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## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, a cover wrap from **CVFR** plus full pages from:

- Ecotourism Australia
- EVA Airways

## Noumea riots rage

FRANCE has imposed a state of emergency for its Pacific territory, with four people killed in violent protests overnight relating to proposed constitutional reforms. The violent riots have prompted Smartraveller to escalate its overall alert level for New Caledonia to "exercise a high degree of caution". Travellers are now advised to reconsider their need to travel to the capital specifically.

## Uber alarm for NSW taxis

EXCLUSIVE

THE NSW Taxi Council will seek talks with the state's Point to Point Transport Commissioner to introduce guidelines in response to rideshare giant Uber reopening access to its platform for taxis.

In an update to its vehicle eligibility requirements, Uber will now allow taxi owners to register their vehicles to provide services to Uber customers.

For travellers, the move means their next Uber booking could be completed either by a private car owner or a registered NSW taxi vehicle, all under the Uber app.

All existing features of the Uber experience remain the same, including upfront confirmed fares, in-app payment, trip support and Uber's safety features.

Taxi trips booked in the Uber app cannot be converted to a traditional taxi service, meaning the meter cannot be switched on, while vehicles cannot be hailed on the street or at a taxi rank.

"Allowing taxis to perform trips with Uber will increase reliability on the platform and reduce wait times for riders," a statement on the Uber website read.

However, NSW Taxi Council CEO Nick Abraham told **TD** the decision to allow taxis to provide Uber services raised a number of red flags, including the requirement for taxi drivers to display ID cards, which doesn't apply to Uber.

"[Another] big issue that we see is that this driver is connected and affiliated with a brand...and when the likes of Uber gives a job to that driver, they're still turning up in that branded vehicle and not doing a job for their service provider," Abraham said.

"So if there's an incident or a complaint, it's that brand on the line, not Uber."

Another major issue involves driver fatigue and passenger safety if drivers are completing a taxi shift, then switching to Uber jobs and potentially working beyond safe hours.



Abraham said, "the regulator needs to step in...[and] make sure those standards, particularly around safety, are met".

"There's a series of questions that needs to be asked to make sure there is fair and consistent compliance applied here across the board."

Abraham revealed there has been no consultation from Uber relating to its decision, saying the company has "gone out and done this on their own".

"We want to make sure drivers have the ability to maximise their earnings potential, but...in a safe and compliant manner."

Sydney is the latest city in which Uber has allowed taxis on its platform, a move largely driven by an inability to meet demand solely through the use of privately owned vehicles.

Travel Daily has contacted Uber for comment. *ML*

## Payments by CVFR

CVFR Payments can work for agencies by making travel payments possible across a range of physical and digital systems.

Travellers can pay via a physical terminal, via an embedded secure link or via an API connected to existing mid- and back-office systems - for more details, see the **front page** of **TD** today.

## Ecotourism Summit

PLACES are selling quickly to the 2024 Global Sustainable Tourism Summit, taking place in Brisbane from 04-06 Jun.

The three-day program hosted by Ecotourism Australia features useful business insights and practices, networking events and thought leadership presentations. For more info, see **page seven**.

Travel Daily  
ON LOCATION

HAYMAN ISLAND

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of Flight Centre Travel Group, which is hosting its inaugural **Luxury Travel Collection Business Owners Island Soiree**.

**DAY** three of the FCTG's Business Owners Soiree will see guests engage in a variety of island immersions, as well as lunch & luminary sessions.

To conclude proceedings, this evening **RSSC** is sponsoring an event where attendees are encouraged to show off their best St Tropez glamour.

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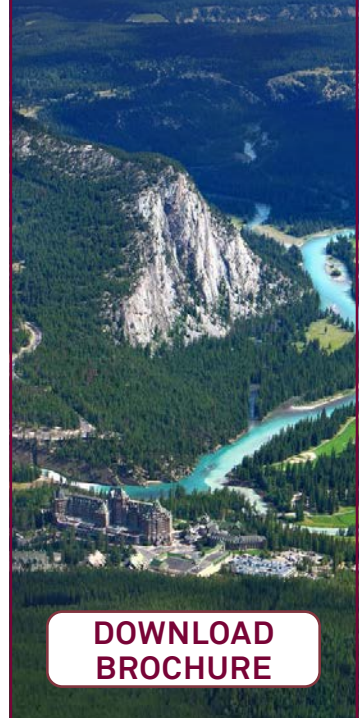


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## Discover Taiwan

**AGENTS** can learn all about why Taiwan is a favourite new destination for all types of travellers by joining EVA Air's Taiwan Travel Academy - for more details, see the **back page**.

## Vic's regional boost

**THE** Victorian Government has opened up applications for the Regional Tourism Investment Fund, which will support operators in building and upgrading their infrastructure.

The new round of funding provides grants of between \$100,000 and \$5 million for small and large-scale projects and accommodation improvement projects for tourism businesses, not-for-profit and traditional owner organisations. Applications close 19 Jul.

## Air must stay affordable

**VIRGIN** Australia has expressed concern that development of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) may put flying beyond the financial reach of most travellers.

Following the handing down of the 2024 Federal Budget this week, VA said it welcomes the government's commitment of

## Hawaii flood watch

**A DEVELOPING** storm with the potential to bring heavy rain and severe thunderstorms has led Hawaii's National Weather Service to issue a formal warning.

The warning said high rain levels were expected over Oahu and Maui beginning tonight and persisting through to Fri, with the public urged to be prepared for the possibility of flash flooding.

\$1.7 billion over the next decade to accelerate the development of Australia's domestic SAF industry.

"Aviation is a hard-to-abate industry, and this announcement puts us closer to other overseas jurisdictions which have been working at pace to deliver a strong SAF industry," said Virgin Australia Chief Corporate Affairs and Sustainability Officer, Christian Bennett.

"Decarbonisation is critical but we do not want it to come at the cost of affordable travel for Australians," Bennett warned.

"As a value carrier, we truly believe we can have both - a sustainable industry that our customers can afford to use."

Currently, SAF is around triple the price of traditional kerosene, largely due to undeveloped feedstock supply chains and nascent local refinery facilities.

Despite this, experts predict the price of traditional jet fuel to rise by around 1% per year, while SAF will gradually trend the other way as supply chains improve.

Virgin Australia has committed to a net-zero target by 2050 and to reduce its carbon emissions by 22% by 2030. *ML*

## Budget funds lack

**TOURISM** Council Western Australia and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council have beanoaned the lack of support measures for Australian tourism in this week's Federal Budget.

Both associations say they are disappointed funding for Tourism Australia had not increased despite int'l visitor numbers still down 20% on pre-COVID levels.

## Merlin passes Go

**MERLIN** Entertainments' iconic Sydney attractions are now featured on Go City's Sydney sightseeing pass, thanks to a new strategic partnership between the two brands.

Travellers who purchase the pass can now save up to 50% on entry to SEA LIFE Sydney Aquarium, Sydney Tower Eye, Madame Tussauds Sydney and WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo.

The Sydney Explorer Pass starts from \$114 - **CLICK HERE**.

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## Window Seat

**FORMER** *Top Gear* host Jeremy Clarkson has taken a stance against international travel, saying he'd rather holiday within the UK than deal with the hassle of travelling through an airport.

Clarkson said his recent holiday to Madrid has put him off travelling abroad again, and declared the Spanish capital's airport as "the stupidest in the world".

He complained about the experience in his *Sun* column, sharing, "you leave the plane, which has parked at the very end of the farthest terminal from baggage reclaim.

"So you walk, uphill, in a superheated tunnel for about an hour and then you're in a terminal, which is bigger than most deserts.

"You walk, and then you walk some more, and then you walk until every old injury starts to flare up."

The *Clarkson's Farm* star also grumbled about "nuisance" pax who don't have paperwork, don't know the carry-on rules, or can't work the electronic passport machines.

He urged travellers not to spend "half your holiday in a lift or a queue", and said he will be staying at home to enjoy a "beautiful summer".

## Luxury is all about experiences



**ONE** of the key insights relayed this week to business owners at the Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) inaugural Business Owners Soiree on Hayman Island has been the growing preference for experiences over material items.

To reinforce that key theme for future success, Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) growing LTC division has demonstrated the power of immersion on day two of the event, with 11 partners hosting 30-minute discovery sessions for guests.

These included agave tasting, coffee appreciation, master weaving, crepe making, detoxing, yoga, and much more.

Creating lasting memories are seen as a key driver of luxury consumer spending, with 78% opting to outlay more money on experiential activities that will make leisure travel memorable.

According to FCTG, Millennial and Gen Z travellers are currently driving 100% of growth in luxury spending.

"A core requirement of any luxury travel owner is product knowledge, making 'Immersion Day' a critical way to absorb new information about partners, as well as strengthen their connections with the senior executives of each partnering brand," Global MD of Luxury & Independent Leisure FCTG, Dani Galloway, said.

LTC's Global Brand & Marketing Director, Anna Burgdorf, added that a day of immersion was a great way to demonstrate to business leaders and partners how successful the concept can be when it is purpose-designed for the client's added value.

"It's all about the concept of 'show, rather than tell'," Burgdorf explained. *AB*

**Pictured:** The Ponant team, including Deb Corbett (far left), cook up some French crepes for owners, the likes of which included Murray and Robyn Sinfield of Home Travel Company (second and third from left).

## FAA reauthorised

**THE** United States is a step closer to introducing new legislation to strengthen aviation safety standards, after the Senate approving the bipartisan *Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024*.

The act authorises more than US\$105 billion in funding for the FAA for fiscal years 2024 through 2028, including \$66.7 billion to pour into key safety programs, from aircraft certification reform to air carrier oversight.

The funds will also enable the hiring, training and retention of safety-critical staff like air traffic controllers and technical engineers, the modernisation of key technologies and systems, and airport infrastructure improvement grants to support more than US 3,300 airports.

The reauthorisation also gives flyers new rights to hassle-free refunds, no-fee family seating, and 24/7 customer service.

"The American people expect and deserve the safest, most reliable and modern aerospace system in the world and this landmark bill is intended to deliver just that," said Commerce Committee Chair, Maria Cantwell.

## Scot's latest sale

**AUSSIES** can snatch up airfares to Singapore from as low as \$160 one way as part of Scot's new sale, which also includes Japan, Bali, Thailand and more.

The offer ends 21 May - **CLICK HERE** for more details.

# MAKE IT CHOOSE DAY

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## Ama gets settled in Sydney



**AMAWATERWAYS** officially opened its new Sydney office on Bligh St yesterday, hosting a ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the milestone.

ANZ Managing Director Steve Richards was joined by co-owner Gary Murphy (pictured), who flew in from California to check out the office, which features an open-plan layout and stunning views across Finger Wharf.

"I wanted to be in the heartbeat of Sydney where I could bring

the best talent easily to work on public transport, and I wanted it to be a fun, great place to work where we could feel this vision and passion for cruise to come alive," Richards commented.

He said in the six weeks since AmaWaterways has been in the office, "the phones have been ringing and it's been getting busy" with more and more bookings.

"We saw this opportunity and Steve and I knew we had to take advantage of it," Murphy said. *DF*

### The Chat

with Jenny



**Travel Daily**  
A conversation with Michelle Ashcroft

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## Cruising into ATE24

**AUSTRALIAN** Cruise Association (ACA) and Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) are gearing up to return to Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) this month.

The two leading cruise industry bodies will showcase Australia's cruising products to the global travel market, with over 2,000 delegates to be expected to attend the event in Melbourne.

"With cruise representing such a significant source market for inbound visitation to Australia, ATE provides an unparalleled platform for engaging with key tourism wholesalers and retailers worldwide," CLIA MD Australasia Joel Katz said.

"Our presence at ATE24 allows us to convey to global markets that Australia is a premier cruise destination, offering unique and diverse experiences for international travellers."

For more cruise industry news, see today's **Cruise Weekly**.

## Expedia's AI helper

**EXPEDIA** Group has unveiled its new AI travel assistant, Romie, at its annual Explore conference in Las Vegas this week.

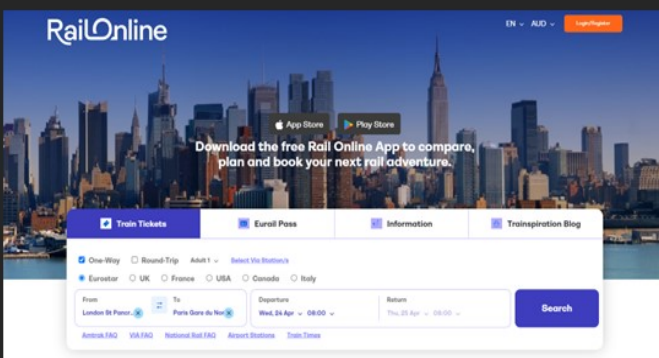
The innovation was among 40 new products announced at the event, and is designed to help travellers with everything from shopping, booking, and navigating unexpected changes during travel.

A spokesperson for the global travel tech platform said Romie is "not intended to replace live travel advisors" and will instead be an option for those who prefer planning their own trips.

The AI-powered tool is currently being tested in Expedia's EG Labs, and will be rolled out globally once it is ready.

## APT Europe 2025

**APT** has launched its 2025 European collection, which features new Mediterranean Europe itineraries in partnership with Seabourn - more info [HERE](#).



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## SYD A TOP 3 MICE DESTINATION

**SYDNEY** has ranked third on Cvent's annual Top Meeting Destinations in Asia-Pacific list for 2024, which was unveiled recently at IMEX Frankfurt.

The list was compiled based on sourcing activity through the Cvent Supplier Network, and is considered a valuable resource for event planners worldwide who are looking for destinations to host their event.

Sydney outshone Melbourne, which claimed the fifth spot - and was the only other Australian city to appear in the top 10 ranking - while Singapore was declared the number one meetings destination, followed by Bangkok in second place.

Two Sydney hotels also appeared in the top 10 of Cvent's Top Meeting Hotels list, including Hyatt Regency Sydney in third place, and Sheraton Grand Sydney Hyde Park in ninth spot.



Business Events Sydney (BESydney) CEO Lyn Lewis-Smith said the ranking was a "wonderful endorsement of Sydney's attractiveness...as a business event host city".

"Cvent plays an important role in bringing incredible destinations like Sydney directly to a planner's fingertips.

"This recognition is a testament to our incredible network of hotels, venues, and suppliers who collaborate with event planners to bring their events to life."

**MEANWHILE**, BESydney and PCMA Foundation have released

the final report of their global study, *Advancing Women in Business Events*.

The new document identifies recommended actions to remove barriers and accelerate the advancement of women within the industry, across personal, organisational, and societal/industry-wide perspectives.

Available to download for free **HERE**, the paper follows the groundbreaking study's initial findings report, which revealed a significant gender gap in the global business events industry (**TD 11 Jan**). *JM*

## Arinex's Kiwi buy

**AUSTRALASIAN** event management company Arinex has announced the acquisition of New Zealand-based business events agency, Auaha.

The move marks a milestone in Arinex's market presence and capabilities in the New Zealand MICE industry.

"This acquisition aligns with our dedication to driving innovation and delivering exceptional value to our clients," said Nicole Walker, CEO of Arinex.

Auaha will be rolled into the Arinex brand, with the NZ company's staff to transition to Arinex this month, along with the full handover of Auaha clients.

The purchase is Arinex's first acquisition since it joined forces with Delegate Connection last year.

## New Mel eGuide

**WITH** the goal of championing sustainable business events, Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) has published its latest Melbourne eGuide.

The interactive tool showcases the city's eco-conscious suppliers, products and experiences, helping event planners integrate sustainable options into their conference and incentive programs - see it **HERE**.

## Thousands get a taste of South Australia

**ADELAIDE** foodie festival, Tasting Australia, attracted a record attendance of more than 77,000 people this year.

The 10-day festival, which took place 03-12 May, featured more than 150 events and 260 local businesses, showcasing some of the state's best culinary experiences.

"This is an outstanding result for an event that has been evolving since it began in 1997," the state's Minister for



Tourism, Zoe Bettison, said.

"The success of this festival also highlights the strength of audience appetite for authentic eating and drinking experiences in South Australia and drives year-round demand for all our state offers."

## NT events boost

**THE** Darwin Convention Centre will undergo a \$19.2 million upgrade, as set out in the Northern Territory's 2024 Budget.

The investment will see the venue's capacity expanded by 4,350 seats to a total of 5,550 seats, enabling it to host more major events, along with upgrades to its public amenities and audio visual equipment.

The Budget also includes \$41 million for the NT Major Events Company, with a \$4 million boost to secure new events.



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## APPOINTMENTS

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APT Travel Group stalwart, **Scott Ellis**, has been promoted to the role of Chief Sales Officer. Ellis has been with the company for over 20 years, first joining as Business Development Manager in 2003, before working his way up to State Sales Manager - Victoria, followed by National Sales Manager, and most recently, General Manager Sales, a position which he filled for more than four years.

Tourism industry leader **Benjamin Brown** has been entrusted by **Baillie Lodges** to oversee Silky Oaks Lodge, its 40-suite property located on the banks of the Mossman River in Tropical North Queensland. Brown brings plenty of experience to the General Manager position, having held the same role at Voyages Ayers Rock Resort and Vali Byron Bay.

**Jacqui Abbott**, former Foxtel executive, is set to join the **Qantas Group** on 20 May as Executive Manager Corporate Affairs and Internal Communications. The communications expert is no stranger to aviation, having enjoyed a turn at Virgin Australia as Senior Public Affairs Manager between 2012 and 2015.

**Novotel Sydney Darling Square** has welcomed **Andrew Hills** as its new General Manager. He is also tasked with leading the hotel's adjoining venue, Pumphouse Sydney, and will endeavour to drive the ongoing financial success of both properties while fostering a high level of team morale and guest experience.

Bringing nearly two decades of experience, **Paula Watson** has been announced as the Head of Longhaul and Supplier Partnerships for **House of Travel**. Watson has been with the New Zealand-based company for more than 13 years in a number of managerial roles, most recently as Commercial Manager - Product.

**Experience Co** has appointed **Matthew Vince** as the new interim Head of Marketing during Brooke Robson's maternity leave. He begins covering the position from tomorrow through until 21 Mar 2025. Vince most recently served as Director of Marketing in Asia Pacific for Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

**Waldorf Astoria New York** has partnered with acclaimed chef **Michael Anthony**, who will oversee the property's signature restaurant and dining experience as Chef Partner. Anthony will introduce farm-to-table experiences and elevated seasonal dining to the hotel's two-storey American Brasserie-style restaurant, Peacock Alley, when it reopens later this year.

Brisbane-based travel professional, **Chantelle Gordan**, has been named as **Tour Amigo's** new Head of Sales & Partners for the Australia and New Zealand region. Gordon joins from Flight Centre Travel Group, where she worked across various leisure and corporate travel management roles over the span of 13 years.

## Sydney's got the blues



**THE** Sydney travel trade enjoyed a night of blues at the Oxford Art Factory last night, with highly acclaimed Memphis band, the Hi Rhythm Section, featuring musician and producer Boo Mitchell and soul singers Lina Beach and Jerome Chism.

The Grammy Award-winning band is currently in Australia and performing at the Blues on Broadbeach Festival on the Gold Coast, supported by Memphis Travel, United Airlines and Cosmos.

Last night, the Hi Rhythm Section had the travel industry up on their feet and dancing, as they performed a range of new and classic hits, such as Al Green's *Love and Happiness* and *Let's Stay Together*.

One lucky attendee even won a trip to Memphis, including flights with United Airlines and three nights' accommodation for two, staying at the iconic Peabody Memphis Hotel, as well as attraction passes and meals in the city.

The Hi Rhythm Section has also just performed for the travel industry at an exclusive Memphis

Tourism event in Auckland.

"[We are] incredibly excited to bring these outstanding musicians to Australia to give the Australian travel industry a taste of why thousands from around the world visit the river city every year to experience Memphis' blues and soul," said Chris Ingram, Director of Memphis Tourism Australia and New Zealand.

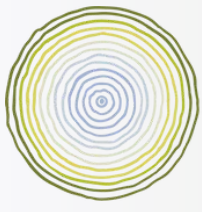
"We simply couldn't present such a significant travel trade initiative without the support from our valued and longtime partner United Airlines and Cosmos," he added. *JHM*

## The Overland 2025

**JOURNEY** Beyond has announced the early release of The Overland's 2025 schedule, along with a new pricing structure for extended fare types.

Guests can now enjoy more flexibility on the twice weekly Adelaide-Melbourne daylight service, including a fully refundable fare option up to 24 hours before departure.

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.



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