

ETG soiree is back

ENTIRE Travel Group's (ETG) showcase soiree is back next year, with three dates in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane - read more on [page six](#).

Fly free with Scenic

FLY free to Europe for a voyage on board a Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours discovery yacht next year. The economy fly free offer is valid from 15 Dec to 28 Feb - full details available on [page seven](#).

WSI spurs SYD upgrades

THE raft of renovations and enhancements being undertaken at Sydney Airport is directly attributable to the competition being applied by the upcoming 24-7 Western Sydney Airport, the hub's Chief Operating Officer Matt Duffy has claimed.

Speaking at FACTS in Sydney, Duffy said Sydney Airport is working hard to modernise its passenger services because there



will soon be competition "in their backyard", and will ultimately be a major win for all Aussie travellers and inbound tourists. "You'll see better service levels - both within airports and airlines in Australia - and overall travellers will see better value-for-money," Duffy predicted.

"We also know that Sydney Airport continues to shed capacity - particularly during the peak periods it has its issues - so we know there's demand in the market and we are really focused on creating a great product and getting into the market."

Duffy also delineated WSI from Sydney Airport by emphasising its ability to expand and future-proof facilities, an area that Sydney Airport's smaller real estate capacity may limit in the future.

But WSI has had its own challenges, with Duffy conceding it would have been nice to have already locked in VA, but a scarcity of aircraft has added "complexities" to talks. *AB*

QF pays out \$40m

AS PART of a Federal Court loss around the illegal sacking of workers (*TD* 18 Aug), Qantas will pay the residual \$40 million penalty to the 1,700 affected workers before Christmas.

Each worker will receive an initial payment of \$3,333, with the remainder of the payments to be made on a pro-rata basis based on their entitlements.

The Federal Court found Qantas had breached *The Fair Work Act* when it outsourced staff in 2020.

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MU commits to BNE

CHINA Eastern Airlines plans to increase its frequencies to Brisbane next year from daily to 10 times a week.

The added flights will be applied between 22 Jan and 28 Feb using A330-200 aircraft, according to GDS screens.

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today features five pages of industry news, including our **Luxury** page, plus full pages from:

- Entire Travel Group
- Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours

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Fruin takes a Swan dive

SWAN Hellenic has welcomed on board Kirsty Fruin as Sales Director Australia & New Zealand (pictured) as part of restructure to commit more resources to the local market.

Reporting to newly installed Regional Director Beth Stolyar - who was previously the local sales chief - Fruin will now lead the cruise line's sales strategy and trade engagement, working with agency partners, key accounts and industry stakeholders to support greater brand awareness.

In addition, her remit will also include providing greater support sales development and training.

"Kirsty's deep understanding of the cruise and expedition sector, combined with her strong trade relationships and commercial expertise, makes her a valuable addition to the Swan Hellenic team," Stolyar said.

"We are excited to have her lead our sales efforts across Australia



and New Zealand."

Swan Hellenic poached Fruin from rival HX Expeditions, where she had been Key Account Manager for only nine months.

She has also worked at Royal Caribbean, Fred. Olsen and The Travel Corporation, where she held leadership and account management positions across the UK and international markets.

According to Swan Hellenic, Fruin has "a proven track record developing high-performing sales strategies, leading teams, and building...trade relations". JHM

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Salter Worlds Apart

SALTER Brothers Hospitality (SBH) has unveiled Worlds Apart, a unified booking platform that brings together its portfolio of accommodation, dining, wellness and events in one space.

CEO Tash Tobias described the new initiative as "a gateway to exceptional journeys", where guests can now explore and seamlessly book experiences across all of its offerings.

"It's not only about convenience, but also about creating a streamlined, inspiring journey from discovery to booking," she explained.

"Our new platform reflects SBH's vision for a connected, elevated experience that brings our diverse offerings together under one intuitive digital destination, reinforcing our position at the forefront of luxury travel," she added

Salter Brothers Hospitality will also launch a new loyalty program next year.

A luxury of points

AUSTRALIAN-BASED travel agents can now earn reward points for their clients and soon themselves through Luxury Escapes' loyalty program, Societe.

To help clients earn Societe and status credits, advisors can apply client membership details as part of the checkout process through the agent hub.

The business is working on added functionality to allow agents to claim points if their client is not a member.

VA sweeping change

VIRGIN Australia will boost its Perth-Broome services in 2026 with its 737 and E190-E2 fleet.

From 01 Apr, services to Broome will increase to 17 flights a week, timed to enable connections from capital cities on the east coast.

The carrier recently renewed its pledge to the Regional Airfare Zone Cap scheme, offering capped fares for the WA regions.

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For more information contact SalesAPAC@ponant.com

CONDITIONS: Bookings must be deposited by 09 JAN 2026 to qualify. 1 guest booked = 1 Entry, with unlimited entries. Prize will be randomly drawn on 12 January 2026. Expedition is for 2 Adults travelling in a Prestige Stateroom on a PONANT 8 Day Arctic Expedition. Prize is for Cruise only and cannot be redeemed for cash or transferred. International airfares are at winners own expense.



Ports CEO ships out

TASPORTS CEO Anthony Donald will step down from the role from Mar next year, with interim arrangements and a leadership succession plan to be announced in the coming weeks.

Donald has been in the role for close to 10 years, and recently presided over a challenging period for TasPorts regarding its handling of the infrastructure needs for an expanded fleet of Spirit of Tasmania ferries.

The organisation has faced public backlash over the litany of issues that have plagued the expansion of the ferry services, including accusations of mismanagement, poor cost controls, infrastructure delays, and disputes with Spirit of Tasmania's operator TT-Line.

Agencies drop out

FIVE travel agencies have exited the ATIA accreditation scheme so far this month via a combination of voluntary withdrawals and failures to renew in line with what the charter requires.

Port Stephens-based Travel with Jade withdrew voluntarily, telling *Travel Daily* the main reason was accreditation affordability.

Sussex Inlet Travel also failed to renew, according to ATIA filings, with the agency recently closing its physical store presence in exchange for online trading.

Other agencies listed on the exit list included Bega Valley Travel and All Good Travels Pty Ltd, both of which failed to renew their accreditation as required under S2.5(n) of the ATAS Charter.

Helloworld Travel Vermont South was the fifth business named, withdrawing voluntarily.

Hamilton Island milestone

HAMILTON Island's iconic Sails Restaurant (pictured) has been transformed with new dining, bar, and sunbed experiences, in what is the first stage of the revitalisation of the destination's Resort Centre precinct.

The new-look Sails brings together relaxed, modern Australian dining, a swim-up bar, as well as all-day dining, from breakfast through to golden hour for guests of all ages.

New menu feature fresh dishes inspired by Mediterranean flavours, including colourful salads, meze plates, and seasonal seafood.

The Sails swim-up bar offers summer spritzes, classic cocktails, and icy refreshments with regular live acoustic music sets.

Guests can reserve king-size sunbeds or twin sunlounges, as well as curated food and drink packages, with four options designed to suit different moods and times of day.

The reopening of Sails is part of a transformation Hamilton Island has undergone over the past year,



which has included a broader revitalised dining landscape, led by the return of Executive Chef Ryan Locke to the Bommie and Beach Club restaurants.

Apr also saw the opening of Catseye Pool Club at The Sundays venues, as well as refreshed interiors and menus at South East Asian favourite Coca Chu, and new menus across Qualia's Pebble Beach and Long Pavilion.

The changes are aimed at positioning Hamilton Island as the leading tropical island destination in the heart of the Great Barrier Reef (TD 01 Aug). MS

Ritzy equity grab

HALF of the equity in the Ritz-Carlton Perth has been sold by Far East Consortium to global Asian hotel conglomerate The Generation Essentials Group for \$100 million.

The new part-owner of the major WA hotel is listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and already owns iconic properties such as the five-star Dao by Dorsett AMTD Singapore, and the four-star hotel iclub AMTD Sheung Wan Hotel in Hong Kong.

United app gets real

UNITED Airlines has updated its app to offer customers a range of new real-time features.

The carrier's new virtual gate option provides updates about which groups are boarding and a progress bar that shows how many people have boarded.

An upgraded mobile bag tracking feature has also rolled out, including a package-delivery-style tracker that shows locations throughout the journey.

The app also allows for more tailored options, such as guidance on travelling with strollers or wheelchairs, reminders for required travel docs, as well as biometric boarding options.

Window Seat

MANY of us have dreamed of stowing away on a cruise ship, an aircraft, a ferry, or something travelling to some place we would rather be.

A parliament of owls recently lived out that fantasy, boarding a Royal Caribbean cruise ship undetected and sailing all the way from Florida to Spain.

The two burrowing owls boarded *Allure of the Seas* on her repositioning journey from Miami to the Mediterranean, and for weeks enjoyed living it up along the coast of Spain.

Unfortunately, reality then set in for the owls, which were caught and are now due for a lengthy stay in quarantine before being returned to the United States.

After a free cruise to Europe, the owls will be returning by air, their fares paid for by the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida - an all-expenses-covered trip most humans would be jealous of.

"They're having quite the adventure and we're glad to help get them safely back to a burrow in Florida," the Foundation's Director of Conservation Tindl Rainey told *The Guardian*.





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Daintree eco lodge

A NEW luxury eco lodge will open in the Daintree Rainforest next year, offering a shift away from material amenities in exchange for memorable nature experiences and connection.

The 14-room Ever Bloomfield Lodge in Tropical North Queensland will open its doors to guests from the middle of next year.

Its website also suggests an emphasis on coral reef experiences, Indigenous tours, and treks through the surrounding rainforest.

The new venture was founded by Drew Kluska and Justin Liberman, who are supported by CEO Matt Casey, Chief Commercial Officer Emma Weeling and Chair Rick Albertini.

STAR SEEKER TO SET SAIL SOON

WINDSTAR Cruises has taken delivery of its new all-suite yacht, *Star Seeker*, following a handover ceremony earlier this week at the WestSEA Shipyard in Viana do Castelo, Portugal (TD 24 Apr).

The 224-guest yacht is the first new-build in the small ship cruise line's Star class, marking a significant milestone in its ongoing fleet expansion.

Star Seeker is now undergoing final preparations ahead of her maiden voyage from Malaga Spain, across the Atlantic to Miami, now home to Windstar Cruises' corporate headquarters.

A christening ceremony will take place there on 15 Jan with godmother Libby Anschutz, daughter of Windstar Cruises' owner Phil Anschutz, before the vessel sails to the Caribbean for an inaugural season.



The ship boasts 112 oceanview suites, nearly all with a full private veranda or a floor-to-ceiling infinity window, as well as two new Horizon Owner's suites with wrap-around balconies.

Guests will enjoy scenic views and the chance to spot wildlife from the newbuild's expansive open decks, and can dine at five venues, including the new Mediterranean-Asian-inspired Basil + Bamboo.

Star Seeker also features WorldSpa by Windsor, offering a full suite of wellness and fitness experiences, and the line's newly reimagined marina.

"From the float-out to the handover, we've seen *Star Seeker* take shape with extraordinary craftsmanship," said Windstar President Chris Prelog.

"We cannot wait to welcome guests aboard in just a few short weeks," he added. JM

Four Seasons I passes

FOUR Seasons Yachts' first-ever vessel, *Four Seasons I*, successfully completed her sea trials in Ancona, Italy (TD 26 Nov).

The superyacht underwent more than 60 rigorous evaluations, including propulsion, navigation, mechanical, electrical, safety, environmental and comfort-system tests, ending with a six-hour endurance run at full power.

The results confirmed the vessel's seaworthiness, as well as its comfort and guest-facing systems, with a second sea trial planned later this month.

Four Seasons brings luxury to Rio de Janeiro

FOUR Seasons is preparing to make its debut in Rio de Janeiro, with plans to take over the former Marina Palace.

Opening in 2029, the beachfront property will be transformed into Four Seasons Hotel Rio de Janeiro at Leblon, offering 120 premium rooms and suites with ocean views.

The building will undergo a complete renovation that will transform its vintage facade and interiors into a landmark luxury hospitality destination.



Located just a 30-minute drive from Galeao International Airport, the hotel will feature multiple culinary experiences including a rooftop bar and signature restaurant, spa and wellness facilities, and an array of beachfront activities.

Serenity crowned

SERENITY Gully, an adults-only eco retreat in WA's Bridgetown, was declared Australia's best glamping destination at the 2025 World Luxury Travel Awards.

"This award validates our vision of creating a truly unique couples' luxury glamping experience that harmonises five-star comfort with environmental responsibility and complete immersion in nature," said co-founder Susan Randazzo.



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Club Med South Africa Beach & Safari is set to open next year on 04 Jul. Blending beach luxury with the adventures of a safari holiday, the resort will offer 345 rooms, five bars and two restaurants, four swimming pools, a kids' club, spa, and a range of activities, including Club Med's first surf academy. Meanwhile, the safari lodge will feature 20 deluxe tented rooms and a panoramic terrace and pool, and will be set on 18,000ha of land that is home to the Big Five.



A \$5.1 million refurbishment has been completed on **The Sebel Melbourne Flinders Lane**, giving the boutique hotel a fresh 'contemporary urban chic' look. All 60 of the property's suites were updated with a lighter colour palette of beige, tan and charcoal, along with new furniture, lighting and decor. Public areas were also revitalised including the reception, which has been completely reconfigured and now features an electric fireplace.



Sofitel has unveiled the first of its new-generation **Le Petit Prince Kids Clubs** at **Sofitel Krabi Phokeethra Golf & Spa Resort** on Thailand's Andaman coast. Shaped around deeper storytelling and sensory design, the new 175m² space features several different themes, a creative area for arts and craft, a move area for climbing, sliding and energetic play, a rest area with books and quiet games, and an immersive area with that blends play with learning.



Capella Sydney has announced the launch of **Arcana & Alchemy**, a curated cocktail journey at **McRae Bar**. Guests are invited to draw a tarot card, each of which is inspired by a Major Arcana archetype and paired with one of 12 McRae's Sydney buildings. Each pairing is brought to life as a bespoke cocktail that "embodies the spirit, story, and personality of the building it represents".



Guests can experience a magical festive season at **Pattaya Marriott Resort and Spa** - a new five-star hotel on Thailand's Jomtien Beach. The property will host a line-up of culinary journeys and seaside celebrations throughout Dec, including a brunch and buffet dinner on Christmas Day and a New Year's Eve fireworks celebration on the beach, complete with a live DJ.

A boot scootin' Christmas



JOURNEY Beyond recently gathered its team members and partners from across the country at its annual Christmas Party in Adelaide, where its corporate, rail and Monarto Safari Resort operations are based.

Under the theme 'outback ball', which paid tribute to the remote regions in which the company operates, the event celebrated a year of big milestones and continued momentum for Journey Beyond.

This year saw the operator expand its footprint significantly, including the addition of Exmouth Dive & Whalesharks Ningaloo, Moreton Telegraph Station, Sailaway Port Douglas, Grand Pacific Tours in New Zealand, and most recently, Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia.

"The evening was a chance to come together, reflect on 2025, and honour everything we've achieved this year," the operator shared on LinkedIn.

Guests were entertained with an opening performance by Olivia Coe Fox and David Spry, live music

from Adam Thompson, Julie Walter and the band, followed by a high-energy performance from Hot Dub Time Machine.

The evening also celebrated the legacy of Journey Beyond's Accounts Payable Clerk, Lynette Walters, who is retiring after nearly 50 years of service. *JM*

Carnival kicks a goal

PASSENGERS aboard any cruise ship in the Carnival fleet will be able to watch every match of the FIFA World Cup 26.

The major event will take place between 11 Jun through to 19 Jul 2026 for its 104 matches.

"By bringing live coverage to all of our wonderful ships, we are making sure fans can experience incredible destinations and cheer on every match, whether they are soaking up the sun in the Caribbean, taking in the Mediterranean coast, or sailing past glaciers in Alaska," enthused Lorna Warren, Princess Cruises' Vice President of Hotel Operations and Guest Experience.



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