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Cruise360 kicks off

THE Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) MD in Australasia, Joel Katz, revealed to delegates at Cruise360 today that a total of 63 ships would operate in local waters between Oct-Apr.

"The popularity of cruising continues to grow worldwide, and Australia is undoubtedly one of the world's most spectacular cruise destinations," he enthused.

Find out what else Katz said in today's issue of **Cruise Weekly**.

Topdeck set to relaunch

AS PART of a wider portfolio restructure, Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has revealed its touring brand Topdeck will undergo a major overhaul (**TD** breaking news).

Contained in its latest financial reporting, FCTG said the "under-performing" asset will be repositioned to focus exclusively on small-group trips capped at 18 guests from late Sep, catering for the evolving Gen Z traveller.

The Global Touring brand will also refresh its touring suite with new styles, which will commence operating from Apr 2026.

A range of other enhancements for Topdeck are also in the pipeline, including new routes and destinations, while significant investment will be poured into a major brand refresh to formally mark the business pivot as well.

These are set to encompass a new website and launch marketing campaign.

Commenting on the relaunch, FCTG Global CEO and Topdeck co-founder Graham 'Skroo' Turner said today's younger travellers have been asking for change, which also aligns with his own fond memories as a young man.

"I was 23, living in London and just wanted to explore Europe with my mates in a way that was fun, low-fuss and let us experience more in the places we



visited," Turner said.

"That first trip had only 14 people, so it feels right to return to that smaller group style.

"It is also exactly what younger travellers today are telling us they are looking for," he added.

While bookings performance was a driver of the change, surveys also played a role in FCTG pulling the trigger on a relaunch.

In a Topdeck survey of more than 2,000 younger travellers, 60% said they would consider a group tour to holiday, compared to 45% in 2019, while 68% noted they would prefer to travel in a group of up to 20 people.

"Large groups are perceived as overwhelming and overbearing when infiltrating a destination as 'tourists' - young travellers want to feel like locals when they travel," Topdeck GM APAC Anna Fawcett said. **AB**

An Outback hack

OUTBACK Pioneers experienced a security breach involving its email system today, which has since been resolved by its IT team.

Early this morning, unauthorised emails were sent that appeared to be official correspondence from the business.

The emails have now been contained and the business' database has been contacted.

Thailand in spotlight

INFINITY Holidays has partnered with the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) on a new campaign, 'Your Stories Never End' - discover more details on **page six**.

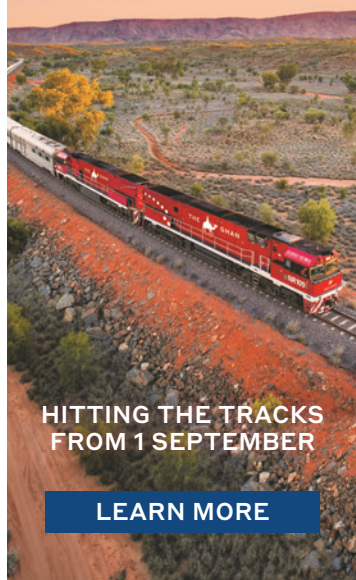
Discover Vietnam

TRAVELLERS are invited to discover domestic Vietnam destinations with Vietnam Airlines - find more information on the **back page**.

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news, including our **Luxury** page plus a product profile from **Vietnam Airlines** and a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

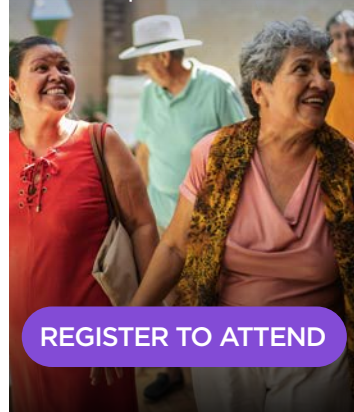
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BRISBANE

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you from Brisbane, where Cruise Lines International Association's Cruise360 is taking place.

TRAVEL Daily is in Brisbane this week for the annual Cruise360 conference.

The next two days will see the Australian cruise industry meet to discuss all the big topics in the sector, with more international speakers to join this year than ever before.

TD's Editorial Director Damian Francis will be marshalling two sessions during the conference - the state of the industry panel, which will kick off the conference, and a fireside chat with MSC Cruises Vice President of Int'l Sales Antonio Paradiso.

Choice in Grampians

CHOICE Hotels Asia-Pac has secured funding for what is set to be the largest hotel in Victoria's Grampians region.

Back by the State Government's Regional Tourism Investment Fund 2024, the LOAM Hotel in Stawell will be located on the Western Freeway between Melbourne and Adelaide, with the aim of drawing in business and leisure travellers from within Victoria, interstate and overseas.

The \$16 million double-storey development will span two buildings, featuring 77 studio-style rooms, a solar energy system, wellness facilities, and more.

FCTG makes brand shift

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) travel booking platform for students and young adults, StudentUniverse, has been closed due to under-performance.

The development was confirmed in FCTG's latest financial results released this morning, and followed a review of the brand that kicked off last year (*TD* 08 May 2024) after a sustained loss-making period.

In its revised financial outlook released in Apr, FCTG said StudentUniverse was under the microscope as it looked on track to deliver a \$10 million loss for this year (*TD* 28 Apr).

FCTG had also previously intimated that StudentUniverse's poor performance may see it folded in with BYOJet, which appears to have taken place in Jun, according to the BYOJet site.

The broader financial performance of FCTG for the latest financial year saw the business deliver a record TTV of \$24.5 billion (*TD* breaking news), up 3% year-on-year in what it described as a "challenging global trading cycle".

Headwinds included cautious consumer sentiment, geopolitical tensions that escalated during Q4, tariff and entry policy issues in the United States, as well as softness in the global corporate travel market.

While corporate TTV still managed to make a 2% gain to \$12.3 billion, FCTG's leisure division fared better, piling on 6.7% growth to deliver \$11.8 billion in TTV.

Revenue also marginally improved during the latest annual reporting period, increasing by



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3% to \$2.78 billion.

Despite TTV and earnings growth, the business saw its profit before tax decline by 3% to \$213 million.

"After two years of strong recovery post-COVID, FY25 proved to be a more challenging trading period," MD Graham Turner conceded.

He added the challenges should be short-term given they can be largely addressed internally and are cyclic in nature. *AB*

TC wins back agency

TRAVELLERS Choice has welcomed Au Revoir Travel & Cruise back into its network.

The agency, located in Perth's Mount Lawley, was one of the earlier members of Travellers Choice, but departed the group in 2010.

Now owned and managed by Samantha Gallaher, the decision to re-join the network was partly due to Travellers Choice's move to exchange its former one-size-fits-all membership package for a more flexible structure, offering independent agents a choice of three solutions.

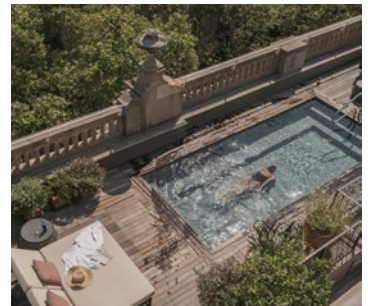
"That has allowed me to select a membership package that really suits the current needs of my business," enthused Gallaher.

MEL mobility hubs

MELBOURNE Airport will launch a network of mobility hubs in Sep, using buggies and powered wheelchairs to assist passengers transit through the terminals and carpark.

Provided by Travellers Aid, the mobility hubs underwent a trial last year & will operate seven days a week from 6am-10pm.

The hubs were designed to extend to and from the new pick-up and drop-off areas that will open in 2026.



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NSW aims high in new visitor strategy

THE NSW Government has unveiled a new visitor economy strategy, which aims to generate \$91 billion in annual visitor expenditure by 2035.

The ambitious roadmap is also targeting 40,000 hotel rooms, 8.5 million new airline seats, and an additional 150,000 tourism jobs over the next decade.

Based on a comprehensive review and consultation with more than 500 NSW stakeholders, the strategy hones in on five key growth pillars - Make it Easy for More People to Visit; Focus on Attracting Visitors; Drive Growth through Events; Focus on Experiences; and Leverage Data and Insights.

"NSW is home to some of the world's most vibrant destinations, experiences and events, but we can't afford to stand still," said NSW Premier Chris Minns.

"This strategy is about taking bold, coordinated action to ensure we continue to lead the nation and compete on the global stage," he added.

The plan includes a new staged



growth path, with targets of \$59b by 2026 and \$71b by 2030.

Early initiatives include launching the 'Feel New in Sydney' marketing campaign, which invites Australians to rediscover Greater Sydney through fresh eyes.

The push is part of a broader strategy that seeks to elevate the NSW and Sydney brands through bold storytelling and data-led marketing, enhanced by a new partnership with CommBank iQ to leverage consumer data to gain deeper insights into visitor behaviours and trends.

The NSW Government will also launch the \$12.5 million NSW

Take Off Fund and the \$16 million Western Sydney International Take-Off Fund to secure more flights, and has committed to the development of a Statewide Aviation Strategy.

Additionally, the state will introduce extended trading hours and increase the cap on concerts and major events to support the 24-hour economy.

"We welcome the NSW Government's new commitment to improve brand awareness, attract and secure world-class events, focus on experiences and leverage data to drive growth," said NSW Tourism Association CEO, Natalie Godward.

"This strategy recognises the importance of every part of our state and provides a pathway for inclusive, sustainable growth." *JM*

Explore Tru Japan

TRUTRAVELS has launched a seven-day 'Spirit of Japan' tour, designed as a fast-paced introduction to the destination through iconic cities including Tokyo, Hakone and Kyoto.

Activities include sake tasting, a samurai experience and visits to the Fushimi-Inari Red Gates and Arashiyama Bamboo Forest.

Meanwhile, the 12-day 'Legend of Japan' tour has recently been extended to include Hiroshima and now ends in Osaka.

Both tours are available for sale for departures from Mar 2026.



Window Seat

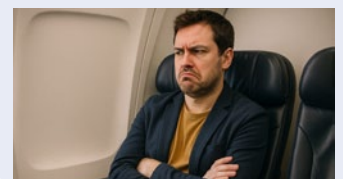
IMAGINE paying extra for a great view from the sky and instead being seated next to an air conditioner.

That's the reason Delta Air Lines and United Airlines are being sued in the United States, with aggrieved passengers claiming they paid a premium for window seats, only to find themselves placed in seats next to blank walls.

The complaints claim some Boeing 737, Boeing 757 and Airbus A321 aircraft contain seats that would normally have windows, but don't because of the placement of air conditioning ducts or electrical conduits.

Plaintiffs in the suit allege DL and UA do not flag these anomaly seats during the booking process - which require a premium price - unlike many of their rivals such as Alaska Airlines.

"Had plaintiffs and the class members known they were purchasing windowless seats, they would not have selected them - much less have paid extra," the complaint stated.



Intrepid hosts FCTG trip

INTREPID Travel hosted 60 top-selling Flight Centre Travel Group agents on its annual week-long Mega Famil to Sri Lanka, where they were also joined by Europ Assistance.

Six Intrepid trips with different groups of agents took place simultaneously across Sri Lanka, showcasing Sri Lanka's diverse landscapes, from lush tea plantations to the ancient ruins of Sigiriya and the country's renowned wildlife.

A highlight of the event was a three-day event at Jetwing Lake in Dambulla, where agents were joined by Intrepid's leadership team including ANZ Managing Director Brett Mitchell, ANZ General Manager Yvette Thompson and Head of ANZ Partnerships Megan Lowe.



FCTG's leadership team also joined the fun, including Flight Centre Brands Global MD Andrew Stark, Travel Associates GM Rachel Kingswell, and Envoyage Global Head of Product, Jodie Bernard for a series of high-energy events.

"It's a destination that's still emerging for many travellers, and we wanted to showcase the incredible depth of experience our local DMC can deliver," Thompson said. *JHM*

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Fairmont Hotels enjoys global facelift

GLOBAL hospitality giant Fairmont Hotels and Resorts has announced several renovations across its properties, which are set to be unveiled next year.

"We're not just refreshing our spaces, we're redefining the guest experience to meet the evolving expectations of today's travellers, while honouring the distinct character that makes these properties special," said CEO Omer Acar.

The Fairmont Grand Hotel Geneva is currently undergoing a major transformation that will debut in 2026, featuring a renovation of the building's facade, more than 400 rooms and a complete redesign of its prestigious seventh floor.

Meanwhile, the Fairmont Southampton has begun the largest renovation project in



Bermuda's history, which will be completed in early summer 2026, the brand said.

Included in the \$550 million re-development will be its 593 rooms, beach club, resort pool and cabanas.

The guestrooms, restaurant experiences, meeting spaces, grand ballrooms and lobby and reception area will all be enhanced as well.

Other Fairmont properties'

renovations were unveiled this year, including its property located in Banff Springs, which was redesigned to cater to multigenerational travel.

In Apr, Fairmont Le Montreaux Palace in Switzerland (**pictured**) showcased the restoration of its 120 lake-view rooms and facade, while Fairmont Orchid on Hawaii Island announced in Jun the completion of its multimillion-dollar refresh. *JHM*

A grand voyage

SILVERSEA'S *Silver Cloud* has embarked on its 'Grand South Pacific Expedition', a 75-day voyage through 58 destinations across Australia, Asia and the South Pacific.

Guests will explore under-the-radar gems, such as Palmerston Island and Adamstown, visiting countries like Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and more.

The trip will feature overnight calls in the Abrolhos Islands and Pitcairn Island, and two events: 'Finnis River Lodge - a Northern Territories Adventure' and 'Toki, a Hope for the Future' on Easter Island, the world's second most remote inhabited island.

Conrad initiative invites guests to slow down

LUXURY property Conrad Bali has launched Conrad 1/3/5, a program created for guests to "slow down" and engage with the island's experiences, however much time they may have on their agenda.

The initiative offers tailored one-, three- and five-hour itineraries, featuring activities such as the peaceful 'Swap Sleep Journey', which takes place in aerial hammocks with weighted blankets and heated eye pillows.



There is also art therapy on offer, in addition to hands-on chef-led cooking experiences, foraging and forest bathing.

Conrad 1/3/5 is a global program currently being rolled out across the Hilton-owned brand around the world.

Swiss unveils Grand

SWISS International Air Lines has unveiled its new Swiss First Grand Suite, combining two first-class suites to create "a personal loft above the clouds" that can serve as a bedroom, office or meeting room.

Launching in early 2026 on the airline's new Airbus 350s and Airbus 330s on flights to Switzerland, the expanded space is part of the new SWISS Senses cabin and service concept.

QT pampers pooches

PET dogs in need of a break are now welcome at QT Hotels, which is offering luxurious stays for pampered furry friends.

Think cosy dog beds with orthopaedic memory foam, fancy grooming products, handbaked treats and butler service.

Meanwhile, the in-room dining menu features Steak Tartare and Bacon Ice Cream.

Select properties even offer a personal Director of Chaos to take pups for a walk.

Pup Yeah! rooms start from an additional \$120 for three nights.

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Baines' Lodge, an A&K Sanctuary located in Botswana's Okavango Delta, has reopened after an extensive renovation that fuses elegance with cutting-edge sustainability. The property, designed with natural pastel tones to complement the environment, offers six suites situated above the floodplains. Guests will enjoy views of nature and wildlife all year round, and can access the lodge's open-plan lounge, dining, bar, library and poolside areas.



With the aim of elevating Thailand's MICE landscape, **Khao Lak Marriott Beach Resort & Spa** has unveiled a collection of indoor and outdoor meetings and events venues. At the heart of the new offerings is the Andaman Grand Ballroom, a 513m² pillarless venue with six-metre ceilings and a 346-inch LED screen. There are also five Similan Meeting Rooms, accommodating 20 to 120 guests, as well as beachfront al fresco venues.



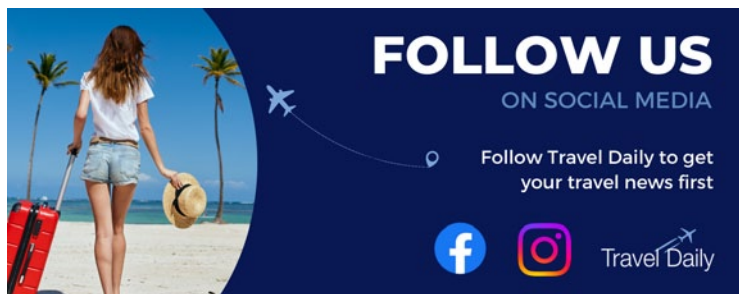
In celebration of its 70th anniversary this year, **The Beverly Hilton** will undergo a transformation set for completion in 2027. Guests can expect elevated new accommodations and fully refreshed event spaces, as well as all-new dining and retail destinations. The hotel will also unveil a reimagined arrival experience, which will focus on a connection to nature. As renovations progress, the property will remain fully open and operational.



Sofitel Noosa Pacific Resort is set to receive a multi-stage makeover, which will see all 175 guest rooms and suites transformed, along with its dining and social hub, Noosa Beach House. The property, which will remain open during the update, will unveil a refreshed aesthetic featuring natural textures, custom detailing, and a seamless connection between indoors and outdoors.



Guests staying at Outrigger **Kaua'i Beach Resort & Spa** can enjoy new cultural programming, designed to deepen their connection to Hawaii's culture and people. Offerings include lei-making workshops and ukulele sessions, traditional dance and music performances, a sunrise ritual, and the chance to participate in a self-guided beach clean up program.



Agents cruise the Danube



AMAWATERWAYS recently hosted its first Australia/New Zealand VIP famil trip, treating a group of trade partners to a seven-night cruise along the Danube River.

Hosted by Managing Director - AU/NZ Steve Richards and co-owner Gary Murphy, the lucky agents travelled from Vilshofen, Germany to Budapest on the cruise line's flagship, *AmaMagna*.

"From start to finish, this journey along the Danube River on the 'double-wide' *AmaMagna* was about more than just showcasing our product," Richards said.

"It was about building connections, deepening relationships, and providing our trade partners with a firsthand look at what makes our ships, destinations, service and offerings so unique." JM

Pictured: Steve Labroski, itravel; Richards; Suze Gower-Macdonald, Travel Associates; Joe Araullo, House of Travel Australia/TravelManagers; John Williams, Our Vacation Centre; Nicole Boyer, CT Partners; Murphy; Tammy Marquet, Flight Centre; Adrienne Wittenman, Trendsetter

Travel & Cruise Centre; Susie Flick, Travel Associates; Missing: Peter Williams, Phil Hoffman Travel.

CX pax numbers up

CATHAY Pacific carried 24% more passengers last month compared to Jul 2024, while available seat kilometres increased by 30%.

Additionally, the carrier saw a 27% increase in the number of passengers during the first seven months of 2025, compared to the same period last year.

Together, Cathay Pacific and HK Express carried around 3.2 million passengers - the most of any month so far this year.

"The robust demand Cathay Pacific saw in Jul was primarily driven by long-haul traffic to and from Hong Kong in the first half of the month...followed by leisure traffic to regional destinations in the second half of Jul," said Chief Customer and Commercial Officer Lavinia Lau.





THAILAND

Your Stories Never End

Step into "Your Stories Never End", a soulful campaign by Infinity Holidays and the Tourism Authority of Thailand, inviting travellers to rediscover the magic of Thailand through connection, culture, and unforgettable moments.

Bangkok

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

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Helio Code: IH51986

FROM

\$685

pp twin share

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Koh Samui

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

5 nights at Chaweng Regent Beach Resort, Samui Elephant Sanctuary Shared Tour, Ang Thong Islands by Speedboat Tour, PLUS airport transfers.

Helio Code: IH52060

FROM

\$1,099

pp twin share

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Phuket

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

8 nights at Katathani Phuket Beach Resort with Phi Phi Island Full-Day tour, PLUS airport transfers.

Helio Code: IH51985

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pp twin share

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Krabi

PACKAGE INCLUDES:

5 nights at Centara Ao Nang Beach Resort & Spa Krabi, Four Island by Longtail Boat Tour from Ao Nang, PLUS airport transfers.

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Discover domestic Vietnam destinations with Vietnam Airlines

VIETNAM offers a wonderfully rich variety of destinations, from vibrant cities to tranquil beaches and culturally significant historical sites.

Popular highlights include Hanoi, the capital known for its centuries-old architecture and the bustling Old Quarter, and Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site famed for its emerald waters and towering limestone formations.

Other notable destinations include Sapa, with its breathtaking terraced rice fields and diverse ethnic cultures, and the charming, lantern-lit streets of Hoi An.

For beach lovers, Nha Trang and Phu Quoc Island are top choices, while the Mekong Delta offers a truly immersive cultural experience.

With a direct flight of just six hours from Perth to Ho Chi Minh City, (SYD/MEL -HCMC approximately eight and half hours) the Australia–Vietnam routes have become increasingly popular among travellers

seeking both convenience and adventure. Supported by Vietnam Airlines’ extensive domestic network, passengers can easily connect from Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi to other major cities and regional destinations, making it simple to explore the country’s many unique regions.

Recent data shows that Vietnam is quickly emerging as a new favourite international destination among Aussie travellers

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the number of travellers to Vietnam in the first quarter of 2025 increased by 54% compared to the same period in 2019, highlighting the country’s growing appeal.

Vietnam Airlines continues to upgrade and enhance its services. In 2025, all domestic routes have introduced Premium Economy Class, expanding to a three-cabin configuration.

This upgrade offers greater comfort and flexibility, particularly for international

connecting passengers.

With its comprehensive domestic network, Vietnam Airlines ensures smooth and convenient travel between key international hubs such as Ho Chi Minh City and Hanoi, while also expanding international transit options at Da Nang and Phu Quoc, providing more choice and accessibility for global travellers.

Travelling to Phu Quoc

Passengers can travel to Phu Quoc without a visa, including transiting through major hubs such as Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi.

The SGN–HAN domestic route is one of the busiest in the world, with Vietnam Airlines operating around 25 flights daily each way, ensuring convenient and frequent connections for international and domestic travellers.