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## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including our Corporate Update, plus a full page from Inspiring Vacations.

## APT in growth mode

WHILE still basking in the excitement of its soon-to-launch luxury river ships, *Solara* and *Ostara* (TD 19 Jan) in 2025, APT has confirmed two more vessels are on the way in 2026.

Speaking at a special media event yesterday in Sydney, APT Travel Group CEO, David Cox, said the board had signed off on one Travelmarvel ship and another that will sail in Egypt.

It has been a busy period for APT, which is aiming to redefine luxury river sailings for Aussies through its upcoming duo of vessels, which will sail the Rhine, Main & Danube rivers in Europe.



## Air Vanuatu goes to water

AFTER a shock cancellation of all flights yesterday (TD breaking news), voluntary liquidators for Air Vanuatu have revealed the carrier is now examining the prospect of being sold.

A spokesperson for Ernst & Young Australia said that while many options were on the table, the carrier may end up resolving its financial issues through a sale to a private operator.

The agency noted it had initiated preliminary conversations with other airlines but had not commenced any formal sales process.

In a statement, EY said the airline suggested its financial troubles have arisen following a "challenging period for the global aviation industry", citing labour shortages, inflation, natural disasters and a globally increasing cost-of-credit environment as major headwinds.

"The liquidators intend to resume normal trading [for Air Vanuatu] as soon as possible, while considering all opportunities to place the carrier on a stronger footing," EY said.

In the EY briefing in Sydney today, the agency confirmed that travellers impacted by grounded flights have started to be informed of rebooking options.

EY also stated the current management team at Air Vanuatu will remain in place for now.

Air Vanuatu services 27 destinations - including ports in Australia and New Zealand - and has codeshare arrangements in place with several carriers, including Qantas. AB

## New Cal roadshow

NEW Caledonia Tourism is bringing its destination roadshow back to Australia next month after a lengthy pause.

Set to visit Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland, the showcase will feature a series of soirees offering networking opportunities with the destination's industry representatives.

Attendees will enjoy cultural activities and French cuisine while gaining firsthand insights into the island's visitor experiences.

"We've recently seen a surge in interest in the destination from Australian travellers, so the New Caledonia Showcase couldn't have come at a better time to help inform advisors of what this French Pacific paradise has to offer," said the DMO's Account Director, Rebecca Marchal. Register your interest [HERE](#).

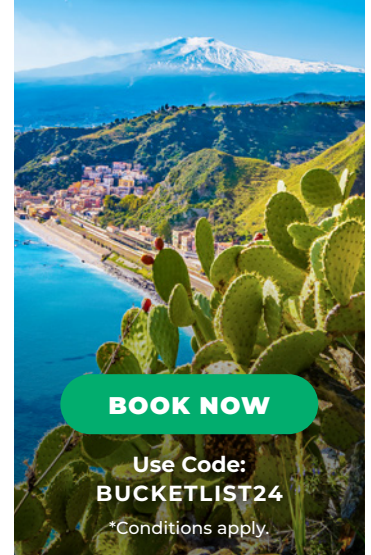
## Earn \$100 to spend

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## The Magic of TIME

**THE** Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) is inviting Australian travel and hospitality professionals to apply for a scholarship, generously provided by Corporate Magic, for its program commencing 19 Jun. Apply **HERE** before 20 May.

## WA tourism's budget win

**THE** WA Government has delivered record funding for tourism in its 2024-25 budget, with added funds to be injected across tourism marketing and attracting more major events.

In stark contrast to Victoria, which earlier this week saw Visit Victoria's marketing budget shredded (**TD** 08 May), WA has pulled the trigger on boosting its overall tourism war chest from \$174 million to \$201 million.

The breakdown of funding in the latest budget sees \$73 million allocated to destination marketing, \$102 million for tourism events, and \$27 million for destination development.

Tourism marketing alone represents a \$24 million increase over two years, while the budget for luring major events to the state has increased by \$25 million

over four years.

Cruise tourism, identified by former Tourism WA CEO Carolyn Turnbull last year as a key pillar of visitor growth, also received a boost, with funding rising by \$1 million over four years.

The ongoing tourism overhaul of Rottneest Island was another winner, receiving \$150.5 million over eight years for staff accommodation and infrastructure, while the state's Outdoor Adventure Tourism Package was also granted \$165 million over four years.

No funding was approved for the Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre. **AB**

## Master TTC Brands

**AGENTS** can become experts at selling TTC Tour Brands' products by joining a new masterclass series this May and Jun.

Running every Wed at 1pm AEST from this week until 26 Jun, the 15-20 minute webinar sessions will offer tips and actionable insights agents can use to help grow sales opportunities and secure bookings.

The masterclasses will approach each brand and topic from a unique angle, with participants able to win a prize each week.

Those who missed out on this week's session, which unpacked the trend of Sep travel, can check out the recording **HERE**, and register for next week's masterclass **HERE**.

## Bunnik sells in Qld

**SMALL** group operator Bunnik Tours has appointed Karen (KJ) Phillips to be its first Queensland-based BDM since the pandemic.

After spending a few years outside of the travel sector, Phillips returns with close to 20 years of travel experience.



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## Catch Christchurch's drift



A DATE has been set for Leisure Accommodation Collective's (LA Co) first Drifter hybrid hotel location in New Zealand, with the doors of the 95-room Drifter Christchurch to open on 01 Jun.

The South Island property will be the first of five Drifter locations across New Zealand and Australia currently being progressed by LA Co, first flagged in Feb this year (TD 26 Feb).

But the ambition is not to grow the brand slowly, with LA Co CEO, Luke Moran, this week confirming the plan will be to expand the Drifter footprint to all major tourism markets in Australia and

New Zealand.

The Christchurch hotel will be located at 96 Lichfield Street in a growth precinct next to SOL Square, and will span five floors and 95 rooms across a mix of premium, private suites, and shared suites.

The property will also feature female-only accommodation.

The Drifter brand positions itself as a lifestyle precinct and experience rather than offering standard hotel stays, promoting "buzzing bars, health and wellness studios and a rotating roster of resident artists from around the world". AB

## Aqua's new portal

AQUA Expeditions has enhanced its agent portal, which now offers an automated account sign-up process and live online booking options.

The revamped portal also gives users secure and easy access to a comprehensive resource library for downloading key information, including sales materials such as flyers, itineraries, rates, departure dates, and more.

Agents will be able to check both FIT and charter availability across the fleet and make bookings 24/7 on desktops, tablets, and mobile devices, and gain deeper insight via the Aqua Academy, a library of recorded webinars.

Aqua Expeditions will offer agents a US\$50 Amazon gift card for every new booking made through its new agent portal.

The portal upgrade comes as the line unveils its new website, which now features interactive deck plans on ship pages, with clickable pop-ups for each cabin and social space - check it out [HERE](#).

## QF heats up menu

QANTAS has upgraded its domestic economy menu, which now offers customers a bigger hot food selection using quality Australian ingredients.

The carrier will offer a hot menu item to economy class passengers on domestic flights of over two hours, replacing current lighter snack options such as cheese and crackers and sweet slices.

The new selection includes gourmet brekkie burgers, Mediterranean pizza, cauliflower bites, artisanal beef sausage rolls, scrambled egg brioche, and more.

Additionally, customers travelling on the airline's longer domestic flights lasting over three and a half hours will be able to indulge in Weis ice cream bars.

The airline will also extend its onboard tea and coffee service to afternoon flights until 4pm.

The menu changes will be rolled out over the coming weeks, and are part of Qantas' ongoing efforts to improve its service and offerings for customers.

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## Window Seat

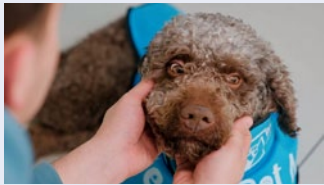
**NERVOUS** flyers who are travelling through Istanbul Airport in Turkey can now take solace in the hub's newest guest experience.

Prior to catching their international flights, pax can take a pause to calm their heart rates by patting, cuddling and playing with the airport's new team members - two adorable pups.

Playful curly-haired Kuki (pictured) and Alita, a beautiful Border Collie, have brought extra cuteness to the airport's new therapy dog team, which has grown to include five friendly furballs.

"Travelling can be a stressful experience, which is why we care about providing a pleasant and relaxing atmosphere at our airport," said Abdulkadir Demirtas, Customer Experience Manager at Istanbul Airport.

He said the project was implemented in light of the "many scientific studies [that] have proven the positive effects of human and animal interaction on blood pressure, stress and anxiety levels".



## Latest OMC was our best yet: Burnes



**HELLOWORLD** CEO Andrew Burnes has declared its recent Owner Managers Conference (OMC) in Sydney "one of the best we have ever hosted".

Reflecting on the pivotal event on the Helloworld calendar, which this year attracted 550 business owners across Australia and NZ, Burnes said the feedback from its delegates following the gathering had been "outstanding".

Helloworld's chief said the OMC provided a key forum to relay all of the important work behind the scenes that is benefiting its growing agency network.

"Our experienced senior executives were on hand to showcase the impressive work we are doing, including beneficial commercial agreements, wholesale expansion and widespread marketing activity," Burnes noted.

Enhancements across Helloworld's tour technology offering was also in the spotlight during the event, including its Air

Tickets brand, which Burnes said "continues to lead the market".

"Our suite of smart technology is exclusive to Helloworld and built inhouse to directly address the needs of agents, built on a history of 60-plus years and the most awarded air ticketing technology by NTIA.

"Our NDC solutions have been in production for over three years and continue to grow with the recent introduction of smart NDC refunds, and we continue to invest in our technology at all times to deliver the most efficient ticketing and reissuing platform on offer," Burnes added.

Qantas was the major sponsorship partner for OMC, with Burnes hailing CEO Vanessa Hudson (pictured inset) providing the keynote address as vindication of Helloworld's ongoing and strong relationship with the national carrier.

Delegates suggested the informative Q&A Hudson had with agents was one of the

highlights of the conference.

The full line-up of guest speakers included Australian Olympian Grant Hackett; founder of Australian brand Carman's Fine Foods, Carolyn Cresswell; and Ash Barty's mindset coach Ben Crowe.



The conference agenda also featured business insights from Helloworld Travel's senior executives and the 140 supplier partners in attendance via the various networking lounges.

OMC concluded in style with a Gala Dinner sponsored by Qantas and held at the Overseas Passenger Terminal.

**Pictured** top is Qantas CEO, International & Freight, Cam Wallace, with Andrew Burnes. *AB*

## Book & Win A Tour to Ireland

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**CORPORATE UPDATE**

# 1000MTG grants Access

**GLOBAL** independent travel advisor network 1000 Mile Travel Group (1000MTG) has announced plans to launch its new travel booking solution, 1000Access, in Australia later this year.

Integrated with the Sabre GDS, the platform is designed to offer travel advisors a seamless travel booking experience, allowing them to shop, book and ticket traditional air content, NDC offers, and low-cost carrier XML options.

Additional capabilities, including hotel and ground transportation, will be rolled out on the 1000Access platform over time, along with VIP white glove service and chatbot functionality.

Users will also be able to access training and support resources, including new member implementation meetings, training session tools, support videos, guides, and webinars.

“1000Access represents a paradigm shift in booking travel, blending cutting-edge technology with personalised support to revolutionise the travel advisory booking experience,” said Ben Ross, co-founder and Chief Executive of 1000MTG.

The platform will come online in the US first, followed by Australia and the UK later this year, and will be accessible to 1000MTG travel advisors, Virtuoso members and mid-sized agencies. *JM*

## Biz travel ups stress

**NEARLY** half (47%) of Australian business travellers experience stress and burnout as a result of frequent work travel, new research from World Travel Protection has found.

The Opinium survey of 500 Australian business travellers found that the stress is worse for those who take a work trip at least once every two months (56%), and more than a third (36%) of these frequent flyers have sought mental health support as a result.

Homesickness and missing family was the predominant feeling among Aussies on business trips at 38%, followed by feeling exhausted (37%), with a higher proportion of women reporting these feelings.

Despite these worrying findings, half of all respondents also indicated that work travel has had a positive impact on their wellbeing and mental health.

## Expensify Travel

**EXPENSE** management app Expensify is set to roll out a new travel platform enabling corporate travellers to book their trip in just minutes, including key travel segments like flights, hotels, car hire, and trains.

Built on top of Spotnana’s cloud-based travel-as-a-service platform, the next-gen tool will offer extensive booking and management capabilities, as well as access to global travel inventory, lower airfares and 24/7 support, via the Expensify web and mobile apps.

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# Urban Rest on the move



**CORPORATE** accommodation provider Urban Rest has furthered its global expansion with the acquisition of Auckland-based short-term rental management company, The Urban Butler.

Founded in Sydney in 2017, Urban Rest has now expanded to several locations across the country, as well as Europe and New Zealand, with the latest move allowing it to further tap the high-potential Kiwi market.

The brand set out to create a “new category” of accommodation for business travellers, offering personalised, modern apartments designed to enhance wellbeing and offer greater flexibility than long-term rentals, combined with 24/7 customer service.

The company will use its acquisition of The Urban Butler, which boasts a collection of short-term rental apartments across central Auckland, to enhance its

offerings to corporate clientele in the New Zealand market.

“Acquiring The Urban Butler represents a significant milestone in our journey to expand our global footprint,” said David Whelan, founder and Chief Executive Officer of Urban Rest.

“We recognise the immense potential of the New Zealand market, and this acquisition aligns perfectly with our strategic vision to provide premium accommodations tailored to the needs of business travellers.”

The acquisition comes after Urban Rest announced its first branded property in Auckland, Urban Rest Sylvia Park, which is set to open in the coming months.

With the integration of The Urban Butler team, the new Urban Rest New Zealand team aims to “aggressively expand” its presence across key cities, including Auckland, Wellington, and Christchurch. *JM*




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**Viking** is now offering limited-time savings on select European river journeys departing in Oct and Nov 2024. Take on the 15-day Grand European Tour between Budapest and Amsterdam from \$5,495ppts in a standard stateroom, with savings up to \$14,200 per couple in a Veranda Stateroom on select Oct departures. More eligible departure dates are available - call 138 747 to learn more.

**Aircalin's** Escape to New Caledonia Sale is now on, with return flights between Sydney and Noumea from as low as \$529 until 24 May. Available for travel dates between Jun 2024 and Mar 2025, travellers from Brisbane and Melbourne can also score return fares to Noumea from \$569 and \$579 respectively. **CLICK HERE** to lock-in the low fare.

Explore the wonders of the Arctic with **Aurora Expeditions'** Arctic Adventures sale, which offers travellers up to \$3,750 of air credit per person and up to 15% savings. The deal is available on select 2024 adventures to Greenland, Svalbard, Iceland and the Northwest Passage. Contact the cruise line on 1800 637 688 to book.

Enjoy **Railbookers'** most-loved destinations at a discounted price for your next getaway. Up to \$800 of savings per couple is available on the 26-day 'The Wonders of Europe by Luxury Train' on an Istanbul round-trip via Paris, Zurich, Rome and more. Travellers can earn savings of \$600 on any seven- to nine-night rail holidays, and an extra \$100 in savings on any 10- to 14-night itinerary. Call 1300 938 534 for more.

**Regent Seven Seas Cruises** is offering guests a discount of up to 45% per person for select sailings across the 2024/25 cruising season. Book between now and 30 Jun to earn the listed savings on almost 30 voyages ranging from 10 to 24 nights. Itineraries span across Asia, Africa & Arabia, the South Pacific, Australia & New Zealand

Plan your Oct getaway with **Insight Vacations'** October on Sale promotion. For a limited time only, the tour operator is offering savings of up to \$4,000 per couple. Trending tours for the month include the seven-day 'Sicily in Depth' tour, the 12-day 'Best of Germany' itinerary, the two-week 'Country Roads of Croatia', and more **HERE**.

To celebrate Mother's Day, **Zulal Wellness Resort** in Qatar is now offering a special package where mums can enjoy five nights for the price of four, or seven nights for the price of five. The offer also includes a complimentary extra room for kids - the value of two rooms for the price of one. Learn more by contacting [reservations@zulal.com](mailto:reservations@zulal.com).

Enjoy extensive savings of \$9,520 per couple and up to \$11,290pp with **Cruise Traveller's** latest offer on its 10-night expedition voyage from Broome and Perth. Experience the huge array of ancient rock art on the remote Burrup Peninsula, the underwater wonderland of Ningaloo Reef, and much more. Call 1800 507 777 to book.

## Swimming in new inspo



**AHEAD** of the recent Fiji Tourism Exchange, a select group of travel advisors and execs from brands like Flight Centre, Helloworld and Omniche visited the newly refurbished Malamala Beach Club this week.

Surrounded by turquoise waters, white sands and views of the Mamanuca Islands, Malamala has undergone some recent improvements, including a spectacular adults-only infinity pool and bar, with additional shower and changing facilities.

This is where the group of travel industry colleagues spent a lazy afternoon - savouring canapes, drinking cocktails, chatting and relaxing in the water.

During FTE, South Sea Cruises Chief Executive Officer, Brad Rutherford, shared news about recent additions at Malamala.

"Since the opening of Malamala on 17 Aug, the island has gone

on to welcome some 200,000 visitors, making it the second-most popular activity or day trip offering in Fiji behind our very own South Sea Island," he said, adding he expects more than 600,000 to visit the club in 2025, overtaking the island.

Malamala has also just introduced new beachside and grand deluxe cabanas.

The cabanas include butler service and options like pre-ordered food and drinks and a range of seating from informal dining and sun loungers to day beds and bean bags.

In addition, the club has tripled its massage capability to keep up with demand.

Now, guests can relax in individual beachside cabanas for their treatments.

**Pictured:** Attendees take a splash to find out the full value of the Malamala Beach Club. *JHM*

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