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## Lewis-Riley exits VV

THE man responsible for promoting sales for Virgin Voyages in global markets like Australia has left the business.

Shane Lewis-Riley, Vice President International Sales for the cruise line, said he will now pursue new opportunities.

## Webjet demerger ticked

IN A watershed moment for Webjet, shareholders have this morning approved plans for the company to spin off its consumer arm and create two independent ASX-listed businesses (TD breaking news).

Just over 97.7% of shareholders voted in favour of the demerger proposal, while 97.68% also gave flagged name changes the green light to proceed.

The existing listed company will own WebBeds and be renamed

Web Travel Group, while the soon to be spun-off consumer arm housing Webjet OTA, GoSee and Trip Ninja, will be known as Webjet Group Limited.

After receiving approval today, shareholders will retain their existing holding in Web Travel Group, and eligible shareholders will receive one Webjet Group Limited share for every Web Travel Group share they hold on the record date, which is 24 Sep.

Chairman Roger Sharp said he expects Webjet Group Limited to start trading on the ASX on 23 Sep, on a conditional and deferred settlement basis.

"We are confident that [both ASX businesses]...will be set up for success," Sharp said. AB

## TA appoints Doig

TOURISM Australia has recruited Jennifer Doig to be its Regional GM for Southeast Asia.

The experienced tourism marketing exec shifts across from Dubai Tourism, where she was Director of Global Campaigns.

She will report to Executive GM, Eastern Markets & Aviation, Andrew Hogg.

## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including our Sustainability page, plus a full page from Ponant.

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## Ponant's Kimberley

TRAVELLERS can now book Ponant's 2025 fly, stay and cruise packages to the Kimberley, which include a luxury 10-night expedition, as well as return flights and transfers.

For more information about the deal, see the [back page](#).

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## Window Seat

**FAMILIES** can embrace the spirit of Halloween at Paradise Resort Gold Coast, which is hosting a month of spooky fun throughout Oct.

The resort will transform into a Halloween haven complete with a horror train ride, trick-or-treat adventures, ghostly games and creepy crafts, as well as 'fright nights' featuring zombies, fire performers, a 360° photo booth, and a best dressed competition.

On Halloween, there will be a special Kids Club session with a themed pass the parcel, 'guess the food' challenges, witch races and a ghost hunt.



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## "Long-haul is back": Skroo

**TYPICAL** airfares between Sydney and London now cost about four days' salary for the average Aussie worker, showing prices are stabilising post-COVID.

According to Flight Centre Travel Group's latest *Turner Index*, named after its founder, Graham 'Skroo' Turner, long-haul fares haven't quite hit 2019 levels but are heading in the right direction.

The new report draws on government wage data, compared against average Sydney to London fares over the year, to determine relative affordability.

In the report, Turner said prior to the pandemic, airfares were generally one of the few products capable of defying inflation.

"Prices of the headline airfare to London tended to drop or remain fairly stable over the years, while average wages tended to increase," Turner said.

"That trend is now starting to re-emerge post-COVID, which is



great news for travellers who are planning and saving to take off to London," he added.

At its most affordable, Turner said, airfares to London equated to around three days' wages.

Two decades ago, it would have taken 1.5 weeks to save for the \$1,299 average fare; up to seven weeks 50 years ago for what was an \$800-\$1000 ticket, and 1.5 years of work or 7,700% of the average wage when Qantas' first UK flight took off in 1947.

Turner added there is still room for fares to come down further, but only if competition and capacity increases. *ML*

## EY commits to SYD

**ETIHAD** Airways will soon boost frequencies to Sydney Airport, with the Middle Eastern carrier to increase from daily services to 10 services a week from Jul 2025.

When the changes take effect, Sydney will become the most important port in Australia for EY.

The carrier has also boosted flights across its summer schedule to other key ports, including Barcelona (+four); Madrid (+four); Manchester (+seven); Munich (+four); Milan (+four); Zurich (+four); and Dublin (+three).



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## Rail Europe

Rail Journey Inspiration by  
Jodi van de Wydeven, Two Feet Agency NZ

**The Glacier Express:**

Jodi's dream journey is to embark on Switzerland's thoroughly panoramic Glacier Express rail journey stretching from the traditional village of Zermatt at the foot of the Matterhorn in the country's southwest, to the glitzy and glamorous St Moritz alpine resort in the eastern Romansch region.

With a mid-way stop at Andermatt, Jodi would be taking in spectacular views as well as each village's charm, elegance and stories.

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

**Book with Rail Europe**  
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The best way to follow Jodi's dream route or travel around Europe is with the Swiss Travel Pass, which grants holders unlimited access to all public transportation in Switzerland; up to 50% discounts on cableways, free access to 500+ museums, and free travel for children under 16yo. For a full list of benefits and to compare against the Eurail Pass, [click here](#).

To determine if a pass or point-to-point tickets works best for the traveller, watch this [short video](#) to learn the key determining factors. Refer to [Planning Resources](#) to check out booking horizons.

Click [HERE](#) for more inspiring 4, 7 and 15-day themed itineraries around Europe.

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## Ghan ready to go

**JOURNEY** Beyond (JB) has advised The Ghan has cleared final checks to resume its journey to Adelaide after a truck collided with the train on Sat (**TD** 17 Sep).

The incident has cost The Ghan a one-day delay, with JB confident its Wed Adelaide to Alice Springs departure will not be impacted.

## QF hikes domestic fees

**QANTAS** will increase change and cancellation fees from \$99 to \$119 for all domestic bookings made from 09 Oct.

The hiked charges only apply in instances where customers elect



to change or cancel their flights, however Qantas confirmed a fare difference may also apply.

This is the first time the Flying Kangaroo has adjusted the change and cancellation penalties since 2017, and follows the lifting of fees across other key area of the business.

Qantas raised the price of joining its Qantas Club by 17% from 18 Apr (**TD** 19 Mar), citing a need to cover higher costs passed on from a range of suppliers.

The additional slug to air passengers arrives as domestic airfares increase across the country, according to the latest monthly figures from BITRE.

Sharper increases in the index for restricted economy fares were noted from Jul to Aug, the month following the collapse of Rex. **AB**

## QF pressure incident

**QANTAS** has confirmed a Townsville to Brisbane flight was diverted to Rockhampton this morning following a "depressurisation issue" aboard one of its E190 aircraft.

"The flight landed normally and we'll get passengers on their way to Brisbane on other flights this morning," Qantas said.

## Bangladesh lowered

DFAT has lowered its travel advice for travellers to Bangladesh, moving the country down from 'do not travel' to 'reconsider your need to travel'.

The Smartraveller website said Aussies must still be aware of the risks posed by civil unrest, demonstrations and terrorism.

# itravel



**ANDREW HAGGER**  
*Viva Travel*

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## NIB expands cover

**FOLLOWING** feedback from travel agents, nib Travel has expanded its range of cover for Aussie travellers.

Key improvements to policies include enhanced cover in the event of a cancellation or holiday deferment costs due to natural disasters and severe weather.

The travel insurer now offers emergency travel arrangements and accommodation expenses for attending the childbirth of a close relative, while Australian Defence Force personnel have also been added to the list of workers covered when pre-arranged leave is cancelled.

Meanwhile, a range additional activities have been added, including hiking under 6,000m altitude; riding an e-scooter or an e-bike with a helmet within speed limits; guided tours on quad bikes; ice-skating; dogsledding; and glacier walking.

Nib has also expanded its definition of 'close relatives' to include uncles, aunts, and legal guardians, while stopover destinations only need to be listed when longer than 72 hours - previously this was 24 hours.

Changes take effect from today.



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## NT relishes Bonza legacy

EXCLUSIVE

**TOURISM** NT says the brief entry of collapsed low-cost carrier Bonza into the Northern Territory showed how affordable an outback holiday can be.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* at the NT Muster last week, Tourism NT Executive Director, Tony Quarmby, said Bonza opened up the region to travel markets who believed it to be too expensive.

In a few months, Bonza launched services between Melbourne and Alice Springs, as well as routes linking both the Gold Coast and

Sunshine Coast with Darwin.

"The great thing about Bonza is it proved that introducing a low-cost carrier doesn't hijack passengers from existing carriers - it actually introduces new customers," Quarmby said.

"So these are customers who felt the NT was out of their price range [who] could now look at the NT as an affordable destination - that's what Bonza did."

Quarmby stressed that these new travellers discovering the Northern Territory are "not your business market, not your high-end market".

"These are leisure consumers who are legitimately there to holiday in a place they thought was out of their price range, which it's not - when you get an affordable airfare, it is an affordable destination."

The Tourism NT boss added that outside peak months of Jun, Jul and Aug, shoulder seasons see prices drop dramatically, and by booking ahead and packaging, the NT is just as affordable as anywhere in Australia. *ML*

## Cruise boasts 1.68m

**THE** number of cruise passengers in Australia grew at a compound rate of 4.2% between 2019 and 2023, an inaugural report published by Ports Australia has shown.

For the summer of 2022/2023, Australia enjoyed the patronage of around 1.688 million passengers, growth that was achieved despite a slight downturn in the number of cruise vessels visiting our shores.

The same report also exposed Victoria as lagging behind other major states, attracting just 121 cruise ship visits in 2022/23, less than half the numbers delivered by NSW, Qld, and WA.

NSW led the way with 320, followed by Qld with 290, and WA with 272.

"This growth has an especially positive impact on remote and regional ports, driving local economies and communities that might otherwise miss out on such vibrant activity," CLIA Australasia MD, Joel Katz, said.

## Uniworld debuts Liz

**UNIWORLD** Boutique River Cruises has announced its new offerings for 2025, including the debut of its latest vessel, *S.S. Elizabeth*, which sets sail in Mar.

Travellers can choose from six new itineraries next year in Italy, France, Portugal and beyond, such as the 18-day 'Wine Roads of France and Portugal' journey.

Uniworld has also introduced six cruise extensions on its Europe itineraries, including Madeira Island, Zurich and Engelberg.

## ATIA UPDATE

from Nina Hedges, Compliance Manager



**IN OUR** industry, the catchphrase "without a travel agent, you are on your own" is almost a mantra and

rightly so.

But after nearly a decade of helping travel intermediaries navigate customer disputes and spending a fair amount of time in courts and tribunals, I believe we should start staying "without terms & conditions, you are on your own!"

When a customer dispute is brought to my attention, my first question is always "What do your T&Cs say?"

This is quickly followed by "did the customer receive a copy?"

The answer to these questions usually reveals how solid a business' position is.

When the phone line goes silent, I know we are in trouble.

It is tough having to tell a

business who has strong T&Cs that they can't apply them simply because the customer was never provided the opportunity to review them - yes this is a reality we face.

I get it - days in travel are hectic. You have got flight changes to process, clients to call, quotes to prepare and a million other tasks to juggle.

However, taking just five minutes in each and every consultation to ensure that access to your T&Cs are provided and accepted will save you hours of stress down the line, not to mention hefty costs and reputational damage.

This is not a new issue, it was a problem years ago and it's still happening now.

But I can guarantee that once you have been burnt, you will not make the same mistake again.

Your T&Cs are there to protect yourself and your valued customers; take the time to share them, because at the end of the day, without your T&Cs you truly are on your own.

## G, what a sponsor!

**G ADVENTURES** and its non-profit partner, Planeterra, have confirmed Incredible India as the headline sponsor for the GX World Community Tourism Summit, taking place 24-28 Sep.

The adventure travel operator has also announced four new social enterprises designed for travellers to India, which GX guests will experience during their time in the country, including Anoothi India, a textile workshop led by women from marginalised communities in the Jaipur region.

"Community tourism is an increasing focus for Incredible India, so sponsoring GX is a natural fit as tourism returns and builds back in a better way," said Bruce Poon Tip, founder of G Adventures and Planeterra.

## MS Estrela sets sail

**APT** Travel Group has celebrated the maiden voyage of its new river ship, *MS Estrela*, which sailed from Porto on 29 Aug (*TD* 15 Aug 2023).

Designed to sail Portugal's Douro River under both the APT and Travelmarvel brands, *MS Estrela* features a large swimming pool, as well as a sun deck with an outdoor bar, lounging options and a golf putting green.

Guests can enjoy a range of Portuguese, Mediterranean, and international flavours for breakfast, lunch and dinner at the ship's main restaurant.

During her inaugural season, *MS Estrela* will operate APT's 14-day 'Duoro Delights with Madrid and Lisbon' and Travelmarvel's 11-day 'Lisbon with Douro Discovery'.

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### MGM solar deal

**MGM Resorts International** is set to more than double its access to clean solar electricity, thanks to a new owner purchase agreement with Escape Solar LLC.

The company currently uses solar power for 90% of the total daytime needs at 11 of its Las Vegas properties, with the 25-year deal to extend its renewable energy capabilities to cover 100% of those properties' total daytime needs.

Additionally, Escape Solar's battery storage will enable the extension of renewable power provided into the late afternoon and early evening to include uses such as exterior property lighting.

"This agreement is the next step toward the achievement of our climate goals," said Bill Hornbuckle, CEO and President at MGM Resorts.

"We have our eyes on meeting our science-based targets and goal of sourcing 100% of our electricity in North America from renewable sources by 2030."

Since 2016, MGM Resorts has significantly reduced its carbon emissions through several renewable energy projects, including the installation of a 323,000-panel Mega Solar Array, which provides 100MW to its locations in Las Vegas.

## QF TO CONTINUE O/S SAF PURCHASES

**QANTAS** intends to meet its short-term Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) targets by buying from the UK and USA, due to projects in Australia not expected to be ready until later this decade.

According to the carrier's *2024 Sustainability Report*, released last Thu, Qantas has cut 20,000 tonnes of CO2 by buying SAF from London Heathrow, equating to 7.9% or 10 million litres of its total UK fuel uptake in 2023.

SAF currently makes up only 0.2% of Qantas' total fuel consumption, however the airline says this will rise to 3% as availability improves in "cost advantaged ports", such as the US.

Qantas is aiming for SAF to make



up 10% of its overall fuel use by 2030 and 60% by 2050, with the remaining 7% coming from local projects during the second half of this decade.

The report also emphasised how advanced other regions

and countries are in terms of developing home-grown SAF industries, with Australia continuing to fall behind.

"Incumbent fuel players will also need to repurpose existing infrastructure and establish efficient new biomass supply chains, all of which will need to be underpinned by supportive government policy," it reads.

Qantas is investing heavily in a range of local SAF projects along with partners Airbus and Boeing.

Projects include 'Wheatbelt Connect', which is investigating whether native plantation biomass and stabilised bio-oils from eucalyptus trees can one day be converted into SAF at scale. *ML*

### First tourism electric hydrofoil vessel

**VESSEV**, a global leader in sustainable marine technology, has unveiled its premium electric hydrofoil, which is expected to unlock new opportunities for water transport and tourism.

Entering the final phase of sea trials ahead of commercial certification, the VS-9 can transport 10 passengers at a service speed of 25 knots, and is both comfortable and spacious, with an interior design inspired by private jet travel.

"Traditionally, larger vessels are required to deliver a comfortable passenger



experience as they can handle the impact of waves and wake," CEO Eric Laakmann said.

"By flying above the waves, the VS-9 delivers a large vessel experience on an agile platform that can be berthed and charged in nearly any marina."

The eco-friendly vessel is set to join the largest ferry operator in New Zealand, Fullers360.

### Joby gets the job

**JOBY Aviation** has taken the first step towards becoming a certified air taxi operator in the United Arab Emirates.

Last week at the International Civil Aviation Organization's inaugural Advanced Air Mobility Summit, the UAE General Civil Aviation Authority presented a Letter of Intent to initiate Joby's Air Operator Certificate application.

The operator, whose electric air taxis can carry a pilot and four passengers, will now undertake a five-stage application process.



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## MONEY

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

### AU\$1 = US\$0.675

**THE** Australian dollar regained its footing against the US dollar this week, surging towards the 0.6750 cents mark - largely due to significant US dollar weakness ahead of the Federal Reserve's monetary policy meeting tomorrow.

However, the AUD is expected to continue facing challenges, especially due to China's slow post-pandemic recovery and deflationary concerns.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.675
UK	£0.511
NZ	\$1.089
Euro	€0.607
Japan	¥94.97
Thailand	฿22.46
China	¥4.789
South Africa	11.89
Canada	US\$0.917
Crude oil	US\$68.28

## Boeing staff strike

**MORE** than 30,000 staff at Boeing factories in Seattle and Oregon have voted against a new employment contract, initiating the first major strike for the plane manufacturer in 16 years.

Boeing had presented a deal with a 25% wage increase along with better health and retirement benefits, while workers were holding out for a 40% pay jump.

According to the *BBC*, the strike could cost Boeing up to US\$3.5 billion in lost orders.

## Greek island-hopper chopper



**TRAVELLERS** now have easier access to Greece's most remote destinations, with Hoper launching as the first airline company in the country to offer daily scheduled helicopter flights.

Aiming to provide fast, convenient, scenic and safe helicopter flights, the Athens-based company will operate year-round with a fleet of five

glass-cockpit Robinson R44 and R66 helicopters.

Travellers can book services to Athens, Antiparos, Folegandros, Ios, Kea (Tzea), Mykonos, Patmos, Santorini, Sifnos, Patmos, Spetses and Tinos, as well as request chartered flights if their plans do not align with scheduled routes.

The flights will take off from Hoper's base in Koropi, Athens, which is only 15 minutes by private car or taxi from Athens International Airport, as well as from Mykonos and Santorini, to other islands.

"Our vision is to make vertical mobility solutions a habit for people who value their time," said Hoper CEO Dimitris Memos.

"With Hoper, we turn hours into minutes, and travellers earn up to a full day of vacation; it is a new, unique travel experience that makes the beauties of Greece more accessible."

Available to book online as individual one-way or round-trip seats at [flyhoper.com](http://flyhoper.com), fares are priced from around €150-350. *JM*

## Certification in Bali

**INDONESIA'S** Recreational Park Business Association is calling for the island's government to create a certification program for tourists to identify attractions based on quality and safety.

Bali Restaurant and Hotels Association Chairman, Cok Ace, said the rapid growth in tourism offerings across the island has led to discrepancies in the quality of experiences on offer.

Ace added that a certification program would help travellers and providers to ensure a uniform level of safety was provided across the board.

## Travel Daily ON LOCATION



### SHENZHEN

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

**THE** final port of call on our *Viking Yi Dun* China Discovery voyage is Shenzhen, just across the water from Hong Kong.

The ship spends a full day here allowing for plenty of activities, with guests staying on board tonight before heading home via a short ferry ride to HKG to join flights.

Today is quite auspicious, with a full moon this evening marking the annual Mid Autumn Festival, one of the most important holidays in Chinese culture.

Held on the 15th day of the eighth month of the Chinese Lunar Calendar, this year the festival falls on 17 Sep and Viking's passengers are being treated to a range of celebrations including a special onboard acrobatic performance.

Shenzhen is also a popular shopping destination, with many guests set to explore independently and fill their bags with gifts, fabric, clothing and more from the markets which abound in this flourishing commercial centre.

Upon disembarkation today, passengers will also experience a warm welcome from locals, who have established a fair at the Shenzhen Cruise Terminal to welcome the arrival of its first international Viking guests.

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