

Riverside eyes familis

GERMAN cruise line Riverside Cruises has revealed it plans to offer more famil opportunities for Australian agents this year.

A spokesperson for the company told *Travel Daily* it is also hoping to have a number of other trade initiatives for 2025.

The brand confirmed its partnership with Luxury Escapes will not change, despite appointing Susie Coughlin as its Commercial Sales & Marketing head in ANZ (*TD* 10 Feb).

Webjet settles with ACCC

WEBJET'S marketing division and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) will lodge submissions to the Federal Court calling for a \$9 million fine for alleged deceptive historical marketing practices (*TD* breaking news).

In an ASX filing today, Webjet said it has reached agreement with the competition watchdog on a range of measures, including publishing a corrective notice on its website for 60 days detailing its fee structure both for bookings and guaranteeing airfare prices.

The OTA will also contribute \$100,000 to court costs incurred by the ACCC and implement an agreed Australian Consumer Law compliance program.

The out-of-court settlement relates to failing to disclose compulsory fees of up to \$32.95 during the booking process or in advertising promoting minimum airfares across social media, email, its website and mobile app.

Webjet said it has "always prided itself on its high levels of trust with all customers

and stakeholders and has fully cooperated and positively engaged with the ACCC to resolve this matter".

The Court will now consider and make orders in relation to the proposed penalty at a hearing on a date to be fixed. *ML*

See Room-Res Island

EXCLUSIVE

AGENTS can win one of nine places on an exciting three-night famil to The Naka Island in Phuket as part of a new trade promotion launched by Room-Res.

Now live, eight places on the famil will be decided by sales volumes, with a Room-Res Island Party scheduled for 28 Mar, which will take place at the company's headquarters in Sydney.

The event will see 20 specially invited participants from around Australia compete in "a well-known childhood classic" game to determine the final winner.

Each of the nine winning agents and their travel companions will be whisked away to The Naka Island, a Luxury Collection Resort in Phuket for four days of luxury, relaxation and activities.

The agent-only wholesaler has also selected five random islands from its product range, with the first agent to book and pay for a hotel on each island instantly winning a place on the famil.

Three of the four remaining spots will go to Room-Res.com's top-selling agents of Naka Island, Marriott International hotels and overall product on Room-Res.com during the incentive period.

Bonus rewards are also on offer throughout the campaign.

Topdeck is inclusive

TOPDECK Travel has introduced a non-binary option to its booking process, as well as mixed-room product that supports the LGBTQIA+ community and gives agents more tools to cater to the needs of diverse travellers.

Guests can now select the non-binary 'X' as their passport gender, and new mixed accommodation is on offer across all trip styles - moving beyond the traditional male and female allocations.

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Garuda gives more

GARUDA Indonesia will ramp up frequencies on services between Melbourne and Jakarta from Jul, with a boost to Sydney services coming later this year.

More details on [page eight](#).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of travel news, including our **Corporate Update**, plus a product profile from **Garuda Indonesia**.

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More class actions against cruise likely: ALA

EXCLUSIVE

RECENT class action settlements in Australia against major cruise brands could pave the way for more passengers to take similar legal action in the future, a travel lawyer has warned the industry.

Earlier this month, passengers received almost double the value of their cruise tickets because the P&O voyage they boarded in 2017 was forced to abandon a port call due to wild weather.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* this week, Australian Lawyers Alliance spokesperson Victoria Roy said the \$2.4 million in damages awarded to guests who sailed into a cyclone could mark a flurry of new legal cases in Australia.

"Whilst the *Pacific Aria* 'cruise from hell' has recently settled without the court ruling on liability, it again illustrates how cruise lines must abide by Australian Consumer Law (ACL)



despite the wording of their terms and conditions," Roy said.

"I therefore expect that disgruntled cruise passengers will be encouraged by the combined results of the *Pacific Aria* and Moore v Scenic Tours class actions, and more claims will follow to enforce passengers' ACL rights," she added.

Roy also argued the terms and conditions put in place by cruise lines usually stipulate that itineraries "aren't guaranteed", but that may not count for much when ACL is breached.

This was demonstrated in a case against Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours in 2023, which paid out millions of dollars to aggrieved guests when river cruises more

than a decade ago in Europe were not able to go ahead due to the flooding of waterways.

"Australian courts found in the Moore v Scenic Tours class action - where Scenic essentially gave passengers a coach tour instead of a river cruise because of bad weather - that when a cruise line knows that external circumstances will have a significant impact on the cruise, but fails to notify passengers in advance, this is a breach of the ACL," Roy said.

"Claims essentially come down to an assessment of whether the cruise services were provided in accordance with the ACL.

"The contractual terms, such as a disclaimer that itineraries aren't guaranteed, are a starting point in that assessment but are not conclusive," she concluded.

Scenic declined to comment on the warning, while Carnival did not respond by publishing. AB

Adv tourism review

THE Outdoor Council of Australia (OCA) has asked Deputy Chair of the National Centre for Outdoor Risk and Readiness, David Marsden, to lead a review of the Australian Adventure Activity Standards (AAAS) & Good Practice Guides (GPG).

The review will ensure industry guidelines are keeping up with expected practice in the outdoor adventure space, with Marsden to engage with outdoor tourism stakeholders across the country.

From Mar, Marsden will canvass thoughts on the current AAAS and GPGs; provide recommendations for changes to the existing AAAS and GPGs; ensure inclusivity and accessibility across a broad range of adventure activities, and more.

"The OCA is committed to ensuring adventure activity standards remain practical, relevant, and aligned with industry needs," said Neil Le Febvre, Chair of the OCA.

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Window Seat

THREE Kiwi tourists in Rome are in trouble after they decided to take a dip in the Trevi Fountain after a long evening of drinking.

When police escorted the men away for questioning, one broke free and decided to take another swim in the fountain, much to the chagrin of shocked onlookers.

The tourists were slapped with a A\$830 fine and banned from visiting the famous Italian landmark for life.

About a dozen tourists are fined for taking illegal swims in the fountain each year, according to Roman police.

Aqua is now tastier

AQUA Expeditions has announced its 2025 chef-hosted sailings, which feature innovative menus inspired by each destination's culture using premium local produce.

Australian chef and restaurateur Benjamin Cross will join guests on board *Aqua Blu's* Indonesian expeditions in Aug, serving up over 160 exclusively crafted recipes inspired by Indonesian, European, and Mediterranean palettes.

Additionally, Peruvian chef Pedro Miguel will treat guests to his rainforest-to-table cuisine on board *Aqua Nera* voyages to the Peruvian Amazon in Jun and Sep.

TC brushes up on AI trends



ARTIFICIAL intelligence is something of a language in its own right and one that Travellers Choice is eager to speak fluently.

Executives from the member-owned agency network recently attended a full-day AI bootcamp to learn more about the technology rapidly changing the world in which we live.

The session was conducted by technology educator Sami Makelainen, who works to ensure Australian businesses are adapting to our digital future.

Topics included the nature of AI, current and potential applications, and regulatory issues around the emerging tech.

Travellers Choice Managing Director, Christian Hunter, said the session was aimed at giving the company's leaders a foothold in AI and how it can be harnessed to improve life for members and in turn, their clients.

Hunter said prior to the session, the group had been exposed to AI at different levels.

"Some had undertaken training and engaged in AI research initiatives outside of travel,

others had only encountered the technology sporadically," he said.

"By bringing everyone up to the same speed, as a board, we are now better equipped to identify the risks and opportunities that AI presents to our company, and make strategic decisions based on that enhanced knowledge."

The bootcamp preceded the annual strategy session, which this year took place in Perth, during which the group reviewed its objectives for 2025. *ML*

Sami Makelainen is pictured above second from right with the Travellers Choice board, consisting of Benjamin Apsey, Naome Burdon, Greg Close, Christian Hunter, Mark Brady, Trent Bartlett, and Jacqui Wilson-Smith.

Pan Pacific passes

PAN Pacific Hotels Group has made the move to consolidate marketing and PR requirements, ending its association with long-time reps Devahasdin PR.

A new external agency based on Australia's east coast will be engaged effective next month.

Mauritius cyclone

TRAVELLERS heading to Mauritius are being advised to check flight details before heading to the airport, with a cyclone warning in place.

According to Smartraveller, there may be extreme winds and rain that may potentially shut down the destination's airports.

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Dual affiliation answers

VIRTUOSO CEO Matthew Upchurch addressed the question of dual affiliation in the final session of the Australia & New Zealand Forum in Perth.

Speaking during a fireside chat moderated by Mosman Travel Owner & Managing Director, Sharyn Kitchener, Upchurch was asked several questions through the Virtuoso app from delegates.

Kitchener read out, "A question that I keep being asked is the Virtuoso policy on dual affiliation - Australia is a complicated market with consortia, what do you see as our position?"

Upchurch suggested that it is not complicated everywhere in the world, but just complicated in "a different way and different dynamics" in Australia.

"The simplest way to look at this is if you're [with] Virtuoso, and somebody is Virtuoso preferred, contractually and through our agreements, that is a Virtuoso production," he said.

"Most of the dual affiliation issues we've had around the world have been formed by the other organisations saying 'you can't be both', rather than it being us.

"We've always been very confident from the perspective of, we have our [referral partners] and we do what we do, and know that we can't - and don't - want to be everything to everybody."

Upchurch added that it is not uncommon for other organisations to say they are



luxury, but in truth be focusing on four-star experiences.

"We keep an eye on that, but our number one thing is to support you guys as our members and our preferred partners from the perspective of how we can be a solution for the luxury part of your business," Upchurch said.

"We've always known that it would water down Virtuoso if we tried to be everything to everybody," he concluded. *DF*

CAPA flies to Cairns

GLOBAL aviation and tourism industry leaders will converge on Cairns later this year for the 2025 CAPA Airline Leaders Summit Asia Pacific - the first time it has been held outside a capital city.

The annual gathering will take place from 31 Jul - 01 Aug at the Cairns Convention Centre.

Speakers will include leaders from a variety of air travel sectors along with government heads.

"Hosting CAPA will enable us to welcome the cream of the aviation and tourism sectors to Cairns, the northern gateway to Australia," said Cairns Airport CEO, Richard Barker.

Topics will include regional capacity, pax spend and more.

Experience in black

ATTRACTIONS operator Experience Co said its latest half-year results ending 31 Dec were the strongest in terms of trading volumes, revenue and earnings since 2019.

The company reported a net profit after tax of \$1.4 million, turning around from a loss in a similar range posted last year.

Total revenue for the period closed at \$67.9 million, with an underlying EBITDA of \$10.6 million.

CEO John O'Sullivan said all business units have posted improved performances, with Skydive Australia, Reef Unlimited, Treetops Adventure and Wild Bush Luxury as standout brands.

Dubai signs a GDS

AMADEUS has signed a strategic MoU with the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism to foster innovation efforts in travel technology.

The move is aimed at furthering Dubai's market position as a hub for innovation and technology.

Under the deal, the two organisations will create an ecosystem for travel tech that improve the visitor experience.



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Perth eyes India flights

EXCLUSIVE

THERE is “absolutely” an opportunity to get direct flights to Indian cities from Perth, Tourism Western Australia Managing Director Anneke Brown has told *Travel Daily*.

In an interview on the sidelines of the Virtuoso Australia & New Zealand Forum in Perth, Brown highlighted the significant opportunity the country provided for Perth and Western Australia, stating there would hopefully “be news soon”.

“We’ve been working that space for a number of years - fleet availability is probably still an issue across all airlines and regions, so really, we are looking forward to being able to secure that shortly and we are working really hard,” Brown said.

India and Australia have an open skies agreement, meaning adding flights will not face any political roadblocks.

A Tourism Australia report recently stated, “There’s increased appetite to travel amongst the young Indians and



factors like generational and attitudinal shifts, and global events will continue to drive outbound travel, which, as per CAPA and McKinsey, is expected to reach 50 million by 2030 and 90 million by 2040 respectively”.

Brown added that the value of the traveller market out of India has not gone unnoticed by Western Australia and that the approach, based on what the state has to offer, is strongly targeting that high-yield traveller.

“We have a lot of product to offer the Indian market and we are the closest natural stop and first direct stop for India, so we are looking forward to that.”

Brown added it would be a targeted approach and that “hopefully not too long away”, there will be some updates on the situation. *DF*

Sensory Asia tours

DESTINATION management company, Khiri Travel, has introduced sensory urban day tours in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, with Laos, the Philippines.

The private guided tours will see guests experience the iconic sights, sounds, smells and tastes of each destination.

Khiri Travel has also launched a series of heritage and history tours ranging from nine to 13 days in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam, Philippines and Laos, with Myanmar to follow.

Guests will visit or stay in mansions and hotels from the era of 19th century European explorers in Asia, and enjoy expert insights from historians.

Agents can learn more about the new specialist tours, including sample itineraries and an online photo gallery, by visiting Khiri Travel’s online Agent Hub.

Afterpay four-days

TRAVEL brands including Webjet and Jetstar are among many confirmed to take part in Afterpay Day 2025.

The popular online shopping bonanza will run for four days from 8am on 20 Mar through to Sun 23 Mar.

Tourism jobs climb

HOSPITALITY and tourism job ads posted on Seek climbed 4.2% in Jan 2025 as part of a 5.1% spike in ads nationwide.

The increase marked the largest rise in job ads since Oct 2021 and followed three months of declining ad volumes.

According to the report, advertised salaries in hospitality and tourism have grown 3.5% in the 12 months ending Jan 2025.



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Virtuoso honours AU members



VIRTUOSO has honoured its top-performing members and partners across the Australia and New Zealand region at its annual regional awards this week.

Taking place during the luxury network’s annual Forum, the gala event saw 190 attendees come together at the Ritz-Carlton, Perth on Wed.

Goldman Travel Corporation was one of the big winners on the night, declared as the Top Producer in both the hotels & resorts category, and the on-site category, while Viking also took home several accolades.

Mosman Travel was recognised as the Most Engaged member, while Travel Associates took out the Top Producer titles for both cruise and tours.

Other winners included Main

Beach Travel’s Mike Dwyer (pictured middle), who took home the prestigious Southern Cross Award, as well as Allure Travel by CTM, FBI Travel, Abercrombie & Kent Australia, Y Travel, and more.

View the full list of winners on the night [HERE](#). *JM*

The end for Star?

CASINO operator Star Entertainment has entered into a trading halt and declined to publish its latest financial results, citing a need to continue the search for more liquidity solutions as it battles to stay afloat.

The company conceded there remains material uncertainty as to the group’s ability to continue as a going concern.

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CORPORATE UPDATE

Nexus has the answers

CONSOLIDATION brand Nexus DMC has partnered with US-based luxury travel wholesaler Travel Answers Group (TAG) as part of an acquisition strategy. TAG is one of North America's largest providers of Oceania travel product to US-based consortia, and is aiming to double turnover over the next two years.

The partnership aims to simplify the process for US agents booking clients to Australia, NZ and the Pacific, using Nexus' AI-driven itinerary building software. TAG is already a preferred wholesaler of Oceania product for US agents.

The Nexus partnership follows the establishment last year of Nexus' global headquarters in Melbourne (TD 07 Nov 2024) as the brand seeks to expand its product range in the local market.

Nexus DMC now maintains offices in Sydney and New Zealand, and has an on-ground team on the Gold Coast.

"Together with Nexus DMC, we are launching a cutting-edge booking platform designed to deliver a seamless, 24/7 booking experience across all our destinations," said TAG Group founder and CEO, Kirk Demeter.

"This collaboration represents a significant evolution in our operational model and is a strategic step toward leveraging Nexus DMC's innovative technology to amplify and scale our operations.

"This innovation will enhance



service delivery, increase efficiency, and support long-term growth for both our business and our partners," Demeter said. *ML*

New Platinum heads

PLATINUM Travel Group has introduced its new leadership team as the company grows and sets its sights on greater success.

The business has appointed Phil Gleeson as its new General Manager for Strategy and Partnerships, who brings extensive expertise in forming lasting corporate relationships.

Additionally, Ryan Potts has been named Chief Operations Officer, while Lauren O'Dowd will assume the role of General Manager - Customer Experience.

Driving Platinum's national growth will be Laura Lotter, who moves into the role of General Manager - Western Australia.

The new team is **pictured** below with Platinum Travel Group CEO Andy Buerckner and Managing Director Sarah Szubanski.



Discover our River Cruise Special Report

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Get on the bus to Britain



VISITBRITAIN treated trade partners and media to a VIP event in Sydney last night to celebrate the launch of its new global campaign, 'Starring GREAT Britain' (TD 29 Jan).

The evening kicked off at The Langham Sydney with canapes and drinks, while guests received a welcome address from British Deputy Consul General Edward Kitt, as well as hearing a video message from VisitBritain CEO

Patricia Yates.

After that, guests at the VIP party viewed the new campaign directed by Oscar-winning director Tom Hooper.

The group then hopped on a double-decker bus inspired by London's famous Big Red Bus (**pictured**), which took them to Mov'in Bed Cinema at Harbour Park to enjoy a screening of classic British rom-com, *Notting Hill*.

The outdoor cinema experience is owned by Val Morgan Cinema, which VisitBritain has partnered with to promote the campaign in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane from Jan-Mar. *JM*

Milestone for Sabre

TRAVEL technology giant Sabre Corporation has marked 100 airlines signing up to its Network Planning and Optimisation Suite, with Air India Express becoming the milestone customer.

The low-cost offshoot of Air India will utilise Sabre's Schedule Manager and Slot Manager tools to streamline flight schedules and optimise slot allocation to better maximise revenue and demand.

Air India Express operates 2,800 departures weekly across more than 200 routes, to 54 destinations in India, the Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

Rush for Touropa

TOUROPA has reported a surge in short-lead time bookings, with 50% of recent conversions in the first two weeks of Jan departing before the end of May.

The company's most popular itineraries in this period included its 10-day 'Magnificent France', its 15-day 'Wonders of Japan and Tokyo' and its six-day 'Pearls of Northern Europe', with Prague and Rome also booking heavily.




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Jetstar has released 450,000 discounted fares across its entire domestic and international network, starting from \$29. More than 100 routes are on sale, with 29,000 \$29 fares available on 20 domestic routes including Melbourne (Tullamarine) to Gold Coast, Sydney to Sunshine Coast, and Hobart to Brisbane. International sale fares include \$145 from Perth to Singapore, \$189 from Melbourne to Singapore and \$199 from Sydney to Fiji (Nadi). Find out more about the Takeoff More Sale [HERE](#).

Travellers can sail into savings with **Uniworld's** latest offer. The boutique river cruise line is discounting its 2025 holidays by up to 30%, such as the eight-day 'Castles Along the Rhine' itinerary, the 12-day 'Splendours of Egypt & The Nile'. More details can be found [HERE](#).

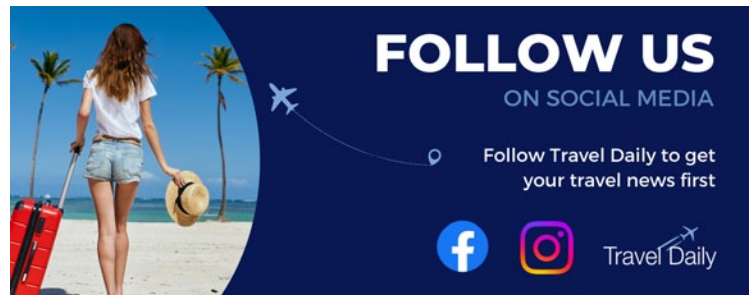
Insight Vacations has extended its air credit offer due to popular demand. Travellers who book a 2025 tour before 03 Apr will save up to 15%, as well as receive an air credit of up to \$300 per person. For example, the seven-day 'Focus on Ireland' itinerary is available from \$3,358 instead of the standard price of \$3,950. See more [HERE](#).

Couples are being invited to dial up the romance at Whitsundays retreat **Daydream Island Resort & Living Reef**, which recently starred on reality TV show *Married at First Sight* as one of the honeymoon destinations. The resort has launched a Couples Romance Package, which includes three nights accommodation, a bottle of sparkling wine on arrival, a \$200 food & beverage credit per stay to use at the three onsite restaurants and bars, a 50% discount on ferry transfers to and from the island (from Hamilton Island or Port of Airlie), and daily buffet breakfast at Graze Restaurant for two people. Prices start from \$1,200 per couple. For more information, see [HERE](#).

Wendy Wu Tours has brought back one of its most popular offers, which allows a guest's partner to fly free on select tours in 2025 and 2026, while solo travellers can enjoy 50% off their airfare. The promotion applies to more than 770 departures, and is available to book until 30 Apr. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Aussies can save on **Airnorth** fares to some of the country's best regional destinations, including Alice Springs, Cairns, Broome, the Kimberley and more. Prices start from \$199, and apply to travel periods between 17 Mar and 30 Sep 2025. Find out more about the Freedom Awaits sale by clicking [HERE](#).

AAT Kings has slashed the prices on some of its most popular tours across Australia and Tasmania. For instance, travellers can save \$1,277 on the 13-day 'Perfect Tasmania' itinerary departing 21 Mar, which explores the state's pristine wilderness, history, and charming towns, all while enjoying luxury accommodation and local experiences. Limited spots are available, with discounts subject to availability. More [HERE](#).



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Bucket list travel delayed

COST-OF-LIVING struggles are forcing 71% of Australians to delay ticking items off their travel 'bucket lists', according to a new study from Insure&Go.

The survey of 1,006 Australians found 65% have a list of dream travel destinations they would like to visit, however for 31%, it would take at least a year to save.

People aged between 30-49 were the most likely (78%) to delay fulfilling their travel dreams due to a lack of disposable income, while over-50s were the least likely at 64%, due to smaller financial responsibilities and more time to tick items off.

While 60% of Aussies were opting to delay their international bucket list, 30% are making the same decision for domestic trips.

"That 60% of Australians are postponing their international travel bucket list - and that nearly a third need over two years to save for their dream trip - reveals a growing gap between aspirations and affordability as



they reshape their priorities," said Insure&Go Commercial and Marketing Director, David Mayo.

"This financial strain is especially felt among 30-49-year-olds, the age group that is most likely to have a sizable mortgage and young family."

Europe was the number one bucket list destination for 67% of respondents, followed by Asia at 53% and the USA at 41%. *ML*

SV network growth

TEN new destinations will join the Saudi Arabian Airlines network in 2025.

These include Vienna, Venice, Larnaca, Athens, Heraklion, Nice, Malaga, Bali, Antalya, El Alamein and Salalah.

Intrepid goes home

INTREPID Travel has formed a new partnership with Homeward Bound, an organisation aimed at supporting leadership aspirations for women and non-binary people to tackle sustainability issues.

The tour operator has signed on to sponsor three scholarships to Homeward Bound's 2025 intake, which comprises a 12-month online program of workshops around leadership, coaching and visibility enhancement for women in STEM vocations.

At the end of the program, graduates will have an opportunity to apply their new skills in a real-world environment during an expedition in Tanzania.

Pickled with Collette

TOUR operator Collette is inviting travel agents to a special Pickleball Australia championship event in Sydney on 10 Mar.

The event, taking place from 6-8:30pm at Robyn Webster Sports Centre in Tempe Reserve, will also offer agents a chance to meet Collette senior executives including Executive Vice President Global Sales, Christian Leibl-Cote, during a visit from the US.

Collette Managing Director Australia, Karen Deveson, will also be on hand at the event.

Expressions of interest to attend are open now - [CLICK HERE](#).



Garuda Indonesia flight schedule update

Garuda Indonesia is pleased to inform important updates to their flight schedules, designed to provide enhanced connectivity and flexibility for your clients.

Garuda Indonesia will maintain daily operations on the Melbourne (MEL) – Bali (DPS) and Sydney (SYD) – Bali (DPS) routes, offering seamless connections for passengers travelling to one of the region's most sought-after destinations. This consistent daily service ensures a high level of flexibility for all travellers to Bali and beyond.

In addition, Garuda Indonesia will increase the frequency of its Melbourne (MEL) – Jakarta (CGK) service to up to

five times weekly, starting from 8th July 2025. This adjustment will provide more options for passengers looking to explore Jakarta and beyond, facilitating smoother connections to both (Indonesia) domestic and international destinations (to Incheon, Tokyo and many more).

Starting 5th October 2025, Garuda Indonesia will be adding more frequency to Sydney (SYD) – Jakarta (CGK) services to a daily frequency, up from the current 4 weekly services. This change is aimed at offering enhanced convenience for travellers flying between Sydney and Jakarta, catering to both business and leisure demands.

Garuda Indonesia believes these schedule enhancements will provide your clients with even more opportunities for seamless travel with Garuda Indonesia.

GARUDA BENEFITS

Garuda Indonesia offers a free stopover in Bali or Jakarta for travellers flying from Melbourne or Sydney to Japan, Korea and other international destinations. This allows clients to explore two destinations, enjoying Bali's tropical paradise or Jakarta's vibrant city life.

