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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features seven pages of news, a cover wrap from **Norwegian Cruise Line**, a product profile from **Collette**, our **Corporate Update**, plus full pages from:

- Tourism NT Training
- AAT Kings

## Keeping Rex alive is vital

**REGIONAL** communities across Australia are continuing to sweat over the ongoing voluntary administration of Rex Airlines and the existential economic lifeline provided by the carrier.

New data from Lime Intelligence analysed by the Australian Airports Association (AAA) shows how vital the preservation of Rex is to regional and rural townships across the country.

The data showed Rex is still carrying 75,000 passengers per week on its regional routes flown by Saab 340 turboprop aircraft.

There are 42 regional routes served exclusively by Rex

including Melbourne to Mount Gambier; Sydney to Parkes; Perth to Esperance; Adelaide to Broken Hill and Sydney to Narrandera.

Another 20 routes are also flown by a competing airline, with Rex holding a 70% market share or higher on routes including Perth to Albany; Brisbane to Roma; Adelaide to Mount Gambier and Cairns to Normanton.

Rex was bolstered by an \$80 million finance facility provided by Minister for Transport Catherine King earlier this week (**TD** 12 Nov) to ensure services continue to operate, with a refund facility also provided if a flight is cancelled.

AAA Chief Executive Simon Westaway urged the government to continue working to ensure no communities are left stranded.

"Air connectivity is a lifeline for regional communities and it is vital for governments and industry need to strive toward delivering better services and airfares for these residents," he said. *ML*

## Be an expert on NT

**BECOME** a Northern Territory expert by joining Tourism NT's upcoming webinar on Tue 26 Nov or Wed 27 Nov.

There's also a chance to win a trip to the NT - find out more on **page eight**.

## Black Friday at NCL

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line (NCL) has kicked off its massive Black Friday sale, which offers up to 50% off global voyages.

Agents will also enjoy triple the rewards when they make a deposited booking before 03 Dec - see the **cover page**.

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## ATIA seeks a seat at the aviation table

**EXCLUSIVE**

**THE** Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) is working to obtain a seat on Sydney Airport's new-look government-run Compliance Committee to act as a key conduit between airlines, Australia's busiest airport, and the travelling public.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, ATIA CEO Dean Long (pictured) said while the travel industry doesn't have a commercial interest in the management of slots, it can bring extensive insights into the flow-on impact of how travellers are affected by changes to those slots.

"At the moment, the dearth of insights is meaning mass confusion and really, the reason for why the performance is the way that it is, particularly on certain routes, is what is causing the public debate," Long said.

ATIA's chief said the association is hugely supportive of a mechanism that would provide timely, transparent reasons for why flight cancellations occur, a change that will set up the policy debate for the next five years.

Long added there is no evidence to suggest airlines play a direct role in allocating and managing their own slots, however the terms of reference for Airport Coordination Australia are "extremely narrow", leading to decisions that do suit the commercial interests of its owners.

"Once we expand the Terms of Reference for that Compliance Committee, I think we'll start to



see that [performance] sharpen and we'll also see where the issues are with cancellations and delays, which will allow us to make improvements.

"If it's air services, then they need a massive increase in funding to get their workforce up and going," Long said.

"If it's airports that aren't running their maintenance programs at an appropriate level, then let's look at that, and if it's airlines changing their schedules for commercial reasons (*TD* 24 Jan), let's look at that."

The Federal Government's recently released Aviation White Paper (*TD* 27 Aug) detailed the formation of a new government body which will manage slot allocation, application and retention at Sydney Airport.

Currently, these are overseen by Airport Coordination Australia (ACA), an organisation funded and co-owned by Qantas Group, Virgin Australia, Sydney Airport itself and the Regional Aviation Association of Australia (RAAA).

If it is given a seat on any new Compliance Committee, ATIA said it would bring key long-term data on cancellation rates and patterns and provide input to drive better outcomes for travellers.

"Probably more importantly

is that because we represent so many people who purchase their travel through one of our members, we'll also have good insights into the way those with a commercial interest are presenting that information back up [to the government].

"We'll be able to have that detailed look at what's going on, overlaying that with feedback and impact on customers [and] it uniquely positions us to really drive some better outcomes and some reforms to the system." *ML*

### Thornton at the top

**INTREPID** Travel CEO James Thornton has picked up the coveted CEO of the Year Award run by *The CEO Magazine*.

Speaking about his big win, Thornton said it was "incredible" that a small Melbourne-based adventure travel company has managed to grow and receive such lauded recognition.

Among the achievements achieved in Thornton's tenure as chief include attaining B Corp certification in 2018, and steering the business through the rigours of the pandemic.

### New from Collette

**COLLETTE** has unveiled its new 2025-26 brochure, which features five new tours.

The operator has also launched its Black Friday sale - see the **back page** for all the details.

### Sell big, earn big

AAT Kings is giving travel advisors the opportunity to earn big when they sell big, with \$200 gift cards up for grabs - just in time for Christmas.

The more you book, the more you make - discover how by visiting **page nine**.

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## BUDAPEST

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of Aviareps.

IT'S time to farewell the beautiful city of Budapest, where we've enjoyed a week of culture and history.

But before we head to the airport this afternoon, some of us will enjoy the famous Szechenyi Thermal Bath, one of the largest thermal complexes in Europe.

Featuring 15 grand indoor and outdoor swimming pools, as well as various saunas massage rooms and health and wellness services, the baths are supplied by two thermal springs, one at 74 °C and the other at 77 °C - there is even a rooftop spa greenhouse.

## Visitors demand more

INTERNATIONAL visitors are increasingly seeking greater flexibility and value from tourism businesses to win their bookings, a new report on tourism distribution has outlined.

*The Future of Distribution Insights Report* was a joint exercise carried out earlier this year by Tourism Australia and Deloitte Access Economics to examine the post-pandemic booking habits of travellers worldwide.

The report spotlights 15 priority markets which together provide around 80% of Australia's

inbound visitor pool, with insights exclusive to each market.

It pinpoints Australia's position as a complex, long-haul destination and ways businesses can convert interest to bookings.

The report showed that while traditional booking channels remain critically important, new entrants and technologies are rapidly driving change.

Market shifts outlined include a trend of booking flights directly with airlines and multiple distribution channels used for the same trip.

While rapid growth in familiarity with online purchasing has been seen, wider adoption of AI in the booking process is enabling greater personalisation and operational efficiency.

Following the pandemic, global distribution has seen concurrent consolidation and fragmentation, creating a complex environment that must be navigated carefully.

## New Club at ADL

QANTAS has opened the doors to its new Qantas Club at Adelaide Airport in time for the peak summer holiday period.

The new space features premium local beer and wine along with custom furniture, with over 80% of seats fitted with USB chargers.



## KYOTO

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of Inspiring Vacations, which is hosting us in Japan alongside valued trade partners.

WE ARE en route to Japan for our weekend with Inspiring Vacations, which will start with a visit to Nara, famous for its historic temples and free-roaming deer, before we make our way to Osaka and enjoying a tour of the Dotonbori area.

We will also make our way to Kyoto, where we will stand among the towering bamboo of Arashiyama Grove, visit the serene Kinkakuji with its floors of gold, and stroll through the authentic Gion district.

After an immersive day, the group will return to Osaka.

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## Virtuoso's big forecast

**VIRTUOSO** Executive VP David Kolner has revealed sales across the global luxury network continue to set a record pace, tracking 14% higher for the year-to-date compared to 2023.

Addressing more than 130 of the group's top-selling agency owners and managers worldwide during Virtuoso's 2024 Chairman's Event in Slovenia, Kolner added bookings made one-to-two years out for 2025 and 2026 are also up 30% compared to 2023.

Among these, the proportion of future sales valued at US\$50,000 and higher has increased 42%, with luxury cruise sales spiking by 47% and African safaris up 42%.

Virtuoso Chairman and CEO Matthew Upchurch provided further insights which detailed how the travel and tourism industry is on track to make up 11.4% of the global economy and 12.2% of the world's workforce over the next 10 years.

The Chairman's Event, held in a



different location each year, took top-performers to the Slovenian capital of Ljubljana and the coastal enclave of Portoroz.

Kicking things off at Ljubljana Castle featuring a showcase of local cuisine, cocktails and wines, the group was welcomed by city Mayor Zoran Jankovic and industry heavyweights including Kempinski Hotels' new CEO, Barbara Muckermann.

Exclusive 'Design Your Day' activities booked for the group included rowing with Slovenian Olympic athletes on Lake Bled, a traditional Slovenian cake making workshop, a day trip to Maribor and a scenic adventure to explore the hiking trails of Roznik. *ML*

## Win a famil to Tahiti

**AGENTS** can win one of three places on a seven-night famil to French Polynesia as part of a new incentive campaign from Lux Voyages running until 02 Dec.

Hosted by Lux Voyages Director Julia Li, two places will go to agents with the highest sales during the campaign period, with a third spot drawn as a wildcard.

The trip includes a stay in Taha'a and Bora Bora - find out more details **HERE**.

## ETC cluster webinar

**GREAT** Journeys New Zealand and TruTravels will feature in the next cluster training webinar from Evolution Travel Collective.

Scheduled for midday AEDT on 21 Nov, the session will include a presentation on Great Journeys' NZ Scenic product, while James Lavin will share tips on how best to sell TruTravels' small group adventures to travellers under 35.

Agents joining the session can also win a \$50 gift card.



## Window Seat

**A STINK** may be brewing between Geelong's Botanic Gardens and South Australia's Botanic Gardens and State Herbarium after the latter "gifted" its Vic counterpart with the rare Corpse Plant.

How does it get its name, you may be wondering?

Every four to five years, the rare species blooms and emits a smell so pungent and disgusting it has been compared to rotting fish and a corpse, which may be why it's called a Corpse Plant.

Perhaps curiously, the bloom is quite the tourist attraction, with large crowds having been seen coming to fill their nostrils.

**TD** can't wait to see what "gift" Victoria sends back to South Australia as a thank you - perhaps just its gratitude it only happens every few years.

We're turning Black Friday **Green**  
 Choose experiences over things.

**Green Friday** is a movement that raises awareness of the environmental and social impacts of consumerism. This November, ask your clients to consider investing in unique travel experiences. Explore breathtaking destinations, make unforgettable memories, commune with wildlife and nature. Choose a journey that will change the way they see the world.

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### The faces of Aussie tourism

**TOURISM** Australia has called on members of the industry to contribute their voices to a new initiative highlighting the value of tourism, which is expected to be worth \$220 billion by 2028.

The first episode of *We are the Australian tourism industry* launched this week, as Tourism Australia opened registrations for its Destination Australia event, taking place in Mar 2025.

The video features industry figures from across the country, from tour guides to experience operators and accommodation leaders, speaking about the importance of the tourism industry to Australia's economy.

"We always knew recovery would take time and we have experienced that over the past two and a half years since international borders reopened," said Tourism Australia Managing Director, Phillipa Harrison.



"We are on our way to returning to a path of sustainable growth and it is important we do, not only for tourism, but for the halo effect the industry has on so many other local businesses.

"We thank our busy tourism business owners and operators who have taken the time to take part in 'We are the Australian tourism industry'.

"It is their ongoing resilience, optimism and passion for the industry which will help to drive our future growth," Harrison said.

The videos will also feature at upcoming tourism awards around the country - watch the first episode **HERE**. *JM*



**REPRESENTATIVES** from TravelManagers Australia attended the recent Signature Travel Network 2024 annual conference for four days of learning and networking with luxury travel brands.

The annual event, which brought together members of Signature's luxury travel advisor network, partners, travel media and experts, took place at The Venetian in Las Vegas.

According to TravelManagers' Operations Manager, Troy Coelho, the conference was a great opportunity to rub shoulders with like-minded agents from around the world.

Seven out of TravelManagers' 10 representatives at the conference were first-time attendees.

"We joined more than 2,700 attendees for a wide-ranging program that was designed to maximise networking and learning opportunities," Coelho shared.

"It included peer-to-peer round tables, interactive sessions and workshops that addressed the technological innovations shaping the future of travel consulting and marketing." *JM*

**Pictured:** Annalize Troost, Michael Gazal, Tanya Tyler, Rose Febo, Dana Brown, Shannon Garrett, Coelho, Ange Bowerman and Grant Campbell.

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## CORPORATE UPDATE

# VA confirms Etihad out, Singapore in

**VIRGIN** Australian CEO Jayne Hrdlicka has left the industry in no doubt about the airline's future with Etihad, confirming the Middle Eastern carrier will no longer be a strategic partner if Qatar Airways is successful in buying a 25% stake.

Speaking at the Australian Corporate Travel Summit on Wed, the VA chief stated the carrier had no intention of taking on more than one strategic partner in the Middle East.

"We went through this very thoughtfully and for Etihad it means that they go from being an important interline and codeshare partner, an important part of our frequent flyer program, to coming out, because we can only have one partner that we're really investing behind through the Middle East," Hrdlicka said.

Given VA's submission to the ACCC contained an exclusivity clause stating that Qatar Airways will become Virgin Australia's only interline, codeshare and loyalty partner headquartered in the Middle East or Turkiye, the confirmation was expected by many in the industry.

"VA will not codeshare on the int'l flights of other airlines to, from or within the Middle East,



Europe, and Africa, and will not acquire or supply any loyalty point accrual services or high-value guest services, such as lounge access provided to gold members and above, with any airline headquartered in Africa or Europe," VA pledged in its proposal to the ACCC.

However, Singapore Airlines will remain an important partner for VA - even if the equity purchase with QR is approved - with Hrdlicka stating only codeshare flights through Europe with SQ will be impacted by the deal.

"Singapore Airlines remains a really important partner and so the Velocity benefits don't change...and while the codesharing to Europe won't exist anymore, codesharing into Southeast Asia, North Asia, India [is] alive and well, and we will go from strength to strength with Singapore Airlines," she said.

Additionally, any QR purchase would not scuttle VA partnerships with ANA or United Airlines.

Etihad will have a delegation in Australia next week to clarify its market value to Australian travellers - stay tuned to **Travel Daily** for updates.

**MEANWHILE**, Hrdlicka also confirmed at the Summit that she will not be at the helm of the airline when an IPO takes place, which at this stage still does not have a date.

"[A listing] is anybody's guess, that's up to our shareholder but the most important thing for us is to always be in a position where we're ready," Hrdlicka said.

"I'm super proud of how much we've accomplished as a team and I'm also super excited to hand over to somebody else to run through the IPO.

"We had a dry run hoping that we could get [the IPO] away about 18 months ago but the markets were shut.

"That was a pretty challenging time for me because my husband was dying and investors look you in the eye and say 'how long are you committed to stay?'"

"They want to hear three to five years and the last four years have been dog years."

The VA boss added there is a clear plan in place so there is no risk in the handover process before an IPO takes place. **AB**

## The world is anarchic

**THE** risks posed to corporate travellers this year are becoming more anarchic and divided, according to James Robertson, Security Director for Australasia at International SOS.

Speaking on a panel session at the inaugural Australian Corporate Travel Summit in Sydney this week, Robertson said the rapidly changing geopolitical environment is making it more difficult for travel managers and travel risk assessors to understand trends and the impacts for business travellers.

"The effects for organisations are amplified by things like conflict, connections and confusion around myths and disinformation," Robertson said.

A global rise in nativism and protectionism was also cited as a factor more businesses needed to pay attention to in corporate travel risk assessments, with the election of Donald Trump likely to add to that rising risk factor.

The session also predicted there will be more protests and unrest over the next 12 months that travel managers will need to understand, with industrial and civil action to affect travel in a rising number of countries.

"This is worth tracking more closely in your information sources," Robertson said.

# AI will shape the future

**ARTIFICIAL** intelligence was listed as the factor most likely to impact the corporate travel sector over the next five years, by attendees at the Australian Corporate Travel Summit.

AI accounted for 36% of the vote, dwarfing other factors listed such as blockchain, commission cuts, content fragmentation, NDC, and sustainability.

Commenting on the result in the final session of the day, Founder & CEO Partnership Travel Consulting, Andy Menkes, said that for the business travel sector, it was important to note "that

you can't spell 'pain' without AI".

"It's got a lot of good capabilities but it certainly has some challenges," Menkes said.

"On the plus side, I've seen a TMC take 13,000 emails and convert them into an online booking in the OBT in just four hours - just think about how long it would take to process that many emails and turn them into a booking right away."

In making some predictions for the future though, Menkes said we might "heading for an iceberg" if accuracy standards around AI are not maintained.



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## SPECIALS

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**Intrepid's** Cyber Sale has landed, offering up to 20% off a huge range of small group adventures around the world in 2025. For bookings made by 05 Dec, travellers can save on over 800 trips - find out more **HERE**.

Travellers can enjoy up to 30% off stays at **Nesuto Hotels and Apartment Hotels'** properties across Australia and New Zealand. The sale kicks off tomorrow and runs until 04 Dec - more info **HERE**.

**Tahiti Voyages** has launched exciting last-minute deals for the Australian travellers, with a range of packages including airfares. Call 1300 526 868 before 17 Nov to find out more or to make a booking.

For its 2024 Cyber Sale, **Outrigger Resorts & Hotels** has wiped up to 50% off stays at its iconic beach destinations across Hawaii, the Maldives, Fiji and more - secure your booking **HERE** before 09 Dec.

**Wendy Wu Tours** has launched its biggest-ever Black Friday sale, with three unmissable offers available until 02 Dec, including \$700 savings per couple on its Africa & Latin America tours - details **HERE**.

Travellers looking to book their next tropical escape can take advantage of **The Celebration Travel Company's** new seven-night package at Fiji's Namale Resort and Spa, which includes a bonus spa credit - see **HERE**.

**Cruise Traveller** has unveiled a new 2025 fly, cruise and stay package to Antarctica with Atlas Ocean Voyages. Savings of \$4,710 per couple are available for bookings made by 07 Dec - learn more **HERE**.

Elvis fans can spend Christmas at Graceland thanks to a new package at the King of Rock's former estate. Enjoy 20% savings on a two-night stay at **The Guest House at Graceland**, as well as a tour - details **HERE**.

**Virgin Voyages** is offering 40% off all voyages, including its newest itineraries, and up to \$455 in free drinks. The Black Friday deal is available to book **HERE** until 03 Dec on voyages through to 2026.

Travellers can save up to \$3,150 per couple on Rocky Mountaineer packages with **Travel Masters (HERE)**. There are four routes to choose from, including the 'First Passage to the West' from Vancouver to Banff.

**Norwegian Cruise Line** is offering up to 50% off voyages around the world as part of its 2024 Black Friday sale, which ends 03 Dec. Savings can be combined with the brand's 'More at Sea' offer - info **HERE**.

Guests booking a stay at a **Crystalbrook Collection** hotel can enjoy a complimentary breakfast for two until the end of Jan. The offer is available at multiple properties across Australia - more details **HERE**.

**Silversea** is offering savings of up to \$10,000 per suite on a global selection of voyages departing between 2024 and 2026. The 'Sale Away' Black Friday offer is combinable with Silversea's fare guarantee, and applies to more than 550 sailings for bookings made by 02 Dec, **HERE**.

## Race around the Globus



each others' hard work, ingenuity, and product knowledge - with all agreeing the day was far more fun than a webinar.

Sydney is the third city to host the new concept, following Melbourne and Brisbane. **MS**

**Pictured** above is GFOB National Account Manager Mel Wouda with Andrew Parchimowicz, Anna De Mari, and Pia Folden; **pictured** inset is Air New Zealand Business Development Manager Stella Hritis with Teresa Christopher, Leesa McNally, and Julie Burke.

**GLOBUS** family of brands' (GFOB) and Air New Zealand's Amazing Race concept came to New South Wales yesterday, with home-based travel advisors competing in the popular new concept in Sydney (**TD** 15 Oct).

Advisors headed to the Harbour Rocks Hotel, where they were received with morning tea, toured the property, and teamed up for the competition.

Racers then headed to Circular Quay, where they were tasked with competing in a number of challenges akin to those seen in the popular adventure reality television series, such as detours and road blocks.

Once the race had been run and won, contestants then headed to the Paragon Hotel to cheers to

## Spirit bankruptcy

**US LOW-COST** carrier Spirit Airlines is in advanced discussions about applying for bankruptcy protection, with a filing reportedly due in the next few weeks.

According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the latest development comes as cooperation talks with Frontier Airlines appear to have broken down.

Spirit Airlines tried earlier this year to merge with JetBlue, with the deal blocked by regulators.



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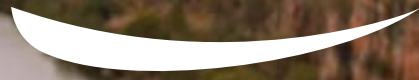
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## Small Group Tours Done Differently Collette's New 2025-26 Brochure

Travellers continue to seek out small group experiences. This is one of the fastest growing sectors within the touring category. Travellers gravitate to small group tours because they offer balance and a slower pace. They set out to see the world with a rich and personalised experience planned for them – allowing the traveller to explore more than visit.

107-year-old tour operator, Collette, has been leading the way in creating small group experiences with their Explorations travel style. They launched their Explorations tours in 2008, introducing a more personalised travel experience with cultural connections and a maximum of 24 travellers per departure.

But it's key to understand that not all small group tours are created equal. Across

the industry, many tour operators have responded to the demand by simply taking an existing tour and scaling it down – same hotels, same sights. According to Collette's CEO, Jaclyn Leibl-Cote, their small group tours are different. "From the onset," she says, "these tours had unique brand standards for accommodations, venues, and experiences that larger groups simply couldn't access."

Their approach never wavered, and the popularity of the Explorations line took off. Since launching Explorations 15 years ago, Collette has expanded and perfected it, now offering more than 50 journeys tailored to small groups with experiences like meals hosted in locals' homes, exploring by unique modes of transportation, and overnight in culturally reflective places such

as igloos, castles, and villas.

The 2025-26 Explorations brochure is available now featuring 5 new tours including Namibia and South Africa, Japan Past and Present (now including South Korea) and the Balkans – Croatia to Greece.

Better still, Collette's Black Friday sale has commenced including **savings of up to 25% on selected 2025 and 2026 departures.**

### FOR MORE INFO

To see the Explorations e-brochure click [HERE](#).

For full details on Collette's Black Friday sale click [HERE](#).

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