Travel Daily First with the news

Wednesday 23rd Oct 2024



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 Viva Holidays.

Say G'day to USA

READY to book self-drive, city stays, guided tours, rail journeys and much more have been preloaded for easy recommendations to US-hungry clients - Viva Holidays has the way on p8.

Hurry for 25% off

RAIL Europe's 25% discounts on Eurail Global Passes will expire tomorrow, so agents are encouraged to take advantage of the promo which marks Eurail's 65th anniversary.



First Travel CEO exits

NZ-BASED First Travel Group CEO Malcolm MacLeod will step down from the role on 31 Oct, a position he has held since 2018.

The company operates under the umbrella of the Helloworldowned Express Travel Group.

Reflecting on his exit, MacLeod said that while his latest chapter is closing, he was excited about the opportunities that lie ahead for his career and First Travel Group, although he will be taking time "to recharge the batteries".

"Together, we've navigated challenges, celebrated successes, and built something truly special, from the amazing growth and transformation to tackling GFCs and pandemics, I'm immensely proud of what we have achieved," MacLeod said.

"I want to thank our

San Fran up 25%

THE San Francisco Travel Association recently announced 154,000 visitors from Australia are forecasted to arrive for 2024. marking a 24.5% increase from the previous year.

The Aussie travellers are expected to contribute \$345 million into the local economy.

Overall, San Francisco anticipates welcoming 23.22 million global visitors, generating US\$9.24 billion in spend, despite a slight dip in hotel occupancy.

EY to double fleet?

ETIHAD Airways is in early discussions with Airbus and Boeing about a potential order for twin-aisle jets, with the Middle Eastern carrier eyeing plans to double its fleet, according to a Bloomberg report.

The aircraft being discussed include the A350 and the B777X, with EY's current active jet mix consisting of 14 A320ceos, nine A321ceos, six A321neos, five A350-1000s, five A380s, five 777Fs, nine 777-300ERs, 33 787-9s, and ten 787-10s.

outstanding team, partners, and the loyal membership for their support...through this journey."

No replacement was announced by time of publish. AB

ATD pilot takes off

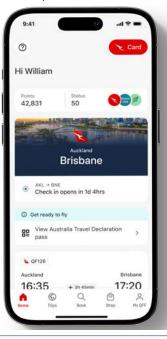
AS FLAGGED by Travel Daily in Aug (TD 19 Aug), Qantas customers travelling this week from New Zealand have become the first to access a fast-tracked arrival process, as part of a joint initiative with Border Force.

The carrier is piloting the Australia Digital Travel Declaration (ATD), a digital replacement for the current paper Incoming Passenger Card, which is now available for eligible passengers travelling from Auckland to Brisbane.

The program will be expanded to include customers travelling from other New Zealand cities to Brisbane in the coming days, ahead of additional Australian destinations early next year.

Qantas is also looking at expanding the program to other international destinations in the coming months.

Passengers will have three days to fill out the digital form at a time and place that suits them.



Virgin gets social

VIRGIN Australia has recruited former Destination NSW Director of PR. Influencers and Visiting Media, Kristy Meudell, to be its Head of Consumer PR & Social.

The experienced comms executive spent close to six years with NSW's peak tourism marketing body, and before that enjoyed a six-year stint at Gate 7 in various PR roles.

"[Meudall's] track record of producing innovative PR and social strategies that captivate consumers aligns perfectly with our vision," Virgin Australia said.







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Shoring up New Cal

THE arrival of *National Geographic Explorer* at the port of Easo, Lifou last week marked a "decisive step towards stabilisation" for New Caledonia, according to the territory's marketing body.

Cruises were halted for several months due to civil unrest over voting rights.

"The return of cruises is a very positive sign for all those within New Caledonia's tourism and cruise industries, representing a crucial step in reassuring our outbound markets," New Caledonia Tourism said.

National Geographic's return will be followed by more stopovers in Noumea and Lifou in Nov, "reflecting a shared desire to boost the local economy in the islands", the body added.



Cancellations slashed

AUSTRALIA'S airlines managed to lower their collective flight cancellation rate to 2% last month, putting them below the long-term average of 2.2% and marking a significant improvement on Aug's 3.8%.

The positive figures were revealed in BITRE's Sep on-time report, which also showed the Flying Kangaroo nearly halved its cancellation rate, which shrank from 4% in Aug to 2.4% in Sep, however it was outperformed by VA, which only scrapped 1.4% of its flights last month.

Rex Airlines boosted its reliability last month, achieving a cancellation rate of 1.2% for its scheduled regional flights - down from 2.1% the previous month

In further news, the overall on-time arrival and departure rates rose to 73.4% - up slightly from 72.9% the month prior, but still well behind the long-term average of 81.4%.

Following a similar theme from Aug, Qantas Group outshone the Virgin Australia network when it came to on-time performance (74% versus 70.9%).



Rex managed to take off and land 78.3% of its services on time, compared to 74.9% in Aug. *JM*

Agents at the wheel

DRIVEAWAY has launched a new competition in partnership with THL, which will offer travel agents the chance to win a fiveday motorhome holiday.

To be in the running, advisors need to complete a motorhome survey **HERE**, and the winner can activate the THL trip between Mar and Nov next year (excluding 14-28 Apr 2025).

All Australian branches are participating in the competition, (except Broome), with motorhomes needing to be picked up and dropped off at the same location

Insight niche surge

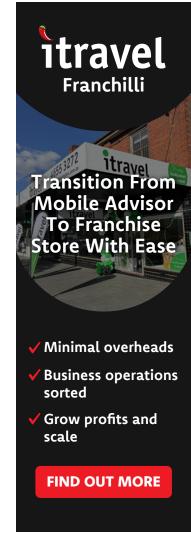
DESTINATIONS outside the commonly worn path are proving hot sellers and presenting new opportunities for agent partners, Insight Vacations data suggests.

The TTC Tour Brands operator said sales are up significantly for Finland (+82%), Romania (+75%) and Poland (+48%), while Malta has skyrocketed by 267%.

Insight Vacations Oceania Managing Director, Toni Ambler, said the surge in bookings for new destinations meant the sky was the limit for travel booking trips in 2025.

"We're not only welcoming back loyal travellers eager to discover something fresh, but also seeing interest from first-time travellers looking for somewhere that's still Europe, but different and a little unexpected," Ambler said.









SDTA CEO exits

SAN Diego Tourism Authority (SDTA) President and CEO Julie Coker is farewelling her position and saying hello to the bright lights of the Big Apple, as she goes on to lead New York City Tourism + Conventions.

Coker will remain in her position at SDTA until 06 Dec, and in the meantime, the organisation's board of directors will commence the process of finding a new leader to take her role.

Kids stay



Club Med 4. KANI, MALDIVES

A&K unveils refresh, expansion



ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) will embark on its "greatest adventure yet" next year, with the tour operator last night showcasing its ambitious expansion plans to the industry.

The brand gathered select trade partners at Art Gallery of New South Wales for an update on its plans, hosted by newly minted Sales Director Alexa Paopulias, a finalist at this week's NTIAs.

The coming months will see A&K launch a soft rebrand, encompassing a new logo and a new tag line: "life, well travelled" (pictured inset).

There will also be a new website, a new client and trade loyalty program, and a new trade portal going live in the first guarter of next year, where travel advisors will be able to access sales and marketing tools.

"We're currently building out the final touches, so we can't wait to share more information with you on this," VP Marketing APAC Michelle Mickan said.

"Going forward, we are putting

a significant investment into the brand and the advertising, and that is to drive more people into [advisors'] doors.

"We are a trade-friendly brand, and we are very much about driving back to the trade, and you will see our call-to-action is 'call your travel agent or travel professional'," she added.

Vice President Sales & Partnerships Susan Haberle also opened up about A&K's DMC program expansion, which will see the tour operator add to its 61 on-the-ground representatives over the coming months, particularly in destinations in the Americas, such as Colombia, Costa Rica, and Mexico.

"We have some very heavy expansion plans, we're also opening up Indonesia as well, and this will continue to grow," Haberle added, MS

Pictured is the Abercrombie & Kent team: Andrew Gallagher, Jacqui Tufala, Susan Haberle, Kyah Tragardh, Dalia Gibu, Alexa Paopulias, Michelle Mickan, and John Round Turner.

JQ loses its mind

JETSTAR has launched its new 'Mindlessness Sale', offering holiday packages to the Pacific Islands from \$949 per person, twin share

Destinations in the sale include Phuket, Vanuatu, Rarotonga, Honolulu and Fiji.

The promotion ends at 11.59pm AEDT Mon 28 Oct.

MEANWHILE, JQ will operate a fifth weekly return flight between Sydney and Rarotonga May-Oct.



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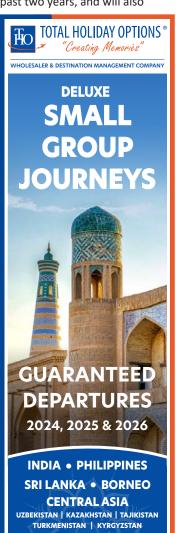


The Calile checks in to Noosa



AFTER a two-year planning process, Noosa Shire Council has granted final approval for development of a new five-star resort, The Calile Noosa.

The award-winning brand has been recognised among the 'World's 50 Best Hotels' for the past two years, and will also



become Noosa's first five-star newbuild development in more than three decades.

Designed by Richards & Spence, The Calile Noosa will replicate much of what makes it such a popular part of Brisbane's luxury hotel scene, sitting on a 2.4-hectare site at Noosa Heads.

The property will feature 153 rooms, 29 suites and four villas, backed by a 50-metre swimming pool (pictured), a second smaller pool set in a lush garden, and a wellness centre, with the property also targeting a carbonneutral operation, which will be certified annually.

Economically, the project will inject \$338 million per year in direct spending and \$660 million in regional expenditure, aligning with Tourism Noosa's objective of drawing higher-yielding visitors to the Sunshine Coast.

"We are especially excited that The Calile Noosa is being delivered by the Queensland-based Malouf Family, who have a strong passion for placemaking and a deep appreciation for the unique qualities of Noosa," said Tourism Noosa Chief Executive Officer, Sharon Raguse.

"Their understanding of what makes this region special shines through in their commitment to creating a development that not only enhances Noosa's offering but also aligns with its values of sustainability and community."

Construction work at The Calile Noosa is scheduled to begin early next year. *ML*

SPAIN WITH ENTIRE TRAVEL GROUP



TEN lucky travel agents are currently experiencing first-hand what makes an Entire Group Journeys' trip so special as they tour southern Spain on an exciting famil.

All Entire Group Journeys tours feature guaranteed departures, with centrally located 4–5-star hotels, small group sizes (maximum 24 guests) and English-only expert guides – ensuring a seamless, personalised travel experience.

The 10-day 'Southern Spain & Barcelona Journey' explores Madrid, Seville, Córdoba, Granada, Úbeda, Valencia and Barcelona, with quality city-centre hotels throughout and special events along the way.

Day one saw the group gather at the elegant Barceló Torre de Madrid – perfectly situated near Plaza de España – where they were given a warm welcome by their tour director, along with a briefing on the itinerary ahead.

On day two, after a lavish breakfast, the group embarked on a guided city tour led by local expert Javier, exploring Madrid's iconic sites like the Royal Palace and Plaza Mayor.

Later, they boarded a comfortable private coach as

they journeyed to the historic town of Toledo, where local guide Ricardo brought the city's rich heritage to life. The day was capped off with a delightful tapas-style welcome dinner back in Madrid.

Keep an eye out over the next fortnight as we share more highlights from the trip!

TOP: The famil group - Robin, Laurin, Santo, Tim, Kate, Abby, Kate, Molly, Tara, and Jo.



Famil IN FOCUS is our feature showcasing some of the photos from recent industry famils. If you want your famil to be featured, email advertising@traveldaily.com.au.



Al tops the priority list

GENERATIVE AI (GAI) is a top priority for travel technology leaders around the world, with nearly half (46%) citing it as their top focus for 2025 - a figure that rose to 61% in the Asia Pacific region, a new report from Amadeus has revealed.

Titled Navigating the Future: How Generative Artificial Intelligence is transforming the travel industry, the report surveyed more than 300 industry experts from across the travel ecosystem in 10 countries, including Australia.

Other technologies cited as key priorities for 2025 included data management (38%), cloud architecture (36%), nongenerative AI IT infrastructure (34%), and biometric tech (23%).

Globally, over half of travel technology leaders (51%) said GAI already has a 'significant presence' in the travel industry in their country, and a further 36% expect this presence to emerge over the next year.

According to the report, 41% of travel companies have the budget and resources in place to implement GAI, while 87% are open to working with a thirdparty vendor to develop GAIpowered applications.

Travel companies are putting the tech to several key uses, including providing digital assistance for travellers during booking (53%), recommendations for activities or venues (48%), content generation (47%), helping staff to better



serve customers (45%), and collecting and condensing posttravel feedback (45%).

The survey also identified key challenges that are slowing the roll-out of the technology, with data security topping the list of concerns at 36%, followed by lack of GAI expertise and training (34%) and data quality and inadequate technological infrastructure (33%).

"This is a technology that has the potential to transform every facet of what we do across the travel ecosystem, significantly enhancing the passenger experience at every step of the journey," said Sylvain Roy, Chief Technology Officer at Amadeus.

"While technology will be a key focus for the next year, questions are rightly being asked whether Generative AI will deliver sufficient returns on investment, while talent shortages are also coming under the spotlight.

"It is crucial that we use this new technology responsibly, ensuring data security, privacy, and content reliability - it is time for Generative AI to prove it can live up to the hype." JM



Tuck into Singapore

SINGAPORE Tourism Board (STB) is serving up its latest global promotional campaign, focusing on the city's diverse food scene and gastronomic variety.

The 'Culinary Capital' promotion aims to capitalise on the 15% cohort of travellers who identified F&B as the primary reason for their visit in 2023 - a figure which marked a 63% increase from 2019 levels prior to the pandemic.

Fronting the campaign is a 30-second digital video entitled 'What Do I Eat First?', which takes audiences on a journey through Singapore's culinary tapestry, from street food through to stateof-the-art fusion cuisine.

More visual assets to support the push will roll out next year.

Points with Peloton

WORLD of Hyatt members can now earn loyalty points by completing a Peloton Bike or Peloton Row workout at Hvatt hotels around Australia and more than 700 properties worldwide.

Under the new loyalty collaboration, travellers who link their World of Hyatt and Peloton accounts can earn 100 bonus points on up to 10 completed qualifying workouts of at least 20 minutes per month.

Peloton bikes can be found at all Hyatt brands around Australia including Park Hyatt, Grand Hyatt, Hyatt Regency, Hyatt Centric and Hyatt Place, with each member able to earn up to 12,000 bonus points per year.



COINCIDING with World Champagne Day (yes, this is a day for some reason), InterContinental Singapore is allowing guests to order expensive bubbly from the comfort of their cars.

Putting a luxurious twist on the concept of drive-throughs, the premium hotel is claiming the concept as a way for guests to "live out their Crazy Rich Asians dreams", with orders to be personally delivered by the hotel's butler.

Bottles on offer to drivers include Adrien Renoir 'Les Annees' Solera Grand Cru (SGD\$262), and the 2012 JL Vergnon 'MSNL' Blanc de Blancs (SGD\$32).

If guests are also hungry, never fear, they are able to order Kaluga Queen Caviar for only SGD\$32 a serve.

"We want to marry the elegance and sophistication of our hotel with a concept that's exciting through a playful twist on luxury," InterContinental Singapore said.

Way to pop the cork on a great idea, we say.





luxury@traveldaily.com.au Wednesday 23rd Oct 2024

W HOTELS BETS BIG ON LAS VEGAS

MARRIOTT International will introduce its W Hotels brand to the famed Las Vegas Strip later this year, as part of a conversion of The Delano Las Vegas.

The addition marks the latest step in a licensing agreement signed last year (*TD* 18 Jul 2023) between Marriott International and MGM Resorts, aimed at unlocking greater access to Las Vegas for members of the Marriott Bonvoy loyalty program.

The latest deal means MGM Collection with Marriott Bonvoy will encompass a total of 12 hotels on the Las Vegas Strip.

"As a luxury brand rooted in bold design and nightlife, W Hotels is well-positioned to elevate experiences for travellers in this destination," said Leeny Oberg, Marriott Int'I's Chief Financial Officer and EVP, Development.

Located on the Mandalay Bay

First class orders



Campus, the hotel is slated to officially join the W Hotels portfolio later this year, with additional plans for the property to be announced in the future.

Marriott Bonvoy members have responded well to the tie-up with MGM Resorts, with hundreds of thousands of room nights booked, which the companies say is well ahead of projections.

MGM Resorts Operations

President, Steve Zanella, said the relationship with Marriott has far exceeded its expectations.

"W Las Vegas, the latest hotel to come to life as part of our collaboration, will allow our guests to access a new luxury lifestyle experience recognised worldwide for its distinct personality, dynamic programming and elevated service culture," Zanella commented. JM/ML

The Langham Gold Coast revs up with Porsche

PRE-FLIGHT dining orders are now being taken by Korean Air for travellers in first class on international flights departing from Seoul.

The service has been gradually rolled out across economy class and Prestige (business class).

Up to three courses can be selected via the Korean Air website or app from 60 days prior to departure up to 24 hours before take-off.

THE Langham Gold Coast has teamed up with Porsche Centre Gold Coast to launch a new high-octane ultra-luxurious afternoon tea experience.

Designed to celebrate the launch of the new electric Porsche Macan (pictured), the pact is designed to savour the sophistication of both brands.

At \$95 per person and served from 2.30pm daily, guests can enjoy a selection of savoury and sweet treats inspired by



the Porsche Macan's 'Provence' colour and created by the hotel's newly-appointed Pastry Chef, Lucas Mongelli.

The afternoon tea experience is available from 24 Oct-07 Nov.

New Ormina Insider

HIGH-END tailored European experiences brand Ormina Tours has launched its latest exclusive product - an eight-day retreat in a luxury Sicilian villa.

Running from 23-30 Aug next year, the latest 'Ormina Insider' takes place at the Villa Commenda di San Calogero, which dates back to the 1600s and is located in the Sicilian village of Catania.

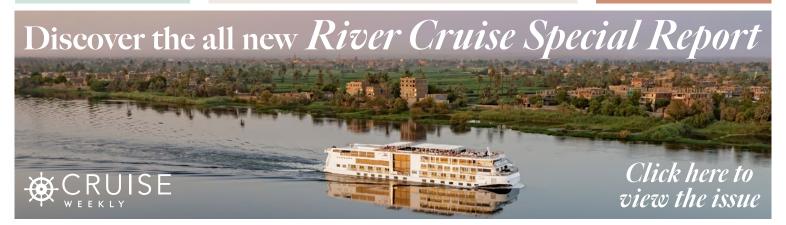
The fully curated itinerary features a variety of local excursions, including a visit to Mt Etna with a farmhouse winery lunch, a Sicilian cooking class, and a guided tour of Ortigia (Syracuse).

Guests can also indulge in an expert-led visit to the UNESCO-listed Necropolis of Pantalica, and workshops with local artisans including classes with ceramics and soap-making experts.

The villa itself sits on a 110acre property and features 12 double bedrooms, a saltwater swimming pool, Turkish bath and spa facility, and daily meals prepared by an on-site chef.

The Ormina Insider retreat is available to a maximum of 24 travellers and is priced from \$9,490 per person, twin share, with options for solo travellers to room share, subject to availability.

CLICK HERE for more info.





Australia's next great walk

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THE Tasmanian Walking Company has announced a new experience uniting two Australian icons, which the operator believes could become "one of the great walks of the world".

Developed in partnership with the Anangu community, the five-day fully guided walk takes travellers inside the grounds of the Northern Territory's World Heritage-listed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, linking the two natural wonders.

Small groups of up to 14 will spend four nights inside the national park learning about ancient Anangu culture and history, connecting with nature, and staying exclusively in environmentally sustainable accommodation.

Tasmanian Walking Company co-owner and respected tourism leader Brett Godfrey described the experience as "a desert journey into the heart of Australia and a trail that unites two geological icons, Kata Tjuta with Uluru".

NT Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, Marie-Clare Boothby, heralded the new walk, and said

"it will be sure to be a popular hiking trail for adventure visitors to the Territory".

Kicking off in Apr 2026, the multi-day 54km desert trek includes art workshops, lessons in land management practices, and daily three-course meals - see the full itinerary HERE. JM

Pictured: Tasmanian Walking Company's Heath Garratt and Anangu Senior Vincent Nipper on the new trail.

Qld Country rebrand

QUEENSLAND Country Tourism is preparing to undertake a rebrand, which will officially launch next week.

While most of the details are under wraps, the tourism body said the upcoming changes will help foster greater collaboration in regional Qld and continued growth in the tourism industry.

Queensland Country Tourism is the peak tourism industry body for Toowoomba, Lockyer Valley, Southern Downs and Granite Belt, Somerset, Goondiwindi, & Central Highlands & the Western Downs.

ACCOMMODATION

Send your accommodation updates to:



Immersive experiences are coming to InterContinental Danang Sun Peninsula Resort, including new sound therapy at the property's Mi Soi Spa. Guests can tune into the body's natural vibrations and frequencies to stimulate the flow of energy

with this new therapeutic experience. The resort's fitness team will also lead outdoor sessions including morning yoga on the beach, afternoon pilates, kickboxing, tai chi, meditation, and more.



Sheraton Samoa Beach Resort has officially re-opened, following significant renovations. The comprehensive US\$10 million refurbishment provide the resort with 133 modernised guestrooms, including six suites. Guests will also be able to enjoy

an international range of cuisines at its three newly renovated restaurants. Design for the renovation was inspired by the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Samoa, and its coastal landscape.



Capella Singapore has unveiled its newly transformed hotel lobby bar, The Pineapple Room. The new bar is situated above the hotel lobby, in the resort's historic Tanah Merah building, honouring Sentosa's past, and serving classic and

contemporary cocktails. The space will also transform into The Living Room from 3pm to 5pm, offering guests light refreshments.



Two new bars, Delta Rue & Wentworth Bar, are both set to open at **Sofitel Sydney** Wentworth, as the hotel's newest drinking establishments. Delta Rue serves up a lively mix of Vietnamese-French flavours and energy, while Wentworth Bar captures

the buzz of a rooftop with its all-weather terrace. The two new bars joined the also recently opened tilda and bar tilda, with the property now offering a four-venue hospitality precinct.



Dusit Hotels & Resorts is returning to India with its new dusitD2 Fagu, a new Himalayan retreat opening in Dec. The property features 80 elegantly appointed questrooms, ranging from 38m2 to 86m2, as well as an authentic Thai spa. The hotel

is located just over an hour from Shimla Airport, and is also easily accessible from Kalka Railway Station.



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EDITORIAL

Editor - Adam Bishop Deputy Editor - Matt Lennon Cruise Editor - Myles Stedman Journalists - Janie Medbury Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper Publisher - Damian Francis

Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan Advertising - Laura Aghajanian & Dante Muranty advertising@traveldaily.com.au

Head of Operations & Contributing Editor - Anna Piper

ACCOUNTS

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1 Level 2 64 Talavera Rd Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760

info@traveldaily.com.au



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