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Receive up to **\$3,000 flight credit per couple** when you book a 2025 or 2026 ocean voyage



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See website for T&Cs

Travel Daily

First with the news

Monday 15th Jan 2024



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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 **Viking** and a full page from **Albatross Tours**.

Odell back to RSSC

WELL-KNOWN Australian cruise executive Steve Odell has revealed a high-profile return to the cruise sector, confirming a new role with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings' Regent Seven Seas Cruises brand as its Global Chief Sales Officer (**CW** breaking news).

The news arrives only 12 months after Odell departed NCLH's APAC division (**TD** 16 Dec 2022), where he served as Senior VP & MD APAC for the company's Oceania Cruises and Regent brands in the local region.

Odell boasts 36 years of cruise experience and notably joined NCLH in Oct 2015 to lead the launch of the company's APAC business - more in **CW**.

Smaller Europe, big sales

EXCLUSIVE

CLOSE to two-thirds of Australian sales for the Explore Worldwide brand over the last year have been generated by European bookings, global CEO of Hotelplan UK Joe Ponte (**pictured**) has revealed to **TD**.

The head of the operator's parent company was in Australia last week on a whirlwind trip to meet with stakeholders and the local team, with Ponte keen to talk up the strong traction Explore has been enjoying in Australia for European visitation.

"We have more than 100 itineraries in Europe and I think the growth is really interesting because it is sparking a new conversation around the changing ways in which people are experiencing Europe as a destination," Ponte explained.

"A lot of people think about small group touring as adventuring to places like Latin



America, Central America, Asia, and African destinations, but for us at Explore, Europe is our number one destination.

"We are a European business and it is where we grew up and 35% of our total global sales are for trips to Europe," he added.

More from Explore on **p5**. **AB**

CLIA's best revealed

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia has announced the finalists for its highly anticipated Cruise Industry Awards taking place in Mar.

More than 800 entries were received by CLIA for this year's awards across 18 categories, including 11 open to self-nomination or peer-nomination.

"This year's nominees include not only the most successful and high-profile travel agents, but also a new and determined generation of travel agents who are part of our expanded CLIA membership," CLIA Australasia MD Joel Katz said - see the list of nominees in today's **Cruise Weekly**.

Explore with Viking

VIKING is offering up to \$3,000 flight credits per couple on ocean voyages, as well as included flights on Europe and Southeast Asia river journeys, in 2025 and 2026 - details on the **front page**.

SAVE UP TO \$3,770*
ON SELECT WORLDWIDE TRIPS

SOCIAL TRAVEL FOR 18-35s

LET'S TRAVEL

contiki
TRAVEL. TOGETHER.

SOCIAL TRAVEL FOR 18-35s

BIG SOCIAL TRAVEL SALE

TTF dispels cruise myth

A **NEW** report from Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) Australia has put paid to perceptions that cruising is only for older Aussies.

The new study of 2,000 Australians commissioned by TTF Australia and conducted by Pure Profile found that increased demand for cruising from Millennials and Gen Z is now the driving force in the sector's growing success in Australia.

More than a third of Aussies under 35 said they were planning to cruise this year, versus just 18% of over 65s, while the demographic deemed the most 'cruise curious' was also those aged under 35.

"Any misconception cruises are only for retirees and families is outdated," TTF Australia CEO

Margy Osmond declared.

"This year, more young Australians will enjoy a cruise catered to their preferences, from Michelin-starred restaurants and yoga, to tattoo parlours, free wi-fi and other services for remote workers - there's something for everyone," she added.

The report was also a good result for New Zealand's cruise sector, with the country topping the list of overseas destinations among Aussies.

Close to a quarter of Australians want to take a cruise trip across the Tasman, ahead of Europe (21%), Japan (7%) & Canada (6%).

Domestically, Far North Queensland is in the strongest demand, leading the way from Tasmania, Sydney, South Australia's Kangaroo Island, Melbourne and Darwin.

While Australia enjoys one of the strongest per capita cruise trip rates in the world, the report did show there might be some work to go however, with only a quarter of the population indicating a cruise was on the cards this year.

Of the quarter who are setting sail, the booking is split 50:50 between domestic & overseas. *AB*

Major hotel discounts

TRAVEL agents can take advantage of discounted rates on thousands of hotels globally with Expedia Group's 2024 Jan Expedia TAAP sales event, with at least 25% savings on offer.

The travel tech company, which boasts an inventory of more than three million properties around the world, described the sale as "the ideal opportunity for travel agents to drive bookings, boost sales, and earn commission at the start of the year".

The offer applies to bookings made between 03 Jan and 31 Jan, and is valid for stays booked until 31 Aug 2024.

Agents are also able to use Expedia's free marketing assets.

Highlights of Sri Lanka

10 days Colombo to Galle from only \$2,899*

2 for 1 SALE

mwTours

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Penrith to become a bit cooler



A PROPOSAL to build Australia's first indoor snow resort (render pictured) in Western Sydney has been given the green light.

Located within the vibrant Riverlink Tourism Precinct at Penrith, the \$400 million project, dubbed Winter Sports World (WSW), will now enter a design and engineering development phase to prepare for construction.

The facility will feature a "unique alpine exterior", night lights and subtle textural surfaces to create the appearance of a blizzard, and will use real snow to create a 300-metre advanced open run for experienced skiers and snow boarders, learn-to-ski runs, and a dedicated winter wonderland snow play area.

There will also be a competition venue for snow sports such as alpine skiing and a 4.5-star, 170-room hotel, conference and function rooms, and a restaurant and cafes with snow views.

Demonstrating a commitment to the environment, the new facility will eliminate fossil fuel use on site, minimise energy use, supply energy with onsite renewable sources.

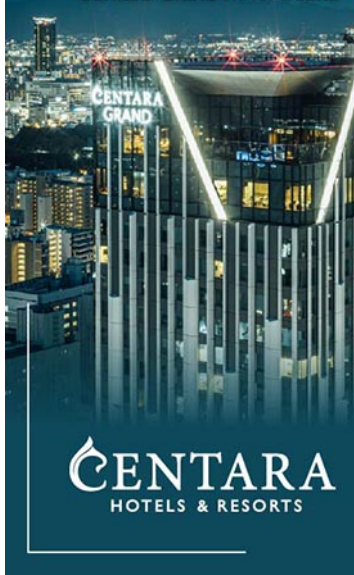
Albatross incentive

ALBATROSS Tours is giving agents the chance to win a tour to Europe for two, valued at over \$14,000 - head over to the **back page** for details.

Once complete, WSW is expected to generate more than 1,350 new tourism jobs and inject more than \$220 million a year into the local economy with around one million visitors annually. *JM*

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Centara Grand Hotel Osaka



CENTARA
HOTELS & RESORTS

Wendy Wu Tours Summer Sale

COUPLES SAVE UP TO \$1,100

or

SOLOS - ENJOY 50% OFF SINGLE SUPPLEMENT OR FREE

Selected Departures



Explore Now →



MSC flags Texas base

MSC Cruises is expanding its presence in the American market, with *MSC Seascapes* to homeport in Texas beginning next year.

From 09 Nov 2025, the ship will offer seven-night sailings from Galveston, visiting destinations in the Caribbean and Mexico, with bookings now open.

The cruise line is currently in negotiations with the port over a new cruise terminal, with plans for a proposed fourth terminal to be announced once the two parties finalise the agreement.

"Expanding to Galveston...is a pivotal moment for us at MSC Cruises and for our guests," MSC Cruises USA President Ruben Rodriguez said.

"Our unique cruise experience are more accessible to travellers in the central and western parts of the country and it illustrates our commitment to providing families in the region with unparalleled vacation options," Rodriguez added.

I want to be with P&O Everywhere



P&O Cruises Australia is inspiring Aussies to set sail on a journey of meaningful connection with its new brand platform, 'Brings Us All Together', which appeals to those seeking genuine connections on their next holiday.

The new brand platform has been created in partnership with creative studio Supermassive, and celebrates P&O Australia's distinctive ability to help foster deeper connections among families, friends and loved ones, as well as their fellow passengers.

P&O created a new choral arrangement of Fleetwood Mac's *Everywhere*, sung en masse by a 300-strong choir comprised of local singing groups, past guests, and the cruise line's fans, while on board *Pacific Encounter* in Nov off the Queensland coast.

The campaign was designed by Cameron Bruce, musical supervisor on the epic biographical drama film *Elvis*, and launches as P&O embarks on an ambitious season of sailings - more in today's *CW*. *MS*



Window Seat

A MUM from Melbourne has smashed the world record for completing a 1,300km run across Antarctica.

Donna Urquhart set off on the chilly mission on 15 Dec and completed the incredible feat in just 26 days, helping to raise \$75,000 for young girls and women in sport.

The determined Aussie tested her physical and mental limits as she ran through heavy snow and -20°C temperatures to set new the *Guinness World Record* for the longest run in a polar region.



PRICING AND ANALYSIS MANAGER FULL TIME – SYDNEY – HYBRID



If you have a passion for pricing, analysis and travel, this role could be the one for you.

We're looking for an enthusiastic **Pricing & Analysis Manager** to join our dynamic team.

The successful candidate will have over 2 years' experience in assisting with pricing strategy, loading pricing into internal systems, conducting analysis and communicating findings.

We are looking for someone who:

- Is process driven and understands the big picture, not just the detail
- Can wow us with your Excel skills
- Possesses great presentation skills – ability to write and speak clearly to easily communicate complex ideas in a way that is easy to understand
- Brings new ideas to the table and enjoys solving problems
- Is a self-motivated individual who takes initiative

This hands-on role demands meticulous attention to detail and a versatile mindset within a fast-paced, results-driven environment.

This is an opportunity to join a recognised industry leader and be part of a fun and friendly team. As we experience extraordinary growth, **now is the time to become a Viking!**

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**Applications close
21 January 2024**

MAX checks ongoing

THE Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has extended the grounding of Boeing 737 MAX 9 planes in order to conduct more safety checks, following the Alaska Airlines (AS) incident (**TD** 12 Jan).

The US regulator said it will monitor Boeing more closely, and will conduct an audit of the Boeing 737 MAX 9 production line and suppliers.

It will also consider assigning an independent entity to certify the safety of new aircraft - a responsibility it had previously given to Boeing.

Meanwhile, AS has started preliminary inspections on some of its MAX 9 aircraft over the weekend, revealing that up to 20 planes could undergo the safety checks, and has cancelled all MAX 9 flights through to Tue.

EK makes a splash

TRAVELLERS who fly to Dubai with Emirates this winter can enjoy free tickets to two of the city's biggest attractions - the Museum of the Future and Atlantis Aquaventure.

The offer is valid on tickets purchased between 12 Jan-01 Feb for travel between 15 Jan-31 Mar, including customers who have a stopover in Dubai of eight hours or more.

The carrier has launched a similar promotion in the past, when it offered pax discounts on a number of Dubai experiences (**TD** 22 May 2022).

TA blakes travel confidence



RAPID changes in the influencer marketing space could go some way to explaining why Tourism Australia missed several social media posts that failed to note they were paid for by the country's peak tourism body.

A report in the *SMH* over the weekend exposed the oversight, which included posts supporting TA paid-for famils from US-based lifestyle personality Laura Brown and TV host Hamish Blake, who holidayed with his son on K'gari.

While the posts have since been updated to make it clear the trips were supported by TA, Neuralle MD Jordan Michaelides, a noted influencer marketing specialist, said it was "unusual" that Tourism Australia dropped the ball.

"The guidelines around disclosure of influencer advertising are pretty straightforward, whether it be using #ad #spon or the partnership tag on social platforms," Michaelides said.

"Perhaps they haven't had an agency, staff member or consultant that has been clued into the regulatory requirements in this space for some time -

which are rapidly changing each quarter in line with its growth.

"The posts...have almost certainly breached the Ad Standard guidelines as administrated by the Australian Influencer Marketing Council (AiMCO)", a voice for the market influencer marketing sector.

The body recently updated its guidelines in relation to influencer posts, underscoring the need for full disclosure relating to all engagements, including paid or contracted, gifts, value-in-kind, and affiliate.

When contacted for comment, Tourism Australia told *Travel Daily* that it directs content creators and advocates to include tags indicating they were a 'guest of @Australia' or 'hosted by @Australia', but that ultimately content creators and advocates retain content control over their own posts.

Tourism Australia covered flights, accommodation and experiences for Blake and Brown but did not pay either of the celebrities directly for posts. **AB**

Hamish Blake **pictured** with partner in crime Andy Lee.

Vic is a bit different

VICTORIA is showcasing why to the world why its "every bit different", in a new global campaign that went live during the Australian Open yesterday.

The fresh marketing push from Visit Victoria promotes the state as a unique and exciting travel destination, highlighting its major events calendar and shining a spotlight on both metro Melbourne and regional Victoria.

The new destination brand means "tourism operators across the state now have the ability to connect with these campaigns in a meaningful way and leverage the activity through their own marketing efforts", according to Victoria Tourism Industry Council CEO, Felicia Mariani.

Greece climate tax

TRAVELLERS visiting Greece will have to fork out an extra tax on their accommodations, after the European country announced a new climate levy.

Rates will vary based on the official rating of the property, from €1.50 (A\$2.46) per night for one or two-star hotels, all the way up to €10 (A\$16.38) for luxury five-star accommodation.

The tax, which must be paid locally in the local currency, will only apply during the high season between Mar and Oct, while the existing bed tax will resume during the off periods.

Revenue from the new levy will be used to help rebuild from last year's brutal fires and floods.

#TRAVELINSPO

Check out which destinations are trending **HERE**

Travel & Cruise
Weekly



Explore on track for spike

EXCLUSIVE

EXPLORE Worldwide in Australia has enjoyed a strong performance over the last year, with the Chief Executive Officer of the brand's parent telling **TD** that passenger numbers have more than doubled, while revenue has also increased by 129%.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** on Fri, Hotelplan UK's CEO Joe Ponte said that the brand has only continued to grow in Australia since the global head office in London decided to set up a direct presence early last year (**TD** 09 Jan 2023).

Previously, Explore was represented in the local market by The Travel Corporation's Adventure World office.

"MD at Explore Worldwide Michael Edwards and Regional Director Australia & New Zealand Ben Ittensohn have both worked really heavily on a great market entry strategy," Ponte said.

"Particularly in Australia, extra air capacity will come into the market and will bring air fares down and the fact that we are achieving [sales growth] in an environment where it costs so much for an average Australian to get to Europe is impressive.

"When those prices start to come down - and mark my words it is inevitable - over the next 12 months when more capacity

comes in we will continue to see even more growth," he added.

With the successful launch of a direct presence in Australia for Explore servings as an encouraging template, Ponte did not rule out bringing other brands to Australia down the track if there was a compelling business case to do so, flagging the rise of walking tours locally as a potential catalyst.

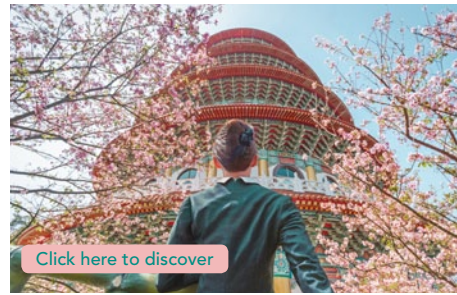
"I'm really excited with Michael Edwards at the helm and the team here, and with the progress that we're seeing it gives me great confidence that when we're ready some of the other brands might have a place in this market - so watch this space for something more concrete." **AB**

Airbus delivered

AIRBUS delivered 735 commercial aircraft to 87 customers around the world in 2023 - an increase of 11% on the previous year.

The aircraft manufacturer sold a record number of A320s and A350s last year, and registered 2,319 gross new orders across the board, with its year-end backlog now standing at 8,598.

Chief Executive Guillaume Faury said strong demand from airlines helped fuel the positive results, which were on the "upper end" of the company's target.



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Travel Daily

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Travel Daily Training Academy

IHG Auckland finally arrives



AFTER being delayed from its original opening date in 2022, InterContinental Auckland is officially set to open on 30 Jan (**TD** 15 Dec 2022).

Positioned on Waitemata Harbour in the city's Commercial Bay lifestyle precinct, the luxury

hotel features 139 guest rooms and suites with views overlooking the water or city.

The newbuild also includes a 24-hour fitness centre, while Advieh, the rooftop restaurant and bar, is set to open later this year to offer a "contemporary twist on Middle Eastern-inspired cuisine", using New Zealand's finest produce.

Guests can also enjoy the cuisine from the comfort of their room by ordering off the hotel's in-room dining menu.

The property anchors visitors in an ideal location from which to explore the city, given it is close to Auckland's city business district, with easy access to its main transport terminals, shopping centres and dining venues, and is a 30-minute drive from Auckland Airport. **JM**

Jetstar Japan glitch

A SYSTEM glitch within Jetstar Japan's systems halted all of the airline's domestic flights from Tokyo on Fri, affecting a massive 2,600 passengers.

The technical glitch occurred in the airline's system for checking the performance of planes before flights, by entering aircraft weight, weather and other data. Int'l flights were not impacted.

HRSA names CEO

TIMOTHY Parker has been announced as the inaugural Chief Executive Officer of Australia's new High Speed Rail Authority (HSRA) (**TD** 14 Jun 2023).

The body was launched last year to oversee the development of a high speed rail network on the east coast, starting with the Sydney to Newcastle section.

Parker has over three decades' experience in delivering complex infrastructure projects, and was the Head of Project for Sydney Metro since 2018.

More guns seized

THE Transportation Security Administration (TSA) has revealed it confiscated a record number of firearms at airports across the United States in 2023.

The government agency intercepted 6,737 firearms over the last year (93% of which were loaded), exceeding the previous year's record of 6,542 firearms stopped at TSA checkpoints.

Those caught with a firearm are reported to local police, and face a fine up to \$15,000.

Travel Daily

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Shannon on fern ground



LAST year marked a significant recovery in tourism since the pandemic, and Travel Agent Finder (TAF) has played a key role in assisting both travel agents and travellers.

The online platform, which currently boasts over 750 agents as members, provides a marketing framework for agents to display their expertise online, acting as an online portfolio for them with credible feedback.

In 2023 alone, TAF attracted over 621,000 page views, 92,000 website visitors, as well as a reach of nearly 500,000 on social media.

The impressive figures have resulted in over 4,200 travellers being connected to an expert, prompting millions of dollars in sales, with the highest value lead

generated for one agent resulting in \$232,713 of sales.

The report showed that 15% of respondents received offline enquiries from travellers from TAF, so the number of enquiries is likely to be even larger.

Owner Anna Shannon (pictured) is proud of the achievement, and said TAF will remain steadfast in its commitment to help "agents find trade resources and niche supplier partners to best match their clients' needs". MW

BA pilot kidnapped

A BRITISH Airways pilot was reportedly kidnapped and subjected to hours of torture during a stopover in South Africa.

According to local reports, the pilot was in no shape to fly back to London after being released upon handing over all his money to the criminals, with the airline having to find a replacement.

British Airways confirmed that a staff member was abducted in Johannesburg, and said it was supporting the individual and assisting local authorities with their investigation.

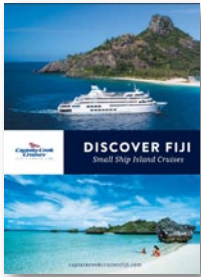
Mauritius storm

TROPICAL Storm Belal is expected to impact Mauritius today, bringing strong winds, heavy rainfall and storms.

DFAT has advised Australians who are visiting the island to monitor local media and follow the advice of local authorities.

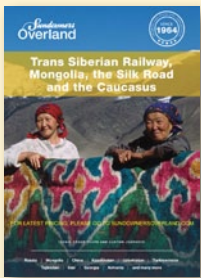
BROCHURES

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Captain Cook Cruises - Discover Fiji

Enjoy an adventure through the islands of Fiji with Captain Cook Cruises. The operator's newly released brochure showcases all the highlights of the tropical destination, with six different itineraries available to suit all types of travellers. The remote islands of North Fiji, the Lau and Kadavu islands, plus the Mamanuca and Yasawa islands, are some of the exhilarating locations that travellers can explore during a Captain Cook Cruises sailing. Guests will sail aboard the intimate small ship *MV Reef Endeavour*, with no more than 130 travellers sailing at once.



Sundowners Overland - Iconic Group Tours

Discover the cities of Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and many more with the latest Sundowners Overland brochure. The 92-page guide depicts the leisurely, luxurious, and action-packed journeys on offer, suitable for all kinds of travellers. There are up to four different types of tours, including Premium, Discovery, Freedom, and Luxury Train tours, available to choose from. An exploration of the Silk Road and Central Asia is a taste of what's on offer.



Viva Holidays - Thailand 2024/2025

Viva Holidays has released its new Thailand brochure, which now includes additional hotel accommodations in the popular cities of Phuket and Koh Samui. Guests will be welcomed by the newly renovated Courtyard by Marriott Phuket, Patong Beach - formerly the very popular Patong Merlin Hotel, as well as some of the newly introduced stays in Koh Phangan, Koh Phi Phi, Koh Yao and Hua Hin.



Contours Travel - Latin America & Antarctica

Learn what Contours Travel has on offer across Latin America and Antarctica inside its brand-new guide. Boasting an intimate knowledge of the region, Contours offers tailor-made holidays, along with authentic local experiences and a commitment to ethical travel and sustainability. Travellers can peruse the 100-page brochure to learn all about the day-to-day activities included in each of the tours.



2024 TRAVEL AGENT INCENTIVE

WIN A TOUR TO EUROPE FOR 2 VALUED AT OVER 14K!

Get ready for an exciting opportunity to WIN big with Albatross Tours.

Whether you're a frequent seller or making your first booking, there's a chance for everyone to be a WINNER!

Book any Albatross Tours 2024 tour for your clients and you could WIN

A trip for yourself and a companion, valued at over \$14K. The winner can choose from these fantastic European small group tours:

- 10 days Belgium, Holland Cobblestones and Windmills
- 13 days Croatia & the Adriatic
- 10 days Hidden Italy, the land of the Etruscans
- 14 days Glorious Germany & Czech Republic

How to win

Book and deposit at least 1 (one) passenger on any 2024 Albatross Tour to be entered into the draw to win a tour for two people. Every passenger booked gives you more entries in the draw, that means book 10 get 10 entries.

Plus, for ALL Summer 2024 bookings, your entries will be doubled!

Incentive Steps:

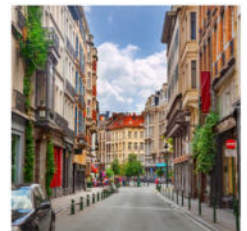
1. Complete the online training module within the incentive period. [Click here to access the training module.](#)
2. Make a Booking: Secure your opportunity to win by making a booking on any Albatross 2024 tour between Monday, 15 January until Thursday, 28 March (inclusive).
3. Book, Book, Book: The more bookings you make, the more entries into the draw and the higher your chances of claiming the coveted prize.

Prize Details:

The prize winner will be notified on Friday 5 April 2024. This is your chance to not only elevate your sales but also secure an amazing reward! Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to experience the magic of an Albatross Tour.



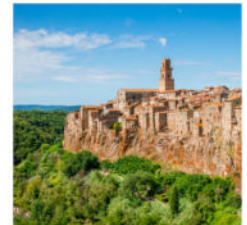
Belgium, Holland Cobblestones and Windmills



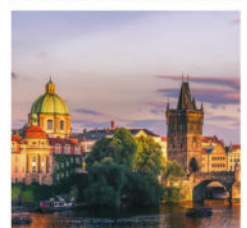
Croatia & the Adriatic



Hidden Italy, the land of the Etruscans



Glorious Germany & Czech Republic



[Terms & Conditions](#)