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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features nine pages of industry news, including a special feature from **Tourism Ireland** and our **Sustainability** page.

Soak in Irish scenery

TOURISM Ireland is showcasing the breadth of experiences available on offer in Northern Ireland, including iconic filming locations across the region.

The new SCENEic route map makes it easy for visitors to step into the stories they love - for more details, see **page seven**.

YouTrip lands in Oz

MONEY travel app YouTrip has launched in Australia, offering travellers direct access to real-time exchange rates for more than 150 currencies, with zero FX or annual fees.

The travel card, which is already popular across Asia, offers free ATM withdrawals worldwide for up to \$1,500 per calendar month, exchange and lock rates for 10 currencies, and up to 2% cashback on international purchases (A\$40 cap/month) during the first five months of signing up.

"Australians love to travel, but hidden fees and poor exchange rates are eating into every trip," said Caecilia Chu, CEO and co-founder of YouTrip.

"YouTrip was founded with the mission to deliver a more affordable, accessible and convenient way for travellers to make overseas payments."

YouTrip is now available nationwide on the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

FCTG sells Luxperience

LUXURY travel trade event Luxperience has been sold to event director Lynn Ormiston and Jonathan Leggett from Curated Travel Marketing, heralding "an exciting new era" for the brand.

Previously owned by Flight Centre Travel Group's Luxury Travel Collection (LTC), both Ormiston and Leggett will now lead Luxperience through their business, which will manage all future initiatives and events.

"Jonathan and I share a deep belief in the power of meaningful connections and creative collaboration," said Ormiston.

"We're committed to building on Luxperience's strong legacy while continuing to champion the people and brands that make this industry so extraordinary."

Meanwhile, Leggett noted that the goal for Luxperience is to strengthen its role "as a hub of creativity and connection, bringing together the most inspiring minds and brands in luxury travel".

Ormiston will continue as the main contact for partners, while Leggett will be the contact for travel professionals.



LTC General Manager Nikki Glading commended the duo for their work on elevating the event during a critical growth period for the luxury travel sector.

"They both bring passion, expertise, and a deep understanding of the luxury landscape, and we are looking forward to watching Luxperience continue to grow, innovate, and inspire," she said.

This year's Luxperience was its largest ever, hosting 160 local and international brands, with a 20% increase in partner numbers from the previous year and a 15% rise in buyers (**TD 09 Oct**).

Luxperience will take place 17-20 Nov 2026 in Sydney and expressions of interest are now open for partners and buyers. **JHM**

MEL-DOH on VA

VIRGIN Australia's inaugural Melbourne-Doha service took off yesterday ahead of the Christmas travel rush (**TD 13 Nov**).

The new flights unlock one-stop access to more than 170 global destinations via Doha through Qatar Airways' network, and is expected to inject more than \$190 million into Victoria's economy each year.

Virgin will use Qatar Airways' Boeing 777s on the route.

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Wendy Wu Tours

QF FF reward seats

QANTAS Frequent Flyer has announced the release of 100,000 extra Classic Reward seats across its global network, including more than 1,000 business seats to Paris on Qantas flights, and hundreds of Points Planes to Bali with Jetstar.



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Tauck opens Roam 2026

ROAM by Tauck, the recently launched brand from Tauck aimed at travellers in their 40s and 50s, has opened bookings for its inaugural five journeys debuting in 2026 (**TD** 14 Aug).

Designed for travellers who are seeking more independence, the collection includes a seven-day 'Mexico City & San Miguel de Allende' itinerary, showcasing the art, culture and cuisine of Mexico's capital.

Highlights include an e-bike ride through Roma and Condesa, a taco-tasting walk, private cooking class, guided market visit, and sunrise balloon flight over the pyramids of Teotihuacan, plus a three-night stay at the luxurious

EVT Connect is here

EVT Limited has completed its acquisition of Pro-invest Hotels (**TD** 18 Aug), marking the official launch of third-party hotel management platform, EVT Connect Hospitality.

The platform has 15 hotels and 3,200 rooms under management.

"An asset owner can now choose to franchise a third-party hotel brand and boost performance by leveraging EVT's local and extensive expertise to ensure long-term success for our partners," explained EVT Director of Commercial and Connect Hospitality, Mathew Duff.

Meanwhile, Troy Cuthbertson, has been appointed General Manager of Operations.

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Casa de Sierra Nevada, A Belmond Hotel.

Other itineraries include an eight-day journey through Bordeaux, Saint-Emillion, and Dordogne; a seven-day coast-to-vineyard journey through Spain's Basque Country; a 10-day land-and-river journey along the Danube to Budapest; and an eight-day cruise aboard *MS Andorinha* on the Douro River.

"Since introducing Roam by Tauck in Aug, we've heard tremendous enthusiasm from travel advisors who recognise this fills a meaningful gap in the luxury travel market," said Jennifer Tombaugh, Tauck CEO.

"We designed these journeys for travellers who lead dynamic, fast-paced lives and want a guided experience that still feels personal, less structured, and yet entirely effortless."

Following strong early interest from advisors and guests, Roam by Tauck will expand to 12 itineraries by 2027, including a NZ-focused journey, an Iceland adventure, and a Tokyo tour.

Full details and itineraries for these journeys will be announced in spring 2026. *JM*

UTC's newest client

THE Unique Tourism Collection is now the ANZ sales and marketing representative for Jordan-based DMO Dakkak Group, which specialises in offering travel experiences across the Middle East and around the globe, from corporate to cruise.

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when experience matters

QF to Port Moresby

QANTAS has announced the return of flights between Sydney and Port Moresby as Papua New Guinea prepares to enter Australia's premier rugby league competition.

The service will operate twice weekly from Mar 2026 on the airline's Boeing 737 aircraft, adding almost 35,000 seats annually to Papua New Guinea, complementing QF's existing daily Brisbane-Port Moresby flights.

"We're seeing growth in business travel between Sydney and Port Moresby and that's building further as PNG ramps up preparations for Australia's premier rugby league competition in 2028," said Qantas Chief Executive Officer International, Cam Wallace.

"The preparation work alone is generating travel, and once the team starts playing and fans and teams are travelling for matches, we expect that to increase significantly," he added.

AW advisor survey

ADVENTURE World has launched its 2025 Travel Advisor Survey, which asks Australian and New Zealand agents to provide essential feedback that will directly influence its future product offerings, training programs, and support services.

All advisors who submit the five-minute questionnaire by 19 Dec will be entered into a draw for a chance to win a gourmet gift hamper - **CLICK HERE**.

SmartLynx lands in SYD



THE first SmartLynx Australia flight from Lord Howe Island landed at Sydney Airport this week, taking over from Qantas, which operated the route for more than 30 years.

Several execs were at Sydney Airport to welcome the flight, including SmartLynx Australia Chief Executive Gytis Gumuliauskas and CCO Richard George; Sydney Airport's General Manager of Aviation Operations, Brett Daley; Destination NSW's Stephen Mahoney; and Josh Hogan from QantasLink.

"SmartLynx Australia will work with all Lord Howe Island stakeholders to help grow the visitor economy on the beautiful Lord Howe Island," Gumuliauskas explained.

The regional airline received the license for the route in Oct last year, which will now be operated using Dash-8 aircraft

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WWT expands Japan

WENDY Wu Tours has launched a new 16-day 'Gems of Japan & Shikoku' tour, designed for travellers seeking richer, more meaningful experiences without feeling rushed.

The tour takes in major cities as well as the tranquil countryside.

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Qatar back to CBR

QATAR Airways flight QR988 touched down in Canberra today, marking the return of its daily service via Melbourne which stopped during the pandemic.

The move was flagged last year (**TD** 16 Dec 2024), and will connect travellers from Canberra to more than 170 destinations worldwide via Hamad International Airport in Doha.

Meanwhile, thanks to the airline's strategic partnership with Virgin Australia, passengers can also enjoy seamless onward connections to major domestic destinations, enhancing convenience and flexibility across the country.

"The return of Qatar Airways is a game-changer for international travel," said Canberra Airport CEO Stephen Byron.

"It restores a vital link for over a million people across the ACT and southern NSW, while opening the door to global opportunities for business and tourism."

Govt slashes skills support

THE Federal Government is halving the level of support for employers and trainees under its Australian Apprenticeship Traineeship Incentives System, in a move that the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has described as "disappointing".

Under the government's revised system, from 01 Jan next year, financial support for priority occupations (outside of housing and energy) will be reduced from \$2,500 for employers and \$2,500 for trainees.

According to a statement from ATIA, "the extent of the impact of the reduction will become apparent in coming months".

However, ATIA Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Ingrid Fraser, acknowledged that it is positive news that the travel industry remains on the government's priority list, as the funds will help to attract and train new talent entering the sector.




"ATIA has advocated extensively to ensure the Government understands the significant workforce pressures facing our industry," Fraser said, noting the importance of continued support given the national shortage of travel consultants.

"As the incentives system evolves, ATIA will continue working closely with Government to ensure the training needs of critical industries like travel remain understood and supported," she added.

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, Amanda Rishworth, noted that other support is available, such as Australian Apprenticeship Support Loans. *JHM*



Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



MELBOURNE

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of **Tourism Australia**, which is hosting **Australia Next in Melbourne**.

TODAY attendees of Australia Next are getting down to business with a full day of conferencing and networking sessions with business events bodies across the country.

Members of the media will then be whisked off to experience some of the best features of Melbourne as an incentive destination in the afternoon, the details of which are being kept under wraps to build added excitement.

The day will conclude with a special welcome function in the evening hosted by the Melbourne Convention Bureau.

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TASMAN SEA

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Holland America Line aboard the *MS Noordam* as she cruises from NZ to Australia.

IT'S hard to imagine anything more relaxing than a sea day, with guests aboard HAL's *Noordam* enjoying a leisurely crossing to Hobart today.

The spa and gym are busy, as are the huge array of bars and restaurants, while those of a more curious bent are also making the most of art classes, cooking demonstrations, competitions and concerts.

The library offers an array of reading material, while many are just taking the opportunity to sit and watch the waves go by in the many public spaces.

Tassie BETS on big events

EXCLUSIVE

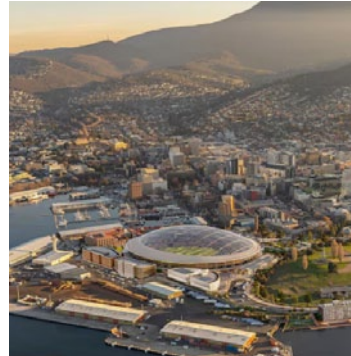
THE proposed 23,000 seat Hobart Stadium on the brink of approval at Macquarie Point on Hobart's waterfront will be an "absolute game-changer" for the state's business events sector.

According to Laura Curtain, Business Events Tasmania's (BET) Strategic Partnerships and Seamless Experiences executive, the major piece of events infrastructure will turn the tap on for Hobart's events appeal 365 days a year.

"We are really excited about the what it's going to be like for the events that happen behind the closed doors away from the sporting arena," Curtain said.

"All of the rigging is there in the design for artists like Pink to be flying off the roof - the architects have really thought about those kinds of considerations.

"The northern part of the stand is actually removable so they can



put a stage in there, so this is ready to be a multi-purpose space the state can benefit from." AB

EK plane damage

AN INQUIRY has been opened after an Emirates plane was found to have damage to two of its tyres and wheels after landing at Auckland Airport yesterday.

The incident - which involved an A380-861 - occurred after 11.30am on Sun in wet conditions, with no injuries reported.



Window Seat

FLYING can wreak havoc on your skin, but it seems some seats are better than others if you want to avoid the ravages of low humidity and high UV radiation.

Beauty expert and ex-flight attendant Danielle Louise told the *Daily Mail* that the worst seats are window seats, due to their minimal airflow and higher UV exposure, while the first and last five rows, which are subject to high temperature and airflow fluctuation, are the most dehydrating.

Meanwhile, the best place to sit is an aisle seat in the middle of the cabin, where airflow is more stable, and humidity dips aren't as severe.

But if you're stuck in a first-class window seat, simply apply a rich, hydrating moisturiser.

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A taste of Vietnam



LAST week, members of the Australian travel trade attended the Vietnam Tourism Roadshow at Sydney Marriott, which was organised by the Vietnam National Authority of Tourism (VNAT) in collaboration with the Vietnam Tourism Development Fund, Vietnam Airlines and Best Price Travel.

Delegates from VNAT flew to Australia to take part in the event, led by VNAT Deputy Director Ha Van Sieu (**pictured**) and Deputy Consul General and Head of the Vietnam Trade Office in Sydney Tran Thi Thanh My.

The evening began with a B2B networking session, as attendees chatted with suppliers from all over Vietnam, which was followed by a gala dinner.

During dinner, guests heard about the nation's tourism landscape from representatives.

"We receive more than 20

million international tourists every year and among that, half a million come from Australia - we're very happy about that - thank you very much," Sieu said, noting that Australia ranks as the ninth biggest source market for Vietnam.

My shared Vietnam's diverse tourism experiences, such as the rail journeys on board the Reunification Express.

Attendees also heard about the hidden gems of Quang Ninh Province from Nguyen Thuy Yen, Deputy Director of the region's Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

Emilie Groleau, General Manager from Aviareps, which represents Best Price Travel in Australia, shared her insights into the growth of the wellness industry in Vietnam, noting that Aussies spend \$5,000 - \$10,000 per wellness trip. *JHM*

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Travel Daily

TC improves succession

TRAVELLERS Choice followed up its ProStart training program with the launch of ProAdvance - a professional development program tailored for consultants who want to take their careers to the next level.

Revealed at the Travellers Choice conference in Melbourne over the weekend, ProAdvance is a six-month program tackling topics such as leadership, strategic communications and business innovation.

Speaking to **Travel Daily** on the sidelines of the conference, Managing Director Christian Hunter said the new training offering is about providing travel advisors a professional pathway to allow them to one day run a travel agency of their own.

"There are many consultants who come into the industry and really enjoy the job, but they don't actually see themselves as being a business owner down the track," Hunter explained

TRAVELLERS CHOICE

"ProAdvance is really taking that experienced consultant and giving them the opportunity to really think about that."

While the new training tool will provide benefits in terms of future-proofing members of the Travellers Choice network, Hunter believes a lack of forward planning is a stumbling block more broadly in travel.

"I think we have a succession issue across the sector, particularly in that independent space, a lot of the owners are more senior in their careers.

"Everyone has a use-by date and there will come a time when those business owners no longer want to continue.

"We would hate to see businesses closing around the country because of that." *AB*

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Tourism Ireland

THERE is a certain magic to Northern Ireland, with its mix of striking landscapes, deep-rooted culture and genuine local warmth.

The famed Causeway Coastal Route is the perfect place to begin, where your clients can walk among ancient basalt columns at the UNESCO-listed Giant's Causeway, cross the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge, or roam the atmospheric ruins of Dunluce Castle above the sea.

Inland, the charm continues with heather-topped mountains, hands-on experiences like

traditional bread-making and whiskey tasting, and storytelling at the Ulster American Folk Park.

Then there's Belfast: birthplace of Titanic and now a UNESCO City of Music, where traditional Irish

tunes mingle with contemporary beats in lively pubs and venues.

Travellers can indulge in fresh flavours at St George's Market, treat themselves to Michelin-star dining, and soak up panoramic

views from Belfast Castle.

Whether it's the scenery, the stories, or the spirit of the people, Northern Ireland offers a travel experience that's as personal as it is unforgettable.



Indulge in food and drink

FROM guided city walks in Belfast starting at the historic St George's Market to rustic farm-and-orchard tours across the countryside, Northern Ireland offers a front-row seat to its vibrant food scene.

Along the dramatic coastal route and inland glens, visitors can cycle through craft beer breweries, stroll apple orchards producing award winning cider, or

don an apron to bake traditional soda bread in a 17th century thatched cottage.

These immersive trails connect travellers with local producers and distillers, bringing the story of the land, its ingredients, and its people to life in every bite and sip.

Discover more experiences along Northern Ireland's Food and Drink Trail [HERE](#).

Follow the SCENEic route

NORTHERN Ireland's landscapes and cities shine on screen, and now travellers can explore them with the new SCENEic Route.

This illustrated map highlights iconic filming locations across the region, from *Derry Girls* spots in

Londonderry to *Line of Duty* trails in Belfast and *Game of Thrones* Movie Studios, or settings in Tollymore Forest.

The SCENEic Route invites travellers to step into the stories they love.

Find out more [HERE](#).





Goldie goes Eco

ECOTOURISM Australia has announced the return of the Global Sustainable Tourism Summit in 2026, with the Gold Coast named the official host city for the event.

The conference is supported by Tourism Australia and will take place between 02-05 June.

"This event is a significant opportunity for our industry to learn, share and be inspired to create change and ensure that tourism is a catalyst for positive change," Elissa Keenan, CEO of Ecotourism Australia, said.

The Gold Coast is home to a significant number of Ecotourism Australia-certified operators, with over 30 Eco and Sustainable Tourism Certified businesses located in the region.

Aussie sustainability gets the Flix

GERMAN bus company Flix's launch in Australia has seen more than just another long-distance coach operator enter the market - it is ensured that a leading European sustainable transport company has hit local roads.

Last week, Flix was awarded by EUPD Group with the status of excellence, and recognised as a leading company in the ESG Transparency Award 2025, with a total score of 87.98 out of 100.

Currently, almost 120 FlixBus coaches around the world are running on alternative drives including electricity or biofuel, in an effort to cut CO2 emissions compared to more standard diesel operations.

This is part of the fleet transformation process that Flix is pursuing within the framework of the Science-based Targets initiative (SBTi).



"We are proud to be recognised for transparent sustainability reporting - as we expand globally, our responsibility grows with us," CEO and co-founder André Schwämmlein said.

"We are committed to turning that scale into real value for the communities we serve."

Flix has recently expanded substantially on a global level, including its entry into Australia.

In one year, Flix increased its global network by 33%.

It is now possible to buy tickets to more than 8,000 destinations in 45 countries, with one third in towns with less than 20,000 inhabitants, often in remote areas and either poorly or not connected by trains.

Flix is committed to achieving Net Zero operations in Europe by 2040 and globally by 2050. *DF*

Small calls to act

SMALL Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH) has debuted its Call-to-Action (CTA) Report, inspiring action from boutique hotels and beyond.

Marking the 35th anniversary of the brand in 2025, SLH's version of a CTA report looked at the past, present and future of small luxury hotels and sustainability, and emphasised solution-led success stories.

The report is SLH's largest CTA yet and spotlights innovative success.

Read the CTA [HERE](#).

Lithium air batteries could be about to revolutionise eVTOLs

RESEARCH teams from the National Institute for Materials Science (NIMS) and Toyo Tanso have developed a carbon electrode that enables stable operation of a 1-Wh-class stacked lithium-air battery.

While those words may be akin to a foreign language for many, the result could mean a significant step towards practical, industrial-scale lithium-air batteries which could significantly improve the flexibility of eVTOLs by allowing for greater range from batteries that are much lighter.

The concept works by drawing



oxygen from the surrounding environment rather than storing it inside the cell, thereby reducing the weight and potentially achieving energy densities many times higher than those of standard lithium-ion cells.

For eVTOLs that require the lightest batteries possible with the longest range, it is a significant step forward.

In a statement, the project team said the progress was a big step towards "real-world deployment" of the batteries. *DF*



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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.650

RECENTLY this column reported on a number of financial analysts suggesting that as we moved towards the end of the year, the AUD would climb towards the US\$0.70 mark and remain around that position into 2026.

That expectation has come crashing down with a loud thud despite Cecile Lefort in the *AFR* describing the current environment as "a strong economy" with "talk of interest rate rises next year when other countries including the US are still in easing mode".

She reported that Ray Attrill, Head of FX Strategy at National Australia Bank said "The movement in rate differentials is impressive.

"It certainly suggests the Aussie should be much higher than US\$0.65."

Where does that leave the Aussie, then?

Possibly tracking more towards the US\$0.63 mark towards mid-2026.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.650
UK	£0.500
NZ	\$1.143
Euro	€0.564
Japan	¥101.84
Thailand	฿20.949
China	¥4.629
South Africa	11.190
Canada	\$0.916
Bitcoin	0.0000075590

CT Partners has the FACTS



CT Partners enjoyed a great week taking part at the recent Future of Australian Corporate Travel Summits (FACTS) two-day conference in Sydney, with several members hitting the stage to share their insights into the future of business travel.

Topics included emerging trends in corporate travel, the future of sustainability, business events strategy, modern airline retailing, AI and travel technology and much more.

"FACTS features some important conversations around key issues impacting our sector including around NDC, data sophistication, aviation sustainability, premium traveller expectations and the future of distribution," CT Partners CEO Matt Masson said.

"Our members aren't just participating in those conversations; they're helping shape them."

Masson noted the importance of CT Partners' members' involvement in the wider industry and sharing their knowledge with their peers.

"We've always believed that independence and innovation are strongest when paired with collaboration," he said.

"When our members present at events like FACTS, they're not only showcasing their own expertise, they're demonstrating the leadership, strategic alignment and forward-thinking mindset that defines CT Partners as a network."

CT Partners also recently wrapped up its annual conference in Singapore, themed 'Resilience and reinvention' and attended by a record 150 delegates, including guest speaker Australian Travel Industry Association Chief Executive Dean Long. *JHM*

Pictured: Masson with Freddy Mikhael, founder and Managing Director at JC Travel, and Kristin Panchetti, General Manager at Complete Business Travel.

Moreton Bay boost

MORETON Bay has launched its Rediscover Play campaign, highlighting the playful tourism offerings of the region as it prepares for "a record-breaking summer holiday season".

"We are stepping up our trade engagement and marketing activity as the region continues to mature," explained Luke Edwards, CEO of Tourism and Events Moreton Bay.

"By tapping into a clear desire for adults to embrace more play, and drawing on our heritage as Brisbane's original seaside playground, we are aiming to boost visitation across the peak summer season."

New data from Tourism Research Australia has revealed Moreton Bay enjoyed a 57% growth in international holiday visitor nights in 2024-2025, while in terms of occupancy, the region is set to experience "slightly higher peak levels than past seasons" during Dec and Jan.

A Trilogy takeover

TRILOGY Hotels is now managing the Ink Hotel Melbourne Southbank, marking the property group's debut in the city as it expands in Australia.

Owned by Nadathur Group, the 162-key hotel will also be rebranded as ibis Styles Melbourne Southbank under a franchise agreement with Accor.

"The conversion to ibis Styles Melbourne Southbank under Trilogy management will deliver strong operational performance, great guest experiences and launch careers in the industry we love," enthused said Scott Boyes, CEO of Trilogy Hotels.