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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a cover wrap from **Norwegian Cruise Line** and a full page from **A Force For Good Hub**.

Learn all about LA

DESTINATION Webinars is inviting agents to brush up their knowledge on Los Angeles by registering for its upcoming 30-minute webinar, with the chance to win a \$100 gift card.

Hosted by Kathleen Brown from Los Angeles Tourism, the session will take place on Thu 08 Feb at 8.30am or 12pm AEDT, [HERE](#).

Capital Batik move

A NEW direct flight between Canberra and Denpasar in Bali's south is set to take off with Batik Air on 14 Jun.

The service will operate three times weekly, connecting the capital to Asia for the first time.

WTAAA eyes NDC reform

THE World Travel Agents Association Alliance (WTAAA) has recruited Otto de Vries (**pictured**) to be the first-ever Executive Director of the association.

The foremost body advocating for the rights of travel agencies globally, WTAAA has tasked South Africa-based de Vries to provide strategic leadership as it seeks to make greater inroads into improved collaboration between agencies and related partners.

Chief among his remit will be addressing issues around IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC), which WTAAA claims only promises certain retailing capabilities but "falls short" of expectations for agents globally.

"We want to collaborate with IATA to achieve full NDC adoption in a way that works for everyone and does not limit access to content and pricing to the detriment of the travelling public," de Vries explained.

Other goals for this year include



reestablishing a taskforce to mitigate risks between agencies and airlines, and lobbying for improved taxation and market access in lockstep with the World Travel and Tourism Council.

ATIA is currently a member organisation of WTAAA. *AB*

Not Entirely sold

ENTIRE Travel Group has sold out its Travel Showcase & Soirees in Melbourne and Sydney.

A few tickets are still available however for the Brisbane event, and agents are also being encouraged to join a wait list for Melbourne and Sydney.

Email events@entiretravel.com.au to be added to the wait list or [CLICK HERE](#) for Brisbane tickets.

NCL's triple delight

TRAVEL advisors can triple their money on all Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL) sailings via the company's Partners First Rewards program when they register new bookings between 01-07 Feb - more details on the **cover page**.

Oaks' Happy Folks

OAKS Hotels, Resorts & Suites has welcomed The Coffee Club, Menulog and Foxtel as the latest partners for its Happy Folks Choose Oaks brand campaign.

Guests staying at Oaks properties across Australia can now pre-order essential grocery hampers, savour quality in-room pod coffee by The Coffee Club, and access a curated Menulog menu featuring a wide selection of local restaurants, available for in-room dining.

The promotion also includes the full Foxtel experience, with guests able to stream a wide range of movies, drama and sport on demand during their stay.

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AtlasAir raises air comm

AGENTS can now boost their commission on wholesale airfares through a new venture being launched by Infinity Holidays.

The trade-only wholesaler has expanded its Atlas product range to introduce AtlasAir, which has today been rolled out more widely following a trial conducted last year featuring Fiji Airways.



Following its full rollout, AtlasAir now pays 5% commission on wholesale fares sold through Infinity on Singapore Airlines (SQ), Malaysia Airlines (MH), Qatar Airways (QR), Aircalin (SB) and Batik Air (OD/ID).

Infinity Holidays General Manager, James Whiting, said he was thrilled to launch its new commissionable wholesale airfares as part of AtlasAir.

"Agent can earn up to 5% commission on flight bookings with this initial launch offering of seven airlines as part of AtlasAir," Whiting said.

"We are looking to expand the range over the coming months to include more airlines." ML

Garuda boosts Oz

GARUDA Indonesia has made changes to its Northern Summer 2024 schedule which will boost flights to Melbourne and Sydney.

From 24 Jun, the carrier will increase services to Melbourne from four to five weekly and up to daily from 06 Jul.

Sydney will see a similar boost to frequencies, with five flights in effect from 18 Jun and daily services from 01 Jul.

An Airbus A330-300 aircraft will continue to serve both cities.

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New Traveltek chief

TRAVELTEK has appointed Christian Sansom as its new Head of Asia Pacific, based in Australia.

Sansom has been tasked with continuing growth momentum in the APAC market and nurturing existing client relationships.

He joins after eight years with HBX Group (Hotelbeds), where he focused on B2B.

The travel technology firm is enjoying a new lease on life and building on its recent 25th anniversary (TD 25 Jan) by posting record sales and further international growth.

QF WA strike policy

QANTAS has issued a commercial policy for travellers holding 081 tickets booked to fly to or from Perth on 08 Feb due to planned industrial action.

Agents may rebook to another flight within seven days, retain value in credit or refund, reissuing with 602165 in endorsement box.

JQ Thai packages

JETSTAR has today launched a sale on Thailand holiday packages with flight and hotel deals ex PER starting from \$529ppts.

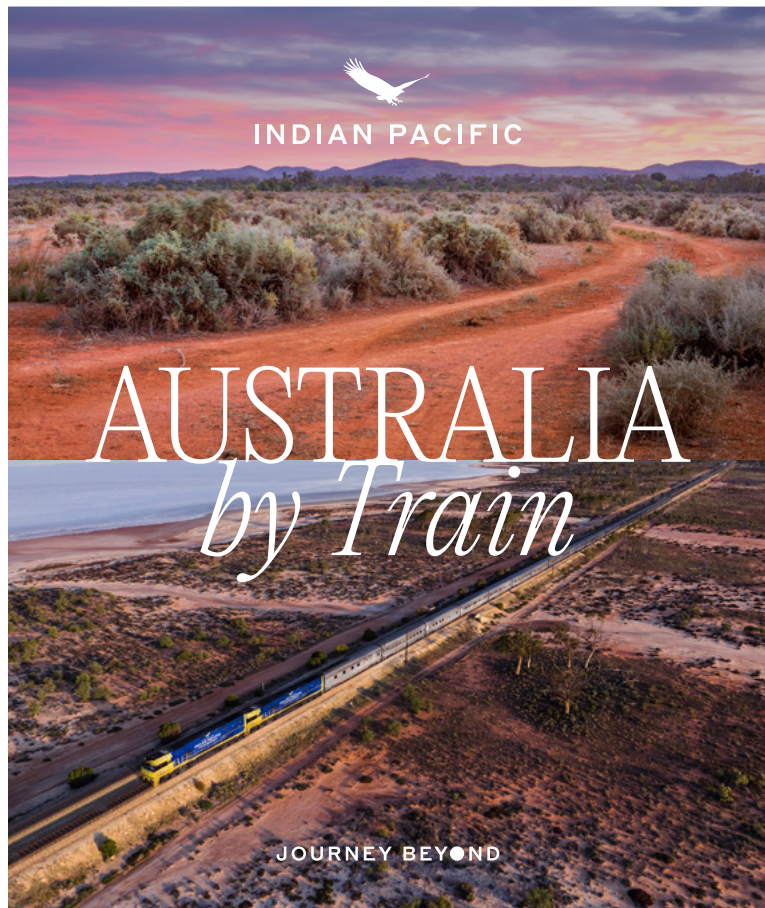
Deals include return Starter fares, 20kg of checked bags, seat selection and accommodation at a range of resorts in Phuket, Khao Lak and Bangkok.

Sale ends 11.59pm on 10 Feb.

Fun continues in Bali

FOLLOWING a recent backlash from the Balinese tourism sector (TD 24 Jan), the Indonesian Govt has officially shelved plans to increase its controversial Entertainment Tax on tourists.

According to a report in *The Bali Sun*, Indonesia's Minister for Tourism, Sandiaga Uno, said a flagged levy increase of between 40-75% on a range of entertainment venues and services is now at "the end of the story", confirming no prospect of a hike on entertainment charges.



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Nolan adds APAC

CELEBRITY Cruises has made some changes to its top-level executive structure, designed to boost efficiencies and accelerate growth for the premium line.

Gerard Nolan (pictured), EMEA Associate VP Commercial, will take on an expanded global role which will now encompass the Asia Pacific region.

Nolan will work alongside Claire Stirrup, who has also had her responsibilities increased as Senior Sales Director EMEA.

The duo will report directly to Celebrity Cruises EMEA Vice President and Managing Director, Giles Hawke.



Rex reductions continue

REX has been forced to delay a return to standard regional scheduling on 31 Mar flagged last year (**TD** 25 Sep 2023), citing ongoing dislocated supply chains which are continuing to impact its access to engine parts.

The frequency reductions will now continue through to at least 27 Oct and apply to a range of routes from Sydney to hubs such as Albury, Coffs Harbour, Griffith, Orange, Parkes and Port Macquarie, as well as prolong suspensions of the Adelaide-Mildura and SYD-Armidale routes.

Rex’s GM of Network Strategy, Warrick Lodge, said the airline is committed to rebuilding its regional network, subject to supply chain issues improving.

While not specifically naming Qantas in its update, Rex also had a swipe at its competitors for allegedly continuing to sell “phantom flights” when resources are not available.

“Rex finds such deliberate last-minute cancellations to be unconscionable,” Lodge said. **AB**

Jayride raises \$1.5m

JAYRIDE has announced a successful \$1.5 million capital raising this morning after entering a trading halt last week.

The injection of funds arrived via the issue of convertible notes through a combination of new and existing investors, which Jayride said will be used to restore its balance sheet and pay for ongoing operational expenses.

It has been a bumpy ride for the Aussie-based airport transfer business, which conceded late last year it needed to sharpen its business model if it were to achieve key growth objectives this year (**TD** 23 Nov 2023).

The company will reveal the results of a company-wide review in the coming weeks.

25 years of oneworld

THE oneworld alliance marked its 25-year anniversary last week, having flown almost nine billion customers since its launch on 01 Feb 1999 by founding members American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, and Qantas.

Since then, the network has expanded to include 13 airlines, as well as 26 affiliate airlines, with Oman Air set to become its 14th full member this year.

VA’s tropical sale

VIRGIN Australia has released more than 50,000 sale fares to tropical destinations, including Bali, Vanuatu, Samoa and Fiji from as low as \$449 return.

The discounted Economy Lite seats from Adelaide, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Brisbane, and Melbourne are available to book **HERE** for five days until midnight AEST 09 Feb (unless sold out prior), for travel between 13 Feb-30 Nov 2024.



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Window Seat

THERE has been heated competition in recent years as claims to the world's longest flight changed a few times, but at the opposite end of the gauge, one of the world's shortest flights is about to be discontinued.

From 01 Aug this year, Japan Airlines subsidiary Ryukyu Air Commuter will cease service between Minamidaito and Kitadaito - a distance of just 12km flown over 20 minutes.

From this date, any traveller wishing to fly this short sector must take an onerous one-hour sector to connect in the larger city of Okinawa, after waiting two hours in between.

While it's Japan's shortest flight, it's still easily trumped by Loganair's one-minute daily service between Westray and Papa Westray in Scotland.

EY regional ramp-up

ETIHAD Airways is significantly increasing frequencies on Middle East, Asia and subcontinental services as part of the carrier's 2024 Northern Summer schedule, GDS displays show.

The schedule details service increases to Amman (11 weekly), Beirut (now daily), Jeddah (four daily) and Riyadh (four daily), while Bangalore (17 weekly), Colombo (13 weekly) and Kolkata (eight weekly) will also climb.

Virtuoso toasts to 20 years



VIRTUOSO hosted a special luncheon on the Sydney Harbour last week to celebrate a milestone 20 years of operations in Australia and New Zealand.

Chairman and CEO Matthew Upchurch welcomed the 120 Virtuoso agency members, preferred partners and employees who attended to reflect on the global luxury travel network's growth in the region over the past two decades.

"Witnessing the growth of Virtuoso in Australia and New Zealand, as well as our continued expansion around the globe, is a testament to the enduring values that have been the cornerstone of our success," Upchurch shared.

"Virtuoso is rooted in co-creation, and it has been my honour to co-create this network in Australia and New Zealand with these incredible professionals."

"Our members and leadership in Australia and New Zealand have

also been instrumental in helping us be a better organisation that is both globally consistent and regionally relevant," he added.

Since arriving in the region on 29 Jan 2004, with Mary Rossi Travel as the network's first member agency in Australia, followed by Voyage Affairs as its first NZ agency, the community has expanded to 60 and more than 1,700 advisors.

Virtuoso's General Manager Australia and New Zealand, Fiona Dalton, said "over the past two decades, our community has thrived, and Virtuoso has set the standard in luxury travel for others to follow...we are excited for what the future holds". *JM*

Pictured: Michael Londregan, Zoe Dean, Edwina Lambkin, Kara Heaslip, Sophie Treasure, Kerrie Fellowes, Anna Davies, Fiona Dalton, Bhavini Aggarwal, Michele Duncan, Sussanah Teng, and Matthew Upchurch.

Amadeus acquires

BIOMETRIC technology firm Vision-Box has been acquired by Amadeus as the company continues its quest to deliver an end-to-end seamless pax journey.

Vision-Box is a specialist hardware and software developer in biometrics for airports, airlines and border control needs, with the purchase now bringing border control functionality into Amadeus' game for the first time.

The move means the travel tech firm will now be able to offer solutions covering booking, airport arrival, and border control all the way to boarding the plane.

Recent research conducted by Biometrics Research Group shows the global biometrics sector will skyrocket in value to US\$86.1 billion by 2028, nearly doubled its 2023 projections.

This growth is largely being pushed ahead by soaring demand from the travel industry for a fully digital and seamless passenger journey in the face of ongoing operational pressure and regulatory demands.

Hourly hotel stays

PARKROYAL Melbourne Airport has introduced Short Stay Hourly Accommodation for travellers passing through the airport.

The new offering allows guests to check into a newly refurbished room to rest and relax while waiting for their flight.

The passes, which range from three to eight hours, include in-room dining service and more.

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Price war on biz class air

PREMIUM airfares at the pointy end of the plane to the US and the UK are now being heavily discounted as a price war on the sectors begins to intensify.

Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) said business class fares are now available at a fraction of recent levels, building on momentum from economy fares selling for pre-pandemic levels.

Both Qantas and United Airlines are now selling return business class flights between Sydney and Los Angeles from under \$7,300, valid for departures on many dates between 06 Feb-21 Nov.

FCTG said the Qantas offer is more than \$4,000 cheaper than the typical premium fare and more than \$3,000 off what travellers paid for much of 2023.

Indirect carriers are also competing heavily on price, with Air Canada and Philippine Airlines priced from \$6,764 and \$5,276 respectively to Los Angeles.

The cheapest current options to the UK are ranging from return to London via China from \$5,281 for departures in Mar, while Etihad Airways is also selling business class seats from under \$6,000.

“The airfare price wars that we are starting to see are great news for travellers and provide further evidence that airfare pricing is finally starting to normalise,” said FCTG Leisure Chief Executive, James Kavanagh.

“Generally, fares are now cheaper to most international destinations and we are starting



to see some eye-catching deals through to London, which has been one of the hottest destinations for Australian travellers over the past few years.”

Qantas, Emirates and Qatar Airways are also priced well, with London fares sitting at about \$9k or 10% off typical levels. *ML*

Etti a top influencer

INTREPID Travel's Global Environment Impact Manager, Dr Susanne Etti, has been recognised by National Geographic as one of only nine 'Travellers of The Year' in its *Best of The World* guide.

The brand-new category celebrates the “creatives, guides, influencers and adventurers [who] excel at exciting people about the wonders of our world, illuminating diverse cultures and showing them how to travel smarter”.

Etti was the only Australian to feature on the prestigious list, which the tour operator said “highlights the important role of Australian leaders and businesses such as Intrepid Travel on the world stage”.

Railbookers rock summit



RAILBOOKERS Group (RGB) held its inaugural global summit at the Hilton Tapatio Cliffs Resort in Phoenix, Arizona last week, bringing together its remote staff from around the world for the very first time.

The event kicked off with a welcome reception, followed by a panel discussion featuring four of RGB's key rail partners in Amtrak, Rocky Mountaineer, Swiss Travel System and VIA Rail Canada, as well as a trade show where vendors and partners were able to meet and engage with staff.

The day, which was themed 'Heavy Metal/VIP Rock Star', also included a 'Fishbowl Session', where staff from each department were able to work alongside some of their colleagues as vendor partners observed first-hand.

“We wanted to bring together some of our global staff from every department in the company, along with our invitation-only vendors and partners to meet,

learn and grow our relationships - all while celebrating the growth and future of our company,” Railbookers Group President & CEO Frank Marini shared. *JM*

UK youth visa change

YOUNGER Aussies looking to make their way to the UK for a working holiday can now stay an extra year under new changes to the UK Youth Mobility Visa that came into effect on 01 Feb.

Reforms to the travel scheme mean travellers can now stay three years in total, while the age range has also been widened by five years from 18-30 to 18-35.

The changes are intended to incentivise more Aussies to take long-term trips to the UK, however there are also more prerequisites in place to qualify for the visa, including a need to have \$4,900 in a personal bank account at least 28 days prior to travel, as well as an application for a biometric residence permit.



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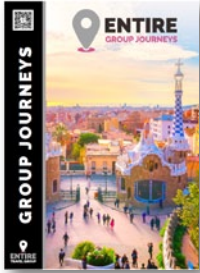
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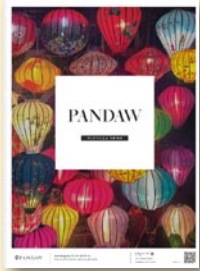
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Entire Travel Group - Entire Group Journeys

Entire Travel Group has unveiled its first-ever Group Journeys brochure, showcasing its new escorted European group touring program. Featuring 33 itineraries across nine destinations, including Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece, Morocco, Turkiye, Jordan and Egypt, the 82-page guide offers day-by-day details for every tour, all of which take a maximum of 24 passengers and include relaxed two- or three-night city stays. In line with the company's commitment to sustainability, the brochure is made of materials sourced responsibly from managed forests.



Pandaw Cruises - Flotilla News 2024

Pandaw Cruises is enticing travellers to explore the mighty rivers of Southeast Asia and India, as highlighted in the new annual edition of its *Flotilla News Magazine*. The 50-page publication includes comments, news, updates and blogs from the Pandaw team, including an in-depth look at its newest itinerary on the Brahmaputra River in Northeast India. Readers will also learn about the new Pandaw app and hear from the company's founder Paul Strachan about exciting new developments.



Murray River Paddlesteamers - 2024/25 Preview

Travellers can get a sneak peek into Murray River Paddlesteamers' itineraries for 2024/25 by checking out the operator's latest brochure, which showcases the luxury three-, four-, and seven-night journeys aboard the world's only wood-fired paddlesteamer. Now offering savings of up to \$804 per couple on off-peak itineraries, sailors can also score an extra \$300 off when six or more guests book twin shares on the same tour.



Viva Holidays - Bali 2024-2025

Viva Holidays is inviting Aussies to experience Bali in a new way with its latest brochure. The comprehensive guide includes exclusive travel tips and highlights "unmissable experiences", from the best local Balinese food to renowned wellness retreats. The brochure also details tours across Kuta, Legian, Seminyak, Jimbaran and more. Travellers and agents can find special offers and a handy accommodation index.

Universal Orlando goes Epic



MORE than 50 attractions and entertainment options along with an array of dining and retail will feature at Epic Universe, a new theme park coming to Universal Orlando in 2025.

Epic Universe will be the fourth theme park at the entertainment hub alongside Universal Studios Florida, Islands of Adventure, and the Volcano Bay water park.

The first precinct guests will encounter will be Celestial Park, which will feature attractions based on astronomical and mythological elements, backed by gardens and "dancing fountains" set to music and interactive lights.

Other worlds for guests to enjoy will include 'The Wizarding World of Harry Potter', 'How To Train Your Dragon', 'Dark Universe', and the expansion of 'Super Nintendo World' to the Eastern US.

Three new Universal hotels will be developed to support the additional patronage, including the 500-room Universal Helios Grand Hotel, which will be located inside the park, complete with a dedicated entrance.

Universal Stella Nova Resort and Universal Terra Luna Resort will be aimed at the value price point and will each offer 750 rooms.

Once each hotel is open, it will take the total room count across the Universal complex to 10,500.

The front gate of Universal Epic Universe is **pictured**. *ML*

Radisson in Anyer

RADISSON Hotel Group is set to introduce a new glamping concept when it opens a beachfront resort in the coastal town of Anyer, Indonesia, in 2027.

Comprising 120 guestrooms and 30 tent villas, the property will be set on a private shoreline on Java's west coast, within a two-hour drive of Jakarta.

Guests can expect a modern, clean Nordic-style design and comfortable bedding, as well as private beach access.

The resort will also feature a beach club and swimming pool, all-day restaurant, a bar, a gym, a kids' club, meeting rooms, and a spa and wellness centre.

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