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## Harmony debuts tours

**EXCLUSIVE**

A **NEW** tour operator has launched in the Australian market, specialising in adventures across Turkiye and the Balkans. Harmony Travel Group offers travellers all-inclusive packages at affordable price points that focus on delivering a blend of history, culture, and nature.

Three debut tours are now available to book, including its 'Amazing Turkiye' itinerary exploring the Cappadocia region, as well as a 'Grand Balkans' adventure visiting the historic towns of Mostar and Trogid.

A 'Grand Europe' trip is also live, taking guests to popular cities such as Venice and Paris.

The Australian business is looking to capitalise on new Turkish Airlines services departing from Melbourne, which its itineraries all incorporate, with Sydney departures likely to be added once they are introduced.

Harmony Travel Group CEO,

Steven Young, told **TD** the Harmony brand will be investing resources in educating travel agents about its new tours.

"We are committed to enhancing the expertise of travel advisors through...fam trips, incentives, and training sessions, with specific dates to be communicated soon," he said.

The target market are Aussies aged 45+, including active retirees who prefer group travel in a tailored guided tour environment.

Harmony offers commissions of 10% and access to promotional materials (see more info **HERE**).

Debut dates for all three tours will depart in Oct. **AB**

### Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features six pages of the latest news including a cover wrap from **Tourism New Zealand**, our **Sustainability** page, plus a full page from **Silversea**.

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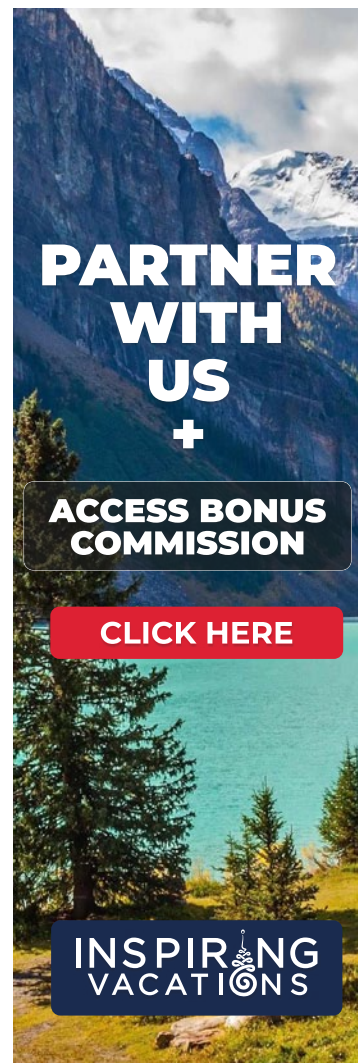
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## Atlas plots Australia

**PORTUGAL-BASED** expedition cruise line Atlas Ocean Voyages is making a stronger push on the Australian market, appointing Cruise Traveller as its new exclusive local representative.

The luxury cruise brand operates voyages to the poles, Europe and South America, with its fleet of three 198-guest ships offering a 24-hour room service, a modern fitness studio, French-inspired wellness facilities, and sundeck with pools and hot tub.

“Atlas Ocean Voyages is a fresh brand and through our extensive trade and consumer networks and by working with our retail agent partners, we plan to showcase bold, intimate and in-depth experiences,” Cruise Traveller Managing Director, Joseph O’Sullivan, said.

## Regional renewal for QF

**QANTASLINK** will consolidate three sub-fleets of DeHavilland turboprop aircraft down to one, today announcing it will purchase an extra 14 mid-life Dash 8-400 planes for its regional operations.

The Q400 model is 30% faster than its Q200 and Q300 predecessors, with the first plane to join the fleet by end of 2024.

Remaining aircraft will be commissioned into service over the next two years, with the majority coming in FY25 and concluding in FY26.

QantasLink will then gradually phase out 19 older aircraft from service, with the consolidation expected to result in lower maintenance and operating costs.

The investment will take Qantas’ Q400 fleet to 45 planes, however the airline said no material change to QantasLink’s overall turboprop capacity is expected.

The hardware refresh comes as QantasLink continues to take



delivery of up to 29 Airbus A220 aircraft as part of its regional fleet renewal, replacing its Boeing 717s.

Qantas Group CEO, Vanessa Hudson, said the investment will ensure ongoing and reliable air services across regional Australia.

“By consolidating our turboprops into a single fleet type, we’ll be able to further improve our reliability and provide a better recovery for our customers during disruptions as well as reducing complexity and cost for our operation,” Hudson commented.

The Qantas boss added the extra aircraft will provide certainty over the next decade while it works with manufacturers on electric and battery aircraft. *ML*

## Dunbier at the wheel

**MANDY** Dunbier has joined Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) to lead its ground transport segment as the new Global Supply Partnerships Manager.

Based at the company’s global headquarters in Brisbane, Dunbier (**pictured**) will identify and capitalise on new opportunities to grow land segment sales across FCTG’s corporate and leisure businesses.



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## Eurail shifts gears to go slow



### EXCLUSIVE

**HIGH-SPEED** European rail pass provider Eurail is applying the brakes and urging travellers to relax and explore more of the continent on their next visit.

To get holidaymakers in the mood to go slow, Eurail has curated a pop-up exhibit at Jordan in Sydney's Paddington, featuring a gallery of spectacular images by artist, Liz Sunshine.

Eurail passes are available in Australia through Rail Europe, Rail Online and International Rail, and allow travellers to explore more than 30,000 stations in 33 countries with 35 train operators.

Travel passes range in duration from four days to three months.

But according to Eurail Senior Communications Lead, Pip Issa, the brand is aiming to change the mindset of travellers to embrace Europe beyond the major cities. "We went on a slow travel rail

adventure to Scandinavia, with a journalist and photographer called Liz Sunshine, and she was able to capture streets, fashion, but also what makes Scandinavia the way it is."

Issa said when you think of European trains, 'slow' is not an adjective often used, but travellers would be surprised by what else is out there.

"We have the most beautiful local slower trains," Issa said.

"[We] try to encourage people to get curious and combine some local trains with some high-speed trains, because not everyone has all the time in the world, so you have to be a bit selective.

"We say, 'go one stop further'."

"There is a slow travel adventure for you because of how flexible our passes are...it's a new position for the brand," she added. *ML*

Issa is pictured above left with Eurail colleague, Emma Malinova.

## The Chat

with Jenny



Travel Daily  
A conversation with Penny Spencer

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## Aussie carriers' Skytrax slide

**AUSTRALIA'S** two biggest airlines have both slipped down the rankings in the 2024 Skytrax World Airline Awards.

Qantas fell from 17th place in 2023 down to the 24th spot this year, while VA slipped eight places from 46th to 54th.

When asked how it intends to climb the ladder again, Qantas told *Travel Daily*, "we have been listening to our customers and our people and have been acting on this feedback with significant investment already underway".

"We want our customers to feel the difference from the changes that we have put in place and in recent months we have seen customer satisfaction levels improve," a spokesperson said.

It isn't all bad news for Aussie

carriers though, with Jetstar taking out silver in the World's Best Long Haul Low-Cost Airlines category, outshone only by Singapore Airlines subsidiary, Scoot.

Meanwhile, Qatar Airways was declared the World's Best airline at the gala ceremony in London last night, marking the eight time the carrier has claimed the title.

In addition to earning the top title, Qatar was also named the World's Best Business Class, the World's Best Business Class Lounge and the Best Airline in the Middle East.

Singapore Airlines, which was 2023 Airline of the Year winner, ranked as the second-best airline in the world, followed by EK, ANA & Cathay Pacific. *JM*

## Speaking for Good

**THE** speaker line-up has been revealed for next year's travel industry empowerment event 'A Force For Good' (*TD* 17 Apr).

Intrepid co-founder and Director, Geoff Manchester, will take to the stage along with Wendy Wu Tours founder Wendy Wu; Globus family of brands MD Gai Tyrrell; and founder of Eden Australia, Michelle Kerr.

The event, which will champion diversity, equality, inclusion and sustainability, will take place in Sydney on 07 Mar and Auckland on 14 Mar 2025.

Secure your spot by contacting [hello@aforgeforgoodhub.com](mailto:hello@aforgeforgoodhub.com).

## Taipei over Tasman

**CHINA** Airlines will join the crowded trans-Tasman aviation landscape from 03 Dec, launching a five-times weekly service linking Melbourne and Auckland.

The Taiwanese airline's new link to New Zealand will supplement the regular Taipei to Melbourne service, adding around 3,000 weekly seats to the route.

MEL Aviation Chief Jim Parashos said the move means four airlines will compete on the AKL route.

"China Airlines is making the most of what would otherwise be downtime for its aircraft in Melbourne to operate this new service, and it's a great result for consumers," Parashos said.

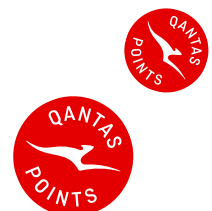
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## Airlines boost their game

**EVERY** Australian domestic airline recorded on-time arrivals and departures above 70% for the first time this year, according to official data released yesterday.

The latest BITRE report for airline on-time performance saw Qantas reclaim its crown as the most reliable carrier, recording a 79.5% score for on-time arrivals.

After a stellar 81.2% score in Apr, Virgin Australia returned to more familiar territory in May with 77.9% of flights pulling up to the gate as scheduled, while Jetstar recorded a 79.1% average.

All three major domestic carriers, including regional offshoots QantasLink and Virgin Australia Regional, performed better than Rex, which returned a score for May of 77.1%.

On-time departures also rated well for the month, with Qantas seeing 81.1% of flights get away on time, followed by Virgin Australia at 78.9%.

Cancellations saw a bigger gap in performance, with Qantas axing 3.2%, or 529 flights compared to Virgin with just 2% or 249 flights, while JQ (71 flights) and Rex (49 flights) book-ended the 1% mark, respectively. *ML*

## Italy claims top spot

**ITALY** is at the top of the list of destinations where Australians make the most travel insurance claims, ahead of the UK, Greece, France and Spain, according to new data from Medibank.

Two of the highest insurance claims made by Aussies in Europe last year were also in Italy, for \$67,000 and \$42,000.

ATIA CEO Dean Long pointed out to *The Australian* that ticket sales through travel agents were up 7% in May compared to last year.

Interestingly, DFAT figures also show Italy is where most Australian passports go missing.

## ATIA UPDATE

from Christian Hunter, Chairman



**AS THE** incoming Chair of ATIA, I wanted to take the opportunity to simply say hi. Thank you to

everyone who has sent a personal message; I've been overwhelmed by the support since news of my appointment was released and contact has been received from industry colleagues not just in Australia, but around the globe.

I cannot overemphasise how honoured I am to lead such an esteemed and talented board.

ATIA's directors are among the travel industry's greatest minds, and we are privileged to have their commitment to the goal of strengthening the industry we all love so much.

Travel is extremely dynamic, with constant change, constant challenges but also constant opportunity, and ATIA's new board has a fantastic depth of experience to continue to lead our

industry in this next chapter.

I look forward to working with all directors and our amazing ATIA team, led by CEO Dean Long, to deliver even greater outcomes for our travel agent, tour operator, wholesale and consolidation members.

It would be remiss of me to not acknowledge the outstanding work of ATIA's retiring Chairman, Tom Manwaring.

Throughout the pandemic, Tom spent more time in the trenches on behalf of every single business in the Australian travel industry than he will ever admit.

ATIA will never forget this, and on behalf of all members Tom, I say a massive thank you.

There is a lot to do as ATIA looks to address the pressing issues faced by all members.

Regardless of your industry sector, there is a common goal to maximise the sale of travel products and I hope to be able to make a difference through leading the Board with an absolute focus on the needs of members and greater collaboration across all segments of the industry.

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### Take a Firebreak

A NEW off-grid retreat has opened in Queensland, offering visitors a blend of sustainable accommodation and luxury.

Located around two-and-a-half hours from Brisbane in the scenic South Burnett region, The Firebreak is ideal for guests seeking to reconnect with nature.

Each cabin is entirely off-grid, featuring a fireplace and bathtub, and boasting views of the Bunya Mountains.

Guests are encouraged to take a break from technology and embark on hikes, explore Lake Boondooma, and visit the surrounding wineries.

### Fresh fish promise

GUESTS on a Holland America Line (HAL) Alaska Cruisetour will enjoy fresh, locally sourced sustainable seafood when they stay at McKinley Chalet Resort.

Located on the doorstep of Denali National Park, the lodge has just received Marine Stewardship Council certification, which reaffirms its commitment to serving the highest-quality seafood that is sourced sustainably.

The resort's two onsite restaurants feature refreshed menus with dishes like smoked salmon chowder, and steamed mussels.

## INDUSTRY DIVIDED OVER GREECE LIMITS

GREECE'S polarising plan to introduce restrictions on the number of cruise visits has earned the support of locally based operator Celestyal Cruises.

Chief Executive Officer, Chris Theophilides, said the cruise line supports Greece's desire for responsible tourism, and is united with its fellow cruise stakeholders in its collective approach to implement greater restrictions in the industry.

Celestyal joined a number of its fellow operators last year, as well as Cruise Lines International Association, to make overtures to the Greek government for more sustainable local growth.

The line is specifically backing measures including enhanced berthing request systems and



scheduled visit times - concepts in play in other popular cruise destinations such as Alaska and the Galapagos.

However, Greece & Mediterranean Travel Centre Managing Director Halina Kubica told *Travel Daily* she believes the potential restrictions will not make a large difference in

helping the country restrain its overwhelmed tourism industry.

Kubica said Greece's issues with tourism management extend beyond the cruise industry, and although the situation has improved, introducing restrictions to the cruise industry will not provide greater balance - read more in today's issue of *CW*. *MS*

### MSC reflects on sustainability progress

MSC Cruises improved the carbon footprint of its fleet by 6.5% in 2023 compared to the prior year, marking a 37.8% reduction since 2008.

The achievement was noted in the cruise line's newly published *2023 Sustainability Report*, which tracks its progress over the 12-month period in the areas of environmental, social and governance.

The progress puts MSC on track to hit the International Maritime Organization's target of a 40% carbon intensity reduction before 2030.

The report also covers the line's sister company and luxury travel brand, Explora Journeys, and includes detailed data on MSC's operations, emissions, water, waste, headcount and gender distribution.

Additionally, the paper notes the launch of the line's second LNG-powered vessel, *MSC Euribia*, with a net-zero greenhouse gas emissions voyage from France to Denmark.

See the full report [HERE](#), which also discusses the brand's shore power connections and freshwater management.

### Tassie lodge win

TASMANIA'S Freycinet Lodge was recognised recently at the inaugural Marie Claire Sustainability Awards, where it was the winner of the travel category.

Surrounded by rugged beauty in Freycinet National Park, the environmentally sustainable lodge boasts a small footprint, and offers a whole host of nature-based outdoor activities.

The waterfront property's GM, Trent Thompson, said it "places the highest priority on sustainable practice".



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## Summer the right Choice



**TEN** lucky agents swapped their winter woolies for swimmers, and whisked off to the Maldives as a reward for being among the top-selling agents of Travellers Choice's preferred partners.

The Maldives was just one of three Choice Rewards trips open to the winning agents, with New Zealand and Vietnam also among the destinations considered.

Highlights of the trip included each agent enjoying a stay in an overwater bungalow at the all-inclusive Club Med Kani.

The stay also included a visit to Finolhu Villas, part of the Club Med Exclusive Collection which sits on its own atoll.

Indulging in the many activities at the resort ranked highly for the group, with daily options including scuba diving, snorkelling, padel, yoga and even the chance to learn trapeze.

During their stay, the group also travelled to a remote island where Club Med hosted a sumptuous lobster BBQ picnic, capped off with an afternoon of snorkelling among colourful fish, turtles, rays and even sharks.

The final evening of the trip also

coincided with a themed 'White Night', where agents donned their brightest white gear for a beach party for the ages. *ML*

The group consisted of Tia Simpson, Top Deck Travel; Trinity Hastwell, Hastwell Travel & Cruise; James Cracknell, Windsong Travel; Gay Skinner, Capricorn Travel; Courtney Machon, All About Travel; Caroline Sage, Panorama Cruise & Travel; Gillian Connors, Ucango Travel & Cruise Centre; Jill Faircloth, Endeavour Travel & Cruise; Janine Snook, Chris Watson Travel; Brian Bennett, Travel & Cruise Professionals; and Robyn Mitchell, Travellers Choice.

## A million sale seats

**TRAVELLERS** can get their hands on discounted airfares to over 60 destinations across Australia, thanks to Qantas' 1 Million Seat Sale.

Available until midnight AEST 30 Jun, the sale includes fares to Broome, the Sunshine Coast, Uluru, Mount Gambier and all major cities across Australia - see the Qantas deals [HERE](#).

## MONEY

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

**AU\$1 = US\$0.666**

**THE** Australian dollar is achieving solid gains against most key currencies around the world, most prominently against the Japanese yen, which is currently sitting at ¥106 for every Aussie dollar.

Travellers to the United States will also be happy about gains made on the US dollar, advancing over US\$0.667.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

<b>US</b>	\$0.666
<b>UK</b>	£0.525
<b>NZ</b>	\$1.087
<b>Euro</b>	€0.620
<b>Japan</b>	¥106.2
<b>Thailand</b>	฿24.38
<b>China</b>	¥4.832
<b>South Africa</b>	12.05
<b>Canada</b>	\$0.909
<b>Crude oil</b>	US\$85.24

## Track your travels

**CONTIKI** has launched a new interactive travel map which allows travellers to log the countries they have previously visited and keep track of their bucket-list destinations.

The new tool, which features on the Contiki website [HERE](#), informs users about what percentage of the world they've covered in their travels to-date.

Travellers can share their results with friends and family, as well as get personalised trip recommendations from Contiki based on the information they've input onto the digital map.



## Window Seat

**GERMAN** airline Eurowings has welcomed a new kind of aircraft to its fleet - the first "hot air balloon in jet design".

Featuring a cockpit, tail unit and wings, the burgundy balloon - once just a clever April Fool's joke from the carrier - will operate regular rides from Spain's Mallorca from this month.

The prank on 01 Apr, which declared "Eurowings is entering the hot air ballooning business", generated an unexpected flurry of interest, with balloon pilots applying for jobs and asking when the flights would start.

Buoyed by the positive response, Eurowings had the M160 hot air balloon specially made in Barcelona.

"As the largest airline to and from Mallorca, it is part of our brand essence to convey vacation fun," said Eurowings CEO, Jens Bischof.

"An April Fool's joke can fly - except instead of the announced scheduled service from Dusseldorf to Mallorca, there are now balloon trips over the sunny island."

Named 'Burgundy Dreams' the new 'aircraft' is operated by Mallorca Balloons, and can accommodate four to five passengers in the basket.



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