Travel Daily First with the news

Thursday 3rd Apr 2025



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Today's issue of TD

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

- Disney Destinations
- Hurtigruten Expeditions

All new Disney Days

DISNEY Destinations and its friends at Visit Anaheim are inviting the travel trade to join them for an all new Disney Days experience this year.

Head to page seven for more information on the events.

QF's 'kia ora' to NZ

QANTAS Airways has announced a huge sale to New Zealand, with tens of thousands of discounted seats available across the Tasman to all four of QF's ports in the country.

The New Zealand Getaway Sale, run in partnership with Tourism New Zealand, will give customers access to a range of discounted flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide to some of the country's most popular destinations, including Auckland, Christchurch, Wellington, and Queenstown.

Economy return sale fares start from \$499, and are available for seven days with select dates during key travel periods including New Zealand ski season.

MEANWHILE, Jetstar Airways' new Holiday Packages Sale is offering travellers to fly a friend for free - more info HERE.

Adelaide United to the US



UNITED today announced one of the most surprising new routes in the recent past by connecting the South Australian capital of Adelaide directly to the Californian city of San Francisco.

It marks the first time Adelaide has received direct flights to the US, with United set to ply the route from 11 Dec three times weekly on Mon, Wed and Sat until Mar 2026.

United will operate the flight on a Boeing 787-9 - meaning it will now offer direct services from four Australian cities to the US, making it the only carrier currently to do so.

National Account Manager at United Airlines, Richard Carrick, took to LinkedIn to laud the new service, saying it was "really exciting news for the Australian travel trade".

"In addition to our yearround services to SYD, MEL and BNE, it's great to continue our commitment to the Australian market and cement ourselves as the number one carrier across the Pacific."

A statement from Adelaide Airport called it an "historic announcement" that would

"significantly boost business, investment and our broader tourism economy".

It said the service was "decades" in the making and would add close to 25,000 seats between Australia and the US each year.

MEANWHILE, United has scheduled the first flight on its Starlink-equipped aircraft for May, with travellers to benefit from onboard wi-fi connectivity speeds 50 times faster than currently available.

The deployment comes after United received FAA approval for the technology to be fitted to its Embraer 175 fleet. DF

Albatros purchased

ALBATROS Expeditions has been acquired by Nordic Expedition Cruise & Travel (NCET), which will see it join forces with fellow expedition cruise operator Polar Latitudes and Australian tour operator Chimu Adventures.

Under the deal, the three will coordinate and combine their itineraries, before Albatros and Polar Latitudes combine as one brand over time - more details in today's issue of Cruise Weekly.

On the edge for 130

HX IS celebrating 130 years of exploring the edge, discovering the most remote regions of the world since 1896.

The cruise line is celebrating by offering a suite at the price of a Superior stateroom - more information on page eight.



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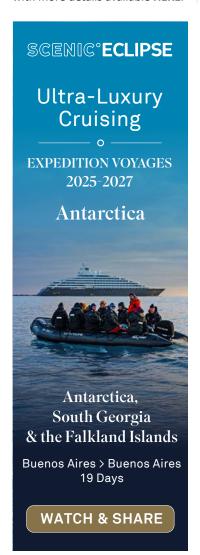


New NZ earlybirds

GREAT Journeys New Zealand has released a special earlybird sale on rail journeys, with 20% off all rail tours departing between Sep 2025 and Apr 2026.

The sale is valid across the operator's range, which comprises three rail journeys across New Zealand - the TranzAlpine, Northern Explorer and Coastal Pacific.

Bookings are open to 30 Apr, with more details available HERE.



Brisbane biz events soar



NEARLY 100,000 conference delegates from around Australia and the world will land in Brisbane this year for a range of business events, collectively generating more than 180,000 visitor nights.

New data from Tourism Research Australia shows Brisbane's business events sector is booming, with the destination tallying 5.8 million visitor nights recorded last year - a 30.5% yearon-vear spike.

The city's convention bureau. Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA), has secured 89 events for this year so far, covering sectors such as science, farming, neurosurgery, agriculture, medical technology, and tourism.

Together, the events will inject more than \$123 million into the city's economy, with venues including Howard Smith Wharves and the newly opened The Star Queen's Wharf proving popular among event organisers.

One major event, the Brisbane Truck Show, is expected to see more than 40,000 visitors and heavy vehicle industry leaders descend on the city to showcase its transport and logistics sector.

Lord Mayor Adrian Schrinner said Brisbane has everything needed for a business to create an exceptional visitor experience for delegates.

"Brisbane's growing reputation as Australia's most small business-friendly city and our unparalleled lifestyle makes us the perfect host for business events," he said. ML

For more business events news, see page five.

Viking adds on 10

VIKING has launched 10 new pre- and post-hotel extensions on select European and Egyptian river itineraries for 2025-26.

Available to book now, the lineup includes Toulouse in France, St. Moritz in Switzerland, and Tokaj in Hungary, as well as Amsterdam, Budapest and Cairo.

Highlights include four nights in Milan and Saint Moritz, incorporating a rail journey along a UNESCO World Heritage Site route through the Alps and Northern Italy, and three nights in Amsterdam, where travellers can explore Gouda's historic sites and enjoy a stroopwafel workshop.

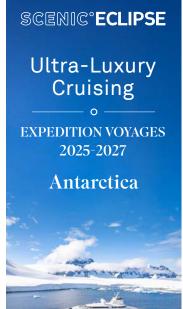
Agents can earn commission on Viking's extensions for bookings made online via the Travel Advisor Portal or via the Contact Centre prior to departure.

Hawaii learn & win

HAWAII Tourism Oceania is inviting agents to participate in its upcoming virtual Lunch & Learn webinar, which will equip them to sell Hawaii to clients.

Anna Riedel from Hawaii Tourism Oceania and Sally Miles from Aqua-Aston Hospitality will provide a destination and product update during the session, taking place Thu 10 Apr at 12pm AEST.

There are also two \$50 gift cards up for grabs - register HERE.



















Dedicated solo departures



TBG charts the way forward



TRAVEL Beyond Group (TBG) held its annual conference over the weekend at the Sheraton Grand Sydney, bringing together 110 attendees from across Australia and New Zealand.

The guest list was made up of TBG team members and partners from major airlines, hotel groups, and attractions.

With the theme 'Chartering the Future', the conference included an inspiring keynote address by Peter Baines, founder of charity Hands Across the Water, who shared powerful stories of resilience, impact and purpose.

During the event, TBG leaders took to the stage to discuss the company's growth, future ambitions, and the challenges faced in a fast-changing industry.

Attendees also heard from TBG's

Curated adventures

WORLD Expeditions has launched a new collection of Curated Adventures for 2025 and 2026 allowing travellers to embark on itineraries guided by experts in a variety of fields.

The collection includes a 14day cultural tour of India with historian John Zubrzycki, a walk along the Camino de Santiago with author Dr. Stephanie Dale and a Vietnamese culinary showcase guided by celebrity chef and TV personality Duncan Lu.

CLICK HERE for more details including departure dates.

Travel Daily

charity partner, Little Wings, a not-for-profit organisation providing free, professional, and safe transport for seriously ill children in regional NSW, ACT, and Old.

After a heartfelt presentation by Little Wings CEO Clare Pearson, attendees rolled up their sleeves for a team-building activity.

"Our 2025 conference wasn't just about reflection - it was about action," said TBG Chief Executive Officer, Tim Lane.

"Between Peter Baines' powerful words, our team's incredible efforts for Little Wings, and the spirit of unity across our group, we truly felt the meaning behind 'Chartering the Future'."

The jam-packed weekend wrapped up with a gala dinner, where six major awards were presented for excellence and contribution to the company's continued success. *JM*

Pictured: CEO Award winner Rhonda Alaeddin, with CEO Tim Lane; Emma-Jaye Lane, Head of Escape Beyond; and Mike Humphries, Head of Marketing and Sales.

Tide reels in BIG

TIDE Communications has been appointed as the national PR partner for BIG4 Holiday Parks, with the Vic-based agency to oversee the brand's media relations, media famils, ambassador activity, and events.

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Climate disurptions on the rise

AROUND two in three Aussies (65%) believe that travel insurance is more important now due to a rise in unexpected weather events caused by climate change, new research from Southern Cross Travel Insurance (SCTI) has revealed.

The Future of Travel 2025 report discovered a clear generational divide, with Gen Z and Millennials more likely than Baby Boomers to hold this concern (71% vs. 57%).

Jo McCauley, CEO at SCTI, pointed out that her company has seen a 16% rise in disruption to travel caused by natural disasters or severe weather events since 2018, as well as a 96% increase in heat stroke claims in 2024 when compared to 2018.

"Turbulence has been a significant issue for travellers as well, with SCTI paying more than \$25,000 on turbulence-related claims since 2023, with 46% coming from the Asia region," she revealed.

The report also found that seven in 10 Aussies (70%) feel less secure and more inclined to take out travel insurance due to the

Merger value cut

AMERICAN Express Global Business Travel says it has reviewed the scale of its proposed merger with CWT, with \$30 million wiped off the deal's value, which it has now listed at \$540 million.

The two organisations have also extended the planned merger's expiry date to 31 Dec to allow time to fight an antitrust lawsuit brought on by the US Department of Justice (DoJ).

The planned amalgamation of the two companies was unveiled one year ago (*TD* 26 Mar 2024), in which time it has received plenty of objections from competition regulators in the US and UK.

The UK approved the deal last month following a lengthy investigation, however the DoJ court case will be heard in Sep.



state of world affairs and growing global unrest.

"This is reflected in our customer data, with a 43% increase in Australians impacted by world conflicts in 2024 compared to 2018," said McCauley.

"Last year, 33 Aussies were affected in significant events like riots in New Caledonia and the Gaza War, while 23 were impacted in 2018." JM



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Window Seat

TODAY we have yet another story of people acting unhinged on a plane.

A woman on a Jetstar flight from Bali to Melbourne tried to open the doors of the aircraft mid-flight, prompting the captain to return to Denpasar Airport, where the traveller was arrested.

According to a fellow pax, the woman - who has since been banned from flying with JQ - "wanted to have a chair that could recline".

We suppose the woman would indeed have ended up with plenty of space to herself had she opened the door...



Competition for Eurostar

THE UK Office of Rail and Road (ORR) says its Temple Mills maintenance depot can be opened to more train operators to launch services on crosschannel routes into Europe.

Following an independent report into cross-channel rail capacity, the ORR said changes to Temple Mills' operations and infrastructure would be needed to allow for more trains to be stored and maintained there.

The decision could open the door to a number of emerging rail brands which have expressed interest in competing with Eurostar, which has had a monopoly on channel routes since the undersea rail corridor opened in 1994.

These include UK start-up Gemini Trains, which has applied to operate services between both St Pancras and Ebbsfleet in Kent to Paris, Brussels and beyond.

The company, which said it has been developing its network for two years, announced it plans to adopt a "fresh approach to ticketing" and brand-new state-of-the-art train fleets to break Eurostar's monopoly.

At the helm of Gemini Trains is Adrian Quine, who said the new operation is aiming to cater to "a whole new generation" of European travellers choosing trains over planes.

Batik ups commission

BATIK Air Malaysia has introduced 10% commission on all flight-related ancillaries, including prepaid baggage, prepaid meals and paid seats.

The commission applies to ancillaries sold under EMD-A issuance through global distribution systems, including Sabre, Travelport and Amadeus.

The airline notified travel agents that baggage ancillary via Amadeus is not currently available, but will come online "in due course".



Other interested parties include Spanish operator Evolyn and a revitalised Virgin Trains outfit, with the latter aiming to launch services between London, Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam.

A Virgin Trains spokesperson labelled the decision a "green signal for competition".

"The Temple Mills depot is the only facility in the UK which can accommodate European-style trains and claims suggesting it was at capacity have been blocking Virgin from coming to the line," a spokesperson said.

Stakeholders are now being invited to submit evidence supporting or objecting to the report's findings, with Eurostar expected to object to any moves to share its facility. *ML*

Rottnest call-out

THE WA Government has opened expressions of interest for businesses to operate on Rottnest Island, with a focus on new recreational experiences and enhancing Aboriginal cultural tourism.

More than 823,000 visitors travelled to Rottnest Island by ferry during 2023-24, with new businesses offering visitors cruises on a traditional pearl lugger boat, handcrafted ice cream, guided cycling tours, yoga and wellness, beach safety education and an app for hiking trails.

"The unique natural environment of Rottnest Island provides a great opportunity for nature-based tourism operators to showcase the many wonders of the island," Tourism Minister Reece Whitby said.

Applications close 29 Apr - see **HERE** for more information.

Off season in Tassie

MORE than 600 special offers and events are in market as part of the new 'Off Season' campaign launched by Tourism Tasmania, which is now live across Australia.

The 2025 edition of the annual campaign sees new relaxation and family experiences added to marketing materials, which will appear on television, social media and online platforms and on outdoor billboards and furniture in high-traffic areas.

Tourism Tasmania has also partnered with airlines and car rental companies to stimulate bookings as part of a focus on fly/drive holidaymakers.

The state will also appear in strategic PR activity including the *Hamish and Andy Podcast* and the SBS TV series *Alone*.





business events news

Thursday 3rd Apr 2025

businesseventsnews.com.au

Mel's big incentive

MELBOURNE is welcoming Australia's largest incentive group on record this week, with the first wave of delegates arriving from Amway China's Leadership Seminar (TD 12 Sep 2024).

The incentive program which is the biggest-ever outbound incentive from China - will see 16,000 delegates fly into Melbourne in groups of between 2,000 and 3,000 people.

The five-day event, which will include business seminars, touring experiences and a gala dinner at the Melbourne Showgrounds, is projected to generate \$100 million in economic impact.

The delegation will generate 32,000 hotel room nights across eight hotels, dine at 50 restaurants, and visit 20 popular attractions.

Aussie tix splurge

MORE than 28% of Australians - and 37% of under-50s - are planning to splurge on tickets for major sporting events and international music acts over the coming 12 months.

The new research from FCTG's Stage and Screen shows that 34% of all respondents intend to fork out on VIP experiences at live sports events and 30% plan to buy the best tickets for their favourite international music act - despite ticket prices rising by more than 50% in 12 months.

WESTERN SYDNEY TAKES OFF

WESTERN Sydney is positioning itself as a leading business events and incentives destination, ahead of the opening of the Western Sydney International Airport in late 2026.

Located less than a 30-minute drive from the airport, the Western Sydney Conference Centre (WSCC) has partnered with the Panthers Precinct to create a one-stop hub for corporate events (TD 31 Mar).

With the ability to host up to 2,800 guests or 10,000 in exhibition-style setups, the \$110 million precinct offers state-ofthe-art facilities, expert event planning teams, and access to dining, entertainment, and teambuilding experiences.

"For everyone on an incentive for first time to Australia, it's such a unique opportunity to experience a different part of



Sydney," WSSC Director of Sales and Marketing, Jo Naumovski, told Travel Daily.

"There's a lot of talk about the value that a business delegate brings...to the local economy, [and] we are the catalyst for that because there is no other facility out here that can house that many delegates.

"We want to be considered right up against Sydney CBD and Melbourne," Naumovski said.

The precinct also now provides event organisers access to the

Panthers Academy, where past and present rugby league players, health and wellbeing experts, coaches, and other key figures can be featured as speakers, discussing topics like leadership strategies, team dynamics, sports science, and health and wellness.

"The next 12 months for us is looking very positive; we've got a great pipeline association of corporate events," Naumovski revealed to TD.

"Our key focus is to really grow in that market and get people out here," she added.

Delegates can stay at the adjoining 152-room Pullman Sydney Penrith, the area's first five-star hotel, and enjoy 17 bar and dining options across the precinct, as well as team-building experiences such as indoor skydiving at iFLY, Aqua Golf and Cables Wake Park. JM

BEA takes centre stage in Greater China

BUSINESS Events Australia's Greater China Showcase has kicked off this week in Xiamen, returning for the first time since 2019 as a face-to-face event.

The three-day showcase connected 29 Australian industry organisations with more than 55 incentive planners and corporate clients from Greater China.

Australia's convention bureaux, hotels, inbound tour operators, airlines, venues and experiences were able to build



on incentive opportunities through one-to-one meetings, education sessions and networking events.

"Greater China remains one of Australia's most important markets for corporate incentive travel," said Tourism Australia's Executive GM, Commercial & BEA Robin Mack.

Artsy Hilton Mel

HILTON Melbourne Little Queen Street has been announced as the exclusive Tourism Partner of the National Gallery of Victoria for both its summer and winter exhibitions.

The partnership will help position the property as the go-to destination for visitors attending Melbourne's cultural events.

To celebrate, the hotel has launched a Yayoi Kusama Stay Package, on until 21 Apr.





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APPOINTMENTS

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Michelle Battersby has been recruited by Webjet Group New Zealand as its new Chief Sales and Operations Officer. In her new role, Battersby will oversee strategic leadership of the Sales and Operations teams for Webjet's Airport Rentals and Motorhome Republic brands. Battersby brings extensive experience in business transformation, commercial strategy and corporate travel to her new duties.

Veteran tourism industry professional Craig Davidson will lead Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ) as its new Chief Executive Officer. Davidson brings 35 years in travel and tourism to his role, having worked across many facets of the industry including with Tourism Australia, Hamilton Island, Voyages Hotels, Journey Beyond and more. Davidson takes over from Patricia O'Callaghan, who left TEQ last year to take up a role with the Queensland Government.

The Rees Hotel Queenstown has a new General Manager in Micka McDonald, who moves into the top job after spending 10 years holding various roles within the property. McDonald replaces longtime GM Mark Rose, who moves into a Director capacity at the property.

Travel industry payment provider Mint Payments has a new Director, with investor and business builder Huy Truong joining the Board as Executive Chairman. Truong replaces the retiring Bill Bartee, who has served on the Board for the past decade.

Albatross Tours has welcomed Michelle Daniels as its new Regional Sales Manager, based in Melbourne. Davies joins the tour operator from Evolution Travel Collective and will join a sales team led by fellow new recruit and fellow TIME graduate, Harry Sargent.

Bringing nearly four decades of management experience, Stephan **Schupbach** has become the new Group CEO of GHM to spearhead the luxury accommodation group's rebrand to Chedi Hospitality. In his new role, Schupbach will work to amplify the new brand identity and expand its global reach as the company strengthens its global footprint.

Events and tourism management firm Arinex Australia has appointed Maree Di Pasquale as its new Group CEO. Tasked with setting new benchmarks for business events in the region, Di Pasquale brings leadership experience in tourism and events in Australia, Hong Kong and the UAE and steps into the role vacated recently by Nicole Walker.

American Airlines has appointed Tony Richmond as its new Executive Vice President, Corporate Affairs, and Chief Legal Officer. Richmond will lead the airline's legal affairs team and become part of the airline's senior leadership team, reporting directly to CEO Robert Isom.

Aircraft manufacturer **Boeing** has named **Eric Hill** as Vice President of Investor Relations. In his new role, which starts in May, Hill will lead Boeing's engagement with the global investment community.



BNE hits 100 with new look



BRISBANE Airport has unveiled a new brand identity to mark its 100th anniversary today, reflecting the ongoing transformation of Australia's third-busiest aviation hub.

The previous corporate-style logo has been swapped out for a vibrant new design that aims to "depict a sense of anticipation and limitless possibilities, featuring ribbon-like jet streams to represent motion".

"In addition to all the work we're doing to make using the airport better, it's important we also send a visual message about the optimism and excitement that is pervading Brisbane right now," said BNE Head of Communications & Brand Marketing, Sarah Whyte.

"With our centenary, major improvements of both the Domestic and International terminals underway, and our \$5 billion 'Future BNE' transformation well advanced, the timing feels right.

"In the years since we last refreshed our brand, the city of

Brisbane has changed, the way we market our destination has evolved, and so has the airport," Whyte added.

Passengers and airport workers will now begin to see the fresh branding across terminal digital signs and social media channels, as well as the airport's website, bne.com.au. JM

Cruise blossoming

HERITAGE Expeditions has responded to guest demand by introducing a new itinerary centred around Japan's famous cherry blossom season.

The new 'Cherry Blossoms of Japan' cruise departs on 31 Mar 2026 and sails from Tokyo to Osaka while exploring the islands of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu, taking part in a variety of cherry blossom events along the way.

Travellers will also cruise the Seto inland sea and pay a visit to Busan in South Korea as part of the 12-day itinerary.

A 20% discount is available for bookings made by 30 Apr 2025.

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