trip, the Aussie visitors took advantage of Hawaiian Airline's convenient late-morning arrival time in Honolulu, transferring to their accommodation to change into their swimmers and join a Mai Tai Catamaran Cruise, where they explored beautiful Waikiki.

Other highlights of the tropical trip included hiking to Diamond Head, where they admired the majestic Waikiki sunset.

There was also a surf lesson at Monitz Surf School and an immersive circle island tour of Oahu with Roberts Hawaii on offer for the explorers.

The famil featured two full days

of hotel inspections at selected Marriott Bonvoy properties, Aqua Aston Hotels and Outrigger Hotels and Resorts.

During the five-night trip, the group stayed at Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach; Sheraton Prince Kaiulani; and Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort and Spa. *JHM*

## Vietjet one-day sale

VIETJET has launched a one-day promotion for Australian travellers to celebrate the arrival of its new Airbus A321neo, marking its 111th aircraft.

For bookings made on 12 Dec, travellers can fly from Australia to Vietnam for just \$199 all-in one-way, for travel between 01 Jan-25 Oct 2025, using promo code VJ12.

Vietjet will receive three more aircraft in Dec and plans to wet-lease between six and 10 planes to meet the surge in demand during the Lunar New Year, ensuring ample capacity for peak travel seasons.

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## VA's summer record

**VIRGIN** Australia is gearing up for a record-breaking summer, as pax numbers are set to soar.

VA is scheduled to operate up to 3,000 flights per week across its domestic and short-haul international network over the next two months.

This is the equivalent of nearly half a million seats per week.

Extra flights have been added to popular holiday destinations including the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Cairns, Tasmania, the Whitsundays, Hamilton Island, and Byron Bay.

Domestic capacity over the peak period (from 16 Dec to 12 Jan) is 3% higher than the same period last year, and 5% higher than pre-COVID.

The busiest days of travel are expected prior to Christmas on 20, 22, and 27 Dec, as travellers make their way home.

Sydney Airport is anticipating an estimated 5.8 million passengers alone during its holiday peak of 13 Dec to 27 Jan.

Melbourne Airport too is gearing up for a record summer, particularly internationally, between this Fri and the end of the Australia Day weekend.

**MEANWHILE**, threatened strike action by dnata ground crew (**TD 03 Dec**) has been called off, after a pay deal of an 11% rise was agreed to this morning.

The all-day strike was due to take place today and would have derailed several flight services, including a number of routes operated by Qantas.

## Gauguin's gargantuan refresh



**PONANT** has announced a transformation of *m/s Paul Gauguin*, the premier ship of its French Polynesian cruise line, Paul Gauguin Cruises.

The 330-guest ship will undergo a multi-million-dollar renovation during a seven-week dry dock in Singapore from Feb to Mar 2025, which will see her receive sustainable technology enhancements, as well as eight new connecting staterooms.

The refurbishment will introduce energy performance upgrades, a new seawater treatment system to produce fresh water on board, and waste management enhancements.

Throughout the ship, both public spaces and staterooms will see reupholstered furnishings and new carpeting in a "tropically chic" colour palette as well as woodwork restorations.

Additionally, the makeover will include a refresh of *m/s Paul Gauguin's* Le Grill restaurant, a rejuvenated pool deck complete with cabana-shaded areas, and a series of design enhancements, including revamped logos.

"Our vision for this refurbishment is deeply rooted in our ongoing commitment to delivering an authentic experience that reflects the beauty and culture of French Polynesia," said Herve Gastinel, Ponant CEO and Chief Sustainability Officer.

"The ship is beloved by our guests and the local community, and we continue to invest in the *m/s Paul Gauguin's* elegant design while integrating advanced, more sustainable tech to minimise the environmental footprint - an area in which the Group continues to lead." *JM*



**AUSTRALIAN** professional surfer Mick Fanning is opening the doors to his local Surf Live Saving Club (**pictured**) for an unforgettable Airbnb stay for one lucky family.

Fanning's Palm Beach Surf Club on the Gold Coast is being offered to a family (or a group of four) in collaboration with Surf Live Saving Australia, to help promote water safety as summer heats up.

The stay will be available to book for just \$7, on 18 Dec at 10am (AEDT) (**CLICK HERE**), with the guests to enjoy a loft-style converted industrial stay, full of Fanning's memorabilia and competition surfboards, overlooking Palm Beach.

Airbnb is of course known for its experiences too, and guests will also receive a surfing sesh with Fanning at Palm Beach, capped off with a sunset barbecue, and a shopping spree at the four-time world champion's local Rip Curl store - sounds like a 'swell' prize.



## Discover our Adventure Special Report





## Tourism to grow by 41%

**INTERNATIONAL** visitor arrivals to Australia will soar by an expected 41% over the next five years, new data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) predicts.

In its annual forecast looking at the coming half-decade, TRA said despite the optimistic projection, the figures represent a downward revision from forecasts the body made in 2023.

In short, the figures point to Australia exceeding its THRIVE target of \$230 billion by 2030.

Expenditure by visitors to Australia from domestic and international markets is forecast to hit \$223 billion over the five-year period, the report suggested.

Growth in spend will hit 4.7% annually, above the expected rate of consumer inflation.

International visitor numbers will close 2024 at 8.3 million, or 88% of pre-pandemic levels, but will finally surpass these in 2026, hit the 10 million mark and climb to 11.8 million by 2029.

While some country source markets have already surpassed their pre-pandemic arrival levels, China has been a slower burn but will finally hit its straps by 2027 and reclaim its 2018-2019 title as Australia's leading source market.

Meanwhile, other southeast Asian markets such as Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam will continue to perform, growing by more than 40% by 2029 and contributing nearly 262,000 new arrivals from the three countries.

On the domestic side, a new surge from 2026 has been predicted following what is tipped to be a stagnant year in 2025.

However, domestic overnight spend levels will grow more slowly than international, with a slightly more modest annual CAGR forecast of 3.8%, which will gradually accelerate in the latter half to hit \$132.7 billion by 2029.

Rapid growth enjoyed in recent years will continue to normalise in the coming years, with signs of this slowdown coming this year



as global cost-of-living pressures force more belts to tighten.

This moderation is already being demonstrated through market preferences for domestic and short-haul destinations.

The TRA report foreshadows arrival numbers to be affected by the trend toward more sustainable travel options, which may influence a traveller's consideration of a long-haul destination such as Australia. *ML*

## Intrepid's big day

**INTREPID** Travel has recorded its biggest-ever trading month in the ANZ region, including the largest trading day in the B corp company's 35-year history.

The bumper day occurred on 05 Dec, the last day of Intrepid's annual Cyber Sale, with 69% of revenue coming from customers aged 51-80.

"This exceptional year is a direct result of the hard work from our ANZ team and partners," said Brett Mitchell, Managing Director at Intrepid Travel ANZ.

"Over the past two years, we've laid the groundwork for future growth while staying true to our commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

"Our record-breaking month demonstrates that purpose and profit can go hand in hand."

As a thank you to agents, Intrepid is offering 12 daily prizes until 20 Dec, including a trip to Japan - to enter, agents must secure a deposit on any Intrepid trip between 09-20 Dec.



## Agents front the cold



**PONANT** treated travel partners to an exciting agent fam to Antarctica last month aboard *L'Austral*, hosted by the cruise line's State Manager for NSW and ACT, Kristina Sambaher.

From Buenos Aires to Ushuaia, guests were immersed in the natural wonders of the Southern Hemisphere, from its pristine glaciers to its abundant wildlife.

A standout moment for the group was witnessing the awe-inspiring A23a iceberg - the largest in the world - as it drifted toward the South Atlantic.

The adventure also included a Zodiac cruise through Wilhelmina Bay; a day trip to Cuverville Island, where the group

witnessed a bustling Gentoo Penguin colony; and a visit to Royal Bay Moltke Beach.

The fam concluded with a celebratory moment as Captain Fabien Roche performed the tradition of slicing open a bottle of champagne on the pool deck in front of impressed guests.

## Travel takes time

**AUSTRALIANS** spend an average of 8.1 hours on holiday travel planning, according to new research from Microsoft, with younger generations dedicating nearly three times as much time (11.7 hours) compared to their older counterparts.

The *Microsoft AI Holiday Hacks Report*, which surveyed 1,119 Australians aged over 18, also uncovered that 16% of Aussies are open to using AI to assist them in travel planning.

Men were more likely to use AI to plan their holidays, because it "makes things easier and provides updates" (20% versus 13% females), and for organising their schedule to avoid missing events or flights (17% vs 10%).



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destination, preparing them for a busy 2025 Japan season. Discover InsideJapan's offerings for your clients **HERE**.

**SEVERAL** trade experts recently enjoyed a nine-day tour of Japan, guided by Inside Travel Group's Trade Partnerships Manager, Amanda Highfield.

Brought to life by InsideJapan's expert 'Insider' tour leaders, the agents experienced the operator's signature cultural adventure style of travel, covering popular sights and lesser-seen places for a slice of local life.

The agents savoured fresh sushi, tasted small-batch sake, sampled local treats, and participated in a private tea ceremony with a maiko, where conversation and games flowed.

The group returned home with valuable insights into the

**THE** group had the Nezu Shrine in Tokyo to themselves.

**SILVER** Pavilion Kyoto and the added bonus of the beautiful autumn colours.



**WELCOME** dinner in Tokyo.



**FAMOUS** in Kyoto.



**THE** iconic Mt Fuji.



**DISCOVERING** those hidden gems in Tokyo.



**SPECIAL** tea with a maiko.



**MEETING** the friendly locals in the back streets of Tokyo.



**HIDDEN** restaurants.



**TASTING** the small batch sake in Kyoto.





### ESTE opening in '25

A **NEW** luxury hotel in Byron Bay, Este Wategos, is set to open next year.

The property is located in one of the most easterly points in Australia, nestled beneath the iconic Cape Byron Lighthouse.

Este Wategos will consist of two three-level residences, accommodating up to 14 guests, as well as rooftop terraces with glass-bottomed infinity pools.

Each residence accommodates up to six adults, making it ideal for a family getaway or a gathering with friends.

Guests will also enjoy a dedicated driver and concierge, as well as gourmet chef-prepared meals.

## PREFERRED TO OPEN 10 NEW HOTELS

**PREFERRED** Hotels & Resorts has unveiled 10 of its highly anticipated new luxury hotel openings in 2024 and 2025.

Highlights of the new openings include Peter Island Resort in the British Virgin Islands, which opened this month.

The newly rebuilt Caribbean hideaway boasts hundreds of lush acreage, five pristine beaches, and 52 room, suite and villa accommodations by the sea.

Royal Hideaway Corales Villas in Tenerife is set to launch in Mar, with 139 refined rooms and suites offering sweeping views of the Atlantic Ocean and La Gomera.

The property will feature a dedicated wellness area, providing exclusive treatments.

Oros (**pictured**) in Crete, which will launch in May, is nestled on the slopes of the Lefka Ori



mountain range of western Crete, and overlooks the Cretan Sea.

This new beach resort will offer guestrooms, suites, and villas, with 117 including their own private pool.

The Newman in London, which is set to launch in the northern summer, will be located in Fitzrovia, near the West End.

The contemporary hotel will feature 81 guest rooms and

suites, and a rooftop with a signature suite including a private terrace, dining, and a relaxation, and wellness space with a sauna.

Reomgas Hotel in Malta is also set to take guests from Jun, while recent openings include Dusit Thani Bangkok, Villa Dahlia in Stockholm, Pendry Natirar in the United States, Maison Albar - Le Victoria in Nice, and The Visions Resort & Spa in Florida. *MS*

### New Hyatt openings

**HYATT** Hotels is set to open more than 50 luxury properties in the next two years.

Highly anticipated openings include Miraval The Red Sea, set to debut late next year off the coast of Saudi Arabia.

This project will mark the Miraval brand's international debut, and will be one of the largest properties in the region.

Other awaited openings include Park Hyatt Kuala Lumpur, Park Hyatt Johannesburg, Andaz Miami Beach by Hyatt, and Andaz Gold Coast.

### Australians enjoy pre-ILTM Monaco famil trip

A **SELECT** group of Australian luxury travel advisors attended an exclusive pre-ILTM fam trip in Monaco, providing them with the perfect introduction to the destination's latest openings and iconic experiences.

Advisors enjoyed helicopter transfers to the iconic Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo and Hotel Hermitage Monte-Carlo, dined at top restaurants like the new L'Abyssé Monte-Carlo and Pavillon Monte-Carlo, un restaurant de Yannick Alleno,



organised by the Societe des Bains de Mer Monte-Carlo and Visit Monaco.

Other highlights saw the group take in the famous Christmas lighting ceremony.

"Monaco is the prefect prelude to ILTM Cannes," the event's Regional Director Alison Roberts-Brown said.

### Four Seasons Greece

**FOUR** Seasons Hotels & Resorts has expanded its portfolio in Greece, with the soon-to-be-opened Four Seasons Resort and Residences Porto Heli.

The new hotel will offer views of the Argolic Gulf, and the nearby island of Spetses.

The expansion and redevelopment will transform the existing beachfront estate into a new property with 80 guestrooms and 30 bungalows.

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**Crowne Plaza Sydney Airport** (formerly a Holiday Inn) has officially opened, marking the first airport-based Crowne Plaza in the country. The 252-room property is undergoing a multi-million-dollar transformation, which will include a refresh

of its dining and bar experiences, as well as updates to rooms, conference and meeting rooms, and public spaces. The first phase of the refurbishment has seen \$6 million invested in public spaces so far.



After a six-month refurbishment, **andBeyond Ngala Tented Camp** has reopened along Timbavati River in South Africa. Renowned for its wildlife, the camp now offers an enhanced romantic tented experience. The redesigned guest tents are

now more spacious, featuring private outdoor areas and luxurious bathrooms. The property also boasts a new gym, additional dining options, and expanded spa facilities.



Marriott Hotels has debuted in Thailand's beachfront destination, Khao Lak, with the opening of **Khao Lak Marriott Beach Resort & Spa**. Featuring 283 rooms, suites and villas, the resort is surrounded by natural wonders and offers easy access to

world-class diving sports, nearby attractions like Phang Nga Bay viewpoint, and Khao Lak Lam Ru National Park. Phuket International Airport is just go minutes' drive away.



A new boutique independent resort has landed in Vietnam. Located close to Hoi An's historic heritage attractions, the **Wafaifo Resort Hoi An** comprises 134 rooms and suites along with an all-day bistro, wellness and spa facility, fitness

centre, coffee shop, a 'heritage and culture pathway', an activities zone, and a landmark illuminated water fountain.



Located in Tempe, Arizona, **Marriott Phoenix Resort Tempe at The Buttes** has completed a multi-million dollar renovation of its 353 guestrooms and suites, which now boast new furniture, electronics, artwork, and lighting. The transformation also saw

the property's fitness centre revamped, as well as an expansion of its outdoor meeting space and the lobby bar's outdoor dining area.

## TGA plugging the gap

**TOUR** Guides Australia (TGA) has successfully delivered 15 fundamental courses this year to address Australia's shortage of skilled and qualified tour guides.

Developed and led by seasoned industry professionals, the Tour Guiding Fundamentals courses provides comprehensive, hands-on training to around 150 participants nationally in 2024.

Sixteen courses were held across Victoria, NSW, Queensland, and the NT, attracting a 'positive' feedback rating from 94% of student participants.

"We are thrilled with the results of this initiative and its positive impact on the tourism workforce," said Greg Esnouf (**pictured**), President of TGA.

"Tour guides are essential to the visitor experience, and these courses equip them with the skills needed to excel in this rewarding profession."

The three-day micro-credential courses cover essential areas of tour guiding, including customer service, interpretive skills, safety protocols, and how to create immersive and engaging



experiences for visitors.

"With the support of the tourism industry, state governments' support, and regional tourism organisations, we are ensuring that our industry is well-prepared for the future, with a skilled and dynamic workforce ready to meet the demands of a growing tourism market," Esnouf added.

In 2025, TGA is planning to run courses in every state to support the tourism industry and national strategies such as the THRIVE 2030 Visitor Economy Recovery Strategy. *JM*

## New NZ rail journey

**CRUISE** Express has unveiled a new rail journey through NZ's North Island, departing Oct 2025.

The inaugural 'New Zealand Steam Adventure' includes a four-day steam train trip from Wellington to Auckland, with 1950s steam locomotive Ja1271 hauling a heritage train through scenic landscapes.

Guests will journey from Paekakariki to Whanganui, Ohakune, Hamilton and Waiuku over 13 days, witnessing key North Island destinations, including Rotorua, Lake Taupo, Napier and Wellington.

The new itinerary is priced from \$9,990ppts - find out more **HERE**.

## Friends in Sydney

**FANS** of smash hit 90s sitcom *Friends* can step inside scenes from the show at a new lifelike experience, now open in Sydney.

Produced by TEG Life Like Touring, The Friends Experience is located at The Fullerton Hotel in the Sydney CBD and features Central Perk, Monica's apartment, and the famous fountain scene from the show's intro.

**CLICK HERE** for more details and tickets to visit the experience.



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