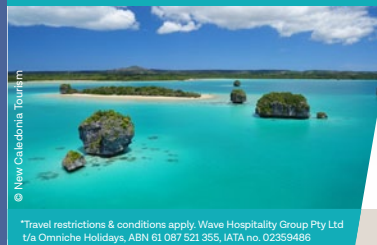


Travel Daily

First with the news

Tuesday 20th Feb 2024



**DISCOVER
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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features 10 pages of the latest news including a photo page from **Visit USA**, a feature page from **Tokyo Tourism/Destination Webinars**, our **Sustainability** page, plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Abercrombie & Kent

Learn & Win Tokyo

TRAVEL agents can score one of five \$100 gift cards when they watch Tokyo Tourism's new four-part mini-series before Fri 15 Mar, now available on Destination Webinars.

The 20-minute sessions will feature all the latest news, information and tips from Tokyo suppliers - see the **last page** for more details.

Ardour to debut in Barossa

SALTER Brothers has lifted the lid on its much-hyped Ardour Hotels & Estates brand, acquiring the historic Kingsford Barossa in South Australia as the launch site for the new venture.

The property investment firm has made no secret about pursuing a potential gap in the accommodation market, identifying a need for "celebrated luxury" in natural settings.

The purchase and development of the Ardour Hotel and Estates brand also strategically aligns with Salter Brothers' regional hospitality growth strategy flagged last year (**TD** 20 Nov 2023), which saw a range of key appointments made and the declaration to rapidly grow its Asia property portfolio.

Speaking about the launch of Ardour via the newly acquired Kingsford property, CEO Tash Tobias said that when developed, the asset will cater for guests seeking a "luxurious escape from the everyday", adding Salter Brothers aims to create an iconic hospitality experience that brings together the best of the Barossa



with "the beautiful Australian backdrop and luxurious spaces available at Kingsford".

Kingsford Barossa will open its doors to the public from Q3 this year following a refurb. **AB**

Fez Travel says Ynot?

FEZ Travel Turkey has appointed Sydney boutique marketing agency, Ynot Concepts, to represent it in the Australia and New Zealand market.

The operator will work closely with the PR agency to showcase its diverse tour offerings and promote Turkey as a premier travel destination.

"Ynot Concepts' extensive industry knowledge and established trade connections will significantly elevate Fez Travel Turkey's brand presence in Australia and New Zealand," Fez's MD Robert Gurr said.

collette

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Silversea rich offer

TRAVELLERS on Silversea's door-to-door all-inclusive fares enjoy private executive transfers, an included daily shore excursion and much more.

Clients can still save \$6,000 and a 15% refundable deposit on a grand collection of sailings available until Apr 2026 - for more info, see **page 11**.

Discovery with A&K

INTIMATE group sizes of between 8-12 will see unique and lesser-known locations on Abercrombie & Kent's Limited Edition Small Group Journeys.

Travellers on these tours enjoy insider access, immersive experiences and expert guides with deep local knowledge.

For more info, see **page 12**.

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Explore focuses on Aussies

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIA has been earmarked as a major investment market for tour operator Explore Worldwide, as the British brand looks to cement its presence Down Under after exiting a GSA agreement with The Travel Corporation's Adventure World early last year (*TD* 09 Jan 2023).

Speaking with *Travel Daily* in Australia about Explore's future plans, the brand's MD, Michael Edwards, said the ambition is for the business to transition away from relying on the UK market, with investment to be funnelled towards developing markets such as Australia.

"Right now, the UK accounts for about 75 to 80% of sales and I would like to see within three years sales from overseas markets go to 40%, and within five years, go to at least 50%," Edwards said.

"That will be a combination of Australia, North America and maybe a little bit of Europe and then we'll see beyond that."

Edwards added that Explore is not taking its Australian growth plans lightly, especially given the brand enjoyed its best revenue

year in Australia on record over the last 12 months.

"Currently this year we are 78% up in sales on the same time last year and so far we really haven't done too much yet; the trade has been fantastic in supporting us and we have Ben [Ittensohn] in place but the bottom line is, 'watch this space'.

"We plan to redouble our efforts in Australia and...the lion's share of our marketing efforts will be in overseas markets like Australia and North America," he added.

Edwards also revealed that Explore will be scaling up its presence on the ground in Australia, with one or two new salespeople set to enter the business, as well as a new digital marketing executive to support recently appointed Marketing Manager Stephanie Meehan (*TD* 07 Dec 2023).

"What I have found that works is when head office puts good people into the regions and give them the autonomy to get on and do their job...and then next year, we'll probably look at something around adding more business development partnerships." *AB*

itravel

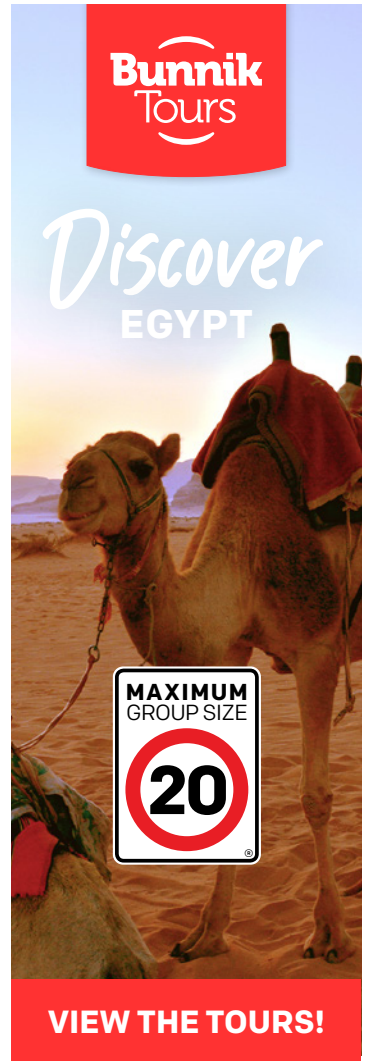


JOANNE ROTHWELL
itravel Mobile, NSW

"itravel has a positive and inclusive company culture that fosters collaboration, innovation, and a sense of belonging."

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More seats on less flights

TRAVELLERS will have access to more available seats, albeit on fewer flights in 2024, which will lead to a more reliable experience and better environmental impact, new global trends data shows.

According to FCM Consulting's Q4 2023 Quarterly Global Trends Report, which utilises data from Cirium, overall capacity in 2024 for corporate and leisure clients will surpass 2018 and 2019 levels.

Cirium data showed there will be 97.5 million seats offered in the first half of 2024, up 3.5% compared to 2019, but across 2.1 million flights, down 5.6% on the same period.

Among the top corporate airlines, seats offered will climb by 2% while the number of flights available will be down 6%.

FCM Consulting APAC Director, Felicity Burke, said this anomaly comes from airlines reconfiguring fleets to fit more seats while also scheduling fewer flights.



"When carefully planned, this will be favourable to airline operating costs, staffing, airport slots, as well as airport costs," Burke contended.

"More seats and less flights will mean less scheduled choice for passengers, but it will contribute to the improvement of travel times, and the environmental impact of travel," Burke added.

"Carriers are certainly looking at how they can manage effective and profitable operations in the current economic climate, whilst not driving up prices for travellers, and that's evident in the results of FCM Consulting's [latest trends report]." ML

Batik prepares for take-off



BATIK Air has celebrated the upcoming launch of its direct Canberra-Denpasar flights, which kick off 14 Jun (TD 05 Feb), at a recent gathering.

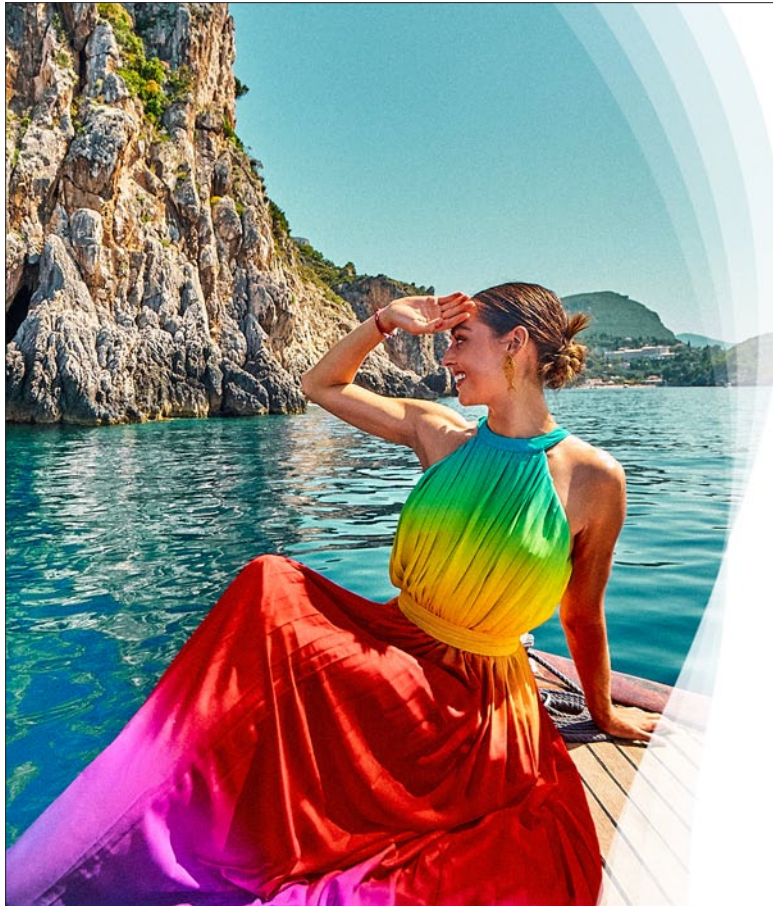
In collaboration with Airline Rep Services, which represents the carrier in Australia and New Zealand, Batik Air revealed its new Bali service will fly three times weekly on Wed, Fri and Sun.

The flights will see Canberra become the carrier's sixth Aussie destination, providing travellers

with easy access to the Southeast Asia hotspot.

The flights are now on sale in the GDS, with prices starting from \$339 one-way in economy class and \$1,549 in business class - for further info, contact batikair@airlinerepservices.com. JM

Pictured: Nidhi Nijhawan, CVFR Group COO; Ram Chhabra, CVFR Group CEO; Chandran Ramamuthy, Batik Air CEO; Ramesh, Marketing Manager at Batik Air; Gabrielle Vicari, Airline Rep Services VP.



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AAT digs deeper

AAT Kings Group has released the next level of its A-List Access podcast, the 'Destination Training' series, which will feature in-depth conversations with tourism experts from Australia and overseas - check it out [HERE](#).

The series comes in response to feedback from advisors, after the podcast racked up over 400 downloads to date from around the world since its launch three months ago (*TD* 27 Sep 2023).

The Comms. People

A PAIR of prominent travel and tourism executives have teamed up with a prominent photo journalist to create a new agency called The Comms. People.

Former Bonza Head of Communications, Heather Mollins, has linked with Non-Exec Director of Visit Sunshine Coast Jennifer Swaine.

The pair will work closely with photographer Peter Wallis to "use great words, photography and video" for brands, which at this stage does not include any in travel or tourism companies.

The agency's foundation client is sunscreen brand Ochre Sun.



Soirees are here to stay



FOLLOWING the resounding success of its inaugural Travel Showcase and Soirees last week, Entire Travel Group has confirmed the high-energy events will now be a fixture on the Australian travel industry calendar.

The gatherings held in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane attracted more than 650 agents and 37 suppliers.

Entire's Managing Director, Brad McDonnell, said the clear success of the format was testament to the need for an innovative and engaging event in the run up to the peak European and Canada summer booking season.

"As an independent group we knew we had a unique opportunity to connect high-quality suppliers with travel agents from a wide variety of Australian retail groups," McDonnell said.

"What we didn't fully anticipate was just how popular the events

would be, with more than 30% of suppliers travelling from overseas and all three events quickly selling out," he added.

Some agents attending the events were surprised by the scale and reach of Entire's operation, McDonnell also revealed, with many unaware of just how much work Entire had undertaken to widen its stable of destination products over the past couple of years.

"A lot of agents tend to only engage with specific products, such as Europe, Tahiti or Canada, and for that reason they may not fully appreciate the enhanced breadth and sophistication of our product offering," he said.

Agents also received copies of Entire's three new brochures during the events, covering Europe, Canada & Alaska, and Entire Group Journeys. *AB*

Pictured: McDonnell with Director Greg McCallum.

Race ahead with QR

QATAR Airways, along with its Holidays offshoot, has announced the launch of fan packages for the upcoming FIA Formula One World Championships, which takes place in Doha on 01 Dec.

Available to fans travelling from more than 40 countries, the packages include return flights, hotel accommodation, F1 Paddock Club or Grandstand race tickets, and return airport transfers for all global races (excluding Qatar).

The high-octane, motorsport extravaganza packages are available to purchase [HERE](#).

Adelaide tourism/education hearing



THE Trade Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will hold a public hearing today in Adelaide for its inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors.

Evidence will be presented by representatives from the international education sector including several universities, TAFE SA and StudyAdelaide, as well as the South Australian Tourism Commission and several tourism operators in the Adelaide Hills region.

"The public hearing in Adelaide will focus on the intersection between international education and tourism rebuilding post COVID-19," Chair of the Trade Subcommittee, Senator Deborah O'Neill said.



Victoria © Destination BC / Reuben Krabbe

CANADA RAINFOREST TO ROCKIES [EXPLORE](#)    

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Window Seat

WE UNDERSTAND the appetite to try new and interesting food is strong in largely sheltered western countries, but perhaps Delta Air Lines took things a little too far last week.

Just ask the woman who was doused with dozens of maggots during her flight, causing such a stir that the plane was forced to turn back to Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport for, ah, a deep clean.

A passenger sitting next to the maggot woman recalled the horror of the incident, which saw hundreds of the creep crawlies parachute down from the baggage compartment above to land on the unsuspecting passenger's head.

"She was freaking out," Philip Schotte told Detroit TV station FOX 2 (WJBK).

"She was just trying to kind of fight off these maggots, I don't really know what was going through my mind really, I was trying to process it - disgust is one thing of course," Schotte remembered.

As for what caused the shocking maggot invasion?

Delta Air Lines wiggled out of giving a direct response, simply stating an "improperly packed carry-on bag" was the source of the issue.

New era for old Cairns hotel



TAISEI Kanko Australia has announced the relaunch of its Cairns hotel, which formerly operated as a Holiday Inn and is now a self-managed, independent property under the new name Cairns Harbourside Hotel.

Spearheading the hotel's shift from global to local management, Glen Macdonald, who was General Manager and then CEO of Fitzroy Island Resort for more than 12 years, will take the reins as the rebranded hotel's GM.

Established in 1991 on Cairns' famous Esplanade, the property offers 173 rooms with private balconies with water, mountain and tropical garden views, as well as a bar and restaurant, pool, spa, conference and function facilities, and a CBD shuttle service.

Cairns Harbourside Hotel will soon undergo a refurbishment that will see its rooms refreshed with new furnishings and an upgrade to bathrooms.

"With the new brand image and the plans for upgrading the hotel, we look forward to delivering a very authentic Tropical Queensland experience," Macdonald enthused.

New signage will roll out as part of the relaunch, while the new website is now live **HERE**. *JM*

AITCAP now open

EARLYBIRD registration has opened for the Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Conference (AITCAP), which is taking place at Melbourne's Convention and Exhibition Centre on 27 Aug.

Now in its fourth year, the annual event provides travel businesses with the knowledge, skills and connections to improve their accessibility and inclusivity.

Day packages start from \$450pp, while the first 150 delegates to secure a spot will pay a discounted rate of \$350 - register **HERE**.

Jayride share issue

JAYRIDE has issued just shy of 700,000 Convertible Notes to investors following a \$1.5 million capital raising (**TD** 05 Feb).

A Cleansing Notice will allow these Convertible Notes to be converted into shares and on-sold to retail investors in the future.

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Virtuoso laps up the luxury



VIRTUOSO agents in New Zealand recently enjoyed an opportunity to meet and mingle

with 16 key luxury suppliers and destinations at an educational networking event in Auckland.

Held at the Sofitel Auckland Viaduct Harbour, the event was at maximum capacity with more than 50 agents in attendance, including 10 from regional New Zealand who flew in especially.

Among these were longstanding Virtuoso members Leith Sison, North Shore Business Travel, Carol Morgan and Voyage Affairs alongside some agents new to the luxury network.

The evening consisted of two cocktail-style networking sessions followed by a structured session of speed dating-style meetings.

The major sponsor of the event was Uniworld River Cruises, with attendees also enjoying a great presentation from the line's AU Managing Director, Alice Ager.

Among the delegation was Visit Monaco as the only European destination in attendance, with Regional Director Alison Roberts-Brown telling *Travel Daily* the event was a great way to connect with NZ's Virtuoso agents.

"About a third of them had previously been to Monaco before COVID; all reported a great increase in interest in Europe, reflecting what we are seeing in our stats of NZ overnight stays," Roberts said.

The attending exhibitors, flanked by Virtuoso General Manager AU/NZ, Fiona Dalton, are **pictured** above. *ML*

Invictus signs EVT

SYDNEY'S Old Clare Hotel and Harbour Rocks Hotel have become the newest members of EVT Hotels and Resorts' Independent Collection under a new management agreement.

Located at opposite ends of the Sydney CBD, the new signings take EVT's Independent Collection in the city to six.

The additions come following a partnership between the hotel and entertainment operator and Singaporean-based real estate investor Invictus Developments.

The company has built an asset portfolio in Sydney and Brisbane, including 39 York Street which it expects to convert into a 150-key hotel in the near future.

"We appreciate the confidence Invictus Developments' has in selecting these hotels to be part of the Luxe tier of the Independent Collection," said EVT Director of Hotel and Resort Operations, Norman Arundel.

"The Old Clare and Harbour Rocks Hotels are Sydney accommodation icons and will be valued additions to the Independent Collection by EVT, which continues to deliver results for owners through a flexible and adaptable model for any property type," Arundel added.

ATIA UPDATE

from Richard Taylor, Director of Membership and Industry Affairs



WHILE looking at booking statistics is always a good measure of how busy the industry currently is, sometimes you want to verify what you're reading

with your own eyes and ears. Texting one of our members in Western Australia last week, the short and direct response told me everything I needed to know.

"If it gets any busier, we will implode," she said.

A follow-up message sent later suggested to me that, if her experience is anything to go by, Italy will be overrun with Australians this Sep and Oct.

Industry events are also buzzing. Last week Entire Travel Group held its inaugural 'Showcase and Soiree' event on its last stop in Sydney after taking in Brisbane and Melbourne.

You arrive at these evenings with a pretty accurate idea of the size and scale of the event you're attending, but on this occasion my preconceived ideas were emphatically and spectacularly misguided. This became clear to me approximately eight seconds after my arrival when a videographer's drone buzzed over my head, before making its merry way across a room of nearly 40 booths featuring Entire Travel

Group's partner organisations, many of whom had travelled across the globe to attend.

Later the doors opened to another entirely (no pun intended) separate room with stage, music, food and presentations for more than 200 people to enjoy. Across the three events more than 700 people were entertained, educated and very well fed.

This week sees the Visit USA Expo embark on a similar tour.

The numbers will be even greater for this long-established series that promotes the United States as a key destination to the Australian travel community.

Connections will be made, fostered and built upon, and I'm rather looking forward to this one as a first-time attendee.

All this activity and huge numbers of people getting involved points to an industry that is truly thriving in 2024.

Busy agents, busy reservations teams, busy event organisers... busy everyone. And it's not just expos on the East coast.

Across the country there are information evenings, client gatherings and much else going on, and that's before we even talk about the success of webinars that bring this information to a workforce that is more dispersed than ever before.

Busy is good. But let's make sure we don't implode!

Jetstar Takeoff sale

JETSTAR has today launched its 'Takeoff More Sale', offering 250,000 discounted fares across 99 domestic and int'l routes.

One-way domestic fares include Melbourne to Sunshine Coast from \$29 or overseas fares such as Perth to Bali from \$138.

Sale ends 11.59pm on 24 Feb.

THL hiring delays

TOURISM Holdings Limited says it is experiencing delays finding the right candidate to replace outgoing Chief Financial Officer, Nick Judd, who departs 28 Feb.

In the meantime, Steven Hall will take on the role as Acting CFO until recruitment is complete.

Hedge your Luxury

TRAVELLERS looking to indulge in some luxury retail therapy while overseas can find out the cheapest countries to purchase designer branded goods via a newly launched comparison site.

Dubbed 'Luxury Hedge', the platform compares item prices across a range of luxury brands, real-time exchange rates and a country's VAT tax refund system.

Users can learn that Louis Vuitton is around 25% cheaper to buy in France than Australia after a tax refund is factored, whereas French jeweller Cartier can be 10% cheaper to buy in Australia.

For those just browsing, the site also locates bargains based on a country's exchange rate.

Melbourne unlocks the Visit USA magic

THE Visit USA Expo Series is off to an exceptional start with an impressive turn out from both agents and exhibitors in Melbourne on Mon night.

Hosted at Grand Hyatt Melbourne, the event saw more than 230 travel agents in attendance, as more than 80 US exhibitors showcased their products and offered advisors a comprehensive understanding of the latest US travel trends.

Mike Goldman, who was MC for the evening, helped shower attendees with generous prizes, including a six-night trip to Hawaii with return fares, 13 nights in New York City and Hudson Valley, and more.

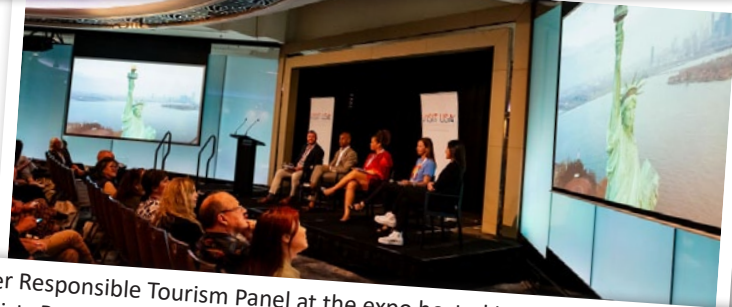
The President of Visit USA Australia, Caroline Davidson, reiterated the significance behind

the experience, stating that the showcase is a gateway to opportunities to learn all about the “ever-changing landscape of US travel”.

The three-day series will continue tonight in Brisbane, and conclude in Sydney in the following night.



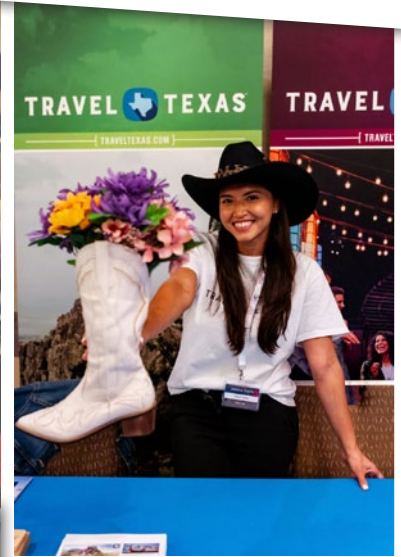
CAROLINE Davidson, President of Visit USA Australia; Anna Riedel, New York City Tourism + Conventions; Chris Rosenow, Hudson Yards; Dawn Hopper, New York’s Backyard; Robert Turner, Arthouse Hotel NYC; Prizewinner Sue Cousin, It’s All About Travel; Claire Chirouze Ulloa, Summit ONE; Alexandra Rodriguez, Hotel Beacon; and Reginald Charlot, New York City Tourism + Conventions.



THE first-ever Responsible Tourism Panel at the expo hosted by David Clark, Tauck; Pannellists Reginald Charlot, New York City Tourism + Conventions; Jennifer Schumacher, Visit California.



TRUE swifties! Citadel Outlets’ Cynthia Schmitt Easey, and Mike Afram from Karmel Shuttle and Extreme Tours.



JESSICA Evans from Travel Texas.





Hydrogen on rails

CALIFORNIAN state transport authority Caltrans will add another six hydrogen powered passenger train sets to an existing order of four, which will be introduced into revenue service from 2027.

Purchased from Stadler Rail, the additional US\$127m spend takes the total order above US\$200m (A\$305.7m).

The original order, placed in Oct last year, included options for 25 more carriage sets, which has now been reduced to 19.

The new carriages are funded by a US\$10 billion commitment by Californian Governor Gavin Newsom toward zero-emission vehicles including buses and trains.

Caltrans says the first trains will operate between Merced and Sacramento on the future Valley Rail line, which will eventually connect to the state's high-speed rail line being developed separately.

Phase 1 of the high-speed project will run from Merced to Bakersfield, opening in the early part of next decade.

A planned extension aims to see the line extended via San Francisco north to Sacramento and south potentially as far as Anaheim.

Trains on the high-speed line are anticipated to run at up to 350kph, making them the fastest in the Americas.

ROSIE NOW POWERED BY FIJIAN SUN

FIJIAN tour and airport transfer operator Rosie Travel Group will hit the road from Apr with its maiden fleet of three Maxus MIFA9 fully electric vehicles to transport visitors around the South Pacific nation.

The new electric vehicles come in partnership with Vision Motors Fiji and follows an extensive review and assessment program to determine which vehicle would be best suited for the Pacific nation's conditions.

A secondary partnership with Solar Hub Fiji will see Rosie install solar-powered charging stations at its Rosie Transport Hub in Nadi, with each charge allowing the vehicles to travel up to 440 kilometres.

Rosie's new vehicles will also usher in a partial rebrand of the organisation, with the unveiling seeing the company reintroduce itself as Rosie Holidays EV.

The Chinese-built Maxus MIFA9



vehicles hold a five-star ANCAP safety rating and can each carry seven passengers, with space for four large suitcases in the back.

Rosie Travel Group General Manager, Eroni Puamau, said the launch of the EVs was a multi-million investment into the future of the organisation.

"Rosie has always been at the forefront of major change and innovation in tourism with our long history," Puamau said.

"It's important that we are also responsible for how we want our tourism future to be - one that is sustainable in its care for our environment and those whom we bring in to share it with."

Rosie's partnership with Solar Hub Fiji will also allow it to generate extra electricity which can be sold back into the national power grid, which the company said was creating a "grid full of sunshine". *ML*

Daintree reopens

NORTH Queensland's Daintree region will reopen in full to independent visitors from next Mon 19 Feb after extensive clean-up work from recent extreme weather caused by Cyclone Jasper

The road to Thornton Beach will reopen to all travellers after a period of being limited to travellers on organised tours.

SAF value skyrocketing in Asia Pacific

SUSTAINABLE Aviation Fuel (SAF) in the Asia Pacific region is set to explode in value by more than 10,000% over the coming decade, a new analysis by ResearchAndMarkets.com has predicted.

According to a new report, growth in the sector is being propelled by state-of-the-art technology investment and collaboration, leading to an

increase in production capacity and lower costs.

Strategic partnerships are also listed as key drivers of growth, leading to more efficient manufacturing capability and supply chain logistics.

Challenges for the sector included securing reliable feedstock sources and building regulatory frameworks to incentivise adoption.

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OPINION

David Beirman is an Adjunct Fellow, Management & Tourism at the University of Technology Sydney.

Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au.



I RECENTLY had the pleasure of participating in The Council for Australasian Tourism and Hospitality Education's (CAUTHE) 34th annual conference, which was held in Hobart and hosted by the University of Tasmania.

For readers of *Travel Daily* and *travelBulletin*, the CAUTHE Conference is the world's largest

annual gathering of tourism academics and higher degree researchers.

This year's conference attracted 250 tourism academics and scholars from over 20 countries and over 180

papers on a wide range of topics, relevant to all sectors of the industry, with key global and Australian issues affecting tourism, presented by established academics and Ph.D and Masters by research candidates.

One of the best aspects of this year's conference was the extensive engagement between the travel industry leadership in Tasmania and tourism academics.

Todd Babiak of Brand Tasmania and Sarah Clark, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Tasmania, gave outstanding keynote addresses and there was a panel of tourism professionals who spoke of their expectations of cooperation

between tourism academics and the industry.

The University of Tasmania can be proud of the extensive level of collaboration between the university and the travel industry and this is something that should be the norm in both Australia and New Zealand.

Anne Hardy, who led her team of superb UTAS colleagues and organised the conference, is also the Chair of Tourism Tasmania.

This gives an indication of the high level of cooperation that exists between the Tasmanian tourism industry and the University of Tasmania.

The conference itself was brilliant and having attended 14 CAUTHE conferences around

Australia and New Zealand since 2003, this year's event was the best ever.

Hobart is the perfect city to run a conference in the Aussie summer and as many people know, it's a gem of a city.

One conference highlight was the welcome cocktails held in

Hobart's historic Theatre Royal, which has featured a pantheon of great actors including Noel Coward throughout its 150-year-plus history.

I hope that Tasmania's spirit of cooperation between tourism town and tourism "gown" will continue to grow.

We have made considerable progress in Australia and New Zealand when it comes to breaking down the barriers.

However, there is still a long way to go before higher education and the tourism industry achieve the optimal level of collaboration that exists in Tasmania and to some extent in Queensland and NZ.

“ This extensive level of collaboration between universities and the travel industry should be the norm in both Australia and New Zealand. ”

PTMs put on a travel bazaar



FIVE Perth-based personal travel managers (PTMs) from TravelManagers Australia came together recently to co-host a travel bazaar.

The group included Alison Parker, Ashley Noble, Charlotte

Nowrojee, Leanne Johnston, Erryn Morris and State Manager Alison Banks.

Representatives from a number of tour operators attended the informative event (pictured), including MW Tours, NCL, Chimu, Insight Vacations, Wide-Eyed Tours, APT, Princess Cruises, ETC, Wendy Wu, Scenic, Aurora Expeditions, Wildlife Safaris, G Adventures, Back Roads, Bench, and BKB Holidays. JM

Payback headaches

A SURVEY by bill-splitting app Kittipay has revealed reimbursing friends are the major cause of tension for groups on holiday.

The poll of 1,000 Australians aged 18-35 found that many are being left out of pocket by friends who either don't pay them back or need repeated reminders.

More than half prefer to pay their way as expenses occur, while another quarter will use an app that tallies up how much each person in a group needs to reimburse to one payer.

One in five complained they always end up paying more than their cohorts, with nearly 30% resenting how much money is spent by the group as a whole.

On top of that, 14.8% of respondents said they had argued over what people owe after money has been spent.

The study showed 57.5% of Aussies are owed \$100 or less and 72.2% owe somebody else a similar amount, with 15% in the red by up to \$250.

Conferma rebrand

CONFERMA, formerly known as Conferma Pay, has unveiled a major rebrand in line with its mission to streamline travel payment processes globally.

The rebranding initiative comes after Sabre's acquisition of the travel tech company in Aug 2022, which was followed shortly after by Mastercard making a minority investment in Conferma.

The company has also introduced an enhanced customer service function, which now offers 24/7 support.

Jason Lalor, CEO of Conferma, said "our goal is to apply technology to break down barriers and advance connectivity in the global business landscape", as well as "connect new ecosystems in areas such as Account Payables and procurement".

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Sunreef teams up with Taylor



SUNSHINE Coast marine tourism operator, Sunreef Mooloolaba, is collaborating with well-known Australian marine conservationist and film-maker Valerie Taylor, who was an underwater cinematographer for the 1975 classic *Jaws*, to film a new documentary.

The film follows the journey of the region's next-generation marine conservationists, including leading dive operators along the east coast Grey Nurse Shark migration path, as well as showcasing Sunreef Mooloolaba's commitment and efforts in promoting marine conservation.

Following the filming of the documentary's opening scenes, Taylor recently hosted a book signing event at Sunreef Headquarters at The Wharf Mooloolaba, offering fans a rare chance to interact and buy a copy of her autobiography, *An Adventurous Life*, for signing.

"Hosting Valerie Taylor was an absolute honour and privilege," said Jonny Fell, Manager at

Sunreef Mooloolaba. "Valerie is a true champion of the oceans, and we were humbled by the opportunity to team up on a documentary and impact campaign that aligns perfectly with [our] mission to celebrate and conserve marine life."

Sunreef Mooloolaba offers daily diving and snorkelling cruises, plus swimming with whales tours. *JM*

France in demand

DEMAND for flights to France has surged by 33% compared to last year in the lead up to the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, the latest data from Amadeus shows.

Flight searches to France for the days just before and after the games, from 23 Jul to 15 Aug, are already up by 25% on the same period last year.

The United States is leading the charge, with searches from the US to Paris up 72%, followed by the UK (60%) and Brazil (50%), while searches from the Asia Pacific region rose by just 15%.

BC bursts into Sydney

DESTINATION British Columbia is highlighting its new Rainforest to Rockies itineraries via an activation in Sydney at Flight Centre's flagship store on George Street this week from 21-27 Feb.

The immersive experience will transport visitors to the majestic rainforests, coast, desert, and peaks of the Canadian Rockies via a reflective 'Wall of Wonder'.

For a chance to win a holiday for two to British Columbia via a Flight Centre travel credit valued at \$20,000, visitors can share images or videos of their interactions with the 'Wall of Wonder' on social media.

15% off Rail Europe

UNTIL 12 Mar, Aussie travel advisors can take advantage of a 15% discount on Eurail Passes when booking with Rail Europe.

The saving applies to most passes except for Germany and Scandinavia Pass products, as well as certain Eurail France passes. More details [HERE](#).

Intrepid Rivertree

A NEW documentary sponsored by Intrepid Travel was viewed by more than 1,500 people at its world premiere in Yamba, NSW last month.

Intended to represent the voice of the Clarence River and its First Nations communities, *Rivertree* showcases the actions taken by locals to protect the environmental and cultural asset, which is under threat from mining.

There will also be more screenings of the film later this month and next, at locations across Queensland, Victoria and NSW - more details [HERE](#).

MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.654

ALTHOUGH the Aussie dollar enjoyed a slight gain against the USD, which has slipped back slightly from three-month highs overnight, New Zealand secured a more significant jump as a result.

Meanwhile, a forecast rate cut from the Bank of China today could boost its economic activity, with experts expecting the move to support the regional FX Markets.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.654
UK	£0.519
NZ	\$1.064
Euro	€0.607
Japan	¥98.20
Thailand	฿23.56
China	¥4.708
South Africa	12.40
Canada	\$0.882
Crude oil	US\$83.47

Royal signs new ship

ROYAL Caribbean Group has placed an order with French shipbuilder Chantiers de l'Atlantique for its seventh Oasis Class ship.

The vessel is expected to join the cruise line's international fleet in 2028, with the order contingent upon financing.

The announcement comes ahead of the debut of the cruise line's latest Oasis Class ship, *Utopia of the Seas*, later this year (*TD* 21 Sep 2023).

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Learn & Win with the Tokyo Mini-Series

Explore Japan's dynamic capital in a four-part Mini-Series with local Tokyo representatives, Alison and Yukiko as they share tips, news and information from suppliers on the ground.

In **PART 1**: Tokyo Neighbourhoods, Alison begins with ALL the reasons why Tokyo is such a popular destination! Well known for mixing modernity and tradition, the city is always changing in fun unpredictable ways. Take a tour of Tokyo's neighbourhoods, including the main attractions and highlights.

In **PART 2**, learn about Tokyo's transport system with Yukiko. With increasing multilingual signage, getting around Tokyo is relatively stress-free by train, subway, taxi and bicycle. Also how to travel between the city and

Tokyo's major airports, Haneda and Narita, and the Tokyo International Cruise Terminal.

In **PART 3**, Alison highlights some of Tokyo's popular attractions, including the mesmerizing digital universe of TeamLab Planets Tokyo, thrilling AirX helicopter tours, iconic Sky Hop Bus city bus tours, exhilarating Canyons Okutama and retail therapy at Bic Camera.

In **PART 4**, Yukiko unveils some of Tokyo's amazing accommodations, including Apartment Hotel MIMARU, Far East Village Hotel Tokyo Asakusa, Cerulean Tower Tokyu Hotel in Shibuya, Shinjuku's Hyatt Regency Tokyo and Hotel Chinzanso Tokyo. There's something for everyone!

WATCH & WIN

Watch all four updates in the Tokyo Mini-Series by Friday 15th March for FIVE chances to WIN a \$100 gift card and some special prizes.

There's one prize for each part, plus one lucky viewer who completes the series will WIN a \$100 gift card and a beautiful AMAYA 6-piece ceremonial Japanese matcha set, valued at \$240!

Simply submit your details before accessing each video.