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## VA's rocky landing

**VIRGIN** Australia has dropped a three-day sale ahead of the launch of its new flights between Melbourne and Uluru tomorrow (**TD** 21 Nov 2023).

The discounted fares are available **HERE** from \$119 one-way until 12pm AEST 08 Jun.

## Rex shakes up its board

**REX** Executive Chairman Lim Kim Hai has stepped down amid a flurry of major changes announced today by the regional carrier to its management and board (**TD** breaking news).

Neville Howell, who has been Rex's Chief Operating Officer for the last 10 years, has been named as the airline's new Chief Executive Officer for an initial term of two years.

Howell, **pictured**, has been with the carrier for 34 years, including 12 years at its predecessor, Hazelton Airlines.

Kim Hai will remain on board with Rex as a Non-Executive Director and a significant shareholder of the company.

Meanwhile, John Sharp, who has served as Rex's Deputy Chairman for the last two decades, will now act as a Non-Executive Chairman.

"Kim Lai has given extraordinary service to the Rex Group during his time as Executive Chairman," Sharp stated in an announcement released on the ASX today.

"The company has grown from a small regional operator to one of the major aviation businesses in Australia today.

"On behalf of all of us at Rex, I would like to extend our thanks



to him for his leadership and huge effort over the many years he has led the company."

All other members of the Rex Board and management team will remain in their current roles. *JM*

## Qantas fuelled up

**THE** Australian Civil Aviation Safety Authority has certified the expanded fuel tank design on Qantas' forthcoming fleet of Airbus A350-1000 aircraft, which will operate its highly anticipated Project Sunrise flights.

The Flying Kangaroo pushed back the debut of its Sydney and Melbourne nonstop services to London and New York by six months (**TD** 22 Feb) to mid-2026 after the regulator asked for a redesign of the plane's fuel tanks to handle the 22-hour journeys.

Qantas originally ordered 12 of the ultra-long range jets before doubling the order to 24 last year (**TD** 24 Aug 2023), with CEO Vanessa Hudson saying the certification meant she was highly optimistic about the delivery date.

## Austria spotlighted

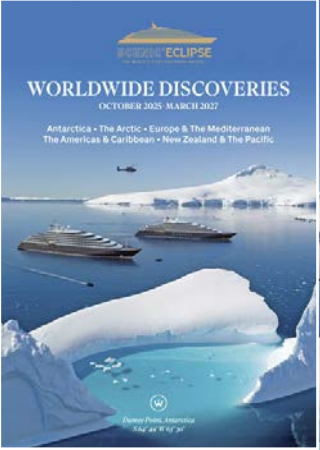
**TRAVEL** Agent Finder (TAF) has announced Austria as its newest destination feature, offering essential info for travellers planning to visit.

The guide also features a call-to-action to connect with an Austrian specialist travel agent.

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- Americas 250th Anniversary
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- Baltic Splendor
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- Bordeaux to the Thames River



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## AC ups yum factor

AIR Canada is now offering complimentary snacks, beer and wine on all flights within Canada and the US until the end of 2024.

Customers will enjoy Canadian favourites like herb and garlic pretzels, while the beverage line-up includes \$5 cocktails.



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## Green lights for VA/NZ

NEARLY seven years after an acrimonious divorce, Air New Zealand and Virgin Australia have climbed back into bed together with the ACCC today granting full authority for a new five-year partnership (**TD** breaking news).

Building on a draft authorisation granted last month, the two carriers can now fully cooperate on trans-Tasman airfares, joint discounts and marketing options among other initiatives.

ACCC Deputy Chair, Mick Keogh, said the competition watchdog was satisfied the sharing of resources by these airlines will improve ticketing and price options on trans-Tasman routes.

"Virgin Australia and Air New Zealand will also be able to jointly offer discounts and a range of marketing options to businesses, and eligible Virgin Australia customers will have access to Velocity Frequent Flyer program benefits and international lounge access," Keogh added.

## Intrepid's Oz sale

INTREPID has slashed the prices of its small-group adventures in Australia by 25%, including its six-day 'Daintree & Cape Tribulation Adventure', the 10-day 'South Australian Outback Adventure' and the nine-day 'Eyre Peninsula Adventure'.

The sale applies to itineraries departing between 06 Jun and 31 Oct 2024, for bookings made by 17 Jun - **CLICK HERE** for details.

Virgin Australia can now place its VA code on Air New Zealand flights across the Tasman on itineraries originating in Australia, significantly boosting the range of fares available to travellers.

Conditions of the deal mean Air New Zealand specifies which fares can be sold and marketed by VA and resupply those itineraries.

Excluded from the deal are routes already operated by Virgin Australia, such as its regular flights from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to Queenstown.

However, the ACCC said in its determination it did not support an increase to Air New Zealand's trans-Tasman capacity allocation, accepting the codeshare may result in higher pax volumes but that these extra travellers would likely fly with Qantas instead. **ML**

## WTAAA applaud AA

THE World Travel Agency Associations Alliance (WTAAA) has congratulated American Airlines for reversing its controversial policy restricting accrual of loyalty points to preferred NDC sellers.

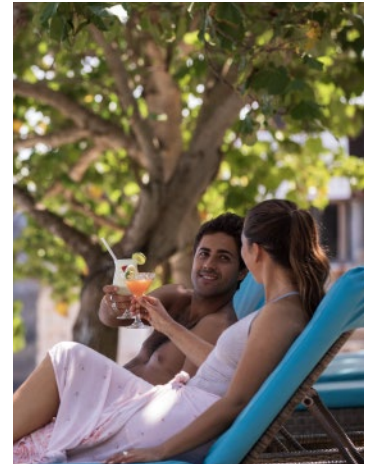
The prompt reversal comes less than a week after the departure of the airline's polarising anti-travel agent Chief Commercial Officer, Vasu Rama (**TD** 31 May).

The organisation said it hopes this development paves the way for American Airlines to rebuild constructive relationships with travel agents and recognise the value they provide to travellers.

## Ocean Day cruising

IN CELEBRATION of World Oceans Day this Sat, Celebrity Cruises is hosting a range of special activities across its fleet.

Guests can enjoy a presentation from Celebrity's environmental officers, Tai Chi classes, ocean-themed trivia, and more.



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## Window Seat

A QUEENSLAND retreat has enlisted the help of a sleep scientist to assist guests in getting a better night's rest.

Located in Palm Cove, the Reef House Adults Retreat has appointed Sabine Christelli as the property's Director of Sleep and Rejuvenation.

The snooze expert will lead the retreat's free Sleep Easy program, which includes educational sessions, guided meditation, light therapy, the sleep science of temperature, and journalling classes.

For an additional cost, guests can also book private 30-minute consultations with Christelli during their stay.

While it sounds like a rather dreamy job, most of us know that sleep can be a tricky thing to master!

## TTF: no SAF, no tourism

**TOURISM & Transport** Forum Chief Executive Officer Margy Osmond has described sustainable aviation fuel availability as a "deal-breaker" for the Australian tourism industry, as viability concerns about our destination emerge.

Osmond told yesterday's Ecotourism Australia Global Sustainable Tourism Summit the development of a local SAF industry is critical to the future of our tourism industry.

"This will be a deal-breaker for the Australian tourism industry; we're just too far away and every way to get here is long haul," Osmond said on the 'Future of Air Travel' panel (pictured).

"An industry is what we need: we need the fuel security, we need the fact that it's probably going to create close to 8,000 jobs in the next couple of decades," she added.

The roughly \$180 million set



aside to stimulate the local SAF industry by the Government of Australia in its latest budget is "not enough, but a start", Osmond contends.

The result of the lag in funding has seen the industry put its hand in its pocket, with Qantas Airways and Airbus each recently committing \$120m to establish an SAF refinery in Townsville.

Osmond said the best thing the rest of the industry can do is educate itself on the importance of SAF, and highlight this criticality to politicians and business. *MS*

## Accor goes Central

**ACCOR** has announced it will use Amadeus' Central Reservation System (ACRS) for its global properties portfolio.

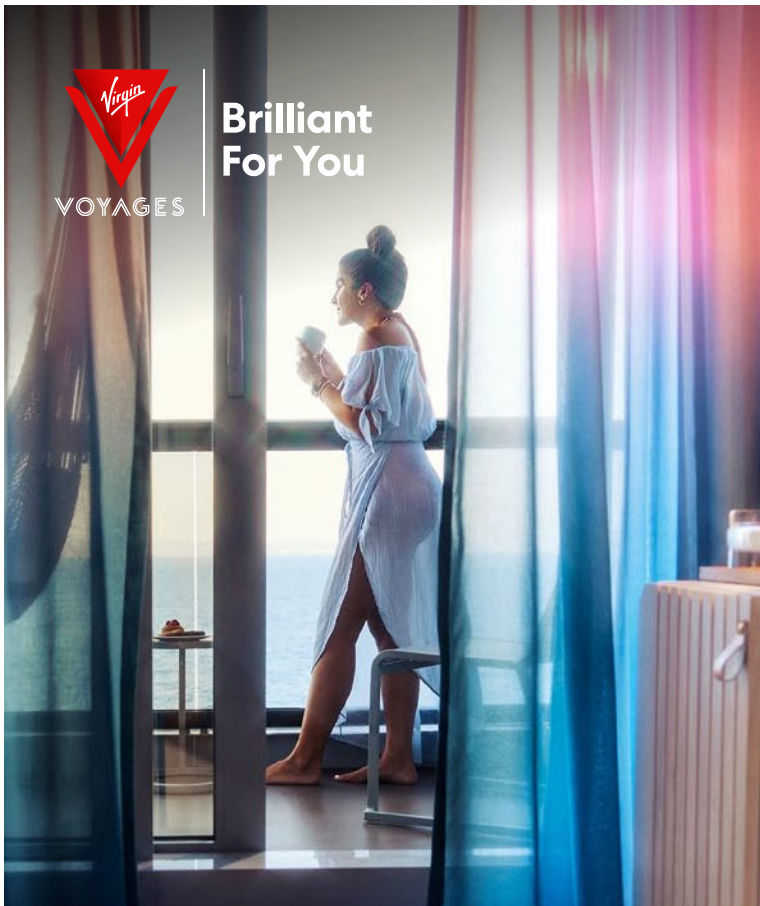
The cloud-based technology will help Accor boost its revenues, maximise distribution strategies, and better meet the needs of its guests around the world.

ACRS also allows hoteliers to curate personalised offers beyond just room types, by incorporating aspects like room views, styles, bedding preferences, and more.

## Korean to Macau

**KOREAN** Air is preparing to launch a new daily service between Seoul Incheon and Macau from 01 Jul.

Served by the airline's fleet of Airbus A321neos, the new route offers travellers from Macau more flight options, along with the ability to connect to KE's North America and Japan destinations via Seoul Incheon Int'l Airport.



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## Vic funding regions

**REGIONAL** tourism boards in Victoria will each be eligible for up to \$100,000 in funding via a new state government program. The 'Regional Tourism Network Industry Strengthening Program' is designed to ensure regional tourism bodies can upskill staff to improve the visitor experience. Funding can be used to conduct staff training courses on subjects including web content, social media and sustainability projects.

## Travel24 expands again



**THE** hottest topic in business has made it onto the Travel24 program, with a massive spin. Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be tackled in a way not yet seen at a travel and tourism conference by going far beyond the 'how to use ChatGPT' mindset. Founder of Airstack AI, Tom Pitney (pictured), will reveal how to create an AI strategy and share

steps to build out a plan. If Pitney's name sounds familiar, it may be because he was largely the brains behind well-known youth title Punkee, part of Junkee Media, which was born when Junkee acquired Pitney's media business, TheVine.com.au. Pitney not only knows AI, but he knows how to run and work in businesses of various sizes, with his CV also including time spent as Strategy Director, Commercial Content at News Corp.



### Alice Springs

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of AAT Kings, which is hosting its inaugural Kings Canyon, Uluru and Kata Tjuta tour this week.

**ASSEMBLING** in front of the resort before 6am, our day begins with a viewing of one of the Northern Territory's biggest light art installations, with the sunrise as a backdrop. Bruce Munro's Field of Light is comprised of up to 50,000 glowing spheres in hues of ochre, violet, blue, and white to create a stunning vivid experience made more special under the pre-dawn sky. After that, we headed to the Cultural Centre once again for an interactive Maraku Arts session before making our way to the iconic Kings Canyon.

## Bonza shoots wide

**IN WHAT** could spell more bad news for Bonza, the carrier's parent company, 777 Partners, has missed the deadline for a deal to take over English Premier League club, Everton FC. The failure of the US private equity firm to follow through on its agreement to purchase a 94.1% stake in the club has fuelled speculation it may not have the funds to bail out Bonza. The news comes less than two weeks after 777 Partners revealed its intention to restructure the Aussie carrier - however, no formal proposal has been submitted as of yet (TD 28 May).

**MEANWHILE**, the third travel advisor to take part in the 'Change Agents: The Challenges And Opportunities For Travel Advisors' panel has been named. Emily Kadinski (pictured), owner of itravel Carlingford, is joining the group which already includes Helloworld's Yohan Siva and TravelManagers' Louise McCarthy. Also confirmed to speak at Travel24 is CVFR Group's Ram Chhabra, Hardhat's Dan Monheit, and global keynote speaker, DEI expert Azure Antoinette. Earlybird tickets for groups and individuals are on sale only for a limited time - **CLICK HERE**.

## Juneau caps cruise

**JUNEAU** has imposed a daily limit to the number of visitors permitted to disembark from cruise ships in a move designed to combat overtourism. The Alaskan city will accept no more than 16,000 visitors from Sun-Fri, with the limit tightening to 12,000 on Sat. The move aims to address longstanding demands by residents for daily limits and builds on a 2023 agreement to cap the number of ships in port, a deal which led cruise lines to increase the size of ships sailing in Alaska to cater to strong demand.

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## Festival fade-out

**AUSSIERS** are starting to favour stadium acts over festivals, according to new research from Flight Centre's Stage and Screen, due to increased costs, logistical challenges, and bad weather.

The survey of 1,000 18-to-35-year-old Australians revealed 89% would steer clear of music festivals for multiple reasons, while 31% said they'd prefer to see a headline act, such as Taylor Swift or P!nk.

Two thirds (66%) said ticket prices are putting them off festivals, and more than one third (35%) are deterred by the hassle of getting to festival locations.

The fact that festivals can quickly turn into a mud-bath given a lack of shelter, has also deterred 33% of Aussies.

## A VICTORY FOR VIC EVENT INDUSTRY

**IN A** win for Victoria's events industry, secret briefings that were used to justify sending Victorians into the world's longest lockdown will be made public.

The landmark ruling follows a four-year Freedom of Information fight by Liberal MP David Davis, as part of his support for Victoria's event industry in the form of the 'Save Victorian Events' campaign.

The Department of Health was ordered to make public more than 100 briefs containing up to 7,000 pages upon which key decisions were made about the state's COVID restrictions.

Well-respected event industry professional and Managing Director of Events Pty, Simon Thewlis (**pictured**), gave evidence during the trial, arguing that the 111-day lockdown "decimated" Victoria's events industry, which is worth \$10 billion annually.

Thewlis, who has worked in



the industry for four decades, said the restrictions did "not seem to be based on any real understanding of the real risks involved with events or the main setting in which they are held".

In his witness statement, Thewlis explained that being able to access the health briefings "would have certainly assisted the industry as we were desperately trying to understand what was allowed...and what we could plan for the future".

He pointed out that "most events have a lead time of anywhere between six weeks and a year...which meant that when all of this was happening...people were trying to make decisions about events that might be in six weeks' time, six months' time or even a year's time".

At the time Thewlis prepared his witness statement, he noted there had been no direct meetings between the Department of Health and Victorian event industry representatives.

Speaking on behalf of the industry, he said "our view was very much that a lot of the restrictions made no sense".

The Department of Health, which fought to keep the documents private due to the time and resources it would take to locate and process them, has until the end of Jun to decide if it will appeal the decision. *JM*

## SITE to see Sydney

**THE** Society for Incentive Travel Excellence Australia and New Zealand (SITE ANZ) will host a global leaders meeting in Sydney next week, in partnership with Business Events Australia and other organisations.

The five-day program will see SITE's international Board of Directors and global senior leadership team gather to discuss initiatives, incentive travel industry trends, and future directions for SITE, as well as explore Sydney's iconic locations.

## Encore delivers huge incentive program

**AUSTRALIAN** audio-visual and event production company, Encore Event Technologies, recently managed its biggest-ever back-to-back program of activity and events.

Encore delivered an action-packed incentive experience for 700 Asian Paints India resellers, with the 14-day schedule featuring more than 32 events in 17 venues across Australia and New Zealand.

The huge program saw the delegates flown between Queenstown and Auckland in two groups over two weeks in Apr and May.

The groups were taken to incredible venues, from Doubtful Sound on the South Island of NZ to Sky City in the North, then across the ditch to Sydney Harbour and Bondi, with team-building activities and gala dinners also on the agenda.

## \$1.2m for events

**THE** WA Government will award \$1.2 million to 73 events through its annual Regional Events Scheme.

The recipients include 16 new events for 2024-25, including the Ningaloo Sky Festival, which will increase exposure to the Gascoyne's dark sky tourism.

The funding allocation also includes \$250,000 for nine Aboriginal events.



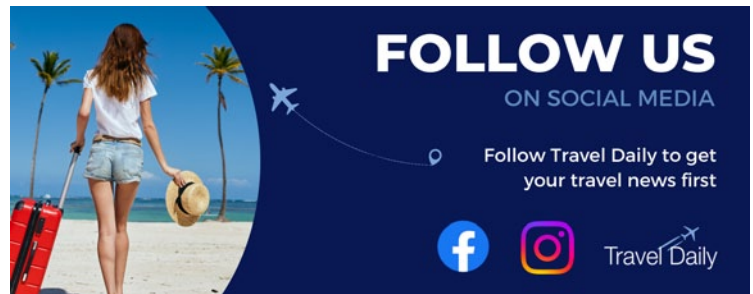
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## APPOINTMENTS

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appointments@traveldaily.com.au

HX (previously Hurtigruten Expeditions) has announced the appointment of **Kirsty Fruin** as its Regional Sales Manager Qld/SA/WA. Set to be based in Brisbane for her new role, Fruin has recently immigrated from the UK and joins the team with a wealth of experience in the cruise sector, boasting successful spells from renowned cruise lines such as Fred. Olsen and Royal Caribbean International.

The **South Australian Tourism Commission** has recently welcomed veteran TV presenter **David Koch** as its new Executive Director and Chairman of the organisation. Koch is a well-know media personality with a variety of experiences across different fields including co-hosting Channel Seven's *Sunrise* for many years. Alongside his new SATC duties, Koch remains in his role as Chairman of the Port Adelaide AFL football club as well as the Economic Director at comparethemarket.com.au.

**Pam Dewar** has been promoted to the role of National Sales Manager at **World Expeditions**, a global tour operator. Dewar carries an impressive history in the leisure, travel, and tourism industries. She was most recently the Queensland sales manager of the organisation, where she was instrumental in delivering strong sales results and growing trade relationships for the brand across the region.

**Alison Banks** has joined **Abercrombie & Kent (A&K)** in a newly created position of Regional Sales Manager for South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Banks joins A&K from TravelManagers where she worked as its Business Partnership Manager. She boasts in-depth expertise across the retail, air, and touring sectors throughout her expansive resume.

Initiating its expansion to the Australian market, **Riviera Travel** has appointed **Steven Taylor** as the new International Sales Manager, who will be dedicated in driving growth of the river cruise line's brand profile in Australia. Taylor brings a lengthy resume of experience across the tourism sector, having worked with organisations like Saga Travels and P&O Cruises. Taylor will work closely with Riviera's trade partner Travel the World to achieve strong results in the Australian market.

In a move to sustain its best achieving year in 2023, **Shiji Distribution Solutions** has promoted **Anson Lau** to Managing Director, Global. The organisation has signed new partnerships in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Indonesia, Europe, and the US with more services to be launched, including the Book & Pay online marketplace in the pipeline.

**Pornpim Hiranpradit** has joined **Dusit International** as Director of Development (Global). Based in Bangkok, her day-to-day responsibilities will include leading the company's development efforts across Asia-Pacific, as well as Dusit's regional offices worldwide. She was previously the hotel General Manager at Patravana Resort Khaoyai.

## Treby traverses Northern BC



**ENTIRE** Travel Group's Destination Manager - Canada & Alaska, Sam Treby, has returned home after a week-long adventure in Canada's Northern British Columbia (BC).

Joining a group of Canada experts, Treby began her journey in Terrace, a small city in west central BC that serves as a gateway to the region's Indigenous communities. "As well as immersing ourselves in authentic First Nations experiences, we traversed the spectacular Nass Valley, navigated the Skeena River on a Northern BC Jet Boat Tour, and received a guided tour of the Kitselas Canyon National Historic Site," Treby described.

The group took a scenic train ride to Prince Rupert, where they spent two days exploring the region, including observing grizzly bears, sea lions, eagles and whales in their natural habitat.

"Overall, the trip offered a comprehensive look at the diverse cultural heritage of Northwest Indigenous communities and the

natural beauty of the region," Treby shared.

"This area of Canada is a hidden gem that would appeal to those seeking unique travel experiences, whether by rail, road, or sea."

Entire Travel Group's 2024/25 Canada & Alaska brochure is out now - order a copy **HERE**. JM

Treby is **pictured** on board a Prince of Rupert Tours cruise to the Khutzeymateen Valley Grizzly Bear Tour.

## Azzurra goes north

**EMERALD** Cruises will redeploy *Emerald Azzurra* away from its previously scheduled Seychelles season for the 2024/25 northern winter due to ongoing safety concerns in the Red Sea.

In its place, *Azzurra* will relocate to the Caribbean from Dec 2024 to Feb 2025 where it will operate a pair of eight-night itineraries to less-travelled ports including Jost Van Dyke and Norman Island.

The move also aims to address strong demand in the Caribbean.