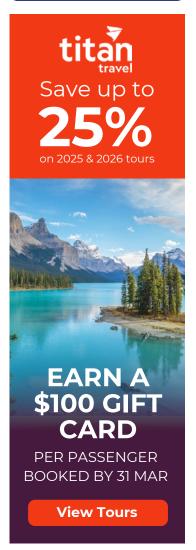
Travel Daily First with the news

Thursday 27th Feb 2025



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news, including our Business Events News page, plus a product profile from **Exoticca** and a full page from **Designer Journeys.**



Qantas eyes \$2b hat-trick

QANTAS is on track to achieve an underlying profit before tax of over \$2 billion for the third consecutive financial year.

The carrier posted a \$1.38 billion underlying profit for the six months to 31 Dec, representing a healthy \$140 million uptick on the same six-month period last year (TD breaking news).

Statutory profit also increased by a solid margin on the previous corresponding period, up by \$54 million to \$923 million, while revenue also enjoyed a bump to \$12.12 billion from \$11.12 billion.

The impressive results were driven largely by increased capacity in the domestic market via Jetstar, modest growth in earnings on international flights, and a strong showing from its loyalty division.

Qantas Loyalty posted an underlying EBIT result of \$255 million for the half, with membership reaching 17 million,



and an 11% growth in active members compared to last year.

There was also a 10% rise in points earned for the period through financial services, credit cards, retail and insurance, while 6% more points were redeemed, which Qantas chalked up to its Classic Flight Rewards category.

In fleet developments, Qantas confirmed some of its ageing short-haul planes will be upgraded, with plans to fit 42 Boeing 737-800s with next generation seats in business and economy, as well as larger overhead lockers.

The move is in line with issues faced by Qantas, and other airlines, regarding the delay in receiving new aircraft. AB

Exoticca visits SA

VACATION package company Exoticca is today showcasing its 10-day 'Cape & Kruger Explorer' tour, which takes travellers through South Africa's vibrant cities and untamed wildness.

Head to page nine for more information on the tour.







Qantas is giving 15 lucky agents the chance to win corporate box seats to Oasis Live 25' in Sydney, including flights and accommodation. Plus, in partnership with VisitBritain, the top five selling agents will get to experience the ultimate UK adventure.

Find out more









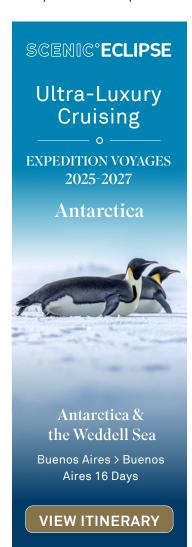
Travel Daily Learn more about Italy with Travel Daily Training Academy

Click here to discover

Turkish Holidays in Oz

HBX Group has partnered with travel package building brand PerfectStay and Turkish Airlines to launch Turkish Airlines Holidays into the Australian market.

Travellers will be able to bundle TK flights from SYD and MEL with HBX's portfolio of land products.



Virtuoso feels optimistic

SEVENTY five percent of Virtuoso members in Australia and New Zealand are feeling optimistic about the future, according to the luxury network's *Global Pulse Survey* of members shared at the Virtuoso Forum which formally wrapped up in Perth last night.

While the result is encouraging, the figure is slightly below the global average for the network, which sits at 80%, thanks largely to the UK & Ireland recording 90% of members feeling optimistic about their travel businesses.

Of the other western countries, the percentage of members that were optimistic sat at 84% for continental Europe, 81% for the US, and 72% for Canada.

"[Australia] is running close to global average," Michael Londregan, Senior VP of Global Operations at Virtuoso said, adding there are plenty of reasons for the local market to continue its outlook. "People ask me about confidence in the network - already for bookings one to two years out as a network, we are 33% up, which means the long-term bookings are very, very, solid," Londregan added.

He also noted that Virtuoso data showed bookings over \$50,000 more than one or two years out were up by 51%, suggesting consumers are looking to get in early and lock in luxury plans.

The global average booking window is now 125 days, a 6% year-on-year increase, while the average booking window for Australia and New Zealand travellers is slightly greater at 131 days, up 4% on 2023. *DF*

Vietjet links NZ, bro

VIETJET is set to connect Vietnam with New Zealand, offering flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Auckland from Sep, operating four times weekly.

New Members Welcome

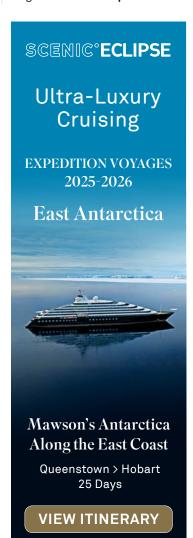


TRAVELLERS CHOICE

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A Designer's Island

THREE top-performing agents and one rising star can earn a spot on an exciting new 'Designer Island' incentive from bespoke itinerary brand Designer Journeys, which includes five nights at Bali's cliff-top resort, The Ungasan - details on p8.







TRAVEL TECH SPECIAL REPORT

JOIN US ON A DEEP-DIVE INTO THE LATEST TRENDS IN TRAVEL TECHNOLOGY.

New Norfolk agency

NORFOLK Island travel specialist, Burnt Pine Travel, has announced the launch of Norfolk Island Travel Company, offering holiday packages that showcase the best of the destination.

See the new website HERE, which features a travel planner.



Not worried by Aussie safaris



SOME might view recent moves by brands to open safari-style accommodation in Australia as a threat to African operators, but one man who does not see it that way is Southern Cross Safaris Managing Director Glen Rawlings.

Speaking to Travel Daily at Bench Africa's recent 2025 brochure launch in Sydney on Tue (TD 26 Feb), the chief of the brand's parent company is supremely confident that African visitation from Aussies will continue to grow, even if there are more domestic alternatives.

"We're not worried at all because with us, you've got the real deal," Rawlings explained.

"Bench has been around for 56 years, for Southern Cross it's 68 years, and we are the experts with the boots on the ground.

"All of our reservation team have lived in Africa, they breathe Africa and know it so well - so we're not worried."

While Abercrombie & Kent has

flagged increased investment in its portfolio of safari camps and lodges in Africa (TD 06 Jan), the operator has also confirmed the opening of a luxury wilderness lodge in Western Australia from 2027 (TD 05 Feb).

The property will have a distinct First Nations appeal, however it will also leverage the success of its safari-style lodges in Africa in the design principles.

Meanwhile, Journey Beyond has recently inked a management deal for the Monarto Safari Resort in South Australia (TD 23 Jan), a property that provides its guests with access to the neighbouring Wild Africa precinct featuring African wildlife.

Rawlings clearly does not perceive these properties as a threat, and his confidence is no doubt buoyed by the surge in sales numbers since 2023, which has Bench confident that 2025 will the biggest year in terms of bookings for quite some time. AB

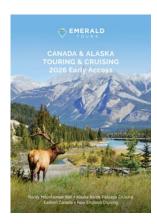
QR live on Air Tickets

HELLOWORLD Travel's Air Tickets has confirmed Qatar Airways NDC connection is now live, with agents now able to access NDC content from the carrier, including the Air Tickets 'Shop, Book and Ticket' which provides a range of fare classes.



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Chalmers ticks VA deal with conditions

THE Federal Govt has approved Qatar Airways' 25% stake in Virgin Australia (TD breaking news), more than four months after the Australian carrier made the announcement (TD 01 Oct 2024).

Treasurer Jim Chalmers (pictured) confirmed the Foreign Investment Review Board has approved QR's investment, but that the purchase will be subject to strict conditions around Australian board representation.

Of chief concern to the government is ensuring the checks and balances at the executive level are in place to protect Australian customer data.

It is not currently known how many Aussie executives will sit on the Virgin Australia board after the closure of the 25% sale.

"The proposal will deliver more flights for Australians and strengthen competition in the aviation sector," Chalmers said.

The announcement is another



major step in VA's plan to return to international operations from Jun, and follows the ACCC issuing draft approval for its Qatar Airways alliance earlier this month (TD 18 Feb).

VA will now wait for a decision from the International Air Services Commission to be approved for capacity allocation on the route between Australia and Doha, with submissions from stakeholders being broadly supportive of the proposal.

A final ACCC decision is expected in late Mar or early Apr. With the carrier now very likely to jump through all of the hoops required, flights from Sydney,

which are already on sale - look set to go ahead as scheduled.

Flights from Melbourne to Doha are scheduled to commence a little later from Dec.

Virgin Australia CEO Javne Hrdlicka declared the news today as the start of a "new era".

"This is a major win for Australian consumers, who are already benefiting from more choice and greater value when travelling to Europe, the Middle East and Africa since our flights went on sale," Hrdlicka said.

"Domestically, we are... performing stronger than at any other point in our 24-year history, and being backed by one of the world's largest airlines now gives us the scale and access to industry expertise which will support continued growth."

Bain Capital, Virgin Group, and Queensland Investment Corporation will retain shareholdings in VA. AB



Window

WHILE France may be known as the fashion capital of the world, the country may also be on its way to gaining quite a different reputation among cheese lovers.

Juraflore, a French cheese company, set a world record recently by cooking up a whopping 2,177kg of cheese fondue at Fort des Rousses in the village of Les Rousses.

The massive copper cauldron used for the attempt was filled with 40 wheels of comte cheese, flavoured with Chardonnay and Savagnin white wines, 2kg of garlic, 1.5kg of white pepper and about 55kg of cornstarch. Juraflore also bested an

unofficial record set by Swiss cheese company La Chaux-de-Fonds in 2009.



It's time for your clients to dream big - the world is on sale.

Whether they want to see the Big Five on an African Safari or wander through a bamboo forest in Japan, their dream tour is on sale now until 28 February.

Secure your spot on our Peaks of Europe famil! Every Collette booking you make until 30 April 2025 brings you closer to securing your spot on this October 2025 Famil.

Download our toolkit for sale terms and conditions and assets to help you promote the sale to your clients.

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Intrepid growing in Asia

INTREPID Travel Managing Director of Global Operations and Asia, Natalie Kidd, will expand her responsibilities under a revised leadership structure to drive the company's Asia growth objectives.

The 19-year Intrepid veteran will add oversight of Destination Management Companies (DMC) Sales to her existing role leading Asian and Global Operations.

Kidd (pictured) will continue to be based in Sydney in her new role and will apply her extensive knowledge of the Asian travel sector to help Intrepid reach a target of 600,000 travellers in the region by 2030.

To support the effort, Intrepid has created two new regional general manager roles to oversee a strong operational focus.

Filling these roles are Ashish Verma, based in Delhi, who will take on the North and South Asia territory of China, Nepal, and India, while Mike Stewart will be based in Bangkok and oversee Cambodia, Thailand, Indonesia, and Malaysia, and each country will retain a Country Manager.

Kidd said she is excited to lead

Get the Inside running

INSIDE Travel Group has launched a \$50,000 agent incentive program, offering the chance to win a free land tour.

One lucky advisor will win an adventure to any of InsideJapan or InsideAsia's destinations, which is able to be experienced with their family or friends.

Every booking made this year will give each advisor a new entry and more chances to win.

InsideJapan is also offering 10 exclusive spots on its award-winning small group tours, in addition to the grand prize.

"The trade is massively important for Inside Travel Group and essential to help drive growth," Global Trade Manager Gabo Quiros said.

CLICK HERE for more information on the program.



Intrepid's momentum in Asia and support its next growth phase.

"The new structural changes position us to strengthen our operations, support our teams, and continue delivering meaningful travel experiences across the region," Kidd said.

"I'm looking forward to working closely with our leaders to drive sustainable growth and create new opportunities as we work towards our 2030 goals," she said.

Quickest to Europe

AUSTRALIANS flying to Europe can now connect to a range of destinations in only two hours, after Air India unveiled a newly optimised network via Delhi.

The carrier has launched a new 'Via' campaign for Air India's European network, while also spruiking India as a stopover hub.

This is achieved with connecting flights departing from the same terminal, a move which also allows business class, Maharaja Club and eligible Star Alliance loyalty members to maximise their lounge time between flights.

Air India flies daily to both Sydney and Melbourne, with service times to complement 24 weekly flights to Heathrow, 14 to Paris and Frankfurt, and daily flights to Amsterdam and Milan.

"India's geographical advantage and impressive airport infrastructure, combined with Air India's robust route network, offer convenient one-stop access for travellers from the East to West and vice versa," said Air India Chief Commercial Officer, Nipun Aggarwal.



Discover our River Cruise Special Report

Click here

A finely designed experience



BESPOKE itinerary builder Designer Journeys will reward three top-selling agents and one rising star as part of its first-ever agent incentive.

Dubbed 'Designer Island by Designer Journeys', the top prize will see the four agents and their travel partner whisked off to one of Bali's most exclusive cliffside resorts, The Ungasan, for a fournight stay, with all meals and wine included.

Also featured during the trip will be a two-hat fine dining experience, complete with top-shelf cuisine and cocktails.

Guests will also enjoy exclusive access to Sundays Beach Club located within the resort, and includes reserved beachfront seating, VIP service, as well as sunset cocktails.

Designer Journeys will put together a tailored itinerary with local experiences to immerse winners in Bali's cultural highlights, in addition to trips to discover some of the region's hidden gems.

Outside of the top-performing agents during the incentive period, the Rising Star will be chosen based on recording the highest overall TTV for the cohort of agents who have signed up in the last 12 months.

The incentive has now gone live and runs through to 30 Nov, with winners being announced in Dec 2025 and the trip departing in May 2026.

Every confirmed booking will earn agents an opportunity to appear on a leader board and win the major prize.

Agents must secure at least five fully paid bookings to be eligible to win, with the top three based on TTV sales selected.

The Rising Star opportunity is open to agents who signed up with Designer Journeys after 01 Jul 2024. *ML*

Pictured: Bali's exclusive cliff-top resort, The Ungasan.



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Geelong team

NYAAL Banyul Geelong
Convention and Event Centre
is ramping up recruitment
ahead of its opening in 2026.
Venue operator Victorian
Convention and Event Trust
(VCET) will open applications
for 12 new roles over the
coming months, aiming to
build a local leadership team

Supporting the recently appointed GM Rick Aylett (*TD* 31 Oct 2024), the roles will include executive chef, event and venue operations manager, marketing specialist and sales executives.

for the centre.

"While we'll be benefiting from VCET's 30-years of experience, as a local team, we'll be taking on a 'start-up' mentality," Aylett said, adding the focus is on enthusiasm and creativity.

BEA Planners Guide

BUSINESS Events Adelaide (BEA) has updated its Planners Guide, which offers detailed information on Adelaide's venues and services for business event organisers worldwide.

The 2025 guide builds on last year's design, with a fly-through of Adelaide's innovation, cultural and business event precincts integrated with member venues.

It also offers sample itineraries for corporate incentive groups and details of Adelaide's sustainability credentials.

View the guide online HERE.

MEA'S MAJOR COLLABS FOR '25

MEETINGS & Events Australia (MEA) has announced Lateral Events as the 2025 MEA Mentor Program sponsoring partner.

The partnership will support the professional development of 50 mentees in 2025, who will each be paired with a mentor to develop their industry knowledge, skills, and capabilities.

For the first time, the program will include a face-to-face group mentoring session at the 2025 MEA National Conference in Jun.

"Lateral have a strong connection to mentoring the next generation of event professionals and we value this opportunity to contribute to the industry's longevity through connecting tomorrow's event managers with today's industry legends," said Megan Peters, CEO and Director of Lateral Events.

Registrations for mentees and



mentors opened yesterday, with applications closing 31 Mar and the program commencing 28 Apr.

MEANWHILE, MEA has also partnered with EventsAir, which will be the exclusive sponsor of the Event of the Year Awards at the MEA National Awards 2024 and the MEA State/Territory Awards 2024.

The national awards night will be held in Sydney on 18 Jun, culminating in a gala dinner at Sofitel Sydney Wentworth on the final night of the 2025 MEA National Conference. EventsAir will sponsor the nine awards within the Event of the Year Awards category, as well as extending its support of the Event of the Year Awards at the MEA Awards 2024 in each state and territory across Australia in May.

"We understand the work that goes into delivering exceptional events, and we're honoured to support the industry's best and brightest through the Event of the Year Awards," said EventsAir Chief Customer Officer. Renee Elliott. JM

Pictured: The Lateral team celebrate the honour.

Visit Anaheim gears up for big 2025

VISIT Anaheim in California is preparing for a big year of business events, having confirmed 160 conventions and meetings for 2025.

The pipeline is projected to generate more than US\$1.4 billion (A\$2.2b) in economic impact for the local community.

Visit Anaheim was at AIME earlier this month in Melbourne, where VP of Tourism and International Sales, Adriel Terbeche, provided the update.

"We see an enormous opportunity in the Australian and New Zealand markets.

"With great air capacity connecting Australian cities to LAX, and the variety of event spaces available throughout Anaheim, coupled with Aussies' and Kiwis' love of Southern California...Anaheim is certain to provide an event and experience that will be talked about for years to come."

A MICE retreat

THE Lane Retreat in the Hunter Valley is offering MICE organisers a bonus incentive and a special reward when they book their next corporate retreat.

Event planners who book 10 rooms or \$10,000 total spend will be rewarded with a two-night complimentary stay including breakfast at The Lane Retreat for them to enjoy at their own leisure.

Learn more HERE.

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

LAUNCHING 10 MARCH



REGISTER FREE

page 6



APPOINTMENTS

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Grant Robertson has expanded his responsibilities with Rail Europe, promoted to Regional Manager for Australia and New Zealand. With a strong background in aviation, car rental and rail, Robertson has developed a strong and respected reputation for strengthening industry partnerships and driving awareness of rail throughout Europe.

Luxury Escapes has bolstered its travel industry team, naming Claire **Bradley** as its new Business Development Manager for its Agent Hub. Previously working with Hawaiian Airlines, Bradley brings an extensive pedigree to her new role, which will champion Luxury Escapes product and experiences for agents to book via its Agent Hub.

Holding more than 20 years in travel including frontline consultant and tour guide, Jade Mannix has joined Helloworld Travel as new Wholesale Account Manager Victoria. Mannix's remit will include Viva Holidays, ReadyRooms, Cruiseco and Creative Cruising across Melbourne's east.

Independent agent network Envoyage has expanded its sales team, welcoming Pill Attlee as its new Business Development Partner. Attlee brings 15 years in travel and tourism to her new role and has a strong track record in building industry partnerships. Envoyage has also promoted Stephanie Beale to Business Improvement Manager.

Assisting in the PR Campaigns and Events team, Destination NSW has welcomed Victoria Goddard to the team. Goddard joins the government tourism body from a recent stint handling PR and Comms for tourism management and marketing body, Gate 7.

Affectionately known as 'Howie', Ovolo Hotels will say farewell to its Group Director of Marketing and Communications, Stephen Howard, after seven years in the role. Howard has opted to take time to focus on family and health before exploring future opportunities.

Bringing over two decades in hospitality including a stint working in London, Carolyn Smith has been appointed as the new General Manager at The Tasman, A Luxury Collection Resort in Hobart. Smith takes up her new post having spent the past four years as the opening GM at Courtyard by Marriott Flagstaff Gardens in Melbourne.

Journey Beyond has welcomed Andreas Huck as General Manager for the Monarto Safari Resort, which opens 28 May 2025. A seasoned hospitality professional, Huck joins from Crowne Plaza Hobart, where he worked for more than five years..

The Westin Resort Nusa Dua Bali has appointed Marco Di Pasquale as its new Hotel Manager. Bringing over 25 years in luxury hotel management to his new role, Di Pasquale brings extensive culinary expertise, having been born and raised in Italy's renowned Falermo wine region, refining his craft under Alain Ducasse and Gordon Ramsay.



CLIA heads back to Brent St



TALENTED singers and dancers from Sydney's Brent Street performing arts school will once again take centre stage at next week's CLIA Cruise Industry Awards at The Star.

Fresh from performing on America's Got Talent in the US, dozens of performers will pay tribute to cruise ship entertainment and those who perform on lines worldwide.

The group (pictured) will recreate one of their routines from the hit US show, while musical theatre star Ryan Gonzalez and winner of So You Think You Can Dance Australia Talia Fowler will dazzle crowds.

This year marks the third time Brent Street has performed at the CLIA Awards, which in 2025 is

Yuk it up with Uni

UNIWORLD has announced American actress Rachel Dratch as the celebrity host of its exclusive Women's Only Cruise, set to sail later this year.

Dratch is best known for her role on Saturday Night Live from 1999 to 2006.

headline sponsored by Visit Qatar. "Brent Street is a leading source of stand-out performers for cruise lines around the world and the talent they produce has a big impact internationally," said CLIA Australia MD, Joel Katz. ML

Accor reserves Uber

GUESTS staying at Accor hotels in Australia and New Zealand will be able to book an Uber service up to 90 days in advance via a new agreement between the two.

The tie-up allows guests to access Uber Reserve through the ALL.com website and ALL app.

The service also allows guests staying at Accor's Sydney Olympic Park properties to plan their journeys to & from major events.

Accor Chief Operating Officer, Adrian Williams, said the pact offers guests a new level of convenience and certainty.

Membership of ALL.com is free.



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The ultimate luxury famil is here and you could be on your way to Bali's most exclusive clifftop resort,

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- A luxurious two-hat fine dining experience plus unlimited daily food & wine to indulge in worldclass cuisine and cocktails
- VIP Beach Club Access to Sundays Beach Club, complete with reserved beachfront seating, cocktails at sunset and VIP service
- A tailored Designer Journeys local experience, immersing you in Bali's hidden gems and cultural highlights and more!

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Scan the QR or visit www.designerislandbydesignerjourneys.com to find out how you could earn your spot on Designer Island.









Cape & Kruger Explorer

This 10-day adventure through South Africa's vibrant cities and untamed wilderness offers your customers an unforgettable blend of wildlife, culture and gastronomy. From the thrilling game drives in Kruger National Park, to the vibrant neighborhoods of Johannesburg and the rich history of Cape town, this is the ultimate way to experience this diverse nation.

Johannesburg's vibrant neighborhoods

This adventure begins after touching down in Johannesburg, the country's largest city. Your travellers will have the chance to immerse themselves into its dynamic atmosphere, catching live music performances, exploring trendy bars and world-class restaurants.

When leaving the city, they'll witness the country's striking landscapes unfold, transitioning from Johannesburg's urban energy to the tranquil Highveld plateau.

Kruger National Park's wildlife wonders

The highlight of this journey is an unforgettable safari experience in South Africa's most famous reserve: the iconic Southern Circle of Kruger National Park. Here, travellers will embark on a fullday 4x4 game drive, encountering lions, rhinos, and a vast array of exotic wildlife in their natural habitat.

For those looking to dive deeper into the wilderness, optional activities include guided bush walks, bird-watching excursions, and a scenic picnic amid the breathtaking African landscape.

Cape Town's rich history

The last part of your travellers' trip will take them to the vibrant and picturesque Cape Town, known for its stunning natural beauty, diverse cultures, and rich history. They will take the cableway to the top of Table Mountain and behold one of Africa's most breathtaking views:

an incredible sight across the city, coastline and surrounding landscapes. With their adventure drawing to a close, they'll have the opportunity to visit Cape Town's renowned museums, stroll through the country's flagship botanical gardens, and embark on an excursion to the historic Cape Winelands—home to world-class vineyards and exceptional wines.

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