

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, plus a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

JQ Perth sale fares

JETSTAR has released discounted fares on three new international routes from Perth, including Singapore, Bangkok, and Phuket.

Prices start from just \$130 one way from the WA capital to Singapore, while travellers can fly to Bangkok and Phuket from \$165 and \$174 respectively.

The sale ends midnight AEST on Mon 27 May, and applies to travel periods between mid-Aug 2024 to early Mar 2025.

For more details, **CLICK HERE**.

Gens divided on travel

AUSTRALIANS aged in their mid-to-late twenties are pulling back on travel spending while those aged over 65 are spending more, according to a new report published by CommBank.

The *CommBank iQ Cost of Living Insights Report* examined the spending habits of thousands of Aussies during Q1 this year, and found that 20-somethings had scaled back on travel spend by around 10%.

Conversely, the baby boomer market continued its growth trend, increasing by 11% over the same period this year.

"The wide gap in spending patterns across age groups continues to persist, with Australians in the 60 and older age bracket spending above inflation levels," CommBank iQ Head of Innovation and Analytics, Wade Tubman, said.

The report also found that

discretionary spend per capita on travel in Q1 was higher than the nationwide average, while Victorians had reduced their spending significantly more than any other state.

Across all demographics, discretionary spend on travel was up by \$226 (+4%), outpacing general retail, entertainment, apparel and dining out.

Cruise lines also emerged as winners during Q1, up by 22% on the same period last year.

While sales through travel agents remained stagnant, online travel bookings surged by 16% year-on-year. *AB*

FCTG/VA are trusted

FLIGHT Centre and Virgin Australia have performed well in Roy Morgan's latest *Risk Monitor* report, which asked Australians to name brands they trust versus those they distrust.

VA snagged second spot on the most trusted travel and tourism brands behind Singapore Airlines, while Flight Centre ranked third.

Flight Centre Global MD, Andrew Stark, said the report's result showed that trust underpins its customer value proposition philosophies.

"It is our ongoing goal to deliver truly amazing travel experiences to our customers, and this relies on trust in the brand and our experts who recommend and book their holidays," he said.

"The travel and tourism industry has been through a lot over the past few years so it's reaffirming to see that all our efforts to look after our customers are being recognised and valued, resulting in this accolade," he added.

Inspire bookings

AGENTS can score a \$100 gift card to spend on whatever they wish, with every Inspiring Vacations booking they make before the end of this month - see the **back page** to learn more.

Webjet seeks advice

INVESTMENT bank Goldman Sachs has been selected by Webjet to provide advice for its proposed demerger announced yesterday (*TD* 22 May).

The company is exploring a separation of its two leading travel divisions, global bed business WebBeds and Webjet B2C, which includes Webjet OTA, GoSee and Trip Ninja.

ATE off to Brisbane

TOURISM Australia will take the 2025 edition of its flagship Australian Tourism Exchange event to Queensland, with Brisbane today confirmed as host.

The event, which is Australia's largest annual tourism trade event, will be held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre from 28 Apr to 01 May 2025.

Brisbane's confirmation marks the first time the Queensland capital has hosted the event since 2007 and its fourth in total, having also hosted in 2001 and 2002.

Travel Daily ON LOCATION



SIGIRIYA

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

OUR final day in Sri Lanka started early with a fascinating guided tour of medieval capital city, Polonnaruwa.

After learning about the city's rich history and viewing its many styles of Buddhist statues, we will make our way to Sigiriya Rock Fortress.

A UNESCO Heritage site, Sigiriya Rock Fortress is regarded as one of the most artistic complexes of its time.

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A by Adina Vienna

AUSTRALIAN hotelier TFE Hotels has announced its premium A by Adina brand will debut in Europe when it opens its first Austrian hotel in 2025.

TFE is no stranger to the European market, having opened several locations under its apartment-style hotel brand Adina over the last 15 years.

"Adina Hotels was the very first Australian hotel brand to enter the European Market, so it's exciting to see the elevation of this brand - a sort of 'sophisticated coming of age' if you will - with the launch of A by Adina into Europe," CEO, Asli Kutlucan, said.

The A by Adina Vienna Danube will boast 108 rooms (studios and doubles), a cocktail lounge & restaurant with Danube views.

Get in early for Travel24

EARLYBIRD tickets are now on sale for Travel24 – *Travel Daily's* new industry conference that explores the next 24 months in the travel industry.

More speakers have been revealed after it was announced that one of the world's leading DEI experts (who is also Grammy-considered, a TED speaker and appeared on *Greys Anatomy* in 2021), Azure Antoinette, will share how the travel and tourism industry can be better when it comes to diversity & inclusion.

ATIA CEO, Dean Long, will moderate a key panel of travel agents discussing what they see as the challenges and opportunities over the next 24 months, and how they would like to work with suppliers.

Joining Long will be Personal Travel Manager from TravelManagers, Louise McCarthy, with three more agents to be confirmed very soon.

In addition, consumer behaviour expert Dan Monheit, CEO of Hardhat agency, will fly up from Melbourne to share how the travel and tourism industry

TRAVEL 24
REVEALING THE NEXT 24 MONTHS IN TRAVEL

should navigate a time of recovery, mixed in with a cost-of-living crisis.

Monheit has worked with clients the likes of Visit Victoria, Destination Phillip Island and Melbourne Airport, and has spoken at major international events including SXSW in Austin.

CVFR's Group CEO, Ram Chhabra, is also on board to take an in-depth look at the near future of air travel, including airline capacity/network, airfares and NDC.

Travel24 will take place on 08 Aug in Sydney at the Sofitel Darling Harbour over a full day and promises to give travel and tourism a new take on the industry conference.

More key sessions will be announced soon looking at topics including AI and much more.

Earlybird tickets are available for a limited time **HERE**. *DF*

EVT enters Asia

EVT Hotels & Resorts is preparing to open its first QT property outside of Australia and NZ, after it was awarded the management contract for Singapore's Hotel Telegraph.

Situated next to Lau Pa Sat hawker centre, one of Singapore's iconic attractions, the four-storey heritage building is currently being transformed into QT Singapore Hotel.

EVT is undertaking a full-scale renovation of the hotel, which will become a "hub of playful luxury", including an overhaul of its food and beverage offerings.

Due to reopen on 16 Sep, QT Singapore will feature luxurious QT redesigned guest rooms and suites, a signature bar and grill, a rooftop bar and pool, and bespoke private dining.

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Inspiring trust with agents

EXCLUSIVE

INSPIRING Vacations' first-ever trade fam, which is exploring the highlights of Sri Lanka this week (*TD* yesterday), is a "statement" of the tour operator's resolution to work with the travel industry going forward.

Global Head of Sales Cameron Hunt (**pictured** with Marketing Manager Emily Humphrey) told *Travel Daily* the trade fam will be the first of many Inspiring Vacations plans to host, as it looks to erase any doubt regarding its commitment to the industry.

"There has been a little bit of a cloud over whether we are working with travel agents, [and] what are we actually committed to," Hunt explained.

"This is a statement to say we want to work with agents, and there's going to be more of these coming up," he added.

The fams will act as an incentive, and be an opportunity



for the industry to test Inspiring Vacations' product.

The company's broader travel agent strategy will include a dedicated phone line for travel advisors to contact it on.

Hunt said, "travel agents have got that unique experience, we know that they like our product, we get feedback about it all the time, so why not get them to work with us?"

The six-year-old company has become well-known to travellers through its broadsheet advertising in national mastheads, which Hunt hopes will make it even easier for advisors to book its product for their clients. *MS*

Start wiggling, kids

THE Wiggles has partnered with Thrifty Car Rentals to launch 'Backseat Bandmates', a free travel pack and in-car musical experience to keep kids entertained and prevent tantrums while on long road trips.

Kids can enjoy sing-a-longs, puzzles and games when their parents make a booking through the vehicle rental company.

The collaboration follows research by Thrifty which suggests the question 'are we there yet?' is hurled at parents around 20 times per road trip.

"We love the idea of spreading joy to families on-the-go to make road trips even more fun and a little less stressful for everyone," Red Wiggle, Caterina Mete, said.



Window Seat

CHANNELLING the whimsy of "where the bloody hell are ya?", a Minnesota Timberwolves player's heat-of-the-moment quip has sparked a viral tourism campaign.

Following a big Timberwolves win which lifted his team to the cusp of the NBA Finals, guard Anthony Edwards instructed a post-game interviewer to "bring ya ass" to Minnesota for the next round against Dallas.

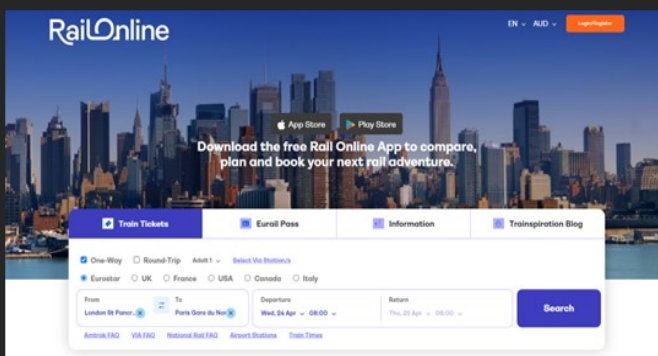
The jest was quickly dived on by the destination's marketing organisation Explore Minnesota, which is already working to turn the line into the state's new tourism brand.

A branded t-shirt is already in production, and website traffic to the organisation's website has already doubled.



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US airlines push back

AN AVIATION lobby group in the United States is taking legal action against the US Department of Transportation (DOJ) to fight against a rule requiring airlines to disclose fees at the point-of-sale.

The suit is being led by Airlines for America (A4A), which argues that full disclosure of all fees relating to checked baggage, seat allocation, reservation changes and cancellations will only serve to confuse travellers.

The DOJ has vowed to defend its new rules, which it said have come after three years of careful consultation and would make the industry more competitive.

A4A represents American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, United Airlines, Alaska Airlines, Hawaiian Airlines and Southwest Airlines, however the latter has declined to join the lawsuit.

The DOJ 'Final Rule' on fees stipulates that charges for "critical ancillary services" must be disclosed before online tickets are purchased, but aren't required to be included alongside base fares.

Fees must be clearly explained and accurate, cannot be displayed through a hyperlink but can appear as a pop-up, expandable



text or other means.

The DOJ ruling will not take effect until 24 Oct at the earliest, however the A4A action wants it to be wound back entirely.

A4A said the new rules would not make things easier, but confuse customers who are "well aware" of existing service fees.

"The ancillary fee rule by the Department of Transportation will greatly confuse consumers who will be inundated with information that will only serve to complicate the buying process," the association said.

MEANWHILE, some airlines may have been spooked by the new DOJ rules, with Frontier Airlines introducing an entirely new fare and merchandising model.

Along with a 'basic' fare, the budget carrier has added economy, premium and business bundles, each including a carry-on bag and seat selection.

The carrier has also scrapped all change fees and extended the life of cancellation credits from three months to one year.

Low-cost rival Spirit Airlines quickly followed suit, eliminating change and cancellation fees for all of its fare bundles excluding its Basic level - potentially saving travellers up to US\$119. *ML*

A desirable Virgin

A SURVEY of 6,105 workers has placed Virgin Australia at number four in the list of most desirable workplaces across the country.

The carrier was the only travel brand to make the top 10 in the Randstad list, with professional consultancy Deloitte claiming top position ahead of a slew of public services organisations which dominated the rankings.

Job security, career progression, attractive salaries, and work benefits were all considered key criteria in 2024.

Australian Leisure and Hospitality Hotels was the top-performing travel brand in the corresponding research last year, taking out second spot.

RSSC in the fast lane

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has collaborated with the Aston Martin Aramco Formula One Team on a new 10-night voyage, which will sail the Mediterranean in Jul 2025.

The 'Spotlight Voyage' will be hosted by former F1 driver Pedro de la Rosa and members of Aston Martin Aramco - details [HERE](#).

Palau's Paradise graces Brissy



THE excitement was palpable at Brisbane International Airport last night as Nauru Airlines' inaugural direct flight between the Queensland capital and Palau touched down (**TD 06 May**).

More than 100 passengers from Palau, Nauru and Australia were on board the first 'Palau Paradise Express' flight, including 50 travel agents and industry guests, who were welcomed by Maverick Eoe, Deputy Minister responsible for Nauru Airlines, and Nauru Airlines Chairman, Dr Kieren Keke.

"Nauru is very honoured to be able to partner with Australia and Palau to deliver this new direct connection," Minister Eoe said.

"We look forward to seeing a rapid growth in visitors between both countries and indeed beyond Palau, to and from other parts of Micronesia and the northern Pacific."

The six-hour Palau Paradise

Express return flight will operate once weekly, using Nauru Airlines' 737-700 and 737-800 aircraft.

Located 1,500km to the east of the Philippines, Palau comprises around 300 islands, and is considered as one of the world's hidden gem destinations. *JM*

MCEC gets tech-y

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has announced several technology upgrades, including the installation of two ultra-modern LED screens in its Plenary.

As well as being 50% more energy efficient, the new screens can double in size to create a more immersive experience for visitors, while new control panels in all meeting rooms allow presenters to easily adjust lighting, temperature, and more.

More events news on [page five](#).

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Case joins GCCEC

THE Gold Coast Convention and Exhibition Centre (GCCEC) has welcomed Anna Case to the role of Executive Manager of Sales.

Drawing on more than 25 years' experience in sales, leadership and management, Case is tasked with leading the sales team in generating business opportunities for the venue and promoting the Gold Coast as a business events destination.

"We are delighted to welcome Anna to the executive team," said Nick Jeffrey, Interim GM at GCCEC.

"Her extensive network and knowledge of the sector will be invaluable to the destination and the sustainable growth of GCCEC," he enthused.

NSW SHOWS OFF EVENTS APPEAL

MORE than 100 event planners and buyers attended Destination NSW's inaugural Business Events NSW Showcase, which took place in Sydney last week.

The event was an opportunity for the destination marketing body to highlight its fresh approach to growing the business events sector in regional NSW.

In line with Destination NSW's 'Feel New' visitor brand, the new Business Events NSW messaging - 'Corporate events that feel anything but' - aims to put an exciting spin on the traditional business events experience.

Attendees were able to get a feel of the fun and unique experiences that are available to corporate events in the state's regional areas.

Showcase participants included the likes of Accor, Barefoot Conferences, Brokenwood Wines,



Hunter Valley Resort & Farm, Stay n'Sip, Sydney Oyster Farm Tours, and many more.

Destination NSW CEO, Steve Cox, said feedback from the event was "outstanding".

"From the outback to the ocean, regional NSW is home to world-class conference facilities, warm hospitality and visitor experiences filled with richness and substance," he shared.

"The Business Events NSW Showcase was an invaluable

opportunity to immerse buyers in business event destinations, products and experiences available in regional NSW.

"Buyers gained valuable insights on products and experiences available across NSW that will help them deliver inspiring conference programs for their next event."

Business event travellers spend on average \$554 per person per night in NSW - 101% more than leisure travellers. JM

Homestead opens

THE Homestead, a new events venue at Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary on the Gold Coast, has officially opened (TD 15 Feb).

Part of the attraction's new multi-million-dollar tourism precinct, The Homestead has already secured a number of corporate event bookings.

The 841m² venue features a design inspired by a traditional Queenslander house, and comprises indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as an fresco dining area with a menu championing locally sourced ingredients.

Events on the big screen at RACV Resort

RACV Royal Pines Resort on the Gold Coast is now home to the largest hotel LED screen in the Southern Hemisphere.

The 24-metre wide screen, which is located in the ballroom, boosts the property's reputation as a conferencing and events destination.

The giant screen is part of the resort's multi-million-dollar investment to upgrade its audio-visual technology, along with other improvements



including a new executive lounge, refurbished rooms and elevated dining experiences.

RACV Royal Pines Resort can accommodate up to 1,800 delegates, and hosts an array of national and international conferences each year.

Cliftons gets star

CLIFTONS Event Solutions has achieved platinum level accreditation with IACC Green Star Certification, in recognition of its commitment to the environment.

The certification is assessed across 60 areas, such as waste and energy management, social responsibility, and water conservation.

Cliftons is the first Australian IACC member to reach platinum status.



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Maggie Wong has joined **Dorsett Melbourne** as its Director of Sales. Wong is tasked with driving sales and awareness of the property, which is celebrating one year since its opening. Joining her on the team is **Wendy Au**, who has been named as the hotelier's Business Development Manager, and **Kylie Ortega**, who will take on the role of Conference and Events Sales Executive. The new appointments align with Dorsett's focus on strengthening sales, revenue and reservations across its Melbourne property, with the aim of continuing to grow its presence within Australia.

itravel has welcomed two new appointees to its marketing division. **Rebecca Smith** has begun her role as the new Digital Marketing Manager, while Katherine Giannos has joined as ittravel's Sales & Marketing Co-ordinator from Globus. Smith and Giannos have both shared valuable experience in the past across the B2B and B2C sectors, and will leverage their skills in strategic planning, project management, and more in their new positions.

Global airport hospitality services provider, **Plaza Premium Group (PPG)**, has announced the appointment of **Syafrina Sharif** as its Global Head of ESG & Sustainability. Based in Kuala Lumpur, Sharif brings a decade of experience in promoting and leading the corporate sustainability agenda at multinational companies in industries of engineering and construction as well as biotechnology.

Puneet Dhawan will take on the role of the Head of Asia at **Minor Hotels** beginning Jul, in a move that the hotelier believes will better steer the group's growth in Asia and India. Dhawan is a seasoned professional, bringing 30 years of experience in hospitality spanning Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.

Rosewood Hotels & Resorts has announced the appointment of **Stephane Massarini** as Managing Director of Rosewood Kauri Cliffs. He was most recently the group's Resort Manager at Rosewood Le Guanahani St. Barth, French West Indies. Prior to joining Rosewood, Massarini was GM at IHG's Beppu Resort and Spa for five years.

Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has promoted **Amit Sripathi** to the role of Chief Development Officer, which will see him lead the group's North American franchise sales team. Sripathi, who is based in New Jersey in the United States, first joined Wyndham in 2021 as its Senior Vice President, Strategic and Corporate Development.

Tony Brun, CEO of Melbourne's **Avalon Airport**, has announced that he will step down on 28 Jun after nearly two years in the role. Brun, who has over 25 years of experience in engineering, infrastructure, aviation, and city development, revealed he is leaving in order to pursue a new Chief Executive opportunity in Saudi Arabia.

The Chat

with Jenny



Travel Daily
 A conversation with
Michelle Ashcroft

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SYD backs aviation student



SYDNEY Airport has announced the latest recipient of its SYD100 Scholarship, which supports young people from under-represented groups to enter the aviation community.

Now in its fifth year, the scholarship has been awarded to 19-year-old Harmony Boonaerts, who is preparing to begin her first year of a Bachelor of Aviation Management at the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

Based in Ulladulla on the South Coast of NSW, Boonaerts is the third female to be awarded the scholarship since the inaugural award in 2020.

Sydney Airport CEO, Scott Charlton, said, "supporting underrepresented groups in the aviation industry...is something we're really proud of, and we're pleased to be presenting the 2024 SYD100 Scholarship to Harmony who is our fifth recipient".

"Harmony embodies everything the SYD100 stands for and we

look forward to seeing what great things come of her studies at UNSW," he added.

The aspiring aviation professional, who is pictured, said being named as a recipient of the scholarship was "a dream come true".

"Being from a rural area, living in the city away from family and friends and completing a degree was always going to be financially challenging," Boonaerts said.

"The scholarship takes that stress away and means I can focus on my studies without the worry." JM

Philippines package

THE Funny Lion Group, a Philippines luxury hotel chain, has launched a bespoke seven-day package for Aussie travellers.

Priced from \$550pp, the 'Grand Palawan Expedition' features adventurous experiences focused around the chain's three hotels in Palawan - **CLICK HERE** for details.

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