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COOK ISLANDS

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel news, a cover wrap from **FCTG's Envoyage**, a photo page from **TravelManagers**, our **Business Events News** feature page, plus a full page from tour operator **Collette**.

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Travelport embraces AI

GLOBAL travel technology company Travelport has unveiled a new AI-powered tool for its Travelport+ platform, designed to assist travel agencies provide better packages for clients.

Hailed by Travelport as a new way for advisors to "compare apples to oranges in an apples-to-apples way", the newly launched Content Curation Layer (CCL) uses AI and machine learning to optimise search results from billions of trip options fed from multiple global sources.

Content is drawn by the CCL from several pipelines, including LCC, EDIFACT, NDC, hotel bed banks, and car rental sites, to provide agents with a range of bookable content at speed, all via the one search screen.

"Travelport's role in the increasingly complex travel industry is to take millions of pieces of disparate information and make it simple for both travel agencies and providers

to understand, search, sell and service," said Travelport Chief Executive Officer, Greg Webb.

Travelport also claims the CCL enables a search return speed faster than current airline search responses, and identifies a greater volume of relevant travel offers to create a more intelligent search experience for agents. **AB**

CATO Xmas open

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has placed tickets on sale for its Christmas lunch event taking place on 05 Dec at the Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park.

This year's theme is inspired by a cocktail attire featuring blue and silver, promising an "elegant setting, top-tier entertainment, and a celebration of the industry's achievements" in 2024.

Earlybird prices are available from \$180pp (including GST) - **CLICK HERE** for further details.

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We are your envoy

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The global network of entrepreneurial travel advisors is steered by an experienced team backed by one of the biggest names in travel - see **cover page**.

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Aussies losing \$600m a year

AUSTRALIAN travellers have leaked \$600 million in international transaction fees over the last 12 months, new research from ING has shown. The bank's report suggested the average Aussie is losing out on close to \$95 each trip because they have not done their due diligence about how much each transaction overseas will cost.

"Our research shows that a huge number of Aussies are getting hit by those hidden international transaction fees, that's why it's important that Aussies confirm with their banks ahead of time what fees they may be subject to," ING Head of Consumer and Market Insights, Matt Bowen, said.

Close to a third of Aussies conceded they lost out on over \$100 in international transaction fees, while a worrying 13% said they had "no idea" that using an Australian debit/credit card incurs international transaction fees.

The lucrative stream of bank revenue also looks set to continue, with 81% of Aussies travellers still using Aussie-issued cards (physical or on mobile) to make purchases on int'l trips.

The same report also claimed 61% of Aussies cite affordability as the primary deterrent in booking a trip to Europe.

A gap was identified between what amount of savings travellers think they will need for a two-week trip to Europe, versus what they are willing to spend.



Aussies anticipate needing to spend \$10,490 for a good two-week holiday, but they are only willing to fork out \$8,866 - representing a 15% differential.

It would take close to two years for the average Aussie to save for a two-week holiday in Europe, the report found, with nearly a quarter indicating such a trip would be a "big strain" on the household budget.

The biggest expenses on an overseas trip were found to be accommodation (86%), flights (85%), food and drink (56%) and experiences (45%). *AB*

IBTM Asia Pacific

INCENTIVES, Business Travel & Meetings (IBTM) World has announced venue and industry associations ICCA Asia Pacific, MPI and IAPCO as supporting partners for its inaugural Asia Pacific tradeshow.

Additionally, AsiaWorld-Expo in Hong Kong has been confirmed as the event's venue.

IBTM Asia Pacific will allow global destinations and suppliers to showcase their products to more than 250 buyers and 1,500 visitors from over 20 APAC countries - more events news on [page five](#).

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APT increases Africa selection



A FOUR-DAY extension at the luxurious Grootbos Private Nature Reserve is among the highlights of APT's 2025/26 Africa Journeys range released today.

The eco-reserve is located close to the south-western tip of South Africa and offers activities including guided walks through a milkwood forest, horse riding and a 4WD botanical safari.

The extension is priced at \$5,495pp, twin share and can be coupled on to APT's 24-day 'Contrasts of Africa', priced from \$35,495ppts or the 13-day

'Essence of Southern Africa', priced from \$16,495ppts.

Tour dates for 2025 and 2026 are now on sale, with more departure dates on offer.

"On the back of our sold-out 2024 season, we've increased departures and are expecting 2025 and 2026 to be just as popular - and you can bet we'll ensure our guests have the ultimate African safari," said APT Product Manager, Kelly D'Aucourt.

Itineraries include deluxe accommodation throughout, regular game drives during visits to nature reserves, and activities including a helicopter flight over the raging Victoria Falls.

Travellers can enjoy earlybird savings of up to \$3,000 per couple.

Big brands go small

SMALL Luxury Hotels of the World has officially inducted Ovolo Hotels (**TD** 01 Feb) and Hilton (**TD** 08 Feb) as the newest members of the portfolio.

The update means members of the Hilton Honors loyalty program can now earn and redeem points at Ovolo's collection of properties in Australia along with Ovolo Central in Hong Kong.

Collette showcases

COLLETTE is celebrating its 107th touring season in 2025 and is inviting agents to join the party.

Learn about the highlights of Collette's 107th touring season - find your nearest on [page seven](#).

Sell flights to India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh or Nepal and win return flight tickets plus your share of **AUD 7,000 in gift vouchers**.

[Find out more](#)

T&Cs apply

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Your Gateway to Asia & Beyond

FCTG appoints CMO corp

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has announced Scott Alboni (**pictured**) as the new Global Chief Marketing Officer for its flagship corporate businesses.

Alboni will take the reins at FCM Travel and Corporate Traveller, following a successful six-year stint as FCM's Senior Vice President of Marketing.

He replaces Frits de Kok, who will become leader of the FCM Meetings & Events business in EMEA.

Alboni led the rebrand of the entire FCM business during the pandemic, and has enjoyed other notable successes such as the rollout of the FCM Platform.

"We have had some amazing achievements worldwide for the FCM business, namely the



rebrand that took place early on that really re-established our position in the market, which triggered a fantastic growth period with some huge wins for the company across the board," Alboni explained.

"I was privileged to work with some of the best talent in the industry to successfully deliver on that project.

"My core focuses in the future will centre on driving new marketing innovation through

our MarTech, helping to drive business insights through our innovative customer experiences programmes, and have more data-driven marketing strategies," he added. *MS*

Pan Pac Perth update

PAN Pacific Perth's refurbishment, underway since May 2023, has seen 390 guest rooms and suites transformed.

The convention ballrooms and meeting rooms, along with the lobby and Pacific Club lounge on level 7, are also now underway.

The plan will also see a grand unveiling of the luxuriously appointed Presidential Suite, which boasts panoramic views of Perth and the Swan River from each of the suite's two balconies.

The next stage will see the Pacific Club rooms updated, with the reno to be done late this year.

Join the Aug frenzy

THE Click Frenzy Travel event will be held from 07-11 Aug, and brands still have time to get involved through premium digital placements, targeted EDM campaigns, and more.

Last Mar, participating retailers experienced a 70% increase in brand traffic by participating - **CLICK HERE** to learn more.

Dive deep with MSC

TRAVEL agents can enjoy an in-depth look into the MSC Yacht Club experience through an exclusive webinar next week.

The 20-minute MSC Yacht Club webinar aims to equip partners with the expertise to offer their clients the epitome of luxury cruising, and takes place on 17 Jul over two sessions at 8:30am and 12.30pm (AEST), as well as 10.30am and 2.30pm (NZST).

CLICK HERE to attend.

Travel spike in Jun

ONLINE travel bookings and commercial airline tickets were the key drivers of a spike in recreational spending among Aussie households in Jun, with the category rising by 3.2% compared to May.

The latest monthly data from CommBank showed the jump in recreation spend arrives at a welcome time, with the last 12 months only showing soft gains.

The Chat

with Jenny



Travel Daily
A conversation with Penny Spencer

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Meet the Stylish new team



THE Novotel & ibis Styles Melbourne Airport has revealed the team driving its launch.

David Alexander is the new General Manager, bringing over 15 years of leadership experience to the position, including being part of the pre-opening team at Novotel Melbourne and ibis Melbourne Central.

Narelle Welsh has also been appointed the new Director of Sales and Marketing, where she is responsible for securing clients and partnerships for the hotels.

Also joining as Director of Finance from Novotel Melbourne South Wharf is Charlie Tickler, while Sonia Ruiz is the new Director of Talent and Culture.

Ruiz will prioritise recruiting and fostering a positive work environment, drawing from her experience at Novotel Melbourne and ibis Melbourne Central.

Meanwhile, Giovanni Sayuti will manage the day-to-day needs of the property as Director of Operations, with his brief to focus on delivering exceptional customer service.

Gopikrishna Loganathan, Director of Engineering, is charged with building operations, leveraging his experience from Novotel and ibis Melbourne Central, while Ashish Rajput, Director of Revenue, will handle all distribution channels. *JG*

White knight saves Hornblower Group

THE former parent of Australia-based Journey Beyond has this week welcomed a major funding injection that will enable the cash-strapped Hornblower Group to jettison more than US\$720 million in unpaid bills.

Strategic Value Partners (SVP) became the new majority owners of the San Francisco-headquartered Hornblower Group in Feb (**TD** 22 Feb), with the latest tranche of support pumping millions of dollars of extra liquidity into the business.

The deals leaves former majority owner in Hornblower, Crestview Partners, with a "significant" but minority stake.

"We are thrilled to see Hornblower enter this new era of growth," SVP confirmed.

Hornblower operates a number of tourist cruises in the US, including to Niagara and Alcatraz, and had previously operated American Queen Voyages until the river cruise line's collapse, which was brought on by mounting debts (**TD** 21 Feb).

Hornblower at one stage also owned Journey Beyond, however that agreement was abandoned and the Aussie company now operates as a stand-alone business as part of Crestview.

TravelManagers' mid-year catch ups

TRAVELMANAGERS has celebrated the midpoint of a busy and productive 2024 calendar year, with a series of social events for its personal travel managers (PTMs) and partner suppliers.

The focus was firmly on catching up with old friends and colleagues, as well as connecting with new faces within the TravelManagers family and the wider industry.

Find out more about TravelManagers [HERE](#).



GOLD Coast PTMs Dionne Smith, Aileen Collins, Tracy Cosgriff, Melanie Harrop, Sarena Taylor, Janice Lee, Kathryn Watson and Lisa Leary.



ROBERT Couvre from Malaysian Airlines joined Collette's David Farrar and TravelManagers' Micheal Puttner.



RAMON Drew, Viking; PTM Michelle Michael-Pecora; Michael Gazal, TravelManagers' General Manager; and PTMs Sue Kuti and Julianne Gazal-Rizk.



VIC PTM Karen Dempsey; Karlie Day, Viva Holidays; Sally-Anne Matthews, Bunnik Tours; and PTMs Anita Coombs and Tania White.



TRAVELMANAGERS' Michael Gazal with SA PTMs Carolyn Johnston and Prue Thomson, alongside Zoe Francis, Bunnik Tours; Johnny McCarten, On the Go Tours; and Leigh Reynolds, Intrepid Travel.

NSW PTMs enjoyed fantastic food, wine and conversation at Baia The Italian on Sydney's Cockle Bay Wharf.



WA PTM Tanya Nielsen; Samantha Morgan, Norwegian Cruise Lines; PTM Erryn Morris; Michael Gazal, TravelManagers; and PTMs Lyndall Hewitt and Kathy Millett.

BRISBANE PTMs enjoyed the opportunity to meet their new BPM, Nicole Henderson.



SUNSHINE Coast PTMs Tracey Mills and Julie Jenkinson; TravelManagers' Julia McLean; PTM Joy Varga; and Qld BPM Nicole Henderson.



MICK Boylan, Viva Holidays; Tenneil Lawson, APT; Molly Savage, APT; Annabel Herman, APT; Nick Sherrard, Singapore Airlines; Peter Lombardi, Lufthansa; and George Siljanoski, KLM.





Savannah gears up

MAJOR Tropical North Queensland music festival, Savannah in the Round, has released its 2024 program as it gears up for its fifth year.

Already seeing strong ticket sales and boasting a stellar line-up of artists, the event is set to take place from 11-13 Oct in the Cairns Hinterland.

TTNQ CEO Mark Olsen said Savannah in the Round played a key role in bringing visitors to the region during the shoulder season.

He pointed out that last year's event generated \$5.5 million in overnight visitor expenditure and more than 23,000 visitor nights.

"This year there are very high profile international and Australian artists performing, so we anticipate more interstate guests," he added.

HILTON SYD TASTES DIFFERENT

HILTON Sydney has teamed up with Encore Event Technologies to launch a bespoke culinary concept for meeting organisers seeking a "big, bold, and dramatic" events experience.

Unveiled at an annual events showcase in front of media, stakeholders and buyers, the innovative food and beverage concept consists of seven speciality food stations including caviar and Peking duck.

There were also interactive live food displays at the launch event, as well as premium Champagnes, wines, cocktails from around the world, complemented by a stellar line-up of live entertainment, including performances by Japanese drummers.

Hilton Sydney also took the opportunity to introduce its new Executive Chef, Hamish Neale, who played a key role in dreaming up the new concept.



"Event organisers place so much time, money and investment into organising quality, bespoke events only to be faced with generic food packages that can often be restrictive or uninspired and this is absolutely not the case at Hilton Sydney," Neale shared.

"My vision was to create a collaborative menu approach where we can work together to build a culinary offering custom-

made to the audience and event.

"There are no barriers on how big we can go," he enthused.

Hilton Sydney's fresh culinary concept can be complemented by new production innovations, which were also developed in partnership with Encore and revealed on the night, including creative uses of light and LED to create theatrical moments, presentations, and themes. *JM*

BEIA helps you plan

BUSINESS Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) has launched a new online planning tool to assist event organisers searching for key details about their next event destination and venue.

The tool is available via the industry body's new website, which contains membership information, regional insights, news updates, events and programs, industry stats and other useful resources.

The new planning tool can be accessed now, [HERE](#).

First Nations culture on display in Cairns

CAIRNS Convention Centre has unveiled a new artwork by local First Nations artist, Elverina Johnson ([pictured](#)).

The piece, now on display in the entrance to the newly expanded centre ([TD 28 Sep 2023](#)), captures the connection between the ocean, reef, mangroves, and the land with First Nations people.

Announced last month, the initiative marks a key step in the



Centre's Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan ([TD 13 Jun](#)).

General Manager Janet Hamilton said the artwork "not only enhances the vibrancy of our centre but also educates and inspires our visitors".

Virtual event book

CVENT has published a new virtual event handbook to help planners design and execute engaging virtual events, and maximise their return on investment.

Titled *Virtual Event Strategy for Dummies*, the e-book covers everything from deciding on strategy, to promoting your virtual event.

The 66-page guide can be accessed for free [HERE](#).



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The Hawai'i Tourism Authority (HTA) has welcomed two members to the board, with Roberts Hawai'i Inc. President and CEO **Roy Pfund** and International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 142 President **Chris West** joining as Directors. Pfund brings 40 years of experience in the tour and transportation industry, while West has made significant contributions to ILWU's operations for the past 14 years. The new HTA board members' terms will end on 30 Jun 2028.

Andrew Evans will take on the role of Chief Financial Officer and Joint Company Secretary at **Alliance Aviation**. Evans, who has worked at Alliance for the last 17 months, replaces Marc Devine, who is set to resign on 30 Aug after seven years as the company's CFO. Evans boasts more than 30 years' experience in corporate and operational accounting, financing, strategic planning and information systems in a range of sectors, both overseas and locally.

Grant Devonport, the former CFO of Australia Pacific Airports Corporation (which owns Melbourne and Launceston airports), has been nominated by **Auckland Airport** as a Director. The shareholders will formally vote on his election at the Annual General Meeting on 17 Oct, at which time the board will also welcome Julia Hoare as its new Chair. Devonport's nomination comes as the airport undertakes a huge transformation program.

Hotel asset management firm, **Axsia HTL**, has appointed Sydney-based **Sarah Taylor** as its Senior Consultant. She started in her new role this week, and is tasked with expanding the company's capabilities and presence in Australia. Taylor has more than two decades of hotel and tourism industry experience under her belt, and has worked across major hospitality brands including Sheraton, Hyatt, and Seibu Prince Hotels. Her skillset encompasses revenue management, sales and distribution, events, and finance.

Emirates has announced several senior appointments to support the airline's growth. Among the 10 new employees joining this week are **Ali Mubarak Al Soori** as Chief Procurement and Facilities Officer; **Ahmed Safa** as Head of Engineering and MRO; and **Will Lofberg** as SVP International and Government Affairs. Also coming onboard from 01 Sep is **Shahreyar Nawabi** as CEO Emirates Flight Catering and **Mahmood Ameen** as Divisional SVP Engineering Projects & Aircraft Procurement.

Hertz Group is preparing to welcome **Sandeep Dube** as its new Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer on 22 Jul, along with **Katherine Lee Martin**, who will become Executive Vice President, General Counsel, and Corporate Secretary, effective immediately. The global rental car company is also expanding its leadership team with three other additions, including **Greg May** as EVP Fleet Management and **Mike Moore** as EVP, Technical Operations.

Tassie gets creative

TOURISM Tasmania is reviewing its creative agency arrangements, requesting a new pitch for enhanced and methods to better promote the state.

The tourism marketing body wants to renew its strategic brand positioning by improving its connection with travellers on a more emotional level.

Incumbent agency BMF has held the account since 2019.

Travelex adds seven

FOREIGN exchange company Travelex has added seven currencies to its pre-paid travel money card.

Customers are now able to upload and spend Norwegian Krone, Danish Krone, Icelandic Krona, Hungarian Forint, Thai Baht, Hong Kong Dollars and Singapore Dollars.

The update comes as a result of growing demand for Asian currencies as travel across Asia continues to rebound post-pandemic, and brings the total number of currencies available on the Travelex Money Card (TMC) up to 22.

Storyteller sailing

AVALON Waterways has announced a new Storyteller cruise, with best-selling author Christopher Moore to host the special sailing for a second time in Oct 2025.

The 'Illuminations on the Danube' voyage will make its way along the waterway from Vilshofen to Budapest over 10 days, with guests to experience two full days in Vienna - the setting of Moore's upcoming novel - more info **HERE**.



Window Seat

TASMANIA'S controversial Museum of Old and New Art (Mona) is in the spotlight again this week, after admitting the Picasso paintings on display in its bathrooms are fake.

The quirky museum made global news last month after it moved the so-called Picasso paintings from its 'Ladies Lounge' - the gallery's female-only venue - to a female toilet cubicle, in protest of a court order that dictated it must allow men into the lounge.

Up until recently, the museum claimed the paintings were inherited by Kirsha Kaechele - artist, curator, and wife of Mona's owner, David Walsh - whose great-grandmother had apparently been buddies with Picasso.

However after being approached by the Picasso Administration, which manages the late artist's estate, Kaechele confessed yesterday on Mona's website that the works were not genuine, and that she had in fact painted them herself.

She clarified in the blog post that, apart from those on display in the ladies' toilets, "all of my acquisitions for Mona to date have been (real) Picassos".

Kaechele said she painted the Picasso works in secret three years ago, and that despite "waiting" for people to catch on to the fakery and expose her, she boasted that even the gallery staff were fooled by her imitation brush strokes.

collette

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