Travel Daily First with the news

Tuesday 25th Feb 2025



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Silversea reminder

TIME is running out to take advantage of Silversea's offer of \$9,600 per suite discounts on more than 300 cruises.

Sailings on offer include voyages in the Mediterranean, Australia and Antarctica, see the back page



PER PASSENGER **BOOKED BY 31 MAR**

View Tours

Discount portal goes live

COUPON and discount platform Entertainment Group has launched a new travel portal packed with special offers of up to 20% off flights, hotels, train. cruise and tour holidays globally.

Available on the site are offers on travel insurance, rental cars and holiday packages featuring river cruise and luxury rail trips.

Cruise brands featured on the site include Carnival Cruise Line, Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises, Scenic, Ponant, Uniworld, Silversea and more.

Land-based brands available include Rocky Mountaineer, Trafalgar, Collette, Globus, Wendy Wu Tours, Back-Roads Touring,

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news, including our Sustainability page plus a full page from Silversea.



Intrepid Travel, to name a few. Travellers can couple their itineraries with flights from major airlines including Qantas, Virgin Australia, Emirates, Singapore

More than 750,000 hotels also feature on the site from brands including Hyatt, Club Med and TFE Hotels properties.

Airlines, and Air Canada.

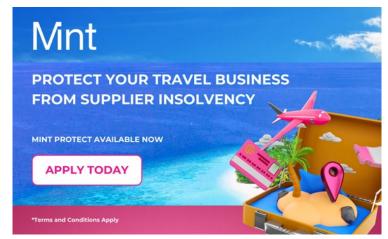
Deals aimed at solo travellers, families, expedition and luxury seekers all feature on the site. which can be accessed for a membership fee of \$70 per year.

Entertainment Group has a long history of supporting charitable causes, with up to 20% of its membership fees being funnelled to help community groups, local schools and sports clubs. ML

VA slashes tickets

VIRGIN Australia has launched a range of discounted fares starting from \$49 one-way in economy (Sydney-Byron Bay). Available until 02 Mar, cheap flight destinations include Cairns, Uluru, Melbourne, Perth,











LST refurb update

FRESH from posting its highestever monthly passenger number for Jan (*TD* 19 Feb), Launceston Airport has revealed more details about future terminal upgrades.

Renovation plans have confirmed more eateries, extra seating, and more terminal space.



Contiki founder passes

THE founder of one of the world's most iconic youth tour operators has passed away.

John Anderson (pictured) founded The Travel Corporation's (TTC) Contiki brand in 1962, a business move he made after successfully funding his own European travel adventure by advertising for 11 other young Australians and Kiwis to join him.

The offer was so well subscribed that he followed up the holiday shortly after, charging a higher price than the debut journey, and the business of Contiki was born.

Announcing the passing overnight, a spokesperson for Contiki said the brand was "deeply saddened" to learn of Anderson's death.

"In 1962, with a beaten-up minibus and a group of young adventurers, he sparked a travel revolution that changed millions of lives," Contiki said.

"John wasn't just a travel



pioneer, he taught us to embrace the unknown, take chances, and explore the world together.

"His spirit lives on in every Contiki trip, every new friendship, and every unforgettable memory made on the road."

In the early 1980s, the Kiwi businessman sold down his investment in Contiki, opening up the opportunity for fellow directors to invest.

After experiencing some financial difficulties, Anderson sold Contiki to TTC in 1989. AB

TruTravel age limit

TRUTRAVELS has implemented a new age limit of 18-45 across all tours, a move designed to cement its role as a youth travel brand.

The operator has also advised it will restore its guaranteed departures policy across 100% of its tours from this month.

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QR claims booking first

QATAR Airways has introduced what it claims to be a "world-first" Al booking experience via its new Al cabin crew Sama, now live on the QVerse app and website.

The carrier has been vocal about its integration of AI in every aspect of its business, and overnight at the Web Summit Qatar 2025, it unveiled the new tool that can make bookings in a more personalised way, guiding customers every step of the way through voice and chat functions.

"With Al-powered, intuitive booking, travellers can simply ask Sama about flights, and she will curate a tailored itinerary," Qatar Airways said.

"Planning a family trip? Just tell Sama and she will suggest familyfriendly destinations and refine the itinerary in real-time.

"Available around the clock, Sama makes booking smarter." Qatar Airways first introduced Sama to the market last month



(*TD* 15 Jan), and in her initial form was billed as providing passengers with a mix of travel tips, personal stories from her layovers, and a behind-the-scenes look at life in the skies year.

However, it is clear that Sama's repertoire is going to expand, as the airline looks to push the limits of Al integration.

In further technology developments, the carrier also unveiled AI menu recommendations, allowing business class passengers to choose meal options before their flight in consort with Sama.

The AI tool can chat through chef specials & diet preferences.

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Minor expands HBX

MINOR Hotels will expand its distribution agreement with B2B marketplace HBX Group beyond Europe and the Americas.

Under the expanded deal, 181 new properties in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Australasia will be added, while HBX will be designated as a preferred partner to optimise operational costs.

Cheaper NZ visits

WEBJET and Tourism New Zealand have partnered up to offer Aussies discounted flights to cities such as Auckland, Christchurch, and Queenstown.

The cheaper airfares are available for travel between Mar and May, with the goal of increasing visitation this autumn.

On sale until 28 Feb, the offer applies to all departure points in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria, with prices starting from \$170 economy one-way - find out more **HERE**.





PERTH

Today's issue of TD is coming to you from Perth, where Virtuoso is about to hold its highly anticipated Australia & New Zealand Forum.

AFTER a range of famils over the weekend and yesterday in Western Australia, the serious business has kicked off today with the start of the Forum proper, being held at The Ritz-Carlton Perth, Elizabeth Quay.

Sessions include professional freediver Adam Sellars, Al expert Dr Jill Schiefelbein, and a leadership workshop with Samantha Gash.

The proceedings will finish up this evening with a cocktail reception sponsored by Tourism WA at COMO The Treasury Postal Hall.







Bali surf fee coming?

TOURISTS could soon have to pay to surf at Nusa Dua in Bali. with talks currently underway to develop the luxury resort as a major surfing destination.

General Manager of The Nusa Dua (ITDC), Made Agus Dwiatmika, revealed that the resort is exploring potentials to develop the popular sport.

"Until now, ITDC has not charged a special fee for surfing activities there - those who do activities only need to report and visitors only need to pay parking fees," he explained.

He also confirmed that The Nusa Dua is providing its staff with language training, including English, at its member properties, and is also in discussion with insurance companies to insure all activities at the resort.

MEANWHILE, Bali's I Gusti Ngurah Rai International Airport served over two million passengers in Jan - up 12% compared to last year, a trend expected to continue throughout the rest of the year.

Moit is off to Tokyo

CAROLINE Moit from MTA Travel has been named the winner of the 'Yokozuna Grand Prize' in Tokyo Tourism Expert's recent e-learning agent incentive.

Moit has won return flights to Tokyo, a two-night stay at The Prince Park Tower Tokyo, and two nights at Tokyo Bay Shiomi Hotel.

TravelManagers' Janelle Beucker took home a four-night stay at Apartment Hotel Mimaru in Tokyo for winning the gold prize.

Ten other agents won additional prizes, including Japanese sake and a souvenir fan.

Starts at 60 makes NSW push



THE Starts at 60 Group has expanded its travel venture with the purchase of Sydney-based agency, Travel Central.

The Queensland-based media, content marketing and travel retail business, which serves the Baby Boomer market, has established a marketplace, travelpackaging team and full-service travel call centre since entering the sector in 2018.

The acquisition of Travel Central will see the group gain access to a loyal database that has been growing since the agency was founded 20 years ago by Rodney and Nuch Pattison.

"This partnership allows us to continue to explore areas where there is a real need for curated products and services," Starts at 60 Travel CEO Wendy Harch said.

"Leisure travel spending in the western world is driven by the retiree traveller, so growing the travel portfolio is an exciting proposition for our team and for our community, which is really vocal about wanting bucket-listquality holidays from a company they trust." JM

Pictured: Wendy Harch; Chris Blow, Starts at 60; Nongnuch Pattison, Travel Central; Rodney Pattison, Travel Central; and Steven Woolston, Starts at 60.

Qantas brand rehab

QANTAS has come out on top in YouGov's Biggest Brand Movers list for Jan, beating other big players like Commonwealth Bank, Instagram, Google, Suzuki, Shopify, and Mastercard.

The monthly reporting series ranks the top 10 brands that have registered the most statistically significant month-on-month upticks in consumer perception, according to 13 key metrics.

Qantas saw gains in six metrics across two categories - brand perception and purchase funnel with YouGov attributing the boost to the carrier's recently enhanced frequent flyer program.





THE war about what to call the Gulf of Mexico in the United States continues to rage, following the Trump Administration's recent call to rebrand the body of water to the Gulf of America.

While most Google Maps users around the world will still see the Gulf of Mexico on the platform, the name will flip to its new 'patriotic' Trump-decreed handle when travellers are in the US.

In response, Mexico is now threatening to take Google to court unless the tech giant changes its name back for American users.

"What Google is doing here is changing the name of the continental shelf of Mexico and Cuba, which has nothing to do with Trump's decree, which applied only to the US continental shelf," President Claudia Sheinbaum said.

"We do not agree with this, and our Foreign Minister has sent a new letter addressing the issue," she added.

Google has defended its decision, stating it had simply enacted "a long-standing practice of applying name changes [on its maps] when they have been updated in official government sources".



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Green hydrogen breakthrough

THE University of Wollongong (UOW) has developed a revolutionary way to produce green hydrogen using far less renewable energy, which could result in enormous benefits for the travel sector.

Green hydrogen stores large quantities of renewable energy, allowing it to be used to decarobise difficultto-electrify sectors of the economy, such as air travel and marine shipping.

"Even with the best batteries, you cannot fly a large passenger aircraft between continents," UOW research team leader Gerhard Swiegers said.

"With green hydrogen, you can do that, by using it to make sustainable aviation fuel," he added.

"It is literally the only solution for powering the hard-to-abate sectors of the economy," Swiegers said.

The UOW team has come up with a "radically different" ultra-efficient electrolyser, a device which can produce green hydrogen from water using renewable energy with 95% efficiency.

Today's typical state-of-theart commercial electrolysers waste about 25% of the renewable energy used in green hydrogen production.

EU MUST GET STRICTER ON SAF: KLM

DUTCH airline KLM has called on the European Union to firm up its policies on Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) which will help promised investments in the sector materialise and progress.

The carrier is a founder of Project SkyPower, an initiative which is actively pushing for policy reforms to boost SAF and e-SAF production.

To date, around 30 projects to advance SAF and e-SAF have been announced, but all are being held back due to uncertainty over EU policy, investment and commercialisation in the sector.

The airline's CEO Marjan Rintel said the country has the expertise and infrastructure to lead the way on SAF development but is being hamstrung by policy inertia.

"Only by working together with government, knowledge institutes and industry can we take significant steps to achieve



cleaner and quieter operations," Rintel said.

Led by KLM Vice President of Sustainability, Karel Bockstael, the Amsterdam-based airline has invested heavily in fleet renewal and incorporating SAF into its future fuel operations.

MEANWHILE, rising construction costs and the lack of a usage mandate in Australia has led British oil giant BP to put plans on hold to develop a biofuel plant south of Perth.

Originally planned to begin production in 2026, the Kwinana Renewable Fuels plant intended to produce SAF and renewable diesel from biomass.

The US\$1 billion project was on track to become the first of five plants worldwide to produce SAF at a rate of 10,000 barrels daily, however uncertainty over the readiness of a local market led to the decision to postpone. ML

Barrington Coast's sustainability milestone

THE Barrington Coast region, on New South Wales' lower mid north coast, has achieved a major sustainability milestone - the ECO Destination Certification through Ecotourism Australia.

This milestone makes the Barrington Coast the fifth destination in NSW, and the 13th in Australia, to receive this distinguished recognition.

"We're incredibly excited to

welcome the Barrington Coast region as our newest certified ECO Destination," Ecotourism Australia Chief Executive Officer Elissa Keenan said.

"Led by the wonderful team at MidCoast Council, this achievement highlights the region's commitment to adhering to global best practice sustainable tourism."

Support for the program is provided by WWF Australia.

Soneva Dialoque

REEF restoration and regeneration experts have united at Soneva Fushi to develop innovative solutions on coral resilience.

The three-day Soneva Dialogue on Coral Reef Restoration & Resilience explored the impact of climate change on coral ecosystems, and highlighted groundbreaking restoration techniques being trialled.



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Solomons to widen appeal

COLLABORATION between the public and private sectors is vital to ensure the success of tourism in the Solomon Islands, according to Minister for Culture & Tourism, Choylin Yim Douglas.

Addressing 150 tourism leaders at the inaugural 'Tourism in Focus' event in Honiara, Douglas (pictured) said the industry has seen "remarkable growth" due to its collaboration and resilience.

The Minister called for private and public investment in product development and diversification, infrastructure investment, accommodation, marketing, capacity and training pipelines.

"Our government recognises the immense potential of tourism to stimulate economic

SIA profit takes off

SINGAPORE Airlines Group (SIA) has posted its most profitable quarter on record in terms of passengers carried, despite more aggressive competition eating into yields.

The company ended the period S\$629 million (A\$739 million) in front, helped further along by a 9.8% drop in fuel costs.

Overall group-wide profits closed 3.3% ahead year-on-year, while non-fuel expenditure was higher than the prior period, slightly denting operating profits.

Net profits were also boosted by a one-off non-cash accounting gain stemming from completion of Air India's merger with Vistara, in which SIA held a major stake.



growth, create meaningful jobs and improve livelihoods for our people," Minister Douglas said.

"To demonstrate our commitment to this vision, the government has significantly increased its budget support this year to the tourism industry.

"This increased funding is strategically allocated to trigger growth in targeted areas and to transform the sector in line with our bold ambition of achieving 100,000 visitor arrivals by 2035," Douglas commented.

"Through continued collaboration, we can build a sustainable future for the Solomon Islands' tourism industry," she added. ML

CX's sporting chance

CATHAY Pacific has partnered with Travel Partner of Kai Tak Sports Park (KTSP) to develop mega events to attract tourists.

The Hong Kong carrier said it will work closely with KTSP to delivering world-class sporting, cultural and entertainment experiences to a global audience.

Agents design their WA



TOURISM Western Australia has concluded a range of 'Design your Day' famils with advisors and suppliers prior to the Virtuoso Australia and New Zealand Forum in Perth/Boorloo.

After several pre-famils that started on Fri, 107 Virtuoso delegates split into nine groups and headed in all directions, both within Perth and its surrounds.

Delegates were treated to journeys that included a trip tp to Rottnest Island with a sevencourse seafood cruise, a walking tour of Fremantle, taking in lunch at Gibney in Cottesloe, a Perth city experience that featured a Diamond masterclass at the Perth Mint, and many more.

From there, it was off to Sandalford Wines in the Swan Valley, the oldest wine region in Western Australia.

The winery's history goes all the way back to 1840, when Queen Victoria granted John Septimus Roe, Western Australia's first Surveyor General, 4,000 acres of land in honour of his 57 years of service to the Commonwealth.

He named the iconic WA property Sandalford, and the business is today owned by the Prendiville family.

After Sandalfords, the group made its way to Mandoon Estate to try its hand at wine blending. With the famil component

complete, the conference sessions, networking and workshops start in earnest tomorrow morning at the Ritz-Carlton Perth.

Pictured about to partake in some WA plonk is: Andrew Thwaites, Coral Expeditions; Kieran Roberts, Gungahlin Travel Associates; Karen Fedorko Sefer, Sea Song Turkey; Mel Johnson, Tourism Western Australia; Svetlana Jovanovic, The Unique Tourism Collection. DF

LE hub moves on UK

LUXURY Escapes is bringing its Agent Hub platform to the UK after its "hugely successful" launch in Australia in Mar last year, which has already seen more than 6,000 agents join (TD 23 Apr 2024).

To support the expansion, Luxury Escapes has appointed Claire Bradley as Wholesale Business Development Manager.

Bradley has more than 20 years' industry experience, having previously worked with Hawaiian Airlines and Brand USA in Sydney.

The Agent Hub offers commissionable rates for Luxury Escapes' limited time exclusive offers and exclusive cruise and tour products at market-leading rates, as well as marketing tools and flexible payment options.

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MONEY

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

AU\$1 = U\$\$0.634

AS THE price of gold hits an all-time high, there are nerves and confusion over the AUD performance against the USD.

A five-day "losing streak" on the ASX ended with a rally in global tech stocks which helped the AUD regain lost ground.

Wall Street fell hard over the weekend, with US business confidence declining rapidly. Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.634
UK	£0.502
NZ	\$1.107
Euro	€0.606
Japan	¥95.01
Thailand	ß21.25
China	¥4.596
South Africa	11.652
Canada	\$0.904
Crude oil	US\$74.78

Museum open date

AFTER more than two decades in planning and construction, the Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo will open in full on 03 Jul 2025.

Following its soft opening last year (TD 22 Oct 2024), visitors will now be able to see the museum's entire collection, touted as the world's largest archeological museum dedicated to a single civilisation.

Among more than 100,000 artefacts inside will be treasures from King Tutankhamun, ancient hand-painted hieroglyphs and a collection of mummified remains.

Busselton resort renewed



THE Sebel Busselton has reopened following an extensive \$6.1 million refurbishment of its 59 club apartments, reception, on-site lounge and pizza cafe.

Situated on Geographe Bay around 220km south of Perth, the Accor Vacation Club property now boasts upgraded amenities, as well as a new poolside pizzeria.

The club's studio apartments have been fully refreshed with new bedroom carpets, updated kitchenettes, and renewed bathrooms with modern tiling, vanities, and fixtures, in addition to new curtains, wall-mounted bedheads, bedside tables, lamps. and living room furniture.

The two- and three-bedroom apartments also received a makeover, which saw kitchens upgraded with modern joinery, stone benchtops, splashbacks, appliances, and feature lighting, while living areas were enhanced with new furniture.

The property partnered with the local Lions Club to donate a range of items from the refurbishment, including electrical appliances, lighting, bedding, furniture, and decor items, which were repurposed for community use.

Guests will also notice new Nespresso machines, 65-inch smart TVs, and new washing machines and drvers.

Additionally, the reception area underwent a total transformation and now features modern pod-style stone-topped desks, new pendant lighting, upgraded flooring, and refreshed decor.

"Through this project, we aimed to create spaces that bring the beauty of Busselton indoors, offering guests a fully immersive experience of the destination," said The Sebel Busselton General Manager, Sandy Crothers. JM

Burnie wants bigger

INFRASTRUCTURE upgrades to support larger aircraft will be developed at Burnie Airport through a \$365,000 injection from the Tasmanian Government.

Announced by Minister for Infrastructure, Kerry Vincent, the funding will be aimed at ensuring Burnie can cater to QantasLink's Q400 (TD 25 Jun 2024) turboprop aircraft, which have more seats than the retiring Q300 fleet.

Work on the upgrades at Burnie is expected to begin this year.

US measles outbreak

HEALTH officials in Texas and New Mexico say they are tracking an outbreak of measles that has so far climbed to an "underestimated" 100 cases.

According to the BBC, the outbreaks coincide with a rise in anti-vaccine sentiment relating to a measles, mumps and rubella jab given in childhood.

Measles is especially dangerous to pregnant women and can cause pneumonia, neurological impairment, hearing loss, and even death in some cases.

Lufthansa India link

AIR India has signed its second major codeshare partnership in less than a week, joining forces with Lufthansa Group carrier, Austrian Airlines.

The new deal expands Air India's long-standing cooperation with the wider Lufthansa Group and will now cover nearly 100 routes across India, Europe, Australia and the Americas.

Across the four airlines, 60 routes have been added to the deal, covering flights with Lufthansa (to or from Frankfurt), Swiss International Air Lines (to or from Zurich) and Austrian Airlines (to or from Vienna).

Air India's latest signing follows a new unilateral codeshare deal with Virgin Australia (TD 18 Feb) which covers AI flights into Australia and onward to 16 cities.



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