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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including our **Luxury page**, a cover wrap from **Norwegian Cruise Line**, as well as a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

See Britain differently

IT IS time to experience Britain differently with Infinity Holidays, with a range of trips on offer to see the destination through new cultural lenses - see **page seven**.

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Aussies assemble for USA

VISIT USA Australia has assembled some of the travel industry's best and brightest to help shape the outbound visitor strategy to the United States in 2024 and beyond.

The newly elected Executive Committee includes: President Caroline Davidson, Rocky Mountain International; VP David Clark, Tauck; Secretary Belinda Harvy, Discover The World; and Treasurer Millie Browne, Colorado Tourism Authority.

Meanwhile, a list of key stakeholders have also been elected to the Ordinary Committee to advise on the best way to increase Australian visitation to the United States.

These include: Kim Ryan, Santa



Monica Travel & Tourism; Tony Soden, Rocky Mountaineer; Richard Carrick, United Airlines; David McMahon, San Diego Tourism Authority; Jack Curtis, Arizona Office of Tourism; Michael Cassis, Visit Anaheim; Chris Watson, Chris Watson Travel/Rediscover Travel; Hannah Wright, Travel Oklahoma; Nicole Bennett, Delta Air Lines; Anna Riedel, Hawaii Tourism Oceania; Joanne Motta, Utah Office of Tourism; and Kathleen Brown, Los Angeles Tourism. AB

The new Executive Committee pictured after the ballot.

Alliance shifts gears

ALLIANCE Aviation has announced changes to its plan to "part out" 11 of its E190 aircraft, which it highlighted in its half-year results presentation last month (TD 08 Feb).

The charter airline said it will now disassemble only seven of its E190s to use the components for spare parts or sell to third parties, citing significant demand for its aircraft and a recent rise in used regional jet pricing.

The additional four operational aircraft will now be used for revenue-generating operations for both Alliance and third-party use (either wet or dry lease).

The company's Managing Director, Scott McMillan, said Alliance has taken delivery of 10 of 34 of the E190 fleet committed to in Feb and Jul 2023, with three already parted out.

Courtyard WA entry

COURTYARD by Marriott has marked its debut in Western Australia this week with the formal opening of Courtyard by Marriott Perth, Murdoch.

The 150-room property was flagged in 2021 (TD 22 Oct 2021) and features an all-day dining venue called Substance Restaurant & Bar, spaces for meetings and a 24-hour gym.

Get more with NCL

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) offers more value for travel agents and their clients, thanks to its Free at Sea offer, as well as more earnings and more rewards.

Check out the **cover page** for more information.

Carnival Excels, again

CARNIVAL Cruise Line has finalised an agreement with Meyer Werft to build a fifth Excel-class vessel for the brand.

The latest order will be delivered to the cruise line in 2028, joining sister ships in the class which already include *Mardi Gras*, *Celebration* and *Jubilee*, as well as a fourth yet-to-be-named vessel in 2027.

This latest ship will be powered by LNG and carry 6,400 passengers and 1,800 crew.

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A Noble calling for Karena

AFTER leading PR at EVT Hotels & Resorts for almost three years as Communications Manager, Karena Noble is flying the coop to launch her own consultancy.

Karena Noble Communications will specialise in the travel, tourism and hospitality industries, bringing over two decades of experience to her clients.

“With so much activity happening in the tourism and hotel industry, I thought it was ideal timing to create Karena Noble Communications,” Noble said, pointing out that she also has past experience operating her own PR agency.

“It will allow me to continue to work with even more hospitality and tourism clients, both domestically and internationally.”

During her time at EVT, Noble led the PR efforts for 70 of the group’s hotels across Australia and New Zealand under brands



Rydges, Autra, and more.

She oversaw the launch of Rydges Melbourne last year, and was also behind the debut of the LyLo brand in the Australia/NZ market with the opening of LyLo Auckland in 2022.

Before being recruited by EVT, the Sydney-based communications expert worked for almost a decade as Director of Public Relations for Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia.

For more information on Noble’s new boutique PR consultancy, **CLICK HERE.** JM

The Entire release

ENTIRE Travel Group has advised its 2024/25 Europe and Canada & Alaska brochures have arrived and travel agents can now secure their copies via TIFS.

The new 184-page Europe brochure (**pictured**) features eight destinations, including Italy, France, Spain, and Switzerland, while the 96-page Canada & Alaska brochure highlights scenic rail journeys, road trips, and immersive wildlife encounters.

Order the brochures **HERE.**



Swifter than Swift

THE Grand Prix has provided a turbocharged boost to Melbourne’s visitor economy, with inner city bookings up by 67% year-on-year, new data from Big Red Group shows.

The result overtakes the 46.8% uplift delivered to the Victorian capital by Taylor Swift’s Eras Tour last month (**TD** 13 Mar).

The popular motorsport event took place at Melbourne’s racetrack in Albert Park, attracting a record-breaking 452,000 attendees over four days.

The visitor surge also benefited the state’s regional areas, including Geelong, where Big Red’s bookings were up a whopping 108%, as well as Hume (up 23%) and Ballarat (up 2.8%).

The experience marketplace saw the most traction in the transport and services category, with bookings ballooning 612% year-on-year, followed by attractions (up 132%), and golf packages (up 183%).

Travel Daily
 ON LOCATION

LISBON

Today’s issue of **TD** is coming to you en route to Portugal, where we will board **Avalon Waterways’** new ship **Avalon Alegria** over the weekend.

WE ARE currently mid-flight on our way to Lisbon, Portugal, ahead of **Avalon Alegria’s** inaugural cruise along the Douro river this week.

Guests have the chance to explore the Portuguese capital prior to heading to Porto to board the brand-new vessel, an itinerary option that is available on Avalon’s Douro cruises.

Jetstar remembers 20 years



JETSTAR is preparing to celebrate 20 years of operation by remaking its original launch campaign, ‘Let’s Fly Jetstar’.

Qantas’ budget subsidiary recently invited customers to submit their favourite Jetstar travel memories from the past two decades for a chance to feature in the milestone marketing push, with the best submissions to be showcased in the May campaign.

Jetstar’s Executive Manager Customer, Jenn Armor, said the remake of Jetstar’s launch

advertisement will be elevated through the eyes of its customers and its people 20 years on.

“Since we introduced low-cost airfares in Australia, millions more people are able to fly around the country and overseas, with the majority of our fares being sold for under \$100,” Armor said.

“What better way to mark our birthday than by telling the stories of all of the people who have made Jetstar what it is today,” she added.

Entries to submit best memories closed earlier in the week. **AB**

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SIXT parks agent concern

EXCLUSIVE

GLOBAL vehicle rental company SIXT has acted quickly to settle a series of outstanding travel agent commission payments which sparked concern from the trade.

Travel Daily was contacted by one disgruntled agent who sounded the alarm after waiting up to six months for commissions

Airnorth goes west

AIRNORTH launched its inaugural flight from Perth to Alice Springs on Mon morning.

Taking off from Perth Airport’s Terminal 3, the route is operated by an Embraer-jet registered under TL361, with a two-two seat configuration, adding a capacity of near 600 seats each week.

The service will now operate Mon, Wed and Fri until at least the end of the year.

Some passengers also received a small gift (pictured) before boarding the flight to the NT city.

The regional airline is currently offering the Perth-Alice Springs route from \$253 one-way.



Thredbo ski passes

SEASON passes to Thredbo Resort have gone on sale for Winter 2024 ahead of the season, which runs from 08 Jun to 07 Oct.

In addition, ski enthusiasts can also now secure their lift passes, ski rentals, lessons, backcountry tours and discounts on tickets to the resort’s exciting new Alpine Coaster attraction (**TD 12 Mar**).

Passes include a variety of deals and bonus benefits including discounts on F&B and unlimited access to the Leisure Centre.

on a variety of bookings.

The matter stemmed from SIXT’s use of Paymode X - a B2B payment intermediary owned by Bottomline Technologies and based in the United States.

Complicating matters further was the Australian travel agent being erroneously registered twice by Paymode X after his IATA number was attributed to a travel agent in the US.

Due to the confusion, Paymode-X was issuing cheques in USD, which the agent’s bank declined to process due to Australia’s phasing-out of cheques as a payment type by 2030.

After making enquiries with SIXT Australia, the matter was escalated to the company’s head office in Pullach, Germany, which led to a speedy approval for the local office to remit outstanding commissions via funds transfer.

“In recent months, a handful of travel agencies were paid their commissions as cheques by SIXT Global instead of direct electronic transfers,” the company said in a statement to *Travel Daily*.

“We apologise to the agencies impacted and have arranged for SIXT Australia to honour the commission payments as EFT on behalf of SIXT Global.” *ML*

42% bleisure surge

FLIGHT Centre’s Corporate Traveller (FCTG) division has reported a 42% rise in bleisure travel bookings this Easter.

Brisbane and New Zealand are the most popular destinations, with the majority of business travellers choosing to depart today ahead of the official start of the holiday period.

FCTG believes the early departures are part of a trend for bleisure travel in Australia.

“This year has seen a remarkable increase in the number of corporate trips being planned around the Easter, underscoring the value of blending work & holidays,” FCTG said.

NSW impresses India



MORE than 35 key travel partners from India sampled the best visitor experiences on offer in Sydney and its surrounds last week, thanks to Destination New South Wales’ renewed Focus on India program.

Delegates enjoyed workshops at the Sydney Cricket Ground and a gala dinner at the Sydney Opera House, which highlighted the best of NSW produce, before embarking on trips to regional locations including the Blue Mountains, the South Coast and Port Stephens.

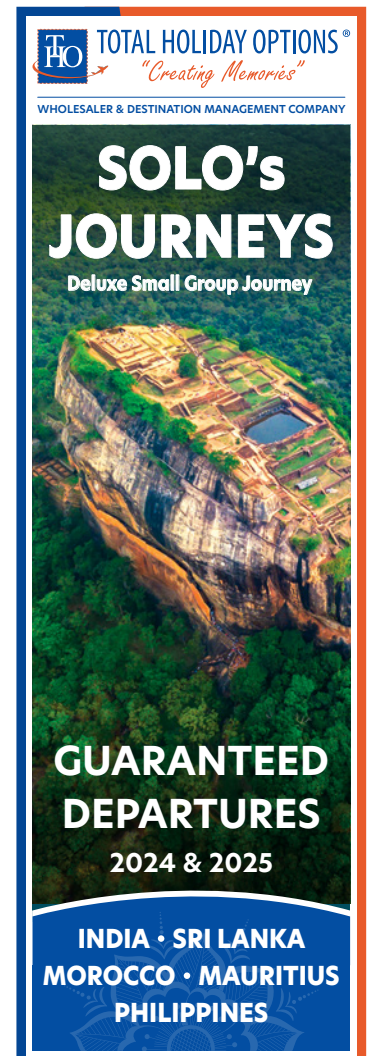
The program also gave the state’s tourism operators a timely opportunity to connect with Indian travel partners and promote their experiences, following the return of NSW to its position as the top Aussie destination for Indian visitors after six years.

In fact, the latest data from Tourism Research Australia shows 50% of Indian visitors to Australia visited NSW for the year ending Sep 2023 - the highest market share of all states - injecting \$488 million into the Premier State’s visitor economy.

“The event provided an invaluable platform for NSW visitor economy operators to develop business relationships with key Indian travel partners,” Destination NSW Chief Executive Officer Steve Cox said.

“These new connections will

expose our local operators to new and bigger audiences, supporting businesses and thousands of jobs throughout the state’s visitor economy.” *JM*



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Luxury lodge b'day

LUXURY Lodges of Australia has paid tribute to its founding member, Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, ahead of its 16th birthday this week.

"On behalf of our Luxury Lodges of Australia family, we'd like to honour and celebrate the living legacy of Southern Ocean Lodge as it continues to lead the way in a next generation of luxury, experiential and sustainable tourism," said Luxury Lodges of Australia Chair, Penny Rafferty.

The Baillie Lodges property first opened its doors on 29 Mar 2008 and quickly became an icon of the island, nestled between Flinders Chase National Park and Seal Bay Conservation Park.

LIZARD ISLAND DISHES OUT NEW HONOUR

LUXURY hotel and restaurant collective, Relais & Chateaux, has signed its newest Australian members property, with Lizard Island this week welcomed into the exclusive fraternity.

The North Queensland resort joins a global network of 580 of the finest hotels, resorts and restaurants, designed to provide a mark of guaranteed excellence for discerning travellers.

Lizard Island General Manager, Mark Leslie, said the team was thrilled to have been accepted into the Relais & Chateaux family, which will resonate with travellers seeking a standard of luxury recognised the world over.

"Relais & Chateaux brings together a global community of discerning travellers and diners,



and we're looking forward to welcoming more members from around the world to the natural paradise here at Lizard Island, with its wade-in access to the Great Barrier Reef, beach house suites and fine, island-style dining," Leslie said.

Leslie added that Lizard Island gained acceptance into Relais &

Chateaux through its meticulous attention to detail, warm and welcoming atmosphere, and commitment to exemplary service.

The property's kitchen celebrates local, seasonal and artisanal tastes in order to showcase the flavours of the region while telling an important story at the same time. *ML*

Seabourn segments

ULTRA-LUXURY cruise brand Seabourn has opened nine individual segments for sale in its 2026 World Cruise on board *Seabourn Sojourn*.

The circumnavigation, titled 'Ring of Fire: Hidden Gems', features segments ranging from 10 to 48 days in length, including a 39-day sector from Sydney to Hong Kong.

The full 129-day sailing departs from Los Angeles on 06 Jan 2026.

Mandarin Oriental expands 'Homes' portfolio with new French estate

MANDARIN Oriental Exclusive Homes has introduced the palatial Chateau de la Croix des Gardes to its collection for 2024.

The 16-bedroom estate is located in the Cote d'Azur region in Cannes and takes Mandarin Oriental 'Homes' range to six.

Chateau de la Croix des Gardes is set among 25 acres of manicured Italian gardens and offers panoramic views over the Mediterranean Sea.

The property's bedrooms are spread across both the main house, along with an

external cottage and a poolside penthouse, with terraces overlooking the gardens.

Guests can enjoy a variety of entertainment options including a private bowling alley, tennis court and a cinema room, the latter a tribute to the property's role as a backdrop in Alfred Hitchcock's 1955 masterpiece, *To Catch a Thief*, starring Cary Grant and Grace Kelly.

The property has also hosted luminaries of the global fashion world, last year serving as the setting for Donatella Versace's La



Vacanza fashion show.

"From its meticulously curated amenities to its breathtaking surroundings, every detail has been thoughtfully curated to ensure an unparalleled level of luxury and hospitality," said Mandarin Oriental Exclusive Homes GM, Ersev Demiroz.



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Pier One Sydney Harbour has partnered with independent Sydney-based fragrance house, Who is Elijah, to launch a new hotel collection. Guests staying at the property will be able to enjoy a comprehensive range of amenities, including shampoo,

conditioner, body wash, body lotions and fragrances. To celebrate the occasion, the hotel's waterfront bar, Pier Bar, will also permanently feature a 'Who Is Elijah' cocktail.



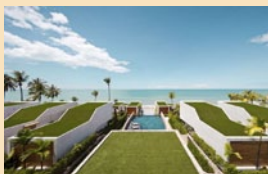
Oakwood Premier Melbourne has recently unveiled a revitalised lobby bar, Oak Lounge. The bar now features a refreshed space that centres on elevated comfort, adhering to luxury design elements alongside a brand-new menu. Guests can

now savour new flavours of prawn and crab spiced remoulade on brioche, a honey-glazed sriracha salmon burger, curated by Head Chef Jean-Pierre Sauterelle.



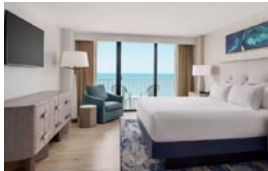
In a bid to blend classy sophistication with vibrant energy, the Grain Bar at **Four Seasons Hotel Sydney** now boasts a new cocktail menu and several theatrical experiences. New cocktails on offer are heralded as "showstoppers", with each

drink infused with stories behind virtuoso bartenders. Each cocktail creator has brought with them unique touches to the creation of the unique alcoholic beverages, while live music will play as guests enjoy.



Casa de La Flora in Thailand has reopened after a nearly year-long renovation, which included a revamp of its guest rooms, as well as the majority of its public spaces. Situated directly on the Andean Sea in southern Thailand, the property features a

radically transformed duplex villa, a refreshed fitness centre, and updated lobby and beachside restaurant.



DoubleTree Beach Resort by Hilton has completed an extensive renovation. The urban getaway in North Redington Beach, Florida, now provides enhanced amenities, updated guestrooms and public spaces, all while maintaining the property's

beachfront charm. The 125-room resort has returned to service just in time for the destination's high season.

Crown retains Mel

CROWN Resorts will retain its Melbourne casino licence after Victoria's gambling watchdog ruled its high-profile quality control failings have been fixed.

The Victorian Gambling and Casino Control Commission said it was satisfied that Crown Melbourne now understands holding a licence is a "privilege and obligation" and not the right of a business "too big to fail".

Holidays for Hounds

DOG owners need not leave their furry friends at home when they stay at Dorsett Melbourne, with the hotel launching new pet-friendly stay packages.

The hotel's Holidays for Hounds offer includes an overnight stay in a pet-friendly room, which has been fitted with a Snooza Snuggler Orthopaedic foam bed.

Pooches can also enjoy a pre-ordered gourmet meal from a special Pet Menu curated by canine nutritionist Jacinta Malone from Chadwick Nutrition.

The hotel's 'Paw-cierge' team will also be on hand to point guests to nearby dog-friendly parks when it's time for a run.

Find out more details [HERE](#).

Honour Sir Richard

VIRGIN Atlantic will salute its esteemed founder Richard Branson in its 40th anniversary year by naming its newest aircraft after travel's human headline.

The airline's new Airbus A330neo has been named Ruby Rebel, and features an emblem paying tribute to the various iconic Virgin Group businesses, including a Virgin Records pin and a Virgin Galactic rocketship.



Window Seat

AN OVERZEALOUS ostrich which managed to escape from a zoo in South Korea and run amok on the country's city streets has been safely returned to captivity.

The bird found its way onto the busy sidewalks of Seongnam, where surprised pedestrians and drivers were quick to get out of its way as it dashed at high speeds through major thoroughfares.

Sadly, the ostrich named Tadori recently lost his best friend and fellow ostrich at the animal park, with a spokesperson for Bug City Zoo admitting the passing had been tough on him.



MH adds three more

MALAYSIA Airlines plans to start servicing three new cities from Q3 this year.

The carrier will commence daily flights to the Maldives in Aug and five times weekly services in the same month to Chiang Mai (Thailand), while daily services to Da Nang (Vietnam) **pictured** will take off in Sep

Tickets for the upcoming flights are now on sale.





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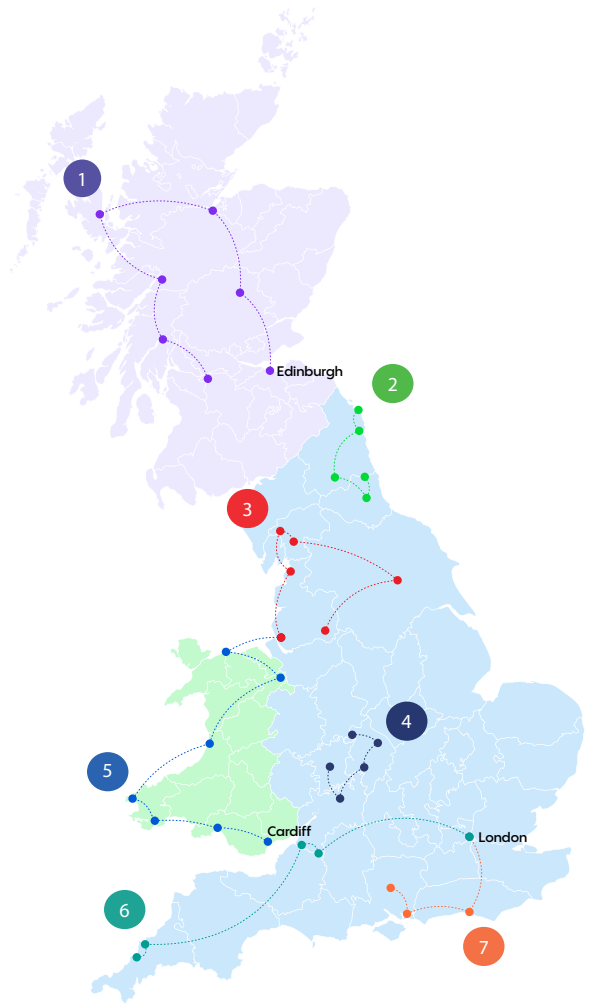
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