Travel Daily First with the news

Thursday 4th December 2025







AT 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.

AFTER a day in Hobart, we're back on the high seas heading to Melbourne.

Yesterday guests made the most of the Tassie capital, undertaking organised shore excursions or exploring independently from Noordam's dock on the Derwent River.

For some international quests, it was their first ever taste of Australia, visiting sights such as Bruny Island, Port Arthur, Richmond and more - as well as taking in local wildlife viewing, sampling Tassie cuisine and nearby wineries.

Int'l Rail giveaway

INTERNATIONAL Rail has teamed up with Italian train operator Trenitalia to give agents in Australia and New Zealand the chance to win a \$1,000 Visa gift voucher this month.

Every Trenitalia sector booked online between 01-31 Dec equals one entry into the draw, for example Romes-Naples or Milan-Florence, with no cap on entries.

The winning agent will be drawn on 15 Jan 2026 and notified directly - find out more HERE.

QF names first AI chief

QANTAS Group has announced a major shake-up of personnel and departments in a note to staff that has been leaked to mainstream media.

The national carrier confirmed a senior leadership shuffle that will see Andrew Glance become Chief Executive of Loyalty and Customer, International and Freight boss Cam Wallace take on in-flight and on-ground services, domestic head Markus Svensson add customer care, and QantasLink chief Rachel Yangoyan become the airline's first chief of technology, AI and transformation officer, among other changes.

The latter leaves room for a major change to QantasLink, which will now merge with Qantas domestic.

Jetstar boss Mark Dal Pra will take on Yangon's former role but will now report into Svensson.

There are a number of departures as well, including Chief Customer Officer, Catriona Larritt, Chief Data and Information Officer Andrew Walduck, and Executive Manager In-flight Experience, David Kondo.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from **Qatar** Airways and our Business Events News page, plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Abercrombie & Kent



News.com.au also reported that up to 400 jobs may be lost prior to Christmas, although Qantas has strenuously denied this.

Qantas CEO Vanessa Hudson took the opportunity to explain why the airline was making such significant changes on the eve of receiving hundreds of new aircraft - the biggest fleet renewal in the airline's history.

The AFR reported that Hudson wrote, "With more than 200 new aircraft joining our fleet over the next decade and significant investment in technology and AI ahead, I've taken this opportunity to update the group leadership team structure and responsibilities to ensure we are set up for success."

MEANWHILE, Qantas will scrap its direct flights between Melbourne and Honolulu from Feb 2026 due to soft demand. just nine months after launching the route (TD 03 Sep 2024).

By contrast, demand on Sydney-Honolulu remains strong, with the Flying Kangaroo confirming it will boost the service to six flights per week, going up to daily flights in Apr to cater for re-bookings from the abandoned Melbourne service. DF

Limitless Silversea

SILVERSEA has launched its 2026 wave season offer, with up to 40% savings available on more than 800 voyages.

The promotion applies to new bookings made from 03 Dec 2025 through to 28 Feb 2026.

See page eight for more details.



WEEKLY GIVEAWAY

INCENTIVES

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Australian Star set to ascend

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIA'S first five-star river vessel met the water for the first time recently, as the ship's construction nears completion.

The brand-new Australian Star paddlesteamer (TD 12 Jan 2024) is now poised to debut for Murray River Paddlesteamers next year, after meeting water for the first time last month, and cruising up the Murray River to the ship's base near Echuca.

Final work on the \$11 million vessel (pictured) will now be completed over the course of two months, which will see the upper deck finished, and all staterooms and public areas fitted out.

She will then begin her program of three-, four-, and seven-night cruises from Echuca in Feb, with a formal christening ceremony to be held the following month.

Murray River Paddlesteamers **Director Craig Burgess said** Australian Star's arrival marked a major achievement

"Seeing Australian Star pass safely through the Torrumbarry Weir was a tremendous relief, especially given the lower-thanexpected water levels," he said.

"It marks the culmination of a two-and-a-half-year journey involving more than 80 Victorian suppliers and craftsmen who have poured their skill, passion and dedication into bringing this remarkable vessel to life."

Burgess said the vessel represents a step-change for the local river cruising sector.



"Australians love cruising, and they love the Murray River - it's an icon - but there has been a clear demand for a world-class, five-star experience that matches the standards of Europe's great waterways," he explained.

"Australian Star will deliver exactly that - she will usher in a new era of luxury river cruising and reimagine what's possible on the Murray." MS

New Intrepid SVP

INTREPID Travel has named Steven Larkin as Senior Vice President of Global Sales & Partnerships.

Larkin has a long history with Intrepid, having spent his first stint working for the company between 2018-2014, when he ascended to the Presidency of the company in Canada.

He will report directly to Americas President Leigh Barnes.

Other roles Larkin has served in the travel industry include Delta Air Line Director of Sales for Canada - the position he departed to rejoin Intrepid.

Larkin also co-founded his own brand, Out Adventures, one of the world's leaders in LGBTQI travel.

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HLO jumps hurdle

HELLOWORLD has cleared another major hurdle in its bid to acquire Webjet, with the ACCC confirming it has no objection to the potential purchase (TD breaking news yesterday).

The development followed the major travel agency player making an offer last month to buy Webjet for 90 cents a share (TD 19 Nov), with the OTA granting Helloworld due diligence access.

Webjet's board of directors will also need to issue a unanimous endorsement of the deal to shareholders for the acquisition offer to go ahead.

While the news takes Helloworld anther step closer to a purchase of Webjet, BGH Capital also has a bid in play for 91 cents a share (TD 21 Nov).

CTM probed in Oz

CORPORATE Travel

Management (CTM) has agreed to undertake an independent audit of its Australian Government contracts, after the Finance Department requested the ASXlisted company prove that is has not overcharged taxpayers.

The demand comes after CTM disclosed that it had overcharged customers in the UK, including British taxpayers, at least £80 million (\$162 million), prompting several British authorities to launch investigations (TD 28 Nov).

CTM has a contract to provide travel bookings for Australian parliamentarians until 2027, with a possible three-year extension.

Save on A&K '26

TRAVELLERS can enjoy big savings across Abercrombie & Kent Group's small group iournevs in 2026 and 2027.

The offer includes itineraries like the 10-day 'Natural Wonders of Madagascar' - head to the back page to find out more.









SPECIAL REPORT

Southeast Asia's hidden gems revealed.

>>> CLICK HERE TO READ



Window Seat

WHAT better way to celebrate an Australian Christmas than at the beach?

The Bureau of Meterology has released three-year historic Christmas Day data into exactly which Australian beaches to visit for optimal sunshine and swimmable temperatures - and little chance of rain or storms.

The best beach to visit in WA is Shell Beach in the Shark Bay region, which has an average temperature of 30.5°C and an average of zero rainfall - score.

In NSW, head to Bennetts Beach in Hawks Nest to enjoy an average temp of 27.9°C and 2.6mm of rain, while Queenslanders should visit Lady Musgrave Island Beach, and Victorians are advised to visit Torquay Beach.

Aussies relying on points

CLOSE to half of Australians intend to use their frequent flyer points to help cover costs associated with Christmas, including shopping and travel.

A new report from Virgin Australia's Velocity Frequent Flyer and YouGov has showed the average airline loyalty member in Australia has an estimated 58.000 unredeemed points, equating to roughly \$1.9 billion worth of loyalty currency.

More than any other demographic, Gen Z and Millennials are planning to lean into points to fund their Christmas travel and gift plans, with 79% of Gen Z planning to use their points this festive season, and 83% looking to redeem on travel specifically.

The research also revealed that more than half of Aussies (55%) feel more financially stretched than this time last year, with 40% confirming they will struggle to



afford everyday essentials.

Velocity Frequent Flyer Chief **Executive Officer Nick Rohrlach** said the report highlighted a "major shift" in how Australians think about loyalty programs.

"Members are no longer just thinking about flights - a 40% surge in members earning through non-air partners shows Aussies are turning everyday spending into Christmas gifts," said Rohrlach (pictured).

"With cost-of-living pressures impacting households, points are becoming an important part of how Australians manage their spending, especially in the lead up to Christmas," he added. AB

Sabre gets precise

TRAVEL risk management solution Precision has signed an agreement with Sabre to combat fraud in travel payments.

The partnership combines Precision's advanced fraud intelligence with Sabre's global distribution scale and payment innovation to deliver seamless and more secure bookings.

Precision will now help travel sellers to intercept threats at the time of booking, helping to mitigate losses in an industry which faces over \$21 billion in annual fraud.

Riviera's new CEO

RIVIERA Travel has appointed Matt Luscombe as Group CEO, effective 01 Jan 2026, who takes over from Phil Hullah.

Luscombe previously served as CEO of Cycas Hospitality and prior to that, spent a decade at InterContinental Hotels Group. More appointments on p7.





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Boeing nabs Tilden

BOEING has announced the election of former chairman, president and CEO of Alaska Air Group, Bradley Tilden, to its Board of Directors.

Effective immediately, Tilden will serve on the Aerospace Safety and Finance committees.



Crikey, what a great result

NEW insights released by Tourism Australia have shown its latest campaign featuring Robert Irwin as brand ambassador has shifted the needle on the appetite for Australian visitation.

The latest global rollout of the 'Come and Say G'day' push has already attracted 374 million views from around the world, with four in five viewers stating they are now considering taking a trip to Australia.

A little under 80% said they would plan a trip within the next two years, while nine in 10 high-yield travellers indicated a desire "to find out more" about Australia after seeing the ad.

Testament to the Federal Government spending \$130 million on the campaign, Tourism Australia figures show that for every dollar invested, the country receives a roughly \$14 return.

"The campaign has clearly struck a chord with audiences overseas and it will be in markets



for two years encouraging travellers to plan and book an Australian holiday," Federal Tourism Minister Don Farrell said.

"Tourism is the lifeblood of so many communities around the country and 'Come and Say G'day' will ensure more visitors come to our shores, creating more jobs and growing our economy."

Acting Tourism Australia Managing Director Robin Mack added that while the results of the latest campaign rollout are still in the "early days", he was excited about its potential to attract high-spending tourists.

"Three in four high-yielding travellers indicated there is something new in the ad they hadn't realised Australia was known for," Mack said. AB

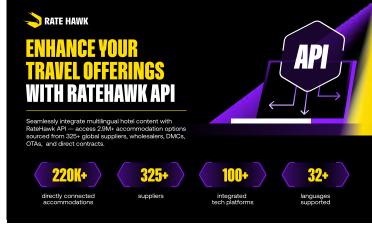
FCTG worker jailed

A FORMER Flight Centre employee has been sentenced to four years in jail after pleading guilty to stealing almost \$40,000 from the Canberra City branch.

Justin Dion Appleton, 39, stole the money while he was a sales consultant for the brand in 2019.



View Itineraries >







Thursday 4th Dec 2025

QR CREW; Yen Kho, QR; Melissa Evans, Canberra Airport; Dr Atheer Al-Saoudi, Egis; Jonathan Kobus, Visit Canberra; Justin Kestel, QR; Dr. David Marshall, Canberra Tourism Leaders Forum; Ken Lau, QR; QR crew.





MC ISABELLE Mullen from Channel 7.



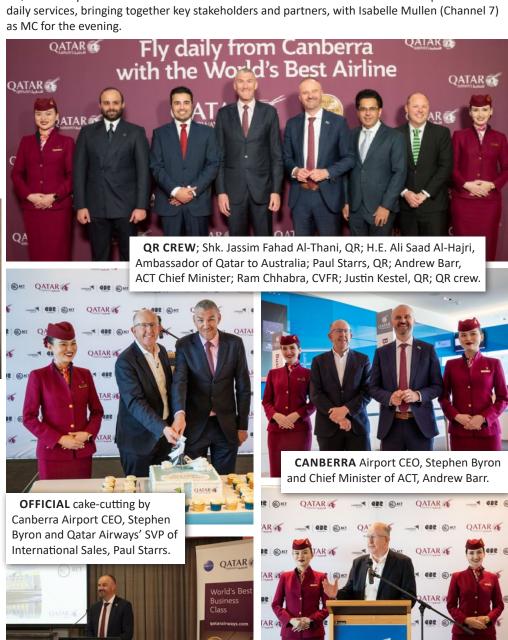


Qatar Airways' return to Canberra has landed

QATAR Airways' resumption flight to Canberra touched down on 02 Dec, officially marking the return of its daily service to the Australian capital via Melbourne.

To celebrate the world's best airline once again connecting Canberra to more than 170 global destinations, trade partners and media gathered for an exclusive event at Canberra Airport, joined by ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr, Canberra Airport CEO Stephen Byron, and Head of Aviation Michael Thomson.

Qatar Airways also hosted an exclusive dinner in Canberra to celebrate the resumption of its





ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr.



CANBERRA Airport CEO, Stephen

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businesseventsnews.com.au

Melbourne H

AUSTRALIA welcomed close to 200 industry sellers and business event planners from key overseas markets in Melbourne this week.

The delegation for the Business Events Australia's marquee Australia Next conference wrapped up last night at the historic Royal Exhibition Building, marking the end of three days of networking between Australian events stakeholders and reps from the UK, NZ, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, South Korea and Japan.

Tourism Australia Acting Managing Director, Robin Mack, said Australia Next has a proven track record of helping to secure a pipeline of international events.

"Our last incentive showcase in Cairns last year drove solid results for Australia's business events industry, generating 161 business leads, worth around \$170 million,

NZICC opens Feb

AN OPENING date has been set for the New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC), which will officially open its doors on 11 Feb 2026.

More than 100 events are already confirmed for the NZ\$750m (A\$656m) centre, starting with a series of special opening events over the first few weeks, including a dawn blessing, live concert, and public open day.

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and we are confident this year's event will deliver more great results," Mack said.

"At Tourism Australia we know the best way to showcase our country is to show, not tell, international decision makers about what we have to offer and [this year's] program...will ensure planners will experience the very best of Melbourne's incentive offerings," he added.

A key plank of Australia Next is the ability to host famils for

attendees across the country, and while Melbourne was the focal point as host, destination trips were also offered in Cairns, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Perth, Adelaide and Hobart.

Further highlights of the program included guests being serenaded by the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, helicopter flights to the Mornington Peninsula, art classes in Melbourne's CBD, Yarra river cruises, and cherry picking.

Melbourne took full advantage of the event to create stronger momentum for its visitor economy, with business events delegate worth more than either leisure or corporate travellers.

Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO Julia Swanson said Australia Next provided the perfect forum to promote the city's "unique appeal to the global incentive market", and what makes it a premier destination.

"Melbourne offers more than exceptional event spaces with world class food and wine, a vibrant calendar of major events, and a plethora of cultural experiences - it's a city built for creating unforgiveable moments."

Last night it was revealed that Australia Next will revert to a once every two years event from its recent annual frequency, and will shift to Sydney in 2027. AB

SITE appoints global events partner

THE Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) has announced the appointment Missouri-based company Bishop-McCann as its global strategic event partner for a three-year term.

Under the agreement, Bishop-McCann will provide key planning services and support delivery of SITE's portfolio of events worldwide.

The full-service event management partner will

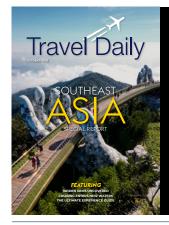
collaborate closely with the SITE events team across strategy, program design, production, logistics, registration, and onsite execution.

"Partnering with Bishop-McCann elevates our ability to design and deliver exceptional experiences, while aligning with a team that shares our values, our standards, and our commitment to operational excellence," said SITE CEO, Annette Gregg.

Australia Next

AUSTRALIA'S business events offerings were showcased to almost 100 international buyers during the country's signature incentive showcase, Australia Next, which took place in Melbourne earlier this week.

Over the past two years, the showcase has helped to secure 45 events for Australia worth almost \$37 million, and it is expected those numbers will continue to grow.



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Hyatt Hotels is advancing its luxury brand focus, appointing **Tamara Lohan** to lead this dedicated brand within the company. The news was announced at ILTM Cannes this week, with Lohan bringing deep expertise in personalisation, global luxury trends, and consumer insights to hew new role as Global Brand Leader - Luxury. She joined Hyatt in 2023 through the acquisition of Mr & Mrs Smith, the boutique luxury hotel platform she co-founded and led for more than two decades.

Destination management company EXO Travel has appointed Chris Morley as Director of Commercial. This new key role will further reinforce the company's commercial leadership under Chief Commercial Officer Nick Ghosh. Morley will oversee EXO's commercial strategy across its network of destinations, with a focus on deepening supplier relationships, enhancing contracting performance, and creating added value for EXO's worldwide trade partners.

Celestyal Cruises has appointed Janet Parton as Vice President of Marketing, PR, & Customer Experience. Parton moves into the new role with immediate effect from her previous position as Vice President of Business Development & Managing Director of Celestyal Travel. She brings with her extensive experience from both her two years at Celestyal, as well as earlier roles as sales and marketing director at Globus Family of Brands.

Senior leadership announcements have been made at TFE Hotels in Victoria, with new general manager appointments: Grant Fleet, Michael Gibson, and Angelo Di Marco. Fleet will lead Rendezvous Hotel Melbourne, Gibson will head up the Quincy Hotel Melbourne, and Di Marco will be General Manager at the Travelodge Hotel Melbourne Docklands. Also joining the TFE team will be Lindsay Guy, who will be the new Executive Assistant Manager at the city's soon-to-open Hannah St Hotel. He will be joined by Food & Beverage Manager Bernard Glaude and Experience Director Sergio Morales, with all three appointed ahead of the hotel's opening later this month.

Hilton Hotels has appointed a new Regional Head of Human Resources, with Stephanie Lopesi to bring her 15 years of HR leadership to the company. She will play a key role in deepening Hilton's culture of inclusion and belonging across Australia.

The Australian Travel Careers Council (ATCC) has appointed Dr Moira Scerri to its advisory board. ATCC Chair Ian Carew-Reid said Scerri brings extensive experience across travel operations, technology implementation, and workforce capability, drawing on her academic role at the University of Technology Sydney. ATCC Chief Executive Officer Rick Myatt noted Scerri's background, which includes roles with Amadeus, Moneydirect, and TAFE NSW.



Agents get excited for Turkiye



BUNNIK Tours recently hosted its first-ever Turkiye famil, which saw 10 Flight Centre agents explore the destination over eight days.

The group experienced highlights from the operator's classic 'Turkiye in Depth' and deluxe 'Turkiye In-Style' tours, beginning with Istanbul's iconic landmarks and a Bosphorus cruise, before exploring the ancient ruins of Troy and Ephesus.

They also visited the terraces of Pamukkale, enjoyed a stay at Istanbul's luxuruious Pera Palace Hotel, and explored Gallipoli with a specialist guide.

A particular highlight was a cooking class in the quaint village of Sirince, where the agents learned to make local culinary specialities, including hummus, stew and halva.

Bunnik Tours' GM - Sales, Kevin Bishop, who co-hosted the famil with National Sales Manager Zoe Francis, said: "This famil has strengthened our connections with trade partners and sparked a real excitement for Turkiye, while giving agents a first-hand experience of what sets Bunnik Tours apart." JM



Games Room

With a huge array of games and puzzles, this peaceful place is on deck 10 of Holland America Line's Noordam as part of the observation lounge. Bar staff are on hand to cater to every whim, as passengers enjoy multiple jigsaws, chess, Scrabble and a generous collection of board games.



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FDITORIAL

Editor - Adam Bishop 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

Business Development Manager - Kara

advertising@traveldaily.com.au

t 1300 799 220

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER Matthew Vince

ACCOUNTS

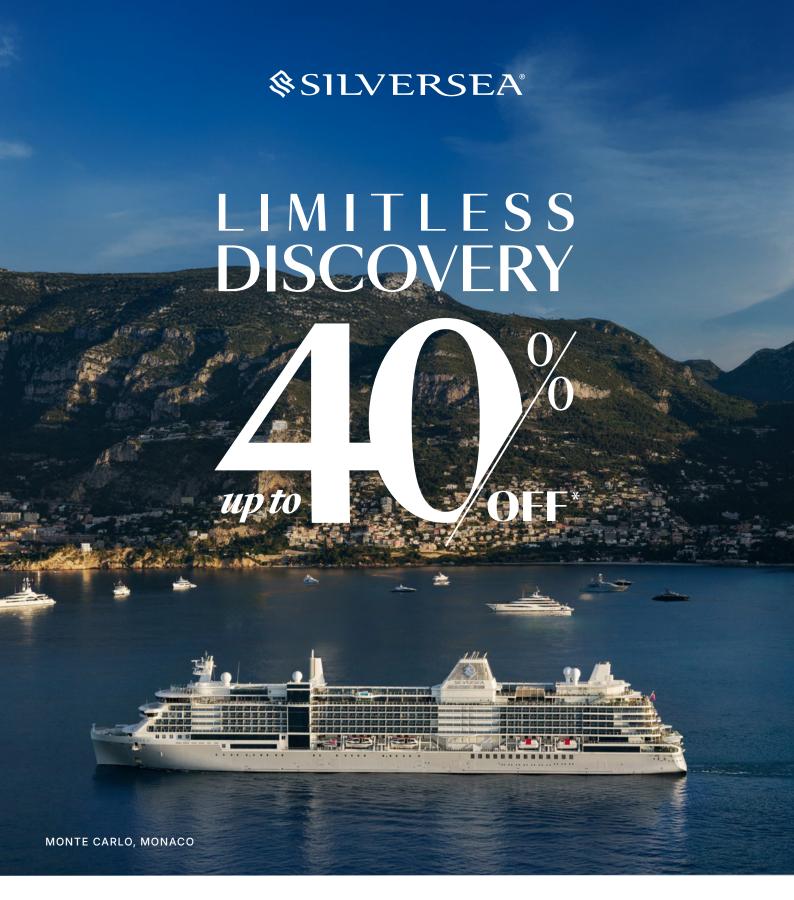
accounts@traveldaily.com.au

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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