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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features five pages of the latest news including our **Corporate Update** and a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

## QR flies to Canada

**QATAR** Airways has expanded its services to Canada with the launch of flights to Toronto.

Three weekly direct flights will start on 11 Dec, marking the Qatari flag carrier's 14th gateway to the Americas.

## Time to go to SFO

**MAKE** your San Francisco stopover a stayover with Infinity Holidays and United Airlines.

For full details, head to **page six** of today's *Travel Daily*.

# Exoticca debuts in Oz

**AGENTS** can now arrange highly flexible, customised multi-day itineraries in 50-plus destinations through Spanish touring firm Exoticca, which is in the early stages of its Australian launch.

Spearheaded by well-known travel industry veteran Dennis Basham (**pictured**), Exoticca has applied for its ATAS accreditation and is now operating in Australia.

Exoticca itineraries feature small-group tours led by exclusive DMCs in the morning followed by free leisure time in the afternoon.

Backed by a user-friendly online booking tool, agents can cherry-pick from pre-prepared tours and supplement with private touring to create a hybrid itinerary.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, Basham said in the lead-up to expanding to Australia, it was important to find the right person to lead on the ground.

"I think they were looking for someone in Australia with both a touring background, and because Exoticca have the unique selling



point of including flights, they wanted someone with an aviation background as well."

Basham said agents can earn a \$200 Amazon gift card as a welcome gift if they complete a 30-min onboarding session and make their first booking. *ML*

## CT pushes on NDC

**CT PARTNERS** will provide its members with dedicated resources, insights and training around NDC capabilities in partnership with industry players.

The company's NDC Focus Month kicks off in under two weeks time, and will include input from Singapore Airlines, Qantas, United Airlines, Lufthansa Group and Air Canada in assisting members to enhance NDC usage and drive booking efficiency.

CT Partners has enjoyed strong growth in its year-to-date adoption of NDC bookings with Singapore Airlines, and is now looking to capitalise on industry evolution by integrating new tech to provide better outcomes for clients, such as competitive fares.

"By partnering with leading airlines and technology providers, we're ensuring that our members stay ahead of the curve in this rapidly evolving space," CEO Matt Masson (**pictured**) said.



## Bonza owes \$170m

**A NEW** report from Bonza liquidators Hall Chadwick shows the collapsed carrier owes more than previously estimated.

Bonza's liabilities sheet revealed it has creditors left out of pocket to the tune of close to \$170 million, almost \$40 million more than Hall Chadwick previously suggested in Jul (*TD* 02 Jul).

Of particular concern to customers awaiting refunds, liquidators have only been able to recover \$556,000 from Bonza's bank accounts, making it unlikely the business will be able to pay back the lion's share of debts still outstanding to creditors.

In Jun, Hall Chadwick concluded the directors of Bonza should have appointed an external administrator "much earlier" than 30 Apr, with Bonza likely to have been insolvent at least two months prior (*TD* 28 Jun).

## We will return on Tue

**THERE** will be no edition of *Travel Daily* on Mon as we observe the Labour Day public holiday in NSW.

But never fear, *TD* will return on Tue to deliver you all the latest news in travel and tourism.

## People's Choice in

**ATIA** has released the finalists for the 2024 National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) popular People's Choice Award, presented by Newscorp's Escape.

The finalist are: Contiki; Flight Centre North Lakes; JC Travel Team; Royal Caribbean; and Taking Off Tours.

These brands must be retail or online travel agencies, and tour operators that are ATAS accredited, or cruise lines.

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## Clear sky for Air Vanuatu

**CONTROL** of Air Vanuatu will return to management after the Supreme Court of Vanuatu approved a restructure plan put forward by airline administrators (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

Under a Deed of Compromise, the airline will return to public hands, with all shares transferred to government-owned vehicle AV3 Ltd, nullifying the liquidation imposed in May (**TD** 10 May).

Administrator Ernst & Young (EY) Australia said the execution of the deed was a positive outcome for the airline and its creditors.

"We're very pleased the Supreme Court of Vanuatu ratified the Deed of Compromise," said EY Partner in Strategy & Transactions, Morgan Kelly.

"The implementation of the

Deed of Compromise maximises the return to creditors and presents an opportunity for the Air Vanuatu business to continue, saving jobs and providing vital aviation services for Vanuatu."

The Deed of Compromise terms include a restructured workforce and recapitalisation for the airline under its new government vehicle.

No date has been set for Air Vanuatu to return to the sky; the carrier will resume initially with domestic services but says it may consider international routes in the future.

At the height of its financial peril, EY Australia said the airline owed more than \$110 million to its creditors and did not have the assets to service the debt. **ML**

## Qantas updates menu

**MORE** than 70 new items featuring local produce and more sustainable packaging will be added to inflight menus on Qantas' domestic Boeing 737 and Airbus A330 flights.

New items include dreamtime tuka macadamia granola slice or focaccia with chorizo, pesto and meredith dairy goats cheese.

Business class travellers will be able to enjoy snacks and meals including smoked salmon bagel with cream cheese or miso-glazed chicken breast salad with brown rice, sweet potato, and green beans, with a dark chocolate sour cherry fondant cake for dessert.

Vegetarian options have also been expanded, with new items including cottage cheese and spinach samosas along with triple chocolate brownie cookie.

Items will be spread across six mealtimes based on a flight's departure time - breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner and supper.

"Customer feedback drives continuous menu refinement, elevating our in-flight dining," said Qantas Executive Manager of Product and Service, Phil Capps.

*The Chat*

with Jenny



Travel Daily  
A conversation with Kylee Kay

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## School in session for Virtuoso



**A HOST** of Canadian suppliers recently welcomed a group of Virtuoso agents from Australia and New Zealand for its first study tour of the region.

Hosted by Destination Canada, Tourism Vancouver, Tourism Whistler and Northwest Territories Tourism, the group explored remote parts of Canada, with a stay at Blachford Lodge in the Northwest Territories.

Activities included a 4x4 glacier viewing safari, a photography tour to locate bears, ziplining, seaplane flights and a visit to Grouse Mountain, each night with Michelin-starred dining. **ML**

**Pictured** above basking after taking a scenic helicopter jaunt is Jade, Tourism Whistler; Marcela Hrnecir, Wentworth Travel; Michelle Hanson, Aurora Travel;

Katie Bramley, Enhance Travel; Kathy Thomaidis, MTA Travel; Jessica, Tourism Whistler; Deb Clarke, MTA Travel; Michele Duncan, Virtuoso; Sarah Manche, MTA Travel and Deb Oliver, Frontier Travel.

## WWT into Namibia

**ALL-INCLUSIVE** tour operator Wendy Wu Tours has launched a new 12-day adventure to the southern African country of Namibia, featuring a plethora of wildlife and immersive culture.

Highlights include a safari in the Etosha National Park, where visitors can encounter more than 140 different species along with elephants, lions and rhinos.

The itinerary also includes a Himba Village Tour and a cruise on Walvis Bay in search of the 'Big five' marine animals of whales, dolphins, sunfish, leatherback turtles and seals.

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## Window Seat

**WHAT** is the best way to tackle anxiety over wearing a bikini at a public beach?

Well, for one Dubai couple, the answer was to purchase an entire holiday island.

Dubai businessman Jamal Al Nadak bought the private oasis at an undisclosed location in Asia for \$50 million, just so his wife Soudi Al Nadak could feel safe in a bikini while lying on the beach.

Al Nadak, who is also a social media influencer, shared the news in a viral Instagram video captioned, "POV: You wanted to wear a bikini so your millionaire husband bought you an island".

However, acquiring a tropical holiday paradise is not the first big buy announced on Instagram by the couple, with a previous post revelling in the purchase of a US\$1 million diamond ring and the investment in a \$2 million in artwork in a single day.

## Wellness in Tuscany

**RAKXA** Integrative Wellness has launched a series of seasonal wellness retreats at the Castelfalfi resort in Tuscany.

The year-round retreats kicked off this week, with guests able to choose from one-, two- and four-day packages encompassing nutrition, exercise, stress management, rest, and restorative treatment.

Highlights include nature hikes, truffle hunting, and wine or olive oil tastings, depending on the season, while guests will also have access to wellness welcome amenities, such as essential oils.

Find out more **HERE**.



## NSW tip-top for road trips

**NSW** is the country's hottest destination for road trips, according to new data from Tourism Research Australia.

The state pulled in 3.4 million domestic overnight road trip visitors in 2023, up 2.8% on the prior year, with these travellers racking up 18 million nights and spending \$4.9 billion.

Research by BDA Marketing Planning commissioned by Destination NSW shows road trips are one of the biggest drawcards for almost a third (30%) of interstate visitors when planning a holiday in NSW.

With the goal of encouraging even more road-tripping to the state, with a particular focus on sustainability, Destination NSW leaders headed to the Central Coast and the Hunter region this week to engage with local visitor economy stakeholders and learn



more about sustainable regional visitor experiences.

Making the trip in an electric vehicle, the delegation - which included Destination NSW CEO Steve Cox - visited Broken Bay Pearl Farm, which offers a unique sustainable tourism experience on the Hawkesbury river.

He commented, "I travel to regional NSW as often as I can to engage with visitor economy stakeholders", adding that "it provides an invaluable opportunity to hear directly from operators and better understand their challenges and opportunities".

He pointed out that more visitors are opting to explore NSW via EV, with the battery-operated vehicles to account for more than half of new car sales within the state by 2030-31.

"Visitor economy businesses that have EV chargers available have the opportunity to attract EV drivers who want to travel more sustainably," Cox said. *JM*

## Surprises in Qatar

**VISIT** Qatar has launched its latest tourism campaign aimed at raising the Gulf nation's profile and changing the perception of the country as just a transit city.

Targeting families, couples and groups, the 'Surprise Yourself' campaign showcases Qatar's diverse and meaningful attractions and experiences and serves as a step towards Qatar welcoming six million visitors annually by 2030.

Local highlights featured in the creative include the tropical Banana Island, the activity of Souq Waqif to high-energy activities including dune bashing, and more relaxing adventures such as day spas and nature.

Visit Qatar CEO Abdulaziz Ali Al Mawlawi said Qatar is "an ideal choice for visitors seeking a stopover destination or a safe, family-friendly holiday".

The campaign will be introduced in 10 international markets via television, social media, outdoor advertising and digital channels.



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## Egypt not impacted

**AUSSIE** tourists continue to flock to Egypt despite its proximity to escalating hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah.

While Smartraveller's latest travel advisory warned of the possibility of increased tensions across the Middle East, the official alert level for Egypt was recently lowered (**TD 04 Sep**) to 'reconsider your need to travel' or step two of its four-step ladder.

Bunnik Tours told **Travel Daily** that while conventional wisdom would be to move away from a potential warzone, demand for Egypt since the warning was lowered has been very strong.

All tours in Egypt are operating as normal, helped by strong security, with the company saying travellers are frequently remarking how safe they feel.

While tours are visiting places far removed from the conflict, tour directors are remaining vigilant and are trained to handle any crisis if one occurred.



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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Resist fragmentation: report

A **WHITE** Paper jointly commissioned by the the Association of Travel Management Companies (ATMC) has been released this week, making several recommendations to combat rising fragmentation in the corporate travel sector.

At the forefront of the report's commissioning was to address



content fragmentation brought on by an increasing number of direct booking strategies in the market, which, according to the ATMC, has served to complicate travel management processes and reduce oversight.

The white paper concluded that for corporate travel to operate optimally for buyers, HR directors, procurement, finance directors, and travellers, it is key that TMCs are able to streamline fragmented processes.

"Achieving this requires comprehensive rate parity and complete access to content," the report noted.

The recommendations included:

1. TMCs to develop systems that integrate more personalisation integration.
2. Establish robust risk management frameworks.
3. Focus on transparency in service provision.
4. Innovate in automation and data analytics.
5. Foster closer relationships with suppliers and technology providers.
6. Ensure travel practices align with broader corporate sustainability policies.

The report also noted that over the years, travel distribution behaviours have morphed to focus on end travellers as opposed to supporting retailers, portraying an undervalued appreciation in the level of effort from TMCs.

Global business travel industry spending is expected to hit a record \$1.48 trillion by the end of 2024, fuelled by economic stability, pent-up demand and recovery momentum.

That trajectory is anticipated to accelerate, with the value to surpass \$2 trillion by 2028. *AB*

### Footy kicks bleisure

**CORPORATE** Traveller, the SME division of Flight Centre Travel Group, has reported a surge in corporate 'bleisure' travel to Sydney around the 2024 NRL Grand Final.

The data showed that 68% of corporate bookings for the event are mixing business and leisure, with trips lasting over two days.

Trips of two to three days are the most popular, making up 33% of bookings, while four- to five-day trips account for 10%.

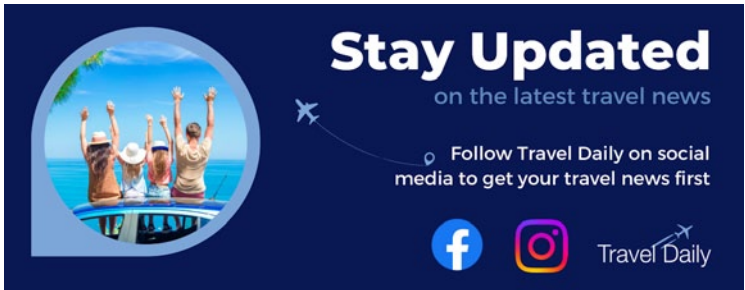
Notably, trips of seven days have increased by 38% year-over-year, rising from 13% in 2023 to 18% in 2024.

Corporate Traveller's Global Managing Director, Tom Walley, said this trend highlights the appeal of combining business with major events like the NRL Grand Final.

"The continued high proportion of bleisure bookings to Sydney for the NRL Grand Final indicates that more corporates are combining business with leisure to experience the excitement firsthand, and is a positive sign for the industry," Walley said.

He noted that Sydney's appeal as a bleisure destination benefits both the tourism sector and local businesses.








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### Maiden airport hotel for CNS



**SERVICED** apartments will be introduced as the first short-term accommodation option open at Cairns Airport as part of a new \$60 million development aimed at corporate travellers.

Tropical Airport Accommodation is a subsidiary of Cairns-based B-Corp social enterprise MiHaven, which will open a new SkyHaven-branded serviced apartments complex over a three-stage construction project in the Cairns Airport Business Precinct.

After an 18-month planning phase, construction on stages one and two is scheduled to commence later this year, with a grand opening flagged for late 2026 or early 2027.

The project is aimed at addressing a limited supply of new hotels being developed to support new investment in the region, including a \$270 million upgrade to the Cairns Convention Centre.

Skyhaven Serviced Apartments (**pictured**) will comprise 183 premium units, with guest offerings including a fitness centre, cafe, swimming pools and meeting facilities, all within easy access to the airport.

A 50-year lease for the site has been signed, with the project aimed at addressing a shortage of lodging at the airport itself.

The third stage, to follow after the opening of SkyHaven, will be a 200-bed lodging offering to

house students from Central Qld University's airport-based pilot school and Aviation Australia's engineering campus. *ML*

### Crystalbrook takes government eco loan

**CRYSTALBROOK** Collection claims to be the first known hotel brand in the country to secure a sustainability-linked loan, demonstrating its commitment to sustainability leadership in the hospitality industry.

Sustainability-linked loans tie the borrower's cost of debt directly to their sustainability performance, with the goal of incentivising and supporting companies to achieve slated environmental or social targets.

Geoff York, CEO of Crystalbrook Collection, said the loan, which is supported by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, "not only provides us with the financial flexibility to further our sustainability initiatives, but also validates our efforts to date".

Crystalbrook's targets are focused on minimising water usage and waste, reducing carbon emissions, and enhancing energy efficiency across its properties.





## SPECIALS

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**Riviera Travel Cruises** has launched its biggest-ever campaign to support and thank the trade during Cruise Month. The triple-stacked offer includes savings of up to \$3,000 off the next river cruise departing in 2024 or 2025; a \$50 gift card for bookings made in Oct; and a free sailing for agents who sell three river cruises before 31 Oct. The brand also has a sell-seven-get-one-free offer for group bookings - call 1300 857 437.

It has never been easier or cheaper for Aussie travellers to explore New Zealand's North Island, thanks to a new '2 Easy' deal from **Tataki Auckland Unlimited, RotoruaNZ, and Auckland Airport**. Running until 29 Nov, the campaign includes incentive accommodation and activity deals with more than 80 tourism operators, including Qantas and ANZCRO, for travellers who book a minimum two nights in Auckland and two nights in Rotorua to explore both destinations between 30 Sep-15 Dec 2024 and 01 Feb - 30 May 2025. Find out more [HERE](#).

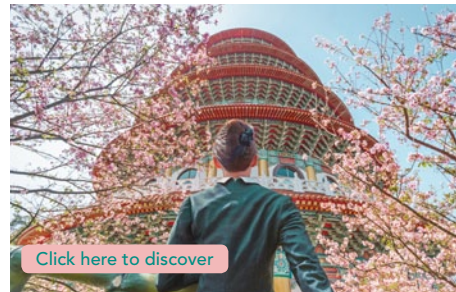
Travellers can save up to \$5,200 per couple on **APT's** 15-day 'Kimberley Complete' tour, which includes a helicopter flight over Mitchell Falls, witnessing the beehive-like domes of the Bungle Bungle Range, a chance to relax in El Questro's Zebedee Springs, and a stay at APT's exclusive wilderness lodges. The offer is valid until sold out - call APT on 1300 278 278 or check out the itinerary [HERE](#).

**La Collection** has partnered with **Grecotel** to launch two offers ideal for travellers who are spending time in Athens before or after a cruise. Agents can earn an extra 15% commission when booking The Roc Club ([HERE](#)), a brand-new resort in the heart of the Athens Riviera, or Cape Sound ([HERE](#)), which has undergone a property-wide transformation. The deal for both stays includes two sunset cocktails with canape bites, a 30-minute massage per adult per stay, and round-trip transportation.

In celebration of its 10th anniversary, **Klook** has announced its biggest travel sale of the decade. Until 31 Oct, holidaymakers can take advantage of up to 50% off on tours, activities, and accommodation across Japan, Singapore, Bali and more. Klook is also offering a free eSIM for Klook Members including 3GB of data with seamless in-app activation for coverage in over 200 destinations - more [HERE](#).

Australians can save \$250 per person off selected 2025 departures to the UK and Europe thanks to a new promotion from Back-Roads Touring. The offer is valid for bookings made until 13 Nov, excluding May and Sep departures. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

**Virgin Voyages** is offering 70% off the second guest on all cruises including brand-new itineraries. Additionally, cruisers who pay in full at the time of booking can get up to \$760 off for the rate of any voyage that sails in either 2025 or 2026. Travel agents will need to get their skates on to take advantage of the offer though, as the promotion is available to book until 11 Oct. To find out further about the 'disrupter' cruise line's latest deals, see [HERE](#).



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## Moreton Bay visitation revs up



**QUEENSLAND'S** Moreton Bay region is expecting an influx of visitors this month for the Australian Supercross Championship, which returns to the state after five years.

After the first day sold out, the season opener - originally scheduled as a one-day event - will now take place over two days from 12-13 Oct at Kayo Stadium in Redcliffe.

Timed after the spring school holidays, Queensland supercross fans are expected to descend on Redcliffe and surrounding beachside destinations including Scarborough, Clontarf and nearby Bribie Island.

"Our message to Supercross fans looking to be part of the first Queensland Supercross event in half a decade is - get in quick to secure tickets for the Sunday if you haven't already done so," said Tash Wheeler, CEO of Visit Moreton Bay.

"If you are heading to the region for the event, or you missed out on tickets but still love adventure,

we encourage you to explore beyond the stadium from our hinterland to coast."

"There are plenty of activities for families and adventure seekers, such as 4WD adventure tours, whale watching, winery tours, fishing, dolphin and dugong experiences and scenic helicopter flights," added Wheeler. *JM*

## WSI to boost cargo

**QANTAS** Group has become the first freight airline to sign for the 24-hour cargo precinct at Western Sydney International Airport (WSI), which is expected to boost Sydney's air cargo capacity by around 33%.

Menzies Aviation has also committed to operating at the precinct, which will enable direct connectivity between freighters, the terminal, and road transport.

Currently under construction and on track to begin operations in 2026, the new hub will be capable of servicing eight wide-body aircraft at any one time.

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