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MTA Sue Basedow

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest travel news including our **Luxury** page, plus a full page from **Consolidated Travel**.

CLIA noms now open

NOMINATIONS for the 22nd Annual Cruise Industry Awards are now open, celebrating excellence within the sector. "Australasia is one of the world's most prosperous cruise regions, and our travel agent community has played an enormous part in building that success," said CLIA Managing Director in Australasia, Joel Katz.

"Our 22nd annual awards will be a salute to travel agents throughout Australia and NZ." The awards night will feature 15 categories, 10 of which are open to self- or peer-nomination. Nominations close on 29 Nov and awards will be announced on 08 Mar 2025 at Sydney's Star Event Centre.

Int'l airfares trending down

INCREASED capacity and competition are finally having a material impact on airfares, with new Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) research revealing prices have dropped by \$100 a ticket on average between Jul and Sep.

Outbound economy fares for all carriers decreased during the quarter by 5-10%, with the biggest drops noted on some key European routes such as France, Germany, the UK, and Italy.

Routes linking Australia with the UAE and Qatar were also found to have offered passengers significant price reductions when contrasted with 2023.

FCTG's latest figures showed business travellers are also starting to benefit from international fare decreases, with data showing that business class tickets to the United States and Italy were the biggest movers, dropping 10% & 8% respectively.

FCTG customers said that 40% of businesses plan to increase

their travel budget this FY.

While the cheaper overseas fares are cause for optimism, the same can't be said for domestic prices, with the collapse of Rex leading to ticket price hikes.

Domestic economy airfares increased in the Sep quarter by 3-5% compared to the previous corresponding period, equating to an average ticket rise of between \$10-20.

Rex's woes left key routes linking major regional hubs with capital cities with fewer flight options during the busy school holiday period, a "key contributor" to domestic rises. *AB*

Bonus incentive

TRAVEL advisors can enjoy a bonus incentive from Singapore Airlines and Consolidated Travel, earning up to \$100 per adult ticket to Europe - see the **back page** for more details.

APT sets sail early

APT has launched early access to its 2026 cruising season, featuring river ships *APT Solara* and *APT Ostara*, which will make their debut in 2025 and continue sailing in 2026.

Guests can enjoy exclusive early bird pricing until 13 Dec 2024, allowing them to lock in 2026 travel at 2025 prices.



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\$30m in bookings

THE Western Australian Government estimates that Australia will benefit from an additional \$30 million in holiday bookings over the next 12 months as a result of its G'day Australia event being hosted in Perth.

Attracting more than 300 travel agents from across the globe, the gathering provides sellers who have been trained by Tourism Australia the opportunity to experience attractions across Perth, Broome and Margaret River in WA, as well as trips interstate in partnership with other Aussie DMOs.

"Agents who see for themselves what we have to offer are able to...better sell Australia as the best destination for their customers next holiday," Federal Tourism Minister Don Farrell said.



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Sydney goes loco for Hoteloco



MANDALA Hotels and Resorts has announced Hoteloco, a new boutique hotel set to open in Sydney on 11 Nov.

Located on Garden Street in Alexandria across from the Australia Technology Park, the new property will feature 39 rooms across five levels.

The hotel's name pays homage to 'locomotive', highlighting the area's rich railway heritage, while the building itself features exposed concrete ceilings and evokes an inviting industrial aesthetic, drawing inspiration from the historic Eveleigh Railway Yards nearby.

Guests staying at Hoteloco will be within easy walking distance of Redfern train station and Waterloo station, as well as being in close proximity to South Eveleigh's commercial spaces and variety of cafes, supermarkets, and restaurants.

"Hoteloco allows us to offer travellers a distinctive boutique hotel experience that combines industrial charm with modern comfort," said Elena Martiniuc, Director of Business Development at Mandala Hotels and Resorts.

The hotel was developed by Belvoir Property, a renowned diversified development firm with a legacy dating back to the mid-1980s.

"Hoteloco is a testament to our dedication to creating unique

spaces that resonate with the history and vibrancy of their surroundings," shared the firm's Director, George Kafataris. *JM*

Lufthansa fined \$4m

LUFTHANSA has been hit with the largest-ever fine imposed by the US Department of Transportation for a civil rights violation, with the German airline ordered to fork out US\$4 million for denying boarding to 128 Jewish passengers.

The carrier was found to have denied pax from boarding a flight in 2022, with investigators concluding they were discriminated against in the carrier's effort to handle alleged misbehaviour of some pax.

25% off rail trips

RAIL Europe has discounted 25% off its Eurail Global Passes, which is available for adults and child purchases across first and second classes.

The promotion to celebrate Eurail's 65th anniversary must be booked before 22 Oct.

MEANWHILE, services to and from Croatia on board OBB international are now available for booking with Rail Europe, offering popular routes like the Vienna to Split or Zagreb with the Euronight service.

Merlin flips regional

MERLIN Entertainments has put two of its regional assets up for sale - Otway Fly in Victoria, and Illawarra Fly in NSW.

The move is part of the company's global strategy to focus on building attractions in key cities, namely the big cities of Sydney and Melbourne.

The two rainforest attractions, renowned for their immersive treetop walk and zipline experiences, are now available for acquisition as freehold properties with vacant possession or as a going concern.

Together, the Flies welcome over 100,000 visitors annually, are equipped with extensive visitor facilities, including cafes, large carparks, and retail outlets, and located within a 2.5 hours drive of city centres.



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Outbound nears '19

THE number of overseas trips taken by Aussie travellers in Aug was only 1.5% short of pre-pandemic volumes, new data from the ABS has shown.

Just shy of 917,000 short-term trips were taken during the month, an increase of 58,350 compared with the corresponding month last year.

Indonesia continued its domination in top spot with 158,730 trips, followed by New Zealand (106,450), the UK (62,930), and the US (56,330).

Many markets soared above pre-COVID volumes in Aug, including Thailand, India, Italy, Vietnam and Fiji.

Meanwhile, Kiwis maintained top billing as Australia's number one visitor market with 112,780 trips, followed by a steadily recovering China (78,550), and Japan in third position (54,420).

S Korean tourists also surged past 2019 with 36,140 visits, eclipsing 20,960 five years ago.

AI may damage the personal touch

THERE is widespread uncertainty over the role artificial intelligence may play in the future of travel bookings.

Speaking yesterday during a panel discussion at SXSW Sydney, TripAdvisor Head of Australia and New Zealand, Jessica Small, said a survey conducted by the company showed travellers are worried AI may cost them the "special feeling" they get when booking a holiday.

Small said the new study was based on TripAdvisor's planning and booking data taken from an AI-powered tool it hosts on its flagship website.

"When we asked for that deeper sentiment, we actually found out that travellers don't want to lose that personal touch.

"They also don't want to think that their trip is like everyone else's," Small said.

"When I think about AI [and] the use of AI in trip planning, I



think everyone must be getting a different result.

"But actually, in some cases, AI is actually giving you the same result, and you're being recommended the same trip, which is not really the way that it should be used, so I think there's some worry," Small added.

Destination NSW General Manager of Consumer Marketing, Katherine Illy, said the travel industry is already at a crossroads

with AI adoption in terms of how to present travel experiences as real and genuine content with increasing scepticism over fakes.

"How do you combat the growth of generative AI with actually telling authentic and genuine stories?" Illy queried.

"How will we know what is real and what the truth is?"

MyTravelResearch CEO Carolyn Childs said one unintended consequence of AI in travel planning may be fuelling overtourism and potentially impacting travel experiences by removing their unique nature.

Moderating the panel, Accor Pacific COO Adrian Williams countered this theory however, suggesting if unique experiences become less prevalent, AI may also open up new experiences that may have never been found.

The panel (pictured centre) also featured *Australian Traveller* Publisher, Quentin Long. ML

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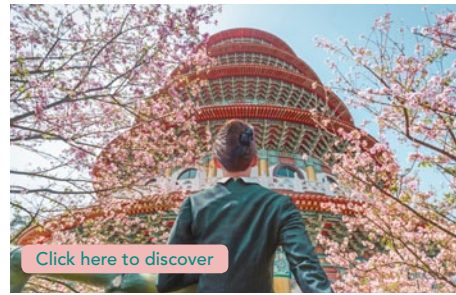
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QF greenwashing claim

QANTAS has been referred to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) by a climate advocacy group which claims the carrier has been misleading customers over sustainability marketing claims.

Climate Integrity's complaint alleges that Qantas' marketing content paints the carrier "as a sustainability leader on the path to net zero by 2050", despite having no credible targets.

"As such, Qantas'...net zero by 2050 representations are potentially misleading," Climate Integrity argued.

Central to the complaint is Qantas' repeated use of the term 'sustainability' on its website, which Climate Integrity suggests is incongruous with the airline's current and future emissions, given its long-term reliance on fossil fuels.

The group also claims the 'fly carbon neutral' option on the



Qantas site is likely to mislead consumers into thinking that their flight is sustainable and/or makes a significant contribution to climate change.

Also under fire is Qantas' commitment to the Paris Climate Agreement, which the filing with the ACCC contends has no credible methodology to substantiate any alignment, while its emissions reduction measures are insufficient to achieve its stated net zero targets.

In response, Qantas told **TD** it has offered to work closely with Climate Integrity on its carbon reduction journey and has also reached out to the ACCC.

The carrier said its targets are underpinned by a robust carbon offset and SAF procurement plan.

Canuckiwi appoints

CANUCKIWI has appointed Peri McCardle to the position of Account Director for the Australia and New Zealand market.

Based in Auckland, McCardle brings over a decade of experience in tourism and marketing across international markets to the travel rep business, having worked for Booking.com and Anderson Vacations Canada.

Her initial focus will be on the Washington DC and Grapevine Texas accounts, and also supporting partner campaigns such as the annual 'Sell Your Way to the USA' program.

"Peri's work will further enhance our presence in Australia and New Zealand, ensuring our clients continue to receive exceptional support and representation," Canuckiwi Principal Corey Marshall said. McCardle's skills will provide in-market expertise, media buying, and product development.

Get more from NZ

JOIN Tourism New Zealand, RotoruaNZ and Tataki Auckland Unlimited for a webinar on 22 Oct to learn how clients can get more experiences into one trip.

Agents can also win a holiday to Auckland by attending.

Register **HERE** to participate.

Free Vietnam flights

AUSSIES can nab free domestic flights in Vietnam under a new promotion from Vietjet.

Travellers flying from Perth to Ho Chi Minh City can access complimentary connecting and return SGN flights to either Da Nang, Hanoi, or Phu Quoc Island.

The deal is on offer until 05 Dec, and passengers will need to select one of the three locations as their final destination, with the cost to be automatically deducted from the total ticket price.

Travellers will also receive an extra 20kg of free checked baggage under the promotion.

"Hop on for 25% off Eurail Global Passes & a Bonus Gift!"

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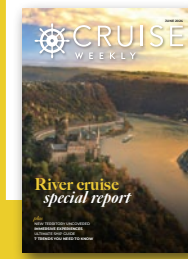
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Window Seat

SICK of attending those run-of-the-mill Halloween festivals where the garb includes tired bah humbug ghouls, goblins, or Paris Hilton outfits?

Well, then look no more because Japan's feline version of the scariest day on the calendar is growing in popularity every year.

Taking place on the main street of Kagurazaka this week is the Bake Nero Festival, otherwise referred to as the Supernatural Cat event.

Attendees often dress up as spooky cats, samurai cats, cute cats, and even real looking cats in a series of purrfect parades in Kagurazaka.

According to the festival's volunteer organisers, Kagurazaka is known as haunt for feline fans with a deep connection to cats.



Hyatt adds Colorado

HYATT Hotels Corporation has this week added the Cheyenne Mountain Resort in Colorado Springs to its portfolio.

"The addition of this unique hotel reflects Hyatt's commitment to expanding the Destination by Hyatt brand presence in meaningful ways with distinct hotels that celebrate the unique essence of their locations," the company said.

Cheyenne Mountain Resort boasts a golf course, private pools, an Olympic sized outdoor pool, and lake boat access.

Agents get 'out there' in Reno



SOMETIMES an unfairly forgotten highlight of Nevada, the city of Reno received some love recently from a group of Aussie agents who were treated to the highlights of the Silver State.

Staying at the Whitney Peak Hotel next door to the famous Reno Arch, the group enjoyed local attractions such as the BaseCamp Climbing Wall, which holds a Guinness World Record as the tallest in the world.

Further highlights of the trip included a bike ride along the Reno Riverwalk, and the Pineapple Pedicab Mural Tour to see some of the city's colourful public artworks.

Agents were also able to indulge in the city's wild west heritage with a visit to the colourfully named Bucket of Blood Saloon, while getting their fright on with a ghost tour at the Washoe Club.

The group also took the time to enjoy some of the 24-hour entertainment at nightlife spots including Eldorado Resort Casino.

The trip concluded with a change of pace with two nights at Hyatt Regency Lake Tahoe, where the group set off on an e-bike adventure on the East Shore Trail and a glass-bottom kayak adventure at Sand Harbour State Park. *ML*

Pictured above at Reno's grand welcome sign is Rob Sexton, Flight Centre; Pippa Vann, Travel

Partners; Jordan Carpenter, HelloWorld and the group's host, Kate Wienburg from Canuckiwi.

Leisure in good shape

HOLIDAYS remain the primary reason for outbound travel in Australia, accounting for 60.2% of trips in Aug 2024, new insights delivered by the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) show.

Visiting friends and relatives comprised 26.7% of travel bookings, while business travel showed more modest growth, representing 5.8% of total trips.

ATIA's report also showed Qantas continues to dominate international air travel, holding a 16.1% market share, followed by Jetstar at 12.0% and Singapore Airlines at 8.8%.

Commenting on the findings, ATIA CEO, Dean Long, said the growth in new and emerging markets tell the story of 2024.

"The 103.4% surge in travel to Japan is a clear sign that Australians are looking for more than just a getaway - they're seeking cultural immersion and unique experiences," Long said.

"We're seeing a shift towards more adventurous and diversified travel, with destinations like Thailand and Vietnam growing by 20.2% and 40.1% respectively."

Long added that growing air capacity is key to further growth.

SE Asia in hot form

SIEM Reap in Cambodia is the top trending destination for 2025, with the best value destination identified as Krabi, according to new data from Skyscanner.

The company's new *Travel Trends: The Search for Community and Collective Experiences 2025* report found 43% of Aussies will plan to travel more in 2025, with 36% budgeting more to spend on flights and 31% setting aside bigger accommodation budgets and 14% more for car hire.

With Aussies seeking holidays that bring people together, Skyscanner found weather, local attractions and food as key motivators for travel.

In addition to the Thailand beach hotspot, the survey found Northern Ireland and Spain both rated highly in terms of value.

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QR marks 15 years

QATAR Airways has launched a new business class menu featuring locally sourced produce to celebrate 15 years of flying to Australia.

Available until 15 Dec on flights from SYD and PER to Doha, the menu features flavours including Queensland finger lime, South Australian bush tomato, lemon myrtle from NSW, and Tasmanian mountain pepper.

Highlighted dishes include apple cream cake with NSW strawberry gum compote, Moreton Bay prawns, Gippsland beef tenderloin, Tasmanian salmon, and Western Australian lobster.

Meals can then be finished with Woombye triple-cream Maffra cheddar and Berry's Creek blue vein cheese.

TINY HOMES MOVE IN WITH BONVOY

MARRIOTT Bonvoy has added a selection of Tiny Away properties in Australia and New Zealand to its accommodation portfolio as part of a new partnership.

The move unlocks the door to the first tiny home products available to book by Marriott Bonvoy members, with properties located in some of the most scenic and remote locations across both countries.

As part of the deal, Bonvoy members can also earn and redeem points on qualifying stays.

Locations added in the partnership include tiny homes in Victoria's Grampians and Yarra Valley regions, along with Queensland's Sunshine Coast and the Hawkesbury River region to the north of Sydney.

Each tiny home has been built using eco-conscious materials and features off-the-grid energy,



energy-efficient appliances, water conservation systems and space-saving furniture designed especially for the homes.

Tiny Away co-founder Jeff Yeo said he was pleased to bring the joy of tiny houses to the Marriott Bonvoy platform.

"This partnership represents a perfect synergy between our sustainable, nature-focused accommodation and the luxury

experience that Marriott Bonvoy is known for," Yeo said.

"Together, we're offering guests the chance to relax and recharge while immersed in breathtaking natural environments."

Tiny Away is part of the Big Tiny disruptor brand, which said it aligns with an international trend toward downsizing and "simplifying life", and therefore resource consumption. ML

Westin Bora Bora opens its doors in paradise

WESTIN Hotels and Resorts has opened the doors to its new resort on the Tahitian island of Bora Bora following a rebrand from its former guise as Le Meridien.

The property features the highest number of overwater bungalows across the island with 128, complemented by 14 beachfront bungalows.

Guests can access six restaurants and bars, a saltwater swimming pool, a



private beach and fitness studio

Westin Bora Bora also retains the island's eco centre and Turtle Sanctuary with resident marine biologists teaching guests about Tahiti's islands.

Como's giving spirit

COMO Hotels and Resorts has launched the Como Gifting Platform featuring a range of curated experiences aimed as Christmas presents.

The brand's 18 properties globally are getting into the festive spirit, rolling out various takes on the season in line with local cultures.

In line with the recent launch of 'Iconic Experiences', Como has also launched new gift cards valid for one year.

Ritz Cancun return

LUXURY hotel brand Ritz-Carlton will return to the Mexican Riviera from 2027 via a new resort in Cancun.

The Ritz-Carlton, Cancun, Punta Nizu, will feature 131 guest rooms and 126 branded residences all boasting a private shore line.

Guest facilities will include an oceanfront pool complex, six restaurants, a day spa, and a range of exclusive amenities for residents.



ACCOMMODATION

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Casita, a new "retro retreat" has opened on New South Wales' South Coast, founded by the team behind The Isla. The new property pays homage to the owners' European roots, and is pitched at families and larger groups. The newly renovated retreat features seven two-bedroom suites, and is designed for longer stays, with each guestroom featuring a fully equipped kitchen and modern amenities.



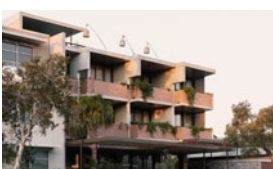
The Westin Bora Bora Resort & Spa is now open, Tahiti's newest property, backdropped by Mt Otermanu. The resort features the most overwater bungalows in Bora Bora, totalling 128, along with 14 beach villas, six bars and restaurants, a saltwater swimming pool, a private beach, a spa, and a fitness studio. There is also an eco centre and turtle sanctuary, a remnant of the former Le Meridien property, which houses resident marine biologists.



Khao Lak Marriott Beach Resort & Spa is now inviting couples, families, and friends to step into its "southern Thai beachfront style". The property is Marriott Hotels & Resorts' first in Khao Lak, and is nestled in a prime location, just steps from Bang-Lut Beach and the Andaman Sea. There are 238 rooms, including ground floor accommodations with direct access to the resort's lagoon pools.



Guests at **Grand Wailea, A Waldorf Astoria Resort**, can now enter the "megaverse", with the Maui property installing a new cutting-edge virtual reality experience called The Cave. The new concept is located within the Molokini Wing of the hotel, and offers billiards, ping pong, darts, shuffleboard, and more classic game lounge favourites, as well as two virtual reality pods.



Byron Bay Oyster Bar & Seafood Restaurant has opened at the town's **Hotel Marvell**, with a land-based oyster tank to live-harvest the freshest seafood. The concept is inspired by lively oyster bar experiences found in places like New England and New York, with oysters to be shucked in front of diners at a live station.

A really Nice trip to Cote d'Azur



AUSTRALIAN luxury travel advisors enjoyed the best of Nice and Monaco on an exclusive famil trip earlier this month.

The six-day showcase was a collaboration with the European Travel Commission, Atout France, and Visit Monaco, with guests offered the best of the two destinations, including unique cultural experiences, prestigious hotels, and fine dining.

The trip began in Nice, where advisors stayed in two iconic five-star hotels, Le Negresco and Anantara Plaza Nice Hotel, while visiting two new properties, Hotel du Couvent and Le Victoria, the latter yet to formally open.

The Nice trip featured cultural and gastronomic experiences with visits to the Villa Massena Musee, Musee du Palais Lascaris, the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, and the Chateau de Bellet.

The famil also included unique activities, such as a VIP shopping experience at Galeries Lafayette Nice Massena, a fragrance creation workshop at Galimard Perfume Factory, and a segway

tour of the city. Arriving in Monaco, advisors checked into the iconic, five-star Hotel de Paris Monte-Carlo, and visited the Hotel Metropole, Monte Carlo, before enjoying some of the destination's culinary highlights, such as Michelin-starred restaurants Pavillon Monte-Carlo, and Les Ambassadeurs by Christophe Cussac, as well as the iconic Cafe de Paris Monte-Carlo.

Other unique experiences included a vintage car tour of Monaco, a gin tasting at La Distillerie de Monaco, a visit to the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco, and witnessing the changing of the guards at the Prince's Palace of Monaco, before being transferred back to Nice Airport by helicopter. *MS*

Pictured are Simon Andrews, Orbit World Travel; Laura Antal, Frontier Travel; Jennifer Day, Ramsgate Travel; Savita Couty, Nice Cote d'Azur Tourism; Sienna Gardner, Travelling Places; Leanne Mitchell, Travel Inspirations; and Nina Moussalli, LUXE by itravel.

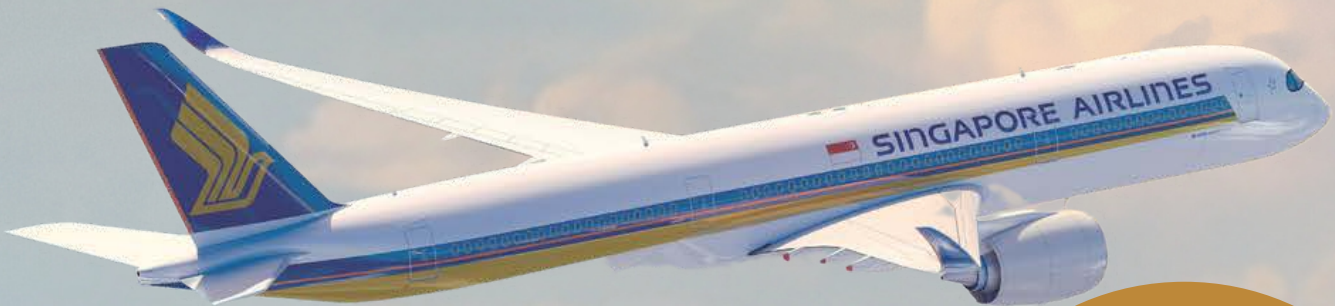


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