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Travel Daily

First with the news

Tuesday 26th Nov 2024

MTA Advisor Danielle Lawson



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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features a cover wrap from **Viva Holidays**, eight pages of news including a photo page from **Link Travel Group**, our **Sustainability** page, plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Infinity Holidays

Mixed picture for Webjet

WEBJET Group Limited, the consumer travel business which demerged from Web Travel Group, has reported a modest 1% EBITDA growth in its first financial half-year report (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

Bookings and Total Transaction Value (TTV) were both down 8%, with overall revenue falling 1% to \$72 million for the half-year, while net profit after tax climbed slightly to \$9.2 million.

For the six months ending 30 Sep 2024, results reflected both the challenges associated with the demerger and the strength of its B2B WebBeds division.

The company cited challenging macro-economic conditions impacting domestic airfare sales, with a focus on higher margin products key to its EBITDA growth.

Despite only launching onto the ASX as a solo entity two months ago (**TD** 24 Sep), Webjet Group said it elected to present its



results with a prior corresponding period to ensure comparability "as if it has always operated independently", meaning results were representative in nature.

"Our focus has been setting ourselves up for and laying the foundations for accelerating growth in the next few years," Webjet Group Managing Director Katrina Barry (**pictured**) said. *ML*

Sale with Silversea

SILVERSEA'S Black Fri offer allows travellers to save up to \$10,000 - the cruise line's most generous offer to date.

More details about the major promo are available on **page 9**.

Viva Britain contest

EXPERIENCE Britain differently with Viva Holidays, which is currently hosting a competition on bookings to the country.

The top seller of Viva's British product from 22 Nov-13 Dec will win a \$2,000 voucher - see the **front cover page**.

collette
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Dutch border check

THE Netherlands will introduce temporary border checks along its land borders with Belgium and Germany from 09 Dec.

The six-month initiative is being introduced to address irregular migration, and to tackle human trafficking, the government said.



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Air India signs with CVFR

EXCLUSIVE

AIRLINE Rep Services has been appointed to handle General Sales Agent (GSA) duties in New Zealand and Fiji for Air India, the company revealed to **TD** today.

Under its new duties, Airline Rep Services will work closely with the Australian Air India team to handle reservations and ticketing, sales support, ensuring streamlined service delivery to agents and support marketing for Air India in both countries.

The Star Alliance member carrier does not currently fly to either New Zealand or Fiji, with outbound services to be handled by Air New Zealand, Singapore Airlines or other partner carriers.

However, the GSA partnership will aim to strengthen passenger traffic to feed into Air India's regional network, which includes flights to Sydney and Melbourne.

Air India flies 17 times weekly between Australia and New Delhi



and more than 60 times weekly into Singapore.

CVFR Travel Group CEO Ram Chhabra said he is truly honoured to represent Air India.

"As someone with Indian heritage, this appointment holds a special significance for me, and I am proud that Airline Rep Services will contribute to strengthening ties between these markets and India," Chhabra said.

The head of Airline Rep Services in ANZ and the South West Pacific, Gabrielle Vicari, said the GSA business continues to strengthen its presence across the region, and she is delighted to partner with Air India.

Airline Rep Services will also work closely with Singapore Airlines, which has a 26% share in Air India. *ML*

Anaheim packages

DISCOVER Anaheim's magic with seven days of world-class theme parks, shopping, and sports, with a new package from Infinity Holidays.

Travel advisors can also win a stash of Californian wines - see **page 10** for more info.

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EY expands by 10

TEN new cities have been added by Etihad Airways to its global network, the most the airline has ever added in a single day.

Beginning at various stages in 2025, the Abu Dhabi-based carrier will launch flights to Algiers, Atlanta, Chiang Mai, Hanoi, Krabi, Phnom Penh, Taipei and Tunis, with the expanded network set to deliver a sizeable tourism boost to the UAE.

The new destinations are in addition to previously announced hubs in Prague, Warsaw and El Alamein, which will also join the network in 2025.

Etihad CEO Antonioaldo Neves said the expansion reflects the airline's commitment to listening to its valued guests, with the cities embodying the experiences that matter to them.

BA's new first class hot seat



BRITISH Airways is taking luxury to new heights, unveiling its brand-new first class seat.

The new product is designed to be "reflective of modern British luxury travel", and is modelled after a premium hotel feel.

New features include a wider and longer seat, a 32-inch television, buddy dining, a personal luggage space, and a fully rectangular bed.

Other features include a multi-purpose ottoman, a stowable table, adjustable mood lighting, and more.

BA worked closely with Collins Aerospace to create the first class seat, following its involvement

in crafting the airline's Club Suite and short-haul aircraft seats earlier this year.

The new cabin forms part of British's A380 retrofit plans, expected to take to the skies in mid-2026.

The airline is now the only European airline to offer first class from London to the US.

British is continuing to invest in its overall customer experience, and has already rolled out more than 120 initiatives as part of its £7 billion transformation (TD 06 Mar), which includes the new short-haul seats, free wi-fi messaging, and refreshed lounges across its global network. MS

DRW price gouging

QANTAS and Virgin Australia have defended expensive airfares to and from Darwin, blaming the high prices on airport management amid plans for fees to climb even higher.

According to ABC News, Virgin Australia said plans by Darwin's Airport Development Group (ADG), which runs DRW, to potentially double its existing fees will push airfares even higher.

NT Chief Minister Lia Finocchiaro said her government will be sitting down with both Qantas and Virgin Australia to outline availability and airfares requirements, and that she is open to the idea of allowing foreign airlines to operate domestic services to Darwin as a measure of boosting competition and lowering airfares.

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Airlines behind time

LAST month's on-time arrival and departure figures were lower than the long-term average, according to the Bureau of Infrastructure & Transport Research Economics (BITRE).

Australia's airlines averaged 74.5% for on-time arrivals and 74.9% for on-time departures, against the long-term average of 80.8% and 81.9% respectively.

The Qantas Group (including Qantas Airways and QantasLink) recorded 75.4% on-time departures, beating out Virgin Australia's 71%.

Skytrans and Hinterland topped the minnow carriers, departing on time at 95.4%, while the two arrived on time at 95.5% and 93.2% of the time respectively.

The rate of cancellations was a brighter note for the sector, which at 1.8% was lower than the long-term average of 2.2%.

Port Lincoln-Adelaide had the highest percentage of on-time arrivals for the month, at 86.9%.

US partnerships are key

EXCLUSIVE

NEW recruits in the United States will strengthen Intrepid's partnerships and expand its reach in North America as the operator continues a major push in the major travel market.

Speaking with **TD** less than a week after bolstering boots on the ground in the US office (**TD** 20 Nov), Intrepid's President of the Americas, Leigh Barnes, said the hires will help the brand develop more experiences in the region - particularly in Central America.

"We're building a solid network to connect with travel advisors who share our commitment to responsible travel and create more opportunities for impactful experiences," Barnes said.

The newly appointed head of the region added there was clearly a gap in the market for Intrepid's unique approach to responsible travel.

"There has never been a greater

need to [open the hearts of travellers], and by focusing our strategy on growing our North American market, we're making small group adventure travel... more accessible for US travellers."

Reflecting on how Intrepid's US expansion may present benefits to the Aussie sector, Barnes argued the growth would ultimately raise the profile of Australia on the globe stage.

"As we grow globally, it brings greater exposure for Australian travel experiences, bringing more international travellers to our unique culture and stunning landscapes," he said.

"It also gives us the ability to reinvest in Australia, which means more opportunities for local tourism, and a chance to showcase our incredible culture and landscapes to the world."

The US is already Intrepid's fastest-growing region globally, driven by purpose-driven travel.



Window Seat

A KOREAN man has been arrested at Lima Airport with almost 500 insects strapped to his body.

Authorities found two belts tied to the man, holding plastic containers and Ziploc bags with more than 300 tarantulas, over 100 centipedes, and nine bullet ants, according to Peru's wildlife service, SERFOR.

They are believed to have been taken from the Amazon in Peru's Madre de Dios region, SERFOR believes.

Peruvian fauna can reach a high price on the black market.



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NDC adoption sluggish

AUSTRALIA is performing ahead of the global game on IATA's New Distribution Capability (NDC), with the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) prepared to share learnings on this success with peers overseas.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, ATIA boss Dean Long said there are only around 20 airlines within IATA that are in advanced stages with NDC, with major carriers in Australia leading the pack, largely driven by significant investment in technology.

Describing IATA as "the greatest opportunity and the greatest challenge the industry faces", Long said mastering NDC is a challenge for airlines and agents.

"Some airlines are doing NDC really well and have got a very good relationship with the agency community, and some aren't doing it as well," Long said.

"If you look through Africa, for example, NDC really doesn't

have any prevalence at all, and if you look [at] European carriers, [there's] a limited NDC take-up.

"But if you look at Germany, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and some flag carriers in Asia, it is really part of the road map that they've got," Long said.

"There are 146 carriers in Australia that agents can sell [and] we want to make sure it's a balanced approach across those 146 so we can continue to offer the best value to the customer."

Dealings with IATA are coming at an international level, with ATIA contributing to the discourse through Long's involvement as Co-Vice Chair (**TD 22 Nov**) on the Executive Committee of the World Travel Agents Associations Alliance (WTAAA).

"It's really important that where we can, we bring global support into national issues that have massive flow-on implications." *ML*

ATIA UPDATE

from Richard Taylor, Director of Membership and Industry Affairs



MY LAST

appearance in this column for 2024 has been brought forward by a week.

I've traded places with Ingrid Fraser, who is busily working on a submission

in relation to the Reserve Bank of Australia's review of merchants' card payment costs and surcharging, to protect the travel industry's interests.

We had a discussion about it, and after four seconds came to the conclusion that this is quite important work and that I could help out by trading places.

So please accept a slightly premature Nov offering of good wishes for Christmas and the New Year from me.

Last year I made the error of assuming that everybody took at least a few days off to unwind over the festive season, until I was corrected by an overflowing mailbag with the message that people can barely spare a moment to pull a cracker before getting back to the bookings.

We've got the pedal down here as

well, after Beyond Borders and the NTIAs, Dean Long was immediately on a plane to Greece for a World Travel Agents Associations Alliance gathering, returning home for 24 hours before heading to Vietnam for CT Partners' annual conference.

We also attended conferences for Travellers' Choice and ATAC, and a Club Med gathering of home-agents in Bali.

My napkin-based calculations suggest that across our team, we've engaged with 2,500 people over the last 30 days.

One topic that keeps coming up is the excitement around ATIA playing its part in helping to attract new faces via our Gap Year and Travel Kickstart programs that will come to life in 2025.

The repeated question I've received is: 'how can I get involved?'

One of my particular interests is attempting to demonstrate to a newcomer the sheer amount of careers-within-a-career that exist within travel.

Talk to pretty much anybody that's been in the industry for a while and they'll tell you about a career journey that's nearly always unique.

In 2025 we must get the message across to people that, once in, the possibilities are almost limitless.

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A networking event for the ages

LINK Travel Group member agencies last weekend enjoyed a convivial and informative networking weekend at the award-winning Reef House in Palm Cove in Qld. The food and drink flowed constantly throughout the two days, which also included the opportunity for Link members to share ideas and review Link's financial performance of FY24. Members learned more about initiatives being launched in the coming weeks and

months, such as a new Link intranet dubbed the 'Linktranet', and a new TIME Mentor Scholarship program.

Every meal was an elaborate celebration, selectively sponsored by The Reef House, AMA Waterways and Viking.

In show of a deep partnership, the Viking team presented every Link attendee with a complimentary eight-night river or ocean cruise for two anywhere in the world.

"When you plan events such as this you always look to raise the bar, we have successfully done that this year and I take great delight in some of the newer members commenting on how they appreciate such open and transparent access to the groups performance," GM Scott Darlow enthused.



LINK Board & Management with Steve Richards from AMA Waterways. The board includes Anthony Goldman; Danielle Galloway; Steve Richards; Penny Spencer; Scott Darlow; and David Goldman.



TERREL & Paul Ramsay (from Travel & Sport Australia) head the table at the arrival lunch.



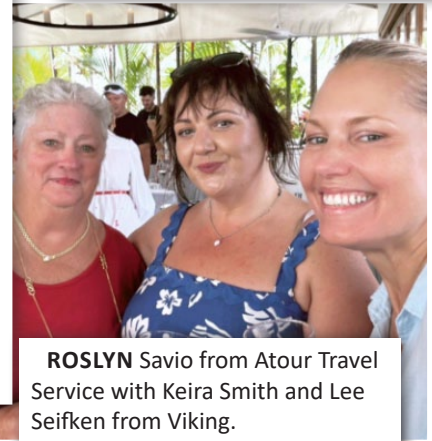
MICHELLE & Karsten Horne, Reho Travel; Krystal Martini, Martini Travel; Mark Trim, Complex Travel Group; and Penny & Edwin Spencer, Spencer Travel.



CAITLIN and Andy Buerckner from Platinum Travel Group enjoying the cocktail-making class.



JENNIFER and Andrew Want from Eden Corporate Travel with Penny Spencer from Spencer Group of Companies



ROSLYN Savio from Atour Travel Service with Keira Smith and Lee Seifken from Viking.



EMMALITA Malmberg, Link Travel Group; Peta Godfrey, Travel Focus Group; Krystal Martini, Martini Travel; and Russell Brown & Fiona Axford, Travel Associates Australia.



THE group embrace the welcome from the traditional custodians of the land.



LEE Seifken and Keira Smith from Viking address delegates.



SHARYN Kitchener from Mosman Travel with Melinda Gregor from Gregor & Lewis Bespoke Travel.



A SMOKEY NEW SOURCE EMERGES FOR SAF GOAL

WHILE smoking on board an aircraft is strictly prohibited, it appears as though tobacco may emerge as an unlikely ally of the aviation industry, according to a new Australian study.

Research conducted by the CSIRO in partnership with agricultural company Nufarm has found modifying the genetic make-up of tobacco plants can increase oil production, the results of which could then be used in the production of sustainable aviation fuel (SAF).

Thomas Vanhercke, a scientist working across the study, told *The Herald Sun* the technology was developed in response to the world's need for production of biofuel, but without impacting important food security.

"We took the genetics for seed



oil production and incorporated them across a range of crops with promising success," he said.

While the prospect of converting tobacco oil into green energy for commercial aircraft is a promising development, Australia is yet to produce any SAF locally, considered one of the industry's best chances of achieving net zero emissions by 2050.

Recent data from the International Air Transport

Association shows that while global SAF production by the end of this year will triple the volume produced in 2023, the amount available to airlines accounts for a miniscule 0.53% of the total fuel need by aviation in 2024.

While visiting Australia in Sep for CAPA's annual leadership summit, Airbus Chief Representative in Australia and New Zealand, Stephen Forshaw, declared Australia could be a

SAF "superpower" if it took local production more seriously.

"The question is 'do we want to do this or not?', because if we don't, by 2040 the aviation sector will be the second-largest contributor to Australia's greenhouse gas emissions," Forshaw said at the event.

"If we're prepared to do this, we can be a SAF superpower."

While much of the talk in the aviation sector around Virgin Australia and Qatar Airways has been a proposed minority stake purchase, the two carriers are also working on projects that promote an uptick in SAF use.

The opportunities will be explored in the areas of waste and energy management, sustainable procurement, and workforce development. *AB*

Sofitel certified

SOFITEL Singapore Sentosa Resort & Spa has attained Green Globe Certification, a mark recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

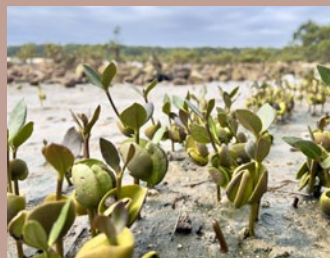
Key initiatives which led to the certification include the elimination of guest-related single-use plastics, water-efficient fittings, LED lighting in guest rooms, improved separation of trash and recycling and a number of local culture, diversity and internal HR criteria.

WTTC flags urgent marine investment

COASTAL and marine tourism will require investments of at least \$30 billion and as much as \$65 billion annually to achieve direct emission reductions, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) has warned.

In a warning to world leaders during World Ocean Day at COP29 in Baku last week, WTTC said the economic value of coastal and marine tourism underscores the need for action and resilience building.

According to the WTTC, coastal and marine tourism generated



US\$1.5 trillion and supported 52 million jobs globally in 2023.

"Protecting our coast and marine life isn't just an environmental necessity; it's a social imperative," said WTTC President Julia Simpson.

Eurail savings

TRAVEL advisors can pass on a 25% saving on selected Eurail Global and one-country passes as part of a new green 'Get Inspired' campaign from Rail Europe.

The discount is available for both first and second class and covers a range of Eurail passes if booked by 17 Dec.

The promotion aims to encourage conscious travel by train along with visiting lesser-known destinations and travelling in off-season with an extended sale period.



It's not just the views that are spectacular with Hurtigruten's Black Friday Sale. Get up to 50% off Hurtigruten cruises along Norway's famously picturesque coastline when you book before December 2, 2024 and you could witness the Northern Lights or the awe-inspiring Midnight Sun at a price that's just as amazing as the locals would say... 'Spektakulært'.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.647

THE upward trend of the AUD/USD is likely to continue throughout the week, amid an improved risk environment.

Analysts believe the Australian dollar has room to recover some of its losses from previous weeks, particularly as the US dollar weakens.

The upbeat projection comes despite the AUD softening overnight, as the markets await key local inflation data.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.647
UK	£0.516
NZ	\$1.113
Euro	€0.618
Japan	¥99.80
Thailand	฿22.46
China	¥4.683
South Africa	11.67
Canada	\$0.910
Crude oil	US\$73.00

Egyptian disaster

MORE than a dozen tourists are missing after a yacht carrying almost 50 people sank in the Red Sea off Egypt's coast yesterday.

Sixteen people, including 12 foreign nationals, are yet to be recovered, with preliminary reports suggesting a sudden, large wave struck the vessel.

Twenty-eight passengers were rescued in the incident, as the yacht sailed from Porto Ghalib to Hurghada Marina on a five-day-long cruise.

Thai sustainability on show



THE future of Thailand's sustainable tourism was on the agenda last week at a Sydney event hosted by the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), featuring conversations with industry professionals.

John Roberts, Director of Elephants and Conservation at the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation, discussed with ATIA's Richard Taylor his projects across Thailand and shared his insights into working with the animals.

Then, a panel of representatives chatted about the country's sustainable tourism and conservation initiatives.

The speakers included Trevor May, Cluster General Manager, Phuket Marriott Resort & Spa, Merlin Beach; Graeme Lunn, Director of Sales & Marketing, Le Meridien Phuket Beach Resort; Phornphan Kitsupee, Group Director of Sales; RAKxa Integrative Wellness; and Sheryl Handjojo, Marketing Manager, Tourism Authority of Thailand.

"There are a lot of

misconceptions [around] how Australians view Thailand, especially in regard to overtourism," said Handjojo.

"At the start, our focus was to increase visitation, regardless of where passengers went.

"Our aim is to promote tourism that is good for locals, and we want to disperse tourism growth to lesser-known destinations."

Solomon Islands

AS THE 2024 Oceania Rugby Sevens Tournament kicks off next month, Solomon Islands is preparing for more than 500 guests to arrive on its shores.

According to Tourism Solomons acting CEO, Dagnal Dereveke, it is "a huge opportunity" for the islands to showcase itself as a destination for sports tourism, following the 2023 Pacific Games.

"We have proven our ability to host major events and the economic impact for our tourism sector is evident, with many of those attending staying to explore our islands," he said.

Club Med record

ALL-INCLUSIVE holiday brand Club Med has recorded its most successful opening for a summer season to date, seeing a 210% increase in summer '25 bookings compared to the previous season.

The announcement comes as Club Med draws to a close its Endless Summer Sale 2025 with agents having just one week left to secure up to 30% off for their clients on Asia sun resorts.

Michelle Davies, General Manager for Club Med Pacific said, "We are thrilled to have recorded our most successful sales opening to date for our summer 2025 season.

"Following a shift to a 100% upscale strategy in April of this year, the demand reinforces Aussies' desire for an elevated travel experience."

She pointed to Bali being amongst the most popular resorts, especially for multi-generational and family bookings.

IATA slaps Spain call

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has condemned a decision by the Spanish Government to scrap cabin baggage fees for passengers and impose fines on airlines who attempt to charge.

The aviation body claims the policy undermines the freedom of pricing which is fundamental to consumer choice & competition.

"This is an appalling decision, far from protecting the consumer interest, this is a slap in the face of travellers who want choice.

Prohibiting all airlines from charging for cabin bags means that the cost will be automatically priced into all tickets," IATA said.

The SilverSea logo features a stylized 'S' icon to the left of the brand name 'SILVERSEA' in a serif font, with a registered trademark symbol.

BLACK FRIDAY OFFER

SALE
AWAY
SAVE UP TO
\$10,000



Our most generous offer ever invites your clients to **save up to \$10,000 per suite** on more than 550 Ocean and Expedition voyages when booking with our all-inclusive fares. From the medieval cities and sapphire waters of the Mediterranean to the legendary white landscape Antarctica, we invite your clients to discover the world's authentic beauty in ultra-luxury splendour. Silversea's small all-suite ships are designed for those who delight in discovery and indulge in luxury. To take advantage of this limited-time offer, **book your client's suite by 2 December 2024.**

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TERMS & CONDITIONS: Black Friday Offer valid on new, individual bookings made between November 11, 2024 and December 2, 2024 on select voyages. Offer valid on select voyages and applicable to guests 1 and 2 in suite. Guests booking with this offer will receive savings AUD 2,500 per person or AUD 5,000 per person, on select cruises. Offer valid on Door-to-Door and Port-to-Port fares. Offer valid on all suite categories. Offer combinable with Promotional Groups, Venetian Society Savings, Event Certificates, National Account Amenities, Referral Savings, Onboard Savings, Combination Savings, pre/post land programs. Not combinable with Kids Savings. Offer not combinable with any other public or close user group promotion. The promotion is capacity controlled and can be removed at any time without prior notice. Single supplements apply and vary by voyage. Cancel and re-books do not qualify. Other restrictions may apply. See silversea.com for full details.

7 Days in Anaheim

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6 Nights

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5 Nights

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