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## Tauck adds two ships

**TAUCK** has announced the expansion of its river fleet through two new ships that will operate on the Seine and Rhone from 2026.

Four in five cabins will be 80% larger than existing Tauck river vessels, while a new Category One will debut, offering bigger bathrooms and no single supplement for solo travellers.

One of the ships will operate a new 11-day itinerary in Bordeaux, Paris and The Seine, with pricing to be released soon.



## QF nearly scrapped int'l

**QANTAS** discussed shutting down its international business and considered a merger with Malaysia Airlines, according to new admissions from former Chief Executive Officer Alan Joyce.

Speaking on the *AIG Our Future Skies* podcast with John Strickland, Joyce admitted the underperformance of Qantas International had made Australia's national carrier look at drastic measures, including closing it down or selling it off.

"We were in the position where the international business was underperforming and wasn't making money," Joyce said.

"At different times we talked about closing it down, selling her off, merging with other airlines - we looked at merging with British Airways, Malaysia...we looked at lots of different ways to fix the problem," Joyce revealed.

In 2008 it was widely reported that Qantas and BA were well down the path of a potential merger which never materialised, while recent comments from former Malaysia Airlines CEO Dato' Sri Idris Jala in *The Malaysia*



*Reserve* revealed he spent "nearly two years of my life" on a deal to merge the carrier with Qantas.

Joyce suggested that it was technology that saved the international business with the long-range Boeing 787-9 allowing direct flights between Perth and London, and subsequently other popular destinations, including Dallas, Rome and Paris.

"Perth to London, which was the first trial of it, overnight became the most profitable route in Qantas' international network and the route with the highest satisfaction," he said.

The interview and revelations come just a week out from the launch of upcoming book *The Chairman's Lounge*, written by Joe Aston, former *AFR* Rear Window columnist and well-documented Joyce-challenger.

Since stepping away from Qantas, Joyce has shied away from the media spotlight. *DF*

## Time for inspiration

**JOIN** A Force For Good on 07 Mar for what is tipped to be a very inspiring day in 2025.

Head to **page 8** for info on speakers, tickets, and more.

## Find a Grand sailing

**THE** ultimate escape awaits cruisers with Ponant's 2025 Europe Collection.

Ponant provides more detail about its Grand Voyages on **p7**.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of travel news, including **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Ponant
- ATI Business Group
- A Force for Good



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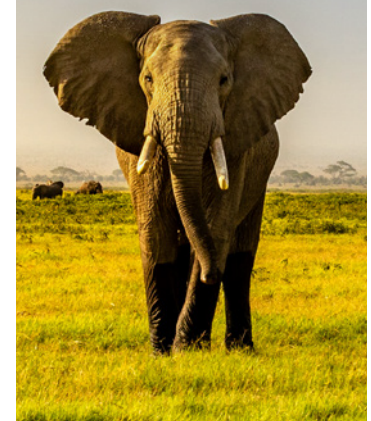
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## SQ strengthens AI

**SINGAPORE** Airlines and Air India have expanded their c'share deal for the first time since 2010, adding 11 Indian cities and 40 global hubs to their network.

Air India customers will access 29 destinations across SQ's network, including Adelaide, Brisbane, Cairns, Darwin, Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney.

While still awaiting regulatory approval, the agreement will be rolled out through the airlines' booking channels from 27 Oct.

## RSSC helps convert sales

**AUSTRALIAN** travel agents are being told they can "supercharge" their sales and marketing efforts using a new tool introduced by Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC).

Launching this week under the luxury line's Regent Elevate partner program, the free-to-use Regent Connect offers advisors instantly co-branded marketing landing pages that share RSSC content experiences, as well as



a dynamically linked co-branded website to drive sales conversion.

The RSSC content primes the client for the co-branded page, which displays real-time access to cruise availability, pricing, and calls-to-action that drive leads directly to agents.

RSSC also stresses that its new Regent Connect tool is easier to use than competitor co-branding solutions on the market, requiring only an email address for access.

The tool's technology is powered by Approach Guides, and arrives after "long-term, ongoing collaboration" to ensure advisors can have better personal interactions with clients.

Agents can access Regent Connect **HERE**, and learn more about it via a video hosted by the cruise line's Senior Marketing Manager, Trade & Events, Sam Deadman, **HERE**. *AB*

## Minimise disruption

**ATI** is highlighting its 24/7 support service, which handles urgent bookings, cancellations, rebooking and itinerary changes - find out more on the **back page**.

## Croisi adds cruises

**CROISIEUROPE** has expanded its cruise and hike program for 2025, adding two new itineraries through the Rhine Valley and along the Gironde.

The river cruise operator will offer a five-night sailing round-trip from Strasbourg, taking in the landscapes, cultures and history of the Rhine Valley.

The itinerary includes a trek towards the Kuhkopf and Hasenberg near Koblenz, hikes through the Rhine and Hibou Trails, as well as the Eberbach Monastery near Rudesheim, and a treetop walk in the Black Forest.

Also new for 2025 is a four-night cruise round-trip from Bordeaux exploring the Gironde, which features ample walks as well as guided tours, encompassing locations like the medieval city of Saint-Emilion and the vineyards and citadel near Blayne.

## True North boosts

**TRUE** North has added a selection of new itineraries for its 2026 sailing schedule, including a 13-night 'Kimberley Untold' adventure, taking guests to previously untapped regions.

Those looking to head overseas can opt for the inaugural 10-night 'Navigate New Britain' itinerary, which explores the "untamed beauty" of Papua New Guinea.

The operator will also continue to offer popular voyages, including many in the Kimberley.

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## TA puts on a show of luxury



**TRAVEL** Associates has concluded its first luxury cruise series around Australia and New Zealand, which attracted more than 2,300 guests.

The events kicked off in Sydney, followed by Gold Coast, Auckland, Adelaide and Melbourne, taking place at luxury hotels such as the Hyatt Regency Sydney and the Ritz-Carlton Melbourne.

Travel Associates General Manager, Rachel Kingswell, said the events reached both new and existing customers, with each advisor taking away around five to 10 bookings.

“Cruising is the fastest-growing segment globally, where 27% of customers over the past two years have been new-to-cruise, so we wanted to reach these customers in an interactive way that would showcase the breadth and range of luxury cruising,” Kingswell explained.

“Between the immersive supplier showcases to guests being able to plan their cruise with advisors in the gated

booking lounge with a canape and a glass of champagne in hand, we were really able to bring luxury cruising to life.”

Kingswell pointed out that 74% of those who came through the doors were new customers for Travel Associates.

“We’ve held events before but nothing to this scale, and it’s certainly paid off in both actual return on investment and feedback we’ve received from partners and clients.”

Regent Seven Seas Cruises General Manager, Lisa Pile, whose brand was a platinum partner, said the event was the perfect opportunity to introduce their products to new clients.

“We were delighted to partner with Travel Associates on their first luxury cruise event series - there’s no other luxury travel retailer doing anything like this.

“It gave us an invaluable opportunity to introduce Regent to guests and connect face-to-face with clients who were ready to book a cruise.” JM

## The Chat

with Jenny

**Travel Daily**  
A conversation with  
Phillipa Walker

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## Qantas goes to college

**QANTAS’** plan to expand its fleet and operations over the coming years will see it create an Australian-first safety academy in partnership with Griffith University and RMIT University.

From 2025, the institution will offer prospective aviation workers the option of gaining safety-related micro credentials across areas such as risk management, data insights, cyber safety, and human health.

Courses can be taken online with both universities, either online or on campus, with students able to use the completion of courses as credit toward other relevant post-graduate qualifications.

In 2026, Qantas will take the program a step further by expanding to accredited post-graduate qualifications, before delivering advanced research programs to students.

To meet its growing training needs, Qantas will pour \$40 million into training facilities across Australia, including a new ground training site in Sydney.

Opening in mid-2026, the new Sydney Ground Training Facility in Mascot will be dedicated to emergency procedures training for more than 5,000 Qantas, Jetstar and QantasLink pilots and cabin crew annually.

Training tools at the site will include virtual reality training spaces and a new narrow-body cabin trainer and classroom.

The news coincides with a deeper equality push in the carrier’s recruitment programs, with Qantas seeking to double the number of scholarships on offer for female and Aboriginal/

Torres Strait Islander students to attend the airline’s pilot academy in Toowoomba.

Twenty scholarships worth up to \$30,000 each will be offered next year, with funds to be used for accommodation and food, but not tuition fees.

Last year, Qantas formed a deal with Aviation Australia to boost engineer stocks (**TD 27 Jun 2023**).

For more details on academy enrolment, see **HERE**. AB

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## Window Seat

**AIRBNB'S** newest listing offers a whole house in New Jersey for bookings - only your housemates for this stay may come in the form of ghosts.

The homestay platform's newest ghoulish listing is the house of Delia Deetz (pictured), acclaimed fictitious artist, and one of the stars of the *Beetlejuice* franchise.

The lucky fan to book this listing can explore the home, admiring Delia's esteemed artwork, 'ghosts', and even a portal to The Afterlife.

Fans can request to book and learn more about the icon **HERE**, with 10, three-hour experiences available, for up to six guests each.

"Now that my work is posthumously appreciating in value and recognition, it's only fair that artistic souls be invited to my magnificent home," Delia said (or did she?).



## Learn more from Ama

**AMAWATERWAYS** Managing Director ANZ Steve Richards and Traveltek Head of Sales APAC Christian Sansom are hosting a trade webinar to relay exciting updates about the cruise line.

Among the updates will be the selling points of AmaWaterways' custom-designed ships, wellness programs, and how bookings can be made via Traveltek's platform.

There will also be a Q&A session to get under the skin of the brand's unique proposition.

Register **HERE** for the session taking place on 30 Oct at 12pm.

## Slow travel, fast growth



**WHILE** the theme of its Aussie roadshow was 'slow travels', the presentation in Sydney from the Spanish Tourism Board and Eurail had plenty of pace, as VIP agents learned more about the vast array of rail options in the European market.

Key themes of the gathering in Sydney yesterday at Gildas in Surry Hills were the rising popularity of off-the-beaten-path rail travel, as well as the advantages of avoiding the high-season crowds and prices by travelling during the shoulder or off-season.

Agents were also told via presentations from Eurail rep Silvia Festa and the Spain Tourism Board's APAC head Marta Fernandez Martin (pictured), that rail travel in Spain is booming on the back of travellers looking for alternate ways to explore the country, other than plane or car.

The presentation also advocated for planning less-crammed itineraries by taking an extra day or two in each destination to wander the streets and observe the local culture, a slow travel trend that is on the rise across Europe.

Testament to the growth of rail bookings in Australia, the market is now Eurail's second-largest globally after the United States, last year enjoying a 91% growth on pre-COVID sales.

Upcoming additions to the Eurail Pass network include:

- Deutsche Bahn and SNCF's ICE route, Paris-Berlin;
- NS and SNCB's new fast

train between Amsterdam and Brussels;

- Czech Railways' new four-daily Baltic Express service between Prague, Wroclaw, Poznan, Gdansk & Gdynia;
- European Sleeper's expanded overnight train route linking Brussels to Venice via the Netherlands and Austria.

The three-stop roadshow also visited Brisbane yesterday and will come to Perth tonight. **AB**

## UA does a pirouette

**UNITED** Airlines has expanded its partnership with the Ballet International Gala (BIG), signing on as the event's exclusive airline partner for the second consecutive year.

The BIG Live will tour classic Christmas story, *The Nutcracker*, in multiple cities across Australia and New Zealand between Oct-Dec 2024.

To celebrate the collaboration, United invited The Nutcracker and Snow Queen performers to Brisbane Airport, capturing them on the tarmac beside the United B787-9 Dreamliner aircraft before it departed for San Francisco.

The partnership will also see United present the BIG Christmas Spectacular at Sydney Opera House this Dec.



## UK aviation shake-up

**PLANS** have been unveiled for faster, quieter, cleaner flights in the United Kingdom, ahead of what could be the biggest shake-up to the design of the country's airspace in 70 years.

A consultation has been launched by the UK's Department for Transportation on how to cut flight delays, reduce carbon emissions, and deliver growth.

The proposed establishment of a UK Airspace Design Service would see a team of aviation experts work with the country's airports, starting with London.

"Our once-in-a-generation creation of a United Kingdom Airspace Design Service will help create quicker routes, ease congestion and reduce harmful emissions," UK Minister for Aviation Mike Kane said.

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## MICE SECTOR STILL GATHERING MOMENTUM

**BUSINESS** event planners are increasingly investigating the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) in the events industry, both in response to modern technological standards and the growing presence of Millennials in the delegate pool.

The *State of the Business Events Industry* report for 2023, from the Australian Business Events Association (ABEA), found Millennials had risen to become key decision-makers and looked favourably at event planners who were across the latest technology and processes.

The report praised the resilience of the meetings sector, with the Australian industry continuing its pandemic bounceback, a feat made even more impressive due to soaring inflation levels.

ABEA noted that as airline capacity returned to the market, labour shortages forced the sector to operate at reduced



capacity while net migration gradually helped fill vacancies.

Virtual conferencing played a major yet diminishing role as 2023 progressed, the report said, with face-to-face meetings rapidly returning as a preference.

Alongside the rise of Millennials, other key trends dominating the year included an increased focus on health, safety, risk management and data security, while sustainability in event operations shifted from 'nice to

have' to 'essential' components.

Clients were also seeking increased flexibility and a desire to modify event programs to suit a market's changing needs, along with increasing the role and involvement of host destinations.

ABEA said it was unable to complete an update to its 2020 study into the economic value of business events to the Australian economy, based on 2019 figures, but said addressing this issue was now a top priority.

Instead, the report cited figures from Tourism Research Australia, but said this data did not include higher spending levels of conference delegates, who did not meet the criteria to be considered day visitors.

ABEA estimated the sector's economic contribution as being "at least 75% higher" than what it adds to the overall general short-term visitor economy.

Instead, the best growth estimates came via data collected from Australia's nine largest convention centres, which compared the number of events from 2022 to 2023 as rising 12% from 3,408 to 3,831 and delegates climbing 37% from 3.27 million to 4.48 million.

ABEA added that data available up to Apr 2024 showed confirmed event and delegate numbers in the first four months of 2024, already hitting 80% and 86% respectively of total 2023 figures. *ML*

### Marriott launches Connect Responsibly for carbon friendliness

**MARRIOTT** International has announced the global launch of its Connect Responsibly with Marriott Bonvoy Events program for meeting planners.

Connect Responsibly will offer planners a meeting impact report and access to select carbon offset projects for those who wish to embed sustainability into their events at participating hotels in the

Marriott Bonvoy portfolio.

The program is anticipated to go live at managed and franchised properties from participating brands globally by the end of the month.

Connect Responsibly can be accessed following an event, capturing event details, property-specific sustainability practices, and carbon and water footprints, calculated

through established hospitality sector methodologies.

Marriott expects the reports to be available in 11 different languages based on location.

It plans to offer meetings and events customers the ability to access select carbon offset projects, in collaboration with South Pole, utilising its online shop to choose from a range of carbon offset projects.

### Keep Cairns fresh

**NEW** event spaces and off-site venues are part of an array of innovations to be revealed at the Cairns Convention Centre.

The facility's newest space, The Mill, was transformed from a working timber mill, while other off-site venues are available throughout the city, targeted at launches and networking functions.



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## APPOINTMENTS

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**Luxury Escapes** has hired **Angus Crichton** as its new Partnerships and Contracting Manager for Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. This is Crichton's first role in the travel industry, having joined from the construction sector and his most recent role at Procore Technologies.

Global airline collective **Star Alliance** has firmed up its management structure, unveiling several new executives to help the organisation enhance its strategic focus. The new recruits are **Ambar Franco** as Vice President, Customer Experience; **Luc Lachoux** as Vice President, Digital & Technology; **Renato Ramos** as Vice President, Strategy; and **Gayatheri Silvakumar** as Vice President, People and Culture. The team will work under and alongside Star Alliance CEO, Theo Panagiotoulas.

**Seibu Prince Hotels and Resorts** has set on an accelerated course of growth by appointing **Lee Richards** as the new CEO of its International Division outside its Japan heartland. Richards brings more than 30 years in hospitality to his new role and has been tasked with driving the expansion of the group's portfolio in global markets. He takes over from Simon Wan, who has opted for retirement after 17 years.

Experienced tourism industry professional **Kristy Meudell** has been named as the new Head of Consumer PR and Social Media at **Virgin Australia**. Meudell brings more than 15 years in the industry to her new role and has held senior leadership positions with organisations such as Destination NSW and Gate 7.

**Julie Coker** will pack up in the Californian city of San Diego and will cross the country to take up her new role as President and CEO of **New York City Tourism + Conventions**. Beginning her role in early Dec, Coker brings more than 30 years in tourism to her new position.

Ahead of its opening next month, **25hours Hotel Jakarta The Oddbird** has appointed **Jesper Soerensen** as General Manager. Bringing nearly 25 years' experience in hotels, the Danish-born Soerensen brings a wealth of knowledge to his new post, gleaned from senior leadership roles at hotels in nearly 10 cities worldwide.

New Zealand's **First Travel Group** is on the hunt for a new CEO, with **Malcolm MacLeod** stepping down from the role from 31 Oct. After taking some time to "recharge the batteries", MacLeod says he will be on the hunt for a new opportunity thereafter.

Transport technology giant **SITA** has promoted **Nathalie Altwegg** to Senior Vice President of its Airports business unit. In her new role, Altwegg will be tasked with evaluating and introducing new technology and efficiencies to help the company realise its objectives of launching fully biometric-powered operations and passenger journeys. She moves into her new position after two years as Chief Operating Officer at SITA Europe, where she oversaw strategy, commercial, people and portfolio.

## itravel takes over New York



**FIVE** itravel advisors have returned after enjoying a six-day famil in New York City, where they ventured beyond the usual tourist spots.

Organised in partnership with United Airlines and New York City Tourism + Conventions, the itinerary focused on the city's vibrant neighbourhoods outside of Midtown Manhattan.

The agents experienced some of New York's most culturally rich areas, including Brooklyn and Williamsburg, while staying at stylish properties like the Ace Hotel Brooklyn, Gansevoort Meatpacking NYC and The Beekman Hotel.

Highlights included a visit to the 9/11 Memorial; a private tour of the Museum of Modern Art; taking in the view from the Top of the Rock observation deck; and a food tour through Brooklyn Heights and Dumbo.

"Our aim was to give our advisors a deeper understanding of New York City, beyond the usual attractions," said itravel's Head of Product & Marketing, Dee Jaswal.

"By exploring lesser-known neighbourhoods, they now have a wealth of new ideas to create

bespoke, authentic itineraries for their clients." *JM*

**Pictured** in Dumbo: Roslyn Thompson, itravel Raymond Terrace; Antonio Khattar, NYC Tourism + Convention; Leesa McNally, itravel Mobile; Jade Garlick, Roast & Roam; Rebecca McHenry, itravel Liverpool; Richard Carrick, UA; Jaswal; and Stefania Towler, Jetsetter Travel.

## Tassie makes top 10

**TASMANIA** has made it on to Lonely Planet's coveted annual 'Best in Travel' list, with Launceston and the Tamar Valley declared one of the top 10 regions in the world to visit in 2025.

Coming in at number four, the scenic Tasmanian region is the only Australian destination to make the list this year.

"While Tasmania's stunning and diverse regions set us apart as a travel destination, it's the tourism and hospitality industry and our communities who provide unforgettable experiences, produce and beverages that showcase the best of what our regions have to offer," said Tasmania's Premier and Minister for Tourism, Jeremy Rockliff.



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