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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a full pages from **Titan Travel**.

Final call for agents

TRAVEL Agent Finder (TAF) is reminding advisors time is running out to secure a free profile page on the platform.

There are now two weeks left for agents to take advantage of the opportunity to boost their online visibility and client engagement at no cost, before TAF transitions to a fully paid membership model - agents can find out more info **HERE**.

Titan's big tempter

TRAVELLERS can save 10% on Titan Travel's 2024 tours, such as the nine-day 'Grand Safari Kenya', now priced from \$5,985.

Savings apply to bookings made by 31 Mar, with agents to earn an extra 5% commission - see **p9**.

FCTG eyes luxury acquisitions

EXCLUSIVE

ACQUISITIONS remain a priority for Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Luxury division, as the group continues its swift global growth trajectory.

"Our goal in the luxury market is to rapidly grow," FCTG Global Managing Director Luxury and Independent brands, Danielle Galloway, told **TD** this weekend at the division's Luxury Product Showcase event in Queensland.

"We know that the opportunity for luxury growth is significant, and we have identified a combination of growth strategies that we are now implementing, one of which is acquisitions," Galloway shared.

The past year has seen significant purchases for the group, acquiring luxury trade show Luxperience (**TD** 15 May 2023), and UK luxury brand Scott Dunn (**TD** 31 Jan 2023).

"We are entering in some of

these global markets later than we'd like, so it's important for us to look at how we fast-track our growth - acquisition is a very good solution to gain rapid growth, rather than an alternative strategy that would see us bring a new brand to market and growing organically," she explained.

Additionally, the group's Travel Associates brand will continue to expand across the region.

"There is still a laser focus on growing the famous Travel Associates brand in Australia and New Zealand," General Manager, Rachel Kingswell, confirmed.

Opening the showcase this weekend, Galloway also shared the Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) pathway for growth, including new brand partnerships, a digital transformation, luxury events, and the launch of the luxury department store, Galeries de Luxe (**TD** 23 Feb). **AP**

More on LTC on **page two**.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



CHIAYI

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of Taiwan Tourism which is hosting us in Taiwan this week.

IT'S been a busy weekend with the launch of the 2024 Taiwan Lantern Festival in Tainan on Sat, which readers can learn more about on **p4**.

After also visiting the Taiwan International Orchid Show, the Southern Branch of the National Palace Museum and the very quaint Museum of Old Taiwan Tiles across the weekend, it's tea-picking at the Lin Yuan Tea Factory today before taking on the Eryanping Trail at sunset.

The day ends with a stay at the Hotel Indogo Alishan before the final day in Taiwan.

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Saying G'day to Triple J

G'DAY Group has acquired its first dedicated touring operation, with WA-based Triple J Tours added to its asset portfolio on Fri for an undisclosed sum.

Triple J Tours operates cruises along the Ord River between Kununurra and Lake Argyle in the Kimberley, as well as premium sunset cruises on Lake Kununurra through its Kununurra Cruises

arm, which it bought in 2014. G'day Group's newly purchased business boasts five tour boats and six buses in total, offering travellers half- and full-day tours with coach transfers and accommodation included.

Reflecting on the purchase, G'day Group CEO, Grant Wilckens, said synergies with its existing operations would enable the group to expand and diversify tourism product in the Kimberley.

"We think there's a great opportunity to develop a more comprehensive cruising offering by leveraging our breadth of existing accommodation and hospitality offerings in the region," Wilckens said.

G'day Group has also flagged integrating Triple J Tours' sailings with stays at its Discovery Resorts such as El Questro.

Key management at Triple J will be retained, with the buy to be settled in the coming weeks. AB

Intrepid grows up

INTREPID Travel has expanded the age for its youth targeted tours, changing 18-29 trips to include travellers aged up to 35.

The operator said it identified an opportunity to expand the age bracket after experiencing a surge in enquiries from travellers in their early 30s.

Intrepid has added 15 new itineraries to its youth portfolio for 2024 to seize on growing demand - view the range [HERE](#).

The next gen of luxury



THE Luxury Travel Collection is setting itself apart as the next generation of luxury travel.

Taking inspiration from the LVMH house of brands, LTC is building a home for luxury travel brands around the world called Galleries de Luxe, Global MD, Danielle Galloway said, at the group's Luxury Product Showcase.

"What LVMH has done so successfully they is bring together incredible luxury brands that have different values, different cultures, different looks - every brand has its uniqueness.

"To do this well, and to become

one global powerhouse by uniting on all the things that are important, like quality, client service and handcrafted luxury, and really position themselves as that luxury leader - this is how we will approach our own pathway," she explained.

Galloway shared that taking luxury travel into the next generation will mean an evolution of the fundamental aspects of the LTC business - the luxury travel advisor, the luxury client, and the luxury supplier. AP

Pictured: LTC's Rachel Kingswell, Dani Galloway and Anna Burgdorf.

elq El Questro

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Lynx Air shuts down

CANADIAN ultra-low-cost carrier Lynx Air has today ceased all operations after just two years in business due to rising costs.

The airline operated its final flight yesterday and has now asked customers holding bookings to contact their credit card company to discuss refunds.

Air Canada has moved to assist affected passengers by capping fares and adding 6,000 new seats in selected markets operated by Lynx Air for travel within Canada and to the US and Mexico.

Routes will include Toronto and Montreal to Cancun, Fort Myers, Orlando, Tampa, Las Vegas and Phoenix for flights to 19 Mar.

“I know this is a terrible shock for many of you and this was not how our story was intended to play out,” COO Jim Sullivan said in a memo to staff.

“While we did our best, the pressures mounted and the risks increased, which has led to today’s announcement.”

DL joins BNE conga line

DELTA Air Lines will add a second Australian city to its route map, announcing plans to begin a three-times weekly service to Brisbane from Dec.

Taking off from Los Angeles on 04 Dec, the service will operate using an Airbus A350-900 jet, which features the carrier’s Delta One lie-flat business class.

The new service will initially be a seasonal operation, running to 28 Mar 2025, with DL joining Qantas and United Airlines on the now-busy BNE-LAX corridor.

Delta’s new link also continues the carrier’s recent expansion in the Oceania region, following the addition of Auckland last year (**TD** 23 Jan 2023), which began as a seasonal service but quickly grew to year-round.

For Brisbane, the arrival of DL takes its seat capacity to North America to 144% of pre-pandemic levels, factoring in Air Canada’s route to Vancouver.



Delta Senior Vice President of Network Planning, Joe Esposito, said the addition of Brisbane takes DL’s weekly schedule from the US to Australia to 17 flights.

The move is also a boost for regional Queensland, with DL interline partner Rex Airlines now able to offer through-bag check access to 23 destinations across the state to travellers connecting to or from LAX (**TD** 02 May 2022).

DL’s announcement means BNE will welcome two new US carriers this year, after American Airlines confirmed its new service to Dallas Fort Worth (**TD** 02 Feb) taking off from Dec. **ML**

Contiki takes a leap

EAGLE-EYED travellers can enjoy a 29% discount on selected Contiki departures by booking on the Leap Year this Thu 29 Feb in a new promotion from the brand.

To avail the offer, travellers must scour the Contiki website to find departures marked with a ‘Take The Leap’ tag.

The promotion goes live at 12:01am on 29 Feb and will be live for 29 hours only.

US Cuba restriction

DFAT has updated its Smartraveller advice for Cuba, with all travellers who have visited the Caribbean nation since Jan 2021 no longer eligible to visit the United States under its ESTA visa-waiver scheme.

The change comes after the US declared its controversial island neighbour as a ‘State Sponsor of Terrorism’ in early 2021, with all applicable travellers now needing to apply for a full US visa to enter.

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Nauru grows fleet

NAURU Airlines welcomed a seventh aircraft to its fleet, a 189-seat Boeing 737-800, with a blessing ceremony last week at the airline's Brisbane hangar.

The plane's arrival signals the completion of the first phase of Nauru Airlines' fleet upgrade program, which so far has seen it replace two older B737-300s with larger, next-generation aircraft, including the B737-700.

The aircraft's blessing was witnessed by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Russ Kun, and Nauru's President, David Adeang, (pictured below with Chairman of Nauru Airlines Kieren Keke), along with Nauru Airlines staff and invited guests.



Taiwan lights tourism plan

BETWEEN 10-15 million international visitors are expected to flock to Taiwan for the 2024 Taiwan Lantern Festival, which kicked off last Sat in Tainan.

The festival, which runs until 10 Mar, will feature 70 performances, more than 300 lanterns and 300 artworks contributed by 16 cities.

Launching the festival on Sat, Taiwan Transportation and Communications Ministry Director General, Chou Yung-hui, told media that 22,000 tourists had already descended during the early stages of the event.

This year's main lantern, 'Dragon Comes to Taiwan', is designed by renowned artist Peng Li-chen and inspired by the dragon sculptures in front of the Daitian Temple in Tainan.

The lantern reaches 22 metres in height and was the centrepiece for the opening ceremony.

This year the festival features



two major exhibition areas, the 'High-Speed Rail Lantern Area' featuring seven large exhibition zones around the high-speed rail station, and 'Anping Lantern Area' located in Lin Mo Niang Park, Anping Recreational Wharf, and along the Anping Canal.

Taiwan is currently embarking on a big push to drive additional visitors, and according to Chou, the country has embraced eco-tourism, tribal tourism and business travel to pique interest.

"We are developing areas to promote tribal tourism in correspondence to tribal trends - New Zealand does this with the Maoris very well and it's something the world is focusing on," he said. *DF*

On The Go in Oz

JUST a month after expanding into New Zealand, On The Go (OTG) Tours has announced the launch of its Australia small group tours for 2024/25.

Travellers can choose from nine new itineraries to a wide range of destinations, such as Sydney, Cairns, the Great Barrier Reef, Byron Bay, the Daintree Rainforest, and more.

Among the adventures on offer is a 10-day 'Whitsundays, Reef & Rainforest' journey, priced from \$6,695, which visits Airlie Beach and Port Douglas and features snorkelling on the Great Barrier Reef & a rainforest gondola ride.

There are two different trip types available, including 'Handpicked' journeys, which see guests stay in three- and four-star hotels, and the more budget-friendly 'Essentials' tours, where see guests stay in a mix of hostels, dorms and eco-cabins.

All tours are commissionable - find out more details [HERE](#).

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Window Seat

WHAT a dirty, stinkin' rat!

Some crimes against tourism run deeper than others, and the villain who recently plastered in Chicago's famous rat hole (**TD** 10 Jan) must surely be held up as one of the vilest criminals of our time.

Thankfully for the city's visitor market, citizens have been working tirelessly to restore the rat outline, which has become a major tourist attraction in recent months.

The unusual pavement impression even became the host venue for a wedding last month - now 'rat's' a wedding!

Hrdlicka was in shock

A REPORT in *The Australian* has claimed outgoing Virgin Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka was blindsided by a call by owner Bain Capital for her to move on.

"She was shocked, the blood drained from her face and she cried," the source claimed.

Intel from inside Bain suggests the equity group had been unhappy with Hrdlicka's performance leading Virgin Australia for close to a year.

Meanwhile, Bain is also rumoured to be scouting for Hrdlicka's replacement from a pool of overseas candidates, suggesting internal promotions or poaching from Aussie rivals are unlikely recruitment paths.

Avis toasts Opera House pact



AVIS last week invited a number of travel industry partners to see the new *Gatsby At The Green Light* cabaret at the Sydney Opera House, as part of an ongoing transport agreement (**TD** 11 Apr).

Guests were personally chauffeured to and from the Opera House, where they were greeted with pre-show drinks and starters, followed by crafted cocktails and delectable party bites at a VIP table in the front row of the show.

The car rental company and the Opera House are one year into their three-year partnership, which has seen the introduction of The Avis Connect Shuttle Service, an enhanced pick-up and drop-off service for visitors.

The Shuttle Service includes a new accessible bus for travel between Circular Quay and the Opera House, as well as three buggies to transport visitors to the performing arts centre.

Pictured are Tina Provis and Eleri Roberts from the Havas Red public relations team, with

Avis Senior Director Commercial, Network & Franchise Justin Montgomery, Head of Marketing, Product & PR Vanessa Wolczak, and Marketing Manager Rachael Hinkson. *MS*

AAT spruiks the NT

AAT Kings has partnered with Tourism NT on a new campaign to inspire travellers to plan a holiday in the Northern Territory.

The operator is offering up to 15% off selected NT tours, and 5% off its recently launched 'Short Break Tours' in the region.

Travellers can enjoy immersive, cultural experiences, including an Uluru Base Walk guided tour and dot-painting with the Aboriginal Anangu artists of Maraku.

Savings of up to \$1,380 per person are available on select departures from now until 31 Dec, including the 15-day 'Outback Adventure' from Adelaide to Darwin.

Bookings must be made before 31 May - more info **HERE**.

QR back to Lisbon

QATAR Airways has announced the resumption of flights to Lisbon, Portugal, as part of its network expansion plan for 2024.

The Middle Eastern carrier will deploy a Boeing B787-8 aircraft on four weekly flights to the capital starting from 06 Jun.

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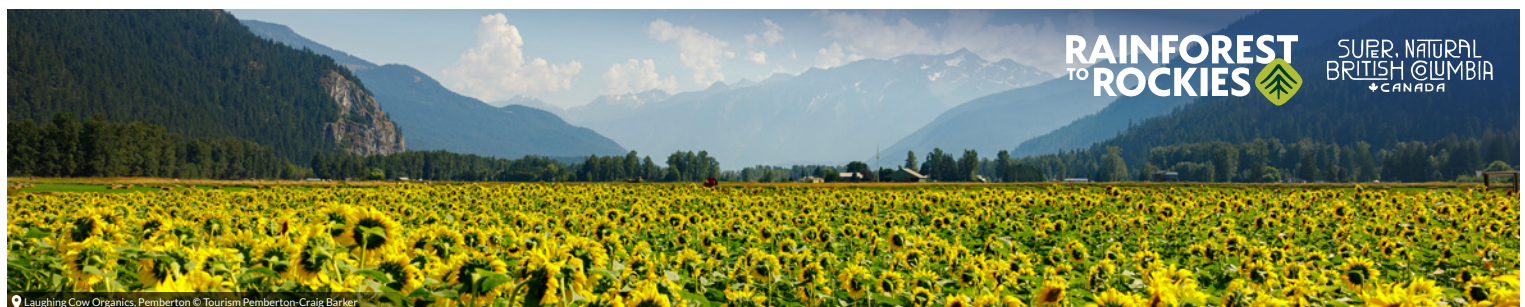
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Water landing for Air Canada



SYDNEY looked her picture postcard self for a lucky group of specialist MICE travel agents last week as they took to the sky in a mesmerising sunset seaplane flight over the harbour.

The experience was hosted by Destination Vancouver along with Air Canada, the duo needing a harbour reminiscent of the Canadian city to demonstrate one of the memorable activities available to incentivise visitors and conference delegates.

Prior to a hearty dinner at Empire Lounge in Rose Bay, MICE agents took to the sky in one of Sydney Seaplanes' Cessna Caravans for a 15-minute tour.

Destination Vancouver Meetings Manager, Luke Snyder, spent last week meeting with specialist MICE agents, learning more about what they're looking for in a host venue and spruiking Vancouver's wares in return.

The city is well equipped with a state-of-the-art convention centre - which features a grass roof as a main sustainability draw.

For Air Canada, the carrier said it has seen great success in its expanded Australian services between Nov-Mar, with larger planes leaving BNE and additional flights from SYD. *ML*

Pictured: Luke Snyder, Destination Vancouver; Vic Naughton, Air Canada; Zoe Gentle, Air Canada; Janis McDonald, Air Canada; Lindsay Goding, Destination Canada; Rick Pomery, Air Canada and Sarah Constable, Air Canada.

New IASC decisions

THE International Air Services Commission has increased seat capacity allowances for Qantas to fly to Tonga and Samoa in new decisions issued late last week.

Qantas was granted an extra 174 weekly seats to Tonga and 450 extra seats to Samoa, with both decisions now in effect.

The IASC also renewed Virgin Australia's daily capacity on its daily services between Cairns and Tokyo Haneda for five more years.

Viking keen to float

VIKING Holdings, the parent firm for Viking Cruises, has lodged its Draft Registration Statement Form F-1 relating to its proposed Initial Public Offering with the United States Securities and Exchange Commission.

While the number of ordinary shares and price range have not yet been determined, Viking said it is aiming to raise around US\$500m from the initial float.

A successful listing will see Viking join Carnival Corporation, Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings as publicly traded companies - more in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

Pimentel checks out

FOUR Seasons Yachts has confirmed company President and CEO Larry Pimentel has left the brand as it steams forward to its planned launch next year.

The cruise industry veteran has committed to sell his stake in the company to existing shareholders.

Booking.com fined

BOOKING.COM is facing a huge fine of €530 million from the Spanish National Markets and Competition Commission for violations of competition law.

The company said it plans to appeal the decision.

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Till pays to join Velocity

ALL-IN-ONE payment solutions brand Till Payments has partnered with Virgin Australia Business Flyer to offer points to businesses processing everyday transactions.

The partnership allows merchants to earn Velocity points on transactions processed via Till Payments products.

Two exclusive offers have been introduced to coincide with the

partnership, led by a bonus of 50,000 Velocity points for new Till Payments customers.

In addition, existing businesses using Till Payments products will earn one Velocity point for every \$25 transacted via a Till product for a limited period.

Till Payments CEO, Paul Kawtal, said the company's mission was to accelerate growth for the business community.

"We value our merchants' loyalty, hard work and persistence and believe they deserve more than just payments.

"By partnering with Velocity, we're excited to take that even further by rewarding our merchants who are also Virgin Australia Business Flyer members' with Velocity Points for their business on every swipe, tap or click," Kawtal added. *ML*

Urban Rest opening

CORPORATE accommodation brand Urban Rest has opened its latest location in North Sydney, featuring a range of self-contained studios up to a split-level three bedroom harbour penthouse.

The company has also opened bookings for its forthcoming opening in Parramatta as it continues its expansion strategy.

Drifter prepares for a home



NEW Aussie venture Leisure Accommodation Collective (LA Co) is preparing to launch Drifter, a design-led hybrid hotel brand, in Australia and New Zealand.

Targeted at "free-spirited travellers both young and young at heart", the first Drifter venues will open in Byron Bay and Christchurch this year, with two more slated to open in 2025.

Drifter was first announced in 2021 as a joint venture with Intrepid Travel (*TD* 25 Oct 2021), however *TD* has been told "Intrepid remains a key partner of Drifter but is not a shareholder".

Drifter Byron Bay, set to open

in Jun, will offer 52 rooms across private and shared spaces, a communal courtyard oasis with a sundeck, fire pit, plunge pools and entertaining areas.

"We wanted to create experience-based precincts to cater to diverse travellers from across the globe," Drifter CMO Josh Hunt said.

"Drifters have the vibrancy and energy of a shared accommodation venue combined with the curation of music, art, food, drinks, and culture most often seen in boutique hotels."

Drifter's parent company, LA Co, is also behind The Village hostel brand, with a portfolio of eight properties around Australia. *JM*

Mega Lekker Escape for agents



SOUTH Africa Tourism is this week hosting 90 Australian and New Zealand travel agents, consumer and trade media on its inaugural Mega Lekker Escape.

The bumper famil and training initiative will see the cohort split into nine groups to embark on different experiences around the country over the next week, each led by an ANZ wholesaler, before rejoining for a two-day training event Sun City Resort in the Pilanesberg Big 5 Game Reserve.

From the Kalahari Desert to Cape Agulhas, the groups will discover South Africa's hidden

gems and community and conservation experiences, as well as its main attractions.

The Mega Lekker famil was made possible thanks to the participation of South African Tourism's Australian and New Zealand trade wholesaler partners, who were responsible for arranging and hosting the itineraries in South Africa.

Participating partners include Above and Beyond Holidays, Adventure Destinations, Adventure World, MW Tours, The Africa Safari Co., This is Africa, Viva Expeditions and World Journeys. *JM*

SeaDream adds to '25

BOUTIQUE luxury cruise line SeaDream Yacht Club has released new voyages to its line-up for 2025, including two seven-day trips and a 14-night in-depth yachting adventures

SeaDream's new 14-night journey combines two new 'Yachting the Greek Isles' voyages and explores 13 different ports.

The itinerary features a blend of must-visit Greek locations and UNESCO World Heritage sites, while guests can enjoy activities such as hiking and beachcombing.

Two new seven-day voyages will also set sail in Jun and Jul next year, featuring an overnight stay in Mykonos or a very late-night departure from Santorini.

Solomons surges

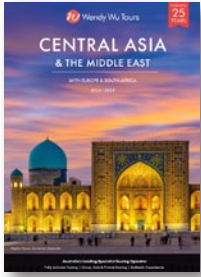
MORE than 26,000 tourists visited the Solomon Islands in 2023, its best result since borders reopened in Jul 2022, new figures from Tourism Solomons show.

According to the tourism body's Acting CEO, Dagnal Dereveke, the numbers were boosted by the influx of international athletes and guests attending the 2023 Pacific Games in Honiara in Nov, however, he also predicted the upward trajectory would continue into this year.

Solomon Airlines' increased air capacity between Honiara and Brisbane (*TD* 08 Aug 2023) is viewed as a key driver of growth.

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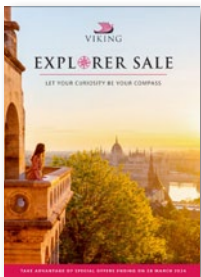
Wendy Wu Tours - Central Asia & the Middle East

Wendy Wu Tours has released a new brochure to inspire travellers with its specially curated tours across Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe and South Africa. The guide details a whole host of new itineraries for 2024-25, including the 11-day 'Secrets of Saudi Arabia', the 20-day 'Treasures of Turkey Anzac Day Dawn Service' and the 15-day 'Christmas in South Africa', as well as long-standing favourites. There are different travelling options available, including group, solo and private tours, with pace indications for each tour also specified in the brochure. There is also a dedicated section towards the end of the guide providing answers to the operator's most frequently asked questions.



Uniworld - Spectacular Journeys in India

Experience the best of India with once-in-a-lifetime experiences around the country, showcased in the latest publication from boutique river cruise line, Uniworld. Travellers can enjoy a unique voyage through the Ganges River, journey through a myriad of small villages across the rural parts of India, as well as immerse themselves in the vibrant cities of Kolkata and Kalna. The itineraries include up to 15 culturally-focused excursions, which are handpicked by the cruise line to further enhance the travel experience by showcasing the authentic culture, sights, activities, cuisine and festivals across the nation. The 26-page brochure has something to offer anyone who is seeking a special experience in the land of the Hindus.



Viking - Explorer Sale

Viking is advising the industry to take advantage of its limited-time special offer, which will wrap up on 28 Mar. To highlight the promotion, Viking has published a 32-page brochure detailing the Explore Sale offerings across a collection of river, ocean and expedition voyages, including the eight-day 'Iconic Western Mediterranean', now priced from \$5,495 per person, and the 15-day 'Grand European' itinerary between Amsterdam and Budapest from \$8,695pp, which includes 12 guided tours, return economy flights from select points, and much more. Agents are encouraged to attend the informative Viking Explorer Sessions, the details of which are included on the guide's final page, along with the chance to win a 15-day Grand European River Cruise.

Vietjet orders 20 A330neos



VIETJET and Airbus signed an agreement for the order of 20 A330neo widebodies at the Singapore Airshow last week.

The new planes will replace the carrier's current fleet of leased A330-300s on its growing long-haul network, as well as its high-capacity regional services.

"The new A330neo aircraft is a strategic addition to comprehensively modernise Vietjet's fleet, enhancing operational capabilities to support our global flight network expansion plan," Vietjet CEO Dinh Viet Phuong said.

"Passengers can look forward to longer-range, well-equipped flights with excellent services at more competitive fares."

The lucrative order will also push the Vietnamese carrier closer to its goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, thanks to its fuel-efficient, new-generation design.

Vietjet currently has a fleet of more than 150 aircraft, and operates 58 flights per week to and from Australia. *JM*

Pictured: Vietjet and Airbus executives after inking the deal.

Aussie tourist lost

A **SEARCH** is currently underway in Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls National Park, after a 67-year-old Australian tourist went missing in the rainforest last Fri.

Zimbabwe National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority said it has deployed a "fully fledged" search team to locate the lost tourist, including police, sniffer dogs, zones and trackers.

Additionally, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) told *ABC News* it is "providing consular assistance" to the family of the missing person.

Hello Kitty terror

TOKYO'S Hello Kitty theme park, located in Tama New Town, reopened yesterday after a "terrorist threat email" prompted it to close on Sat.

Its operator, Sanrio Puroland, filed a police report and issued a statement on the park's official website informing visitors of the safety issue.

According to local reports, police did not find any suspicious objects in the park, which attracts over 1.5 million visitors per year.

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- 11 excursions & visits
- 23 meals included

Price based on 18 October 2024.
Other dates available.



Save \$675

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- 19 excursions & visits
- 32 meals included

Price based on 21 September 2024.
Other dates available.



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- 12 excursions & visits
- Fly the Grand Canyon option

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Other dates available.



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