

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including our **Luxury page**, plus a product profile from **Exoticca** and full pages from:

- Viva Holidays
- Designer Journeys

ANA hikes charges

HIGHER fuel surcharges now apply on All Nippon Airways services between Australia and Japan, the carrier has confirmed.

The surcharge on return fares has climbed from US\$258 to US\$380 for all bookings ticketed from yesterday.

More information can be found on ANA's trade page **HERE**.

Albatross recruits

MICHELLE Daniels has joined the team at Albatross Tours as its new Regional Sales Manager, based in Melbourne.

Daniels will be added to the team headed up by fellow new recruit Harry Sargent, and she arrives at the tour operator from Evolution Travel Collective.

"We are absolutely delighted that Michelle has joined the Albatross Tours team as we continue to invest in our trade partnerships," said Albatross Director of Sales and Marketing, James Hewlett.

Rajasthan spotlight

FIND out more about the cities and vast landscapes of Rajasthan, plus the highlights of Delhi, Agra, Jodhpur and Jaipur and how to see it all over 12 exhilarating days in Exoticca's latest itinerary profile - details on **page nine**.

Kelsian to offload assets

A SUITE of well-known tourism brands have been put up for sale by Kelsian Group Limited as part of a major divestiture of its Australian tourism assets (**TD** breaking news).

Following a strategic evaluation, the company decided a sale of its tourism portfolio would unlock increased value for shareholders and allow the business to focus on its bus and motorcoach assets.

The decision comes just a day after its new CEO Graeme Legh (**pictured**) began his role in place of Clint Feuerherdt, who moved aside last year into a strategic advisor role (**TD** 08 Nov 2024).

Kelsian's tourism portfolio features a range of tour, marine transport and accommodation brands, which it said collectively generated over \$160 million of the company's FY24 revenue.

Brands up for sale include K'gari Beach Resort, Kingfisher Bay Resort and K'gari Explorer Tours, Murray Princess, Adelaide Sightseeing, Swan Valley Tours and a range of SeaLink marine operations around Australia.

These include SeaLink Sydney Harbour, which comprises Captain Cook Cruises, The Jackson superyacht and The Starship Group's two glass-fronted floating event venues.

Also on offer are SeaLink operations to Rottnest Island in Perth, Red Cat Adventure Tours in the Whitsundays and SeaLink ferries in Tasmania and the NT.

Kelsian Chair Fiona Hele said the divestment of the tourism portfolio would allow the company to "emerge as a more infrastructure-like, commuter and contracted business, allowing us



to focus on delivering essential journeys through marine, bus and motorcoach transport".

Kelsian Group said it will retain SeaLink businesses serving Kangaroo Island, Magnetic and Palm Islands, North Stradbroke Island, Moreton Bay islands and ferry operations in Gladstone, Perth and Brisbane in a slimmed down marine portfolio. **ML**

Shopping with Viva

AGENTS will get one step closer to a \$5,000 Prezzy voucher with each new Rocky Mountainer booking made through Viva Holidays before 30 Apr - for more details, see **page seven** for info.

Tailored for travel

ONGOING rewards including gift cards on top of regular commissions can be enjoyed through Designer Journeys' new loyalty program for travel agents. Find out more on **page eight**.

Verve on new curve

MELBOURNE'S Verve Travel has officially rebranded and reopened as Gray Dawes Travel following the agency's acquisition last year (**TD** 05 Nov 2024).

The rebrand marks the next step in the British agency group's expansion into Australia and its "commitment to delivering world-class business travel management services on a global scale".

Gray Dawes said Verve Travel clients will continue to be served by the same familiar team and receive the same service they have come to expect.

"Integrating Verve Travel fully into the Gray Dawes brand enhances our ability to provide a truly borderless travel experience to our clients," said Gray Dawes Group CEO, Suzanne Horner.

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Complex makes it simple

COMPLEX Travel Group has purchased Perth-based VIP concierge service for frequent flyers, The Well Connected Traveller (**TD** breaking news).

Alongside the acquisition announcement, Complex Travel also revealed the launch of Flat Beds Rewards Travel, a service offering its clients curated advice about how best to redeem first and business class seats through AMEX membership rewards or frequent flyer points.

"[These developments] mark an exciting new chapter that allows us to offer a truly unique 'best of both worlds' service," said Mark Trim, Managing Director of Complex Travel Group.

"We are combining our expertise in paid fares with The Well Connected Traveller's specialised knowledge in maximising the value of reward programs, particularly Amex Membership Rewards.



"This positions us to meet the demand for expert support in leveraging reward points...and go beyond simply providing advice to handling the entire booking process," Trim added.

The agency has also appointed former owner of The Well Connected Traveller, Jodie Land (pictured with Trim), to the role of GM, Reward Travel.

Both Complex Travel Group and The Well Connected Traveller are members of the invitation-only Link Travel Group. **AB**

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Rajasthan

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VIEW DEAL

AAT adds mystery

AAT Kings has announced a new incentive for agents, with the opportunity to take part in the 'A-Listers on Location' tour to a mystery destination.

The famil will consist of a four-night AAT Kings/Inspiring Journeys experience to a destination in either Australia or NZ, departing in Sep.

Return economy flights from the agents' nearest major airport are included in the prize, along with accommodation, experiences, most meals, and the A-Listers Top Achievers Awards Dinner.

The reward will be available to top achievers during the incentive period, covering all 2025 departure bookings made up to 08 Aug 2025.

All booked and deposited AAT Kings and Inspiring Journeys guided holidays departing this year will qualify for the famil, with stores with the highest number of deposited pax selected to participate - learn more **HERE**.

Bartee departs Mint

MINT Payments has announced the retirement of Bill Bartee from the board of directors, appointing Huy Truong as the replacement Executive Chairman.

Truong has experience across multiple industries, including private equity investment, financial services, technology, and social impact ventures.

The experienced executive also participated in Mint's latest capital raise in Dec last year.

Bartee departs after being a board member since 2014, with Mint CEO Alex Teoh expressing "sincere gratitude" for his work.

SQ daily to Gatwick

SINGAPORE Airlines has boosted services between Changi and London Gatwick from five weekly to a daily operation due to popular demand from travellers.

The increase means Singapore Airlines will now offer 40 weekly flights to the UK capital.

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Crooked targets solo women

CROOKED Compass has launched a range of ladies-only tours in response to demand from nearly half of its clients, who are categorised as independent female adventurers.

On the new range of luxury five-star journeys, guests will enjoy their own private room and a well-balanced pace that offers enough time for deep immersion and free exploration.

New solo female itineraries include 'Silk Road Sisters', a 10-day trip through Uzbekistan, as well as 'Discover Romania', which traverses through Bucharest, Transylvania and Bucovina and the Carpathian Mountains.

There is also the 17-day 'Queens



of the Nile' itinerary, which explores Egypt's heritage and culture.

"Solo female travellers have always been a driving force behind Crooked Compass," explained Crooked Compass founder Lisa Pagotto.

"These tours are a natural evolution - designed for women who seek deeper cultural connections, premium experiences, and the ease of solo travel without the hassle of single supplements," she added.

"It's about creating journeys that are both enriching and effortless, where like-minded women can explore extraordinary destinations together."

According to Amadeus booking data, solo leisure travel increased by 15.6% in 2023 compared to the previous year, with a further 9.2% rise in 2024.

And in Virtuoso's *The Voice of Luxury* report from last year, 71% of solo travellers are women among its members' client base.

Of these, 47% are divorced, separated or widowed, 40% are seeking a sense of belonging, and 27% want expeditions. *JHM*

HX fetes 130 years

HX EXPEDITIONS is celebrating its 130th anniversary this year with a range of special offers, exclusive on board activities and memorable moments.

These include a new offer for guests to elevate their experience by upgrading to a suite for the price of an Arctic Superior Cabin on new bookings.

In addition, passengers will enjoy special culinary surprises, science lectures, and a 130th anniversary cocktail served on board all year round, as well as a limited-edition keepsakes such as a badge to honour the company's first expedition voyage and an ocean bottle to commemorate their adventure.

Magical check-in now easier



WALT Disney World has brought back its complimentary airline check-in service through a limited pilot phase being run at the brand's Pop Century Resort.

Operated by third-party company Bag Check, the service is currently only complimentary for guests flying Southwest Airlines and departing the resort.

To use the service, guests must check-in with a cast member at the luggage assistance desk and should already be checked in with Southwest, including having paid for baggage.

The guest can then leave their bags with the cast member, who will take care of transportation.

Flights before 1pm require luggage to be handed to a cast member the day before, while flights after 1pm require four hours grace before the flight.

The test comes after Disney shut down its Magical Express

Service (pictured) in Jan 2022 (*TD* 15 Jan 2021), which offered complimentary transportation between Orlando International Airport and Walt Disney World.

Around the same time, it also ceased its complimentary airline check-in and luggage delivery service for guests.

Currently there is a paid-for shuttle service running between Orlando International Airport and Walt Disney World, which is run by Mears, the same business that ran the complimentary shuttle, theoretically making it a simple process to switch the Magical Express service back on.

At the time of writing, arrival bag service and service for other airlines are not on offer.

There is also no timeframe from the company on how long the test will run for and whether it will ultimately be offered in other Disney resorts. *DF*

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Jetstar



"The safety of passengers, airport staff and airport operations is our top priority, and we have stringent protocols in place to uphold all safety policies," he said.



"We need to keep a close eye on developments in North America, which saw falls in both domestic and international traffic," commented IATA Director General, Willie Walsh.



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By the end of 2026, the company is expecting the Four Points Flex by Sheraton brand to debut in Austria and France, while an additional seven properties are slated to open in Germany, as well as four in the UK, three in Italy, three in Türkiye, and one in Denmark. *JM*

The flights will add around 70,000 seats between the two cities, making it the fastest way for Territorians to travel to London.

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BA is set to sparkle

BRITISH Airways has become the first airline to serve prestige cuvee English sparkling wines on board.

The drops, which include Nyetimber, Gusbourne, and Sugrue South Downs, are available on a rotational basis in BA's first class cabins.

More than 1,300 cabin crew members have completed BA's first service specialist training program, which features a bespoke wine masterclass from BA's Master of Wine.

"We are proud to lead the way in championing provenance and British originality, as we continue to work with the very best wine producers across England and beyond for our customers to enjoy both on the ground and in the air," BA Chief Customer Officer Calum Laming said.

GRAND METROPOLITAN BUYS VOILE D'OR

GRAND Metropolitan Hotels has acquired the Voile d'Or luxury hotel collection, with an expansion for the brand planned in markets such as the Maldives, Dubai, and Lisbon.

The acquisition will see the reopening of the original La Voile d'Or in France's Provence-Alpes-Cote d'Azur region in 2029.

The luxury hotel collection currently operates a portfolio of luxury flagship hotels and residences, including the closed PACA flagship.

The brand already has a presence in key markets such as London, Paris, New York City, St. Barths, and the French Alps.

"Voile d'Or will become the pinnacle of our brand architecture, representing an ultra-luxury proposition rooted in elegance and heritage," Grand



Metropolitan Hotels founder and Chair Martin Smura said.

"We are proud to bring together a brand of this calibre and are actively preparing for expansion into the Maldives, Dubai, and Lisbon," he added.

The acquisition has also seen two new leadership appointments: Jacques Oudinot

(pictured left) as Chief Executive Officer, and Edouard Deschepper (pictured right) as a Director.

"Voile d'Or represents more than hospitality - it is the art of crafting unforgettable moments," Oudinot said.

"We are honoured to shape the next era of this extraordinary brand," he added. *MS*

Sofitel gets hip on TikTok

SOFITEL has launched on TikTok, offering a fresh take on luxury hotel life.

The new video-first campaign, 'Sofitel Encounters', is a three-part video series marking the launch of its social personality.

The campaign has been designed to engage younger consumers in a fresh and entertaining way.

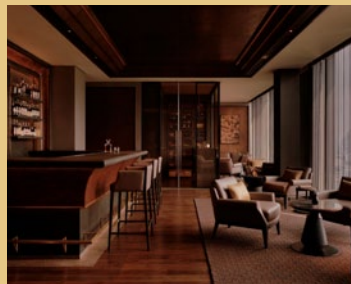
The series will also be rolled out across Facebook and YouTube.

Aman to roll out its Aman Club private members entity worldwide

AMAN Resorts has announced the global expansion of its Aman Club private members entity, following the announcement of Aman Nai Lert Bangkok.

The expanded invitation-only club will feature branded residences and ultra-luxurious amenities, including an open-air terrace, two restaurants, a Cigar Bar, and the Aman Lounge.

The Aman Club at Aman Nai Lert Bangkok will occupy a dedicated space on the 19th floor of the property, inspired



by the original Aman New York Club, fusing east and west, with features such as an Italian coffee bar, and an intimate, Japanese-inspired mixology bar.

Members will also enjoy privileged entry to additional dining venues, including Aman's signature Italian restaurant concept Arva, and the property's additional wellness facilities.

A further 10 Aman Club locations are in development across the Americas, Europe and the Middle East.

Aman Clubs will provide curated programming across the pillars of culinary, culture, wellness, gastronomic journeys, and more.

CHECK OUT



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AGENTS

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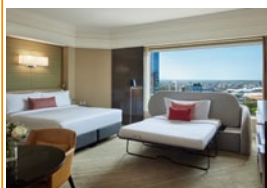
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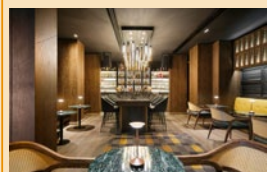
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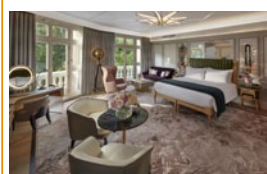


Designed for families and groups, **Grand Hyatt Melbourne** has introduced sofa beds in selected rooms. The new pull-out beds feature the same mattresses as the existing beds to ensure a restful night's sleep and can easily be set up by guests as needed or made ready by staff when a guest checks in. Rooms featuring the new beds can be booked on special request and are subject to availability.

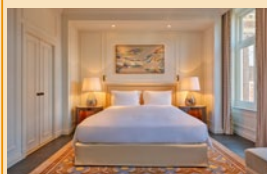


Fiji's first speakeasy bar dedicated to showcasing fine wine, spirits and crafted cocktails has opened at the **Sheraton Fiji Golf and Beach Resort**. The new Cellar and Barrel can be found adjacent to the Island 619 restaurant and features over 300 labels.

The new bar features a walk-in wine cellar stocked with both new and old world blends from the world's best wine regions.



Visitors to London looking to brag about their address can indulge in the **Mandarin Oriental's** 'On Knightsbridge' and 'On Hyde Park' packages. Both seek to emphasise the hotel's proximity to both upmarket highlights of the UK capital. The package includes an overnight stay in one of the hotel's premiere suites, a three-course dining experience at Dinner by Heston Blumenthal, full English breakfast, spa credit and two 'Mandarin Martini' cocktails.

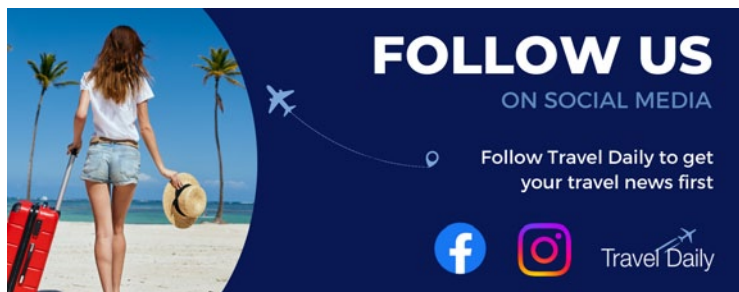


Sofitel Legend The Grand Amsterdam is set to undergo an extensive refurbishment. The transformation, which is expected to be completed by Q1 2027, will preserve the hotel's rich Dutch heritage and historical elements, while integrating modern luxury.

The lobby and central atrium will be reimagined with restored white marble floors, while the property's 175 rooms and suites will be redesigned with furnishings like fine woods and aged leather.



Sri Lanka's leading luxury resort collection, Uga, has announced the upcoming launch of its seventh property, **Uga Prava**, in May 2025. Situated along the shores of Tangalle in Sri Lanka's Southern Province, the upcoming property will feature seven suites with a modern minimalist aesthetic, as well as an infinity pool that appears to flow into the Indian Ocean, restaurant and bar, and activities.



Agents enjoy great Irish craic



A GROUP of Australian agents have returned from an 'Irish Escape' incentive famil, where they experienced St. Patrick's Day in the heart of Dublin.

Eight top-performing travel advisors won their way onto the Globus trade booking incentive, run in partnership with Tourism Ireland, taking in the best-selling, seven-day itinerary.

Advisors visited the Cliffs of Moher and downtown Dublin, where they dropped in on a local pub to join in on the celebrations for St. Patrick's Day.

This included the official street parade which featured performers, dancers, decorated floats, and marching bands from around the world.

The group was hosted by Globus Business Development Manager Anji Tierney, who said the tour offered "non-stop, high-spirited Irish fun".

"It was terrific for our top agents to get first-hand experience of all that Ireland has to offer, from visiting landmarks like the Blarney Stone to sipping

Irish coffee and witnessing the spectacle that is St. Patrick's Day in the Irish capital," she said.

"Our group was serenaded with live music at the John Meade pub which legally opened in 1705 but actually started serving its first drinks 20 years earlier in 1685.

"Ireland has so many incredible old tales and in Killarney we had a taste of nostalgia with a wonderful horse-drawn carriage ride to the castle.

"With its stunning landscapes, warm hospitality, rich history, cosy pubs and vibing culture, it's no wonder Globus bookings on the 'Irish Escapes' tour have doubled since pre-pandemic." **MS**

Pictured enjoying the luck of the Irish are Anji Tierney; Drazenka Middleton, The Cruise & Travel Store; Emily Jones, Helloworld Travel Orion Springfield; Mark Green, Sunseeker Holidays Newcastle West; Tanya Edwards, RAA Travel Elizabeth; Sarah Bennon, Tailor Made Travel; Ciara McDonnell, Helloworld Travel Ayr; and Darcie Comben, Flight Centre Collins St.



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*Terms & conditions apply. Winner to be announced by the 14th April 2025. Promotion is only open to Australian residents who are employed as travel consultants in accredited Australian travel agencies. The prize is non-transferable, non-refundable and cannot be redeemed for cash. If a winner decides not to take the prize, it will be forfeited. Fringe benefits tax (if any) is the liability of the legal employer of the employee. We recommend that you seek your own independent taxation advice to assess any impact of these prizes on your circumstances. Further conditions apply. Please ask for full details. Viva Holidays Pty Ltd ABN 78 634 662 294.

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Delhi & Agra: Essential stops on a trip to India

Arriving in Delhi, the gateway to India, travellers will start their trip with a vibrant introduction to the capital. From there, they'll venture through Rajasthan, India's largest state. An overnight stop in Agra allows for a visit to the unmissable Taj Mahal before returning to Delhi for the final two nights, with time to explore

landmarks like Raj Ghat and India Gate.

Rajasthan's cities & deserts: A multicultural exploration

Your adventurers will experience vibrant cities, desert landscapes, and more. In Mandawa, ancient havelis are adorned with vivid, storytelling frescoes. In the Bikaner Desert Kingdom, the historic Junagarh Fort showcases Rajput, Mughal, and Gujarati architectural styles. While exploring the Golden City of Jaisalmer, they'll browse the bazaars for spices and handicrafts, and watch the sunset over desert dunes. In Jodhpur and Jaipur, a handful of memorable activities await, like visiting the Mehrangarh Fort or riding in a Jeep up to the palatial Amber Fort.

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