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TEG nabs ex Woolies boss

THE parent company of Ticketek has tapped former Woolworths supermarket boss Brad Banducci to be its new CEO.

TEG revealed that Banducci will take over from Geoff Jones on 31 Mar, with the former chief to transition to Chairman.

Banducci will bring over 30 years of leadership experience in the retail and consumer sectors to the role, most recently helming supermarket giant Woolworths until his abrupt resignation last Aug, occurring only days after a tough interview with ABC's *Four Corners* about competition.

Despite the late stumble in his eight-year tenure at Woolworths, Jones said Banducci had a "proven track record" that will make him the right leader to guide TEG's future growth plan.

"As Chairman, I look forward to working with Brad and the team to continue to grow the business," Jones said.

Banducci said he was honoured to join TEG at what he described is an "exciting time" in the company's journey.

"Under Geoff's leadership,



the company has built a strong foundation, and I look forward to working in partnership with Geoff, Cameron Hoy (COO), our investors Silver Lake, Mercury Capital and Australian Super, and the broader TEG Team," he said.

"I am following both a personal passion for live events and a strong belief in the increasing importance of live experiences in general," Banducci added.

Pictured: Banducci welcomed by incumbent Geoff Jones. *AB*

SIA drops the power

PASSENGERS flying with Singapore Airlines and Scoot will no longer be able to charge power banks through onboard USB ports from 01 Apr.

The change has been made in the interests of safety, with a rising amount of data highlighting the overheating and fire risks associated with power banks.

SIA passengers may bring power banks with a capacity of up to 100Wh on board, while power banks with charge power between 100Wh and 160Wh require approval beforehand.

Power banks above 160Wh are not allowed on any flights.

Disneyland deals

DISNEYLAND Resort California is offering Australians a special ticket offer, on sale now through preferred wholesalers.

The offer is valid on all three-, four-, and five-day theme park tickets - see **page eight** for more.

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Travel Daily today features six pages of news including our **Business Events News**, plus a product profile from **Garuda Indonesia** and full pages from:

- Infinity Holidays
- Disneyland Resort

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Riverside joins CLIA

RIVERSIDE Luxury Cruises has joined Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) in Australia.

The move comes a month after Riverside appointed Susie Coughlin as Commercial Sales & Marketing representative in Australia - more details in **CW**.

Jones named VA CCO

THE man once touted as the next Virgin Australia Chief Executive Officer has been appointed to arguably the next best position, named Chief Commercial Officer this week.

Paul Jones (pictured) was ushered into the role quietly by the Aussie carrier, with Jones announcing the news on LinkedIn via a brief statement.

VA's former Chief Customer Officer was considered to be a frontrunner as Jayne Hrdlicka's replacement until a campaign by the Transport Workers Union (TWU) and political pressure put paid to his CEO aspirations.

The TWU said it would not support VA's tie-up with Qatar Airways if Jones was appointed to the top job, with Dave Emerson ultimately landing the key promotion last week (**TD** 05 Mar).

The primary reason for the resistance was Jones' key involvement in sacking workers when he was previously Chief



Operating Officer at Qantas.

When contacted for comment, the TWU said Virgin Australia "made the right call not to appoint Jones, the architect of illegal outsourcing at Qantas".

"Ultimately anyone playing a part in illegal actions will always have a question mark over them," TWU National Secretary Michael Kaine told **Travel Daily**.

The TWU also confirmed a meeting will be held with the carrier this week, which will seek to reset union relations.

"We look forward to meeting incoming CEO Dave Emerson with the view to establishing a co-operative relationship when it comes to worker consultation."

Garuda ramps up Oz

GARUDA Indonesia has updated its flight schedules to increase its Jakarta-Melbourne service to five times per week.

The Indonesian carrier will also maintain daily operations from Bali to Melbourne and Sydney - see **page 9** for more information.

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Beyond Blue buys

PREMIUM inbound experiential specialist Alquemie Travel has been acquired by Beyond the Blue Travel Australia (BTB).

“I’ve long admired the Alquemie brand,” said BTB owner and CEO Steven Pleciak, adding the acquisition of Alquemie was “a natural fit” as a specialist in wilder parts of Australia.

“Going forward, the Alquemie team will continue to celebrate the natural landscapes and engaging people of Australia.

“We’ll work with local partners to make extraordinary experiences happen seamlessly.”

Alquemie Travel moves into a network of BTB offices in Sydney, led by Sophie-Anne Burton, with a Noosa office led by Tara Norton and Ann Glamuzina in Auckland.

Wheels in motion on tours

A **NEW** global alliance of independent motorcycle tour operators has been founded by the owners of prominent Australian touring brand, Ride The World Motorcycle Tours.

The Global Motorcycle Touring Network (GMTN) is the brainchild of self-confessed motorcycle fanatics David Reeves and Walter Nand (**pictured**), pledging to bring together top independent motorcycle touring operators under one trusted network.

GMTN has already attracted several founding members, including Freedom Biker Tours (Canada); D Tours (UK and Europe); iRideArusha (Tanzania); and Satoshi Rides (Japan), with more operators expected to ride along in the coming months.

GMTN’s charter seeks to create a global alliance that tour operators can work together to uphold industry standards, provide support, and inspire more motorcycle experiences.

Benefits for travellers seeking motorcycle trips from members of GMTN include confidence they adhere to the highest standards and offer legitimate insurance.

The new body also claims it will elevate standards in the segment broadly relating to the safety and organisation of motorcycle touring experiences.

“By bringing together operators who share a passion for adventure, safety, and exceptional service, we are



creating a trusted network that benefits both tour providers and riders alike,” Nand said, who has been elected by the group as the debut GMTN Coordinator. *AB*

Albatross lights '26

ALBATROSS Tours has unveiled its Northern Lights program for early 2026, which includes a 12-day ‘Iceland - Fire, Ice Caves and Frozen Waterfalls’ itinerary.

The brand is also offering a nine-day ‘Northern Lights Ice Hotels and Huskies’ tour, featuring iconic locations such as Gullfoss Falls.

With just two departures for each tour and a 28-person cap, they are tipped to sell out quickly.

CZ goes daily at BNE

CHINA Southern Airlines will increase its services from Guangzhou to Brisbane from four flights per week to daily.

The change will take place from 10 Jun, and add 2,000 extra seats per week to the network.

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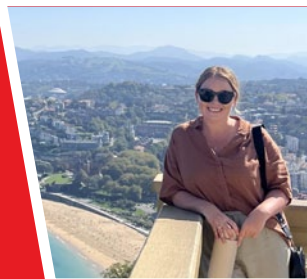
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Aussies riding the rail

AUSTRALIA has retained its position as Eurail's second-largest market globally after the USA, with 2024 seeing more than 57,000 Aussies and over 7,000 Kiwis purchasing a Eurail pass to explore Europe.

According to the company's 2024 data and insights report, Aussies took an average of 11 different trains journeys per Eurail trip, travelling around 1,652km by rail and spending 7.6 hours on board European trains.



Despite facing a cost-of-living crisis, Australian youth travellers (aged 12-27) made up 43% of all Australian passholders last year - up from 32% pre-pandemic.

Australian adult travellers (those 28-59) comprised 36% of the Eurail's market share, followed by seniors (60+) at 17%, and children (four-11) at 4%.

The company also noted a shift towards more affordable second-class travel - prior to the pandemic, the majority (54%) of Eurail's Australian travellers choose a first-class cabin, however last year this fell to 44%.

"One of the reasons why Australians are so important for Eurail and European tourism in general, is their longer length of stay and their curiosity to explore different parts of the continent," said Jody Bauer, Senior Research Analyst at Eurail.

The most popular Eurail Pass category for Australians in 2024 was the '10 Days in 2 Months' pass, Bauer revealed, with Milan, Rome, Florence, Zurich, and Amsterdam the most in-demand city destinations among Aussie Eurail passholders. *JM*

Qantas tastes better

AN UPGRADED Qantas Airways meal service has taken off across the airline's premium cabins and lounges, as well as its international economy network.

The new Neil Perry-designed menu includes chermoula crusted margra lamb cutlets, red wine-braised Wollemi duck, seared humpty doo barramundi, and a salted caramel macadamia tart.

The autumn menu will see international economy customers enjoy additional sides, such as Australian cheese and crackers, and a garden salad to accompany their main meal.

WN bags controversy

SOUTHWEST Airlines has announced it will soon start charging for checked bags, eliminating a policy which has been in place since its founding.

The 'bags fly free' policy will only apply to select premium members, once the change is rolled out from 28 May.

Customers who don't qualify will pay for their first and second checked bags, with fees not yet released by the airline.

CEO Bob Jordan said the change is hoped to spur Southwest's credit card enrolments as part of a larger business overhaul.

Jordan said last year the 'bags fly free' policy was one of the key reasons customers chose WN, after fares and schedules.

Southwest also abandoned its hallmark 'free seating' policy last year (*TD* 29 Jul).



Window Seat

STAFF at a Japanese aquarium recently found themselves providing a creative solution to a unique problem when one of its sunfish was unwell.

When the aquarium closed for renovations, staff noticed something wasn't right with the fish, but no matter what they tried, nothing helped.

One staff member suggested the fish may be lonely and misses its daily visitors, an idea which was derided at the time as ridiculous.

Still, by that point, the team agreed it was worth a shot, so they positioned cardboard cut-outs of people next to the sunfish's tank, put up staff uniforms near the tank and even waved at the fish in an effort to improve its mood.

Despite most staff thinking the idea was ludicrous, results were almost immediate, with the sunfish perking up and improving overnight - all it wanted was some attention.



Intrepid DEI pledge

INTREPID Travel is reaffirming its commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), committing to double investments in black, indigenous and people-of-colour (BIPOC) owned businesses.

As part of its updated ethical marketing guidelines - first introduced in 2021 in response to the Black Lives Matter movement - Intrepid Travel said it will continue to amplify content by Indigenous communities and travellers with disabilities.

The company has identified 24 measurable actions in its new guidelines, including setting a minimum commitment of \$300k to hire BIPOC businesses to create content for its websites and marketing vehicles.

Intrepid said it achieved 22 out of 25 commitments in 2024, with 58% of influencers hired coming from BIPOC-owned businesses.



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F1 fuels stays

FORMULA 1, Australia's largest motorsport event, has fuelled strong occupancy at Marriott Bonvoy's Melbourne hotels, which are preparing for a city-wide sell-out this Fri and Sat during race weekend.

Across the brand's 10 Melbourne hotels, occupancy is up 8% year-on-year (YoY).

"The majority of growth is driven through international travel, with the largest proportion of our guests coming from the USA," said Jason Nuell, Area VP - Australia, NZ and Pacific at Marriott International.

"International room nights increased 25% YoY to almost half of all stays, highlighting the growing international appeal of the sporting event to our traveller base."

MEANWHILE, Airbnb is seeing strong demand for its short stay rental properties within walking distance of Albert Park, where the Grand Prix is taking place.

"Airbnb hosts have a long history of helping cities accommodate big events, while generating benefits for local families and communities," said Susan Wheeldon, Airbnb's Country Manager for AU/NZ.

"Home sharing allows places like Melbourne the flexibility to increase accommodation for a surge in visitors that events like the F1 brings."

VIVID REIMAGINED FOR 2025

THE program for Vivid Sydney 2025 has been unveiled, featuring more free events and encompassing Martin Place and CBD for the first time since 2018.

Visitors will be able to attend more than 75% of this year's events for free, including the entire Vivid Light Walk, which will see eight new buildings and landmarks illuminated for the first time.

Running from 23 May to 14 Jun, the program has been redesigned to present five connected zones, each featuring events from each of the festival pillars - light, music, ideas and food.

Attendees can interact with installations and 3D projections across the Vivid Light Walk, including voice-activated animation, suspended swings, whimsical seesaws, a tennis match with light, and more.



Other highlights include three dinner events with UK celebrity chef Nigella Lawson, a *Stranger Things* experience at Luna Park Sydney, and a keynote lecture from the Creative Director of TIME Magazine.

Vivid Sydney will also feature collaborations for a series of events with Sydney Writers' Festival and Sydney Film Festival, as well as cultural institutions, venues and arts companies.

"Vivid Sydney continues to find exciting new ways and places to bring colour, creativity and fun to our city," stated Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Minister for the Arts, Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, John Graham.

"This year's festival is helping people face the cost-of-living crisis by increasing the number of free events, which is great news if you want a good night out without blowing the budget." JM

Major events company lands in Australia

TRIVANDI, a world-renowned sports and major events advisory, has announced its expansion into Australia, opening an office in Brisbane.

The announcement marks a milestone for Trivandi, which provides advisory, design, production and delivery services for major events, venues, sports and destinations.

Australians make up 10% of Trivandi's existing global team, and 100+ Australian-based associates have contributed to

Trivandi projects.

"We are deeply passionate about empowering local teams, advancing the industry, and contributing to the continued success of Australia's major events, venues and destination ecosystem," said James Bulley, co-founder and CEO of Trivandi.

The company is working with the Federal Govt on a proposed major summit for next year, and has completed a technical review for a proposed Brisbane 2032 Olympics venue.

ABEA jobs board

THE Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) has launched a dedicated jobs platform on its website, connecting professionals and organisations within the business events industry.

The board offers access to roles within venues, suppliers, PCO's, bureaux and more - see it **HERE**.

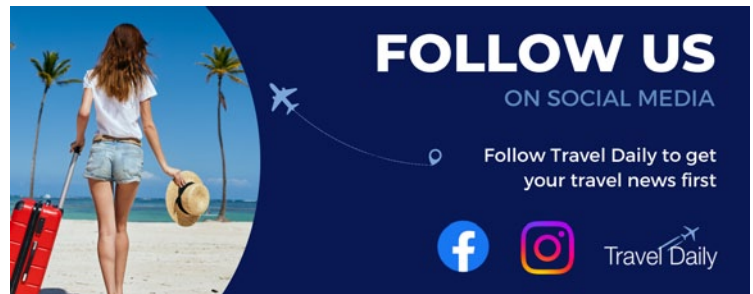
Meanwhile, ABEA has announced its annual conference will take place in Melbourne on 04-05 Dec.

Discover the all new *River Cruise Special Report*



CRUISE
WEEKLY

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APPOINTMENTS

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Beginning her new role this week, **MW Tours** has welcomed **Erin Hickey** to the team as its new Business Development Manager for Western Australia as the tour operator seeks to grow its presence. Well-known in the state, Hickey brings an extensive history in travel to her new role, having formerly held roles with Amadeus IT Pacific and Albatross Tours.

Burgeoning product representation brand **Ascend Travel Group** is growing in Queensland, appointing **Vanessa Whitaker** as its new Sales Manager for the state. Based in Brisbane, Whitaker will work to raise awareness and booking volume for Ascend's client portfolio, which includes Titan Travel, Celestyal Cruises and Ollami. She joins Ascend with an extensive industry CV which includes former roles with MTA Travel, Qantas and Flight Centre Travel Group.

Hotel leadership veteran **John O'Shea** has taken over as General Manager at **The Fullerton Hotel Sydney**. Bringing 40 years in the hotel and hospitality sector, O'Shea moves into the role having led a number of new openings and major properties in Australia and overseas. Recent history includes serving as pre-opening GM at The Langham Gold Coast, a role he fulfilled after 30 years based overseas.

Intrepid Travel has promoted **Isobel Main** to the role of Public Relations Specialist for APAC. Main has steadily climbed the ranks at Intrepid in just over two years with the company and continues to grow the company's presence among media and corporate circles.

Hotel amenities leader **Vanity Group** has appointed **Bree Nicholls** as its new Marketing and Communications Manager for the APAC and MEA regions. Moving across from Mint Partners, where she worked on the Marriott International and Clarins accounts, Nicholls brings 10 years in the travel and beauty spaces to her new role.

River cruise brand **AmaWaterways** has announced two major internal promotions, elevating **Alex Pinelo** as its new Chief Sales Officer. Pinelo brings more than two decades in the cruise industry to his new role and has been with the company for nine years. Elsewhere, **Michal Maguire** has been named as Chief Marketing Officer, moving up from her former role as VP of Marketing. Maguire has held senior marketing roles with Royal Caribbean and Seabourn, and has been with Ama since 2019.

Luxury hotel leader **Paul Jackson** has been named as the new General Manager at **Capella Singapore**. Jackson heads to the Lion City having spent nine years in charge of Claridge's London, where he played a role maintaining the property's standing as a highly prestigious address.

Thailand's **INNSide by Melia Bangkok Sukhumvit** has hired seasoned hospitality professional **Tarek Beheiry** as its new General Manager. Beheiry returns to the Thai capital having served as Regional General Manager at Ennismore New Zealand and GM at SO/Auckland.

Vista to visit 100 ports in 2026



OCEANIA Cruises has announced its 2027 Around the World cruise aboard *Vista* (pictured), which will visit more than 100 ports in 46 countries. The voyage will span 180 days, departing Miami, with a longer (244 days) and shorter (127 days) option also available.

The main adventure will transit the Panama Canal, island-hop through the Pacific from Hawaii to Fiji, sail along Australia's coastline, spend two months in Asia, then cruise the Arabian Peninsula, the Mediterranean, and Iberia, before concluding her trip in London.

Oceania is offering an 'Exclusive Prestige' package, starting at US\$76,199 per person, which offers an array of complimentary amenities, including a choice of free unlimited wine, beer, and spirits; a shore excursion credit; exclusive shoreside events; a free visa package; and more.

This will sit alongside the typical inclusions of gourmet specialty dining, in-room dining, unlimited Starlink wi-fi, and more. *MS*

Smithsonian waters

AMAWATERWAYS has partnered with Smithsonian Journeys, the travel program of the Smithsonian Institution, to host a collection of co-branded river cruises.

From Apr 2026, select European river cruises will feature exclusive Smithsonian-crafted experiences, drawing on the institution's 175-plus year history as the world's largest museum, education, and research complex.

The itineraries will include Smithsonian Journeys experts and offer opportunities for local immersion and discovery.

The collaboration includes 33 departures ranging from eight to 15 days, available to book now on the AmaWaterways website.





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Garuda Indonesia flight schedule update

Garuda Indonesia is pleased to inform important updates to their flight schedules, designed to provide enhanced connectivity and flexibility for your clients.

Garuda Indonesia will maintain daily operations on the Melbourne (MEL) – Bali (DPS) and Sydney (SYD) – Bali (DPS) routes, offering seamless connections for passengers travelling to one of the region's most sought-after destinations. This consistent daily service ensures a high level of flexibility for all travellers to Bali and beyond.

In addition, Garuda Indonesia will increase the frequency of its Melbourne (MEL) – Jakarta (CGK) service to up to

five times weekly, starting from 8th July 2025. This adjustment will provide more options for passengers looking to explore Jakarta and beyond, facilitating smoother connections to both (Indonesia) domestic and international destinations (to Incheon, Tokyo and many more).

Starting 5th October 2025, Garuda Indonesia will be adding more frequency to Sydney (SYD) – Jakarta (CGK) services to a daily frequency, up from the current 4 weekly services. This change is aimed at offering enhanced convenience for travellers flying between Sydney and Jakarta, catering to both business and leisure demands.

Garuda Indonesia believes these schedule enhancements will provide your clients with even more opportunities for seamless travel with Garuda Indonesia.

GARUDA BENEFITS

Garuda Indonesia offers a free stopover in Bali or Jakarta for travellers flying from Melbourne or Sydney to Japan, Korea and other international destinations. This allows clients to explore two destinations, enjoying Bali's tropical paradise or Jakarta's vibrant city life.