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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features seven pages of industry news, plus a cover wrap from **A Force for Good**, our **Corporate Update**, and a full page from **Consolidated Travel**.

## New Bali player soon

**AUSTRALIANS** will soon have another flight option to Bali, with Indonesian carrier TransNusa set to connect Perth and the popular tourism destination from 20 Mar.

Tickets are priced from \$169 and are on sale now, with frequencies to operate at three times a week before increasing to four from 12 Apr.

The carrier will use A320s on the route, but interestingly, its fleet contains two of the new Chinese commercial aircraft, the Comac ARJ21.

TransNusa also flies from Jakarta to destinations such as Malaysia, Singapore, and Guangzhou and Guiyang in China.

## Dozens of TAs leave Virtuoso

### EXCLUSIVE

**MORE** than 80% of Travel Associates (TA) members have left the Virtuoso network, with the intent to join Flight Centre Travel Group's Luxury Travel Collection (LTC), *Travel Daily* can reveal.

Almost 50 members of the Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) division left the luxury travel network at the beginning of the year, sources with knowledge of the situation have confirmed.

Although TA declined to provide any comment when contacted by *TD*, it is believed a smaller number of the luxury travel agency network's members will remain as part of Virtuoso.

## Speaker with force

**THERE** are a myriad of amazing speakers confirmed to present at the A Force For Good event taking place in Sydney on 07 Mar.

See the **cover page** for details.



The move will see FCTG rapidly grow its luxury portfolio, which includes TA, LTC, and premium operator Scott Dunn, as the company continues its push to innovate and expand in the global luxury travel market.

The new LTC agency network has added 15 members in the past 12 months, following its establishment of its member portfolio just over 12 months ago.

Virtuoso declined to comment when contacted by *TD*. *MS*

## CVFR Consolidation Services appoints GM

CVFR Consolidation Services has appointed Lenny Padowitz as General Manager for ANZ and Fiji.

"All of our verticals are independent and...with Lenny leading our Consolidation business, he will streamline our operations and ensure we have the best commercials in place to keep CVFR Consolidation as one of the leading Consolidation businesses in AU/NZ region," Group CEO, Ram Chhabra said.

Reflecting on his appointment, Padowitz said he will work on continuing to build out new features and products to strengthen the business.

"My focus is on growth through innovation and ensuring we are providing the strongest service in the industry," he said.

Consolidation Services is one of five independent vertical divisions of CVFR Travel Group, each with its own general manager.

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## Ponant acquires Aqua

**PONANT** has plotted a course for a more diverse small ship offering across river, polar and ocean cruising, purchasing a majority stake in Aqua Expeditions (**TD** breaking news).

The strategic investment backed by Artemis Group will see the luxury French cruise brand expand its reach in markets such as the Galapagos, Raja Ampat, the Spice Islands, the Mekong River, and the Peruvian Amazon.

Importantly, Aqua Expeditions CEO Francesco Galli Zugaro will remain in the role alongside his senior management team, and the company will also continue to operate as a standalone business under Aqua Expeditions.

Both brands enjoy a range of key synergies in cruising, including a strong focus on small ship luxury, sustainability, and adventurous land excursions.

"This partnership aligns perfectly with our vision of excellence and sustainability in the luxury sector," Ponant Explorations Group CEO Herve Gastinel said.

"We are deeply impressed with the exceptional company that Francesco has built over the past 18 years and the unique brand he has developed in the experiential travel space," he added.

The benefits of the acquisition for Aqua Expeditions will be many and varied, with the deal likely to open opportunities to bolster its current expansion strategy in regions such as east Africa (**TD**



11 Sep 2024), elevate its luxury offerings, and create possible cross-sell opportunities for pax booking on both products.

"With the financial support and expertise from our partners, we are well-positioned to continue our growth and offer our guests unforgettable journeys to the world's most biodiverse and culturally rich regions while maintaining our core brand values," Zugaro said.

Last year, Aqua Expeditions struck a deal with Flight Centre Travel Group to become a preferred supplier (**TD** 02 Jul 2024), and FCTG has confirmed the acquisition has not impacted that agreement. **AB**

### Vietnam to Darwin?

**AS PART** of new global expansion plans for 2025, Vietnam Airlines is exploring the viability of adding Darwin as its fourth Australian port.

Fellow Vietnamese carrier VietJet Air had flagged a possible Ho Chi Minh-Darwin route last year, but is yet to make a call.

Vietnam Airlines operates flights to Sydney, Melbourne and Perth.

## Keel laid for superyacht



**EMERALD** Cruises has reached a major milestone in the construction of its third superyacht, *Emerald Kaia*, marking it with a keel-laying ceremony recently in Vietnam.

Held with the team at MKM Yachts in Ha Long Bay, the event marked the foundation of what will become the cruise line's most innovative luxury superyacht (**TD** 10 Apr 2024).

In celebration of the milestone, Emerald Cruises has revealed updated renders of *Emerald Kaia*, offering a sneak peek into the vessel's innovative design and luxurious features.

Set to debut in Apr 2026, the superyacht will accommodate 128 guests, with 88% of cabins featuring verandahs; there will also be an expansive sun deck, and wellness areas with a 50% larger spa and swim-up platform.

Guests will also enjoy enhanced

marina facilities, including an indoor lounge and new water toys such as an inflatable slide.

"The keel-laying of *Emerald Kaia* marks another exciting step forward in our vision for redefining the yachting experience," said Chairman and Founder of Scenic Group, Glen Moroney. **JM**

### Whiting departs FCTG

**INFINITY** Holidays GM James Whiting has been made redundant at the Flight Centre Travel Group wholesaler after 14 years with the business.

Whiting had headed up Infinity since May 2019.

### Double the rewards

**CONSOLIDATED** Travel is offering double rewards for Singapore Airlines tickets sold before 05 Feb.

See the **back page** details.



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Booking Dates 15 - 31 JAN 2025

Travel Dates 01 FEB - 31 MAY 2025



\*Fares from MEL  
Refer to GDS for SYD, other destinations and T&Cs.





## HAL opens 2026-27

**HOLLAND** America Line (HAL) has opened up bookings for its 2026-27 South America and Antarctica season, which features new glacier experiences.

From Nov 2026 to Mar 2027, *Oosterdam* and *Volendam* (pictured) will operate itineraries between 14-31 days, sailing hard-to-reach destinations like the Amazon River, Falkland Islands, & new trips to the Pio XI Glacier, the Southern Hemisphere's largest outside of Antarctica.

Guests hoping to see the Pio XI glacier can opt for a 14- or 15-day 'South American Pathways: Chilean Fjords and Glaciers' voyage, which sails between San Antonio (Santiago), Chile, and Buenos Aires, Argentina.

See the full list of what is on offer in 2026-27 [HERE](#).



## What a great catch for Tourism Australia

**TOURISM** Australia's 'Summer of Cricket' campaign (*TD* 12 Nov 2024) has turned out to be a big hit in India, with the video starring Aussie cricket legend David Warner garnering 95.9 million views during the Test series between Australia and India.

"We knew that while the cricket was on, the attention of India would be firmly on Australia giving us the perfect opportunity to invite Indian travellers to plan and book an Australian holiday," said Tourism Australia Managing Director Phillipa Harrison.

Warner's content series has so far received 41.9 million views, with that number set to rise with the assets to run until Apr.

Additionally, the 'Howzat for a holiday?' campaign assets (*TD* 21 Nov 2024), which stars Australian captain Pat Cummins (pictured), have been viewed 54 million times in India so far.

"The Indian TV and film industry



stars we invited down as part of a 'mega-famil' have also been promoting Australia on their own channels, making almost 700 social media posts and stories showcasing the wonderful time they had exploring Australia," Harrison said.

The 15 advocates shared social media posts and stories that were viewed by a combined audience of around 55 million during their visit Down Under, generating an equivalent advertising value of \$182.9 million.

"The Indian cricket team returning to Australia later this

year to play a series of One Day Internationals and T20s could provide the perfect excuse for Indian cricket fans to visit Australia and see for themselves the destinations we have been promoting," Harrison added. *JM*

## New Cal is now safer

**SMARTTRAVELLER** has lowered its advice for Aussies from 'reconsider your need to travel' to 'exercise a high degree of caution', marking a key dialling down of political tensions in the French territory.

While it is welcome news for the destination's tourism sector, DFAT has also warned visitors to be aware of the potential of political unrest in Noumea and western coastal areas between Kone and the capital.

New Caledonia lifted its curfew in Dec last year (*TD* 03 Dec 2024), as well as increased air access.

# Where Dreams Take Flight

Explore exceptional fares to stunning destinations. Sale ends 5 February 2025.

Plus, all bookings made during the promotional period will receive 30% bonus KrisFlyer miles, a Global Roaming eSIM for seven days from just \$1 with Pelago, and 10% off Pelago Experiences. Explore more destinations and travel dates through Agent360.

LONDON

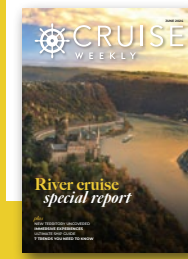
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## Travellers open to subscribe

**TRAVELLERS** who make as few as three trips overseas a year are receptive to the idea of paying for a travel subscription, a new report from global distributor Traveport has shown.

The data, which surveyed a global audience, also indicated that more than one in three consumers would consider buying a travel subscription this year.

Travellers cited subscription benefits such as convenience, cost savings, and exclusive perks, claiming the model presents a compelling alternative to traditional loyalty programs.

Generation Z was found to be most excited about the idea of travel subscriptions when compared to older cohorts.

The report also suggested that OTAs that embrace subscription models may have "an edge" over airline loyalty programs in the leisure travel space.

"Consumers tend to look



more favourably on OTA loyalty schemes versus supplier direct schemes run by airlines, and our findings show people are willing to pay more for complex subscription plans as long as they deliver exclusive benefits, early access to deals, and reduced prices," the report stated.

In Australia, Luxury Escapes has already dabbled with the idea of subscriptions, introducing its LuxPlus+ model last year (**TD** 20 Jun 2024), while Qantas also introduced a 28-day subscription model to access its lounges (**TD** 10 Jul 2024), which customers can access on an ad hoc basis. **AB**

## Pandaw voyages India

**PANDAW** is taking guests on a new 10-day expedition through India, sailing down the Hooghly River, which connects Kolkata with the Ganges.

The 18-stateroom *Kalaw Pandaw* will sail round-trip from Kolkata to Barangar, passing by palaces, villages and temples.

Featuring two nights in Kolkata, the sailing will give pax the chance to admire architectural splendours, such as 18th century churches and mosques from the glory days of the Raj.

Late check-out on the final day means passengers can stay on board, as most international flights from India depart at night.

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.



## Scoot locks in Vienna

**BUDGET** carrier Scoot will fly to Vienna from 03 Jun, operating three departures a week on a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner.

Discounted fares have been released to mark the launch, with flights from Sydney (\$489) and Melbourne (\$399) on offer.

From 14 Apr, Scoot will also commence flying to Iloilo City in the Philippines twice a week.

## Wendy cruises ahead

**WENDY** Wu Tours has launched three new river cruise and tour itineraries in Vietnam and India.

The trio of new options have departures scheduled this year and in 2026, which are available to book now at a special reduced sale rate until 28 Feb.

Prices lead in from \$12,880 per person for the 18-day 'Beyond the Brahmaputra', through to \$13,480pp for the 20-day 'Vietnam & Red River Uncovered' itinerary - call 1300 727 998.

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## Aussies double dip in HK

**EXCLUSIVE**

**ALMOST** nine in 10 Aussies are now repeat travellers to Hong Kong, up from 15% in 2018, Hong Kong Tourism Board Managing Director, Karen Macmillan revealed in an exclusive interview with *Travel Daily*.

Australians are also enjoying longer visits - 1.9 nights more than the average 5.7 nights - and are spending 21% more.

"This is due in large part to its relatively short distance (approx. eight hours) from Australia, excellent international connectivity, and all-round ease of experience," Macmillan said.

"Luxury expenditure has also continued to grow, whether that's starting or finishing their trip at the top end of the plane or splurging on one of the city's many iconic five-star hotels."

"Hong Kong is also an ideal destination for many different kinds of travellers looking for various experiences," she added.

Macmillan described Hong Kong as "a city of fascinating contrasts", hosting both the Hong Kong Sevens and internationally-acclaimed Art Basel on the same weekend in Mar this year.

High on the agenda for the Hong Kong Tourism Board this year is conversion.

For the past two years, the organisation has focused on building awareness and welcoming travellers back.

"We will continue to work closely with our trade partners to



create new products and promote existing Hong Kong products to potential visitors." *JHM*

Read more about HK [HERE](#).

## Celestyal rewards

**CELESTYAL** Cruises is celebrating 10 years of sailing with a year of generous travel advisor rewards and incentives.

More than 1,000 experiences will be on offer to agents across the year, such as cash prizes, cruises, and sold-out concert tickets & sports events.

Advisors can join the first in a series of hosted monthly 'Celestyal Lives' from 13 Mar, to hear updates from the cruise line's senior leaders, including brand updates, giveaways and trade incentives.

The experiences can be won each month through booking incentives, and will be gifted to those who complete training modules on the new advisor portal, 'Celestyal Compass'.

"After a ground-breaking 10 years we want to say a sincere thanks to agents for all their support," Vice President Business Development Janet Parton said.

"We have a history to be proud of, and an exciting future ahead."

## Travel execs a smash hit



**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) luxury leisure brands, including the Luxury Travel Collection and Travel Associates, were treated to a day at the Australian Open yesterday by Intrepid Travel (**pictured**).

The tour operator's Meg Lowe, Yvette Thompson, and Ray Hands hosted the FCTG team, with one of the highlights watching Aussie Alex De Minaur down American qualifier Tristan Boyer. *MS*

## Park Gstaad rebrand

**FOUR** Seasons Hotels & Resorts will take over management of Switzerland's Park Gstaad hotel.

The five-star property is currently undergoing a major renovation project, and will be reopened in time for the 2026-2027 winter season.

The renovation is being led by Squircl Capital with interior design by Joseph Dirand.

Park Gstaad will offer 75 rooms and suites once it reopens.

## AKP is recognised

**ABERCROMBIE & Kent's** (A&K) non-profit network, A&K Philanthropy (AKP), has been recognised by two leading travel magazines for its positive community work.

Experiential travel publication *AFAR* announced AKP as one of nine recipients of its 2024 Travel Vanguard awards, recognised for investing in the future of communities in destinations where its guests travel.

AKP has also been nominated as a finalist for *OutThere's* Experiential Awards for 2024/2025, taking place next month, in the category of 'Most Out There initiative' in community, conservation and sustainability.

If AKP is declared the winner, it will receive a prize of US\$19,000 to fund its projects.

Last year, AKP finished built two primary schools in Cambodia, and a kindergarten in Tanzania.

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**CORPORATE UPDATE**

# US moves to block merger

IF A proposed merger between two of the world's largest business travel management companies goes ahead, it will create "higher prices, less innovation, and fewer choices" for businesses.

The warning came from the US Justice Department, which recently filed a civil antitrust lawsuit to stop Global Business Travel Group (Amex GBT) from acquiring its second-largest rival, CWT Holdings.

Initially proposed early last year, the merger would see Amex GBT acquire CWT for around US\$570 million (A\$872m) on a cash-free, debt-free basis (*TD* 26 Mar 2024).



The move means CWT customers would gain access to Amex GBT's software and services for travel and expenses, as well as a wide range of professional services, including meetings and events, consulting and sustainability solutions.

However, the US Department of Justice has argued in its lawsuit that the acquisition would harm competition in corporate travel and benefit the merged firm at the expense of its customers.

"American businesses rely on travel management companies to connect employees, control travel costs, make travel booking and expense management easier, and ensure their employees' safety during travel," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Doha Mekki of the Justice Department's Antitrust Division.

"This acquisition is the latest in a series of acquisitions by Amex GBT that will further consolidate an already consolidated market with only a handful of competitive options capable of serving customers with the most need for travel management services," she added. *JM*

## Benchmark concurs

**CONCUR** Travel has been announced as the first online booking tool to integrate emissions calculations verified by the new ISO 1483 standard.

The standard was created to offer consistency across the multitude of calculation methods being used in the travel industry.

It also aligns with the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive, which oversees emissions reporting for over 50,000 companies globally.

"We're empowering our customers with the accurate and consistent data needed to make informed decisions and for reporting," enthused Charlie Sultan, Concur Travel President at SAP Concur.



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with Jenny  
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# Bali's new place to chill out



**TRAVELLERS** passing through Bali's Ngurah Rai International Airport can now relax at the revamped Tujuwan Lounge, which recently reopened after an extensive renovation.

Formerly known as the Premier Lounge, the updated space features a more contemporary design and improved facilities to enhance traveller comfort.

Featuring soft lighting and calming neutral tones, the upgraded lounge is designed to be "an oasis in the middle of a bustling international terminal".

One of the standout features is the terrace seating area, where travellers can enjoy their refreshments while overlooking the terminal below.

The lounge also now boasts a more spacious layout with upgraded furnishings; additional

seating zones, including private booths; and premium ergonomic seating with plenty of charging stations; showers with upgraded fixtures and complimentary toiletries; and a refreshed family room for parents and children.

Guests can also enjoy an expanded buffet with a mix of Balinese specialties and western flavours, complete with a more comprehensive drinks menu.

Ideal for business travellers, the lounge offers fast and reliable wi-fi, as well as private workstations equipped with charging points and desk space; there's also a small conference room, ideal for last-minute meetings or calls.

The Tujuwan Lounge remains accessible to all travellers, regardless of airline or ticket class, with walk-in access available for around \$65.05 per adult. *JM*



Travel Daily  
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TAKE A LOOK BACK AT THE BIGGEST STORIES FOR THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY IN 2024.  
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## SPECIALS

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**Vietjet** is offering 50% off flights between Vietnam and Australia from now until 07 Feb. The discounted price applies on eco tickets, available every Fri for travel between 10 Feb and 31 Mar. Learn more [HERE](#).

Travellers can take advantage of slashed prices on **AAT Kings'** most sought-after itineraries. Included in the offer is the 13-day 'Perfect Tasmania' tour, which has been reduced from \$8,515pp to \$7,238pp, twin share. The itinerary showcases some of Tasmania's best destinations, including Cradle Mountain, the Bay of Fires, and Port Arthur.

**Singapore Airlines'** 'New Year Take Off Sale' is live, offering discounted fares across business, premium economy and economy classes, to destinations across Europe, Southeast Asia, north and west Asia, and Africa. Prices start from \$763 for a return flight from Australia to Beijing, for bookings made by 05 Feb for travel through to 31 Dec. More details on the offer can be found [HERE](#).

For a limited time, **Swan Hellenic** is allowing travel companions to sail for half price on selected 2025 voyages. Find out more [HERE](#) and book before 16 Mar to take advantage of the offer.

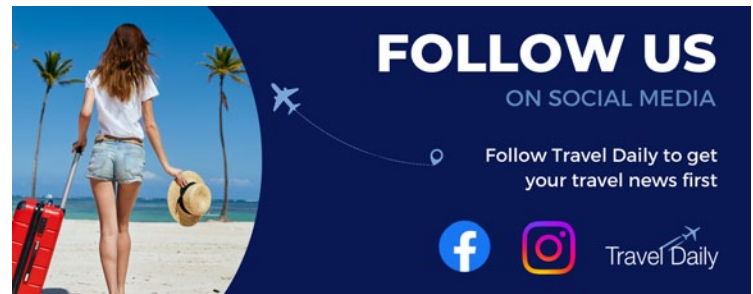
Now is the perfect time for clients to book their Japan holiday, with **All Nippon Airways** announcing its Hello Blue Sale. On until 21 Jan, the promotion includes discounted return fares from Sydney and Perth to Tokyo - see [HERE](#) for more details.

Cruisers can enjoy savings of up to A\$8,000 per suite and a two-category suite upgrade on more than 100 **Silversea** voyages worldwide, departing between early 2025 and 2027. For instance, save on the 10-day Antarctica Voyage on board *Silver Wind*, which departs Puerto Williams on 26 Oct 2025. The offers apply to all-inclusive door-to-door and port-to-port fares, on bookings made by 31 Jan - see [HERE](#).

**Batik Air's** New Year Sale means travellers can fly to Kuala Lumpur from \$139 one way, from Perth, Brisbane, Melbourne or Sydney. The promotion ends 31 Jan, and applies to travel until 25 Mar 2025. [CLICK HERE](#) for more details.

**Trafalgar** is offering savings of up to \$2,200 per couple on worldwide trips, thanks to its 'Big Tour' sale. The discounted itineraries include the 15-day 'Best of Ireland and Scotland', reduced from \$7,050 to \$6,996; the 11-day 'Italy Bellissimo', down from \$6,549 to \$5,567; and plenty more. Browse the limited-time deals [HERE](#).

Velocity Frequent Flyers can gain up to 20,000 bonus points on eligible **Virgin Australia** international long-haul flights until 20 Jan. Travellers can rack up to 20,000 bonus points on business return flights and 10,000 bonus points on economy return flights, for travel between 21 Jun-30 Sep 2025. More special launch fares and promotions are live now on the Virgin Australia ([HERE](#)) and Qatar Airways ([HERE](#)) websites.



## A hotel among fairy chimneys



**MARRIOTT** Hotels has announced the opening of Cappadocia Marriott Hotel (**pictured**) - the newest and largest hotel in the Turkish region of Cappadocia.

Situated near the town of Goreme, guests can easily explore Cappadocia's top attractions, including the UNESCO-listed Goreme National Park, the popular Open-Air Museum, and the renowned underground cities, and the area's famous hot air balloon launch sites.

Adorned with an earthy colour palette and handmade artwork, the hotel comprises of 298 guest rooms with free wi-fi, flat-screen TVs, and air conditioning.

Guests can use the 24-hour fully equipped fitness centre and indoor and outdoor pools, and enjoy Turkish baths and massages at the health club & spa.

Dining options include three signature venues, including the Fairy Flame Restaurant, which is inspired by the region's iconic fairy chimneys and serves authentic Turkish cuisine.

The hotel also features seven multifunctional meeting rooms

which can be configured to suit any event, as well as a 1,200m<sup>2</sup> ballroom for large gatherings.

"We are thrilled to introduce the first Marriott Hotel in Cappadocia, a sought-after destination, renowned for its unique beauty and cultural significance," said Sandra Schulze-Potgieter, Vice President, Premium & Select Brands, Europe, Middle East & Africa, Marriott International.

"This property not only marks our debut in Cappadocia, but also underscores Marriott International's ongoing commitment to the Turkish market," she added. *JM*

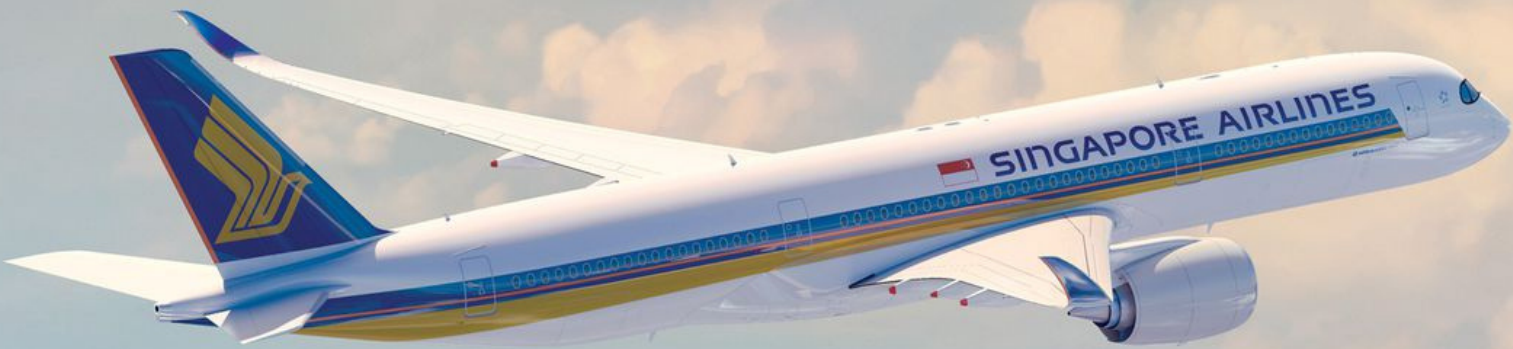
## Final call for ANZACs

**TIME** is running out for guests to book Mat McLachlan's ANZAC Day 2025 tours.

Trips include either a 10-day 'ANZAC Day on the Western Front' tour departing 19 Apr from Paris, or an eight-day 'ANZAC Day at Gallipoli', which leave 20 Apr from Istanbul.

Tours must be booked by 31 Jan - see [HERE](#) for more details.





### Reward per ticket

**Y: \$20, P: \$40, J/F: \$60**

**Ticket: 17JAN-05FEB25  
Travel: 17JAN25 onwards  
Destination: Asia/India**

### Reward per ticket

**Y: \$30, P: \$50, J/F: \$100**

**Ticket: 17JAN-05FEB25  
Travel: 17JAN25 onwards  
Destination: Europe**

### Double

### Rewards per ticket

**Y: \$40, P: \$80, J/F: \$120**

**Ticket: 17JAN-05FEB25  
Travel: 17JAN-31MAR25  
Destination: Asia/India**

### Double

### Rewards per ticket

**Y: \$60, P: \$100, J/F: \$200**

**Ticket: 17JAN-05FEB25  
Travel: 17JAN-31MAR25  
Destination: Europe**

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