

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Corporate Update**, and a full page from the **Italian National Tourist Board**.

Soden promoted

TONY Soden has been promoted to the role of Director of Sales, ANZ at Rocky Mountaineer's parent company, Armstrong Collective. The former Rocky Mountaineer Senior Sales Manager for Australia and New Zealand has been with the parent business for six months, and prior to the promotion was in the position of Senior Sales Manager, ANZ. Soden has also held a senior account role with Club Med.

Know all things Italy

THE Italian National Tourist Board is inviting agents to become Italy experts. Find out how on **page eight**.

Koala confirms planes

KOALA Airlines has secured leases for three Boeing 737 MAX aircraft slated to be delivered next year, according to a report from *Australian Aviation*.

While the touted challenger to Qantas and Virgin Australia has been cryptic with its launch plans, CEO Bill Astling told the aviation masthead that Koala Airlines is eyeing off 20 aircraft within the first few years of operation.

The start-up's chief added the first batch of planes are likely to be ready around Jul or Aug next year, with the formal launch date for the carrier still subject to firmer delivery timelines.

"We've got the first three, and then we've obviously got to get the next batch, and the next batch after that, which we're working on at the moment, so it's a progressive thing," Astling said.

"Starting this operation is not easy, particularly when you look at the global problem with supply of aircraft, and you're up against



people like Ryanair who are screaming for aeroplanes.

"We have been fortunate to get these first three, and we're working on additional aircraft at the moment," he added.

Koala has also confirmed it has a valid Air Operator's Certificate (AOC), which was sighted by *Australian Aviation*, putting to bed speculation by some observers that the carrier was not serious about its launch plans.

TD was told by CASA in Aug last year that it was yet to receive an application from Koala Airlines to conduct operations, so the AOC process must have been actioned after that date. **AB**

QF gets tick on Chile

QANTAS and China Eastern Airlines have been given the green light to codeshare on flights between Sydney and Santiago on a free sale basis from 26 Oct.

The International Air Services Commission's call enables the Chinese carrier to independently market and price flights between China and Chile via Australia, with Qantas also intending to provide China Eastern with access to its inventory without requiring real-time confirmation or booking approval for each seat sold.

Qantas and China Eastern already codeshare on several direct flights to the Asian carrier's hub in Shanghai, as well as a range of services to various Chinese cities via Singapore.

AC back in the air

AIR Canada resumed its flights to Australia this morning following a labour strike this week (**TD** 20 Aug), the airline confirmed to *Travel Daily*, and will cover reasonable incurred expenses for affected passengers.

GM Australia and NZ, Vic Naughton, thanked agency partners for their "outstanding support" and "remarkable patience and understanding".

Air Canada's US schedule has also returned to normal.

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Remembering 'Super Jase'

THE Australian travel industry is mourning the sudden passing of Chimu Adventures destination specialist Jason Dudson.

Founder Chad Carey took to LinkedIn yesterday to break the sad news, describing the week as "one hardest chapters in Chimu Adventure's history".

"It is with heavy hearts that we share the news of the sudden passing of our much-loved colleague and friend, Jason Dudson - fondly known in the Chimu family as 'Super Jase'," Carey wrote.

"Jason was more than a destination specialist, he was the cornerstone of the Chimu Sydney office, and played a huge part in [our] success for the duration of his 11-year employment.

"His deep knowledge, wicked sense of humour, and passion for sharing his unwavering love of his family were characteristics the Chimu crew loved him for."



Carey also hailed Dudson (pictured) for his determination and loyalty during the pandemic, which saw the dedicated executive work tirelessly to repatriate travellers stranded by the sudden closure of borders.

"Jason's passing leaves a void that cannot be filled, we are grateful for the time we had with him, the Pearl Jam songs he shared, and memories we will carry forward," Carey added.

Chimu Adventures will close its office on 26 Aug so the team can properly farewell Dudson, with anybody interested in attending his service encouraged to contact the company for details.

People can also contribute to a GoFundMe page [HERE](#). **AB**

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QF bumps bonus

QANTAS will cut off a loyalty bonus from 15 Sep this year when it removes the option of extra points when members earn 500 status credits.

Currently, every 500 status credits a Qantas Frequent Flyer (QFF) member earns scores them either a bonus 50 status credits or 8,000 QFF points.

The option of 8,000 QFF points will soon be removed, however, with the extra status credits automatically being credited to the member's account.

Loyalty website Australian Frequent Flyer questioned whether the change was in Qantas' own rules, noting the requirement for Qantas to give "at least three months' notice of these kind of changes".

QFF members have been made aware of the change with a large note in red plastered across the Membership Tier Journey page of the QFF website - for further information, see [HERE](#).

Webjet big biz play

WEBJET Group has purchased business travel management platform Locomote to accelerate its corporate bookings growth strategy ([TD breaking news](#)).

The Melbourne-based acquiree offers a fully developed end-to-end corporate booking platform, and will help Webjet fulfil previously stated ambitions to address demand for more seamless digital solutions.

Webjet Group will buy 100% of Locomote for an upfront cash payment of \$17 million, plus an extra \$6 million deferred earnout payable in three years.

The digital travel business also confirmed plans to undertake an on-market share buyback program of up to \$25 million.

"With its secure purpose-built technology, [Locomote] positions us to swiftly provide a distinct business travel offering, avoiding any lengthy development phase and at a lower overall cost," CEO and MD Katrina Barry said.

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*Sale ends 11.59pm (AEST) 25 August 2025 unless sold out prior. Select routes, travel dates and terms and conditions apply.





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Thailand mulls free flights

THAILAND is proposing to offer free domestic flights to 200,000 tourists in an effort to promote regional travel across the country and avoid the scourge of overtourism.

Local media have suggested the proposal will be submitted to the Thai Government for formal review by next week.

If the travel incentive goes ahead, the 'Buy international, free Thailand domestic flights' promotion is expected to take place between Sep and Nov this year, offering a one-way ticket for 1,750 baht (A\$84), or 3,500 baht (A\$167) for a round-trip air ticket per person.

The offer will be available through six regional carriers: Thai Airways, Thai AirAsia, Bangkok Airways, Nok Air, Thai Lion Air, and Thai Vietjet.

Free flights will be offered when purchasing international air tickets directly with the airlines, partners, or through OTAs.

Disney nixes entry

DISNEYLAND Resort in California will be cancelling its 30-minute early park entry offer for hotel guests from 05 Jan.

Instead, guests will be given one Lightning Lane entry to a Lightning Lane Multi Pass attraction during their visits.

However, this benefit applies only once per hotel guest for each stay.



The government plans to invest 700 million baht (A\$33.37 million) into the initiative, which it said is expected to generate around A\$420 million in economic spend, as well as roughly 200,000 international visitors.

Earlier this year, Japan Airlines ran a similar campaign to any local destination for international travellers from select countries, including Australia and New Zealand, who booked international and domestic flights on the same reservation through its website. *JHM*

Get out to Nevada

TRAVEL Nevada has partnered with Travel Agent Finder (TAF) to give two Australian travel advisors the chance to win a spot on a famil to the Silver State.

The lucky advisors will join TAF Founder Anna Shannon on a road trip through Nevada's desert landscape in Feb 2026, with highlights including the Extraterrestrial Highway and the Neon to Nature route.

To enter, agents need to complete the Nevada Trailblazer Specialist Program by 30 Sep ([CLICK HERE](#)) and submit a short entry form ([CLICK HERE](#)).

Fiji takes new tack

TOURISM Fiji has appointed Havas Village Sydney to lead its global creative, customer experience, digital and media accounts in Australia

The remit requires an evolution of the destination's 'Where Happiness Finds You' brand platform; supporting its post-pandemic recovery plans and focus on sustainability; building on its digital experience; and leading global media strategy.

APT's Antarctica

APT is celebrating its 100th anniversary with the release of its 2027 Antarctica program, featuring the exclusive 15-night cruise aboard the luxurious *Seabourn Venture* on a number of itineraries.

The sailing is available on several adventures between Antarctica and South American destinations such as Macchu Pichu, Iguazu Falls, the Peruvian Amazon and more.

All itineraries feature Freedom of Choice touring, locally-inspired dining and Signature Experiences such as hacienda lunches with Peruvian Paso horse shows and Zodiac landings in Antarctica.

Find out more [HERE](#).

MGallery expansion

MALLERY has expanded its footprint in the Philippines with the opening of South Palms Resort & Spa Panglao.

The hotel is located on Panglao Island, a UNESCO Global Geopark and is surrounded by coconut groves and the Bohol Sea.

Featuring 188 guest rooms and eight beachfront villas, the resort's design pays tribute to the local culture, such as the use of polished bamboo and coconut wood throughout.

South Palms also offers restaurants including Tiya's House, Manja and Uma, as well as wellbeing experiences such as the soon-to-be-opened Lola's Sanctuary, including a spa & gym.

Travel plans on cue

GOOGLE has introduced a new AI feature on its soon-to-launch Pixel 10 phones called Magic Cue, which has the power to surface key travel details without prompting from the user.

The new tool can search apps like Gmail and Google Calendar in the background of calls, bringing to the surface things like flight details and hotel bookings when the phone's owner is verbally communicating with airline or accommodation providers.

Magic Cue also actively scans images, screen shots, and messages to bring useful details to the user's attention, and it must be opted into to alleviate any privacy concerns.

The Pixel 10 goes on sale in Australia on 28 Aug.

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RSSC gets festive

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has detailed a dozen festive sailings for the 2025-26 and 2026-27 seasons.

The voyages will see the line's fleet decked out in decorations, such as Xmas trees in the atrium, festive floral arrangements, and a hand-crafted gingerbread village.

Guests will enjoy Epicurean feasts on Xmas Eve, Xmas Day and Hannukah, plus a New Year's Eve Gala menu, and beverages including a cranberry 'Santa Clausmopolitan' and eggnog.

Regent's Christmas lineup includes two Australia-focused sailings on board *Seven Seas Explorer*, including the 'Sojourn to Oz' departing 12 Dec 2025, and 'An Aussie Celebration', which departs 19 Dec 2026.



Jun a struggle for airlines

ON-TIME performance and cancellations proved to be a challenge for domestic airlines, the latest BITRE report for Jun has shown, with departures, arrivals and cancellations all heading in the wrong direction.

While Qantas, Jetstar and Virgin Australia all recorded on-time arrivals and departures for well over 80% of flights in May, Jun saw performance plummet, with no airline recording over 77% for on-time arrivals or departures.

In terms of cancellations, it too dropped away compared to May, with Qantas faring worst of the majors, with 3.8% of all its designated services cancelled, while Jetstar registered 2.8%, and Virgin came in at 2.2%.

Jun figures were compromised by school holidays across multiple states, leading to busier times at airports, but still showed drops when compared to Jun 2024.

Cancellations were highest on



the Canberra-Sydney route at 10% of all services, followed by the Sydney-Canberra route at 9.1%, while the popular Sydney-Melbourne route recorded a 7.4% cancellation rate and its reverse route at 6.8%.

WA airports struggled when it came to arrivals and departures - Perth Airport recorded the lowest percentage of on-time arrivals at 59.2%, while Broome Airport had the lowest percentage of on-time departures, sitting at 51.7%. *DF*

India & China back

DIRECT flights will resume between India and China for the first time in five years.

No date has been set, but it is understood flights will launch as soon as possible following talks.

Cheers to Rosewood

ROSEWOOD Hotels & Resorts will launch a new property nestled in the Californian wine region of Napa Valley in 2027.

Rosewood Calistoga and Rosewood Residences Calistoga will offer what it claims will be a "reimagined" wine retreat, sprawling across 118 acres of forest area and providing 129 rooms, suites and residences.

Amenities include an earth-to-table restaurant, cocktail bar, and poolside eatery.

Experiences on offer range from cooking workshops to starlit vineyard dinners.

Guests can also indulge in the wellness space, Asaya, which hosts treatments and hydrotherapy, as well as a gym.



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LTC tracks luxurious Rocky



A GROUP of five Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) members joined Head of Events Lisa Wright on a journey through Western Canada with LTC's Galeries de Luxe partner, Rocky Mountaineer.

Travelling in GoldLeaf service from Vancouver to Banff, the two-day rail experience paired the

spectacular scenery with gourmet dining, all in five-star comfort.

"To experience GoldLeaf was incredible and one I would highly recommend upgrading to," Wright enthused on the Flight Centre Travel Group division's LinkedIn page.

"The spaciousness and comfort of the upper level and the expansive views it offered made it truly special and such a relaxing, luxurious, and stress-free way to travel." JM

Pictured: Christine Bottrelli, Kellie Woodward, Kate Gaskell, Ian Carsell, Lisa Wright, and Stephanie Bleakley.

Oman, Turkish tie-up

OMAN Air and Turkish Airlines have launched a Frequent Flyer Program (FFP) partnership to enhance the travel experience for members of their respective loyalty programs.

Members of Turkish Airlines' Miles&Smiles program can now enjoy connections to Muscat, Salalah, and Khasab in Oman, as well as other cities across Oman Air's network.

Meanwhile, members of Oman Air's Sindbad program can access Turkish Airlines' global network and new opportunities to earn rewards across Turkey, Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and the Americas.

DNSW promotes

STEPHEN Mahoney has been appointed Acting General Manager of Consumer Marketing at Destination NSW.

The former Head of Corporate Communications, Australia and Asia for Etihad was most recently General Manager Policy, Product and Engagement for the NSW tourism body before taking on his latest promotion.

FOLLOW THE SUN NEAR OR FAR WITH NORWEGIAN CRUISE LINE



AS NCL's Experience More of the World competition wraps up its sixth and final week - spotlighting close to home sailings - the NCL sales team welcomed valued trade partners and TAFE/VET students aboard *Norwegian Sun*® in Sydney this week, for her final turnaround before she set sail for warmer shores.

This marks the beginning of *Norwegian Sun's* global journey. First stop: the sun-drenched South Pacific, sailing the idyllic islands of Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia. She then returns to Asia for a vibrant season of immersive itineraries in Southeast Asia and Japan, before heading north for her Baltic debut in June 2026 - featuring first-ever turnarounds in Helsinki and overnights in Copenhagen. With her intimate size and relaxed atmosphere, *Norwegian Sun* offers a stylish way to explore the world's most captivating destinations in comfort.



Closer to home, the refined *Norwegian Spirit*® will return to Australian and New Zealand waters for her third season this December. Fully modernised from bow to stern with adult cruisers in mind, she'll sail a series of 11-14 day open jaw voyages between Sydney and Auckland, including maiden calls to Busseton, Albany and Kangaroo Island.

Together, *Norwegian Sun* and *Norwegian Spirit* reflect NCL's ongoing commitment to the region, and the promise of unforgettable journeys, near and far.

[CLICK HERE](#) for your last chance to win an NCL cruise!

Don't forget to complete this week's AUNZ quiz to complete your NCL passport. A full passport puts you in the running to win one of TWO unforgettable cruises - one near, and one far! T&Cs apply.



TOP: *Norwegian Sun* did her best to brighten up Sydney Harbour on Wednesday.

MIDDLE: Students from The Youth Partnership Program explored the vast career paths in the cruise industry aboard *Norwegian Sun* with NCL's Angela Middleton, who shared her journey from VET student to Director of Sales AU/NZ - joined by Kate Johnson, NCL (far left) and students.

BOTTOM: NCL's BDMs Sam Morgan and Aaron Dodkin brought the sunshine as agents from Helloworld, Flight Centre, itravel, MTA, and TravelManagers got a taste of life onboard *Norwegian Sun* before she sets sail on her global adventures.

***FAMIL IN FOCUS** is our feature showcasing some of the photos from recent industry famils or events. If you want your famil or event to be featured, email: advertising@traveldaily.com.au*

CORPORATE UPDATE

ATPI means business

ATPI has launched a customised online travel booking platform, which it believes could help corporate clients save time and enhance efficiency.

The solution has normalised all fare content (NDC, EDIFACT, LCC) into a single, unified interface, which is fully integrated with Cytric Travel, and aims to reduce the number of pre-approvals that need to be managed manually during the booking process.

While the platform is purpose-built to reflect the complex travel approval structures and funding models of higher education, it is adaptable to corporate clients.

The program is already live at two of Australia's largest universities, with one already reporting significant savings through a 78% drop in manual interventions in travel bookings.

"We have built a university-



centric solution which can also be used in the corporate sector, on a rock-solid 'Not A Problem!' foundation: our approach to NDC," said ATPI Commercial Director, Peter Hosper.

"With one major university, 99% of Qantas online bookings are now NDC and no one even realises it - that's the point," he added.

"No disruption, no training trauma, just results.

"We didn't retrofit a corporate tool, rather we engineered a university travel solution that simply works." JM

DL business platform

DELTA Air Lines has previewed its new platform for corporate customers and TMCs, which will roll out next year.

The Delta Business program will replace Delta Professional, and offer "more intuitive navigation designed around real-world workflows", Managing Director of Sales & Distribution Innovation Sara Reid confirmed.

Delta Business will also offer a smart search to retrieve key details all in the one place.

The US carrier will launch a streamlined wallet solution to support the platform, enabling better resource allocation.

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Eurowings Biz sale

GERMAN budget airline Eurowings' Premium Biz seats are now on sale, with upgrades starting from €400 (A\$722) a leg. The new seats will make their debut on 22 Nov on the Berlin-Dubai routes, featuring added comfort, privacy and service.

SAA lounge refresh

SOUTH African Airways (SAA) has unveiled its newly refurbished domestic departures lounge at Cape Town International Airport.

The refreshed space is the third major upgrade in SAA's revitalised lounge concept, and now offers expanded capacity and a range of premium amenities, including private focus booths and curated dining areas.

Sabre inks oneworld

SABRE Corporation has renewed its long-standing partnership with oneworld, which will see the global airline alliance continue to use PRISM, the software company's cloud-based corporate travel data and analytics platform.

The solution is used by more than 30 airlines and alliances to grow and manage their corporate sales programs.

Sabre's SVP Global Airline Sales & Accounts, Darren Rickey, explained: "PRISM is uniquely positioned to help our partners unlock the full value of their corporate relationships by combining real-time intelligence, predictive analytics."



Window Seat

THERE'S nothing like live entertainment to lighten the mood on a delayed flight.

Passengers on board a plane from St. Louis, Missouri to Seattle, Washington recently discovered this first hand, when their flight was diverted to Boise, Idaho before sitting idly on the tarmac during a lengthy delay.

On that flight happened to be jazz saxophonist Dave Koz and his bandmates, who had their instruments on board.

One of the flight attendants noticed, and asked if the musicians if they would do an impromptu jam to help cheer up frustrated passengers.

The band, who had been on tour since mid-Jul, was all too happy to assist, and performed Stevie Wonder's *You Haven't Done Nothing*.

The wholesome moment was captured on video and posted to social media, where it went viral.

"You could just feel the energy; everybody was so frustrated," Koz said.

"It just was right, and it brought everybody together in a way that was very special."



FCM analytics tool

FCM Meetings & Events has unveiled a new Reporting & Analytics Tool which enhances operational functionality, delivers greater savings, and enables more informed decision-making.

The new tool also reduces the time spent on compiling and merging reports with a consolidated dashboard for all meetings and events data.

It instantly quantifies missed savings opportunities by visualising supplier and event-level spending against budgets.

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Crystalbrook Collection is offering 30% off luxury stays across Australia, from coastal retreats in Byron Bay and Cairns to five-star city stays in Sydney and Brisbane. The sale runs from 19 Aug to 07 Sep 2025, with travel valid through 31 Jul 2026 and rates starting at just \$207. To access the offer, sign up to the free Crystalbrook Crowd when booking - visit crystalbrookcollection.com for more information.

There is still time for travellers to save up to 15% on worldwide **Collette** tours in 2026. Among the itineraries included in the special is the 10-night 'Antarctica: The White Continent', which departs 27 Nov 2026, with savings of \$2,201 per person. The promotion ends 31 Aug 2025 - to take advantage, use code 'EARLYBIRD26'.


Batik Air has released discounted flights from Perth to Kuala Lumpur and beyond, including Krabi, Phuket, Bangkok and more. The sale includes 20kg baggage. Book before 31 Aug 2025 for travel before 30 Nov 2025 - find out more on the airline's website, [HERE](#).

Travellers can plan their next retreat at **Grand Hyatt Singapore**, which has launched two new packages. Designed for foodies, the 'Grand Culinary Escape' offers experiences across four distinctive dining concepts, while 'The Grand Mindful Escape' spotlights the resort's reimagined wellness hub, with a personalised wellbeing assessment and full access to spa facilities. Bookings are open now until 31 Dec 2025, with a minimum stay of two nights. Find out more [HERE](#).

There is one day left for Aussies to score discounted one-way fares to New Zealand with **Air New Zealand**, starting from \$259 for a Sydney to Wellington flight. Also included in the sale is Melbourne-Auckland and Brisbane-Christchurch, both starting from \$269, and Perth to Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington from \$545. The sale ends at midnight tonight - details can be found [HERE](#).

Holland America Line is offering Australian travellers the opportunity to secure last-minute cruises at significantly discounted rates through its Standby Program. For \$129 per person per day for an Inside or Oceanview stateroom, or \$199 for a Verandah, the program gives cruisers the chance to book a spot on a wait list for several selected sailings - including the 72-day 'Grand World Voyage Segment' and 14-day 'New Zealand Holiday'. Call 1300 987 322 for more information.




Dubai's floating hotel, **Queen Elizabeth 2**, has launched a limited-time 'Summer Staycation' offer, with rates starting from A\$169 per night. The 24-hour getaway package includes a daily buffet breakfast at the historic Lido Restaurant, a complimentary Heritage Tour showcasing the ship's history, and an A\$85 food and beverage credit per stay. Additionally, kids stay and dine free. The offer is valid for stays until 15 Oct 2025, with bookings made by 30 Sep 2025 - learn more [HERE](#).



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SCA shines on the community



SUNSHINE Coast Airport (SCA) has revealed the 18 successful recipients of its 2025 Community Support Fund, an initiative that helps organisations to make a meaningful difference.

Now it in its second year, the program will see each of the selected businesses receive up to \$1,000 to pour into local initiatives across the region, from youth sports to community events and environmental drives.

One of those recipients is Coolool Beach Surf Life Saving Club, which will use the money to purchase a new rescue board for its Nippers program.

"This support goes a long way in helping us keep our beaches safe and our volunteers well-

equipped," said the club's President, Jake Harris.

"We are incredibly proud to support another round of local organisations through our Community Support Fund, it's clear our community is rich with dedicated individuals creating positive change," said SCA Chief Executive Officer Chris Mills. *JM*

Pictured: The very happy Coolool Surf Club Nippers.

Wellbeing Collection

IN AN effort to help fatigued guests, Small Luxury Hotels of the World has launched the Wellbeing Collection off the back of its *Restless Traveller* report.

In the survey, 72% said they are exhausted and 89% believe travel is effective for holistic rest.

The 15 properties offer more than just therapeutic treatments and healthy dining, but they also add experiences that support long-term physical and emotional goals, such as forest bathing, wild swimming, surf workouts, reflexology and artist residencies.

Hotels include the Gangley Lodge in Bhutan, Keemala in Phuket, Teranka in Spain, Castle Hot Springs in Arizona and more.

Japan demand up

MORE than 50,000 Australians visited Japan in Jul, representing a 3.3% increase from the same month last year, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO).

For the year to date, the number of Australian travellers heading to Japan is up by 20.9%, with the total figure to the end of Jul sitting at 617,400.

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