



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news, including **Business Events News**, plus a full page from **Crystal Cruises**.

Crystal upgrade

CRYSTAL Cruises' Sapphire suite upgrade will see those who book an Aquamarine Veranda suite this year upgraded to a higher category - head to **page six** for more information.

Air NZ's \$100 sale

AIR New Zealand has released almost one million domestic fares under NZ\$100.

The 750,000 fares will start from NZ\$59 one way and will be available from 7pm tonight until midnight on 24 Jul.

General Manager Domestic Scott Carr says those looking for a getaway are spoilt with choice with all 20 of Air New Zealand's domestic destinations on sale.

NTIA nominees revealed

LOW-COST carrier Vietjet can cap off a momentous growth year with a major travel industry award, having been nominated in the Most Popular Airline - Online category at the 2024 National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs).

The category is one of 11 which will open for industry voting at 9am on Mon 22 Jul ahead of the gala event on Sat 26 Oct.

Categories feature between four and 16 nominees, with each nominee successfully completing a qualification assessment to ensure winners represent the best of the travel industry.

The 2024 NTIA nominees list features several travel brands which have recently entered the Australian market, with Titan Travel nominated in the Most Outstanding Tour Operator - Global category.

Other new market entrants up for recognition include AmaWaterways (Most Popular



River Cruise Operator) and Disney Cruise Line (Most Popular Ocean Cruise Operator).

Anybody employed in the Australian travel industry can cast one vote per category for a nominee in Categories 21-31, with voting open until Fri 09 Aug.

"We are excited to open the voting process for this year's NTIAs," said ATIA CEO, Dean Long.

The 2024 NTIA Awards will take place at ICC Sydney on Sat 26 Oct one day after ATIA's maiden 'Beyond Borders' summit.

CLICK HERE to see the full list of nominees and **HERE** to cast your vote. *ML*

Traveltek offer

TRAVELTEK has launched a bundle aimed at independent travel advisors, offering a booking portal, mid-office systems, and its new rapid-deploy cruise website.


The company is hosting a webinar on Wed to showcase the new bundle, which advisors can **CLICK HERE** to join.

Traveltek's commitment to advisors has also seen it join Travel Agent Finder, and it will also host a stand at Cruise360 next month.

QTIC have your say

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is developing its priorities ahead of the 2024 Queensland state election, and is calling on tourism operators and businesses to answer its survey.


QTIC's priorities aim to outline the key policies and legislative reforms - **CLICK HERE** to complete the survey.



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Stay longer in Thailand

AUSTRALIANS can now holiday in Thailand for up to 60 days as the country continues its push to entice greater arrival numbers and revitalise its economy through pro-tourism policies.

Effective this week, visitors from 93 countries including Australia and New Zealand can stay for up to 60 days without a visa, which can be extended one time for another 30 days by visiting a local Immigration office.

The move is an abrupt about-face by the recently elected Thai government, which has drawn attention to tourism as a key way to drive the national economy.

Thailand is also looking to appeal to digital nomads, remote workers and freelancers through a new Destination Thailand Visa



(DTV) which grants multiple entries over five years to stay for a total of 180 days, with officials able to grant a second 180 days.

The DTV visa is also available to visitors travelling to Thailand to participate in specific cultural activities such as courses in Muay Thai kickboxing, Thai cooking, sport training, music festivals or specialist medical treatment.

Spouses and dependent children of DTV visa holders will also be eligible to apply, with all holders required to provide proof they hold funds of up to 500,000 Thai Baht (AU\$20,070) to support them during their stay. *ML*

EY, Batik codeshare

ETIHAD Airways and Batik Air have launched a code-share, offering both airlines' passengers access to new destinations, including Perth.

The agreement enables seamless connection to five Malaysian destinations, including Langkawi, Penang, and Kota Kinabalu, as well as Hanoi, Da Nang, Medan, and Hong Kong.

NT Hwy upgrade

THE federal and territory governments have awarded almost \$50 million to upgrade the NT's Plenty Highway, boosting one of Australia's longest drives, the Outback Way.

An almost 30km section of the Highway will be upgraded and sealed to improve safety, and will also provide tourists with greater access to remote communities.

Indonesia \$3b win

A \$3 billion tourism development agreement has been signed by Indonesia's Ministry of State-Owned Enterprises and the United Arab Emirates' Eagle Hills, which outlines plans for investments in the Southeast Asian country's tourism sector.

The memorandum of understanding includes comprehensive investment in tourism destinations, property development, and airports; development of new tourism ecosystems; and the enhancement of airport infrastructure and capacity, particularly Soekarno-Hatta International Airport in Jakarta.

State-owned hotels will also be upgraded to ensure they meet international standards.

StandardX Melb

THE StandardX, Melbourne is set to open its doors on 08 Aug, marking the brand's debut property in Australia.

The 125-room hotel takes inspiration from the post-punk Little Band scene of its Fitzroy neighbourhood, and will include a marquee Thai restaurant BANG, led by Executive Chef Justin Dingle-Garciyya; and another dining experience, The Roof, hidden away for guests only.

Unbundled DL biz

DELTA Air Lines has suggested it may be preparing to introduce a new unbundled fare for its business class cabin, allowing travellers to add extra services as needed to its premium seat class.

The move was teased during Delta's second quarter earnings call last week, with the carrier saying an announcement would be made later this year.

Perks normally associated with Delta's business class which could become optional include lounge access, seat selection, baggage allowance, priority check-in and increased baggage allowance.



Window Seat

LATE food critic and travel presenter, Anthony Bourdain, once described the durian fruit as "like French kissing your dead grandmother".

The putrid-smelling durian is banned in some hotels and public transport in parts of Southeast Asia, but in other circles it is affectionately labelled as the 'King of Fruits'.

Tourism Malaysia is aiming to cash in on the polarising fruit's appeal (or lack thereof) by creating a new range of Durian Tourism Packages, featuring 62 suggested itineraries and 27 local operators from 12 states across the country.

Experiences include taking a "relaxing" day trip to taste fresh durian by a scenic river or a one-day durian feast with river rafting, jungle trekking and a tree-top adventure.

Or for the real fans, consider a three-day stay in a luxurious forest chalet with a homestay durian tasting and all the durian Nasi Lemak you can eat.

The tourism organisation is expecting its durian packages to add more than A\$635,000 to its coffers, inviting tourists to experience "a new and trending cultural and gastronomic tourism wave".

Cruising from Philly

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line will begin sailing from Philadelphia in 2026, with *Norwegian Jewel* to homeport from the city.

The 2,330-pax ship will be based from the 'City of Brotherly Love' between 16 Apr and 17 Oct 2026 and will operate seven- to nine-day voyages to Bermuda and 10-11 days to Canada and New England, calling in Saguenay, Charlottetown and Halifax.

The Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau is now being represented in Australia by Gate 7.



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Royal's size success

ROYAL Caribbean International CEO Michael Bayley says the sheer size and neighbourhoods of its Oasis-class ships is the winning formula behind the class' success.

Speaking onboard *Utopia of the Seas'* shakedown voyage this week, Bayley labelled the Oasis class - of which Utopia is its sixth - as "a true game changer".

"It just consistently delivers every single time and it ages so well - we've invested in these ships, and we continue to invest."

Utopia of the Seas is the first ship in the Oasis class that Royal Caribbean has devoted to the short break market, aimed at three-day weekend and four-day mid-week holidays, which Bayley says is ideal for first-time cruisers.

For more from Royal Caribbean, see today's **Cruise Weekly**.

Ponant serves some Bastille



BASTILLE Day celebrates France's Fete de la Federation and it was under this unifying spirit that Ponant brought together some of its Melbourne agents for an afternoon of French culture.

Hosted by Ponant State Manager for Vic/Tas, Annabelle Brown, the group headed to The French Kitchen to prepare some delectable cuisine to pair and enjoy with fine French wines.

Located inside the home of French culinary doyenne and cookbook author, Diane Holuigue, the group mingled about the rustic copper pots, pans and artworks, preparing a menu of classic French dishes shared while forming professional bonds and exchanging personal travel stories and experiences, including many who have sailed with Ponant.

The elegant occasion also helped the group learn more about France's culinary culture, heritage and love for exploration -

WTTC speakers

THIS year's World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) Global Summit speakers have been announced, including Tripadvisor Chief Executive Matt Goldberg.

Other top business leaders set to speak at the event in Perth from 08-10 Oct include Certares founder and WTTC Chair Greg O'Hara, American Express Travel President Audrey Hendley, and Intrepid CEO James Thornton.

all values shared by the line. **ML**

Pictured above with Diane Holuigue in her white chef's coat is Judy Gillard, Bayview Travel; Lisa Ahearn, Destination HQ; Gary Seigneur, Verve Travel; Ian Mollison, Helloworld Balwyn North; Debra Carr, Helloworld Surrey Hills; Annabelle Brown, Ponant; Natalie Daw, Helloworld Camberwell; James Jang, Where 2 Travel Malvern; Ines Iniesta, Journey Beyond; and Rachel Quinton from Global International Travel in Toorak.

Marriott's best job

FAIRFIELD by Marriott has launched a search for a 'Road Trip Reporter' to set off on a 30-day adventure across 14 less-trawled prefectures in Japan.

The 'World's Coolest Commute' promotion will see the successful applicant create digital content on Japan's hidden gems and lesser-known cultural elements while staying at Fairfield by Marriott hotels each night.

Focus topics across the month-long self-drive tour will include top sights and attractions to visit, food and beverage highlights, and how travellers can enjoy it all while staying at Marriott hotels.

On top of accommodation for 30 nights, three meals daily are included along with return airfare, car hire and a project fee for developing content.

CLICK HERE for more details.

PER calls on retailers

PERTH Airport is providing a new opportunity for retailers, thanks to its multi-billion dollar infrastructure deal with Qantas Airways, signed earlier this year (**TD** 31 May).

The Western Australian gateway is calling for retailers across food and beverage, travel essentials, and speciality categories to bid on 32 sites across its terminals, which will form part of a significant refurbishment and refresh the offering at the airport.

"Along with all the new development and terminal infrastructure we will also be upgrading the current terminals to ensure we are catering for our growing passenger numbers," Chief Commercial and Aviation Officer Kate Holsgrove said.

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BEA shuffles team

BUSINESS Events Adelaide (BEA) has announced a number of changes to its business development team.

The newly promoted Director of National Bidding and Events, Marcia Mudge, will be supported by three new BDMs, with Rachelle Hatcher, Mark Burns, and Paul Shaw joining the team.

Additionally, the international association business development team has been bolstered with Marc Leopold as BDM, and Mark Phelps has stepped up to become Director for International Bidding.

"I'm confident with the new team now in place and quickly getting up to speed, we can continue getting strong domestic results, and aim even higher globally," said BEA CEO Damien Kitto.

BRISSY'S NEW STAR OF EVENTS

EXCLUSIVE

THE Star Brisbane Event Centre, which will begin hosting events and conferences from early Sep in the new \$3.6 billion Queen's Wharf Brisbane Precinct (TD 08 Jul), will offer event planners "unrivalled variety and flexibility".

Kelvin Dodt, Chief Operating Officer of The Star Brisbane, told *Travel Daily* that event planners and their guests "will be spoilt for choice with a variety of day and night venues across the resort and precinct".

Spanning 2,000m², the Event Centre boasts a capacity to host up to 2,000 (theatre), 1,800 (cocktail), and 1,440 (banquet) attendees, with six-metre high floor-to-ceiling windows flooding the space with natural light.

Ideal for sit-down gala dinners, trade shows, incentives and cocktail soirees, the centre can be split into five separate ballroom

spaces, features six conference rooms, and offers market-leading audiovisual technology and support team.

"Our world-class Event Centre has been purposely designed to enable bespoke events of every scale," Dodt said.

He revealed the Centre has already attracted "overwhelming interest" from the domestic and international market, generating a strong pipeline of events including Tourism & Events Queensland's Destination IQ and gala award ceremony in Nov.

The soon-to-open venue will also host more than 400 event and conference organisers from across Australia and New Zealand for PCOA24 in Dec - the first time it will be hosted in Brisbane in almost a decade.

The Star Brisbane has also teamed up with Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

(BCEC), Dodt pointed out, which will be physically joined via a pedestrian bridge linking the South Bank precinct with Queen's Wharf precinct.

"The partnership with BCEC will see us push beyond the physical boundaries of each property to create one of the country's most unique delegate client experiences," he said.

The Centre is complemented by the resort's other venues, including Sky Deck, which soars 100 metres above the Brisbane River and features three venues suited to private events; the Leisure Deck, an expansive open-air oasis; and The Landing, a 6,500m² 'green wharf' located on the river's edge.

Event attendees will be able to stay at four future luxury hotels once complete, including The Star's own five-star hotel, which opens 29 Aug (TD 16 Jul). JM

Accessibility a focus

STRENGTHENING its commitment to event accessibility and inclusion, the operators of Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre have launched its latest Accessibility Action Plan.

Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Trust said the new road map aims to address both physical and non-physical barriers.

The plan focuses on four key goals, including improving access to goods, services and facilities at MCEC - see the document [HERE](#).

New Tassie stadium to boost biz events

BUSINESS Events Tasmania (BET) has welcomed the release of the Macquarie Point Stadium concept designs, which include a 1,500-person function room.

"BET is excited by the new concept stadium renders that feature a Tasmanian timber exterior and roof...it's a great design and uniquely Tasmanian," said Chair Dom Baker.

"We are pleased that as a fully enclosed venue, the concourse, field an corporate areas provide



opportunities for a range of larger events and exhibitions."

Baker said the stadium's function area will likely increase the \$199 million that business events deliver to the Tasmanian economy each year.

EduTECH to Syd

BUSINESS Events Sydney has secured the EduTECH Congress and Expo, one of the largest education events in the world, for the next three years.

The events, occurring from 2025-2027, are expected to bring together more than 10,000 academics, training providers, and innovators, generating \$24 million in direct expenditure for the NSW economy.



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DriveAway has welcomed back **Julia Taylor** as Business Development Manager for South Australia and Western Australia. Taylor began her job as a retail travel advisor, and first started as a dedicated member of the DriveAway team in 2010, before taking a hiatus from the company through the pandemic.

The Star Entertainment Group has appointed **Janelle Campbell** as the new Chief Executive Officer of The Star Sydney. Before joining the casino, Campbell was an executive with Melo Crown Entertainment. The company has also appointed **Neale O'Connell** as interim Group Chief Financial Officer. O'Connell has previously served as CFO of Corporate Travel Management.

Alex McNeill has taken on the newly created role of Chief Expedition Officer of **HX**. The new c-suite role will oversee all aspects of the cruise line's global itinerary and expedition experience. McNeill will ensure each voyage is meticulously designed and curated to offer unparalleled exploration, education, and leave a positive impact on any communities they interact with.

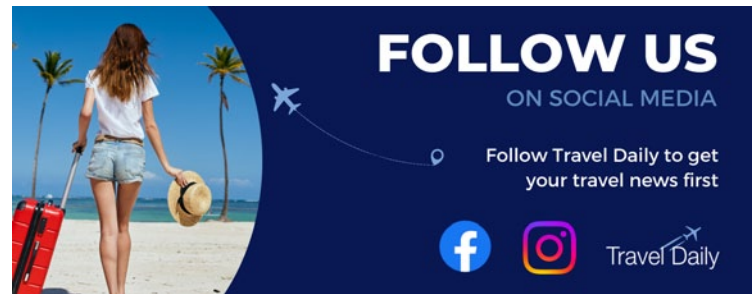
Travel platform **Jerne** has announced the appointment of industry veteran **Jeff Sirota** as Chief Commercial Officer. He arrives at Jerne with 20 years of industry experience, having previously served as Vice President of Small Luxury Hotels of the World, in addition to recently holding senior positions at J.MAK Hospitality.

Sofitel Hotels & Resorts has appointed a new Director of Sales for Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour, with **Rachela Virgara** joining the hotel. She joins the team from Hyatt Regency Sydney, where as Director Sales MICE, where she was recognised as one of the most prolific in her role across the entire Hyatt portfolio.

Baillie Lodges has named **Robyn Bautovich** as the General Manager of its flagship property Southern Ocean Lodge, where she will head up the team at the 25-suite Kangaroo Island property. Bautovich joins the growing Baillie portfolio of lodges as part of a more than 20-year career in hospitality, which most recently included heading up Peppers Beach Club & Spa Palm Cove.

Matthew Smith has been appointed Chief Executive Officer of **Destination Asia**. He succeeds Monique Arnoux, who led the destination management organisation for seven years. Smith will commence in his new role from next month.

Rory Coote has been appointed Corporate Director of Learning & Development at **Rotana**. Coote brings more than 10 years of experience to his new role, having previously served at properties including The Dorchester, 45 Park Lane, and Coworth Park hotels in the UK.



Disney cruising into Christmas



AFTER a wildly successful debut season in Australia and New Zealand, Disney Cruise Line is ramping up the magic further in 2024/25 in ways only Disney can.

In 94 days, *Disney Wonder* will sail back through Sydney Heads for its second of three confirmed seasons (so far) cruising between Australia's east and New Zealand.

For the first time in the local market, Disney Cruise Line will sail special Christmas-themed voyages, featuring all the popular Disney, Pixar, Marvel and Star Wars characters.

Between 24 Nov and 28 Dec, guests can join Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Donald Duck, Goofy, Pluto and many more for a special Christmas tree lighting ceremony in the central atrium on every voyage.

Daily schedules of Christmas themed entertainment will also be available in addition to the regular lineup of stage shows and character meet and greets.

Fast forward a year to 2025/26 and in another first for Disney Cruise Line, the line will visit five

new ports in New Zealand for the first time including Tauranga, Napier, Wellington, Christchurch and the Fiordland National Park.

The line will also add longer itineraries, with the centrepiece being a 10-night one-way voyage from Auckland to Sydney.

The Disney Destinations team kicked off the holiday spirit on Tue at a special 'Christmas in July' event in Sydney, attended by none other than Mickey and Minnie Mouse themselves. *ML*

Pictured above with the iconic Disney duo is Corey Waugh, Disney Destinations; Paul Konat, Disney Destinations; Jimmy Lynett, Disney Cruise Line; Steph Johnson, Disney Destinations; and Claudia Bill, Disney Destinations.

Nassau getting wet

A NEW 'family friendly' water park attraction close to the cruise port is under construction in the Bahamas port of Nassau.

The US\$35 million park will offer a new option for up to five million expected cruise visitors annually.

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