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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features nine pages of news including our **Luxury page**, a photo page from **Rail Europe** plus a full page from **Infinity Holidays Visit California**.

Emirates ADL boost

DAILY Emirates flights between Adelaide and Dubai have resumed as the carrier prepares to take its Australian schedule to 77 flights weekly.

The increased ADL route is flown by a Boeing 777-200LR offering both business and economy seats.

Emirates' increase is tipped to generate more than \$62 million for the local economy and offer a link for South Australians to connect to more than 140 cities across the EK network.

CTSP criticism welcomed

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has welcomed the recognition by a formal review into Australia's handling of the pandemic to improve the future design of the Consumer Travel Support Program (CTSP).

Taking ATIA's submission into consideration, the *COVID-19 Response Inquiry Report* stated that while the CTSP program was "important and beneficial", it noted that some elements of its design and administration should be reconsidered in a future crisis requiring similar support.

"Stakeholders reiterated the need for greater consultation with industry in the design of support measures, as well as greater understanding within govt of the sector that it is seeking to support," the report stated.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* about the findings, ATIA CEO Dean Long said it was encouraging to see that its submission had been heard.

Time to play in CA

INFINITY Holidays has joined with Visit California to launch a series of ready-to-book itineraries in San Diego, Palm Springs, Lake Tahoe and more - see **page 10**.

Qatar brings up 15

QATAR Airways celebrated 15 years of service to Australia, hosting a gala dinner at the Park Hyatt Melbourne last night.

Key luminaries attending the gala included Ambassador Ali Saad Al-Hajri; Third Secretary of Qatar Embassy in Australia Abdulaziz Al-Nasr; Victoria's Minister for Tourism Steve Dimopoulos; and Speaker of the South Australian House of Assembly Leon Bignell.

The event also showcased Qatar's commemorative 15-year anniversary menu, which features some of Australia's best native flavours and local ingredients, available from now until 15 Dec.

"We're really pleased that the panel has recognised our submission and included it in its entirety - it aligns completely to the vision that we put forward," Long said.

"It was a critical program that supported our industry in our moment of need, but it was made significantly harder by the processes used by the department," he added. **AB**

EnPerSo into leisure

BUSINESS travel brand EnPerSo has diversified its offering into leisure, launching a hybrid model allowing independent consultants to work with the stability and security of a permanent position.

EnPerSo's new leisure division will be built on the back of its flagship business travel arm, backed by its core operational pillars of environmental sustainability, personal wellness and social responsibility.

The leisure branch will be led by Managing Director Ali Greer (pictured below) and Dom Michaels as Head of Sales and Customer Experience.

"We're taking the best bits of the traditional travel agent model and rethinking the rest," Greer said, with member agents able to work where, when and how they choose, filling a gap between the stability of a traditional agency and a desire for freelance work.

ELT is now inviting experienced consultants to join a team to create "exceptional travel experiences for customers while creating a lifestyle they love".



Expedia goes Bing

A NEW strategic partnership between Expedia Group and Microsoft will allow travellers to earn loyalty points on bookings made through the Bing engine.

Users of Bing can earn points on both Microsoft Rewards and Expedia Rewards when booking eligible properties as part of the new alignment.

"Our unique partnership underscores the importance of travel within loyalty programs and its ability to amplify value, variety and member retention," Expedia Group President of Private Label Solutions Alfonso Paredes said.

The collaboration comes on the back of Arrivia's *2024 Travel Outlook Report*, which showed 56% of brands want to introduce new rewards and redemption opportunities for members.

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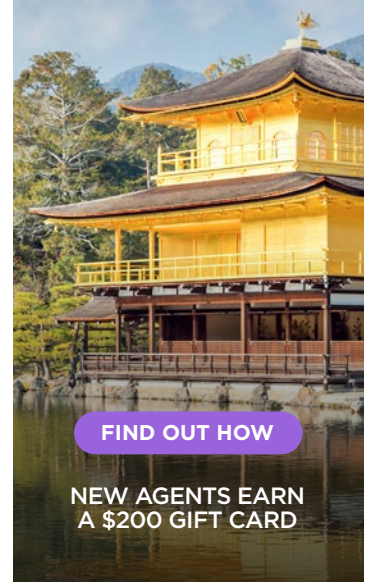
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FCTG ignites cruise growth

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has purchased a privately owned UK company to accelerate its global expansion in the cruise space (**TD** breaking news).

The acquisition of the Manchester-based Cruise Club UK forms part of FCTG's ongoing strategy to capitalise on the global growth in cruise sales, and follows the relaunch of Cruiseabout and wholesaler CruiseHQ (**TD** 24 Aug 2023).

Using the blueprint of its Ignite Travel My Cruises brand, FCTG plans to accelerate its presence in the UK through the Cruise Club UK purchase, with Ignite's founder, Randall Deer, installed as the acquiree's UK MD.

FCTG Global Leisure CEO James Kavanagh said part of the



decision to buy Cruise Club UK was about replicating its success in the Australian market to spearhead overseas expansion.

"As we look to increase cruise sales and expand Ignite's offering internationally, we are excited by the potential in the UK and the parallels with Australia, where the Ignite model and MyCruises have proven so successful," Kavanagh said.

"The UK is a top-three source market for cruise passengers globally and a market that is estimated to be double the size of the Australian market.

"Given Ignite's procurement, packaging and advertising expertise...we're confident we can deliver an innovative and disruptive offering that will quickly prove popular," he added.

FCTG is no stranger to UK acquisitions, buying luxury travel brand Scott Dunn early last year (**TD** 31 Jan 2023).

Cruise Club UK was founded by Paul Edge senior, who is currently the company's major shareholder, and he and his son, Paul Edge, will continue with the business as it is integrated into the Ignite division.

FCTG's Ignite brand has demonstrated strong growth locally in recent years, representing the company's fastest growing brands, generating more than \$500 million in total transaction value (TTV) during the 2024 fiscal year.

Growth in Ignite's TTV has been increasing by roughly 20% year-on-year in Australia, with the business boasting three divisions: MyCruises, My Holiday Centre, and Holiday Exclusives.

The Manchester-based company employs around 35 people and turned over around £20 million in retail cruise sales during FY24. AB

Agents' home away from home



EXCLUSIVE

A NEW "swanky social club" has opened for the travel industry in the heart of The Rocks in Sydney, thanks to the team at Room-Res.

Dubbed 'The Room Residence' and overlooking Sydney Harbour, the area for the travel trade was created for people to work, connect and relax.

The space features lounge areas, several meeting rooms, and a video editing suite.

The Room Residence is open by invitation and to Gold and Platinum members of the platform's loyalty program.

"We think we've created something really valuable for Room-Res agents, and we'll get to hang out with them," said James Mooring, co-founder and joint-CEO of Room-Res.

"The Room Residence [is] our home and you are always welcome," he added.

It's an ideal time for the launch, especially given changing workplace trends since COVID, he pointed out.

The space is perfect for mobile travel agents looking for a change of environment or agents who work from home and wish to meet clients in the city.

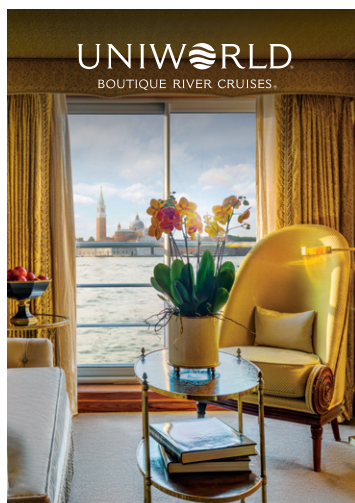
Featuring leather club chairs, parquet flooring and chic soft furnishings, The Room Residence was also inspired by the team's experience in hotels.

"One of the things we wanted to create is a sense of hospitality,"

explained co-founder Nic Bryant.

"We wanted to invite people in and provide a space where people can feel comfortable to meet each other and congregate as an industry," he added.

The space is located at Level 1, 86-88 George St, The Rocks. *JHM*



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Indigenous peak tourism body ticked

A PERMANENT First Nations national tourism peak body will be created to guide the growth of Indigenous tourism, the Federal Government confirmed this morning (**TD** breaking news).

The announcement follows hot on the heels of a Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs report released this month, which called on the government to take more action around accelerating the growth of First Nations tourism in Australia.

Among its suggestions were a new tourism body and advisory panel to liaise with Tourism Australia on marketing strategies.

The new collaboration between the Federal Government and Indigenous stakeholders across the country - the First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership - will provide input into creating a peak First Nations tourism body as a matter of priority.

The partnership will also look



to further support greater participation and economic opportunities for First Nations people and businesses in Australia's tourism industry.

"First Nations tourism provides opportunities to share the world's oldest living culture with travellers from around the world, while empowering First Nations people through employment and business prospects," Minister for Indigenous Australians Malarndirri McCarthy said.

"The First Nations Visitor Economy Partnership will advocate for First Nations tourism businesses to provide unique

experiences for domestic and international visitors, driving more economic activity in the regions and local communities."

First Nations industry representatives helped design the partnership in conjunction with Austrade, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), Tourism Australia, and various state and territory governments.

The initiative has guaranteed funding for at least two years through the National Indigenous Australians Agency's Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

The Federal Government stated the latest move to capitalise on First Nations tourism will help bolster existing programs, such as Tourism Northern Territory's Aboriginal Tourism Development Support Grant Program, which is co-funded by government and aims to develop more Aboriginal cultural tourism experiences and tourism product. *AB*

Pullman's PER home

ACCOR has signed with Perth Airport to operate the gateway's first on-site airport hotel under its Pullman Hotels & Resorts brand.

The new Pullman Perth Airport will feature 240 rooms and suites over eight floors, with guest facilities including a rooftop restaurant and bar, lobby lounge, cafe and fitness centre.

On track to open in 2027, the new hotel forms part of Perth Airport's \$5 billion capital investment program which will also include a new terminal and ground transport infrastructure.

"The new Pullman Perth Airport hotel will be a world-class facility located at the front door to our major terminals," said PER Chief Property Officer, Dan Sweet.

Accor Pacific COO Adrian Williams said he tipped strong demand from leisure and business guests.

Perth Airport flagged its target of developing its first airport hotel last year (**TD** 04 May 2023).

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Experience results

EXPERIENCE Co's underlying 4% earnings growth has been driven by the company's flourishing adventure product.

The tourism firm generated \$30.8 million in sales revenue for the first quarter of the 2025 fiscal year, up from \$29.5 million in the prior quarter - driven by strong trading for Reef Unlimited, compared to the prior corresponding period.

The growth is especially good news in a seasonally "softer trading period", Experience Co noted this week.

The company has also continued its focus on cutting corporate costs, while it has also placed two of its underperforming Skydive Australia sites into "care and maintenance" (TD 05 Aug).

Skydiving is still trading slightly below the PCP, with continued strong performance overseas offset by its Australian business, which was impacted by weather disruptions during the quarter.

Travel duo's new venture

A TRAVEL industry expert and her writer son have launched The Social Spider, a social media and digital marketing agency exclusively for the Australian travel industry.

Sam Patton, who is backed by more than three decades of experience as a travel agent, product manager, marketer and social media professional, and her journalism graduate son, Noah, are now offering services to assist agents and small travel companies with their social media and digital marketing.

Sam Patton explained, "the travel industry has its own unique profile, demands and connections, and we have the seasoned experienced and knowledge in this industry necessary to help travel businesses boost their presence in the digital world".

"The days of a glossy travel brochure as your main selling tool are over and ads in magazines



and newspapers are expensive with a dwindling audience."

The mother-son duo (pictured) believe they have the solution, particularly for smaller operators who struggle with time constraints and are unsure of where to start when it comes to social media and digital marketing.

From social media set up and management to press releases and blogs, The Social Spider can tailor social media and digital solutions campaigns that suit any budget, with packages starting from \$95.

To find out more, call 0438 768 561 or [CLICK HERE](#). JM

VN, EK ink MoU

VIETNAM Airlines and Emirates have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to explore extending its commercial cooperation, which will see the two carriers expand their long-standing interline partnership.

The agreement was sealed on the sidelines of the Vietnam-UAE Business Forum, held at the Hilton Dubai Palm Jumeirah.

Frameworks to be explored as part of the partnership include enhancing connectivity on routes beyond the existing interline, and entering exploratory discussions around potential collaborations across cargo and tech services.

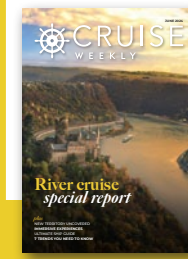
"The cooperation allows us to unleash the combined power of our networks as Vietnam Airlines seeks to leverage our international presence," EK said.



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Window Seat

MANY of ATEC's emerging ELITE leaders largely represent the *Friends* generation, with the 90s sitcom clearly serving as a major reference point for some in their marketing goals.

During a sales campaign presentation for the Never Never Gin Distillery as part of the graduation ceremony, Emma Wilmot from Tourism Central Australia saw the cult show as a point of comparison on why more businesses must invest more in social media.

According to Statista market data, internet users spend 143 minutes per day on social media, which over a year equates to 36 days of scrolling.

"You could binge-watch *Friends* 10 times back-to-back in that same amount of time," Wilmot enthused.

Her data checks out, with 36 days of social media scrolling working out at 52,195 minutes.

Conversely, an average episode of *Friends* runs for 22 minutes, and 236 episodes would take only 5,192 minutes.

Or if you watched them all 10 times as Wilmot suggests, it would run for 51,920 minutes - a clear net gain of 275 minutes and leaving you with a much greater appreciation of Joey, Chandler, Ross, Monica, Phoebe and Rachel.

LH piles on profits

LUFTHANSA Group has reported an operating profit of €1.3 billion for the third quarter, fuelled by a strong northern summer travel season.

The quarter was the strongest in Lufthansa's history from a revenue perspective, with the company raking in €10.7 billion.

Bookings for LH remain high through to the end of the year too, with demand strong for Q4.

Worker incentives needed

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIAN Tourism Export Council (ATEC) Managing Director Peter Shelley is encouraging both businesses and governments to develop incentives to entice workers into the tourism sector.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* at ATEC Meeting Place on the Gold Coast, Shelley praised campaigns run by the Queensland and South Australian governments to help fill high industry vacancies.

"We're at record numbers of working holidaymakers in this country right now, so the supply is coming back," Shelley said.

"It's still a competitive market because there are not enough workers for both skilled and unskilled roles across the country.

"But I would say any state that is looking to attract working holidaymakers, putting incentive programs in place is not a bad idea," Shelley added.

In 2021, then-Queensland Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk launched the 'Work in Paradise' pitch (*TD* 24 May 2021) to lure Australians in other states and territories to relocate to North Queensland and fill a glut of jobs left by working holidaymakers who abruptly returned home during the pandemic.

The \$7.5m program included a \$1,500 relocation incentive to help find new a home, and \$250 in travel vouchers if they secured a job in tourism.

The campaign was quickly put on ice when an outbreak of COVID-19 saw the state close its borders, before being relaunched in 2022 as the recovery began, and again in 2024 under a new tagline of 'Choose Tourism'.

South Australia followed suit in 2022 with the smaller 'Ten Pound Pom' pitch, inviting British and Irish workers to seek tourism jobs in Adelaide and regional areas.

Shelley said with a competitive labour market, workers had choice, meaning businesses need to make their employment



prospect more appealing.

"I think the business market is meeting the employee demand [because] if you're not offering a job that's competitive and attractive in its conditions, you're pretty well not going to get your workforce because people have choice now," Shelley said.

The ATEC boss added the organisation is closely monitoring the impact of changed visa rules no longer requiring working holidaymakers to spend time with regional employers to obtain second and third-year extensions.

Despite this, the organisation said it hasn't yet seen a hesitancy among longer-term international visitors to venture into regional areas to seek employment.

"I wouldn't say it's an issue at this stage, but it's a watching brief," Shelley said. *ML*

Flydubai ups Nepal

FLYDUBAI has announced a new service from Dubai to Bhairahawa, which will take off daily from next month.

The return flights, commencing from 10 Nov, will operate via Kathmandu, supporting the growing demand for travel between the two destinations.

"We are pleased to continue to serve Nepal with the addition of our new daily service, underscoring our commitment to offer reliable and convenient travel options via Dubai's aviation hub," said flydubai Senior Vice President Commercial Operations, Sudhir Sreedharan.

Flydubai started operating to Nepal via the launch of direct flights to Kathmandu in 2009.

Travelex ups UAE

TRAVELEX is undertaking a major expansion in the United Arab Emirates, with the leading foreign exchange brand launching 13 new stores across airports in Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

The company is doubling its store footprint at Zayed International Airport, from seven to 14, including six new kiosks at arrivals baggage, airside departures, and pre-immigration.

Travelex also announced it is launching six new stores across all three terminals at Dubai International, which is set to include a mix of traditional stores and kiosks.

The 13 new stores across Abu Dhabi and Dubai means Travelex will be operating 60 locations across the country in total, as flights to the UAE increase.

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Air NZ makes SAF appeal



WOODY waste residue and low-value wood products could be used to produce sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) in the future, according to a new report from Air New Zealand and SAF tech provider, LanzaJet.

In fact, SAF produced in NZ could meet up to a quarter of the aviation fuel required for domestic flights each year, also contributing hundreds of millions to the NZ economy.

New Zealand is heavily reliant on long-haul aviation, much like Australia, and currently imports all of its jet fuel.

"Alternative jet fuel such as SAF is currently the only real tool available to address carbon emissions from long-haul aviation, so it's crucial for connecting New Zealanders, tourists, and exporters with the rest of the world," said Air NZ Chief Sustainability and Corporate Affairs Officer, Kiri Hannifin.

She added that SAF is currently used by airlines in small quantities, representing only a fraction of overall aviation fuel, and comes at a high premium, so it is vital that initiatives are run to help increase supply.

Hannifin also noted that the right structures and regulatory environment will be needed to secure the necessary global investment into homegrown SAF.

"In our view, New Zealand shouldn't get left too far behind or we risk seeing the flow of capital go elsewhere or our

valuable raw materials being swooped up by other markets for their own SAF," she said.

The next phase of the study exploring residential and commercial waste as a feedstock for the LanzaTech carbon recycling process is expected in the coming months. *JHM*

Aviation still lagging

ALTHOUGH domestic aviation has recovered slightly the past 12 months, it is yet to make it back to its pre-pandemic volume.

There were 5.32 million passengers carried on Australian domestic commercial flights (including charter operations) in Aug, compared with 5.27 million in the prior corresponding period - up 1%.

However, that figure was still 1.7% down on pre-COVID Aug 2019 passenger numbers, which totalled 5.41 million.

Revenue passenger kilometres performed well, at 5.99 billion for Aug, compared to 5.86 billion.

Capacity was also down, when measured by available seat kilometres, which decreased to 7.19 billion in Aug, compared to 7.35b in the PCP (down 2.2%).

The month also saw 2.18 million domestic passenger movements through rural airports - no significant change from the PCP.

ATIA UPDATE

from Richard Taylor, Director of Membership and Industry Affairs



WHAT do Marilyn Monroe, former Prime Minister John Howard, Sachin Tendulkar, Einstein, Harold Bishop and Her Majesty Queen

Elizabeth II have in common?

The answer: all of them managed to snag tickets to Fri night's exclusive NTIA Finalist Event at Madame Tussauds.

Never ones for a quiet get-together, major sponsor Viking sprinkled their unique concoction of magic fairydust onto the event to make things extra special.

Our very sincere thanks to them in helping our finalists meet and engage with each other - that evening was part of an epic weekend, which we're still on a high from.

Prior to the shenanigans with the waxworks, we held Beyond Borders during the day, our industry summit that included ATIA announcements on the subjects of industry-led protections, tackling modern slavery, replacing ATAS with 'ATIA Accredited', workforce plans including a Gap Year Program, and enterprise benchmarking reports for members - and that wasn't even all of it.

With all the announcing going on in the first hour, we sought to mix up the day with sessions on as many areas of the industry we could possibly squeeze in.

I spoke to Wendy Brockbank (MTA), Helen Courias (Holland America) and Shelley Poter (Albatross Tours) about what it's like to win an NTIA award and their advice for finalists, before

we heard other panels on small business, the future of passenger movement, the evolution of sustainability towards 'destination regeneration', and industry disruption.

There was also a brilliant cruise discussion from the esteemed Gavin Smith (Royal Caribbean), Gai Tyrrell (Globus family of brands) and Ben Angell (NCL) that contained more than a few collapses into laughter.

And in the middle of all this we also heard from Virgin Australia's leadership team in a really timely update for the industry.

Our thanks to Roslyn Ranse, Charlie Trevena and Vanessa Green, who helped us with moderating panels.

And then, of course, it was the NTIAs on Sat.

Our Events Manager Jenny Le will be along next week with her wrap of the event, but for the time being, our huge congratulations to the winners of the awards on the big night in travel.

So with Jenny's update to come, I'll sign off with another word about that finalist event.

In a controversial end to this week's ATIA column, I will tell you that any talk of Australia becoming a republic was firmly quashed by our finalists, for whom posing with King Charles and the royal family was by far the most popular display at Madame Tussauds.

Or perhaps they were simply dreaming of their own 'crowning moment' - ba-dum, tish.

Plans for next year's events in Brisbane are already underway - you may want to block out the 17-18 Oct 2025 in your diary for an NTIA weekend of wholesome travel industry goodness.



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Rail Europe unlocks France & Austria

RAIL Europe recently treated two groups of travel advisors to embark on a week-long escapade, immersing themselves in France and Austria's most breathtaking landscapes, rich history, and vibrant culture.

From experiencing the convenience and comfort of Europe's train network to indulging in local delicacies, the travel experts enjoyed the best of Austria's centuries-old traditions and soft adventure offering, as well as France's storied past, architecture, and world-renowned gastronomy.

The Austrian famil was hosted in partnership with self-guided specialists Utracks, who offer over 450 trips in almost 50 countries, including the largest range of boat and bike holidays in Europe: Amsterdam - Gouda - Munich - St Agatha - Melk - Vienna - Zurich.

Participants: Cassandra Trezise, Merrilyn Priest and Helen Rolten, Travel Managers; Kathy Thomaidis, MTA Travel; Lydia Reid, EzyTravel.Guru; Pippa Vann, Travel Partners NSW; Barbro Scott, Harbour City Travel NZ; Donna Honeybone, House of Travel Blenheim NZ; and Joe Germano, Transair International Travel - led by James Hooper Rail Europe KAM for AU/NZ.

The French famil was hosted in partnership with Atout France, La Voyage a Nantes, Destination Rennes, Pullman Hotels and Resorts, and Bateaux Mouches: Paris - Nantes - La Baule - Rennes - St Malo.

Participants: Megan Stirling, House of Travel Ashburton NZ; Peta-Marie McLeod, Orbit World Travel WLG; Garry Galea, Flight Centre Malvern Vic; Bobbie Wyllie, Outdoor Travel Pty Ltd Vic; Candice Free, Travel Associates Geelong Vic; Gary Metcalfe, Flight Centre Burnside SA; Natalie Daw, Helloworld Camberwell Vic; and Tracey Selke, Travel Managers - led by Helen Schenk from Rail Europe HQ.

TAKING in the sites on a walking city tour of Vienna, with St. Stephens Cathedral as the backdrop.



EXERCISE was had on a scenic bike ride from Gouda to Leiden, Molen De Valk (The Falcon).



ENJOYING a hearty lunch at the Schlogen Tavern Pumberger between Passau and Schlogen.



THE group stayed a night at the magnificent five-star Hotel Barriere.

SOAKING up the views and history at Mont Saint Michel.



ENJOYING the cruise life in France.



TAKING in the scenery by bike along the Golden Canal from Gouda to Leiden.

CHEESE and wine tasting while in France is a given.



ON the way to see the Mont Saint Michel Abbey.



INDIAN ODYSSEY BY GOLDEN EAGLE

THREE exclusive itineraries in India operating in 2025 and 2026 have been launched by Golden Eagle Luxury Trains, as the brand makes its return to the subcontinental nation for the first time since 2019.

Travelling aboard the Deccan Odyssey, the new itineraries begin with the 15-day 'Madras Mail', which transports guests between Mumbai and Hyderabad and around India's southern coast and back via Chennai.

The trip operates in both directions, stopping in cities such as Goa, Kochi, Trivandrum, Pondicherry, visiting beaches, popular markets and large swathes of rural India.

Also on offer is the 15-day 'Darjeeling Mail', available both as an east- and westbound journey, between Mumbai and Darjeeling near Nepal.



Stops on this journey include Udaipur, Jaipur, Delhi and Agra, where guests can enjoy a sunrise visit to the Taj Mahal.

Finally, the 15-day 'Splendours of Northern India' travels between Shimla and Amritsa with a detour to Delhi and optional extension south to Mumbai.

The Deccan Odyssey train features plush interiors, double or twin bedded air-conditioned

cabins along with an ensuite and access to a 'Spa Car' offering a sauna and massage and hairdressing services, as well as the services of a private guide.

"I invite travellers to join us on these incredible journeys of discovery and celebration across one of my favourite destinations to visit by train - India," said Golden Eagle Luxury Trains President, Tim Little. *ML*

Al Habtoor Palace links with Preferred Hotels

PRESTIGIOUS Dubai hotel Al Habtoor Palace has become the newest member of the Legend Collection within the Preferred Hotels and Resorts collective.

Located near Dubai Canal, the Al Habtoor Palace sits within a Beaux-Arts castle and features 234 rooms and 52 suites.

Guests can enjoy eight restaurants, bars and lounges, including an American-style steakhouse, a French brasserie



and a cigar bar along with two rooftop swimming pools.

Al Habtoor Palace's new Preferred membership unlocks access to the hotel for I Prefer Hotel Rewards loyalty members to both earn and redeem points.

Virgin to sail Alaska

VIRGIN Voyages has rolled out a collection of seven- to 12-night itineraries in Alaska sailing from May-Sep 2026.

Departing from both Seattle and Vancouver, the line's fourth and newest ship *Brilliant Lady* will explore the region, visiting ports such as Juneau, Ketchikan and Sitka.

Guests can partake in shore excursions including salmon fishing and dog sledding.

Mandarin China plan

LUXURY hotel brand Mandarin Oriental has outlined a comprehensive decade-long strategy to double its network in China.

Central to the plan is a target of pursuing development opportunities in growing luxury markets.

The brand recently opened its 10th property in Greater China in Mandarin Oriental Qianmen, Beijing, which features 42 mini-houses.

Each new property is aimed at capitalising on China's growing luxury domestic market while increasing the flow of business and leisure visitors from key sources.

Mandarin Oriental's plan is built around a pipeline of properties in development, opening in Tianfu, Hangzhou, and Nanjin, among others.

New developments will be complemented with investment into guest-centric experiences built around digital platforms to facilitate greater operating efficiency.

"Chinese travellers are some of the most sophisticated and discerning in the world - they continue to be among the most important customers to us as we accelerate our growth plans internationally over the next ten years," said Mandarin Oriental CEO, Laurent Kleitman.

Discover our Adventure Special Report



The Chat
with Jenny

Travel Daily
A conversation with
Phillipa Walker

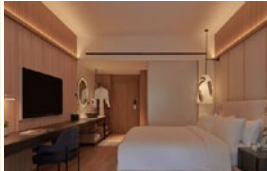
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Amara Singapore has completed the first phase of its refurbishment, unveiling 389 redesigned rooms. Taking inspiration from its surrounds - the historic Tanjong Pagar district - the guest rooms feature earthy and natural textures, including light and dark timber laminate, tan leather, and black metal. Each room comes equipped with a workstation and chaise lounge, while bathrooms feature handcrafted porcelain tiles.



A popular escape for Sydneysiders, **Oaks Port Stephens Pacific Blue Resort** has undergone an extensive transformation of guest rooms and common areas, including its enormous swimming pool. Updated carpet, fresh paint and brand-new furniture-packs feature in the guest rooms, while the resort's 485-metre lagoon-style pool has been rejuvenated with a fresh coat of paint, repaired tiles, new lights and upgraded jacuzzi areas.



Marriott International has announced the opening of its 500th property in the Caribbean and Latin American region. **The Almara, a Luxury Collection Resort, Isla Mujeres, Adult All-Inclusive** marks Marriott's first luxury all-inclusive resort in Mexico, boasting 109 suites with ocean views, private balconies and premium amenities. Guests can dine at seven distinct venues and bars, unwind at the Alma spa, or relax by the infinity pool overlooking the sea.



SOHO Hotel Auckland has introduced new, custom-designed meeting and events spaces. Chief among the offerings is 'Tonga', a purpose-built, pillarless conference and events room featuring a tulip flower chandelier, with the ability to cater to up to 200 guests cocktail-style. Two smaller flexible meeting rooms are also available, along with an outdoor deck and yoga space.



Guests staying at **Park Proxi Gibraltar Bowral** can now enjoy a brand-new dining experience, launched in partnership with Lotus Dining Group. Lotus Bowral will bring its acclaimed Asian cuisine to the Southern Highlands, with a local twist. Diners can expect a mix of favourite Lotus dishes and beverages alongside new menu items showcasing the region's produce.

Well 'y-ello' there ATEC



THE tourism industry threw its support behind the Cancer Council during ATEC's Meeting Place 2024 on the Gold Coast this week.

Delegates were invited to open both their wallets and hearts to contribute to a selected charitable cause, which this year was The Cancer Council.

As well as raising awareness and funds for cancer research, delegates were invited to add a splash of yellow to their outfits for the day, with many taking up the invitation to various degrees.

The initiative was the second time ATEC has coupled a charity fundraiser to its annual Meeting Place, with last year's delegates donning pink in favour of The McGrath Foundation.

Donations could be made via a QR code found on delegates' name badges.

ATEC's yellow brigade getting behind the fundraising initiative is pictured above. *ML*

Reflecting benefits

REFLECTIONS Holidays generated \$126 million in economic benefit to rural New South Wales in FY24.

The property manager welcomed more than 2 million guests to its NSW parks during FY24, including guests staying overnight and day-trippers.

Reflections also welcomed more than 40 new roofed accommodation products across its portfolio in the state, an increase of 6% on FY23.

CEO Nick Baker described FY24 as a "rewarding year".

Take 3 in the surf

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line has expanded its support for environmental non-profit Take 3 For The Sea by signing on as the exclusive sponsor of its 2024/25 Surf Life Saving Club Program.

In line with the cruise line's NCL Cares Philosophy, the alignment encourages SLSC members to engage in beach clean-ups and educate lifesaving communities about the vital issue of marine debris and plastic pollution.



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