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## QR to buy VA stake in "days"

AFTER just over two months of silence, Qatar Airways is close to finalising a rumoured 20% stake in Virgin Australia (TD 27 Jun), the AFR has reported.

Sources close to negotiations have suggested the purchase will happen "within days", but

### Singapore sponsors

THE Singapore Tourism Board has been announced as the Arrival Sponsor for the National Travel Industry Travel Awards (NTIA) in Sydney on 26 Oct.

"From our initial discussions with the Singapore Tourism Board team, it's evident that the 2024 Arrival will elevate travel's premier event to new heights," ATIA CEO, Dean Long said.

Reflecting on the new sponsorship deal, Singapore Tourism Board Executive Director, International Group HQ & Oceania, Oliver Chong, said that while more channels have developed over the years to reach travellers, travel agents have played, and will continue to play, a huge role in helping to sell Singapore as a destination.

any move will still need to gain formal approval from the Foreign Investment Review Board.

Virgin and Qatar enjoy a close relationship, having already brokered various codeshare and reciprocal loyalty agreements, and the latest rumoured bid for equity in the Aussie airline is viewed by many as a key move by the carriers to push back against the dominant Qantas/Emirates alliance in the local market.

Any partial acquisition would also need to be rubber-stamped by the Federal Government.

While the recent history between the Federal Government and Qatar has been strained - given the Middle Eastern carrier was controversially blocked from expanding capacity in Jul last year - the chances of approval seem brighter given the recent Aviation White Paper's pledge to improve aviation competition. AB

### Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news plus a full page from ATIA's Beyond Borders.

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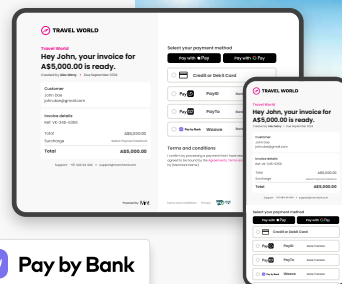
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## JQ ramps up Asia expansion

**JETSTAR'S** Perth expansion is gaining traction this week, with the carrier launching a third new service between the WA capital and Asia this week.

Following the launch of new services between Perth and Singapore and Phuket last month, Jetstar will begin flying up to four times a week between Perth and Bangkok from this Fri.

The three new services will add more than 300,000 new low fares seats each year between Asia and Western Australia.

Jetstar has also officially opened a new aircraft and pilot base at



Perth Airport today, as part of a historic agreement formed between the hub and QF earlier this year (**TD** 31 May).

The new base can accommodate up to 60 pilots and four of the newest aircraft in Jetstar's fleet, the Airbus A321neo LR - part of a pipeline of 38 new A321neo LR and XLR aircraft the carrier is set to acquire by 2029.

Additionally, from today, the Qantas subsidiary will shift all its domestic services from Terminal 3 to Terminal 2, which is next to Terminal 1 where its international flights operate from, providing a quicker and more convenient journey for customers connecting between flights. *JM*

## Beyond Borders '24

**SOME** of the industry's top leaders are set to speak at the Australian Travel industry Association's Beyond Borders Travel Summit next month.

See **p8** to discover the speaker line-up for the Sydney event.

## Star falls from ASX

**THE** Star has been suspended from trading by the ASX after it failed to post its financial results within the reporting period.

The development comes as the troubled casino and resort operator received a copy of the NSW regulator's probe into its culture on Fri, finding the company unsuitable to hold a casino licence.

## Dreamworld mauling

**A WORKER** at Dreamworld has been attacked by a tiger this morning, with the woman taken to Gold Coast hospital with deep laceration wounds to her arms.

The staff member at the Queensland theme park is one of the animal's handlers, with a spokesperson for Dreamworld confirming the emergency incident a short time ago.

"The handler sustained injuries," Dreamworld said, adding a safety review is now underway.

## CATO Xmas sponsor

**THE** Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has announced TravelPay as the Platinum Sponsor of its Christmas Lunch this year, taking place on 05 Dec at the Sheraton Grand Sydney.

"Our commitment to the travel industry is unwavering and we are dedicated to fostering strong partnerships and continuing our support of the CATO family," the travel payment provider stated.

## C360's double take

**SO STRONG** has the growing interest been in CLIA's Cruise360 annual conference, that the gathering will expand to a two-day event next year.

Revealed by CLIA Australasia MD Joel Katz over the weekend, Cruise360, which last week saw its largest attendance ever, will also return to Brisbane for the second time in three years, hosted at the Royal International Convention Centre.

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## Hale to the new chief

**THE** replacement for Global Touring's long-serving senior executive David Gendle has been revealed as Bobby Hale (pictured), who has joined the team as Head of Sales.

Hale takes the role after spending over two years at On the Go Tours, where he served as Head of Sales for the Southern Hemisphere region, helping to nurse the brand's bookings back from the pandemic.

His career also includes stints at Flight Centre Travel Group, On Track Expeditions, and a period with MTA - Mobile Travel Agents during the pandemic.

Hale has also flexed his entrepreneurial muscle in the past, founding Hale Travel & Events, a full-service travel agency and event management company specialising in global adventure and sporting events.

The venture wrapped up in '22. Global Touring, the owner of



Todpeck Travel and Back-Roads Touring, has undergone some big management changes this year, in Apr announcing Gendle would be retiring from the company by the end of the year, while Anna Fawcett returned as General Manager APAC (TD 22 Apr).

For the interim, Gendle has been looking after the Head of Sales position until his exit later this year, after a restructure saw the departure of former sales chief Dylan Hearne.

"Hale's extensive travel experience...will bring a fresh, innovative approach to our sales strategy, ensuring continued success across all our brands," Fawcett enthused. AB

## Gate 7 goes Nasu

**AUSTRALIAN** travellers and agents will soon be able to learn more about Japan's scenic Nasu Highlands after the region's tourism board appointed Gate 7 as its Australian PR representative.

The Nasu Highlands are located approximately 75 minutes by bullet train north of Tokyo and is a region known for Mt Nasu and its plethora of hiking trails, skiing, hot springs and waterfall trails, flower fields and culinary experiences.

The a rising desire by Australian travellers to explore farther-flung areas in Japan.

## Indonesia Mpx form

**TRAVELLERS** entering Indonesia are now required to complete a new electronic health declaration as the country aims to reduce the risk of importing Mpx.

The Satusehat Health Pass can be completed online **HERE** prior to entry, and must be filled out by children and adults.

## MW Tours rebrands

**MW TOURS** is embarking on a new adventure, with a "dynamic brand transformation" embodying a new logo (pictured) and mission statement.

The rebrand coincides with the launch of MW's new brochures for next year (see p7), featuring an array of tours across Japan, Northeast Asia, Africa, and Southeast Asia.

"This is a thrilling moment for MW Tours," National Sales Manager David Reid enthused.

"Over the past two years, post-pandemic, we've vastly surpassed all previous sales records and emerged as a leading name among Australian travel agents.

"Our new branding perfectly captures our evolution and our commitment," he added.



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## JNTO kicks into gear



**ENTHUSIASM** for learning about Japanese culture and experiences was high at the two recent trade events hosted by the Japan National Tourism

Organization (JNTO) in Australia.

The recent networking and learning events attracted 225 attendees, first at Doltone House Hyde Park in Sydney before heading to Pullman King George Square in Brisbane.

Featuring a line-up of 40 leading Japanese suppliers at each location, the gatherings provided in-depth insights into Japan's offerings, kicking off with a welcome from the JNTO executive team and a brief address from the Consulate General.

Agents also so enjoyed connecting directly with suppliers and destinations during scheduled appointments.

A traditional karate demonstration entertained attendees, with Lawson Dobb from Linkd Tourism joining in on the demo in Brissy and impressing the audience with his karate skills.

Some lucky attendees walked away from the JNTO roadshow with prizes, including accommodation stays, traditional crafts, and Japanese spirits. *JM*

## Entire Journeys offer

**ENTIRE** Travel Group is offering savings of \$500 per couple on bookings made in Sep, to celebrate the release of its 2025 Entire Group Journeys program.

Now available to book, the tours visit Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Greece and Morocco, along with new options covering Northern France and eastern Europe.

Agents will also notice changes to popular itineraries, which have been refreshed through the inclusion of additional European destinations, new hotels and an expanded range of day tours.

Among the tours included in the offer are the eight-day 'Morocco Journeys', from \$2,421pp twin share, and the 14-day 'Italy in Style Journeys' from \$7,597pp twin share - see more [HERE](#).



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## One in 10 Aussies robbed

**ALARMING** new research from Finder has revealed that 10% of Aussies have been robbed while on holiday, and another 14% have nearly had something stolen from them while travelling.

A Finder survey of 1,041 respondents showed that, of those who have been robbed, one in three (34%) were pickpocketed, while one in four (24%) had their luggage stolen.

An additional 15% had their credit or debit card skimmed, and the same number said they have been scammed.

"The last thing you want on holiday is to have something stolen from you," Tim Bennett, insurance expert at Finder, said.

"There are some ways to minimise the risk - steer clear of known trouble spots, avoid displaying valuable items, and stay alert in crowded areas."

He added that Australians should carefully read the fine print of their travel insurance

policy to ensure it includes lost or stolen cards and associated fraud.

"If the worst does happen, contact your insurer immediately and ask them exactly what information they'll require from you to make a claim." *JM*

## Taliban drops Aust

**PASSPORTS** renewed in Australia are now banned in Afghanistan, a report by SBS has warned, with those travelling to the country advised they risk becoming stranded.

There are now doubts over the future of Afghanistan's embassy in Canberra, with documents renewed by it now deemed invalid following a Taliban passport decree.

The order from 30 Jul affects documents issued by embassies in Australia and 13 other countries with embassies set up by Afghanistan's former, western-backed government.

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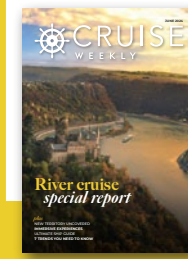
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### Flights per minute

A **MONEY.COM.AU** analysis has ranked Australia's 10 most popular international flight routes by cost-per-minute against approx flight time and the fare paid.

The study found PER-SIN was the best value at \$1.41 per min, closely followed by MEL-SIN at \$1.78 and PER-DPS at \$1.96.

### Concerns at Jayride

**GLOBAL** rideshare aggregator Jayride has reported an after-tax loss of more than \$8.2 million for the 2024 financial year as it looks to turn things around as part of a strategic review.

The company saw an increase in total revenue to \$5.4 million, however overall expenses grew from \$13.3m in 2023 to \$13.7m.

Despite its second capital raising in the past five years (**TD 05 Feb**) generating \$1.5m in new funds, the company's cash balance has continued to fall from \$2.5m last year to just over \$900,000 today.

Jayride says it has shifted its priority to focus on profitable services over pure volume and unwound complex discounting models that were labour intensive to maintain.

Strategic review outcomes have seen fixed costs reduced by \$3.75m per year to boost EBITDA and margins improved.

In the third quarter of the next FY, the company says it aims to implement new API technology for better quoting and booking along with new technology to boost automation and cut costs.

## Mixed fortunes for hotels

**HOTEL** operators in Australasia have expressed mixed sentiments about market performance for the remainder of 2024 and into 2025, with feelings varying wildly depending on hotel sectors.

The JLL Hotel Operators' *Sentiment Survey* for 2024/25 generated 1,075 responses from all types of hotels, from budget to luxury and city to resort, with 225 coming from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region.

The survey found 35% of hoteliers in Australasia believe market conditions will be more challenging for the remainder of 2024 in terms of occupancy, but the outlook for 2025 is optimistic, with 68% expecting better times.

Broken down, luxury and budget hoteliers were bullish about their 2025 fortunes, with 79% of luxe operators and 82% in budget properties anticipating rooms to be full more often next year.

While occupancy expectations were high, respondents were not expecting the same growth



in terms of ADR (Average Daily Rate), with slow gains expected.

This sentiment was blamed on increased input costs and pressure on household budgets.

Hoteliers are expecting greater challenges in retaining quality staff in 2025, with 87% of respondents saying higher salary offers both from within and outside the hotel industry would impact overall sector growth. *ML*

### G's Pink India Party

**LONELY** Planet Co-Founder Tony Wheeler and author Elizabeth Becker have been confirmed as keynote speakers at G Adventures' second GX World Community Tourism Summit, in partnership with Planterra.

Taking place in Jaipur, India, the event will again coincide with World Tourism Day on 27 Sep.

Wheeler and Becker will grace the stage to share their stories for more than 400 of G Adventures' preferred agents, suppliers, staff and partner suppliers.

The event will conclude with a spectacular 'Pink Party' at the Jaigarh Fort, which will feature 90s dance music icons C+C Music Factory as the headline act.

### Gold Coast Tryppin

**WYNDHAM** Hotels and Resorts will open its TRYP by Wyndham Southport Gold Coast in Oct as part of the \$3.8 billion Imperial Square mixed-use development.

The 4.5-star hotel will feature 225 rooms, a rooftop infinity swimming pool with ocean views, day spa and fitness centre along with a 100-seat alfresco Italian and Mediterranean restaurant.

### Park Inn by Rad debut

**PARK** Inn by Radisson is making its debut in Australia, focused on "stress-free experiences, good food and upbeat environments".

The upper midscale brand will launch its Melbourne property in Carlton in Q4.

"We are excited for this opportunity to introduce Park Inn by Radisson to Australia.

Melbourne is one of the world's most iconic cities with attractions for business and leisure travellers," said Victor Kondarios, Director, Development, Australasia, RHG.

"Fraser Capital Group is a strong company looking to grow its hotel portfolio and we are delighted to enter into this relationship with them, which includes a full range of support services such as revenue management, sales and marketing," he added.

An existing property will undergo a total renovation to align with Park Inn by Radisson's international standards.

The hotel will feature 89 rooms, ranging from 25m<sup>2</sup> Standard rooms to 34m<sup>2</sup> Deluxe rooms, featuring contemporary furnishings and bathrooms.

It will also feature a gym, pool, two meeting rooms, an all-day dining restaurant and casual grab-and-go cafe with a choice of culinary options.



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## A yawning gap in White Paper

### OPINION

Tourism expert and academic David Beirman lives in the small NSW township of Nundle, about 60km from Tamworth.



Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to [feedback@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:feedback@traveldaily.com.au)

I LARGELY agreed with Adam Bishop's excellent *travelBulletin* article (HERE), which assessed the 2024 Australian Government's Aviation White Paper.

Certainly the White Paper made sensible recommendations about airlines directly compensating consumers for cancelled or grossly delayed flights, the appointment of Ombudsmen, greater care for disabled travellers, a more transparent and fair approach to hoarding of slots (especially in Sydney and Melbourne), and enhancements to regional airports.

Overall, it was the best Australian Govt Aviation White Paper published in the past 30 years.

Just after its release, I was interviewed by Bridie Tanner from ABC Radio North Coast (NSW) and we discussed the paper's implications for regional aviation.

She asked me if there was anything missing from the White Paper, and my response was that there was no mention of insolvency insurance cover.

This is a weak area in the aviation sector and, in fact, in

most sectors of the Australian tourism, as well as the global industry, to some extent.

Considering the recent demise of Bonza and the partial collapse of Rex, as well as a longer history of domestic airline insolvencies (Ansett, Compass 1 & 2, Impulse, Aussie Air, and even Virgin Australia when its ownership was in flux), the lack of insolvency protection for consumers and the staff of collapsed airlines is a yawning gap in consumer and airline staff protection.

“Lack of insolvency protection for consumers and the staff of collapsed airlines is a yawning gap in protection”

In my book *Handbook on Crisis and Disaster Management in Tourism* (co-edited with Bruce Prideaux), I covered the excellent British scheme, ATOL (Airlines Travel Operators Licence), which has been operating since 1973.

This user-pays government-backed scheme (average cost A\$5 per pax per booking) raised enough money to cover the repatriation and refunds for 150,000 UK pax affected by the 2019 Thomas Cook Collapse.

The European Union version

of this scheme (the European Package Tour Directive, established in 1990) covered 450,000 travellers affected by the same collapse.

ATOL and its EU counterpart primarily cover package tours.

Adapting such a scheme to cover aviation, tour operator and travel agency insolvency would work very well in Australia, with the core proviso that it is a user-paid and government-backed scheme.

It would save a great deal of pain and anguish for those whose travel plans were ruined and bank balances denuded in the unlikely, but far from impossible, event that their airline, tour operator or travel agent suddenly goes bust.

This begs the question: if the British can do this successfully for 51 years and the EU for 32 years, why not Australia?

I don't see this as just an airline issue - it could be adapted to encompass insolvency for airlines, agents, tour operators and events.

Obviously, it would be ideal if all travel enterprises operated so professionally that such cover was not required.

However, the history of aviation and tourism in Australia is compelling evidence that a government-guaranteed safety net is a valuable last resort for the Australian tourism industry.

I can hardly think of a tourist (apart a couple of my stinger former clients) who would begrudge paying under \$10 to be protected by insolvency cover.

## Australians still spending more

DESPITE booking numbers being down, Australians are spending more on domestic tourism experiences, according to new data from Big Red Group.

The experience marketplace has recorded an average basket size increase of 5.7% year-on-year among Australians who are booking adventures Down Under.

Queensland enjoyed booking growth of 18.7% thanks to its best whale-watching numbers in decades, while an unprecedented number of weather-related cancellations saw bookings in NSW drop by a fifth (-20.6%).

Big Red Group has also seen strong returns from international markets, with bookings up 89.1% this season and 337.6% year-on-year for 2024 to date, led by China, Taiwan, Singapore, India and South Korea.

Whitewater rafting experiences proved popular in Jul and Aug, with a 163% bookings boom, while cruises, hot air balloons and jet boats were favourites among international visitors.

“With over 500,000 experiences booked so far this season, we can see that visitors to our shores are committed to creating memorable moments,” said David Anderson, CEO at Big Red Group.





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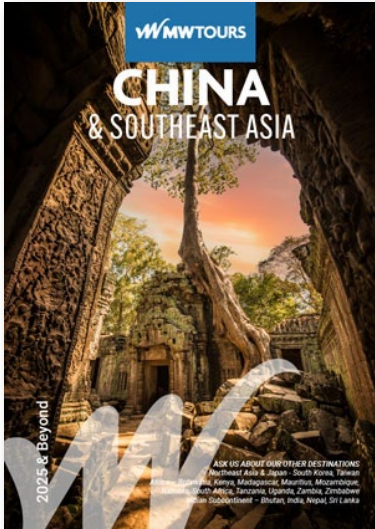
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### Southeast Asia and China 2025

Complementing its recent rebranding, MW Tours has launched fully redesigned brochures for 2025, available in both print and digital formats. The 60-page Southeast Asia and China edition showcases the operator's tours spanning Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, and China. Travel agents and their clients will find an enhanced selection of accommodations, which now include premium four-star options, as well as discounts and destination maps and guides. A special highlight is the Mekong River Cruise tour,

which invites travellers to set sail aboard the luxurious *Toum Tiou 2* as it journeys between Saigon and Siem Reap, complemented by pre- and post-tours. Clients can also discover the allure of the Philippines by opting for one of MW Tours' all-encompassing packages, which cater to a range of holiday styles and budgets. For example, there's the 11-day 'Philippines Express', which features renowned underground river tour in Puerto Princesa and an exploration of the scenic countryside of Bohol. Additionally, the brochure features a selection of China small group tours, including the 'Splendour of China', which takes in all the most famous sights of Beijing, Xi'an, Guilin, Yangshuo, Hangzhou and Shanghai over 14 days.

## JAL doubles MEL

**JAPAN** Airlines will increase its service to Melbourne from three to six flights weekly.

According to GDS displays, the increased frequency will begin from 27 Oct and operate with a mix of Boeing 787-8 and Dash-9 Dreamliner aircraft, and follows a strong and sustained period of growth for the market, both for inbound and outbound numbers.

## A date with *Destiny*

**DISNEY** Cruise Line will set sail on the maiden voyage of its new *Disney Destiny* ship on 20 Nov next year, the line has revealed.

*Destiny* will initially be based in Fort Lauderdale, operating a mix of four- and five-night cruises to the Bahamas, Western Caribbean, Lookout Cay and Castaway Cay.

Bookings for the general public will open on 12 Sep.

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## PAL tech upgrade

**PHILIPPINE** Airlines has partnered with Amadeus to upgrade its digital channels and improve the traveller experience.

The carrier will adopt a wide range of digital services and solutions from Amadeus, including the full integration of customer loyalty knowledge and data with the Altea Passenger Service System, enabling it to deliver real-time personalisation.

The Philippines flag carrier will also implement an advanced loyalty management solution for its Mabuhay Miles program.

## Find your Avani tribe

**AVANI** Hotels & Resorts has launched an online quiz inviting guests to discover which of the six 'Avani Tribe' travel types they belong to.

With the option of either a quick social media game or an extended online quiz, travellers can unlock personalised itineraries based on their 'type', which includes Water Baby, Wellness Wanderer, Adventurer, Foodie, Romantic and Creative.

Designed to appeal to Millennial and Gen Z guests, the initiative is represented by well-known travel influencers representing the six travel tribes, who will embark on personalised trips by Avani.

The influencer line-up includes two Aussies - Locky Gilbert of *Australian Survivor* fame, who will be joined at Avani+ Fares Maldives Resort by his wife Irena.

To participate, travellers can take the Avani Tribes quiz for free **HERE**, or search for the 'Find your Avani Tribe' filter on social platform TikTok and the 'Avani Tribe Filter' on Instagram.

## Window Seat

**SOUTH** Africa and New Zealand clashed on the rugby field on the weekend, in one of the sport's most anticipated games of the year.

The Springboks were victors by four points, but one of the talking points of the game was a controversial flyover from an Emirates Airbus A380.

Fans at Emirates Airline Park in Johannesburg were buzzed by the superjumbo, but it seems only the Springboks were amused.

New Zealanders criticised the stunt's timing, which occurred during the All Blacks' famous haka, calling it "disrespectful" - mind games, perhaps?

The fact they lost didn't help.

## SYD boosts safety

**SYDNEY** Airport has become the first airport in Australia to install a windshear detection system to improve flight safety.

The light detection and ranging system alerts pilots and airport personnel of hazardous low-level wind conditions that could affect aircraft during take-off and landing, and updates every 10 seconds with windshear alerts transmitted to the air traffic control tower.

"This new technology is a game-changer for Sydney Airport, significantly increasing our ability to proactively detect and respond to sudden changes in wind patterns near the runway and alert pilots in the vicinity," said Sydney Airport Chief Operations Officer, Adrian Witherow.

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