



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel industry news including our **Luxury** page, plus full pages from:

- Ponant
- Infinity Holidays

Aussies on fatal flight

FIFTY-SIX Australians were on board a Singapore Airlines flight which suffered fatal turbulence overnight while flying from London to Singapore.

One UK national died in the incident, while dozens more were injured, leading the pilot to divert the flight to Bangkok to seek urgent medical treatment.

A spokesperson for Singapore Airlines said the carrier offers its deepest condolences to the family of the deceased, and "deeply apologises for the traumatic experience" that its passengers and crew members suffered during the flight.

The carrier said it is now working with the relevant authorities on the investigation into what caused the incident.

Australians can call 1800 845 313 for updates.

QF broadens India

QANTAS has further expanded its existing codeshare relationship with Indian domestic airline, IndiGo, unlocking new pathways to two more major Indian cities.

Under the widened partnership, travellers can now fly via Singapore and connect to onward services to Delhi and Mumbai, either immediately or following an overnight stop in the Lion City.

Travellers can continue to visit 21 cities in India with IndiGo after connecting from Qantas' flights from Sydney to Bengaluru or Melbourne to Delhi.

Customers maintain the same baggage allowance throughout the journey, receiving food and beverages in-flight and earning Qantas Frequent Flyer points on all ticketed services.

Webjet ponders demerger

WEBJET is mulling plans to create two separate ASX-listed companies for its B2B and B2C divisions in order to take fuller advantage of the "attractive but divergent" growth opportunities on offer to the respective businesses (**TD** breaking news).

The mooted plan would see Webjet's highly successful WebBeds business demerged from WebjetB2C, the latter of which includes Webjet OTA, GoSee, and Trip Ninja.

Benefits of the separation - if it ends up going ahead - include two management teams each with a tailored focus on growth, independent capital structures, access to new investors, and the ability to respond more quickly to changing travel conditions.

Reflecting on the plan, Webjet Managing Director, John Guscic, said the idea had become a viable lever as both Webjet arms grow

in new directions.

"Our B2B and B2C divisions are increasingly diverging and have minimal operational co-dependence," Guscic said.

"B2C has seen a structural shift to online accelerate since the pandemic...and we continue to see significant growth opportunities for WebBeds as a genuine player of global scale."

The move follows successive financial results showing the success of the WebBeds arm, which accounted for the lion's share of Webjet's EBITDA during the latest six months to 30 Sep 2023 reporting period, raking in \$89.9m of the total \$102.1m.

Webjet is also rolling out a new booking platform for WebBeds to enhance the booking experience of travel agents (**TD** 21 Mar).

A decision on a demerger will be made in the '25 financial year. **AB**

Final register calls

TIME is running out to register for the Global Sustainable Tourism Summit taking place in Brisbane from 04-06 Jun.

More than 220 guests will attend to learn more about the global conversations taking place about the risks, opportunities, and future of sustainable tourism.

There are more than 50 speakers on the program representing brands such as Tourism Australia, Intrepid Travel, Accor, WWF Australia, Flight Centre, Virgin, and more.

Limited tickets remain for the Scenic Rim Sustainability Tour and the World Environment Day cocktail function.

CLICK HERE to register.

Holiday with Infinity

AGENTS who book one of Infinity Holidays' new winter school holiday packages will score double entry points towards a place on the brand's Epic Trip later this year - see **page eight**.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

SIGIRIYA

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Inspiring Vacations which is hosting its first trade famill this week.

OUR Sri Lankan adventure continues today, starting with a visit to Dambulla Cave Temple. This afternoon the group will head to the pristine Minneriya National Park to witness a large elephant gathering. Unique to Sri Lanka, this breathtaking natural phenomenon sees hundreds of elephants gather at the same time at the Minneriya Tank.

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Muckermann booked

AFTER departing her long-time role as Silversea Cruises' President last month (**TD** 15 Apr), Barbara Muckermann has been appointed the CEO of luxury hotel group Kempinski Hotels.

Based in Dubai, the highly experienced cruise executive will spearhead a major growth phase for the ultra-luxury Kempinski brand, which has already earmarked another 34 hotels across Europe, the Middle East, Asia & Africa in the coming years.

"Barbara has always been at the forefront of luxury, and her proven ability to elevate the guest experience while simultaneously maximising profitability for leading travel brands has made her the ideal choice for the position," Kempinski Chairman, Rene Nijhof, said.

Virgin tops Bonza-less pack

VIRGIN Australia says it has returned to pre-COVID levels of on-time performance and cancellations, with the latest data from BITRE seeing the carrier snatch top spot in the rankings.

New performance figures from across the aviation sector saw the Virgin Australia network record 82.1% of flights departing and 81.2% arriving on schedule.

It follows a string of poor results ranging between 65-75% which date back to the start of 2024.

"We have been intensely focused on improving our performance whilst continuing to deliver great value and choice to Australian travellers," said outgoing VA CEO, Jayne Hrdlicka.

Cancellations across the board dropped down to 2.3%, also the best score for the year so far, with Virgin eclipsing Qantas with only 1.7% of flights axed.

Regional carrier Skytrans tailed the pack with more than one in



every six flights (17.5%) scrapped.

Virgin's result helped average on-time running for the wider sector nudge 80% overall, the best result for the year-to-date.

The combined Qantas Group was not far behind, recording a 79% score for on-time arrivals and 79.9% for departures.

A notable omission from the BITRE report was Bonza, with its future far from certain.

Conversely, a new addition to the report saw established North Qld carrier Hinterland Aviation start providing monthly data to the report, with the airline hitting 88.5% in on-time departures and 81.6% for arrivals. **ML**

Battle on track in Oz

RAIL Europe has appointed Sandy Battle to fill the newly created role of Sales Development Manager for the APAC region.

Working closely with account managers James Hooper and Grant Robertson, Battle will be charged with identifying new sales opportunities across APAC, as well as catering to the growing network of travel advisors in Australia and New Zealand.

"Sandy has joined our team at a critical time as enquiries and activities are ramping up across the region," General Manager of APAC, Richard Leonard, said.

Battle previously worked in senior business development roles for 27 years, including stints at Globus, Jetset/Travelworld, Helloworld and Wendy Wu Tours.

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Disney DESTINATIONS

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The Chat
with Jenny

Travel Daily
A conversation with Michelle Ashcroft

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Disney Disability Access changes

DISNEY will significantly tighten its Disability Access Services (DAS) program for its theme parks due to usage tripling and taking it beyond its intended capacity.

The DAS is intended to accommodate guests with a developmental disability such as autism and those unable to wait in lengthy queues.

Guests must now be approved within 30 days of their visit by participating in a live video call with a Disney cast member to determine their DAS eligibility and have a photo taken.

Approved DAS is then valid for up to three accompanying guests.

However, those found to be lying for DAS access will receive a life ban from all Disney parks.

China is still on track: TA

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIA is confident that a recovery of Chinese tourists to our shores is on track and showing positive signs every month, despite visitor numbers sitting at only half of what they were before the pandemic.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* on the sidelines of the Australian Tourism Exchange in Melbourne yesterday, Tourism Australia CEO, Phillipa Harrison, said the outlook for the Chinese market was encouraging as it continues to rebound in 2024.

"We had a really great Chinese New Year, which is our peak period, and we jumped up to about 75% of pre-COVID capacity and aviation capacity is sitting at about 90%," Harrison noted.

"We've got everything in place and we're seeing [the Chinese market] grow month-on-month so it's just a matter of time from our point of view," she added.

The Tourism Australia chief added that given the delay in border openings ordered by the Chinese Government, the recovery trajectory is roughly where the tourism body predicted it would be.

"The delay meant that air capacity took a while to come back...agencies not selling Australia for a long time takes a while to build back their product knowledge...and so we're on the right path with that," she said.

When asked how a recent

Japan on the menu

YOUNG Australians are craving Japan in record numbers, according to StudentUniverse, with booking volumes to Sapporo, Tokyo and Osaka up 200%.

The FCTG subsidiary found 62% of Gen Z pax marked Japan as their most desired country to visit.

StudentUniverse Global Brand Manager, Will Jones, said Japan's Gen Z popularity had surpassed Thailand for the first time ever.



decision by Qantas to dump flights to Shanghai from 28 Jul (**TD** 14 May) might impact Chinese visitation, Harrison said that while it's not ideal to lose a route, the ripple effect of the decision will be minimal.

"It was only five flights in 120 a week, so I don't think that it will impact the inbound market in a material way," she insisted.

Meanwhile, Harrison also fended off suggestions that Tourism Australia would find its job ahead challenging after the Federal Government opted not to increase its marketing budget.

Funding was maintained at \$170.4 million in 2024-25, with Harrison stating the latest budget allocation provides every confidence of getting the job done over the next year. **AB**

Ponant hails arrival

PONANT has reported the arrival of *Le Jacques-Cartier* in Darwin ahead of its maiden season exploring the Kimberley.

The 184-guest vessel sets sail today on its maiden 10-night departure to Broome, the first of 13 voyages scheduled until Sep.

Bureau Veritas has certified the ship with a 'Controlled' grading for underwater radiated noise, a measure designed to mitigate the impact on marine fauna.

From Sep, *Le Jacques-Cartier* will spend the rest of the year on Australia's southern coast.




Turkish connects

TURKISH Airlines has announced the upcoming launch of TKCONNECT, a New Distribution Capability (NDC) platform which will offer exclusive content and services to agents.

Once it goes live on 01 Oct, the platform will provide a range of features and privileges, including differentiated ticket pricing, NDC-only promotional fares, enhanced ancillary services such as excess baggage, seat selection and special equipment, and more.

Turkish Airlines CEO, Ahmet Olmüstür, said TKCONNECT will be "an important milestone in our mission to enhance passenger experiences and support our commercial partners".

Travel agents interested in the platform can discover more details **HERE**.




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Window Seat

TENNIS champions Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal have taken their athleticism off the courts and into the snowy mountains for a special travel journey as part of a new Louis Vuitton (LV) campaign.

Formerly on-court rivals, the duo teamed up to conquer Italy's Dolomites mountain range for the French luxury brand's revival of its Core Values campaign, with the tagline "There are journeys that turn into legends".

For the campaign, Nadal and Federer are "not competitors but instead companions for one another on the journey up the mountain - a visual metaphor for their careers".

Federer donned the Monogram Christopher backpack, which LV called "a symbol of timeless style akin to his own legacy in sport", while Nadal braced the cold in a Monogram Eclipse t-shirt, "representing his dynamic strength and tenacity".

The collaboration between the two sporting stars was described by Federer as "meaningful and special".

"How we could be such rivals and then at the end of our careers be beside each other doing this campaign has been very cool.

"And where we are here today, I think it also embodies everything: at the peak of the mountains," he shared.

The Core Values campaign launched in 2007, and has featured many stars such as tennis champ Steffi Graf.



QF to Link on NDC research



LINK Travel Group recently met with Qantas to firm up its commitment to the carrier's NDC fare content, which is distributed to travel agents through its TPCconnects solution.

The two parties convened at Qantas' Mascot headquarters in Sydney, also agreeing to work more closely on developing the technology and pushing for greater innovation on future distribution solutions.

Both organisations said their visions are bright and that the envelope could be pushed much further to never let the status quo sit unchallenged.

Link Travel Group General Manager, Scott Darlow, said all of its members understood the importance of connecting to and utilising technology such as NDC, with portals such as TPCconnects designed to help their businesses thrive and ensure clients have access to the best fares in market.

Dengue warning

SMARTTRAVELLER is reporting a "higher than usual" number of cases of dengue fever in countries popular with Australians including Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Peru and parts of Africa.

Flinders University Professor Jill Carr said Australians should guard themselves against dengue by covering arms and legs and using mosquito repellent, as there is no antiviral treatment available.

"Qantas are entering an exciting period in their history in terms of fleet upgrade & expansion, network expansion and technology development, and we are delighted to be partnering with them side by side as they embark on these journeys," Darlow commented. *ML*

Pictured above from left after the meeting is Stephen Thompson, Qantas; Anthony Goldman, Link Travel Group; Scott Darlow, Link Travel Group; Danielle Galloway, Link Travel Group; Penny Spencer, Link Travel Group; Norhan Youssef, Qantas and Peter Ross, Qantas.

Tour Guide support

TOUR Guides Australia has praised the Queensland Government's \$2 million Tourism Business Capability Subsidy, with a second round of the program running from now until Oct.

The subsidy program provides up to \$2,000 per eligible business for employees to undertake specific training programs and professional development courses to help keep them in the sector.

Round 2 of the program includes funding for the Tour Guides Australia 'Tour Guiding Fundamentals' micro-course to equip people with basic skills to enter the tour guiding industry.

Courses will take place in Cairns in Jul and Oct or Brisbane in Sep and can also be held on demand.

Qantas Asia sale

QANTAS Airways has launched its latest Asia sale, with return fares on offer to travellers from less than \$680.

The airline has launched deals to Bali, Manila, Seoul, Hong Kong, and other Asian destinations, which are available to book either with cash or as a reward seat using Qantas Points.

Discounted fares start from \$679 return or 41,000 points return (plus taxes, fees, and carrier charges) when booked as a Classic Plus reward seat.

Seats are available for a range of travel periods between Jun 2024 and Mar 2025.

This is the second international sale since the launch of Classic Plus Flight Rewards (**TD 08 Apr**), one of the biggest loyalty shake-ups in Qantas' history.

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Anantara expands

LUXURY hotel brand Anantara has unveiled significant global expansion plans, with new properties opening in several regions.

Announced at the Arabian Travel Market this week, the group revealed it has two new properties in the pipeline in Saudi Arabia, including Anantara Diriyah Gate and Anantara Trojena in Neom.

The brand will also grow its portfolio with a new coastal property, Anantara Bandar Al Khairan Oman, slated to open in 2026, as well as an Anantara Zanzibar Resort in 2027 on the northern coast of the Tanzanian Island.

Additionally, the luxury brand is preparing to open its first tented camp next year at Anantara Kafue in Zambia.

IT'S ALWAYS SUNDAY ON HAMILTON ISLAND

FAMILIES staying on Hamilton Island in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef will soon have an exciting new accommodation option, with a boutique hotel set to open in autumn 2025.

The Sundays will feature a serene, ocean-inspired colour scheme throughout, offering 59 rooms with either a balcony or terrace overlooking the Coral Sea and the hotel's gardens.

Situated at the northern end of Catseye Beach, the \$30 million property will also offer interconnecting rooms - an ideal option for families.

Guests will be able to relax in a private cabana by the hotel's swimming pool, or dine al fresco along the water's edge at the onsite restaurant and bar.

"The Sundays marks over 20 years of continuous significant



investment in Hamilton Island by the Oatley family," said Hamilton Island CEO, Pete Brulisauer.

"In developing its ethos, we were inspired by the essence of what makes a Sunday so special - relaxing, treasuring time and fostering connections with loved ones, and embracing nature."

Sandy Oatley, Chairman of Hamilton Island Enterprises,

shared, "we are responding to our guests' request for more family focused boutique accommodation, in our ideal location".

"We remain focused on continuing to enhance Hamilton Island's reputation as one of Australia's most iconic holiday destinations," Oatley added.

Reservations for The Sundays will open in spring 2024. *JM*

Golden Eagle festivities

GOLDEN Eagle Luxury Trains has introduced its new European Festive Collection for 2024 and 2025, which includes off-train excursions to the Christmas Markets of central Europe and a New Year celebration in Vienna.

There are seven- and eight-night packages available with six dates to choose from; each journey is fully inclusive of all meals and drinks, five-star hotel stays, cabin selection on board the Danube Express, all off-train excursions, portorage and gratuities with a UK medical doctor aboard.

JW Marriott and Flamingo indulge the senses

GUESTS staying at JW Marriott properties around the world can soon partake in a sensorial journey exploring, sounds, scents and taste.

Part of a new partnership between Marriott Bonvoy and the LA-based wellness brand Flamingo Estate, the new experiences aim to blend luxury hospitality with an exploration of the senses.

The collaboration has resulted in a co-branded scent and signature soundtrack,



which guests will smell and hear upon arrival at global JW Marriott hotels.

The two brands have also created a new California wildflower honey, which will be incorporated into cocktails and savoury dishes at select JW Marriott properties.

Marina Bay loves Jo

MARINA Bay Sands has partnered with Vanity Group to introduce the Jo Loves amenity range to its Singapore landmark.

Guests can indulge in the brand's fragranced bath and body care amenities as well as enjoy a limited-edition Jo Loves afternoon tea menu at the Renku Bar & Lounge.

The collaboration is part of the integrated resort's ongoing US\$1.75 billion transformation (*TD* 19 Jan).

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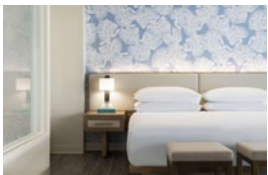


METT Hotel & Beach Resort Marbella has announced the addition of several new suites, a third restaurant, and spa facility updates for the summer season. The resort now houses 24 new suites with pool and terrace access, while the new beachfront

AMMOS restaurant will serve up Mediterranean cuisine. Visitors can now also indulge in bespoke skincare programs and body treatments at the resort's MOI Spa.



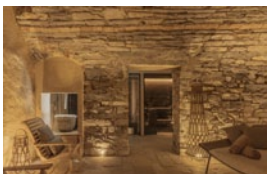
IHG Hotels & Resorts is set to open the new **ANA Holiday Inn Resort Karuizawa** in 2025. Currently operating as the President Resort Karuizawa, the 100-key property will undergo extensive renovations ahead of its opening in the first quarter next year. The property will feature two pet-friendly villas, a restaurant, a natural hot spring, a gym, an indoor swimming pool, and more, located in the Agatsuma district in Gunma, around three hours' drive from Tokyo.



Sheraton Princess Kaiulani in Hawaii has completed a revamp of its Ainahau Tower rooms, introducing new Junior Suites along with a refresh of over 650 guestrooms. The six new Junior Suites each feature a wet bar, pull-out sofa, coffee table and custom chairs, as well as a new bed, art and outdoor furniture. Guests staying in other rooms will now enjoy botanical surroundings, enhanced lighting, custom upholstery, and a coastal-inspired colour palette.



Four Seasons Hotel Toronto has unveiled a multi-million dollar renovation to offer guests enhanced comfort, functionality, and design. All 259 guestrooms, including 42 suites, have been upgraded with new carpets, lighting, and artwork, as well as furnishings sourced from local Canadian artisans.



After opening its doors two years ago, **Passalacqua**, a luxury hotel located along Italy's Lake Como, has introduced a new underground spa area and an 18-metre indoor pool. Located within the property's centuries-old tunnels, the new spa includes a relaxation room under chandeliers and two 'cabins' offering treatments using natural skincare products, while the indoor pool features a whirlpool area with a mosaic of Palladian marble.

Sari-Elle climbs new heights



TRAVEL PR and communications professional Sari-Elle Kraemer has recently arrived in Nepal on her way to Everest Base Camp where she will be tackling the World's Highest Marathon.

The challenge comes as part of her tireless efforts to raise money for the work of the Australian Lions Foundation, which provides emergency aid and community welfare to Australians affected by natural disasters nationwide.

Her campaign to date has already raised \$100,000 of her \$120,000 goal.

Kraemer (**pictured**) has been training for the high endurance

event for months, with the marathon beginning on 29 May and covering 70kms from Everest Base Camp to Namche Bazaar.

The ultra-marathon begins at the Base Camp at an altitude of 5,356m and winds through five extreme Himalayan passes. *ML* Donations to the worthy cause can still be made - **CLICK HERE**.

P&O bowls us over

BOWLS NSW has set sail with P&O Cruises Australia as the line's latest partner.

The governing body for bowls in New South Wales plans to integrate P&O Australia across a range of exciting activities over the coming year.

"We are pleased to be partnering with Bowls NSW as the Official Cruise Partner for 2024" P&O Senior Vice President Peter Little said.

"At P&O Cruises Australia, we cherish the opportunity to bring people together to enjoy unforgettable experiences, whether on land or at sea."

Allure sails early

OCEANIA Cruises has confirmed its latest ship, *Allura*, will enter service one week early.

Her inaugural sailing will now depart Trieste, Italy, on 18 Jul 2025, cruising a six-day itinerary from the Italian city to Athens.

Guests booked on the original 24 Jul departure date received access to the inaugural sailing.



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