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## QF rebukes McKenzie op-ed

**QANTAS** Group has reinforced to *Travel Daily* there have been no findings that it has engaged in anti-competitive behaviour, following a controversial op-ed penned yesterday by Victorian Senator, Bridget McKenzie.

In a column penned yesterday for *The Australian Financial Review*, the Shadow Minister for Transport pondered if divestiture powers should be considered by the Australian Government in regards to Qantas Group, in an opinion titled, 'Is it time to force Qantas to break up with Jetstar?'

Qantas highlighted the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has been monitoring the aviation industry for the past four years, adding it welcomes competition, despite McKenzie's claims.

"Since Jetstar launched 20 years ago it's carried 400 million customers with more than half of them travelling for less than \$100," a Qantas Group spokesperson said.

"Over the past year, domestic and international airfares have continued to trend down, adjusted for inflation."

"Labor's Aviation White Paper failed to deal with the airline duopoly, so the Coalition is now calling for the competition review to include divestiture powers," McKenzie wrote.

Following a rebuke by Nationals Leader, David Littleproud, Senator McKenzie has since denied she supports breaking up Qantas, adding the thoughts in her op-ed "are one of the various tools the treasurer needs to look at", but is not Coalition policy. *MS*

## NZ on your terms

**TRAVEL** agents can plan and book their own self-famil using the Explore New Zealand discount program, which features amazing deals including FOC offers - more details on today's **cover page**.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features eight pages of news including our **Sustainability** page, a cover wrap from **Tourism New Zealand**, a photo page from **Rail Europe** plus a full page from **Silversea**.

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## Silversea indulgence

TRAVELLERS can enjoy savings of \$5,000 along with onboard credit of up to \$400 per suite through Silversea's limited-time 'Save, Indulge, Explore' expedition offer.

For more information, see page nine of today's *Travel Daily*.

## New Great Southern trip

EXCLUSIVE

**JOURNEY** Beyond has announced a three-day summer by train adventure aboard The Great Southern from Brisbane to Melbourne, allowing guests to disembark in the capital of Victoria for the first time.

The first departure will leave Brisbane on 09 Dec and arrive in Melbourne on 11 Dec, where guests will be able to disembark, rather than head through to the train's final stop of Adelaide.

Passengers will still be able to enjoy the Great Southern's off-train experiences throughout the voyage, including in Melbourne, where they can choose to visit the Melbourne Cricket Ground, Old Melbourne Gaol, or the National Gallery of Victoria.

Guests will then head to Melbourne Skydeck for lunch at Eureka 89.

Executive General Manager Rail Expeditions, David Donald, speaking exclusively to *TD*, said guests had been asking for the shorter, segmented journey, which is available on Journey Beyond's other trains, such as The Ghan and The Indian Pacific.

"The Great Southern season is always an exciting time of year, and we are thrilled to now offer guests the opportunity to disembark in Melbourne for the first time, as there is no better time to visit than summer," Donald said.

Journey Beyond extended the Great Southern's season to Feb



last year, and the results have been positive, he revealed. *MS*

## SAA earlybird fares

AUSSIES can take advantage of earlybird prices on South African Airways fares between Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth to Africa.

The sale applies to Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth, for travel between 01 Feb and 31 Aug 2025.

Prices start from \$838 for those travelling from Perth, and from \$1,020 from other Australian cities - more information [HERE](#).

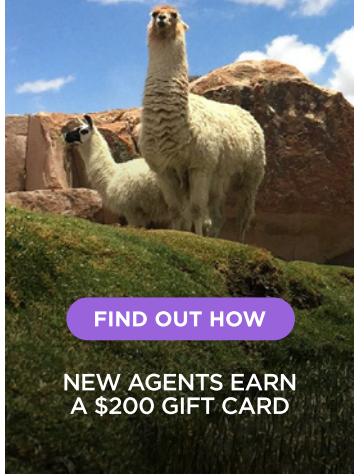
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Rail  
Europe

Rail Journey Inspiration by Alexander Taylor,  
The Fabulous Travel Consultants



Alexander's dream journey goes from Switzerland to France, then down to Italy and back up to Austria. He'd enjoy snowcapped panorama aboard the Glacier Express in Switzerland, the high-speed TGV in France, more scenic panoramas on the Bernina Express when heading to Italy, before Railjet-ing it into Austria.

He said this journey "combines stunning natural scenery, rich cultural experiences, and the joy of sustainable travel. This journey will not only fulfill my wanderlust but also deepen my appreciation for Europe's interconnected beauty and heritage".

Read Alexander's full entry on [Rail Europe's FB page](#)

The best way to follow Alexander's dream route or travel around Europe is with a [Eurail Global Mobile Pass](#). With access to unlimited rail travel across 33 countries, the Pass not only offers unparalleled flexibility, convenience and savings, but also spectacular scenery, superb comfort and modern facilities.

Pass options include 'Continuous' for continuous travel days over 15 days, 22 days, 1 month, 2 months or 3 months; or 'Flexi' for 4, 5 or 7 travel days within 1 month, and 10 or 15 travel days within 2 months. For seat reservations see [here](#) for more information.

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## EK scales back MEL

EMIRATES has flagged it will scale back its Melbourne schedule to two daily nonstop services to Dubai and end its third flight, which stops in Singapore.

Emirates will continue to serve Singapore via its long-running codeshare deal with Qantas.

## DNSW backs NTL routes

FINANCIAL incentives and strategic marketing support will be provided to help Newcastle Airport (NTL) lure foreign airlines to fly to the city once its new int'l terminal opens next year.

The airport has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Destination NSW, which will see funds provided from Stream Two of the state government's Aviation Attraction Fund to help the airport establish itself as a new global gateway.

Newcastle's new \$250 million terminal, which is being bankrolled by Commonwealth Bank (TD 11 Apr 2023), is tipped to see annual visitor numbers to

the coastal city and the famed Hunter Valley skyrocket by 850,000 each year and boost the state's economy by \$6.2 billion, as well as provide 4,400 new jobs.

NSW Minister for Jobs and Tourism, John Graham, said the new terminal will be a massive boost for tourism in the Hunter and the mid-north NSW coast.

"This MOU provides financial certainty to Newcastle Airport so it can attract new international and domestic airline services, helping the recovery of aviation jobs and providing a significant boost to the local visitor economy," Minister Graham said.

Destination NSW Chief Executive Steve Cox said the organisation is proud to be working with the Hunter community on this "once-in-a-generation opportunity". ML

## Touropa's big 25/26

FLEXIBLE coach tour operator Touropa will offer 2,729 different itineraries in its newly-launched 2025/26 season, with almost 100,000 guaranteed departures.

The company has frozen current prices on 2025/26 bookings for all new bookings deposited by 15 Jan.

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**LET'S TALK**

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## Vosaio into market

EUROPE and Morocco group specialist Vosaio Travel Group has expanded into the Australian market, appointing Carly Allen as its local Country Manager.

In her new role, Allen will drive the brand's awareness campaigns, strategic planning, partnership development and market expansion.

Vosaio Travel Group CEO Martin Knuepfer commented that Allen's "industry network, leadership and vision will be crucial in introducing our comprehensive tailored group solutions to travel businesses in Australia and New Zealand, offering them unparalleled opportunities to connect with destinations across Europe and Morocco".

## MEL mobility hubs

MELBOURNE Airport has today introduced four mobility check points designed to help travellers with accessibility requirements to navigate the airport experience.

Each staffed hub, located at the airport's carpark, check-in areas, baggage hall and pick-up/drop-off zones, will provide support for flyers with both visible and non-visible disabilities.

Services will initially operate on a trial from 10am-6pm Mon-Fri and will include buggy transfers, communication boards for non-verbal travellers, sensory packs, wheelchair assistance and more.

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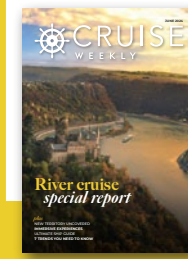
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### ANA's Aussie sale

ALL Nippon Airways has announced a 'Waku Waku' sale for Sydney and Perth, with return fares to Tokyo from \$1,035.

The promotion applies for bookings made before 15 Oct on travel periods between 05-21 Nov 2025 and 13 Feb-13 Mar 2025.

## Industry weighs in on Koala

**EXCLUSIVE**

**MYSTERIOUS** airline newcomer Koala Airlines (**TD** 06 Sep) may claim to "chart a new flight path for Australian aviation", with "a game-changing strategy" under its belt, but some industry experts are skeptical.

"The only carrier I think would work in the Aussie domestic market is an ultra-low cost carrier, like a Ryanair, an AirAsia, Wizz Air, Spirit, Frontier, Volaris, etc," said Airline Intelligence Research Chief Executive, Tony Webber.

"They need to come into the market at lower unit cost than Jetstar and scoop up the really price-sensitive passengers,"

"But when they do come in, they have to come into the market at a reasonable scale, not with a handful of planes, [or] they won't be able to compete with Jetstar on cost."

Ram Chhabra, Group CEO at CVFR Travel Group, also expressed his doubts, especially as some believe that Koala could fill the gap that embattled carrier Rex has left behind.

However, as Chhabra pointed out, Rex started its major metro flights post-COVID, when both Virgin and Qantas had not yet returned to their full pre-pandemic capacity.

Fast forward a couple of years later when both airlines had bounced back and Rex was squeezed out, as it didn't have the frequency or slots required to compete as a strong alternative

to either Qantas or Virgin.

"Koala Airlines wants to enter the market at a time when Qantas and Virgin are back to full capacity and stronger than where they were pre-COVID.

"In fact, Virgin financially is in a much stronger position today than it has ever been," Chhabra told **Travel Daily**.

"There is no room for a niche player in the domestic space.

"There is also no point in servicing small markets where Qantas and Virgin don't fly, because there is a commercial reason why they don't fly there.

"I do believe there is room for another full domestic player, but it needs to have deep pockets and survive the first few years, which will be the toughest.

"They also need to play it differently and engage and work with the travel trade.

"If they do that, I believe the industry will support them because both Qantas and Virgin don't want to play fair with travel agents when it comes to domestic travel."

Koala first launched in 2018, then acquired Desert Air Safaris, which had operated air tours and charter flights in the Australian outback for more than 50 years.

However, Koala Airlines COO Sally Spring revealed that the emerging carrier is still in the process of "meeting regulatory requirements, finalising aircraft leasing agreements & conducting further planning". **JHM**

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**Travel Daily**  
ON LOCATION

**SHANGHAI**

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of **Viking Cruises**, operating its inaugural **China Discovery voyage** aboard the **Viking Yi Dun**.

**SHANGHAI'S** highlights are on the agenda today, as part of an immersive two-night stay on our **Viking China** itinerary.

The **Viking Yi Dun** is a joint venture with state-owned **China Merchants Group**, giving the operation unprecedented access to the destination.

This is the first-ever domestic **China** cruise for **Western** passengers, with a full complement on board including hundreds of **Americans**, who joined the ship after experiencing pre-cruise add-ons taking in many of **China's** other highlights such as the **Great Wall**, the **Terracotta Warriors**, **Beijing** and more.

Options today offer insights into **Shanghai's** many attractions, as well as an evening acrobatic performance showcasing some of the incredible local talent.

Tomorrow we set sail, cruising down the river from **Shanghai** to the coast before heading south to **Zhoushan**.

Lots more from **Viking** in **China** on **page seven** and in today's **Cruise Weekly**.

**En gladlaks.**  
*'A happy salmon.'*

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## Cairns showcases events



**TOURISM** Australia's historically biennial incentive showcase Australia Next has returned to Cairns as the sector looks to boost its post-COVID rebound.

Last year, the leading business events networking showcase was held in Adelaide, where it generated 212 business leads, worth \$192 million.

This year's Australia Next gathering has attracted around 80 international business events buyers and 96 Australian industry sellers, with the former also partaking in a range of pre- and post-familiarisations in destinations around the country.

Tourism Australia's Executive General Manager of Commercial & Business Events Australia, Robin Mack, opened proceedings yesterday, spruiking the event's ability to also highlight what tourism experiences Far North Queensland has to offer.

"Incentive planners from 10 key markets around the world will have the opportunity to experience first-hand the unique tourism experiences and world-class venues available in Cairns,

and as a result generate further business leads for our industry," Mack said.

One of the key markets being courted is Greater China, with Australia hopeful it can build on the solid recovery gains made over the next couple of years.

Buyers from Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, South Korea, Japan, New Zealand, North America and the United Kingdom are also participating in Australia Next this year. *AB*

### AC preps for worst

**AIR** Canada is preparing to suspend most of its operations in the event it can't reach an agreement with the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) over pay conditions (*TD* yesterday).

Failure to reach an agreement could result in a 72-hour strike.

The carrier said a managed shutdown is the "only responsible course" in order to provide certainty to customers, who will be able to use Air Canada's goodwill policy to change or defer imminent travel at no cost.

### Puglia selling fast

**DEPARTURE** dates in 2025 for Ormina Tours' highly sought-after Puglia itinerary are selling fast, with several dates almost sold-out already.

The 'Enchanting Puglia Small Group Journeys', which includes authentic local experiences, features a max of 10 guests and guaranteed departures for two.

The European tour operator has also released a free 'Puglia Travel Guide' for agents, filled with insights to enhance their clients' experience - access it [HERE](#).

### Drakesbrook Weir is the place to be

**THE** Government of Western Australia has unveiled \$800,000 worth of upgrades at Drakesbrook Weir, a popular recreation and tourism spot in the Peel region.

Visitors can now enjoy a children's nature playground, in addition to accessible toilet facilities, barbeque areas, picnic shelters, shade structures, and improved parking.

The enhancements also include the installation of a giant marron, representing the Weir as the place to fish for rainbow trout, redfin perch and marron.

The improvement coincides with Waroona's annual Troutfest celebrations, a community fishing event complete with stalls, food and live music.

"By investing in the Peel region's tourism and recreation infrastructure, the Cook Government is supporting economic growth and development, providing a boost to tourism in the area," said Regional Development and Fisheries Minister, Don Punch.

Travel Daily ON LOCATION

**CAIRNS**

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Tourism Australia, which is hosting its Australia Next event.

**DAY** two of Australia Next will see buyers and media attend a breakfast hosted by Business Events Cairns in partnership with Tourism Events Qld.

The next stop will then see the group board a Reef Magic vessel and explore the pontoon at Moore Reef to learn more about the fascinating marine diversity of the region.

After a fun day in the sun, guests will then enjoy a concluding dinner prepared by Business Events Australia.

Stay tuned for updates in *TD* throughout the week.

### Oman Air stopovers

**OMAN** Air has partnered with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to offer free stopovers for passengers transiting through Muscat, the capital of Oman.

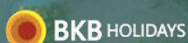
Available until 30 Nov 2024, the promotion offers a free one-night hotel stay for premium class travellers when booking a stopover in Muscat.

Additionally, those travelling in economy class can enjoy two nights for the price of one.

Guests will also get access to exclusive discounts on tours, car hire, and other services.

The offer is available to passengers who hold a return ticket to any destination on Oman Air's network - details [HERE](#).

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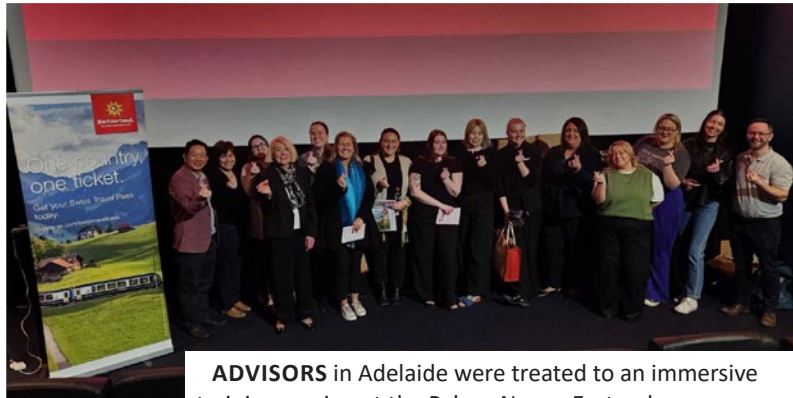
**BROOME & THE KIMBERLEY**  
 FROM \$575 PER PERSON<sup>^</sup>

# Rail Europe shows how Switzerland is done

**ABOUT 70** travel advisors attended a special training session hosted by Rail Europe (RE), Switzerland Tourism (ST) and Swiss Travel System (STS) to learn about the benefits of selling the destination and the Pass, while getting a glimpse into the incentives and commissions that await.

During the immersive sessions held in Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane, advisors met with RE's Rich Leonard, James Hooper and Steph Hummels as well as ST and STS's Rudy Wiratno, where they learned about the best ways to experience Switzerland, advantages of using the Pass, booking seat reservations for mountain excursions and panoramic trains, ongoing support and more.

While up to 10 advisors received Swiss goodies for acing the quiz, Calliope Zacharoyannis from Phil Hoffman Travel Norwood in Adelaide and Annette Dal Sasso from TravelManagers in Melbourne also took home a first-class Swiss Travel Pass each.



**ADVISORS** in Adelaide were treated to an immersive training session at the Palace Nova - Eastend.



**THE** pre-session meet and greet.



**RICH** and Rudy with Nishant Kothary from Travel Bazaar.

**STEPH** giving advisors in Brisbane a low-down on all the useful tools and resources on Rail Europe's B2B platform.



**ADVISORS** looking for new inspiration for itineraries can refer to this specially designed brochure with four-, seven- and 15-day themed itineraries across Europe.



**ADVISORS** in Brisbane were treated to an intimate educational session with Steph and Rudy.



**AMONG** many topics covered, Rich shared with advisors how best to utilise Rail Europe for all rail pass and ticket bookings in Switzerland.



**RUDY** and Rich hosting Melbourne advisors at the Lido Cinema.



### Cruise progress

**CRUISE** Lines International Association (CLIA) has released its annual *Global Cruise Industry Environmental Technologies and Practices Report*, showing the cruise sector's progress towards sustainability goals.

According to the paper, 19 CLIA ships are now using liquefied natural gas (LNG) for their primary propulsion, up from 13 last year - this number represents 7% of the fleet, up from 4.9% last year.

Ships designed with engines and fuel supply systems able to operate on LNG will be able to switch to zero and near-zero fuels such as bio or synthetic LNG in the future, with no engine modifications.

Across the CLIA cruise line member fleet, 52% of the total number of ships can connect to onshore power supply, achieving overall pollutant emissions reductions of up to 98%, the report also highlights.

"Cruise lines are continuing to reduce their emissions at sea and at berth in pursuit of net zero emissions by 2050," said Kelly Craighead, President and CEO of CLIA.

She added that the report demonstrates the industry's commitment to using more renewable energy sources as they become available.

## VIKING PLOTS HYDROGEN FUTURE

**VIKING** Cruises is well advanced with plans for hydrogen power on its future fleet, with special 6MW units to be installed on newbuilds due for delivery in late 2026.

The company's CEO, Torstein Hagen, confirmed the project is well on track, speaking in Shanghai aboard the *Viking Yi Dun* before her first domestic Chinese cruise for western guests.

The 'Future Hydrogen Platform' will be a hybrid of fuel cells and diesel energy, with the ability to operate the onboard hotel facilities and cruise at 10 knots, giving Viking the ability to comply with Norway's strict new rules limiting greenhouse gases.

"We will be able to operate transits into the fjords and port calls at zero emissions," Hagen said, noting that despite rhetoric from other cruise lines, "there is currently no off-the-shelf fuel



solution able to meet all cruising needs" such as power and size requirements.

"We decided to use movable cryogenic tank containers to allow the supply of liquid hydrogen from anywhere to anywhere," the Viking Cruises founder added.

Although the technology is still in its infancy, the first of Viking's current 998-passenger newbuild program will still have space for the fuel cells to allow for a future retrofit, Hagen said.

With a strong focus on science, Hagen said Viking was taking a different approach from many of its competitors, particularly slamming talk around the use of Liquefied Natural Gas as an alternative to diesel fuel.

"LNG is primarily made up of methane, a much worse greenhouse gas than CO2," he said, also casting aspersions about rules which have reduced the use of sulphur in diesel fuel.

"Before the introduction of these regulations, the global shipping community actually contributed to global cooling, because sulphur emissions act as a sort of 'sunscreen,'" he said.

"It was a coolant for the earth," Hagen added, expressing his frustration at how cruising had been unjustly and incorrectly demonised for its contribution to global warming. *BP*

### Become a 'Guardian of the Reef'

**TRAVELLERS** can now become a 'Guardian of the Reef' thanks to a new initiative from Tourism Tropical North Queensland (TTNQ) and Expedia.

Available in Australia, the US, and the UK, the new platform promotes "reef-positive travel choices" that reward travellers for learning about the Great Barrier Reef.

Travellers can visit the new



website to work through a series of educational videos, earning coupon rewards to use with Expedia bookings on the Great Barrier Reef.

They can also go in the draw to win a trip to the iconic destination - learn more [HERE](#).

### Eco Reflections

**REFLECTIONS** Holidays has been recognised for its efforts in water sustainability, which has seen eight of its holiday parks save up to 8.9 million litres of water each year - the equivalent of nearly four Olympic swimming pools.

The certificate of recognition was presented to Reflections' Regional Park Manager Donny Lanesbury by Rous County Council in Lismore, NSW.

# AUSTRALIA'S KIMBERLEY

## THE PONANT WAY

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## MONEY

**WELCOME** to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

### AU\$1 = US\$0.666

**RECESSION** fears and weak data from China have weighed down the Aussie dollar, which declined against the USD by 0.25% yesterday.

It's not all bad news for the AUD though, which is tracking relatively strongly against Great Britain's pound.

The pair jumped 0.67% at the end of last week, with punters expecting the positive trajectory to continue.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.666
UK	£0.509
NZ	\$1.084
Euro	€0.604
Japan	¥95.31
Thailand	฿22.58
China	¥4.741
South Africa	11.91
Canada	\$0.904
Crude oil	US\$67.75

## Take a 'Tascation'

**RACV** Hobart Hotel has launched a new 'Tascation' package combining luxury accommodation with extra perks, starting from \$229 per night.

The offer, available until 20 Dec, includes one night in a hotel king or twin room, breakfast for two, a \$25 daily dining credit and a late 11am checkout.

Guests will also enjoy a \$100 dining credit when they stay for three nights or more in a one-bedroom apartment - see [HERE](#).

## Train travel is up: Railbookers



**RAIL** travel is on the rise for Australians, Railbookers CEO Frank Marini has revealed in an exclusive interview with *TD*.

Australia is the company's second fastest growing market, with sales up 55% compared to last year, whereas overall, Railbookers is up 30%.

Marini also noted the trend towards Australians extending the length of their train travel.

"The average number of days customers are travelling with us keeps getting longer.

"In general, out of this market, it's about 12 nights, but it's increasing to 13 or 14 days," Marini said.

"The Australian customer may travel for three or four weeks, but [the rail] segment is getting longer, even if it's being tagged onto other things."

Interestingly, 27% of Railbookers' business out of Australia comes within 90 days, from the moment of inquiring and booking to departing.

"That's amazing to me, and what I'd like to say to agents is we really thrive on last-minute bookings.

"We're actually very good at it, where other companies may struggle," explained Marini.

Marini describes Railbookers as "the agent for agents" and is proud of the level of customer service that the company provides, in addition to its weekly webinars, incentives and sales.

"I want to thank the agents in Australia for giving us a chance," he said. *JHM*

## Turo now on Uber

**GLOBAL** car sharing marketplace Turo has signed a multi-year partnership with Uber, allowing Aussies to rent a wide selection of its vehicles directly from the Uber app.

Turo has amassed over 2,000 vehicle listings and 220,000-plus sign-ups since launching into the Australian market in 2022 (*TD* 20 Oct 2022).

## Window Seat

**ERIN** Wright, a 24-year old American woman, recently discovered she had been banned for life by American Airlines for having sex with a man on a flight while drunk.

But there's a catch...

"I am a 24-year-old lesbian. You see me? Am I having sexual relations with any man? No," laughed Wright in her viral TikTok video clip, which has amassed 2.6 million views.

Wright recently struggled to buy online a \$600 flight for a hen's party, so to fix the issue, she went to the airport, which is where AA staff revealed that she was blacklisted...but wouldn't give her the details.

So Wright had to fork out \$1,500 to fly on a different airline later that day.

It wasn't until three weeks later that AA eventually revealed she was blacklisted for her supposed onboard raunchy escapade.

Wright contacted the airline's legal department - and three months later, they removed her from the list and refunded her \$600 for the original flight.

Wright has created another video, discussing the "super upsetting experience", particularly as she wasn't compensated for the additional flight she had to book due to AA's error.

"It's a little concerning that they can't correctly identify passengers on the plane," she said. "It's concerning how they go about their no-fly list."

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SAVINGS PER SUITE



UP TO \$1,500  
ADDITIONAL SAVINGS



\$400 SHIPBOARD  
CREDIT PER SUITE