

Travel Daily

First with the news

Wednesday 5th Mar 2025

MTA KIM WOODCOCK



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DB Designer Island

DESIGNER Journeys has announced the ultimate luxury famil, set at Bali's most exclusive cliff-top resort. Find out to secure a spot by heading to **page nine**.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of travel news, including our **Luxury page**, plus full pages from:

- Tourism New Zealand
- Designer Journeys
- Crystal Cruises

Emerson in the cockpit

THE long wait is finally over, with Virgin Australia deciding who should succeed Jayne Hrdlicka as CEO.

Former COO Dave Emerson has been chosen by the board to lead the Aussie carrier from 15 Mar (**TD** breaking news), with the transition to commence effective immediately, and Hrdlicka to remain for a couple of months to assist with the handover.

"After a global search, it was clear that Dave is the right leader to continue the implementation of VA's strategy," Chairman Ryan Cotton said.

"Detailed plans are in place which will deliver continued growth, strong business performance, and continuity of strategy, further enhancing Virgin Australia's competitive position in



the Australian market."

Cotton added that he had worked closely with Emerson over the last four years, noting he has excellent acumen in commercial, digital and customer experience areas, as well as a "deep knowledge of Australian aviation industry" to assist future strategy.

Commenting on her time at VA, Hrdlicka said leading the carrier had been "a career highlight".

"We have detailed plans in place for the next four years which support a very bright outlook... and now is the perfect time to transition leadership for this next chapter," she said.

"Dave is an excellent choice to succeed me...his breadth of experience will be invaluable to the company and he brings the added advantage of being part of the team that created our blueprint for improvement." AB

INSPIRING VACATIONS

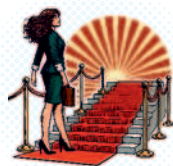
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Diamond closure

VISITORS to Hawaii are being advised that Diamond Head State Monument in Honolulu will close during certain periods in Mar and Apr due to an ongoing construction project.

Find more information about the closure times of the attraction **HERE**.

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NCL to lift agent sales

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has unveiled a new weapon in its bid to push for more fly-cruise bookings, a key pillar of its sales strategy revealed last year.

The cruise line has detailed the upcoming release of NCL Air, a new tool for travel advisors it claims will simplify and incentivise fly-cruise bookings.

Benefits of using the new platform will include the opportunity to earn commission on entire flight packages, real-time access to current flight pricing from Australia and NZ to departure ports across the globe, and a 24/7 air support team.

Few details have been released to the market, with the cruise line to hold a webinar on 18 Mar for agents to learn more.

Hosted by NCL's Brad Hanna and Sam Morgan, the session will provide a step-by-step guide on how advisors can benefit from the new tool, including how to make bookings and what the



selling points are for clients.

NCL has been bullish on growing the fly-cruise market in Australia, with the brand's local chief Ben Angell telling **TD** last year there is an "almost uncapped opportunity" in the market.

Just 200,000 Australians cruised in other parts of the world, versus 10 million outbound Australian travellers, Angell stated in Sep, creating major growth potential.

Helloworld's cruise chief Steve Brady also revealed to sister title **CW** there had been big growth in fly-cruise in 2023 and 2024. **AB**

Earn with Crystal

CRYSTAL is offering advisors a bonus 20% commission when they book clients on an Aquamarine or Sapphire Suite before 31 Mar - more on **p10**.

BENCH AFRICA

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Nakelo hires new rep

HOTEL Representation Australia (HRA) has announced it will look after the marketing for the Nakelo Treasure Island Resort.

The property is located on a 14.5-acre coral cay island in Fiji, and offers guests 78 traditional villas, including interconnecting bures for families.



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Princess anoints its king

CARNIVAL Australia veteran Matthew Rutherford will take charge of Princess Cruises' operations in Australia, Japan and regional Asia as the line's new Vice President Asia Pacific.

Effective from mid-Apr, Rutherford moves into the line's top job in the local region, replacing Stuart Allison, who returned to the UK last year to a senior role at P&O Cruises UK (*TD* 31 Jul 2024).



Rutherford steps into his new role after 10 years in yield and revenue management for the retiring P&O Cruises Australia, bringing expertise in strategic planning and data-led decisions.

"It's a privilege to lead this remarkable brand across the Asia Pacific region and I look forward to working with the talented team and their travel partners," Rutherford said.

"It's also an exciting time as we celebrate our 60th year of operation and welcome *Discovery Princess* to Australia for the first time in December" - more details in *Cruise Weekly* tomorrow. *ML*

Flydubai to Antalya

ARABIAN low-cost carrier flydubai will launch seasonal flights to the Turkish city of Antalya for the northern summer, beginning from 05 Jun.

With the addition of the coastal Turkiye city, flydubai takes its seasonal route offering to 11, with Bodrum and Trabzon also resuming between Jul and Sep.

Flydubai will serve Antalya with daily flights from DXB Terminal 2.

Emirates Asia boost

EMIRATES will launch services to three new Asian destinations from the beginning of Jun, with Shenzen, Da Nang and Siem Reap all joining the EK network.

Shenzen will be linked with daily flights from 01 Jun, with EK connecting Da Nang four times weekly from 02 Jun and Siem Reap thrice weekly from 03 Jun.

The addition of Shenzen takes EK's Chinese network to four cities alongside PEK, PVG and CAN.

Etihad Europa pact

ETIHAD Airways will increase flights to Madrid to twice daily by mid-year as part of an effort to grow operational ties with Spanish carrier Air Europa.

The two airlines are in talks over a strategic partnership which could involve the expansion of an existing codeshare agreement, reciprocal loyalty earn-and-burn links, and a wet lease of a UX plane between each airline's hub city.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



OMAN

Today's issue of *CW* is coming to you courtesy of *Celestyal Cruises*, which is hosting us aboard *Celestyal Journey*.

CELESTYAL Journey is today calling in the town of Khasab in Oman, dubbed the 'Norway of Arabia' due to its extensive fjords and mountainscapes.

Khasab is located on the Musandam Peninsula, an exclave of Oman - meaning it sits outside the country's mainland - encompassed by the United Arab Emirates.

Famil guests will today also enjoy a cruise along one of the region's longest fjords, in a traditional dhow, where if we are lucky, we will be able to spot dolphins swimming alongside the boat.



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Alfred causes havoc

TRAVEL plans in northern NSW and south-east Qld are being thrown into chaos with the impending landfall of Tropical Cyclone Alfred tomorrow.

Gold Coast Airport is closing from 4pm (Qld time) today (**TD** breaking news), with affected pax to be contacted by their airline regarding options to reschedule.

“We’re planning to reopen the terminal as soon as it is safe to do so and will continue to work with our airline partners in this regard,” the hub told **TD**.

While Brisbane Airport has at this stage confirmed it remains operational, carriers are warning about possible disruptions.

Guests travelling on VA services to or from Ballina, Brisbane, Bundaberg, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast airports from today until 08 Mar can choose to move flights to a new date within 14 days, free of charge, or cancel and request a credit by contacting

13 67 89 or their travel agent.

The original ticket must be issued on or before 03 Mar.

Additionally, Qantas will suspend flights into numerous airports in southeast Queensland, the Gold Coast from 4pm today for at least 24 hours; to Coffs Harbour from midnight tonight until at least midday tomorrow and to Ballina/Byron Bay until midnight tomorrow, while services to Lord Howe Island have also been axed for today.

Qantas is also offering change options for departures between 04-09 Mar on Qantas and Jetstar services to Bundaberg; Brisbane; Ballina; Hervey Bay; Coolangatta; Maroochydore; Coffs Harbour; and Lord Howe Island.

The news follows cruise impacts on the east coast as well, with meteorologists predicting Alfred to be the strongest storm to hit Brisbane in over 50 years, with gusts of over 155km/h. *AB*

CVFR gets the VIP treatment



CVFR Travel Group CEO, Ram Chhabra, was lucky enough to be the only Australian guest at a recent VIP dinner hosted by Qatar Airways at Soho House Berlin.

Chhabra, who described the event as “great company and great fun” in a post on LinkedIn, enjoyed the chance to catch up with the carrier’s Chief Commercial Officer, Thierry Antinori (**pictured**). *JM*

HX appoints four

FOUR travel industry veterans will form HX Expeditions’ maiden Australia-based marketing team.

Working under Director of Sales, Amber Wilson, the burgeoning brand has hired Shannon David as Senior Marketing Manager; Gareth Coakley and Kirsty Fruin as Key Account Managers and Jemma Gormack as Marketing Executive for the ANZ market.



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Window Seat

THE thought of visiting Pisa and not seeing the Leaning Tower is almost unfathomable - but it happens to be a big regret for Australian comedian and actor, Stephen Curry.

“Our car broke down on the edge of the city and we had to catch a plane that afternoon,” he recounted in his travel story in *The Guardian*.

“We had a choice: catch the flight or see the tower.”

Curry and his wife played a quick game of rock, paper, scissors to help them make the hard call, with Curry lamenting he had learnt his lesson: “Never choose scissors in Pisa”.

ATPI enjoys Turkish delight



TRAVEL management company ATPI recently teamed up with Turkish Airlines and Pier One Hotel to host clients and suppliers at an evening event in Sydney.

Turkish Airlines showcased its product, while guests enjoyed handcrafted Turkish delight cocktails and food from fresh seafood restaurant Pier Dining.

Pictured: The ATPI team including Peter Hosper, Commercial Director; Wasif Warsi, Account Director at Pier One; and Ugur Tavel, Turkish Airlines Sales Manager take in the Sydney Harbour views. *JM*

A tastier Norway

CROOKED Compass has expanded to Norway with two new small-group tours.

The ‘Fjord to Fork’ itinerary will focus on Norway’s authentic culinary experiences, while the ‘Nordic Bites & Fjord Sights’ will see guests indulge in the Nordic nation’s gastronomy while exploring its dramatic landscapes.

“Norway’s culinary scene is an undiscovered gem, and we’re excited to showcase its rich flavours alongside its world-famous scenery,” said Crooked Compass founder, Lisa Pagotto.

Dubai airport reno

AVIATION service provider Falcon has announced plans to invest US\$100 million to upgrade its facilities at Al Maktoum International Airport in Dubai over the next five years.

The refurbishment, which will include a new private jet facility, comes after Falcon was granted approval last year to launch its maintenance, repair, and overhaul operations in the UAE.

CATO IWD partners

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has announced its supporting partners for this year’s International Women’s Day Lunch (IWD), taking place tomorrow in Melbourne.

The lineup comprises Chimu Adventures, Collette, Destination Canada, Globus Family of Brands, G Adventures, Intrepid, Julie King & Associates, On the Go Tours, NIB Travel, and The Travel Corporation.

“We are incredibly thankful to our partners who have come together in unity to support this vital cause,” stated CATO Managing Director, Brett Jardine.

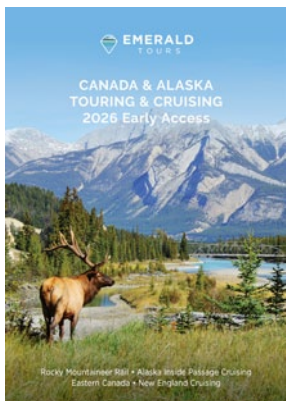
The event, which is themed ‘Emotional Resilience’ and features an inspiring roster of speakers, will also provide critical support to the Women’s Resilience Centre.



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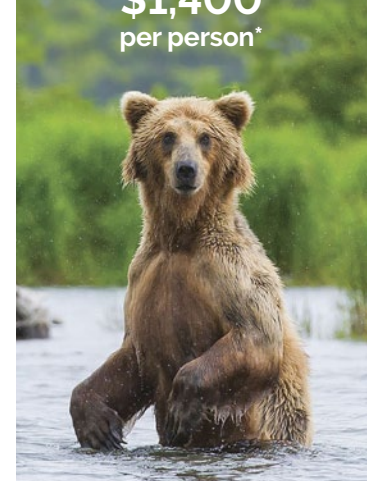
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Grab some lux inspo

CELEBRATIONS were held in Sydney last night to mark the launch of *The Australian Financial Review's* second annual edition of its popular *Highflyer* magazine.

The brainchild of Editor Fiona Carruthers, the insert to the *Australian Financial Review Magazine* is designed to provide Aussies with inspiration for luxury travel around the world.

Outside the vast array of luxury travel reviews and analysis, there is also an in-depth feature from Australian movie star Isla Fisher, where she shares her best premium travel hot spots from London and around the globe.

Added reason to grab a copy of *Highflyer* is a feature penned by controversial, but always compelling, travel writer Joe Aston, who talks about what it is like to fly Qantas after excoriating the carrier in his best selling book, *The Chairman's Lounge*.

Speaking in front of a gathering of VIP guests last night sponsored by Singapore Airlines at the Intercontinental Sydney, recently departed Editor Fiona Carruthers said she felt very proud of her role in creating *Highflyer*.

Access the publication online [HERE](#).

EX-ABC JOURNO LEADS LUXE TOURS

FORMER ABC newsreader Juanita Phillips will be the face of a new women-only luxe travel venture launching this month.

Phillips, who is familiar to millions of Australians, will lead three high-end experiences kicking off with Peru and Chile in Aug, followed by adventures to Southern Africa and India.

Jointly curated by Phillips and Luxury Touring by Revelry, the trips are aimed at women in their 40s to 60s, and will focus on history, culture, fun and food in groups of up to 16, supported by two dedicated travel escorts and expert local guides.

The itineraries feature high-end accommodation, such as Peru's Belmond Hotels, South Africa's Sabi Sabi Earth Lodge and New Delhi's Imperial Palace Hotel.

Highlights of the 12-day



Southern America adventure, which departs 01 Aug, include a deep dive into the Sacred Valley, an exploration of Machu Picchu, and a night-time visit to Larco Museum in Lima.

Meanwhile, the Southern Africa tour in Oct will feature game drives and river safaris, as well as trips to Victoria Falls, Table Mountain and the Stellenbosch Wine Route.

Rounding out the lineup is the Indian tour in Mar 2026, which will include a flower tour of the pink city of Jaipur, stays at palaces and havelis, a safari in the Aravali Ranges accompanied by a qualified naturalist, and cultural experiences like henna artistry, yoga and saree evenings.

"There's a big emphasis on cultural exchange, and sustainable and responsible tourism which will benefit local communities and helps preserve their traditions," said Phillips, who retired in 2023 after reporting the news for 21 years.

"This, coupled with the promise of safety, comfort, convenience and exceptional service, is what many women like me, who've done the hard yards with careers and family, are now seeking for their 'me time' travel needs." JM

Four Seasons indulges *The White Lotus* fans

FOUR Seasons Hotels and Resorts has unveiled a range of new experiences inspired by the HBO TV show, *The White Lotus*.

Fans can step into a world of luxe and drama on the Four Seasons' 'Private Jet White Lotus' itinerary, a 20-day, eight-destination journey including properties in Maui, Taormina and Koh Samui, as featured in the hit show.

Guests can snorkel with a marine biologist, indulge in spa treatments, train in Muay Thai,



cycle around Mount Etna, enjoy outrigger canoeing, and more.

At the resorts, guests will be immersed in a 'poolside escape' featuring cabanas, small bites, and cocktails inspired by *The White Lotus*.

For more details, see [HERE](#).

DL shakes up menu

DELTA Air Lines is bringing Shake Shack's mouth-watering burgers to first class pax on flights out of Atlanta, LA, New York, and Seattle.

The carrier has also introduced a refreshed menu to celebrate its 100th birthday, including a special 'Biscoff Sandwich' in first class and an expansion of its popular meatballs, served with garlic bread and ricotta, on more routes.

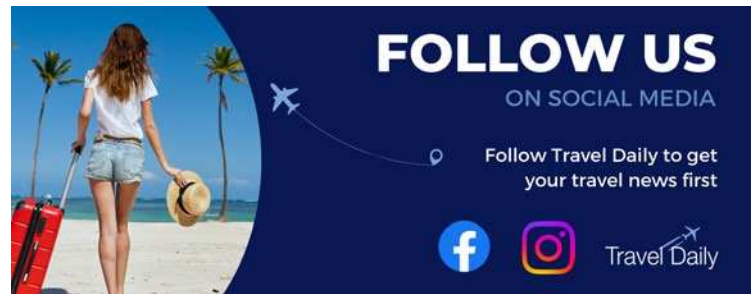
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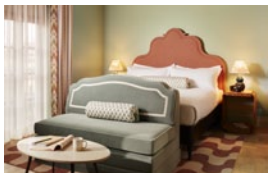
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The Royal Portfolio has launched **Franschhoek House**, a six-bedroom exclusive-use villa on the 30-acre estate of La Residence, located in Franschhoek in South Africa's Cape Winelands. Ideal for multigenerational travellers and groups seeking private and personalised services, the property can accommodate up to 12 guests, and features a heated pool, multiple patios offering views of the surrounding vineyards and mountains, and much more.



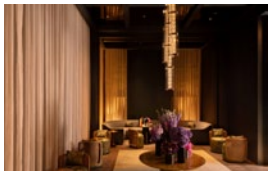
Mercure Madiun has opened in East Java, offering easy access to key business districts, government offices, shopping centres, and culinary hotspots. The hotel features 153 guestrooms, a swimming pool, fitness centre, and a kids' club, with guests able to enjoy traditional Indonesian dishes and global favourites at the Djawara Resto & Bar. Business travellers can take advantage of flexible meeting facilities, with a ballroom to launch soon for large-scale events.



The Hoxton has opened its second property in Italy, with **The Hoxton, Florence** opening its doors this week in the heart of the historic centre. The hotel features 161 rooms split across two buildings: 16th century late-Renaissance palazzo and 1980s minimalist-design building. The property also boasts a coastal-inspired Italian restaurant, a wine bar, courtyard, dedicated event spaces, and a brand-new room category ideal for families and groups.



New Zealand's **Huka Lodge** in Taupo has reopened on the banks of the Waikato River following a NZ\$25 million refurbishment led by owners Baillie Lodges. The luxury lodge has retained its hundred-year heritage while gaining contemporary features and updated spaces, including an expanded dining room and bar. Guests can also enjoy three new bespoke experiences.



Raffles Sentosa Singapore has opened, marking the debut of the first all-villa resort on Sentosa Island. Set within 100,000m² of tropical greenery and just a 15-minute drive from the city's CBD, the resort features 62 villas, each with a private pool and outdoor terrace. Guests can enjoy direct access to Tanjong Beach, an expansive fitness centre and spa, and five restaurants and lounges.

Sound the Peru a-llama



ELEMENTS of Peru's ancient & modern culture were celebrated in Sydney last week as PromPeru welcomed agents to explore an exciting new exhibit at the Australian Museum in Sydney.

On display until May, the *Machu Picchu and the Golden Empires of Peru* exhibition takes visitors on an exploration of Peruvian history through Andean artefacts brought to life with technology.

Guests can admire priceless jewellery, royal tombs and contemporary artworks depicting the Andean civilisation.

A captivating virtual reality experience also allows visitors to interact with the civilisation and its opulent wonders.

Australian traveller numbers to Peru have seen meteoric growth, with arrivals spiking 57% last year.

Sponsoring the exhibit and the event, LATAM Airlines operates four flights per week between Melbourne and Santiago, or daily from Sydney, with frequent connections throughout Peru.

VIP speakers at the event included Peru's Ambassador to Australia, His Excellency Vitaliano Gaspar Gallardo Valencia and Peru's Trade and Tourism Commissioner for Australia and

NZ, Soledad Campos de Parry, pictured above with PromPeru Australia rep, Jacqui Walshe.

Alongside the world-renowned Machu Picchu itself, guests learned more about Peru's culinary offerings, including traditional canapes.

Guests were then given time to roam the museum exhibit, including a special virtual reality experience that transported them back to ancient Peru. *ML*

QR Swans giveaway

QATAR Airways, the official airline partner of the Sydney Swans, is giving away the experience of a lifetime for one lucky footy fan and their mate.

The carrier has two return flights to Doha up for grabs, plus four nights' accommodation, and several experiences, including the Discover Doha tour and a desert and inland sea safari.

To enter, fans attending the AFL's Opening Round at the Sydney Cricket Ground this Fri can collect their 'Fly Me to Doha' boarding pass at the entry gates, and during the quarter-time break, whoever cheers the loudest while waving their pass will be selected to win.

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