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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including **Business Events News**, plus a cover from **Home Ex** and a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

Sign up for Home Ex

IT IS free to register for *Travel Daily's* upcoming home agent virtual experience, Home Ex, which goes live on 10 Mar - see the **cover page** for more info.

CLIA finalists named

THE finalists have been announced for the upcoming Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Cruise Industry Awards for Australasia.

Taking place in Sydney on 08 Mar, the sold-out event will see a total of 75 finalists battle it out to take home an award this year across 15 different categories.

CLIA MD Australasia Joel Katz said this year's finalists reflected a thriving membership that is now bigger than ever - see today's **Cruise Weekly** for details.

SIA adds to Brisbane

SINGAPORE Airlines will begin operating three additional flights per week from Brisbane to Singapore from 16 Jun, subject to regulatory approval.

The extra services, operated by an Airbus A350-900, will see the carrier offer four daily flights (28 flights per week) direct from the Queensland capital to Singapore.

Nov trips outpace 2019

THE number of overseas trips taken by Aussies in Nov was 7.4% higher than the same month in 2019, new ABS figures show.

While the 912,430 short-term trips recorded showed a good gain on pre-pandemic volumes, the month was a dip on the previous month of Oct '23, which saw 1.84 million trips taken.

Indonesia was once again the leading destination of choice with 134,950 trips, followed by New Zealand (113,590), and Japan (72,060), the latter of which continues to boom in light of favourable market conditions, including a weak Japanese yen.

Visits to the United States were in fourth position with 58,360, a figure which is still well down on 2019 levels of 78,960.

In Nov, markets that outperformed prior years and 2019 volumes included Thailand, India, Vietnam and Fiji.

Trips to Thailand surged to 56,000 in Nov, a significant rise

on the 46,470 noted in 2023 and 41,140 in 2019.

India was also well ahead of 2019 volumes with almost 9,000 extra trips in Nov last year, while Vietnam again performed strongly, eclipsing 2019 numbers by roughly 13,000 trips. AB

Viking info sessions

VIKING is running information sessions for regional travel agents across the country, including Ballina, Ballarat, Bunbury, the Barossa Valley, and more.

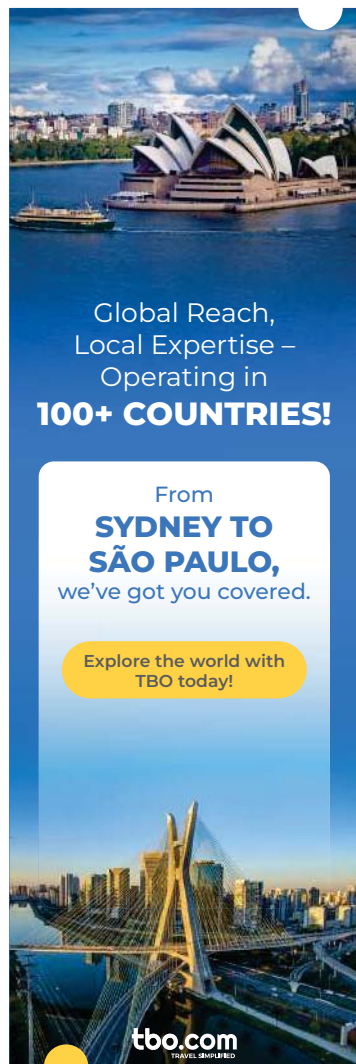
Taking place between Feb and Apr, the sessions will arm agents and their clients with plenty of news and updates about the cruise line's river, ocean and expedition journeys.

Attendees will also find out about new Scandinavian, Northern European and Mediterranean itineraries, as well as new destinations and on-shore and on-board experiences.

Win a \$500 voucher

INFINITY Holidays is giving a \$500 Prezzy gift voucher to the agent who sells the most Northern Territory product and packages this month.

To learn more about the brand's holiday packages, head over to the **back page**.



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QR resumes Malta

QATAR Airways will resume services to Malta with four weekly flights from 02 Jul.

The carrier formerly had a codeshare in place with Air Malta, until the Maltese Govt replaced it with KM Malta Airlines.

Bookings are now open for the latest European connection.

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Fiji unpacks transit plan

FIJI Airports CEO Mesake Nawari has flagged a new 10-year upgrade plan that will see new hotels, improved technology and expanded retail precincts built at hubs across the country.

Speaking to *The Fiji Times* yesterday, Nawari said the objective of the 10-year renovation strategy is to make Fiji the leading aviation transit hub in the Pacific region.

"We have a new vision, and the vision is to be the world-class aviation hub for the Blue Pacific," Nawari said.

While the aviation chief noted Nadi International Airport was performing well in terms of connecting international flights, the country's largest airport is not built for growing transit traffic and will need to be expanded.

Fiji Airports has also put a tender out for a hotel operator to manage an upcoming accommodation to be positioned adjacent to the Nadi International Airport carpark, with a view to incentivising more transit passengers to book a stopover stay and explore the country.

"I'm hoping that people will say, '10 hours is a bit long, we'll take one day or even a 12-hour break and then go on to our next flight,'" Nawari said.

When the hotel is up and running, Nawari confirmed it is likely to be operated by a brand name, but that further details are under wraps for now.

Part of the transit hotel



development will also look to incorporate restaurants and retail outlets nearby as part of a wider tourism project.

Contactless passenger customer service is another priority of the 10-year plan, with Fiji Airports to transition to a more contactless system using smart gates and biometric technology.

"A high number of our visitors are Australians, and in Australia they experience this, so they will expect to experience that when they go through our airports," Nawari observed.

"This would also reduce queuing, leaving ample space in the airport, and we will begin to see close to the end of this year the preparation for more self-check-ins," he added.

Nausori Airport will likely be the second hub to receive upgrades following Nadi. **AB**

IE to add BNE-AKL

SOLOMON Airlines will launch flights between Brisbane and Auckland from 21 Feb.

The weekly service will use an A320 on the route and offer economy and business class seats, leading in from \$521 and \$1,231, respectively.

Solomon Airlines already flies from Brisbane to Honiara, Munda, and Vanuatu.

Raffles Sentosa ready

RAFFLES Sentosa Singapore is now accepting booking enquiries ahead of the all-villa resort's official opening on 01 Mar.

Located on Sentosa island, the luxury property features 62 villas, a strong focus on wellness, five restaurants, and two ballrooms that can cater for 400 guests.

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Window Seat

REFLECTING on its 2024 achievements, among the more unusual is the fact that Air New Zealand can say it carried two Tasmanian devils across the Tasman.

It also transported one kea (an endangered type of parrot), two owls, seven penguins, 10 geese, 17 ducks, 19 kiwi, 4,369 cats and 9,148 dogs - though we're presuming not all at the same time.

In total, the Kiwi carrier flew a whopping 19,444 furry and feathered friends last year.

As well as taking care of beloved animal companions, the airline also proved its capacity to look after its human customers, handing out an astonishing 3.8 million cookies and 17.5 million Air New Zealand lollies.

All up, the crew served 5.7 million meals in the air and on the ground in its lounges.

Customers spent an average of 106 minutes relaxing in Air New Zealand lounges before int'l flights, with mango chili margaritas and espresso martinis the most popular pre-departure cocktails.



Aussie agents flying high

SYDNEY-BASED Sojourns Of founder Ash Chin has been bestowed with the honour of SmartFlyer One recognition by the luxury travel network.

The top-selling advisor was awarded the status for the second year in a row (**TD** 11 Jan 2024), after achieving more than US\$6.3 million in actualised sales, and will be rewarded with various VIP event opportunities and a free recognition holiday.

The total global pool of SmartFlyer One achievers represented over US\$182 million in collective revenue.

Half of the cohort also surpassed US\$10 million in annual revenue.

While Chin was the only Aussie in the SmartFlyer One list this year, multiple local travel agents made the cut for the Club 2A status, recognition for a minimum of US\$2m in actualised revenue.

The cohort this year included: Salli Alderson; Brent Wallace, Jacqui Keating; Marianne Guberina; Lionel Brown; Riya Thanissorn; Ann-Catherine Jones; Gloria Gammo; Vicky King; Sally McMillan; Carolyne Evans; Stacey Dudley; and Lauren Benson.

Rounding out the Australian recognition was Chloe Pagliaro (**pictured**), who was recognised as a SmartFlyer Rising Star.

The accolade shines a light on sellers who are making waves early on in their careers.

The Planner by Chloe founder was congratulated for achieving



sales beyond the industry benchmarks for new businesses.

Locally, SmartFlyer Australia is a Virtuoso travel agency and a joint venture between SmartFlyer and Goldman Travel Corporation. **AB**

Boeing is 180 short

THE supply chain and safety issues that plagued Boeing last year have been laid bare in its latest production report, with the manufacturer delivering 180 fewer jets in 2024 than in 2023.

Boeing completed 380 aircraft last year, including 265 B737s, 51 B787s, 18 B767s, and 14 B777s.

During Q4 2024, the company delivered 57 units.

The report also marked the first time the list has not included a B747 for more than 50 years.

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Booking By : 09 February 2025
Departure By : 30 November 2025

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AOTEAROA AIMS FOR THE SPOTLIGHT

NEW Zealand will shine a spotlight on its unique event offerings at this year's Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) in Melbourne.

The Tourism New Zealand stand will host its largest-ever contingent at the key industry event, with 36 of the country's business events organisations and operators exhibiting, including the Auckland Convention Bureau and Business Events Wellington.

"We're delighted to be showcasing such a broad range of activations at AIME that highlight the variety of experiences available in New Zealand for business events," Tourism New Zealand Global Manager Business Events Penelope Ryan said.

"From authentic engagement with Maori culture to magical, once-in-a-lifetime, activities, and world-class convention centres, New Zealand can deliver it all."



Tourism New Zealand is also sponsoring the 'Change the World Through Tourism' session, which forms part of the AIME Knowledge Program.

The session will see Nadine ToeToe, Director at Kohutapu Lodge & Tribal Tours, explore how indigenous tourism can be a catalyst for positive change.

Additionally, AIME attendees will get a taste of the New Zealand International Convention Centre ahead of its opening

later this year, with a special Kiwi menu to be featured at the hosted buyers' lunch.

Delegates can also explore a full-scale Hobbit Hole, complete with real grass and gardens, from New Zealand's famed Hobbiton Movie Set, where *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit* film trilogies were filmed.

Event organisers can visit stand F1 for korero and kai (a chat and a snack) to discuss event hosting possibilities in New Zealand. *JM*

BOE '25 speakers

THE speaker line-up for The Business of Events (BOE) 2025 has been revealed, with Singapore-based entrepreneur and co-founder & CEO of Addo, Dr Ayesha Khanna, named as the keynote speaker.

The two-day conference will take place from 13-15 Apr at Marina Bay Sands in Singapore, where business events professionals will gather to discuss the evolving events landscape.

Recognised by Forbes as a ground-breaking innovator, she will challenge delegates to think boldly about embracing transformation and navigating change.

Joining Khanna on stage will be Antarctic expedition leader David Knoff, who will share his story of resilience and leadership during his 537 days of isolation in Antarctica at the height of the pandemic.

Additionally, co-founder of Four Pillars Gin & Creative Strategist at Saxton Speakers Bureau, Matt Jones, will share lessons from the world of craft gin that every leader can apply.

BOE attendees will be able to gain insights through keynotes, breakout sessions, and networking opportunities - earlybird registration for BOE 2025 is now open until 31 Jan.

A Green success

THE Green Destinations Global Conference has reaffirmed its role as a key forum in the sustainable tourism sector, following a successful 2024 event in Chile last month.

Participants enjoyed pre-conference tours through the Magallanes region, before engaging in plenary sessions, networking activities, and hearing from more than 50 speakers from 15 countries.

The Calile Hotel unveils events menu

THE Calile Hotel in Fortitude Valley, Queensland has introduced a new conferencing and events menu.

Highlighting local, seasonal ingredients, the updated selection incorporates produce grown by the hotel's rooftop kitchen-garden and apiary.

The selection, developed by Executive Chef Mark Godbeer, features additions such as tamarind glazed beef short rib, with rooftop herbs and coconut



vinegar, as well as variations on favourite dishes including lamb shoulder, yogurt, harissa, spring pea and mint.

Godbeer said his aim was to keep the menu "uncomplicated and "emphasise freshness".



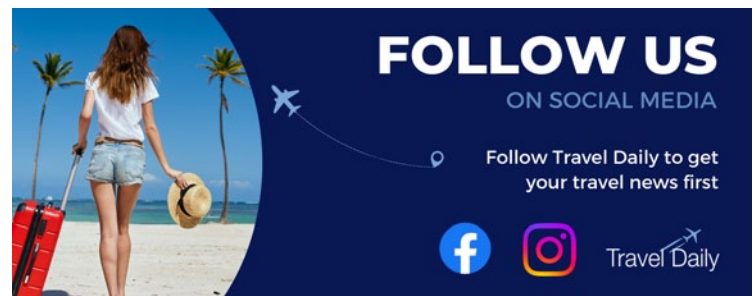
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Link Tourism has appointed **Christina Koullas** as PR Manager, with a view to strengthening the fast-growing public relations division of the business. With more than 20 years' experience, Koullas brings her knowledge and strong media relationships to the new role. She was most recently PR & Communications Manager APAC for Hurtigruten Group, and has previously represented brands as such as Holiday Inn, Melbourne Convention Bureau, and World Travel Protection.

Paul Forbes, who was formerly Air Vanuatu's long-term manager for the Australian market, has announced his newest role, joining **Airline Marketing Australia/New Zealand, World Aviation**, and its associated companies as Group General Manager. Forbes is charged with exploring new markets and creating opportunities to connect passengers with a diverse range of quality airlines worldwide.

Oceania Cruises Senior Vice President of Global Sales, **Nikki Upshaw**, has stepped down this month. Upshaw was just shy of reaching 15 years with the brand, with her departure coming at the same time as Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings announced a leadership shuffle for its brands Oceania and Regent Seven Seas Cruises. No replacement for Upshaw has been named, with sales leadership to report to Oceania President Frank A. Del Rio for the immediate future.

Sarah Stevenson has joined the **Destination NSW** team as Director of Public Relations, Influencers and Visiting Media this week. Before the new appointment, the communications expert was Head of Communications for almost three years at Business Events Sydney, and prior to that was the PR & Communications Director at Sydney-based travel agency, Julie King and Associates. Stevenson also served as an Executive Committee Member for Visit USA Organisation Australia for more than five years, from 2017 to 2022.

Global tech company **Travelport** has welcomed **Andrew Jordan** as its new Chief Product & Technology Officer. Jordan will draw on more than 25 years' experience in digital transformation and large-scale technology platform leadership to shape Travelport's product and technology roadmap for 2025 and beyond. He is no stranger to the travel industry, having worked as Chief Product and Technology Officer at CWT, where he successfully led the transformation of the \$27 billion travel management company into a modern, digital-first platform business. Jordan's career also includes senior technology leadership roles at NEP Group, NBCUniversal, and Thomson Reuters.

Sammi McDonough has taken on a new role in the cruise sector, becoming the Head of Entertainment for **Azamara Cruises**. The Newcastle-based graphic designer and event manager is well-known in the industry, having previously held roles at Cruise Saudi, The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection, Princess Cruises, and Carnival Australia.

Carnival's Asia milestone



CARNIVAL Cruise Line is setting sail for Asia from Australia for the first time, on board *Carnival Adventure* and *Carnival Luminosa*. The two new itineraries in 2027 are on sale now, with an Indonesia, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam cruise to be sailed on board *Adventure*.

The program also includes a Sydney to Singapore voyage, stopping in Indonesia, and a round-trip cruise from Singapore, with Carnival to visit a range of new ports.

Meanwhile, *Luminosa* will introduce a 14-day voyage in 2026, sailing from Tokyo to Singapore, which will visit Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Vietnam.

Luminosa will also sail on a 14-day voyage from Singapore to Brisbane via Bali and Darwin.

Vice President Sales & Marketing Kara Glamore expressed her excitement in setting sail from Australia to Asia for the first time.

"These itineraries mark a new chapter in cruising for Carnival, just as we prepare to embark

on an exciting expansion to four ships in Australia, when P&O's *Pacific Adventure* and *Pacific Encounter* join the Carnival family in Mar," she said.

"This is going to give Australians a new, affordable and more thrilling way to visit multiple destinations across Asia," Glamore added. *MS*

Sensational extension

MSC Cruises' 'Sensational Sale' has been extended to 31 Mar, with new dates, departures and regions available.

As part of the promotion, guests will receive up to 25% off their fare and up to \$1,000 onboard credit per cabin.

Kids can also cruise free on over 150 sailings (only paying port and hotel service charges).

The sale is valid on select sailings in the Mediterranean, Northern Europe, Caribbean, South America and Asia for departures until May 2026.

It is also available on the first season in Alaska, departing between May-Sep 2026.



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