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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest travel industry news plus a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

Extra Vanuatu link

SOLOMON Airlines has confirmed the commencement of its own direct flights between Vanuatu's capital Port Vila and Auckland in New Zealand from today, continuing much needed air access to the leisure destination following the collapse of Air Vanuatu (**TD** 10 May).

Previously, Solomon Airlines operated on behalf of Air Vanuatu between Port Vila and Auckland as part of a codeshare deal.

The carrier said it was committed to assisting the return of Air Vanuatu services.

Visit Victoria hails change

EXCLUSIVE

MELBOURNE is not the city it was 10 years ago, Visit Victoria claims, which is now investing millions to promote its evolution to international markets.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* during the Australian Tourism Exchange last week, the tourism body's CEO, Brendan McClements (**pictured**), said the marketing emphasis has been on positioning the Victorian capital as the country's "best city for visitors".

"That's what we think, we're the best city to experience everything Australia has to offer like food... and sport," McClements said.

"Everyone has their flaring moments but Melbourne delivers it in spades all the time".

And while the city enjoys a reputation for premium dining and a wide breadth of entertainment, the Visit Victoria chief said its tourism appeal had evolved markedly in recent years.

Part of that has been the swathe of new accommodation options added since 2015.

"We've added the Ritz-Carlton,



Le Meridien, W Melbourne, and Marriott Bonvoy has added eight hotels...it has been incredible to see what Melbourne has been able to do," he said.

Currently, Visit Victoria has 53 different executions across 10 separate themes, moving away from standard visuals depicting beaches and greenery and towards fostering a greater emotional connection with prospective visitors.

McClements also revealed the state is chasing a further \$16 billion in visitor economy value between now and 2028.

In Dec 2023, the state's visitor economy was worth \$37.8 billion, with Visit Victoria confident of accelerating that value through more international arrivals.

Victoria is still \$2.4 billion short of its pre-pandemic overseas visitor value of \$8.8 billion. **AB**

Win a \$100 gift card

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.

AA CEO steps down

ACCOMMODATION Australia (AA) CEO Michael Johnson has announced his retirement.

Johnson spent four years as National and NSW head of Tourism Accommodation Australia, before he was appointed to lead AA in Jan 2023.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time representing the industry and feel humbled to have led AA after achieving amalgamation last year," Johnson said.

His last day will be on 31 Jul.

Wendy Wu Tours.

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Perth plugs China back in

SIX months after former Tourism WA CEO Carolyn Turnbull predicted more permanent services to China would soon launch in Perth, China Southern Airlines has confirmed nonstop services between Guangzhou and the state's capital from Nov.

When the Chinese carrier takes off on the route, it will mark the first year-round service between mainland China and WA since the airline ceased flights in 2020.

China Southern had previously operated the Guangzhou-Perth route from 2011 until the pandemic shuttered services, bringing 33,000 visitors inbound to the state in its last full year of operation in 2019.

The new route could act as a key gateway for Aussie travellers looking to explore the Red Dragon as well, with Guangzhou acting as a big transit hub for int'l visitors.

China Southern runs services to 97 destinations throughout China.



The announcement was preceded by a trial of seasonal direct flights to Shanghai by China Eastern Airlines earlier this year, with the numbers demonstrating the commercial viability of WA to mainland China services.

In welcoming the news, WA Tourism Minister, Rita Saffioti, said China stands out as a premium market that has historically delivered high visitor numbers and expenditure.

"We expect this to rise significantly with the resumption of this nonstop service," she said.

In an interview with **TD** last year, Tourism WA's chief said the China Eastern trial would pave the way for a permanent China service (**TD** 20 Dec 2023). AB

Int'l air traffic up

INTERNATIONAL air passenger traffic hit 3.21 million in Feb - up 32.1% compared to the same period in 2023, according to the latest statistics from BITRE.

There were also 34.6% more seats available on international services to and from Australia throughout Feb 2024 versus the same month last year, with 78.8% of those seats filled.

Qantas carried the largest share of the market in Feb with 16.3% of the total, followed by Jetstar with 11%, Singapore Airlines with 9%, Air New Zealand with 7.7% and Emirates with 4.8%.

Australian airlines (Qantas, Jetstar and Virgin) accounted for 29.4% of total passenger carriage in Feb, down slightly from 29.8% in Feb 2023.

Low-cost carriers took a larger slicer of the pie compared to last year, serving 19.2% of total international passenger traffic to and from Australia in Feb - up from 18.4% in 2023.

Singapore incentive

TRAVEL advisors who book their clients on a Singapore holiday with BKB Holidays before 16 Jun will be in the running to win one of 20 \$100 gift cards.

The incentive is for ATIA-accredited agencies only, and bookings must be fully deposited by 24 Jun to be eligible.

Albatross swoops

FOLLOWING the appointment of James Hewlett as its new Director of Marketing (**TD** 20 May), Albatross Tours has unannounced the recruitment Matt "Speako" Speakman to the position of Customer Service & Sales Team Leader.

Speakman has spent the last two-and-a-half years working across product at Sno'n'Ski Holidays, and said he looked forward to working with travel agents to grow their touring business and are key to the Albatross sales strategy.



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Topdeck app refresh

YOUTH-FOCUSED tour operator Topdeck has overhauled its app to improve its overall design and functionality.

Among the enhancements include the launch of the 'Your Topdeck Experience' tab, detailing key information about trips and options to personalise travel.

Guests using the app can now view specific items related to upcoming accommodation, meals, transport and tours.

Users can also buy selected activities tailored to their individuals tastes, such as skydiving and skiing, as well as read feedback from expert tour leaders about the traveller's upcoming tour plans.

Additional functionality includes a simpler sign-in, support, FAQs, a trip countdown clock, and the ability to prepay activities.

The update follows the introduction of Topdeck's 'City Insiders' feature to the app last year (**TD** 02 Nov 2023).

TNZ to add NZ\$5 billion

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) has launched its new strategy to spearhead the next four years, which aims to grow the country's international tourism by NZ\$5b.

The latest plan from the destination marketing body will focus on growing off-peak visitation in particular, positioning New Zealand as a year-round destination in order to promote sustainable tourism growth.

In FY25, TNZ will target a growth of 8.7% in international tourism spend overall, and an increase of 9.6% in the off-peak period.

To achieve this, TNZ will showcase the destination's off-peak experiences, advocate for future year-round flights to boost visitation during the cold seasons, and focus all trade activity on converting consideration into off-peak arrivals.

"FY25 is the first year of our four-year strategy; we'll focus on building a long-term pipeline of



visitors at the same time as we aim to boost off-peak visitation in this year," TNZ Chief Executive Rene de Monchy explained.

The DMO will also look to expand the footprint of its Qualmark quality assurance businesses (those certified as providing eco-conscious experiences) to help the sector become more sustainable, and spur off-peak travellers to visit. *JM*

Hotels in good shape

MORE hotel bookings have been made over the last 12 months globally than before the pandemic, STR Regional Manager Matthew Burke stated at last week's Accommodation Australia NSW market update in Sydney.

BNE upgrade peek

FROM faster processing and less congestion to more accessibility, Brisbane Airport has shared a sneak peek of the planned upgrades to the Qantas Domestic Terminal check-in.

The improvements will help Qantas meet growing demand, and is part of the hub's \$5 billion Future BNE transformation, which includes 150 projects across the precinct.

These include a third passenger terminal and major refurbishments to the domestic and international terminals.

At the domestic terminal, an extension will be added to the multi-level car park so pax can walk directly along the Skywalk into a new screening point.

The terminal will also include a new centralised baggage system.



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Window Seat

ROLLS-ROYCE is currently designing a new \$20 billion 'Doomsday' plane to fly the US President and senior politicians in the event of a major disaster.

The manufacturer secured a contract from the Pentagon earlier this year, with the remit to include the aircraft being able to survive a nuclear blast.

Among its nifty features will be the ability to house a mobile command centre, take over from destroyed ground facilities, and be refuelled mid-air if necessary.

The plane also offers the fleeing President a conference room, a command work area, space for an operations team, a briefing room, break rooms and communication spaces.

The contract for the new project is expected to run up to Jul 2036.



Air NZ makes gains

AIR New Zealand carried 2.2% more passengers in the full year to Apr 2024 than it did in the previous corresponding period.

In an update to the ASX this morning, the Kiwi carrier showed that 1.28 million passengers boarded its planes in the latest 12-month stretch, while revenue passenger kilometres and available seat kilometres also both improved by 4.8%.

Jetstar enjoys historical 20th



JETSTAR recreated its inaugural flight between Newcastle and Melbourne on Sat to mark its 20th birthday, calling on several of the original pilots, cabin crew and customers to take part.

Qantas' budget carrier took to the skies for the first time in 2004 amid a blaze of excitement, with 100,000 tickets sold on its first day.

Originally commencing with

a fleet of 14 aircraft to service Australia's east coast, Jetstar has since grown to operate close to 150 domestic and international routes in the APAC region.

The future of the low-cost carrier looks bright as well, last year selling more than 12 million fares and on track to eclipse that number in 2024.

Jetstar is viewed by many as an important ingredient in the domestic aviation mix, with its budget seats placing important downward pressure on airfares - especially in light of the recent collapse of Bonza (**TD 01** May).

"Before we launched 20 years ago, the only option for families was packing up the car and hitting the road, but our low fares meant they could afford to instead jump on a plane and head off to the Gold Coast, Bali or elsewhere for their family holiday," Jetstar Group CEO, Stephanie Tully, said.

Jetstar's new uniform will roll out later this year (worn by the crew on Sat's flight **pictured**), which the carrier said symbolised its transition into an era of lower fares and better aircraft. **AB**

SQ/GA deepen ties

SINGAPORE Airlines and Garuda Indonesia will expand an existing codeshare agreement to include their respective frequent flyer programs and explore revenue sharing opportunities.

Beginning later this year and subject to regulatory approval, members of SQ's KrisFlyer and GA's GarudaMiles programs will be able to earn and redeem miles on flights aboard both carriers.

Revenue sharing will facilitate joint capacity growth and lay the foundations for a proposed joint venture between the two parties which will cover flights between Singapore and Indonesia.

TTC appoints Taefi

TTC Tour Brands has announced the appointment of Aryan Taefi as its new Sales Manager for Queensland.

Aryan had previously worked across the company's brands for 10 years as a Travel Director in Ireland, leading thousands of guests around the UK.

Tomas Malmberg, Head of Trade Sales and Partnerships Australia, said he was thrilled to welcome Taefi to the Australian team.

"With Aryan's previous experience as a travel director across many of our brands, it is undeniable that his impact to the team will not go unnoticed."

Taefi has already begun connecting with travel agents and can be contacted via email at aryan.taefi@ttc.com.



EK boosts Mexico

EMIRATES has partnered with Mexican low-cost airline Viva Aerobus on a new interline agreement that will boost access for EK passengers to a host of new ports such as Acapulco, Cancun, Guadalajara and Monterrey, to name a few.

The deal offers passengers the option of onward travel to 21 more Mexican destinations in total, as well as a further seven routes between Mexico and cities in the United States on a single ticket.

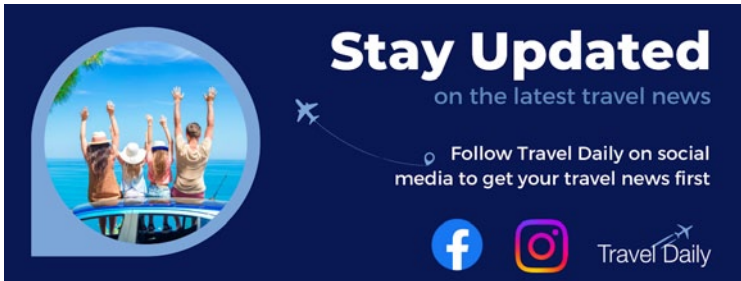
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BKB Holidays - Christmas & Cocos Keeling Islands

BKB Holidays has published its latest brochure, featuring the Australia's Indian Ocean territories. BKB specialises in curating unique itineraries around these island destinations while offering packages catering to nature and ocean enthusiasts. Check out the new guide to discover hotels, car hire, and tailored tour packages, which include exhilarating activities such as diving, snorkelling, photography, and bird watching.

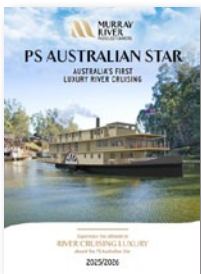
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Virtuoso - The Magazine, The New Adventures

The Magazine by Virtuosos has landed, with everything you need to know from the luxury travel specialist about the upcoming winter season. Released on a quarterly basis, the 64-page publication details popular departures available across Virtuoso-preferred brands, including the seven-night 'Mediterranean Tapestry' by Regent Seven Seas Cruises, which sails from Rome to Barcelona and will offer up to 64 excursions.

Readers can also head to the magazine's 'Just Back' section to learn about Bayview Travel Managing Director, Michael Nolan's, recent trip to Thailand, as he shares his first-hand experience about the popular Southeast Asian tourist destination. As well as a raft of accommodation recommendations and tour packages, Virtuoso's new detailed guide also highlights Perth in its city guide section, showcasing the magic of the Western Australia capital.



Murray River Paddlesteamers - PS Australian Star

Murray River Paddlesteamers has unveiled its latest brochure showcasing its brand-new five-star vessel, *PS Australian Star*. The 24-page guide dives into the ship's standout features, including the chic and cosy Hopwood Lounge and Bar, the Randell Dining Room, and the contemporary River Staterooms. Guests can also learn all about the various voyages the new paddlesteamer will offer during the 2025/26 season, including the three-night Discovery journey, the four-night Explorer itinerary, and the seven-night All the Rivers Run sailing.

Readers can also head to the magazine's 'Just Back' section to learn about Bayview Travel Managing Director, Michael Nolan's, recent trip to Thailand, as he shares his first-hand experience about the popular Southeast Asian tourist destination. As well as a raft of accommodation recommendations and tour packages, Virtuoso's new detailed guide also highlights Perth in its city guide section, showcasing the magic of the Western Australia capital.

Minor sees major Bali scope



MINOR Hotels has signed a management agreement with Anantara Hotels & Resorts to operate a new-build resort in Bali.

Opening in 2027, the Anantara Dragon Seseh Bali Resort will be the first luxury beachfront resort on Seseh Beach, and the third Anantara-branded property to operate in the popular Indonesian tourism destination.

The resort will feature 216 rooms, a large wellness facility offering dedicated yoga and meditation studios, as well as a "top-of-the-line" fitness centre.

Guests will also be able to relax at a resort beach lounge area, swim laps in any of the three swimming pools, grab a drink at a swim-up pool bar, and dine at three restaurants.

Architectural designs for the property are inspired by the mystical Barong of Bali, a dragon-like guardian that Anantara suggests will lend the hotel a "sense of strength and grace with a touch of fantasy".

Minor Hotels' latest venture will add to the two properties it

already runs in Bali - the 73-room Anantara Uluwatu Bali Resort and the 37-suite and pool villa Avani Seminyak Bali Resort.

The hotel group will also open the Anantara Ubud Bali Resort in Sep as part of its ongoing expansion push. **AB**

Pictured: A render of Anantara Dragon Seseh Bali Resort.

Bali cliff collapses

AUTHORITIES in Bali have begun an investigation into how a section of limestone cliff in Uluwatu collapsed during construction of a luxury hotel.

Development of the property overlooking Pemutih Pecatu Beach has now been halted as officials determine whether the company building the property ignored environmental impact assessments and failed to complete building permits.

The company said initial findings suggest the incident occurred by loose debris from a former hotel which occupied the site and was being removed after demolition.

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