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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from **Viking** and our **Corporate Update**.

Batik cans capital

MALAYSIAN low-cost carrier Batik Air has axed direct services between Canberra and Denpasar as part of an operational review.

The route was short-lived, having launched in Jun (**TD** 20 Jun) and scaled back to twice-weekly in Aug.

Canberra Airport Head of Aviation, Michael Thomson, told *ABC News* he was disappointed but understood as the route had lower than expected demand.

Affected passengers will be provided with alternative travel arrangements or full refunds.

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FCTG reports mixed picture

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has suffered a share price drop of 18% in early morning trade on the back of an update released this morning.

The market reacted poorly to uncertainty in the company's FY25 forecast, despite it trading marginally above FY24 Q1 across most key metrics, including Total Transaction Value, profit margin, and underlying profit.

FCTG cautioned it was too early to draw any firm conclusions about the earnings patterns over the full year ahead.

The report also showed FCTG had decreased its reliance on its mass-market leisure brand over the last five years.

The shift in dependence makes it a more "profitable, productive and efficient leisure business", FCTG stated, with the TTV contribution from its mass-market division falling from 67% in 2019 to 55% in FY24.

During the same time period, the independent division has grown its slice of the TTV pie from 9% to 17%, while luxury has also enjoyed solid gains from 6% to 9% of FCTG's transactions.

The update also showed that FCTG has a heavier 2H earnings skew, with almost two-thirds of FY24 underlying profit before tax generated during the latter six months to 30 Jun.

FCTG has been successful in continuing to lower its cost base, with a recalibration of spending seeing a record TTV in FY24 achieved with only 88% of the

Airbnb's co-pilot

AIRBNB has introduced the Co-Host Network, a way for property owners to find local hosts to manage their listings.

The app offers 10,000 co-hosts across 10 countries to choose from, with Airbnb's personalised ranking algorithm recommending candidates using 80 factors, including location, experience, and type of home.



expenses occurred in 2019.

Leasing and business operating expenses have been cut in half over the last five years, while sales and marketing expenses have been trimmed by 12%, and employee benefits have also received a 13% haircut when compared with 2019.

One of the major focuses over the next 12 months will be monitoring airfare price deflation, given its impact on short-term TTV gains, and while there has been "solid growth" in international ticket volumes in Australia during Q1, the gains were largely offset by deflation.

FCTG said it will continue to chase a 2% underlying profit before tax margin, but overall profit growth will be the main priority moving forward. *AB*
More from FCTG on **page six**.

Uber ponders 'super app' acquisition

UBER'S quest to become the global one-stop-shop for travel bookings is seeing the ride-share business mull a potential purchase of Expedia.

First reported by *The Financial Times*, discussions by Uber's executive have reportedly taken place, however according to CNBC, discussions are in the early stages and no formal offer has been put to Expedia.

Uber has made no secret of its ambition to become a travel app that handles every aspect of a booking journey, last year piloting a trial for flight bookings in the United Kingdom (**TD** 17 May 2023), which also included users being able to book sea, rail and coach options through the app.

The OTA is estimated to be worth around US\$20 billion, and if the purchase went ahead, would represent Uber's largest acquisition to date.



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CT Partners gather

FOUR Seasons The Nam Hai in Vietnam will serve as the host for CT Partners' Annual Conference this month, with the independent buying group celebrating 20 years of success in 2024.

The Hoi An resort will welcome representatives from 30 corporate and premium leisure businesses, along with 38 preferred partner suppliers.

Leading mentalist and influencer Duncan Stevens will present the conference's keynote presentation focusing on curating high-performance team leaders.

"With a strong focus on NDC, travel innovation and collaboration, we aim to equip our members with the tools and knowledge to excel in this evolving industry," CT Partners Chief Matt Masson said.

Fees can spook ships

THE future prosperity of Australia's cruise sector is being hampered by high costs and regulatory complexities, Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia Managing Director, Joel Katz, believes.

Commenting in a new report jointly commissioned by CLIA and the Australian Cruise Association, Katz said that while the industry had surged to record levels during the 2023-24 period, the high levies imposed on cruise lines could be an inhibitor of growth.

"The value to the local economy is enormous, but the deployment of ships to this region is at risk of decline while Australia remains one of the world's most expensive destinations for cruise lines," Katz said.

"Rising fees and charges have combined with a complex regulatory environment, which reduces Australia's competitiveness," he added.

The observation follows Carnival Cruise Line recently snubbing the major cruise port of Melbourne in its latest deployment in 2026-27, which will homeport its ships in Sydney and Brisbane (TD 02 Oct).

Despite the future challenges, the cruise report showed the sector remains in great shape, injecting \$8.43 billion in economic value to the country - a 49.7% increase on 2022-23.

The impact assessment also showed that in the 2023-24 period, cruising supported 26,000 local jobs, which amounted to wages of \$2.83 billion.

Further highlights included an average passenger spend per day on shore of \$455 per person (+2%), 4.26 million passenger visit days (+26.9%), as well as a 35% increase in turnaround passengers - the highest-spending visitors - with passenger visits in the segment totalling 3 million.

New South Wales recorded the biggest benefit from cruising, raking in \$4.41 billion in economic benefit (+60.4%),



followed by Queensland with a total economic output of \$2.41 billion (+43.1%).

"Cruise tourism is thriving and passengers have been spending more when they step on shore, creating a record benefit for communities around the Australian coast," Katz noted.

"The number of Australians who benefit from cruise tourism is huge, from the travel agents who manage the passengers' bookings through to the farmers who provide the local produce served on board," he added.

ACA Chief Executive Officer Jill Abel added that cruise ships had visited 49 ports and destinations around Australia during 2023-24, bringing increases in visitor spending to every coastal state and territory.

"Cruise ships made 1,650 visits to communities around the Australian coast in 2023-24, an increase of 5.1% on the year before," Abel said. AB

Pictured: White Bay Cruise Terminal in Sydney.

Emerald's new ship

SCENIC Group is responding to "unprecedented demand" by investing in *Emerald Astra* - a new river ship for Emerald Cruises - which will join the fleet in 2026.

The company has also committed to a major overhaul of the eight-ship fleet, introducing luxury yacht-inspired elements as part of a refurbishment which will see new lounge furniture and bright colours fitted to all ships.

Emerald Astra will welcome up to 180 guests and will be the seventh ship to sail the Rhine, Moselle and Danube rivers.

Viking waxes lyrical

VIKING is teasing an evening of "distinctive Viking fun and big cruise prize giveaways" at the 2024 NTIA Finalist Celebration, taking place next Fri at Madame Tussauds in Darling Harbour.

"Rest assured, it won't just be the waxed celebrities and heroes in the spotlight," said Viking Australia and NZ Managing Director, Michelle Black.

The cruise line is the major sponsor for the event, which provides NTIA finalists a chance to mingle and enjoy some spoils including top food and beverages after a year of high achievement.

Well-known Viking ambassadors and popular Madame Tussauds wax celebrities are being polished for the event, which runs from 6-9pm after ATIA's Beyond Borders Summit.

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QR gives Aussie trade a taste



THIS week, Qatar Airways treated Aussie trade partners to an exclusive fam featuring a 15th anniversary menu tasting, hosted at Dnata Brisbane.

The group had the opportunity to sample the carrier's latest business class menu, which showcases an array of Australia's native flavours (*TD* 16 Oct).

The experience was followed up by a tour of Qatar Airways' B777-300ER, where guests experienced QSuite, the airline's next-generation business class. *JM*

"For 15 years, Qatar Airways has proudly connected Australia to the world with unmatched service and luxury - from spacious cabins, award-winning onboard services to destination-inspired cuisines," said Xia Cai, Qatar Airways Senior VP of Product Development and Design.

Azamara in Alaska

AFTER a seven-year hiatus, Azamara Cruises has announced its return to Alaska in summer 2026 with a series of 10- to 13-day sailings.

Guests can enjoy extended stays in ports such as Juneau, Wrangell, Skagway and Ketchikan, and access to remote locations such as Kodiak and the Dutch Harbor.

The line will also offer 27 late-night departures to maximise guests' time in port - more [HERE](#).

"To mark such a key milestone in our Australian operations, this special menu is carefully curated to reflect the Australian heritage by incorporating native flavours into our award-winning business class menu offerings." *JM*

An African adventure

ADVENTURE World recently hosted travel advisors from Australia and New Zealand on a fam trip to Southern Africa, allowing them to experience the brand's 'Make Travel Matter' program firsthand.

Highlights of the itinerary included a trip to Victoria Falls, where the group enjoyed a community-based walking tour and a Zambezi Sunset Cruise, and a visit to Kruger National Park to witness the big five.

Agents also had the opportunity to explore iconic landmarks like Table Mountain and the Cape Peninsula, encounter Cape Fur Seals at Duiker Island, and engage with local communities about sustainable farming practices.



TA courts Indonesia

IN A bid to tap more effectively into the Indonesian source market, Tourism Australia has teamed up with a consortium of travel agencies in the populous Asian nation to provide tour packages and itineraries that feature an array of local Muslim-friendly trips.

Experiences included in the new collection of itineraries range from star gazing in the Blue Mountains, cruising Sydney Harbour, and riding aboard the iconic Puffing Billy in Victoria.

While outbound travel to Indonesia has been in top spot for a number of consecutive months, Indonesia has also been one of the fastest inbound markets to recover over the past year, with TA keen to capitalise on that strong growth trend.

For the 12 months to Aug 2024, Australia welcomed 216,000 Indonesian travellers, which is close to parity with 2019 levels.

While the volume of visitors is still shy of pre-COVID, in terms



of expenditure, Indonesian travellers spent 26% more in 2024 than they did in 2019.

Roughly 80% of Indonesia's middle class are Muslim, with data showing a strong desire to travel for authentic experiences, with the new agency consortium designed to take another big step forward in efforts to extend Australia's Muslim-friendly tourism experiences.

TA's initiative follows a report from DFAT last year which suggested govt agencies should brush up on understanding Muslim traveller preferences. *AB*


Rail around the world

RAILBOOKERS is bringing back its 'Around the World by Luxury Train' holiday, with a new departure date of 03 Sep 2025.

The 59-day adventure will take travellers across four continents, 12 countries and more than 20 cities via seven luxury trains, including Rocky Mountaineer and La Dolce Vita Orient Express.

"Our 2025 Around the World by Luxury Rail itinerary has been refined and tailored to maximise our guests' time and experiences while enjoying the culture, cuisine and activities that each of these renowned destinations have to offer," said President & CEO Frank Marini.


The journey begins in Vancouver and concludes in Singapore, with the package including high-end accommodations on- and off-board, as well as excursions and sight-seeing activities in each city.

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Window Seat

A US traveller recently caused a scene on board a Frontier Airlines plane when she demanded the flight return to the gate at San Diego International Airport.

In a tirade that has now gone viral on TikTok, the unnamed female passenger shouted that she was the President of the United States and a “sovereign ruler” - all in an attempt to prevent the plane from taking off because she had left her phone in the gate area.

The woman blamed the airline for her forgetfulness, and proceeded to accuse it of criminal activity.

“Seven continents I own”, was another bizarre claim made by the pax, prompting laughter from fellow travellers on board the plane.

JOMO emerging in 2025

TRAVELLERS are increasingly abandoning the once-popular ‘FOMO’ adage, or ‘Fear of Missing Out’, in favour of its opposite ‘JOMO’, or ‘Joy of Missing Out’, according to new market trends released by Expedia Group.

Drawing on travel data gleaned from 25,000 customers, Expedia and its brands including Wotif and Stayz cited ‘JOMO’ among eight trends shaping travel in 2025.

Travellers are increasingly looking to remote destinations to do less on holiday, escape the frenetic pace of modern life, and reduce stress and anxiety.

“What we have seen post-COVID is that everybody’s just working 100 miles an hour, extremely busy lifestyle, and then is wanting to actually escape and be able to relax and have some peace and quiet,” said Expedia Group Senior Director Oceania, Darren Karshagen.

JOMO travellers are booking

secluded beach houses, farm stays and secluded villas with pools and everything on hand.

Expedia’s polling also found overtourism was a concern for its customers, who are increasingly booking hotels outside major cities to avoid massive crowds.

Top ‘Detour Destinations’ include Reims (near Paris), Brescia (near Milan), Waikato (near Auckland), and Girona (near Barcelona).

Fans of shopping are hunting for speciality items, particularly cultural and locally-made goods in 2025, inspired by viral posts on TikTok and other social platforms.

The ‘Goods Getaway’ crowd are flocking to places such as Dubai, France, South Korea and Japan for items such as chocolate, butter and ‘K Beauty’ skincare products.

Wotif found ‘Season Swapping’ was on trend as travellers took advantage of major discounts by visiting places during off-peak. *ML*

Hyatt eyes China

HYATT is preparing to expand its brand presence across China, after entering a joint-venture with China Resources (CR) Land.

Under the initial plan, the joint-venture, Yuen Kai Holdings Limited, will develop and manage hotels including six existing Mumian hotels in Beijing, Shenzhen, Chengdu, Hangzhou, and Rizhao.

The deal also includes two new Mumian hotels in Shaoxing and Shanghai, which are set to open in the first quarter of 2025.

The properties are expected to become part of The Unbound Collection by Hyatt and JdV by Hyatt brands.

The hospitality giant and CR Land also announced a strategic agreement for the development of more Hyatt-branded hotels, and have inked agreements for key projects such as Park Hyatt Xi’an and Andaz Dongguan.

China is currently Hyatt’s second-largest market.

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Agents see the Great Lakes with Viking

VIKING recently had the pleasure of hosting 10 advisors and their travel companions on their eight-day 'Undiscovered Great Lakes' itinerary.

The journey took them from Thunder Bay, Ontario, to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, crossing the width of Lake Superior from Duluth to the Soo Locks.

Along the way, they explored Mackinac Island's natural beauty and historic landmarks by bike, visited Fort William Historical Park - one of North America's largest living history sites - and took in the stunning Kakabeka Falls, known as the 'Niagara of the North'.

Sailing aboard the award-winning expedition ship, *Viking Polaris*, designed for exploring the world's most remote places, the advisors also had a chance to enjoy onboard toys like zodiacs and special operation boats.



VIKING Polaris.

IAN Caswell & Adam Crossman from Travel Associates Glenelg with Stephen & Julie Gillingham from House of Travel Whangarei at Kakabeka Falls (Thunder Bay).



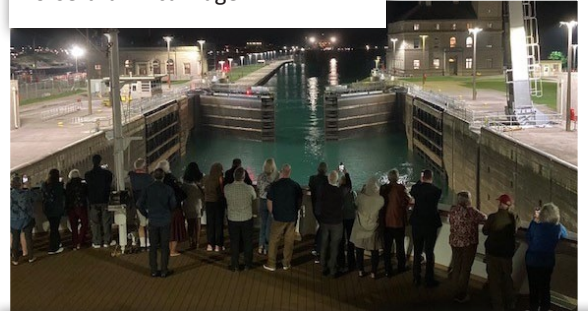
KIM Mildon from Travel Managers and Steve from Viking on the special operations boat.



ENJOYING a private dining experience in Manfredi's, Viking's Italian restaurant.



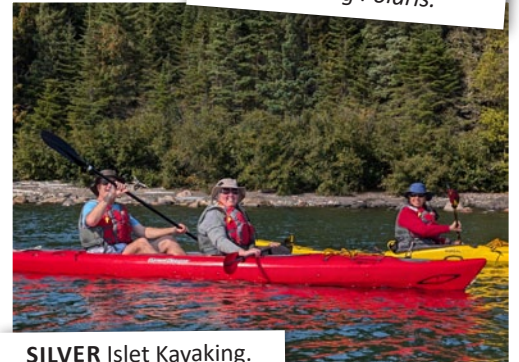
EXPLORING Mackinac Island by horse-drawn carriage.



SAILING through the Soo Locks, which makes travel between Lake Superior and Lake Huron possible.



THE group enjoying time onboard Viking Polaris.



SILVER Islet Kayaking.



BRIDGE tour.



FORT William Historical Park in Thunder Bay.



STEPHEN Gillingham from House of Travel Whangarei with Steve from Viking in Duluth.

CORPORATE UPDATE

FCM takes bigger slice

FCM has been the strongest performing corporate brand for Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) for FY24, accounting for 31% of the company's TTV.

The growth has seen the division improve its TTV share from 20% in 2019 to 31% in the latest period, with the future looking bright for the brand, as it seeks to reap benefits from its recently launched FCM Meetings & Events subdivision.

FCTG's latest financial update released this morning also showed it now embodies a materially larger corporate business across all active regions.

Globally, the company's corporate divisions recorded \$12 billion for FY24, eclipsing the roughly \$9 billion generated five years ago in FY19.

The largest growth since pre-pandemic results have been notched up in Europe, the Middle East and Africa, which grew by 73% to over \$3 billion in FY24.

Australia and New Zealand also added to the growth trajectory, piling on 17% over the five-year period to nearly \$4 billion, while the Americas improved by 27%, and Asia rose by 49%.

The overall split between leisure and corporate has also shifted to see the latter take over as the biggest generator of TTV, moving from 38% in 2019 to 51% in the latest 12-month period.

During that same time, TTV from leisure divisions reduced from 55% of the total to

contributing 46%.

While there are plenty of encouraging signs for FCTG's corporate divisions, looking ahead, the business tempered expectations by revealing global corporate sector activity had been flat during the first quarter of the FY25.

"Wins helped drive TTV and transaction volume growth in FCTG's global corporate business, but first quarter growth was adversely impacted by airfare deflation & downtrading in some large accounts," the report noted.

Despite the subdued Q 1 performance, positive early signs were noted for this month. AB

CTM global CCO

CORPORATE Travel Management (CTM) has appointed Ana Pedersen as its new Global Chief Commercial Officer, with the role from 30 Oct.

Pedersen is a highly experienced executive who brings more than 25 years in senior global sales roles, including brands such as HRS Group, Helloworld Group and BCD Travel.

"Ana will oversee global sales, account management and supplier relations to strengthen our global position in the market and ensure the business continues to deliver exceptional value through our technology to both customers and industry partners worldwide," said CTM MD, Jamie Pherous.

Discover our Adventure Special Report



Merrick was the right Choice



COMEDIAN and radio presenter Merrick Watts will be the face of a new consumer campaign launched today by Choice Hotels Asia-Pac.

The 'Experience More with Choice Hotels' campaign will showcase how travellers can unlock more value and incredible experiences on their next holiday.

The company's five brands - Ascend Hotel Collection, Clarion Hotels, Quality Hotels, Comfort Hotels and Econo Lodge - will star in the pitch, demonstrating the company's brand hallmarks across the price spectrum.

Commercials will be broadcast on free-to-air TV, subscription TV, radio, social and digital platforms and out-of-home.

Choice Hotels Asia-Pac Senior Director Commercial and Revenue Management, Kari Hunter, said Watts' humour resonated with Aussies and Kiwis and made him the perfect personality for the campaign.

STN renovation plan

LONDON Stansted Airport will kick off a £600 million (A\$1.16 billion) extension to its passenger terminal early next year following the finalisation of project funding.

The terminal works are tipped to run for up to three years and will form part of a comprehensive overhaul of the airport.

Once complete, the airport will operate with a further 16,500m2 footprint, increasing its capacity to more than 43 million passengers each year.

Airport records show Stansted handled 29.4 million travellers in the year ending 30 Sep.

The renovation will see an updated terminal with a larger immigration hall which will move from its current location, creating space for a new departure lounge and new baggage carousels.

Broader works at the gateway also include a planned solar farm and upgrades to taxiways.




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Virgin Voyages is offering 70% off the second guest as well as a free balcony upgrade for cruises booked before 12 Nov 2024. The offer is available on most sailing, including brand-new 2025 and 2026 itineraries. Find out more about the deal [HERE](#).

Aussies and Kiwis can book a 2025 walking holiday in the UK with **On Foot Holidays** at the cheaper 2024 price, saving around 5%, when they book by 30 Nov 2024. The week-long getaway explores Cornwall's dramatic coastline in south-west England, where the hit UK TV period drama, *Poldark*, was filmed. Available between Mar and Nov, the self-guided walk will see guests stay in cosy B&Bs and inns, and enjoy traditional local fare. Discover more details [HERE](#).


There's still time to take advantage of **Dorsett Melbourne's** spring package, which has now been extended to finish up 30 Nov 2024. Guests who book directly through Dorsett's website for stays between now and 28 Feb 2025 will receive 20% off their booking. While Dorsett Your Rewards members will enjoy an additional 12% discount. The 'Melbourne Your Way' package also includes discounted valet parking at \$45 per day (down from \$65), complimentary early check-in and late check-out, 15% off your bill at Jin Bar, exclusive Club Lounge access when booking Executive Rooms or Suites, and more - see [HERE](#).

Savings of up to US\$1,000 per person are available with American Cruise Lines, via **Cruise Traveller**, for select Mississippi River sailings in 2025 and 2026. Available to book until 31 Oct 2024, all departures include a one-night stay pre-cruise in New Orleans. Call Cruise Traveller on 1800 507 777 for more information.

Solomon Airlines has launched an earlybird sale, releasing discounted fares between Australia and the Solomon Islands. The deal applies to travel periods between 01 Feb-31 Mar/01 May, and 31 May/01 Aug-30 Sep 2025, for departures from Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Perth, Canberra, Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay. Bookings must be made prior to 30 Nov - more info [HERE](#).



Members of **Hurtigruten Expeditions' (HX)** loyalty program can save an additional 5% off all future cruises when they book before 28 Oct. The offer can be combined with other deals from the cruise line, and can be applied to the new 2026/27 season. The savings will automatically apply to bookings made online or via the brand's call centre.

Travellers can save up to 20% on epic active adventures Down Under with **Australian Walking Holidays**, thanks to the operator's 'Black Friday in October' sale. Discounts of up to \$1,000 per person are available on 19 trips, including the six-day 'Flinders Island Walking Adventure - In Comfort', and the five-day 'Kangaroo Island Wilderness Trail'. Book [HERE](#) between 25-28 Oct.



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Moreton Bay chopper tours



OCEANVIEW Helicopters has launched a new tour taking visitors into the Moreton Bay region from their base on the Sunshine Coast.

Setting off from Oceanview's Caloundra base, the private helicopter tour soars over the Glass House Mountains, Bribie Island, the Pumicestone Passage, and into the heart of Moreton Bay, taking in views of the region's farmland and white sandy beaches.

The tour includes a visit to Ocean View Estates in Mount Meet for a guided vineyard tour and wine tasting, and a lunchtime stop at Sandstone Point Hotel for fresh seafood and cocktails.

"This expansive region is known by locals as Brisbane's playground thanks to its proximity to the Queensland capital," said Karl Mayne, co-founder and chief pilot at Oceanview Helicopters.

"Its size and vast array of experiences makes a helicopter tour the perfect way to explore its diverse beauty in a single day."

The new offering aims to

take advantage of a boom in visitor numbers, with the region growing in popularity due to its accessibility and emerging tourism experiences.

Prices start from \$1,290pp, including the wine tasting (lunch not included). *JM*

TGB grows wings

TRAVEL Beyond Group (TBG) has announced a new partnership with Little Wings, a non-profit organisation providing essential medical transport for families in need across NSW.

The collaboration will help deliver critical support to young patients, with TBG providing a tailored travel program that maximises efficiency and reliability, allowing Little Wings to extend its services to more families in regional areas.

TBG's Head of Sales & Marketing, Mike Humphries, who had the opportunity to witness Little Wings' impact first-hand, said the company is "honoured to play a small part in this crucial work".