



INDIAN PACIFIC



THE GHAN



GREAT SOUTHERN

*Introducing*

# AUROLA AUSTRALIS

*A new level of rail luxury in 2026*

The first of their kind in Australia, these new suites offer a luxurious experience like no other.

Within Aurora and Australis you'll find a separate bedroom, bathroom, lounge areas, dedicated butler service, and Bollinger La Grande Année.

Joining our iconic trains from April 2026, there is no better way to see, taste and experience Australia.

DISCOVER A NEW LEVEL OF LUXURY

JOURNEY BEYOND

Artist impressions



## The Five Stans

KAZAKHSTAN | KYRGYZSTAN | TAJIKISTAN  
 UZBEKISTAN | TURKMENISTAN  
 28 DAYS | DEPARTS 11 MAY & 31 AUG 2025

traveldirectors.com.au

travel  
 directors

SMALL GROUP  
 ESCORTED  
 TOUR EXPERTS

1300 856 661

MORE INFO

## Next-level rail luxury

**JOURNEY** Beyond is introducing a new level of rail luxury in 2026 with its Aurora Australis suites.

The first of their kind in Australia, the suites offer a separate bedroom, bathroom, lounge areas, dedicated butler service, and Bollinger La Grande Annee - discover more on the [cover page](#).



Save up to  
**25%**  
 on 2025 & 2026 tours



**EARN A  
 \$100 GIFT  
 CARD**

PER PASSENGER  
 BOOKED BY 31 MAR

[View Tours](#)

## Air NZ profits shrink

**AIR** New Zealand has delivered a close-to 20% decline in net profit for the six months to 31 Dec 2024 (**TD** breaking news).

Despite posting a reduced NZ\$106 million profit result for the period, the carrier said its financial performance was in the upper end of the guidance provided to the market in Nov.

Aircraft engine and supply problems plaguing the Kiwi airline are no secret, with the latest results confirming its fleet has dwindled by 4%.

These include five narrowbody and three widebody planes

grounded due to additional global engine maintenance issues.

Air NZ also saw its revenue dip slightly to NZ\$3.4 billion, while earnings before tax fell by 16% to NZ\$155 million.

“With over \$1 billion worth of our newest, most efficient aircraft grounded at times, it’s been a tough year so far,” conceded CEO Greg Foran.

“Delivering the performance we have and maintaining such a strong balance sheet is a real credit to our people and I’m proud of what we have achieved.”

In brighter news, Air NZ also announced a share buy-back scheme of up to NZ\$100 million, a move the carrier said reflected confidence in the company’s long-term outlook.

**MEANWHILE**, Air New Zealand has appointed former Meridian Energy CEO Neal Barclay as a Non-Executive Director.

He will commence in the role from 01 May. *AB*

### Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* features nine pages of the latest travel news, plus a cover wrap from **Journey Beyond**, photo pages from **Visit USA** and **Qatar Airways**, our **Business Events News**, and a full page from **APT Travel Group**.



**THE MAGIC OF TAHITI AWAITS**

Save Up to 35% on Tahiti  
 Holiday Packages & Deals 2025!

Hurry, Sale Ends  
**2 March 2025**

1300 526 868  
 res@tahitivoyages.com.au  
 www.tahitivoyages.com.au

TAHITI VOYAGES AIR TAHITI NUI THE LEGEND OF TAHITI

## APT celebrates VIPs

**LAST** week, APT Travel Group honoured over 50 VIP Diamond and Platinum Partners from Victoria and Tasmania at the 2024 VIP Awards Dinner in Melbourne, kicking off the first of six events.

Head over to the [back page](#) to see all the details, including all of the winners on the night.



Explore!

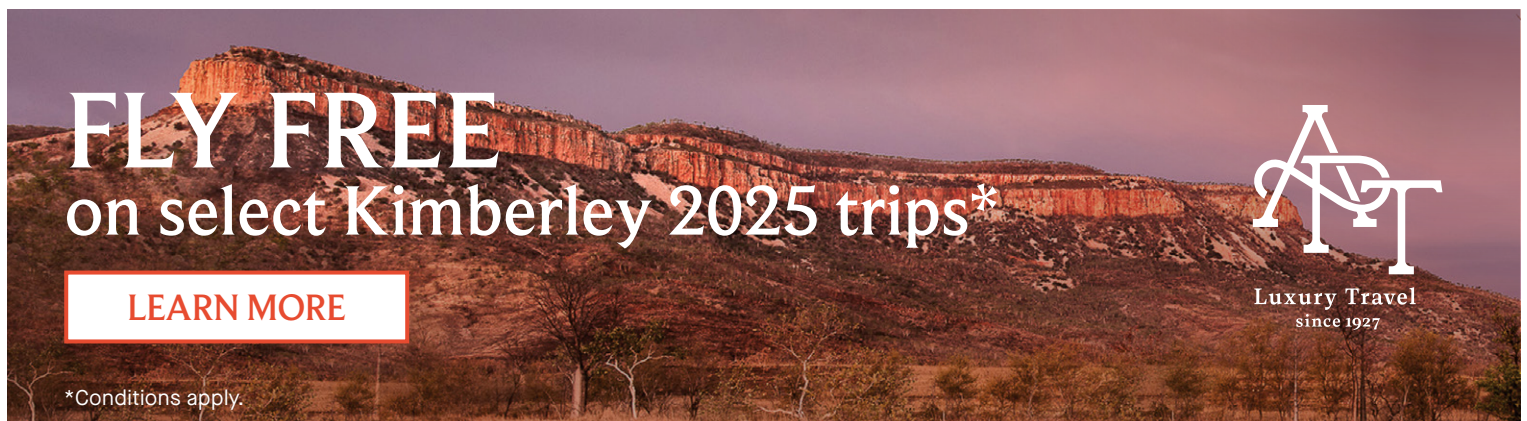
**Walking  
 and  
 Cycling**

**NOW 15% OFF\***

Let's go!

Small group adventures  
**Don't just travel, Explore!**

Certified  
 (B)  
 Corporation



**FLY FREE**  
 on select Kimberley 2025 trips\*

[LEARN MORE](#)

\*Conditions apply.

**APT**  
 Luxury Travel  
 since 1927



**WMTOURS**

PRICES FROM  
**\$5,829**  
PER PERSON TWIN SHARE  
LAND ONLY  
\*Surcharges may apply

Journey to  
*South Africa*

DURATION: 10 DAYS

**VIEW DEAL**

## Jayride suspends

JAYRIDE has requested a voluntary suspension of securities on the ASX, pending a material financing and corporate update to the market.

The Aussie company has also gone into a trading halt on the ASX pending an announcement.

## Webjet called out by WAP

A NEW report from World Animal Protection (WAP) claims Webjet is still selling tickets to some of the worst captive wildlife venues in the world.

The OTA topped the list of travel brands found to be selling inhumane animal experiences, including captive dolphin or orca entertainment venues; elephant entertainment with riding, bathing, and shows; circus-style monkey performances; and tiger venues with feeding or shows.

Klook, which works with Webjet on its 'Things to Do' offering, was also found to be selling many of the same types of experiences, while Luxury Escapes also scored poorly, offering all but monkey, tiger and elephant experiences.

"Webjet don't practice what they preach," claimed WAP Australia Head of Campaigns, Suzanne Milthorpe.

"In one of their web blogs, they state elephant riding is 'cruel at worst and ethically dubious at best', but the irony is they sell tickets to venues that abuse



elephants for riding experiences and circus-style shows."

When contacted for comment, Webjet said it will be working with Klook on a review of the flagged activities in the report.

"Webjet is committed to the promotion of sustainable and ethical tourism," a spokesperson for Webjet told *Travel Daily*.

"Klook...has developed and implemented an updated animal welfare policy and is actively working to educate operators on how to elevate animal welfare standards in partner locations, and work towards creating long-term and sustainable change in the industry."

Brands that performed well in the report included Booking.com, which has no captive wildlife experiences listed to sell, as well as tour operators such as Adventure World, Intrepid, and G Adventures, which were all given a clean bill of ethical health.

Responding to the report's findings, Adventure World encouraged advisors to consult a checklist like the one from Animals Asia before booking.

"We want to see more travel advisors prioritise ethical travel and animal welfare," the operator's Managing Director Neil Rodgers said. AB

## Sargent flies away

ALBATROSS Tours has appointed Harry Sargent as its new National Sales Manager.

Sargent brings a wealth of experience to the position, having spent 14 years with Inside Travel Group in roles both in Australia and the United Kingdom.

### SCENIC°ECLIPSE

## Ultra-Luxury Cruising

EXPEDITION VOYAGES  
2025-2026

## East Antarctica



*Two helicopters,  
only on Scenic Eclipse.*

**Mawson's Antarctica  
Along the East Coast**

**VIEW ITINERARY**

### SCENIC°ECLIPSE

## Ultra-Luxury Cruising

EXPEDITION VOYAGES  
2025-2026

## East Antarctica



**Antarctica's Ross Sea  
Majestic Ice & Wildlife**

Hobart > Dunedin  
24 Days

**VIEW ITINERARY**

WINDSTAR KNOWS THE WAY  
TO JAPAN

**LAST  
CALL!**

WINDSTAR  
CRUISES  
180° FROM ORDINARY®

## EARLY BOOKING OFFER

**BOOK BEFORE 28 FEBRUARY**

Receive the **FREE** all-inclusive experience  
+ **US\$200** onboard credit per stateroom

For more information, contact 1300 749 875 or email [reservations@windstar.com.au](mailto:reservations@windstar.com.au)



LEARN MORE ABOUT TOKYO WITH TRAVEL DAILY TRAINING ACADEMY

Click here to discover

Travel Daily

## Rex SYD relocation

**FROM** 08 Apr, Rex has confirmed it will temporarily relocate to Sydney Airport's Terminal 3 to help reduce passenger volumes at domestic Terminal 2 during its renovation.

The troubled carrier may be in the new location until at least late next year, which is when the upgrade is expected to finish.

All Rex passengers landing at Sydney will continue to arrive into T2 as per normal, including the same baggage collection points.

## PassportCard boards Scenic

**PASSPORTCARD** has inked a new partnership with Scenic Group, marking the travel insurance provider's debut agreement with a cruise line.

The new deal means passengers sailing aboard Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Emerald Cruises can now access PassportCard's full range of cruise and trip coverage plans.

These including instant protections against cruise delays, missed ports, unexpected trip cancellations, and overseas medical expenses.

PassportCard said that with cruising continuing to surge in popularity in Australia, the tie-up with Scenic provides cruise guests with cover that is often difficult to access - particularly for guests in older demographics.

"With instant payouts for overseas medical costs, stolen cash or delayed luggage, our comprehensive coverage will ensure their guests are provided with peace of mind before, and while, embarking on their next cruise adventure," PassportCard CEO Peter Klemt said.

The majority of travellers



purchasing cruise insurance are aged 50 and above, with short to mid-length cruises proving the most popular.

Around 40% of policies cover sailings of one to two weeks. *AB*

## Forum takes off

**THE** inaugural Sydney Airline Leadership Forum is being held today in Sydney, bringing together voices in aviation to discuss issues affecting the industry.

Organised in partnership between Greener Airlines, the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), and Etraveli Group, the gathering features experts such as Dr Susan Bennett from InfoGovANZ, and Alan Polivnick, Watson Farley & Williams.

Topics discussed include privacy and cybersecurity in aviation, sustainability, and the future of corporate travel.

The Sydney Airline Leadership forum also marks Etraveli Group's expansion in Australia, which specialises in flight technology.

## Win a Japan trip

**INTREPID** has revealed the final big prizes that can be won as part of its 12-day 'Advent(ure) Agent Incentive' giveaway.

A spot on the operator's Japan Express trip, a nine-day adventure through Tokyo, Kyoto, Hiroshima, and Osaka, complete with temples, food, and local experiences, is up for grabs.

Also on the line is a B-Corp prize pack from other B-Corp brands.

Agents must deposit a trip between 09-20 Dec to be eligible.

**AATKings**

GET *up to* **\$1,800** AIR CREDIT

per couple on selected tours\*

\*T&C's apply

**Book now**

Nawurlandja Lookout, Kakadu

## Join Brand USA's Inaugural Ambassador Panel

Join the Brand USA Ambassador Panel to elevate your USA expertise, access exclusive mentorship, seize unique opportunities, and cultivate your leadership skills. Applications close 7 March 2025.

**USA**  
VisitTheUSA.com.au

**AIR NEW ZEALAND**

**Apply Now!**

**AATKings**

GET *up to* **\$1,800** AIR CREDIT

per couple on selected tours\*

\*T&C's apply

**Book now**

Uluru

# WIN A SPOT ON THE ULTIMATE USA FAM

**ENTER NOW**

Register for the incentive and log your bookings. See website for T&Cs.

UNITED AIRLINES | USA | ARIZONA | COLORADO | I NY | Hawaii | VISIT seattle

## Kenya roars for Aussies

**TOURISM** authorities in Kenya have flagged plans to step up efforts to attract more Australian travellers to the country's shores.

The comments were made by Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Tourism and Wildlife Rebecca Miano during a recent visit to Melbourne, stating that Aussie travellers are a perfect match for its range of natural attractions.

"We are eager to re-engage with Australian travellers, making up for lost time during the COVID-19 pandemic," Miano said.

"With our unparalleled wildlife, breathtaking beaches, and rich cultural heritage, Kenya is ready to deliver the unforgettable and authentic experiences that Australian travellers seek."

The African nation is still a relatively small outbound market, attracting just over 27,000 Australian visitors last year, however Miano said that with the right strategic efforts, that



number could be significantly increased as both nations strengthen tourism links.

"We want to captivate the Australian market with the magic that is Kenya, so whether travellers seek adventure, relaxation, or meaningful cultural connections, Kenya has something special to offer," Miano observed.

Kenya's tourism branches are currently in discussion with tour operators to make future travel more "seamless and irresistible for Australians".

The formal tourism pillars of promotion include adventure, heritage, and hospitality. *AB*

## Learn about Italy

**ADVISORS** wanting to brush up on their knowledge of Italy's business and leisure appeal can now do so via new training modules added by the Italian National Tourist Board.

Modules now up and running cover a range of important topics, including bleisure travel; solo business travel; the country's north west region; Venice; Italy's history of art & culture; as well as what attractions lie in the south of the country on the Med.

From the Alps to the Mediterranean, visitors to Italy can choose from hundreds of locations with modern infrastructure, heritage palaces, villas, castles or historic residences - all equipped with the comforts to meet client needs.

**CLICK HERE** for more details.



Travel Daily  
ON LOCATION



**NEWCASTLE**

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of *Princess* which is this week hosting us on a trip to Sydney aboard *Diamond Princess*.

**TODAY** is the final day of our fami!, as tomorrow, we will arrive at Circular Quay in sparkling Sydney.

It is our last chance to enjoy the many offerings on board *Diamond Princess* before we say our goodbyes.

Some of us will indulge in the beautiful Izumi traditional Japanese bathhouse, featuring indoor and outdoor baths, saunas, and steam rooms complete with an aft plunge pool and ocean views.

Others might take part in a cha cha lesson or watch a show at the theatre.



## Discover Malta, where history meets modern charm

Starting 2 July 2025, your clients can fly to Malta on four weekly flights, via Hamad International Airport, Doha. Prepare for an unparalleled travel experience, with our award-winning hospitality, unmatched comfort, and exceptional dining above the clouds.

[qatarairways.com/tradeportal](https://qatarairways.com/tradeportal)





## Venice doubles fee

**TRAVELLERS** to Venice now have added reason to plan early, with day-trippers booking less than four days in advance to be subject to a €10 levy from Apr - double the current impost.

Local authorities said the increased tax on late bookers will be implemented to help the Italian city continue to manage the impacts of overtourism.

The updated fee structure will be enforced between 18 Apr and 04 May, and then every Fri, Sat, and Sun until the end of Jul.

Only day tourists visiting between 8.30am and 4pm will be required to pay the charge, while overnight guests are exempt.



## Old Airport records

**MORE** than 760,000 travellers passed through Queensland Airport Limited's (QAL) four gateways in Jan 2025, marking its busiest post-pandemic month.

Gold Coast Airport saw more than 622,000 of this total, marking OOL's fifth busiest month.

Regional areas also saw strong demand, with Mt Isa and Townsville both recording their third busiest Jan ever, while Longreach recorded a 14% jump.

Gold Coast Airport is preparing for further growth in coming months, with routes to Darwin, Dunedin and Hamilton to debut.

## Outbound gains pace

**INTERNATIONAL** departure numbers to Japan, Indonesia and the United States continued to flourish in 2024, with big increases in visitation to all three.

According to new data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Department of Infrastructure and analysed by ATIA, Japan saw a 56.9% leap in arrivals from Australia in 2024, with nearly 800,000 taking advantage of high value from a weak Japanese Yen.

Indonesia remained a popular destination, welcoming 1.68 million Aussies - a 22.7% increase - while the United States saw a 10.2% visitor jump to 735,210.

Jul was the most popular month to take a holiday, the data showed, with 63.1% taking a mid-year leisure break, while business travel peaked in Mar.

Visiting friends and family was reserved more for Jan in line with the traditional holiday season.

Australia also saw an uptick in inbound arrivals, with visitors from New Zealand up 9.5% to 1.39 million, while the US and UK also delivered growth.

China was the fastest growing international source market, with visitor numbers for the full year climbing 66.4% compared to 2023 to more than 890,000.

"The latest data confirms that Australians' appetite for international travel remains strong, with destinations like Japan, Indonesia and the US seeing significant increases," said ATIA Chief Executive, Dean Long.



"At the same time, inbound travel continues to strengthen, with China's remarkable growth standing out.

"These figures underscore the resilience and vitality of our travel and tourism industry," Long said.

Sydney appeared at one end of all three of Australia's busiest domestic routes, with flights to or from Melbourne the most popular nationwide, while Perth saw available seats jump 7.1%. *ML*

## Finke joins Intrepid

**INDIGENOUS** owned tour operator 100% Finke River Culture & Adventure has joined with Intrepid Travel to launch a new Larapinta Trail guided trip.

Available from May, the seven-day walking tour takes travellers along the central Australia trail, accompanied by two First Nations leaders and an Intrepid trip guide.

Walkers will snake alongside riverbanks, covering around 9km per day and culminating at the summit of Mt Sonder to enjoy views of the MacDonnell Ranges.

Ten departures have been scheduled for 2025, each including access to 100% Finke's private campsites along the trail.

**AUCKLAND**

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you from the skies above New Zealand and the surrounding Pacific Islands, with thanks to Solomon Airlines.

**SOLOMON** Airlines will tomorrow operate its first service connecting Auckland and Brisbane.

To celebrate, *Travel Daily* and a contingent of senior industry executives are flying out today on the airline to Auckland, via Santo International Airport and Vanuatu's capital of Port Vila.

Passengers will get an air tour of beautiful Vanuatu and the surrounding islands, after which the plane will take them to New Zealand's largest city, ready for the first flight to Brisbane early tomorrow morning.

## WW2 Pacific tours

**WARTIME** tour specialist Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours has released new commemorative itineraries to mark 80 years since the end of World War II.

Among these is a four-day Hellfire Pass tour departing daily from Bangkok, and visiting the Death Railway in Kanchanaburi.

Also new is a four-day Singapore private tour which retraces the city's WWII history and visits POW camps and memorials.

# BUILD YOUR SKILLS

## LAUNCHING 10 MARCH

# HOME EX

HOME AGENT  
VIRTUAL  
EXPERIENCE

REGISTER FREE



## Visit USA brings the party to Brisbane

**THE** Visit USA Expo 2025 lit up Brisbane last night, bringing together over 230 travel agents and more than 60 US exhibitors for an unforgettable evening at The Star Brisbane.

From regional US beer tastings to pinball challenges and expertly crafted espresso martinis, the event was packed with energy, excitement, and valuable industry connections.

With MC Mike Goldman keeping the crowd engaged, the expo delivered the perfect mix of business and fun, giving travel agents a hands-on experience of everything the US has to offer.

“This year’s expos are all about offering travel agents an interactive and fun way to connect with US tourism while showcasing the very best of what

the US has to offer,” said Caroline Davidson, President of Visit USA.

“Mike Goldman’s infectious energy ensured the event was filled with genuine connections and excitement.”

The final stop of the Visit USA Expos 2025 series is in Melbourne at Marvel Stadium today.

**TEAM** Texas takeover! Texas was out in force in Brisbane, dancing up a storm.



**TRAVEL** Portland hosts a much-hyped pinball competition.



**SALLY** and Jack from Arizona and Colorado wowing the crowds with local iced teas and brews.



**CHEERS** to expo sustenance - aka espresso martinis - courtesy of Visit Seattle.



**HAPPY** agents ready to sell the USA.



**THE** Flight Centre Travel team - Christina Alvarez, Ally Watson, Siobhan Ellis, and Ncole Lucas.



**EXHIBITORS** from all across the USA deep in conversation with agents.



**EMCEE** Mike Goldman in action giving away prizes, prizes, prizes.



# Experiencing Doha, Qatar in 72 hours

**MORE** than 80 travel advisors and key suppliers attended the Visit Qatar and Qatar Airways mega fam, experiencing the captivating city in a whirlwind, wildly enjoyable look at what is on offer.

With the Australian market being the lead supporter of the 'World's Best Value Stopover' program, attendees were able to sample some of the many activities available to their clients - from sumptuous lunches at Jiwan, located inside the National Museum of Qatar, and Boho Social overlooking Katara Beach, to a very 'loved up' Valentine's afternoon at the Doha Beach Club, which had guests sampling the best of local cuisine.

As for activities, the group enjoyed a 4WD dunes exploration at sunrise and a visit to the Khor Al Adaid Inland Sea, a UNESCO-recognised nature reserve.

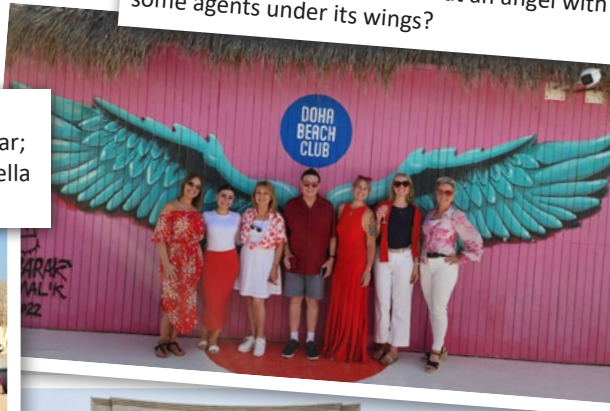
Also on the itinerary were visits to the districts of Doha, including the Mina District, The Pearl, and the Katara Cultural Village, which provided some traditional, cultural and unique offerings available to clients on their visit.

For more information, visit **Qatar Airways** and **Visit Qatar**.

**THE** group experiencing a desert sunrise.



**ANGELS** with wings - or is that an angel with some agents under its wings?



**PARTICIPANTS** enjoying lunch at Boho Social.



**HOSTS** for the fam - Wayne Borland, Qatar Airways; Richard Styles & Nancy Rosales, Visit Qatar; Luke Beecham, Justin Kestel, Georgia Guerinet, Stella Vlahos and Ken Anon Lau, Qatar Airways.



**THE** brave souls taking a dip in the Inland Sea.



**THE** group inside the Katara Amphitheatre with some Omani special guests joining in.



**KATE** McIvor, Global Travel Network; Fiona Prosser, Globetrotter Travel; Michelle Black, Viking; Jessica Hall, Scenic; and Guy Bellamy, Viking, enjoying the Valentine's celebration.



**TONI** Francis, Area Leader Flight Centre; Wayne Borland, Country Manager Qatar Airways; and Gaby Cassano, Emerald Travel hitting the Souq Waqif markets.



**PERSONAL** sand dune exploration time.



**ARI** Magoutis, Consolidated Travel; Ram Chhabra & Nidhi Nijhawan, CVFR; and Jarrod Pask, Scenic Cruises.



**THE** group checking out Mina District.





## Doltone's Encore

**DOLTONE** House Hospitality Group and Encore Event Technologies have partnered to deliver premium event production services across Doltone House's Sydney's venues.

The collaboration will bring together Encore's event production services and Doltone House's venues to offer an enhanced guest experience, with the tech company to deliver tailored solutions for a range of events, from bespoke gala dinners to large-scale corporate events.

The partnership will initially span five of the hospitality brand's locations: Jones Bay Wharf; Darling Island; Western Sydney; Sylvania Waters; and Hyde Park.

## BUDGET CAPS THE MAJOR BARRIER

**BUDGET** limitations are a key concern for event planners around the world, according to a new study from Brisbane-based event technology provider, EventsAir.

A global survey of over 370 event professionals and interviews with industry leaders revealed that 63.5% of respondents consider financial constraints as their main challenge.

Another hurdle is keeping attendees engaged, with 42.7% of event professionals struggling to capture interest amid increasing distractions and digital fatigue.

High-quality content is now the single most important factor for event success, according to 79.7% of event professionals surveyed.

The survey also found that an overwhelming 95.4% of event professionals rated in-person events as either "very important"



or "moderately important", and 79.3% said they use event management software.

"The global events market is undergoing unprecedented change, driven by technology, shifting attendee behaviours, and new industry challenges," said Renee Elliott (**pictured**), Chief Customer Officer at EventsAir.

"We invested in producing

this important report to provide event planners with a clear understanding of these transformations, empowering them to adapt, innovate, and excel in this dynamic environment."

The full report, which offers in-depth insights into the evolving landscape of the events industry, is now available for download on the EventsAir website, **HERE**. *JM*

## Hyatt's new Alliance

**HOSPITALITY** giant Hyatt has launched the Hyatt Asia Pacific Meetings & Events Alliance, an initiative designed to streamline multi-year, multi-city event planning across the Asia Pacific.

The new program aims to provide corporate planners with a simplified approach to event management across multiple Hyatt properties in the region, including dedicated centralised support and customised packages and incentives.

Initially made up of nine Hyatt properties, the alliance includes Hyatt Regency Sydney.

## Lewis-Smith takes out advocacy gong

**BUSINESS** Events Sydney CEO Lyn Lewis-Smith and Gary Grimmer, Chair of MICE consultancy firm GainingEdge, have won the first business events advocacy award at the AIME Leaders Forum last week.

The Iceberg Excellence Awards for Advocacy of the Business & Professional Events Sector was presented by Australian Business Events Association Chair, Peter King.

Founder and producer of global advocacy movement

Iceberg, James Latham, acknowledged the outstanding contributions of both recipients.

"Lyn has been at the vanguard of research, data, and storytelling in our sector...[and] has built the pillars of advocacy that have advanced the narrative of the business events sector," Latham said.

Meanwhile, he commented that Grimmer's "understanding of business events...has enabled the sector to be recognised as a change agent".

## Te Pae delivers

**NEW** Zealand's Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre delivered a NZ\$77 million boost to the nation's economy for the year to Nov 2024, exceeding expectations.

During this period, the centre attracted an estimated 80,200 guests across 217 events, generating visitor spend of around \$37.8 million, with international guests from Australia, North America and Asia making a significant impact.

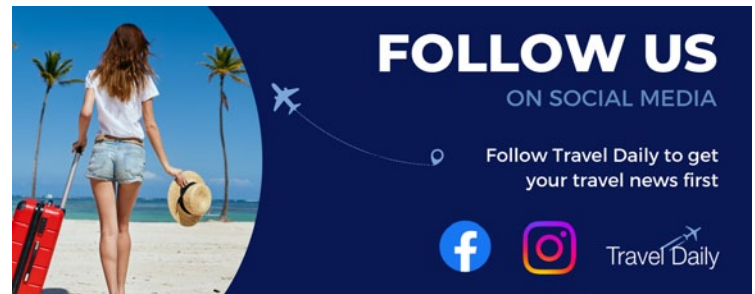
# HONG KONG INCENTIVE PLAYBOOK

Unlock over 100 unique & immersive experiences for your groups!



EXPLORE NOW ▶





## APPOINTMENTS

Send your new appointments to:  
appointments@traveldaily.com.au

**1834 Hotels** has announced the appointment of **Rodney Harrex** as its new Chief Operating Officer. With a distinguished career in tourism and strategic leadership, Harrex joins the company from his role as Chief Executive Officer of the South Australian Tourism Commission, where he played a key part in shaping the state's visitor economy.

**Ponant** has appointed **Fiona Stewart** as its new State Manager for Western Australia & South Australia. With more than 25 years of experience in strategic sales, marketing, and business partnerships across the travel and hospitality industries, Stewart brings a wealth of expertise to her new role, arriving from Journey Beyond's sales team.

**Bench Africa** has now completed its "BDM Tribe", with the appointment of **Lucy Smith** as Business Development Manager for Victoria. The team now comprises Smith, Graham Werner BDM for Qld/northern NSW (caretaker for Vic since 2023), Alex Fayan BDM for NSW, and Andy Kirkman as Head of Trade Relations, also responsible for the remaining states and territories.

**Capella Hotels & Resorts** has appointed **Lucas Gimenez Polcheira** as Director of Sales and Marketing at Capella Sydney. The former Sofitel Sydney Wentworth Commercial Director has also previously worked as Accor Director of Sales & Marketing.

**Rosewood Hotels & Resorts** has announced two new leadership roles in New Zealand, with **Jane-Therese Mulry** appointed Director of Culinary for Rosewood Kauri Cliffs, Rosewood Cape Kidnappers, and Rosewood Matakauri. She will relocate to New Zealand from her most recent position as Executive Chef at The Waldorf Astoria, Seychelles. Joining Mulry at Rosewood Kauri Cliffs will be **Fraser Donald Wong**, who has been appointed Director of Operations. Wong brings an impressive background in the luxury hotel industry to the Rosewood family, spanning 20 years, across properties in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Hong Kong, and India.

**Jamie Swan** has started a new role as Director of Sales for **QT Hotels & Resorts** at QT Auckland this week. She told her LinkedIn network she is excited to be working with a great team, building strong partnerships, and contributing to the hotel's success.

**Lindblad Expeditions** has welcomed **Rosie Loxley** as Key Account Manager. She will manage Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia, and joins Lindblad with a distinguished background in the travel industry, bringing nearly a decade of frontline experience with Flight Centre.

Hurtigruten Group's **Gareth Coakley** will be moving to **HX** as Key Account Manager, following the split of the expedition cruise line from its former coastal cruising sister brand.

## Ovolo AI partnership

**OVOLO** Hotels has forged a landmark partnership with Nodal Marketing, a deal the hotelier believes will revolutionise the way it markets to guests.

All Ovolo staff in marketing to operations now have their own personalised AI chatbot, which will deliver live market insights, brand monitoring, and performance reporting.

Benefits to its digital marketing strategy will include the ability to launch hyper-personalised campaigns tailored to unique audiences, as well as real-time analytics and reporting via a custom-built AI platform.

## Tahiti names winners

**THE** Islands of Tahiti has announced the five Australian winners of its big trade incentive, 'Tahiti Dream Big'.

First prize went to Michelle Mekler-Peled (**pictured**) from Above & Beyond Experiences, who won return flights with Air Tahiti Nui, an Aranui cruise, a stay in Tahiti, a Papeeno tour with Tahiti Nui Travel, and a Dinner Express with Tahiti Travel.

Also winning a prize were Michelle Barker, Jayes Travel; Chrissy Morton, The Travel Agent Caloundra; Jacinta Blundell, Caboolture Cruises & Travel; and Steve Thompson, Anywhere Travel, who each won a two-night stay in Tahiti.



## FOLLOW US

ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Follow Travel Daily to get your travel news first



Travel Daily



## Window Seat



**TYPICALLY** no hotel wants to be associated with the legendary British sitcom *Fawlty Towers*.

However, Leura Gardens Resort in New South Wales' Blue Mountains is celebrating 50 years of the show's run this year, with live theatre dinner tributes throughout 2025.

'Faulty Towers - The Dining Experience' will stage its first live performance on 28 Mar, inspired by the four principal characters from the show, which followed the namesake hotel and its unbearable proprietor, Basil Fawlty.

The performance will pay tribute to the program's origins, while improvising with diners, in what is sure to be a very interactive evening.

Shows will also run on 11 Apr, 29 May, 11 Jun, 25 Jul, and 14 Aug.

Attendees will enjoy a three-course meal during the show, which, unlike the meals served up at the on-screen *Fawlty Towers*, is sure to be exceptionally delicious.

Leura Gardens itself is undergoing a fresh new transformation under new ownership and management, which again, will in no way resemble the show.

# CELEBRATING VIP PARTNERS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

Last Thursday, APT Travel Group kicked off the 2024 VIP Awards Dinners, celebrating top travel agents. The first of six events took place at Melbourne's Crown Aviary, honouring over 50 VIP Diamond and Platinum Partners from Victoria and Tasmania. This year introduced two new awards: The McGeary Club for top agencies and the Million Dollar Agent Club for high achieving consultants. With more events ahead, APT Travel Group continues to reward outstanding agents for their dedication and success.



Geelong Travel awarded McGeary Club 2025 and Highest Agency Sales for 2024 and Rita and Helen both received the Million Dollar Club award



Rob McGeary and Scott Ellis (APT)



RACV Travel and Experiences awarded McGeary Club 2025 and VIC/TAS Hall of Fame recipients



Agents from the Helloworld Travel network with their awards



Platinum and Diamond Flight Centre agents celebrating their success



Diamond Agency Flight Centre Cranbourne and Molly (APT)



Platinum Agency and VIC/TAS Group Sales Award Winner Bellarine Travel & Tenneil (APT)



Diamond Agency Lyn McNaught Travel and Josh (APT)

