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A BOUNTY of rewards and bonus commission awaits agents with many cruise bookings as part of their CLIA 2025 membership.

In addition, a comprehensive training library will ensure your clients have the latest information for their cruise - see **page eight**.

## TravelPay wields a shield

**EXCLUSIVE**

**AGENTS** now have another financial weapon in their arsenal after TravelPay launched its own chargeback protection product to further fortify supplier payments.

The Zenith Payments brand has today unveiled TravelPay Shield, which has been designed to offer “comprehensive protection for travel businesses”, including advanced fraud detection systems.

TravelPay Shield has also been designed to protect against supplier insolvency, shielding transactions from risks including bankruptcy and other failures.

Where services are not delivered, TravelPay Shield covers

chargebacks, allowing agents to offload the financial burden by covering short-term refunds.

Zenith Payments CEO Peter Egglestone said TravelPay Shield represents years of collaboration to deliver the best in market.

“We have been working closely with various groups and bodies in the travel industry to formulate the perfect product to address the unique challenges faced by agents,” Egglestone said.

“This launch underscores our ongoing mission to provide superior solutions tailored to the needs of our partners.” *ML*

## Get behind NDC

**AIRLINE** industry consultant Timmo Rol says Australia’s travel industry must unite behind IATA’s NDC as the future of air retailing.

In a major opinion piece penned exclusively for *Travel Daily* today, Rol explains Qantas’ NDC strategy from another angle - see **page 5**.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features seven pages of news, including **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- CLIA Membership
- Tokyo Tourism

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## Win a trip to Tokyo

**TOKYO** Tourism is inviting agents to be in the running to win a trip to the Japanese capital with return ANA flights and four nights at The Prince Park Tower Tokyo.

To enter, complete the updated Tokyo Tourism Expert program - more details on **page nine**.

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\*T&C'S APPLY.

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## A&K boosts Mexico

**LUXURY** tour operator Abercrombie & Kent has ramped up its presence in Mexico, opening a new Destination Management Company (DMC) with offices in Mexico City and Merida, taking its global DMC office count to 55.

Helmed by Mexico DMC General Manager, Graeme Bull, the new offices come as a precursor to the company's plans to open a luxurious lodge in the Yucatan later this year.

## QF to overhaul uniforms

**QANTAS** is on the hunt for an Australian fashion designer to envisage a new look for its 17,500 uniformed crew members as part of its comprehensive fleet renewal program.

The carrier has launched a survey of its uniformed workforce to develop the eleventh new uniform in its history, which QF says will represent the future of the national carrier.

The successful designer will join a highly exclusive collection of prominent designers to have reworked the Qantas uniform, including Peter Morrissey, Yves



Saint Laurent, George Gross, Harry Who, Emilio Pucci and most recently, Martin Grant.

Ahead of the new uniforms debuting in 2027, Qantas says it will work closely with the chosen designer for the carrier's new look to reflect its ongoing fleet renewal and major initiatives including Project Sunrise.

Qantas CEO Vanessa Hudson said the airline's ambitious plans for the future necessitated a transformation in the way the brand was reflected to customers.

"While the uniform style may have changed, what hasn't changed is the pride our people have in wearing it, which is why we are putting them at the core of the design process.

"Our uniform represents the Qantas spirit all over the world," Hudson added. *ML*

## Complex on Sale

**COMPLEX** Travel Group has welcomed new Luxury Travel Manager, Alana Sale, for its Onboard Luxury brand.

Sale has worked in the travel industry for more than 20 years and previously held roles at Flight Centre Travel Group, managing brands including Flight Centre, Travel Associates and the former Escape Travel label.

In her new role at Onboard Luxury, Sale will oversee the brand's VIP and high-net-worth clients and service national VIP clients across all of Complex Travel Group's brands.

"Alana is a true travel professional with a proven track record of exceeding client expectations," commented Complex Travel Group CEO Anthony Riemann.

Sale's appointment follows eight new hires at Complex Travel Group since mid-Nov, all filling newly created positions.

More appointments on **page 7**.

## Virtuoso on screen

**VIRTUOSO** has renewed its partnership with Westpac OpenAir Cinema in Sydney.

The company will showcase its brand with content screened before the main feature each night against the backdrop of Sydney Harbour.

The collaboration builds on the momentum of the company's global 'So Virtuoso' campaign - a multi-year initiative spotlighting extraordinary travel experiences.

## Oatley back pays

**HAMILTON** Island Enterprises Limited has outlaid \$28.1 million in back pay to current and former staff following an order by the Fair Work Ombudsman.

The regulator launched an investigation into the Whitsunday Island operator in 2020 following requests for assistance regarding underpayment of full time salaries for staff on more than 20 awards.

The payment includes more than \$6 million in interest and super.

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## Window Seat

**HANGOVERS** often stimulate creativity as revellers frantically look for anything that can ease the post-party cranial concert.

Vitamin supplement brand Alc-Eze is looking to tap into this ingenuity, launching a job search for Australia's first-ever Chief Hangover Officer (CHO).

The newly-created position calls for one individual to travel the world to trial the world's wackiest hangover cures - everything from vodka-soaked socks to...bull penis.

The successful applicant will be paid \$100k pro rata for two months to travel the world to hit the world's best parties and try local hangover cures, with a \$20k bonus if the product makes it into Alc-Eze.

## Intrepid recertified

**INTREPID** Travel has certified as a B Corp for the second time.

The tour operator achieved a score of 102.5, up 11.3 points from its initial three-year certification in 2021.

Chief Executive Officer James Thornton updated his LinkedIn followers with the news yesterday, adding Intrepid's score of more than 100 puts it in the top 30 large B Corps globally.

"This is a testament to the improvements we've made in key areas of our business," he said.

## Expedia air travel hacks

**TRAVELLERS** could save 13% on airfare tickets if they book on a Sunday, according to Expedia Group's newly released annual Air Hacks report.

Using data from the Airlines Reporting Corporation, the report aims to dispel air travel myths and find out how travellers can save themselves time and money when planning their next flight.

According to the data, travellers have more leeway than they think when it comes to snagging the cheapest flights, with 18 to 29 days out being the ideal timeframe to book, as opposed to months in advance.

While it is commonly thought that Sunday is the best day to travel, it is actually the most

expensive - however, it is historically the cheapest day of the week to sit down and make the purchase.

The cheapest day to travel internationally is actually Thursday, with flights on this day up to 8% cheaper, while those looking to avoid crowded airports should pick a Tuesday.

The Expedia report also discovered that the busiest month to fly is not Nov or Dec during the holidays, which is a common misconception - it is actually Jul, which sees more than double the number of flights than Feb, the quietest month.

According to the data, the gap between economy and premium is shrinking, with the average difference in cost for flying premium versus economy now 10% smaller than it was in 2019.

Flight prices in general are going down, with the average economy ticket in the US 2% lower than last year, while the average price of a US premium ticket is 5% less than last year.

For US travellers, the cheapest month for an economy ticket is Aug, and the steepest is Mar. *JM*

## Big Serko changes

**SERKO** has announced the appointment of a new Chief Operating Officer, Matthew Gerrie, and the resignation of Chief Product Officer Joydip Das.

Gerrie will join Serko from 17 Mar, and will play a key role in scaling the company's global operations, driving growth, and optimising performance across its international markets.

He will also assume Serko's product responsibilities, following the resignation of Das.

Gerrie joins from Booking Holdings, having spent more than 11 years with its flagship brand Booking.com, most recently as its Director of Strategy.



## CHIRIGUANO BAY

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Viking, which is this week hosting us on an Antarctic expedition aboard *Viking Polaris*.

**AFTER** a delicious Italian feast in the private dining room of Manfredi's last night, we were treated to an incredible show of natural beauty as a pod of orcas was spotted cruising around *Viking Polaris* for the better part of an hour.

The whale sightings have continued today in the sheltered waters of Chiriguano Bay, with guests getting up close on zodiacs and Special Operations Boats.

This afternoon, a small contingent of guests will embark on an expedition with the on board science team to set up a hydrophone to listen to underwater sounds.

## Gettin' active with G

**G ADVENTURES** has bolstered its active offering, with 25 new trips for this year.

The eight new adventures explore new and lesser-known regions across Pakistan, Jordan, Morocco, the Balkans, and more, across a multitude of gradings.

G's Active travel style grew more than 16% last year.





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\*Fares from MEL. Refer to GDS for SYD fares and T&Cs.

## A web of communication

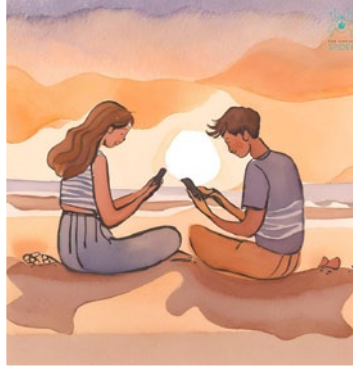
**THE** travel industry is wasting countless sums by communicating incorrectly with different generations, according to travel industry communications expert Sam Patton.

Each demographic prefers a different way of communicating, Patton believes, meaning knowing the optimum method for each age group is integral to successful marketing.

Patton has recently launched The Social Spider, Australia's first digital marketing agency dedicated to the travel sector.

"Each generation has grown up with different levels of technology that they have mastered (or ignored) and this affects how, when and why they communicate," Patton said.

"If we, as marketers and sellers of travel products in Australia, want to communicate with these people, we need to talk to each generation in the way they feel most comfortable and to understand why."



Patton's blogpost '*Text, call or message? Communicating with each generation effectively*', outlines the manner in which each group most effectively receives marketing, such as messaging apps for Generation Z, and mail-outs for older people - for more of Patton's insights and to read the full blog post, [CLICK HERE](#). *MS*

### Ponant Discoveries

**PONANT** has announced a new series of Discovery Sessions events around the country in Feb and Mar.

The first edition for the year will see Ponant destination experts, including Commercial Manager & Expedition Leader Ryo Ijichi, discuss the cruise line's itineraries, share first-hand experiences, and offer other exclusive insights.

Joining Ponant for the events will be sister brand Paul Gauguin Cruises, ahead of the multi-million dollar refit of its flagship.

### NZ Nomadic visa

**NEW** visa conditions for New Zealand will now allow visitors to work remotely from the country.

The visa is available to those arriving as a visitor, or with a NZeTA, on applications received from 27 Jan.

Visa holders must not work for a New Zealand-based employer, or provide goods or services to people in New Zealand.

## ATIA UPDATE

from Ingrid Fraser, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy



**CAN** you believe the first month of 2025 is almost over already?

I hope you've all had a great start to the year -

though, knowing how busy this industry is, I'm sure many of you barely had a chance to catch your breath over the holidays.

At ATIA, we've hit the ground running - our annual Workforce and Skills survey is now live, and we'd love your input.

Last year, your insights contributed to some great wins for the travel industry, which you can check out [HERE](#).

This year's survey will help us represent your priorities for 2025 and shape our advocacy for government support and projects for the travel industry in relation to talent attraction, skills and training, and migration.

[CLICK HERE](#) to share your views in our 2025 survey.

Last week, the Independent Review of the Australian Traineeship Incentive System

was released, which made 34 recommendations about the future of the traineeship system.

Pleasingly, ATIA's contributions were recognised throughout the wide-ranging report.

However, unfortunately, the review downplayed the importance of financial support for employers who take on trainees or apprentices.

And, in a particularly baffling move, travel consultants, tour guides, and flight attendants were grouped with horse trainers and picture framers as roles supposedly lacking a "public value proposition" for funding.

Needless to say, ATIA will continue making the case for the vital importance of our \$69 billion travel industry.

On a brighter note, the Government has extended current funding for employers taking on trainees until Dec 2025 while it reviews the report's recommendations.

Dean and I are heading to Canberra soon for the first week back of Federal Parliament.

As always, we'll keep making sure the travel industry's priorities are front and centre.

### Exp profits in trees

**EXPERIENCE** Co has continued its strong underlying earnings company-wide in the second quarter, driven by revenue growth in both its skydiving and adventure experiences segments.

The improved performance was driven by higher revenues and improved operating efficiency in the second quarter, which is traditionally stronger trading season for the business.

### President Talactac

**VIKING** has appointed Leah Talatac as its new President, reporting into Torstein Hagen, who will remain Chair & Chief Executive Officer.

Talatac has been with Viking for almost 20 years, serving as an important member of the executive team.

She led Viking's successful IPO last year, which was the largest of the year on the NYSE.



## Navigating NDC complexities in Australia

### OPINION

Timmo Rol is an industry consultant in the area of airline retailing, travel tech, and distribution.

Got an opinion? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to [feedback@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:feedback@traveldaily.com.au)



IT'S clear that the travel industry, particularly corporate travel, faces significant challenges in adapting to the evolving landscape of IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC) implementation.

In Australia, the sentiment against NDC has indeed increased, with concerns about complexity, integration challenges, and commercial implications.

However, it is important to remember that you can't make an omelette without breaking a few eggs.

The chance to work on both sides of the airline retailing world (airlines and TMC) has opened my eyes to the positives from each perspective.

I truly believe there are so many great opportunities out there if we come together with a shared focus and investment.

The airline distribution landscape in Australia can be complex, and I'm here to share my insights in the hopes of shedding light on the topic.

So, whilst I understand the resistance to change, emphasis on technology gaps and criticism of Qantas, in my experience, an opportunistic approach will bear more fruit.

Do you see broken eggs, or an omelette ready to be tailored for your customer?

### What is Qantas up to?

Beginning 01 Jul, Qantas will introduce a multi-tier strategy for sellers to access Qantas content.

In my professional opinion, Qantas' announcement to evolve its distribution model is a positive and inclusive advancement.

Here is why:

### Steady progress

Qantas' approach to NDC implementation demonstrates a commitment to steady progress.

After all, the Qantas Distribution Platform (QDP) was first announced in May 2018 and tailored offerings, customer loyalty recognition and indirect "best available offer" were always part of the proposition.

Now, the benefits for adopters are more pronounced.

The upcoming changes highlight the importance of accessing NDC content and the downsides for those who don't adapt.

While some see it as complex, the strategy mirrors the evolving distribution landscape, urging travel sellers to understand and use it.

This approach has given everyone - from large OTAs to smaller agents and TMCs - ample time to adjust.

### Inclusivity in distribution

Contrary to the perception of limited access, Qantas' strategy provides a range of options for travel sellers of all sizes.

The multi-tiered approach, including EDIFACT, standard NDC via GDS, and NDC via tech partners (or direct through the NDC API), ensures that all sellers have pathways to participate in NDC content (or not).

The goal is to provide options based on their choice of channel.

Different flavours come with different commercial propositions, but to date, apart from some above-the-line sale fares, Qantas has not removed any fare classes, or routes from EDIFACT (yet).

On the other hand, did you know that Qantas already offers discounts for Qantas Frequent Flyers on paid seating, bonus savings for Qantas Business Rewards members, dynamic commissions, and companion fare offers on specific eligible flights in NDC?

### Technology readiness

Since launching the QDP in Nov 2018, together with their

NDC tech partners, Qantas continues to invest in the platform.

Aside from Multi-City support for more than six segments, some Interline capabilities, and Routehappy rich content, everything

available in EDIFACT is also available in the QDP.

Technology gaps today are not necessarily on Qantas' side.

Often, it's the technology stack on top where further work is still needed.

Global Distribution Systems (GDS), aggregators, online booking tools (OBTs), mid-back-office systems, and reporting tools all have the ability to limit functionality if they do not (yet) support certain features.

As a result, the lowest level of

capabilities defines the overall customer experience.

Yet, in 2018, Corporate Travel Management demonstrated the ability to adjust systems and access Qantas NDC content without affecting the traveller experience, from booking to servicing, reconciliation, duty of care, and reporting.

### Conclusion

Qantas' approach to NDC is both ambitious and aligned with the evolving demands of the airline industry.

The path forward lies in collaboration and innovation.

Airlines have invested heavily in NDC technology, but its true value can only be realised through widespread adoption and creative application by the travel seller community.

As a travel seller, there is no way around it anymore.

Identify your opportunities and role in this transformation, create your business case, and take ownership of your narrative.

You may very well choose not to change, because it saves in the short-term and will deliver scale, continuity and efficiency in your current tools and reporting (please still do a cost-benefit analysis on this approach).

More likely, it will involve a revised supplier strategy and finding partners that deliver the content and tools to thrive.

In my opinion, it is clearly time to start cooking an omelette, or others will.

### Disclaimer

Please note that I am an independent industry consultant, and this article was not written on behalf of Qantas or any other travel industry provider.

I did not receive any payments (or upgrades) in exchange for my opinions, however, I have verified my understanding with Qantas to ensure accuracy. TR

“  
The path forward lies in collaboration  
”



## BEA's half a billion

ADELAIDE has secured more than \$540 million worth of business events in the first six months of this financial year alone - a figure that exceeds Business Events Adelaide's (BEA) record annual performance last year.

The events pipeline is headlined by the Asia-Pacific International Mining Exhibition, a multi-year agreement that will see five events held at Adelaide Showgrounds until 2033.

"Interest in Adelaide is currently high, and there is a real sense of positivity about what the city can offer business event organisers," CEO Damien Kitto said.

"Business events bring to the fore Adelaide's key industry sectors that offer much sought-after technical expertise - notably in health and medical research, future energy solutions, AI and space technologies, defence and AgTech."

Kitto also pointed out that Adelaide is one of Australia's most affordable capital cities, with a hotel room costing on average \$75 a night less than in Sydney and \$17 less than Perth, making it an appealing destination for MICE events.

There is still plenty of room for growth in 2025, Kitto believes, with BEA aiming to attract more business events during the winter months.

## STAR SELLS SYD EVENTS VENUE

STAR Entertainment has revealed it will sell a major events complex that is part of its flagship Sydney entertainment precinct in order to avoid financial collapse.

The company told investors yesterday that it has inked a deal to sell the event centre and other unspecified parts of the Sydney casino to Foundation Theatres.

The rapid fire sale will see Foundation Theatres pay \$60 million to Star Entertainment by the end of this week - despite the Star previously stating the venue was worth \$100 million.

"The Star has worked closely with the team at Foundation Theatres since they acquired the sublease for the Sydney Lyric in 2011," Star Chief Executive Steve McCann said in a statement.

"We continue to work on a number of other potential non-core asset transactions."



The Star's event centre currently runs over several floors and regularly hosts events, concerts and exhibitions, including the 2024 Logie Awards.

Under its new ownership, the centre will be converted into a two-level, 1,550-seat proscenium arch theatre and a separate 1,000-seat room for contemporary music and comedy.

In a new development, Foundation Theatres will also be

able to build a 550-seat cabaret room in a vacant space next to the Lyric.

Construction and conversion costs are estimated at more than \$100 million, with the new venues to be opened by 2026.

The sale could see the Pyrmont waterfront transform into a live performance destination, helping to boost Sydney's theatre scene, which is currently in a slump due to a shortage of venues. *JM*

## Palaszczuk slams 2032 Olympics planning

FORMER Queensland premier Anastacia Palaszczuk has criticised the planning of the 2032 Olympics in Brisbane, saying she is "absolutely shocked" by the ongoing fight over where the main stadium will be for the Games.

The former Labor Premier, who secured the Olympics for 2032 before stepping down in 2023, told *Today*, "when I left, we had a plan".

The original plan was to

renovate the Brisbane Cricket Ground at a cost of A\$2.7b, however, Palaszczuk's successor Steven Miles undertook another review, which proposed a new \$3.4b facility at Victoria Park.

"We had 80 percent of our stadiums locked in and, frankly, I'm pretty annoyed about how it's turned out.

"It would have been completed by 2030; now we're going to be pushed right up to the line until 2032."

## Choose at Rydges

RYDGES Resort Hunter Valley has launched its latest events promotion, 'Choose Your Cherry'.

Organisers can choose from a range of benefits, whether it is 10% more event value, complimentary bubbles, or a gift card loaded with 5% of event spend.

Find out more about the offer **HERE** and check out the hotel's event facilities and services **HERE**.

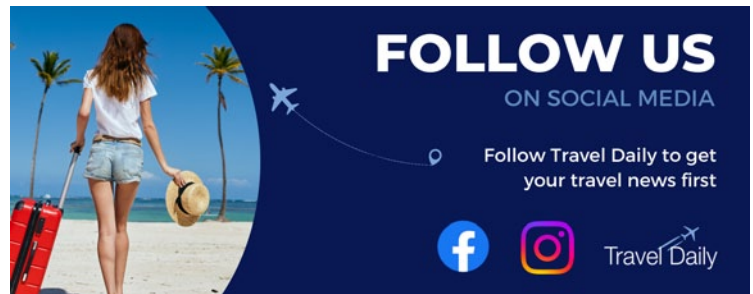
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## APPOINTMENTS

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**Intrepid Travel** has added two new key partnerships managers to its growing team. **Rhi Morgan** has been appointed Key Partnerships Manager, Queensland, and brings extensive experience in the travel industry, having worked in roles with Flight Centre, TravelManagers, and Cover-More. Meanwhile, Intrepid's new Key Partnerships Manager **Georgia Smith** NSW & ACT has an advertising background at Are Media, and has honed her skills in advertising sales, relationship-building and creative collaboration. Smith said she is excited to apply her skills in a sector that fuels her love for adventure.

**Rob Sharp** has been appointed CEO of **Airservices Australia**, Transport Minister Catherine King announced. Sharp has over 25 years of senior executive experience in the aviation and transport sectors, including Secretary of Transport for NSW and CEO for Virgin Australia & Tigerair.

**Tourism Noosa** has announced the appointment of **Helen Mitchell** as Destination Marketing Manager. Bringing over 25 years of extensive experience in the travel and tourism industry, most recently at Noosa Springs Golf and Spa Resort, Mitchell will lead all destination marketing activities for the organisation.

**Seibu Prince Hotels & Resorts'** NSW Southern Highlands property, **Park Proxi Gibraltar Bowral**, has announced the appointment of its new General Manager, **Charles Powell**. With over 20 years of experience in hospitality management and multiple general manager positions in both Australia and the UK in the past 15 years, Powell brings a wealth of knowledge to Park Proxi and Seibu Prince.

**Disney Experiences** has several new appointments on its executive team: **Ken Potrock**, a 30-year Disney veteran, will take on the newly created role of President, The Walt Disney Company Major Events Integration; **Thomas Mazloum** is the new President of Disneyland Resort; **Joe Schott** has been appointed President of Disney Signature Experiences, a division of Disney Experiences that offers family travel and leisure experiences beyond theme parks.

**Tim Swan** has stepped into the newly created role of General Manager Global Distribution at **Air New Zealand**. Swan's tenure at the NZ flag carrier dates back 15 years, with his ascension coming through various roles based in Sydney, Brisbane, South Korea and Auckland.

Former Norwegian Cruise Line President and CEO, **Andy Stuart**, has expanded his interest in Canadian host travel agency brand **Trevello**, buying a stake in the business and becoming co-chair of the board.

**Delphine Guillon** has accepted the role of Managing Director of **Asian Trials Thailand**, following the departure of Marc Albert. Guillon started with the company eight years ago as Sales Manager, was shifted to Deputy MD, and is now the first woman to lead the Thailand team.

## Agents on a science mission



**THE** Australian travel trade currently on board *Viking Polaris* has this week enjoyed an exclusive tour of The Lab and learnt about vital scientific projects being undertaken on its Antarctic expeditions.

In addition to engaging with the working scientists in the on board science lab, the trade group currently exploring Antarctica will also have the opportunity to assist in fieldwork and hear world-class lectures while sailing.

Viking's citizen science program is an important aspect to its expedition cruise product, with guests able to contribute to ongoing research while on board.

Working in partnership with some of the world's leading academic institutions, research on board Viking's Antarctic expeditions has led to major breakthroughs in understanding the world.

These include phytoplankton being genetically sequenced for the first time at sea and multiple sightings of the rare giant phantom jellyfish.

Contributions that Viking guests can make to this research

include assisting in fieldwork and participating in experiential activities, such as accompanying scientists to deploy BRUV (Baited Remote Underwater Video Systems) rigs, and watching the release of weather balloons.

Last year, the Viking expedition team, alongside scientific partner Oceanites, discovered a new colony of chinstrap penguins on Diaz Rock, near Astrolabe Island in Antarctica.

It was the first time that the penguins had been surveyed in nearly 40 years. *AP*

## Schettino freedom

**FORMER** *Costa Concordia* Captain Francesco Schettino has applied for early release from prison, having served half his sentence with good behaviour.

Schettino's application will be heard in Mar, with the disgraced mariner mid-way through a 16-year term for numerous counts of manslaughter, causing a shipwreck and abandoning passengers.

*Costa Concordia* ran aground in 2012 off the coast of Giglio Island in Italy, with 32 passengers killed.



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**Yokozuna Grand Prize:** A trip for two to Tokyo flying ANA, featuring a total 4-night stay at The Prince Park Tower Tokyo & Prince Hotel Tokyo Bay Shiodome, and free entry to teamLab Planets TOKYO.

**Gold Prize:** 4-night stay at Apartment Hotel MIMARU and free entry to teamLab Planets Tokyo for two guests, along with other exciting prizes!

Campaign ends 14 February 2025.

[To learn more click here](#)

