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Explora II delayed

MORE time is needed to put the finishing touches on *Explora II*, with Explora Journeys confirming the luxury vessel will delay its launch date by more than a month and set sail on 16 Sep.

The line is contacting affected pax to arrange revised voyages.

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Barry lands Webjet CEO gig

WEBJET'S plan to separate its thriving B2B business from its consumer arm has precipitated the appointment of well-known travel executive Katrina Barry to the role of CEO Webjet B2C (**TD** breaking news).

The former MD of Contiki Holidays/Trafalgar will exchange her seat on the Webjet board for the new leadership position, cementing her official executive return to the travel sector after a stint as CEO of restaurant ordering platform me&u.

Webjet Managing Director, John Gusic, stated he was confident Barry would bring "considerable



value" to Webjet B2C and take the division to "new heights" under her leadership.

Under the updated demerger plan, Gusic will become the MD of the B2B standalone entity, along with Denise McComish, Brad Holman, and Roger Sharp as Non-Executive Directors.

Meanwhile, Barry will be supported by Layton Shannos as the new CFO for Webjet B2C, and if the proposed demerger of Webjet's B2B and B2C divisions goes ahead, Don Clarke will be appointed Non-Executive Chair of the consumer division.

Shelley Beasley and Brad Holman will also sit on the board of the proposed B2C entity, with another to be recruited.

Webjet also confirmed that after any demerger process, Webjet B2B will not retain a shareholding in Webjet B2C, and will likely be rebranded to reflect its ownership of the WebBeds business. **AB**

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

Batik dumps Perth

OPERATIONAL requirements has led Malaysia-based Batik Air to scrap Perth as a stopover point for its Auckland-Kuala Lumpur services, from 19 Jul.

However, the carrier will reinstate direct flights between Auckland and KL in Dec, subject to regulatory approvals.

Batik Air CEO, Datuk Chandran Rama Muthy, said he regretted any inconvenience caused by the decision, but remains confident that strategic adjustments will strengthen overall operations.

"The forthcoming replacement with a direct service will strengthen the connectivity and opportunities for travellers across the Batik Air network and enhance travel experience of our passengers," he said.

Selling the magic

INFINITY Holidays has launched six Disneyland resort packages in celebration of the new 'Three-Day One-Park Per Day' Disneyland Resort ticket offer.

See the **back page** to discover all the details on the three new six-night packages.

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AI fuels travel scams

THE increasing use of artificial intelligence is driving a dramatic rise in travel scams, Booking.com's Internet Safety chief, Marnie Wilking, has warned.

Over the past 18 months, Wilking stated that scams have spiked by as high as 900%, with criminal outfits using phishing schemes as the most common form of travel booking fraud.

"Attackers are using AI to launch attacks that mimic emails far better than anything that they've done to date," she said.

Phishing attacks attempt to fool travellers into handing over credit card details through fake internet booking links, with AI capable of creating more convincing landing pages than ever before.

Two-factor authentication is a major defence against phishing.

Banks tighten the screws

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIA'S big banks are ramping up pressure on travel agencies to put up large financial guarantees or collateral to keep their merchant EFTPOS facilities in-store, **Travel Daily** can reveal.

While banks have considered travel a high-risk industry for decades, dating back to the fall of Ansett in 2001, the recent failures of Bonza and Air Vanuatu have again earned their ire.

The renewed pressure comes as the rate of credit card chargeback claims rise, as travellers seek to reclaim their money quickly and avoid the possibility of failing to recoup refunds from suppliers.

Echuca Travel Centre Managing Director, Justine Apps, said her store was recently forced to hand back its EFTPOS machines.

"We were with the Commonwealth Bank for over 40 years but they asked us for a security of \$500,000 to continue with the machines, so we don't currently have an EFTPOS machine," Apps told **TD**.

In response, the agency signed up for a new S700 EFTPOS terminal from travel payments brand, Mint Payments.

Kylee Ellerton from Frank Ford Travel in Ballarat said she was unable to secure an EFTPOS machine after repeated attempts with many of the big banks.

Mint Payments Chief Financial Officer, James Swan, said its



new terminal works to serve a segment in the market that is misunderstood by the big banks.

"[Banks are] scared of a Bestjet or Ansett scenario or another drastic event that can happen in the travel space," Swan said.

"Banks don't really understand what a travel agent does, what a tour operator does, what controls they have in place, what suppliers they work with, everyone was just bucketed into one big 'travel is high risk' category."

Zenith Payments, which operates in the travel space under its TravelPay brand, is also understood to be working on a bond-free solution for agents. **ML**

Silversea pre-sale

SILVERSEA has opened an exclusive pre-sale on its World Cruise 2027, 'The Three Oceans', which is set to visit more destinations than any voyage in the brand's history.

Departing 08 Jan 2027 from Los Angeles, *Silver Dawn* will call into 80 destinations during the epic 149-day sailing, including 20 new calls for a Silversea World Cruise and 11 overnights - more **HERE**.

Paying for flexibility

AUSTRALIAN business travellers are prioritising flexibility over price when booking airfares, according to Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Corporate division.

More than half of all FCTG's corporate customers either rebook or reschedule their flights, and are willing to pay a premium for the ability to adjust their travel arrangements.

"We know productivity and flexibility in travel booking is just as important as the cost of travel," Flight Centre Corporate Global Chief Operating Officer, Melissa Elf, said.

She also revealed that corporate travel in Australia is dominated by the mining, oil and gas sector, which accounted for around 14% of all travel bookings in Australia in the first quarter of this year.



Qld reclaims island jewel

QUEENSLAND Government efforts to reclaim the once major tourist destination of Double Island has seen it successfully returned as a state asset.

The development follows a legal battle with Hong Kong businessman Benny Wu (**TD** 18 May 2023), who had a lease on the island, with the Land Court of Australia ruling he had forfeited rights to retain the agreement after letting Double Island fall into a state of disrepair.

With the Far North Qld island now officially back in state hands, expressions of interest for new tourism operators will take place over the coming months.

The Qld Government is envisioning a mixed use tourist development for Double Island, incorporating day visitation, overnight accommodation and various tourism experiences.

The government is also keen to ensure the new suite of operators



are all Australian-based.

“I would like to think by the end of the calendar year there’s a shortlist of people who are putting together their ideas and plans,” Barron River MP Craig Crawford said.

MEANWHILE another Queensland island that has lapsed into a dilapidated state is the subject of a renewed native title claim for exclusive use of the land and its air strip.

The Woppaburra people are seeking exclusive possession of Great Keppel Island’s resort precinct, raising questions about whether it will continue to function as a tourist hub.

Last year, Qld cancelled the lease held by Tower Holdings due to \$900,000 in unpaid rent. **AB**

Sheraton is needed

PROPERTY developer Sunny Beach Land has put forward its case for a proposed 21-storey Sheraton hotel in Hervey Bay, claiming the project, if approved, would contribute \$583m to the Fraser Coast economy.

A newly published report forecasts a Sheraton in the Qld city would add \$158 million more value than previous estimates, including an extra \$12 million in annual visitor spending.

Inspiring webinar

INSPIRING Vacations will host a webinar for travel agents tomorrow at 2pm AEST, where more education will be relayed about its product range, booking processes, & trade partnerships.

All attendees will also have the chance to win a \$500 Mastercard gift card, and a replay of the webinar will be emailed to registrants afterwards.

Register to attend **HERE**.

QF pulls Japan plug

AMID ongoing fuel and labour shortages in Japan, Qantas has ditched plans to operate seasonal flights to Sapporo for the upcoming ski season in Hokkaido.

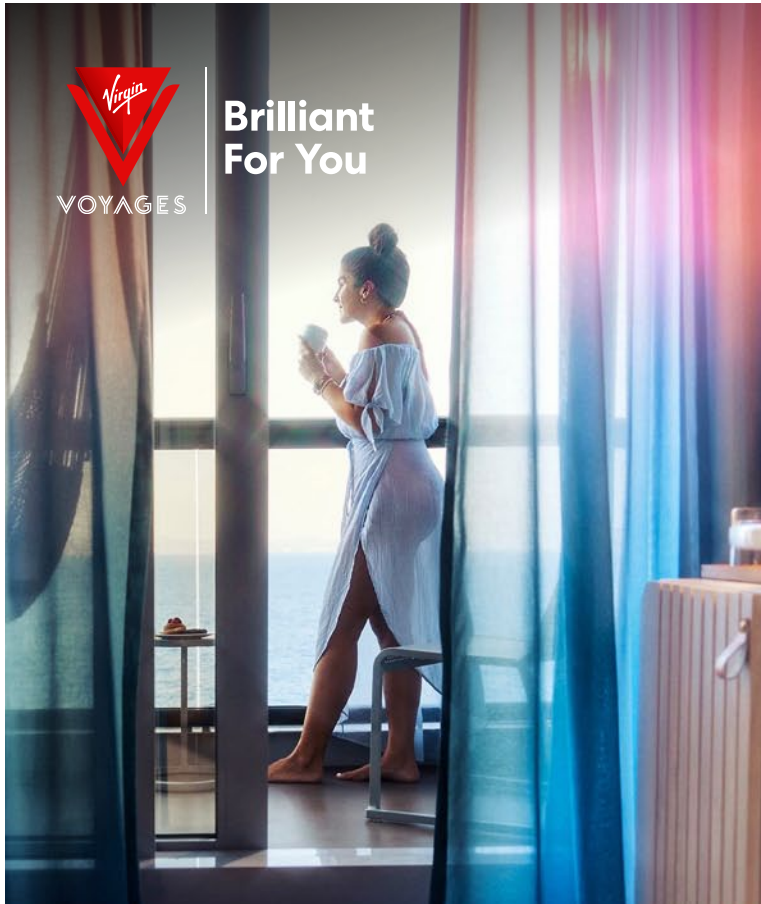
The Aussie carrier’s decision to pull back from a weekly service to the popular ski region accompanies several airlines also making the call to scrap flights to other Japanese airports, citing similar logistical challenges.

Korean Air and T’way Air have cancelled summer routes to Asahikawa Airport and Obihiro Airport in Hokkaido, while SQ is unlikely to go ahead with seasonal flights to New Chitose.

New BA codeshare

BRITISH Airways and JetBlue have been given the green light to codeshare on US and European routes for “an indefinite duration”.

The partnership applies to 39 US domestic routes from NY, 36 from Boston, and 17 European routes.



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QR helps cure cancer



QATAR Airways hosted top clients and industry partners at a major charity event at Sydney's ICC last weekend, with the carrier one of many supporters of the Tour de Cure Snow Ball.

Tour de Cure raises funds for important cancer research, with the evening including a live auction of a luxury Qatar Airways & Scotland whisky experience, featuring business class return

flights from any Australian port to Europe and the United Kingdom.

The QR table is **pictured** above, including Country Manager Australia East, Wayne Borland and Sales Executive, Stella Vlahos with Viking Cruises' Victoria Scobie and Sandra Fleming.

Other industry supporters of the event included Viking Cruises - more details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

Cruise360 earlybird

DISCOUNTED earlybird ticket prices to the 2024 edition of Cruise360 Australasia end this week, with the annual showpiece event set to be bigger than ever.

Cruise360 will take place at the ICC in Sydney on 30 Aug and will feature a packed program of speakers and the show's biggest ever trade show, with exhibitors confirmed from around the world **CLICK HERE** for earlybird tickets.

Mandarin milestone

LUXURY hotel brand Mandarin Oriental has opened its 40th hotel worldwide, with its latest two openings on the same day.

In the Middle East, Mandarin Oriental Muscat has opened its doors, marking the brand's debut in Oman with a property offering 150 rooms and suites.

At the same time, the brand has opened its second site in London with the 50-key Mandarin Oriental London Mayfair.



Window Seat

A GHOST has been reportedly spotted floating in the window above the Fortune of War, Sydney's oldest pub and major tourism drawcard in the historic precinct, The Rocks.

Photos and videos are currently circulating online of the blurry white image, with people speculating whether it could be the infamous George Street ghost.

Apparently the apparition was last seen in a former hostel and brothel in The Rocks, and legend has it the poor guy met his untimely death at the hands of a murderous prostitute.



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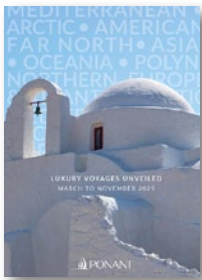
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Ponant Explorations.



Ponant Explorations - Luxury Voyages

Ponant's new 2025 brochure features an enticing range of luxury sailings, including 13 brand-new itineraries exploring Northern Europe & the Atlantic, the Mediterranean, Asia, Oceania and Polynesia, as well as exclusive experiences aboard *Le Commandant Charcot* - the world's only luxury icebreaker. Each Ponant voyage now includes a minimum of one excursion per port of call, promising equally immersive experiences as luxurious as the expeditions themselves. Guests will explore UNESCO World Heritage sites, traverse exhilarating polar destinations, and visit bustling city centres. To learn more about the 2025 journeys, download the new 124-page brochure [HERE](#).



Zeppelin Travel - Floriade & the Best of Canberra

Zeppelin Travel is inviting travellers to Canberra on a six-day tour to experience the best of Australia's capital city. Departing on 04 Oct, travellers will spend five nights at the Mantra on Northbourne, located in the heart of the CBD. The tour coincides with Floriade, a spring celebration with a display of over a million blooms. Guests will also take in Cockington Green Gardens and the National Arboretum; visit parliamentary buildings, galleries, and the Australian War Memorial; and enjoy stunning views of the city from Mount Ainslie and Eagle's Nest Lookout. Land-only packages are priced from \$1,645pp.



Oceania Cruises - Tropics & Exotics Collection

Oceania Cruises is showcasing more than 130 itineraries for 2025 and 2026 in its latest brochure. Travellers can discover details on sailings to far-flung destinations across Antarctica, Asia, Africa, India, Mexico, the Caribbean, South America and the Amazon, and many more. The 'simply MORE' offer is featured on select getaways throughout the booklet, with travellers able to take advantage of free shore excursions, alcoholic beverages, gourmet specialty dining, unlimited wi-fi, and more.

Stark braves cold for a cause



FLIGHT Centre's Global Managing Director, Andrew Stark, braved the cold recently to help raise funds and awareness for homelessness.

Stark (**pictured**) was one of hundreds of CEOs, business owners and government leaders who participated in the Vinnies CEO Sleepout.

The one-night event saw more than 1,500 participants sleep outdoors in cities around the country to help raise money for the charity, which will use the funds to provide essential services to Australians in need.

"It's hard to know where to begin after experiencing just 12 hours of walking in the shoes of someone who lives on the streets," Stark shared on LinkedIn.

"These individuals are not on the streets by choice, but are the unfortunate victims of trauma or financial hardship."

The travel leader went on to discuss how homelessness had affected his own family, sharing how his uncle ended up living on the streets after the loss of his young son led him down a path of destruction.

"Sharing my family's story reminds me of how fortunate I am and how quickly circumstances can change," he said.

"I want to take a moment to acknowledge Vinnies Qld for their exceptional efforts in striving to make a difference in the lives of those affected by homelessness and for letting me play a small part last night."

So far, the Vinnies CEO Sleepout has raised nearly \$8.3 million of its \$8.6 million target - donations can be made [HERE](#). *JM*

UK pax in the dark

MORE than 100 flights were axed at Manchester Airport overnight due to a power outage that "took down security systems and baggage screening".

With the disruption now resolved, the airport stated it will be investigating the incident, and that it is working to reschedule cancelled flights and reunite passengers without their bags.

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Sell the magic with exclusive packages

In celebration of the new 3-Day 1-Park Per Day *Disneyland* Resort ticket offer, Infinity Holidays is launching 6 incredible packages, giving travellers a magical experience, and a great way to save to enjoy three days to explore the wonder of The Happiest Place on Earth.



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