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They are an anxious traveller and have decided to no longer travel



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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from **Viking**, our **Business Events News** feature, a cover wrap from **Cover-More Travel** and full pages from:

- **ATIA Beyond Borders**
- **Ponant**

QF offers sneak peek

QANTAS has revealed a first look at the seats and cabins coming to its new domestic fleet of Airbus A321XLR aircraft, with a focus on space and ironing out common complaints.

The Flying Kangaroo will take delivery of the first of 28 new jets, named 'Great Ocean Road', from Apr 2025 as it continues the renewal of its domestic fleet.

Domestic cabin specifications for the new aircraft will be a two-class layout, with 20 business class seats in rows of two, followed by 177 economy class seats laid out in a three-three format.

Redesigned overhead bins will allow for a 60% capacity increase compared to the Boeing 737 fleet gradually being replaced.

The longer-range aircraft, which can fly approximately 3,000km further than the B737, will also generate fewer carbon emissions per seat and allow Qantas to open new short-haul international

routes across Asia and the Pacific.

MEANWHILE, Qantas today reported a statutory profit after tax of \$1.25 billion, down 28% on the prior year, due largely to major investments in new aircraft and customer-facing initiatives (**TD** breaking news).

The company's full-year books for the 2024 financial year showed a fall in operating margin to 10.4%, with earnings affected by declining airfare prices due to an influx of market capacity.

Qantas said 120 initiatives to improve service and reliability have been completed since Sep 2023, with 100 more to come.

These include upgrades to food and beverage, its mobile app including bag tracking and passport scanning, 200 more workers in customer service, and more than 20 million new domestic & int'l reward seats.

Qantas also provided free flights to 45,000 Rex and Bonza pax. **ML**

Cover-More safety

COVER-MORE Travel Insurance is protecting travellers against more of life's unforeseen events with its new Cancellation Plus Cover, allowing customers to get some of their money back if travel plans go haywire - more details on today's **cover page**.



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The future of travel

ATIA has confirmed the 'who's who' of the Australian travel industry to present at its maiden 'Beyond Borders' summit at the ICC on 25 Oct.

Find out more about the event on **page eight** of today's **TD**.

Tapestry Oz bound

HILTON'S Tapestry Collection brand will debut in Australia, with the hotel group signing The Motley Hotel in Richmond as part of a new franchise agreement.

The 80-room property features a rooftop bar and restaurant and is situated on Bridge Road, within walking distance to the MCG and nearby bars and restaurants.

Once open, the Motley Hotel will join a network of 135 hotels in the global Tapestry Collection.

Webjet results "subdued"

WEBJET has been forced to contend with some significant headwinds during the FY25 period, according to an ASX update from this morning (**TD** breaking news).

The trading summary for the year to date as of 25 Aug showed TTV for Webjet OTA is tracking 10% below the previous reporting period, while bookings for the consumer division is also



down by around 5%.

The "subdued" results were attributed mainly to Rex going into administration and ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

But it wasn't all bad news, with international bookings showing solid gains on last year, and EBITDA also ahead of 2023.

Meanwhile, WebBeds' performance in Europe was adversely impacted in Jun and Jul by the collapse of FTI Group, which Webjet said saw \$2 billion worth of hotel inventory distort the market and affect margins.

The Paris Olympics also impacted demand for France, and the European Football Championships reduced outbound German travel.

Despite these impediments, Webjet's B2B division is on track to deliver \$5 billion in TTV for FY25, and bookings are tracking significantly ahead of last year. **AB**

Simba car growth

SIMBA Car Hire has announced it is driving its national expansion, flagging new openings in Melbourne and Adelaide.

The car rental business is set to open its Melbourne operation in Oct, near Tullamarine Airport.

Simba is also opening a new Adelaide showroom on Fri, located less than 10 minutes from the Airport.

The car rental business recently opened its first Brisbane branch at Eagle Farm, just over 10 minutes from the airport.

Simba's blueprint is to have a presence in every capital by 2026, with the business also having two locations in Cairns.

The firm's fleet has grown to 1,200 since its 2019 founding.

Thanks from Ponant

FRENCH luxury expedition cruise line Ponant is extending its heartfelt thanks to its valued partners for voting for the brand as a finalist in the 2024 NTIA Gala. Share in the line's message of gratitude on **page nine**.

Brisbane Star shines

NEARLY a decade in the making, The Star Brisbane has today opened its doors to the public for the first time as part of the \$3.6 billion Queen's Wharf riverside development.

The hotel's 340 rooms are fully booked for opening night, while thousands of guests are expected to enjoy dozens of restaurants and the Sky Deck, which sits 100 metres above the city and offers views over the Brisbane River.

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Records tumble for Alliance's results

WHILE most airlines are struggling in the Australian market, Alliance Aviation has delivered a record revenue and profit for the year to Jun 2024.

The company's full-year statutory net profit before tax increased by 65% to \$86.3 million, while revenue also rose by 25% to \$637.2 million.

One of the major drivers of the pleasing results was a significant growth in contracted wet lease revenue, while contract charter earnings also rose by 5%.

As of 20 Jun, Qantas has called up 26 of its 30 wet lease aircraft options, propelling Alliance's wet lease revenue to \$265.7 million - a 62% increase on last year.

"As additional Embraer E190s enter service...Alliance has never been in a better position to capitalise on further growth opportunities, and our contracted flying models has proven to be robust," MD Scott McMillian said.

Air NZ slammed in H2

WEAK domestic demand and ongoing maintenance issues have seen Air New Zealand's earnings dwindle from \$574 million to just \$222 million for the 12 months to 30 Jun (**TD** breaking news).

While the poorer financial showing was not wholly unexpected, with the Kiwi carrier downgrading profit forecasts in recent months, the second half of the financial year was particularly challenging for Air NZ.

Net profit after tax was tracking well during the first half of the year with \$129 million, however the picture changed dramatically in the second half, with only \$17 million posted.

Earnings before tax also saw a major drop-off in H2, plummeting from \$185 million to \$37 million.

Not helping matters was the six of Air NZ's Airbus neo jets, which were periodically out of service due to engine checks, as well as the grounding of three Boeing

Dreamliners for Trent 1000 engine maintenance.

The carrier also cited increased competition on its US network and inflationary pressures as factors suppressing profits.

Unfortunately, the carrier has flagged tough trading conditions are likely to continue for at least the first half of the 2025 financial year, and given current "uncertainty", has declined to provide a financial guidance.

Inflation, a rise in competition and maintenance are all expected to hamper H1 2025. **AB**

Rex pulls reporting

THE administrators for Rex have confirmed they will defer any financial reporting for the company for at least six months.

EY also stated that Rex may not provide any financial updates for up to two years as the airline continues to seek a buyer.

Saudi is calling

SAUDI Tourism is inviting travellers to discover the heart of Arabia in its new 'This Land is Calling' international campaign.

Launching across the UK, France, Italy, Germany, and the US, the campaign features a cinematic video which follows a female explorer as she ventures through the country's stand-out destinations, including the Red Sea, Aseer's mountains, the cities of Riyadh and Jeddah, and the UNESCO World Heritage Sites of Diriyah, Hegra and Al Balad.

The campaign will reach audiences through a multi-platform approach over the next several months.

All the sites in the campaign film can be booked, with visitors able to create their own adventure with packages available at visitsaudi.com.

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Brisbane 11 September, The Warehouse, Fortitude Valley
Sydney 12 September, Dockside Cockle Bay Room, Cockle Bay Wharf

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**NORTHERN
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Window Seat

FORGET price scams prior to booking - turns out the latest worry for hotel guests is a stranger breaking into your hotel room and having their own holiday on your dime.

One US couple thought they had checked out of London's Hilton on Park Lane by putting their room keycard in the lobby box, only to later learn an imposter had snuck into their room and called the front desk to extend the guest's stay by a further two days.

Not only did the crafty crim enjoy two nights of luxury on somebody else's credit card, they ran up a \$1,500 room service bill as an extra insult.

To make matters worse for the couple, Hilton Park Lane initially refused to accept any responsibility for the fraudster holidaying at their expense.

However, the hotel finally opted to refund the charges after the couple sent evidence of their Uber to the airport and flight confirmation.

The hotel has now committed to enhancing its procedures for in-house guests extending their stay without visiting the front desk first.

Yet another Icon

ROYAL Caribbean Group has signed an agreement with Meyer Turku for a fourth ship to be built in its Icon-class.

The vessel will be delivered to Royal Caribbean International (RCI) in 2027, with the agreement also including an option to build a fifth and sixth Icon ship.

Royal's Icon series already boasts the world's largest cruise ship, *Icon of the Seas*.

The order also follows Royal Caribbean's announcement for a seventh Oasis-class ship, which is flagged to debut for RCI in 2028.

Speaking up for accessibility



HUNDREDS of travel operators descended on Melbourne on Tues for the second Accessible and Inclusive Tourism Conference, hosted by GetAboutAble.

The jam-packed event included panels and presentations from leaders within the industry, including Vic Minister for Tourism, Steve Dimopoulos; Tourism Australia Executive GM Corporate Affairs, Bede Fennell; Expedia Director of Account Management, Jamie Griego; and plenty more.

In one of the panels hosted by Tweed Tourism Company General Manager, Sally Scott, three travellers with disabilities (**pictured**) shared their experiences and insights with the audience.

These included Co-Chair of IDEAS, Martin Heng; accessibility consultant at GetAboutAble, Alex Stratikis; and Blind Citizens Australia accessibility consultant, Kristy Quigg.

Quigg and Heng discussed how industry professionals can encourage stakeholders to buy into the accessibility opportunity by making a business case.

"The modifications that you make for us benefit everyone.

"There's always a certain level of anxiety for anyone when they travel, so if you can alleviate that for everyone, it makes travel fun and easier," Quigg noted.

"The biggest growth factor in

the accessible tourism market is the aging population," Heng said.

"By 2030, there will be 1.4 billion people over 60 [and] by 2050, there will be 2.1 billion.

"Next year, UN Tourism reckons one in eight international trips will be taken by a retiree aged 60 and over," he said.

"So if tourism businesses want to sustain themselves in the future, they're going to have to cater to this demographic." JHM

Intrepid winners

REECE Ash from Flight Centre Joondalup and Rebecca Lantry from Flight Centre Robina are the winners of Intrepid Travel's exclusive Antarctica incentive.

The two will embark on a once-in-a-lifetime journey to Antarctica, hosted by Key Partnerships Manager Leigh Reynolds during the upcoming 2024/2025 season.

Head of Partnerships Megan Lowe said Intrepid's B2B partners play a very important role in bringing its unique travel experiences to clients.

"This incentive not only rewards their hard work but also highlights the value we place on these essential relationships.

"It's through these partnerships that we can deliver exceptional travel experiences and continue to innovate in the industry."

A&K goes on tour

ABERCOMBIE & Kent (A&K) is preparing for a new round of travel advisor roadshows around Australia, giving attendees the chance to learn about the operator's latest products, destinations, expansion plans and new brand direction.

Advisors can meet A&K destination specialists who work on the ground in Africa, Europe and Latin America, and by attending will also go into the draw to win several prizes.

The free events will visit The Arts Centre Melbourne on 15 Oct; Adelaide Oval on 16 Oct; Fraser's Function Centre in Perth on 17 Oct; the Art Gallery of NSW in Sydney on 22 Oct; Blackbird Bar, Dining & Events in Brisbane on 23 Oct; & QT Gold Coast on 24 Oct.

Register to attend [HERE](#).

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Viking shows its love on the Danube

EARLIER this month, Viking proudly hosted nine talented advisors and their chosen travel companions on its top-selling eight-day 'Romantic Danube' voyage.

Travelling from Regensburg, Germany, to Budapest, Hungary, this unforgettable journey was filled with many highlights.

Advisors explored Gottweig Abbey, one of Austria's most revered monastic centres, visited historic Salzburg, made dumplings with Wachau Valley apricots, and immersed themselves in Bavaria's beer culture, where they learned that 'oi oi oi' isn't just an Australian chant - and more.

Bonding over the beauty of the region and fabulous wine, the journey concluded with the group reminiscing about their experiences and celebrating new-found friendships as they sat

on the Viking Longship sundeck, lapping up the summer ambiance under the lights of Budapest.



KIERAN Roberts embracing his inner monk in Austria.

DAWN McKiernan, FBI Travel; Tanya Chaffey, Chaffey & Turner Travel Associates; and guest Naomi in Passau.



ESTHER Lee, Low & James Travel Associates; Lee Siefken, Viking; and Vivienne Teague, Travel Associates Burleigh in Vienna.



KIERAN Roberts from Travel Associates Belconnen with his guest, Astrid, enjoying the splendour of Gottweig Abbey.



THE group exploring during the Panoramic Budapest Tour.



THE stairs of Gottweig Abbey presented the perfect opportunity for a group photo for the Romantic Danube famil guests.

THE Aquavit Terrace was the place to be, with agents enjoying a final beverage prior to disembarking their ship in Budapest.



UNDER the bridge in Budapest on the sun deck.



AGENTS with some of their favourite crew on the Aquavit Terrace.

SCHONBRUNN Palace in Austria turned on beautiful weather to host the Viking group.





MEA chief retires

PETER McDonald has resigned as CEO of Meetings and Events Australia (MEA), after leading the peak industry body for three years.

McDonald will step down at the end of Oct, ahead of MEA's 50th birthday in 2025.

"During a challenging period, Peter has been a stable and trusted executive officer, ensuring we've been able to serve our members and the industry through a time of upheaval," said MEA Chair Vanessa Green.

"Our vision is to 'lead, empower and connect' - Peter's leadership has provided a platform to deliver on this mission and one that we look forward to continuing to expand upon."

MEA has begun recruiting for McDonald's replacement.

BEDA HONES IN ON CHINA MARKET

IN A move to boost the city's record \$10.6 billion visitor economy, the Brisbane Economic Development Agency (BEDA) has announced the appointment of Sharren Bo (**pictured**) as its new China representative.

The appointment underscores Brisbane's commitment to strengthening the city's presence in China and expanding its influence across Southeast Asia.

Based in Shanghai, Bo is tasked with supporting Brisbane's current China market activity, led locally by Hannah Xue, with the two working together to develop business relationships and grow further opportunities between Brisbane and China.

Bo has held previous roles with Tourism Australia and Business Events Sydney, and brings extensive experience across international incentives and business events, and the Asia



Pacific region.

"Brisbane is on an exciting growth trajectory, with demand for the city soaring and record-breaking visitor spend," said Lorelle Chittick, General Manager Tourism, Business and Major Events at BEDA.

"Bo's appointment marks a pivotal moment for Brisbane as we enhance our presence and focus on growth opportunities in

the China market.

"Her expertise and onground market insights will be invaluable in advancing Brisbane's MICE proposition in China, driving awareness of Brisbane's destination appeal, and solidifying our foothold in this key market."

To further drive growth across Southeast Asia, BEDA has also appointed new in-market representation, Singapore-based Horus Consulting.

The firm will deliver tourism and business events trade and marketing activity across the region, providing local expertise and developing new connections and opportunities for Brisbane.

The BEDA appointments come at a time when the Chinese travel market, worth over A\$1.6 billion to Queensland's economy, continues to recover, with pent-up demand generating huge opportunity for Brisbane. *JM*

Perth event summit

EVENT managers are invited to attend the Event Organisers & Executive PA Summit, which takes place in on 10 Sep at Four Points Sheraton in Perth.

The free one-day event will see executive assistants who organise a large number of events, as well as other inhouse event organisers, industry buyers and suppliers, get together for a day of networking.

The day will be fully catered and will feature great speakers, after-event drinks, and prizes - **CLICK HERE** to register.

Canberra's red-hot new events venue

THE Canberra Convention Bureau has lauded one of the city's newest business events venues, the Red Shed, situated on Black Mountain Peninsula.

Built by locals for the community, the new space boasts state-of-the-art facilities, the latest audio-visual technology, and catering managed by the renowned Occasioni by East Hotel.

The Red Shed operates as a not-for-profit, can cater for up



to 200 delegates, and features a rowing shed, wellness centre, gym, co-working space, cafe and functions area overlooking Lake Burley Griffin.

Learn more about the venue's corporate events offering **HERE**.

Guitars in Bars

SOUTH Australia's live music scene will be showcased in pubs around the state next month, as part of the 2024 Adelaide Guitar Festival program.

'Guitars in Bars' will take the festival to pubs, clubs, bars and public spaces in a series of free and ticketed events from 16-29 Sep 2024, highlighting the diverse performers who bring music to life in SA's local venues.

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APPOINTMENTS

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Aspen One has announced the appointment of **Jeff Toscano** as Chief Executive Officer of Aspen Hospitality. He will take over from current leader Alinio Azevedo on 16 Sep to lead the company through its next phase of rapid growth. Toscano brings three decades of experience in the luxury hospitality market, and has worked with hotel management teams, ownership groups, and developers to innovate and execute unique premium hotel concepts and experiences.

Tom Brassington has taken on the role of Chief Technology Officer at **New Horizon Aircraft**, the developer of the world's first eVTOL that can fly most of its mission exactly like a normal aircraft. He joins from Lilium, a leading eVTOL developer, where he held the position of Head of System Design Engineering. Brassington, who has 17 years' experience working in aerospace systems engineering, will commence in his new position at the end of Oct.

Global hotel technology and services company **Cendyn** has announced **Jeffrey Cross** its new Chief Financial Officer. He is tasked with enhancing Cendyn's fiscal position and guiding it towards sustainable growth and long-term financial goals. Cross brings a range of experience with technology and travel technology companies, acquired over the last 15 years in private equity backed companies, as well as almost 40 years' financial, accounting and operations experience.

Outrigger Kaua'i Beach Resort & Spa has welcomed **Christine (Chris) San Nicolas** as its new General Manager. San Nicolas has been with the hospitality company for 25 years, most recently as Resort Manager at Outrigger Kona Resort & Spa. In her new role, she will be at the helm of the resort's operations, driving excellence across all departments, including guest services, product quality, safety, sales, marketing and revenue management. San Nicolas will also collaborate with Outrigger's global marketing team to ensure a cohesive brand presence.

In a bid to strengthen its commitment to sustainable travel, **World Expeditions** has recruited **Donna Lawrence** as its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Manager. She has been part of the tour operator's team for more than two decades, and is also on the board of the World Expeditions Foundation. Lawrence will focus on advancing the company's CSR initiatives, including achieving third-party accreditation to demonstrate its commitment to people and the planet.

Langham Hospitality Group has bolstered its Melbourne team with several key appointments, as part of a company-wide transfer which will see talent relocate from Cordis, Auckland. Joining The Langham, Melbourne as Hotel Manager is Lucas Gougeon, along with Lee Guo as Executive Housekeeper and Evanda Yam as Assistant Director of Food and Beverage. Additionally, Kim Read will take on the role of Director of Sales at The Langham, Sydney.



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White Paper misses mark

THE Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA) has labelled the Federal Government's much-anticipated Aviation White Paper "a missed opportunity to bring Australian passenger rights in line with other countries internationally".

Travel lawyer and ALA spokesperson, Victoria Roy, said by failing to introduce a flight delay compensation scheme, the government has committed to keeping passenger rights behind much of the rest of the world for at least the next 25 years.

Countries and regions with compensation systems either in place or in final stages of preparation include Europe, UK, US, Canada, Malaysia, Brazil, India and Türkiye.

"The proposed Charter of Rights and the Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme are an improvement on the current situation but, overall, the White Paper is disappointing for consumers and a missed opportunity," Roy commented.

The ALA said the Ombuds Scheme revealed in the Aviation White Paper will simply force airlines to meet existing obligations under Australian Consumer Law but doesn't provide any new rights to flyers.

Instead, the government will introduce a formal body tasked with forcing airlines to provide fast cash refunds in the event of a significant delay or cancellation to a scheduled flight.

"Replacing the Airline Consumer Advocate with an Aviation Industry Ombuds Scheme which will have the power to direct airlines to provide remedies is an improvement," Roy added.

"However, it raises the question of whether the ombudsperson will direct airlines to pay compensation for inconvenience and distress as well as ticket refunds and passenger expenses, and if so, how it will quantify that compensation.

"A commitment to a flight delay compensation scheme would have given passengers certainty."

The ALA added it was pleased airlines will now be required to report reasons for flight delays and cancellations, which will provide transparency to travellers and help the ACCC take action where warranted. *ML*

Amora expansion

AMORA Hotels & Resorts is going "property shopping" in key cities across Australia, with the company's expansion strategy to be driven by Vice President of Operations, Tamer Habib.

The company is aiming to introduce Amora to every capital, on top of its Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane locations.

Habib recently oversaw the launch of a new regional office in Sydney and has helped to appoint a series of top industry professionals in key leadership positions, including Group Director for Commercial & Business Development, Narej Farik, and Group Executive Chef, Hemant Dadlani.

"One of our core strengths is that we are an owner-operator, so we can control every aspect of our experience," Habib said.

"We are mainly seeking rebrandings and refurbishments, but also potential conversions."

Travel Summit ➔ Beyond Borders 2024

The Future of The Travel Industry, Told By Its Leaders

Speakers include a selection of top industry leaders – more to be announced!



Dean Long

ATIA



Christian Hunter

Travellers Choice



Graham 'Skroo' Turner

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