

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including **Business Events News**, plus a full page from **Ponant**.

Darwin-Bali boosted

INDONESIA AirAsia has announced it will resume flights between Darwin and Bali, operating thrice-weekly direct services from 22 Mar.

The Asian carrier will add more choice for Aussie travellers and compete with Jetstar and Virgin Australia on the route.

Indonesia AirAsia's upcoming service will deliver over 1,000 extra seats a week.

Reflecting on the development, NT Minister for Tourism Marie Clare Boothby said it would put downward pressure on airfares and provide a much-needed boost for the tourism sector

"As we rebuild the Territory economy and restore our great lifestyle, we will continue to work with industry to develop new products and promote our fantastic tourism experiences," Boothby said.

Indonesia AirAsia CEO Veranita Yosephine added the direct flights will cater to the "enduring popularity of Bali as a destination for Australians", as well as offer budget connections to over 130 destinations across the Asia.

"Pax from Darwin can enjoy seamless connections via Bali to destinations like Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, and Komodo Island starting from under \$300."

LAX open despite fires

IN THE face of ongoing devastation caused by bushfires in Los Angeles, a statement from LAX has confirmed the city's largest hub remains operational, but that travellers should check with airlines to find out if there have been any flight delays.

While there have been no reports of major airport closures during the unfolding disaster which has already claimed more than 1,000 homes, multiple flights have been diverted from Hollywood Burbank Airport to LAX due to high winds and hazardous conditions.

However, travellers are being told by local authorities to expect flight delays, and brace for hazardous air quality on arrival.

A short time ago, Australia's Smartraveller encouraged Aussie travellers to monitor local media for updates and be alert to instructions about any potential evacuation orders and warnings.

DFAT also suggested Australians in LA become familiar with the location of various evacuation shelters in the American city.

CX to land in Rome

CATHAY Pacific will launch direct flights between Hong Kong and Rome on 05 Jun, operating three times a week on a northern summer seasonal frequency.

The route will be Cathay Pacific's second direct connection to Italy, adding to the five flights a week it already runs to Milan.

Currently there are five major fires burning, the biggest blaze in the Palisades neighbourhood, as well as an Eaton fire near Pasadena, a Hurst fire in the San Fernando Valley, and several other smaller blazes.

Tens of thousands of residents have been evacuated already, with the ferocity of the fires flamed by powerful Santa Ana winds, and ongoing drought conditions in the city.

Keep tabs on updates **HERE**. **AB**

Win a Croatia cruise

EVERY agent who makes a booking for Unforgettable Croatia before 31 Mar will go into the draw to win a place for two people on a cruise from Sibenik to Dubrovnik.

The seven-night sailing snagged by the winner departs 12 Jul on the 36-guest *My Wish*, calling at Trogir, Split, Brac, Jelsa, Hvar, Korcula, Slano and Ston.

Unforgettable Croatia said the cruise will include breakfast, three-course lunches, a cocktail welcome dinner, as well as a special captain's dining event.

Guided tours of the Krka National Park are also on offer, a visit to the Diocletian Palace in Split, in addition to wine tasting and an oyster tasting experience.

The cruise company experienced positive traction through the trade last year, with bookings increasing by 24% on the previous year.

Front row to the fun

PONANT is inviting your clients to take a front row seat to the poles, with up to \$5,399 savings per person on polar voyages.

A number of Ponant's luxury expedition itineraries are featured on **page six** of today's issue of *Travel Daily*.

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YHA updates approach



YHA Australia has completed seven-month long renovations of its three flagship properties in Sydney and Brisbane.

The refurbishments mark a “pivotal moment” for the youth hostel brand, which is seeking to modernise the guest experience whilst maintaining its long-held value proposition of providing affordable accommodation.

Central to the updates at YHA Sydney Central, YHA Sydney Harbour and YHA Brisbane City were the installation of improved quality bunks with inbuilt personal charging points, bedside lights, as well as full-drawn curtains for extra privacy.

Larger sized lockers in co-living rooms have also been added, alongside modern bathrooms featuring spacious showers, wide vanity sinks, and quality mirrors.

“As travel habits evolve, we’re witnessing a growing demand for flexible, community-oriented

living spaces,” YHA Australia CEO Paul McGrath said.

“We know that travellers highly value the social interactions and experiences that enrich co-living accommodations, but also understand that there is a traveller who may need an option to retreat to a considerably designed private space.”

The premise for the upgrades were set in motion four years ago, when YHA surveyed its client base and found that the majority wanted greater privacy, more device connectivity, and quality spaces to meet other guests.

YHA’s pivot to adapt to the modern youth traveller on a budget has also seen a \$200,000 revitalisation project at YHA Thredbo (pictured) completed, which included a refurbishment of all private rooms and upgraded co-living furniture aimed to increase privacy and appeal to a broader segment of travellers. AB

Cruise is the best way

CLOSE to three-quarters of Australians believe a cruise holiday is the best way to travel, according to a new study of 5,000 people compiled by Norwegian Cruise Line (NCL).

The same survey also found that 78% of respondents are planning to take another cruise this year, while 26% said they are getting in early to plan a sailing in 2026.

Voyages in the Mediterranean are currently the most sought-after destination for past Aussie cruisers, with 40% putting the destination at the top of the list.

Asia is also in the sights for many, polling 32% of respondents, followed by northern Europe and the Baltics with (30%), ahead of Alaska, the South Pacific and Hawaii, which were all also popular choices.

When it comes to sailing companions, 69% of people prefer to cruise with their partner - rising to 77% for men - while



40% named their top company preference as friends - increasing to 45% for women.

Relaxation and leisure was listed as the primary reason to hop aboard a cruise ship (80%), followed by easily visiting destinations of interest (76%), experiencing cultures (68%), and escaping the daily routine (39%).

While destinations were the primary motivation for Aussies to take a cruise, the value of cruising compared to land-based itineraries was also a major reason to book (66%), followed by the quality of food and dining experiences on board (65%).

For couples, the data showed 47% of people think cruising is a way to rekindle romance. AB

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Strand takes the stand

EXCLUSIVE

A SURPRISE headline speaker has been announced for the A Force for Good event taking place in Sydney on 07 Mar, with HX/Hurtigruten VP Expedition Development Karin Strand confirmed for the stage.

The experienced expedition cruise executive will travel from Oslo to deliver her presentation.

Strand (pictured) has been with Hurtigruten for 23 years, and has also been the Chair of the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators for five years.



HA unveils new wave

HAWAIIAN Airlines is accepting surfboards, bicycles, golf clubs, and other types of sports equipment as standard checked baggage on every flight, beginning today.

Surfboards in excess of the free baggage allowance and/or when a route stopover exceeds 24 hours, will still be subject to applicable baggage charges.

The change in policy was precipitated by the carrier joining Alaska Air Group, an acquisition that was finalised in Sep last year (TD 19 Sep 2024).

Where music was born



A NEW collaboration between Chris Watson Travel, Travel South USA, Gate 7, and Dream Plan Go is giving travellers the chance to win two flights with Delta Air Lines to kick off their American South musical adventure.

To be in the running, Aussies must enter their preferred itinerary of the two created as part of the 'Where Music Was Born' campaign [HERE](#), and state in 100 words or less why they have a favourite.

The wider marketing push showcases the iconic music associated with southern US destinations such as Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and South Carolina.

A dedicated digital portal has been set up to allow Aussies to learn more discover about the charm of the American region through its music.

Visitors can find out more about upcoming events and festivals, local cuisine, and the various

attractions that make a trip to the south a unique experience.

There will also be pop-up activations in Australia to support the campaign, such as a booth to enjoy an Elvis-inspired performance by Robbie Mortimer and a Southern-style BBQ running at the Parkes Elvis Festival today and tomorrow.

Later this month, the campaign heads to the Tamworth Country Music Festival (23-25 Jan), where Nashville-based performers John and Jax Stone will perform on the main stage and join for an exclusive meet-and-greet.

"Where Music Was Born is a tribute to the South's deep connection between music and travel," Gate 7 founder Jo Palmer said, adding the push offers Australians a window into the region's vibrant culture.

Chris Watson Travel has a range of music-focused travel packages available for the campaign.

More campaign details [HERE](#).



Window Seat

AN AUSTRALIAN couple travelled more than 16,000 kilometres from Adelaide to Edinburgh, only for the reason behind the trip to be cancelled at the last minute.

The couple was travelling to Edinburgh for its famous Hogmany - the Scottish celebration of the New Year.

The fireworks display at Edinburgh Castle is broadcast on television in Scotland, and was meant to be the crescendo in the couples' weeklong British jaunt.

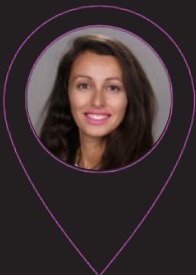
However, when the couple arrived in Edinburgh, they learned the fireworks display had been cancelled, due to extreme weather conditions.

The news left the couple "very upset", after they spent around \$3,000 on accommodation, plus car rental, in order to be in Edinburgh for the occasion, and to boot, they were also fined for parking illegally.

One might say that, when you're dealing with an outdoor event in the midst of a fierce European winter, this sort of thing is something you've 'Scot' to expect.



SPEAKERS



Nicola Veltman
CEO,
1000 Mile Travel



Steve Labroski
CEO,
itravel



Wendy Wu
Founder,
Wendy Wu Tours

HOME EX

HOME AGENT
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MCEC serves up

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has unveiled its 2025 menu, which includes new eco-friendly packages.

The new menu highlights native ingredients, with 80% of the produce sourced from growers across Victoria.

The centre has also launched With Purpose packages across the entire menu range, designed to create a positive impact.

Additionally, guests can enjoy locally sourced wines, craft beers, and specialty cocktails and mocktails, with MCEC partnering with local Geelong brand the Curious Cabinet for delicious non-alcoholic options.

"The team has worked tirelessly to design the bold new menu, dedicated to sustainability and inspired by Melbourne's iconic food scene," Executive Chef Peter Haycroft said.



KTO TAKES AIM AT AUSSIE MARKET

THE Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) Sydney has announced its return to the Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME), taking place from 10-12 Feb 2025.

The tourism body will promote Korea's MICE offerings at the exhibition, alongside the Busan Tourism Organization, INSPIRE Entertainment Resort, and experienced Korean Destination Management Companies, including Seotai Travel, ICU Company, Jane DMC Korea, Trima, and Holiday Planners.

"We were at AIME last year, and we're so excited to exhibit again," said KTO Sydney's Director, Hyeongjoon Kim, adding "buyers can look forward to an immersive experience at our Gyeongbokgung Palace-themed booth".

"This booth is inspired by Korea's iconic heritage, showcasing the palace built



in 1395, known as the most beautiful and largest of palaces.

"There will also be engaging activation games and a dedicated presentation area where attendees can discover more about our offerings."

Ranking second globally in 2021

for hosting the most international meetings, Korea continues to stand out as a top destination for business events, with 52 unique venues spread across the country.

Pictured: Dongdaemun Design Plaza, one of South Korea's key MICE venues.

Bali's International Convention Centre gets a fresh new look

THE Bali International Convention Centre (BICC) has unveiled its newly refurbished facilities, following the completion of its renovations.

This latest refurbishment aims to enhance BICC's standing as a key player in Bali's thriving MICE hotel and convention scene, offering a blend of state-of-the-art technology and the island's cultural heritage.

BICC's largest venue, the newly



refurbished Mangupura Hall has undergone significant upgrades,

including modern wall panels, cutting-edge LED installations on both sides of the existing stage, and a sleek stage design.

Nusantra Hall, BICC's second-largest venue, now boasts premium tiled flooring in its foyer, a new carpet and lighting system, and more.

The entire BICC also now features LED signage throughout, anti-slip flooring in the loading dock, and more.



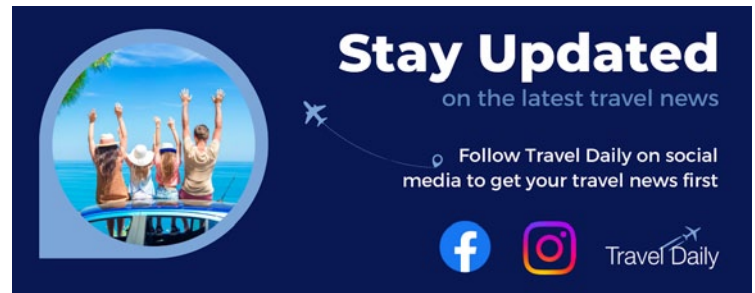
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Mary Reale has joined **Travel Beyond Group** as Head of Account Management. Reale has been in the travel industry for 25 years, and brings a deep understanding of the sector and a client-first mindset to her role. She most recently worked at CWT as a Key Account Manager.

Scott Bear has been appointed General Manager of **Novotel Geelong**. Bear brings a decade of experience in the hospitality industry to his new role, and has worked across a diverse range of departments and hotels, from midscale to luxury.

Melia Pattaya Hotel has announced **Javier Gimeno** as General Manager. He previously worked in senior management roles with Marriott International for more than a decade, most recently as the cluster General Manager of Marriott & Four Points by Sheraton Tianjin National Convention & Exhibition Centre.

Lauren Ganley has succeeded the retiring Rick Allert as Chair of **Kakadu Tourism & Hotels**. Ganley, who is based in Darwin, has served on the board of Kakadu Tourism since 2012, and is the head of Telstra's First Nations Strategy & Engagement, where she leads the strategy and ongoing governance of engagement with First Nations people and communities across Australia.

COMO Cocoa Island has announced **Arta Rozefelde** as Resort Manager. She brings more than 25 years' experience in the hospitality industry to her new role, including positions in the Philippines and the Seychelles, as well as in the cruise sector.

Hamish Brinkley has started a new position as Travel Manager at **FCM Travel**. He joins the company after two years with Intrepid Travel, where he served as Recruitment Partner.

Nicole Tapster has been promoted to Senior Account Manager at **PEPR Agency**. She has been with the Philip Engelberts-led firm for four-and-a-half years, before which she worked with other agencies, such as Gate 7 and The Society Group.

Boeing has appointed **Dana Deasy** as Chief Information Officer & Senior Vice President Information Technology & Data Analytics. Deasy will oversee all aspects of information technology, information security, and data and analytics, and will report to President & Chief Executive Officer Kelly Ortberg. She will also sit on the company's Executive Council.

Derek Sadubin has started a new position as Country Manager at **GBTA**. Sadubin is well-known for having founded the new Festival of Aviation & Corporate Travel Summits, a new event for the corporate travel sector.

Angela Nolan has been appointed Vice President at **Highgate Hotels**. Nolan has served in the hospitality industry for more than 30 years.

Catch a web of marketing

MANY Australian travel operators are missing out on free, "game-changing" marketing that can grow their business, according to travel industry communications expert Sam Patton (**pictured**), who recently launched the country's first digital marketing agency dedicated to the travel sector.

Patton said some savvy travel companies are successful in accessing "magical" marketing funds from government and private sources, but many are still unaware of available cash, or unwilling to spend the time to chase it.

The issue is covered in a new blog post on The Social Spider, *Travel Marketing Money- How to get it and how to spend it*.

Travel companies first need to plan and cost a marketing initiative, Patton believes, and then table that with govt agencies offering grants or cruise lines, tour operators or wholesalers offering 50-50 co-op funds.

Patton said The Social Spider is available to help travel businesses



source and spend marketing grants, especially if they lack the necessary time and skills.

The Social Spider services also include social media set-up and management, online marketing, blogs, creative content, press release, and digital campaigns, with packages starting from just \$95 - **CLICK HERE**. MS

FJ aircraft refresh

FIJI Airways has expanded its domestic and regional connectivity with new ATR aircraft, which arrived over the past few weeks.

The two ATR 72-600s each have a seating capacity of 68, with the aircraft arriving on 29 Dec and 05 Jan.

Additional ATR aircraft will be introduced over the coming years to further enhance capacity and enable more frequent services on domestic routes.

The expansion supports Fiji's ongoing efforts to improve domestic capacity, and better serve regional communities, particularly in the country's Northern Division.

This move also aligns with Fiji's broader strategy to enhance its Nadi hub, and improve travel options for passengers.

Ritz-Carlton Bangkok

THE Ritz-Carlton, Bangkok has debuted in Thailand, influenced by traditional local residences.

The 260-key hotel overlooks Lumpini Park, set in the new 200-metre-high tower located at One Bangkok.

Guestrooms range from the 50m² Deluxe rooms to the 127m² Marigold and Amaranth suites, as well as a 389m² penthouse.

Rooms feature floor-to-ceiling windows, private loggias, and terraces overlooking the park.

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*All advertised price is in Australian dollars (AUD), per person and subject to change at any time without notice. Special offer is a 10% discount per person valid on a selection of polar expeditions, on new bookings made between 3 January and 14 February 2025 included. Offer is not retroactive, is subject to availability and may be removed at any time. Offer is combinable with PONANT Yacht Club discounts, Join The Club offer, the PONANT Bonus Offer and standard permanent back-to-back offer (COMBO10). Offer not combinable with Flight Credit offers, Free Single Supplement, Shipboard credit or any other offer. To take advantage of this offer, please quote code HOLIDAYS when speaking to a Ponant consultant or your preferred travel agent. Disko Bay & Inuit Villages: advertised discounted fare is based on a 10% discount calculated on a Deluxe Stateroom cabin double occupancy on BO180825 departure; advertised maximum saving based on Prestige Suite Deck 5 category on BO180825 departure. Emblematic Antarctica: advertised discounted fare is based on a 10% discount calculated on a Deluxe Stateroom cabin double occupancy on AU231125 departure; advertised maximum saving based on Prestige Suite Deck 5 category on BO111225 departure. Baffin Bay Secrets: advertised discounted fare is based on a 10% discount calculated on a Deluxe Stateroom cabin double occupancy on LY210825 departure; advertised maximum saving based on Prestige Suite Deck 5 category on BO200725 departure. [†]Advertised saving is calculated on 10% savings on Prestige Suite Deck 5 category onboard *Le Boreal*, based on double occupancy on Baffin Bay Secrets departure on 2 July 2025. Included flights, accommodation and transfers are operated by PONANT's preferred airline and local suppliers and subject to special terms and conditions; included flights are operated in economy class, business class available under certain conditions. All pricing and discounts correct as of 10 December 2024, and may change at anytime. Other terms and conditions may apply. Visit au.ponant.com for more information. Photograph: © Studio PONANT - Mike Louagie.