Travel Daily

First with the news



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news plus a full page from Infinity Holidays.

SAA appoints **NSM**

CANDICE Steffensen has been appointed National Sales Manager to handle the Australia and New Zealand region for South African Airways (SAA).

The recruitment was made by local GSA The Walshe Group, bringing Steffensen (pictured) across from Lufthansa, where she was Marketing Manager for Australia and NZ for three years.

Further career highlights include two-and-a-half years spent at Virgin Australia as its Marketing Technologist, Marketing Communications, as well as more than two years with Destination NSW as the tourism body's Manager, Digital Campaigns.

Steffensen will report to SAA Country Manager, ANZ Michael Hall, who took charge of local operations and growth strategies early last year (TD 05 Mar 2024).



Specials at Disney

INFINITY Holidays is celebrating the 70th birthday of Disneyland Resort in Anaheim with a range of special ticket offers for agents and clients to enjoy - see page eight.

Slot hoarding a fairy tale

SLOT hoarding categorically does not exist in Australia, according to Airlines for Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ) Chief Executive Officer, Emma Wilson.

Speaking on a panel at the CAPA Airline Leader Summit in Cairns on Fri, Wilson laughed off suggestions that slot hoarding is a scourge in the Australian aviation industry, comparing the claims to that of the tooth fairy existing.

"It has been an area of interest for the public which I don't think anyone thought would be," Wilson claimed.

"When [people] ask me about [slot hoarding], I say it is about as real as the tooth fairy."

Wilson stated that A4ANZ was about "evidence-based policy", which is "fully backed up by last year's audit of the slot use at Sydney Airport".

She said that "there was absolutely no evidence of slot hoarding at Sydney Airport" and that non-utilisation of slots is almost back to pre-COVID levels with performance improving.

A4ANZ is a member-funded industry group established in 2017 to represent local airlines - its members include Qantas, Jetstar, Virgin Australia, Air New Zealand and Rex.

Her comments come after slot hoarding took up plenty of mainstream news real estate last year, with smaller airlines in particular looking for slot management reform in order to enable better services into and



out of major hubs, namely the country's largest hub in Sydney. In 2021, the government-

ordered Harris Review suggested that reforms were needed.

Part of the changes have seen ACL appointed as a neutral third party to make slot capacity decisions, having previously been determined by an entity controlled by Qantas and VA.

Wilson said that A4ANZ was generally supportive of the various reforms, including the Harris Review recommendations, and suggested that "aligning as much as we can with worldwide airport slot guidelines is critically important" in Australia.

However, Wilson's assertion that slot hoarding is a nonexistent problem at Sydney Airport is at odds with various testimonies given during Senate Inquiries into the aviation industry in 2023.

This included former CEO of the now defunct Bonza brand, Tim Jordan, who said he was told not to bother requesting a slot at Sydney Airport because it would not be granted (TD 29 Sep 2023).

While the controversial 80/20 rule remains in place - allowing players like QF and VA to retain slots so long as they operate at least 80% - laws passed last year have brought in misuse penalties of \$99,000 per offence. DF/AB

ETC inks wholesaler

EVOLUTION Travel Collective (ETC) has inked a deal with wholesaler Omniche Holidavs to sell its range of holiday packages to agencies in Australia.

Destinations covered by Omniche include popular markets like Fiji, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Lord Howe Island, Norfolk Island, and Niue.

"This collaboration brings our South Pacific knowledge and curated packages into the hands of more Australian travel agents, backed by ETC's exceptional on-road trade relationships and proven agent engagement capabilities," Omniche Holidays GM Daina De Luca said.

ETC added that agencies can expect enhanced engagement backed by both Omniche's South Pacific expertise and its own dedicated support infrastructure.

Advisors are invited to contact ETC via its website or reach out directly to Omniche Holidays for a training session.

Royal extends Haiti

ROYAL Caribbean Group has extended is suspension on visiting Labadee in Haiti from itineraries to at least Oct, as gang violence and political instability continue to devastate the small Caribbean island nation.

The cruise company has paused calls at Labadee since Apr, and follows a similar decision made in 2024 to scrap visits for half the year out of an abundance of caution to protect its guests.

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Opportunistic" offer nixed

TOURISM Holdings Limited (THL) has rejected a BGH-led consortium takeover offer, which it labelled as "opportunistic and undervalued" (TD breaking news).

In an ASX update today, the THL board said the proposal by a consortium comprised of BGH Capital and the Trouchet family to acquire the company for NZ\$2.30 (A\$2.10) a share (**TD** 17 Jun) reflected a "bottom-of-the-cycle trading environment".

The non-binding offer was lodged in Jun, with one member of the alliance, Luke Trouchet, already an Executive Director at THL and founder of the Apollo campervan business.

After engaging expert financial and legal advisors and forming a Committee of Independent Directors to help conduct an assessment of the proposal, THL concluded that the value of the company is "well north" of NZ\$3.00 (A\$2.74) per share.



The global motorhome rental brand also acknowledged its growth roadmap, which suggests it will see rental revenue grow significantly over the coming years, as well as a notable reduction in debt, and the implementation of its near-term cost reduction plan.

"Even allowing for significant downsides, and valuing currently underperforming parts of the group based on their underlying assets, the current BGH Proposal is well below a level that the board can engage with," the company stated.

THL said it remained open to engaging with the consortium, or other potential bidders, if it was to be presented with a "significantly improved" offer. JM



Royal drinks change

ROYAL Caribbean has reportedly updated its drinks package policy, with the company now requiring all adults in a cabin to purchase a package if at least one person has chosen one regardless of any requests for a personal exemption.

The change took effect from the start of this month and is believed to be in response to an increasing volume of passengers sharing their drinks package with their group staying in a single cabin.

Until Aug, Royal's guests could contact the cruise line to ask for an exemption to the 'everyone must purchase' rule.



France backs down

THE French Government has pledged not to raise its aviation tax again for some time after Ryanair recently made the call to drop three routes.

Ryanair explicitly cited France's high aviation levy as the reason for the change, which has seen flights servicing Brive, Bergerac and Strasbourg all chopped.

"At a time when France should be focusing on recovery and growth, Ryanair has no choice but to reduce its capacity for winter 2025 by 13% due to the France's failure to act against this harmful air tax," Ryanair Chief Commercial officer Jason McGuinness said.

The Irish carrier will redirect capacity to markets such as Sweden, Hungary and Italy.

However, if France were to drop the tax, Ryanair said it would invest A\$3.9 billion in the country, including the allocation of 25 new aircraft, effectively doubling its traffic to over 30 million passengers a year.







Japan gets cooler

MAIDEN winter departures of the popular 'Must See Japan' tour have been added by InsideJapan for the upcoming festive season.

Three departures will operate on 17 Dec, 27 Dec and 07 Jan, each featuring a variety of Christmas and New Year highlights.



railwayadventures.com

What a year for Camden



ITRAVEL Camden celebrated its one-year anniversary last Fri with an event at The Crown Hotel, Camden, bringing together clients, suppliers, partners, and the itravel head office.

Since opening, the store has grown through word-of-mouth referrals and repeat business from clients, with its high-visibility location in southwestern NSW town of Camden proving to be a major asset.

The celebration was attended by representatives from key suppliers, including NCL, Wendy Wu Tours, Scenic Tours, and Go Insurance, to name a few.

"Opening itravel Camden allowed me to turn my passion for travel into a business that truly serves the community," said owner Christine Kelly.

"I saw a real need for expert, personalised travel advice, and now, thanks to our central location and the support of the itravel network, I get to deliver that every day."

Steve Labroski, itravel CEO, said: "Christine's journey from mobile advisor to successful franchise owner is exactly what we envisioned when we created the Franchilli model." JM

Pictured: Joe Karbo, itravel COO; Kelly; and Labroski.

HLO gives credit

HELLOWORLD has inked a new agreement with travel solutions brand Magnatech which will bring a suite of new technologies to its corporate business agents related to unused credits and duty of care.

The tie-up grants access to OnTrackplus, which automates the tracking of unused airline tickets, and SafeToGo, a duty-of-care and risk messaging tool providing risk alerts, real-time flight updates, and compliance reporting to help businesses manage emergencies.

Aria flies from MEI

CATHAY Pacific has introduced its new Aria business class (TD 08 Aug 2023) along with its updated premium economy and economy cabins on selected flights between Melbourne and Hong Kong.

Travellers can find the new cabins on CX104 and CX105.

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Five ambassadors lead TA campaign

ROBERT Irwin and Nigella Lawson are two of the famous names that have been enlisted by Tourism Australia for its latest campaign that continues the adventures of Ruby the Roo.

The global campaign was launched in Canberra today by Federal Minister for Trade and Tourism, Don Farrell, and outgoing Tourism Australia MD Phillipa Harrison.

Building on the first iteration launched in Oct 2022, the new global campaign comes with localised creative executions that have been developed for key markets including the US, UK, China, India and Japan.

These will include local talent, with Tourism Australia hoping they will give it a leg-up in the respective markets.

The new campaign will feature Australian wildlife conservationist Robert Irwin in the US: food writer and TV cook Nigella



Lawson in the UK; actor Yosh Yu in China; entrepreneur and philanthropist Sara Tendulkar in India; and media personality and comedian Abareru-kun in Japan.

"With competition for the international tourism dollar greater than ever before, we are confident this second chapter of 'Come and say G'day' will ensure Australia continues to remain front of mind for travellers looking to plan and book their next holiday," Harrison said.

Lauded agency Droga5 ANZ developed the new campaign,



which will be rolled out in the key markets with event launches and activations that TA said aligns with key booking periods.

Global CEO of Droga5 Mark Green said, "We feel honoured to partner with such an important client...to promote Australia on a global stage."

Part two of Ruby the Roo's adventures will first launch in China this week, with India following at the end of Aug.

The US, UK, Japan and Germany launch in Sep, while South Korea will follow in Nov. DF

Viking opens 27/28

TRAVELLERS will have the opportunity to cross the 66°33' line of latitude that makes up the Antarctic Circle as part of a new expedition itinerary from Viking.

The line has opened its 2027/28 ocean and expedition season, with the latitudinal moment coming as part of the 15-day 'Into the Antarctic Circle' voyage from Buenos Aires to Ushuaia.

Three departures of the new voyage have been scheduled for 27 Nov, 04 Dec and 21 Dec 2027.

The new season will also include sailings on board Viking Lyra, which will join the fleet in 2028.

Local highlights include a 15-day sailing from Sydney to Auckland, with both Viking Venus and Viking Orion offering the itinerary.





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*Terms and conditions apply. Starlink is available on select flights.









Travel Daily Training Academy



TA names ops chief

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Travel Associates brand has appointed Rin Jensen (pictured) as Head of Operations overseeing the Queensland and New South Wales teams.

Jensen has spent close to 20 years with FCTG in various roles, most recently as National Operations Leader for Flight Centre Luxury and Round the World Travel.

The appointment coincides with a broader restructure across Travel Associates' operational leadership, with the brand recently introducing two heads of operation roles to support growth across Australia and NZ, with both yet to be filled.

"To be able to step into this role at such a pivotal point in Travel Associates' evolution is an honour," Jensen said.

"I am passionate about creating environments where our people feel empowered, valued and inspired - because when our people thrive, our clients experience something truly extraordinary," she added.



Shipshape with Carnival



THE Travel Industry Mentor Experience's (TIME) Brisbane network has connected aboard Carnival Cruise Line's Carnival Encounter at Brisbane's International Cruise Terminal.

Guests were treated to a guided ship tour, followed by a delicious three-course lunch, and a presentation highlighting the value and impact of the TIME program through the years.

Among the speakers was Windstar Cruises Sales Manager Shelley Martin, one of last year's graduates of the TIME program, who shared how the mentorship experience has helped shape her career trajectory. MS

Pictured are Christine Poole, WA Tourism: Fiona Cogar, Abercrombie & Kent; Cameron Edwards. Amadeus: and Charles Morley, Imagine Cruising.

Aman new local head

AMAN Group has named Guenter Gebhard as its new Managing Director for the Asia Pacific region, where he will be charged with leading strategic operations and growth of Aman's properties and multiple new hotel developments.

Based in Bangkok, Gebhard will also be responsible for lifting the hotel company's level of service delivery across all channels, including guest experience and digital transformation.

Outside of quality and expansion performance indicators, Aman said the new local executive will also oversee succession planning and senior leadership development within the APAC division, and represent the brand in investor, partner and government-facing engagements.



Window

TOURISTS in Indonesia may soon be deprived from witnessing unusual puppetry performances on the streets of Jakarta if angry government authorities get their way.

Especially popular in the city among buskers, giant ondelondel puppets (pictured) have been labelled "a nuisance" by the Indonesian Government, which is now working on new legislation to ban them from being displayed in public.

If the changes go ahead, performances featuring the mammoth puppets - which can stand as tall as a truck - will be allowed only at approved scheduled events.

Ondel-ondels have been increasingly used by buskers in recent years, who sway the puppets back and forth to music from loudspeakers, seeking money on the roadside from visitors at traffic lights and in the alleyways of Jakarta's densely populated neighbourhoods.







Hack a reminder for all

THE recent Qantas cyber attack (TD 02 Jul) is a "reminder for everyone" and "a global issue", according to Qantas Domestic CEO Markus Svensso (pictured).

Speaking at the CAPA Airline Leader Summit in Cairns. Svensson took the opportunity to apologise on behalf of Qantas for the breach, but qualified that the problem is one that goes far beyond the airline.

"This is a reminder for everyone - this is a global issue," he said.

"We are working as fast as we can to protect our systems, our data, not just from a corporate perspective but also for our customers," Svensson added.

The Qantas executive admitted that one of the biggest challenges was that "these guys are as fast as us", providing a significant challenge to the airline and businesses in general.

"I don't know where it is going to end but we have to be vigilant," he cautioned.

"It is not just about corporate, but also individuals being vigilant to what is going on, because they are out there every day trying to get your data or some details that they believe are valuable."

Despite the latest challenges, Svensson said that technology was a "friend" to the airline industry and provided a lot of opportunity for carriers.

"Everybody in this industry still knows that there is a lot of greenscreen around, so we



have, as an industry, a huge task of getting rid of those systems, getting off those systems - I think other technology and AI is a huge opportunity," he said.

Svensson insisted that it was not about replacing humans but being more efficient and providing better service.

"A lot of this innovation investment when it comes to operations, particularly around how you schedule your crew, how you run your schedule and maintenance planning, and AI in particular, is going to provide [businesses] with opportunity."

Svensson admitted that this investment was not necessarily a new thing for the industry, with Qantas already using large language models in planning and revenue management "for quite some time". DF

Peppers in Hunter

GRAND Mercure The Vintage has rebranded to Peppers Hunter Valley following a multi-million dollar refurbishment.

The revamped Accor property now features upgraded one-, two-, and three-bedroom villas.



Discover our River Cruise Special Report

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Training coming for South Africa



AUSSIE agents can expect a wave of training from Club Med on its new all-inclusive dualresort African safari product.

Information sessions will kick off with two comprehensive webinars on 11 and 12 Aug to provide more details on the new resort, with registration now available via the Club Med travel agent portal.

The company's BDMs will also conduct in-store training and cluster training events across Aug and Sep ahead of bookings opening from 14 Oct.

Full pricing details will be available in the portal from 30 Sep, with rates detailed for each room category and booking links.

Club Med General Manager Pacific and New ESAP Markets, Michelle Davies, told Travel Daily South Africa has been on the company's radar for a long time.

"Choosing the right location was incredibly important for us, and being able to secure this dual concept where you can include both a beach holiday and a safari

holiday, purpose-built for families was absolutely the perfect location that we were looking for."

Davies acknowledged advisors are likely to have a lot of logistical questions but there are still some elements to be worked out.

"Safaris can be a logistical nightmare for clients to try and navigate themselves, and we know there are a lot of safari specialist travel agents out there, but we really believe Club Med is going to provide something that is purpose-fit for families."

Other key enquiries will relate to capacity constraints at the safari lodge, with the Club Med beach resort offering 411 rooms, compared to just 75 luxury tents at the safari lodge.

The main resort will feature 345 hotel style rooms and 66 suites in its Club Med Exclusive Collection.

Facilities will also include four swimming pools surrounded by landscaped gardens, including a main pool and two others reserved exclusively for adults and guests staying in suites. ML



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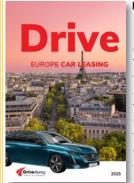




BROCHURES

THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by DriveAway.





DriveAway - Europe Car Leasing 2025 DriveAway is inviting travellers to discover Europe their way with its Europe Car Leasing options, now detailed in a new brochure. Tailored for non-European residents travelling up to 175 days, this flexible alternative to car hire offers a brand-new, tax-free vehicle from Peugeot, Renault, Citroen, or DS. Holidaymakers can enjoy the freedom of unlimited kilometres, zero excess comprehensive insurance, and the ability to explore over 38 European countries in comfort and style. The digital brochure is

available on DriveAway's website, HERE.



Railbookers - Switzerland by Rail 2026-27 Highlighting its worldwide product collection, Railbookers has unveiled its latest assortment of e-brochures, plus deeper-focus editions featuring Italy, Switzerland, cruise extensions, and luxury rail holidays. The guides are now available for Australian travel advisors to share with clients planning rail holidays across Europe and beyond, with itineraries available for booking up to 24 months in advance. Switzerland and Italy continue to attract strong

interest from Australia, with more than one-third of all bookings including at least one of the countries. Download the brochures for free HERE.



Wendy Wu Tours - India & Central Asia 2026-27 Wendy Wu Tours has launched its latest brochure, showcasing a mix of new adventures and returning favourites across India, Central Asia and beyond. For 2026-27, the brochure introduces new cruise and tour itineraries and expanded regional options, including short stays and solo departures. New additions include a 15-day tour of Southern India and Sri Lanka, featuring a houseboat cruise through Kerala's backwaters, an exploration of Sri

Lanka's ancient cities, and visits to the hill stations of Nuwara Eliya and Ella. There is also a new 16-day adventure through Mongolia.



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Accessible source markets

VISITORS from New Zealand, the UK and USA accounted for nearly 60% of the accessible traveller source market in 2024, according to new Tourism Research Australia (TRA) data.

According to the department's Accessible Tourism Report, which captures a snapshot of Australia's accessible tourism market, more than 202,000 visitors hailed from these three countries alone.

Asian countries made up a noticeably small component of the accessible source market, with Singapore and China each accounting for 2% each, while Hong Kong, Indonesia and Japan represented 3% each.

Conversely, Chinese visitors over the same period made up 11% of Australia's total visitation overall.

The data found travellers with accessible needs were more likely to travel with other people, however 28% still opted for solo adventures, compared to 36% of other travellers.

Shifting to domestic, accessible needs travellers took longer trips than other travellers, clocking an average stay of 3.7 nights per trip compared to 3.4 nights.

SYD takes a bite

SYDNEY Airport has launched phase one of its T3 dining and retail redevelopment.

Fourteen new food and beverage concepts will be introduced, with three headline brands announced today: Maggio's, Slim's Quality Burgers, and Loulou

The trio of outlets will be all be making their airport debut when they open later this year.



The gap was larger for overseas business trips, with accessible travellers spending 17.4 nights away compared to 13.2 nights.

Local forms of transport tended to be avoided by travellers with accessible needs while away, with only 77% taking them compared to 71% of other visitors.

The TRA report suggested this presented an opportunity for destinations to invest in making their local public transport more welcoming and viable for those with accessibility needs.

The most common services use by travellers who did opt for public transport included rideshare services (9%), followed by train (7%) and bus (6%). ML

Azamara elevates

AZAMARA Cruises is elevating its suite experience fleet-wide with new inclusions.

Guests staying in Azamara's top suites, including the club world owner's suites, club ocean suites, and spa suites, will enjoy the line's ultimate beverage package; the chef-curated, multi-course Acamar Experience Dinner; unlimited wi-fi; unlimited laundry; dedicated butler service; specialty dining; and more.

The new inclusions will apply to guests sailing with Azamara from Apr, and will be applied automatically to top suite bookings made from this month.

Travel Daily www.traveldaily.com.au

Travel Daily is part of the Business Publishing Group family of publications.

Produced each weekday since 1994, Travel Daily is Australia's leading travel industry publication.

FDITORIAL

Editor - Adam Bishop Deputy Editor - Matt Lennon Cruise Editor - Myles Stedman Journalists - Janie Medbury Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper Editorial Director - Damian Francis Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan advertising@traveldaily.com.au

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER Matthew Vince

ACCOUNTS

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760

info@traveldaily.com.au



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