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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest news, plus a full page from Viking.



FOZ DO IGUAZU

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of Intrepid, which is this week hosting us on its Iguazu Falls Short Break.

WE HAVE arrived in Brazil today and made our way to Foz do Iguazu, ready to embark on a beautiful few days experiencing Iguazu Falls, the largest waterfall system in the world.

After an included transfer from the airport to hotel, this evening we will meet our Intrepid local guide and travel group at a briefing about how we will spend the next two days exploring this natural wonder.

Andronis appoints

ANDRONIS Hotels has just appointed boutique communications agency Slojourn Studio as its exclusive PR and sales representatives in Australia.

The hotel operator's portfolio includes retreats in Santorini and Paros in Greece.

Slojourn will share Andronis' vision to the Australian market through tailored campaigns and the team's understanding of local travellers.

QF returns Sapporo direct

QANTAS will operate direct seasonal flights between Sydney and Sapporo in Japan for the first time since scrapping the service in 2020 due to the pandemic (TD breaking news).

The upcoming nonstop flight will operate three times a week between 15 Dec and 28 Mar 2026, adding 20,000 seats to the popular Japanese ski destination at a time when Aussie visitation to Japan continues to boom.

Flights depart Sydney in the morning and arrive at New Chitose Airport in the early evening for a 10 hour and 50 mins flying time, saving several hours compared to existing one-stop options.

"Australians' love affair with Japan is stronger than ever so it is fitting that Sapporo will also mark the 100th destination in the Qantas network," Qantas Int'l CEO Cam Wallace said.

"These new flights will save passengers hours of travel time



compared to connecting in Tokyo or other cities and give them more time to enjoy the slopes."

Responding to the news, Sno'n'Ski Holidays MD Daniel Walker said he "almost fell out of his ski boots" when he first heard the Qantas announcement.

"With the influx of Aussie skiers to Japan, these direct services from Australia to Sapporo have been the missing piece," Walker told Travel Daily.

"This direct service will be an enormous boost to the Hokkaido ski resorts with most resorts within a 2.5 hours' drive from New Chitose airport," he added.

Sno'n'Ski Holidays has a \$99 waitlist for Japan 2025/26, offering clients an additional \$250 off any hotel and lift pass booking until 31 Jan. AB

Fly free with Viking

VIKING'S new Explorer Sale is available to book, with fly free offers until 31 Mar 2025.

Guests or their companions are able to fly free up to the value of \$2,400pp, plus they are eligible to receive a \$500 onboard credit on ocean and expedition voyages. See the back page for details.



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Hike a “staggering blow”

A MOVE by the UK Government to increase the recently launched Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) by 60% has been labelled a “staggering blow” to future visitation by the country’s peak inbound tourism body.

“There is a false assumption that international visitors will continue to choose the UK, even if we hike up prices,” UKinbound CEO Joss Croft pointed out.

“International tourism is a competitive industry and the two key motivators to visit a destination are value for money and the quality of welcome - this move damages our standing on both fronts,” he added.

Croft also took aim at the impact that hiking the ETA fee - which currently sets Australian



visitors back £10 (A\$19.60) - will have on the broader UK economy.

“Charging international travellers more to visit the UK only harms the growth potential of our fifth-largest export sector, international tourism to the UK, which is currently outperforming the wider UK economy,” he said.

The UK tourism body warned that international arrivals will preference other European destinations over the UK, with the upcoming Electronic Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) costing half the price of the ETA and offering more destination value.

ETIAS launches later this year and offers entry to 29 Schengen countries, and is free for over 70s and under 18s.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) also lashed the UK Govt plan, characterising the proposal to raise the cost of the ETA, just a week after being introduced, as “bewildering”.

“In Nov, the UK Government laid out plans to increase tourist arrivals by 30% to reach 50 million annually by 2030 in pursuit of tourism’s economic benefits, but gouging these travellers...would be a very bad start,” IATA Director General Willie Walsh said.

“The added cost would come on top of the Air Passenger Duty - the biggest travel tax in the world - which itself will increase again in Apr,” he added.

Following feedback from the aviation industry, the government has agreed to a temporary exemption for passengers who transit airside, and do not pass through UK border control.

No date for the rise has been announced, and still requires parliamentary approval. AB

Flinders Airport refurb

THE Federal Government is investing \$2.68 million to revitalise Flinders Island Airport in Tasmania’s Furneaux Group.

The project will improve the safety and capacity of the airport, with a view to attracting more visitors and business investment.

Key objectives of the project will include the expanded operation of safe night landings by updating runway lighting and electrical infrastructure, as well as a new operations office.

“By creating a more attractive and reliable travel gateway, the project is expected to increase tourism and business opportunities for the Island and beyond,” Federal Transport Minister Catherine King said.



CATO marks milestone

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators’ (CATO) Touring Academy has recorded more than 11,000 course completions since its launch to the market mid-last year (TD 04 Mar 2024).

More than 600 travel advisors have earned their CATO Touring Certification to date, with more than 1,000 enrolments in total.

The program delivers comprehensive sector insights, exclusive training with CATO member brands, and advanced sales strategies.

“The engagement levels we’ve seen in such a short time are extraordinary - this has resulted in the number of course completions and certified agents doubling since late Nov,” MD Brett Jardine enthused.

“Our Touring Academy provides agents with an unmatched learning experience - combining authentic, sector-focused material with extensive brand training,” he added.

HX touches down

HONG Kong Airlines touched down on its revived Gold Coast route flagged last year (TD 01 Oct 2024), offering seasonal flights over the Lunar New Year.

The service offers four weekly flights until 15 Feb, and is operated by an A330 widebody aircraft, offering both business and economy class options.

The airline hosted a lively ceremony at the boarding gate at Gold Coast Airport on Fri for the first flight, graced by President Jeff Sun, alongside local aviation representatives, and senior officials from the Airport Authority Hong Kong.

Outside of providing another outbound option to Hong Kong, the route is expected to generate greater inbound visitation from Hong Kong and mainland China.

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Craft Kyushu Japan

Airlines threaten tix hike

AUSTRALIA'S major airlines have warned travellers will face higher airfares if a proposed ban on card surcharges were to be approved by the Federal Govt. The calls from Qantas and Virgin Australia are in response to the Reserve Bank deliberating on whether to advise the Federal Government to ban surcharges or push for other fee changes. In its submission, Qantas cautioned that a ban on card surcharges in the tough commercial conditions could lead to carriers raising ticket costs.



"In the current inflationary environment, many merchants are facing increased costs of doing business and a removal of the ability to surcharge may result in a proportionate increase in the price of the underlying product," the airline said.

Virgin Australia echoed the sentiments of its rival, stating that card payment fees allow it to keep airfares more affordable.

"If the ability to pass on card payments fees is removed, this may result in the cost of card acceptance being passed on to all consumers as higher prices," Virgin Australia said.

VA added that many of its customers choose to pay via credit cards to access additional benefits including loyalty points, insurance benefits, and fraud and purchase protections. **AB**

Ama free land tours

AMAWATERWAYS is making waves with complimentary land packages on hundreds of sailings in 2025 and 2026.

More than 20 pre- or post-cruise land packages are available for passengers to extend their holiday for free.

Two-, three- or four-night packages are on offer for guests booking a new reservation on select European sailings until the end of Mar.

The packages are available on around 70 different itineraries covering more than 230 departure dates this year, and doubling to more than almost 500 departures in 2026.

This offer is combinable with other AmaWaterways deals, such as loyalty savings & benefits, referral savings, curated Grand River Cruises & combination cruise savings, and future cruise benefits – **CLICK HERE** for more.

Istanbul drink fears

THERE have been a number of recent deaths reported in Istanbul from methanol in counterfeit drinks, mirroring similar problems in Laos, and possibly in Fiji.

Smarttraveller is urging Australians to stick to reputable venues and beware of suspiciously cheap alcohol.

Aussies are advised to exercise a high degree of caution in Turkiye overall, due to terror threats.

LA is open for tourism

VISIT California is actively working to reassure Australia and the world Los Angeles is open for business, despite the ongoing Southern California wildfires.

The destination management organisation's Chair Dan Gordon is leading a delegation of CEOs from across the state on a mission to Australia this week to help deliver the message, with our market one of the most critical for the state, and Los Angeles in particular.

This week will also see 50 California delegates visit the International Media Marketplace in New York, where they will engage directly with hundreds of journalists and influencers for trips and other engagements.

LCC scraps Sydney

THAI AirAsia X will end its Bangkok-Sydney route in Feb, after launching the service just last month (**TD** 03 Dec 2024).

The route, operating from Bangkok's Don Mueang International Airport, will scale down from its current six weekly flights to five per week early next month, before ceasing operations entirely later in Feb.

The service was the only low-cost service linking the two countries' largest cities.

XJ will however continue to serve seven major international destinations from Bangkok, including Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya, Sapporo, Seoul, Shanghai, and New Delhi.

Sydney Airport declined to comment on the cancellation.

Window Seat

THE Moon has officially been deemed a "vulnerable" site by the World Monuments Fund, as it may be under threat due to an increase in tourism and exploration.

Every two years, the non-profit international organisation lists 25 historic places that face major challenges due to climate change, tourism, conflict and natural disaster.

Other sites include the Barotsa Floodplain Cultural Landscape in Zambia and the Belfast Assembly Rooms in Northern Ireland.

This is the first year that the list now extends beyond Earth.

"We have about 100 places on the Moon where different nations have put material," said Dr Alice Gorman, one of the researchers who worked on the nomination for the list.

"It might be a crash landing. It might be a human landing site, a robotic probe or rover."

Increased traffic could mean more dust moving around, causing cultural heritage sites to be gradually worn away "by sharp abrasive lunar dust".

Several environmental impact assessments have been proposed.

"Commercial operators going to the Moon [need to be held] accountable to the public," Dr Gorman demanded.



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ATIA weighs in on VA deal

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has thrown its support behind Virgin Australia's application for capacity on a wet lease agreement with Qatar Airways, arguing a formal approval will open up a myriad of benefits for Aussie travellers.

In its submission to the International Air Services Commission, ATIA said approval would likely deliver greater

choice and schedule flexibility for passengers, a change that would be especially important on Australia-Middle East services.

The industry body argued concentration levels on flights between Australia and the UAE are back to levels not seen since 2008, with Virgin Australia's tie-up with Qatar needed to deliver greater consumer choice.

"ATIA's analysis reveals that from 2021 to 2023, the concentration on the Australia-UAE route increased by 2,000 points to 7,000 on the Herfindahl-Hirschmann Index," ATIA said.

"This is significant in the context that...close to 10,000 indicates a monopoly route while an [index] close to zero indicates a highly competitive route.

"Airlines between Australia and the Middle East to Europe and the UK have remained relatively expensive post-COVID, so encouraging capacity and competition on these routes is a key priority," ATIA added. *AB*

Seabourn 2026 out

SEABOURN has announced its 2026 itineraries to the Northwest Passage and Canadian Arctic, taking guests to some of the world's most historic destinations and storied waterways.

Seabourn Venture will offer six voyages ranging from eight to 24 days between Aug-Oct 2026, traversing the Northwest Passage and Canadian Arctic before sailing south to explore the Caribbean, South America and Antarctica.

Highlights include an exploration of Devon Island, the world's largest uninhabited island, and connecting with the people of the Arctic, learning their stories and cultural traditions in Cambridge Bay.

"The Northwest Passage is one of the most famous and historic routes in the Arctic, and we are excited to give travellers an opportunity to explore this region with Seabourn," said the cruise line's President, Mark Tamis.

See dates and full itinerary details [HERE](#).

FCTG shuts Hotel API

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has confirmed that due to "a number of factors", the decision was made by the company to wind down its hotel API business in Dec last year.

While the call resulted in redundancies at Infinity Holidays, FCTG told *Travel Daily* that it will not have any impact on the broader Infinity wholesale business, which is operational.

Living large in Asia's Vegas



LATE last year, Cathay Pacific and Sands Resorts Macao jointly hosted MTA on a three-day getaway to Macao on the south coast of China, known as the 'Las Vegas of Asia'.

The group soaked in the culture and sights of Macao, including The Mandarin's House (**pictured**), the residence and family home of the late Qing theoretician and reformist, and St Paul's Ruins, the remnants of a 17th century Catholic Portuguese church.

The MTA advisors also snacked on Portuguese egg tarts and enjoyed modern Thai dishes at The Mews restaurant.

"Macao definitely impressed us with its unique blend of history and modernity, its cleanliness, safety and accessibility making it a fantastic destination worth recommending to our clients, fellow advisors, friends and family," shared Prem Halama, Ticketing Team Leader.

"We enjoyed the convenience of

the location, allowing us to visit not only the nearby properties and attractions, but also venture out into greater Macao and explore Macao Peninsula, historical quarters and villages like Taipa, Coloane and enjoy the beautiful sights."

The group also enjoyed three nights in Hong Kong, taking in the vibrant destination's various sights including the Peak Tram, The Big Buddha and Po Lin Monastery, as well as a trip to the Ladies' markets in Mong Kok. *JM*

Lufthansa nabs ITA

ITALIAN airline ITA Airways is officially the newest member of the Lufthansa Group after formal approvals of the acquisition were passed for a 41% stake.

The two major European carriers agreed to the purchase in May 2023, with the development paving the way new offers and better connections for pax.

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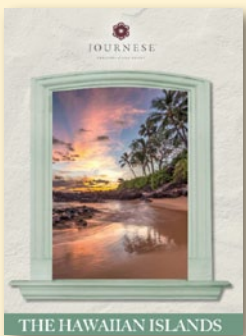
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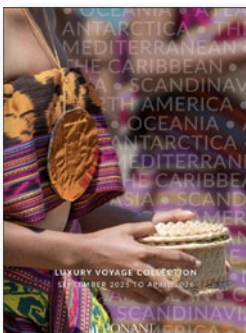
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Seabourn - 2025-2026 Cruises & Expeditions
Seabourn has unveiled its brand-new brochure for the 2025-26 season, highlighting destinations across Europe, Asia, Australia, New Zealand and South Pacific, America and more. The 140-page guide highlights upcoming itineraries like the nine-day 'Greek Isles & Ephesus' sailing; the eight-day 'Treasures of Japan & Taiwan' voyage; and the 14-day 'Glacier Bay, Fjords & Inside Passage' cruise. Readers will also discover what to expect while on board Seabourn's ultra-luxury ships, including the wide array of accommodation options; dining venues; onboard entertainment; and offshore experiences. Order a copy of the brochure, or view it online, [HERE](#).



Journese - The Hawaiian Islands
Luxury travel provider Journese is showcasing its holiday offerings in Hawaii through its latest brochure, which covers Oahu, Maui, Island of Hawaii, Kauai and Lanai. Readers will discover the finest 4- and 5-star resorts across the Hawaiian Islands, as well as private resort residences, condominiums, luxury vacation rentals, exciting activities, cultural experiences, and private excursion options. The 42-page booklet invites travellers to discover the 'Journese difference', including superior service, a world-class portfolio of accommodation, and its expert advisors. Find the brochure online [HERE](#).



Ponant - Luxury Voyages Collection 2025/26
Ponant's new Luxury Voyage Collection invites guests to experience some of the world's most captivating destinations from Sep 2025 to Apr 2026. In a new brochure detailing the collection, advisors and their clients can learn about an exclusive Antarctic adventure departing from Ushuaia to Hobart aboard *Le Commandant Charcot*, featuring Jonathan Shackleton, a descendant of Sir Ernest Shackleton and the family historian. Also highlighted are hidden gems across Northern Europe, the Canary Islands, and Papua New Guinea. View a digital copy of the brochure [HERE](#).

Emirates dresses to impress



EMIRATES has unveiled a new uniform for its premium and VIP passenger services team, who are responsible for the seamless transfer of high-profile passengers, including dignitaries and celebrities, through Dubai International Airport.

Inspired by the Emirates cabin crew look, the new uniform is designed in the shade of 'warm sand', with red accents and matching cuffs for ladies.

There are three different variations - an A-line skirt suit for ladies, a pant suit for ladies, and a tailored three-piece suit for men.

The suit is accented by the Emirates red hat with a gold pin showcasing the Emirates logo, and a cream-coloured chiffon scarf, with red leather shoes and matching handbags completing the look.

The 145-strong team at Emirates have been trained to handle VIP passengers, as well as premium first class connecting passengers at Dubai International Airport, offering a high level of service to more than 150,000 Premium and VIP passengers annually. *JM*

What's brewin', MEL?

MELBOURNE Airport will soon welcome a new dining venue in its T1 domestic terminal, with independent craft brewer Bridge Road Brewers to open on 04 Feb.

Supported by Delaware North, the new venue will offer visitors a welcoming spot to enjoy Bridge Road Brewers' High Country hospitality and range of award-winning beers.

The offering will include a selection of the brewery's signature beers on tap and a High Country-inspired menu featuring pizzas and warm pretzels.

"This venue represents a new chapter for us, a chance to bring the authentic Bridge Road Brewers experience to a broader and more diverse audience," said Bridge Road Brewers founder and co-owner, Ben Kraus.



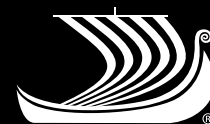
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