

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily five pages, including a photo page from **Viking** and our **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Treasures of the South Pacific
- A Force for Good
- Inspiring Vacations

What a huge year

JUST as the year comes to a close, *Travel Daily* has released its Year in Review special report, taking a look back at some of the biggest news stories of 2025.

The new report features in-depth interviews with several travel leaders about their observations on the highlights of 2025, including Council of Australian Tour Operators MD Brett Jardine, CLIA Australasia MD Joel Katz and APT Travel Group CEO David Cox.

Accenture's Head of Cultural Intelligence Michelle Newton discussed the upcoming trends of 2026 - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.



Finnair lands on Melbourne

FINNAIR has announced it will launch daily flights from Melbourne to Helsinki via Bangkok from 26 Oct 2026 using its recently retrofitted flagship A350 aircraft (*TD* breaking news).

The upcoming year-round service builds upon a strong existing connection to the local market out of Asia for the Scandinavian carrier, with Aussies being its largest offline market.

When asked at a press conference today about the bullish plan to go daily from the start out of Melbourne, Finnair's



Head of Network Strategy and Development, Aaron McGarvey, said the carrier needed to have the appropriate coverage.

"There is such a large amount of demand between the two continents and when you add in Bangkok, we firmly believe that seven flights a week is the right way to go," he said.

"We will be allowing Australian travellers to find all their favourite destinations in Thailand with this service too," McGarvey added.

The carrier's network chief also clarified that Finnair's decision to launch its own metal into Melbourne was made independently of its existing wet-lease agreement with Qantas, which operates out of Sydney via Singapore and Bangkok.

However, McGarvey conceded its agreement with Qantas did help guide its latest decision.

"Operationally, we learnt a lot from the Qantas wet lease and it enabled us to break down some of the barriers to help us to launch this service," he noted.

Over the next couple of months, McGarvey confirmed Finnair will work with Qantas on opening up reward redemptions on the new flights, but would not commit to any specific details. *AB*

Golden Fijian route

FIJI Airways will launch new direct flights between Gold Coast Airport and Nadi International Airport from 11 Jun next year.

The new service will operate three times a week on Mon, Thu and Sat using the airline's Boeing 737-MAX 8 aircraft.

Gold Coast residents will gain one-stop connections to FJ's long-haul network, such as Los Angeles, Dallas Fort Worth, Vancouver and Honolulu, as well as across the Pacific and Asia.

Gold Coast is FJ's seventh Australian destination, as the airline seeks to strengthen connectivity ahead of the Brisbane 2032 Games.

The airline is offering introductory return Lite fares from the Gold Coast to Fiji starting from \$549, available until 31 Dec 2025.

Travel Daily ON LOCATION

MELBOURNE

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Norwegian, which is this week hosting us aboard *Norwegian Spirit*.

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's *Norwegian Spirit* is back in Australia for what will be her third season in local waters.

Travel Daily will be aboard for her first voyage of the season from Melbourne, which will sail to Sydney via Burnie and Eden.

Spirit will then journey on a series of immersive 11-19 day open-jaw itineraries from Sydney from Dec through Apr.

TOSP sends love

TREASURES of the South Pacific wishes all of its partners an amazing festive season and is looking forward to working with everyone in 2026 - see [page six](#).

Eight weeks to go

CELEBRATE International Women's Day with some of the industry's top leaders at A Force for Good - see [page seven](#).

Inspiring women

INSPIRED Women's Only Journeys are created by female travel leaders, with tours of 20 guests maximum - see [page eight](#) to learn more today.

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4 * ACCOMMODATION WITH DAILY BREAKFAST

MWTOURS

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Karratha wants Asia

THE City of Karratha in WA has applied to the Federal Govt for permission for its airport to operate international flights.

If the proposal is approved, the city is hopeful of opening overseas gateways to hubs in Asia, like Singapore and Bali.

Outside of added outbound leisure and inbound tourism opportunities, City of Karratha CEO Virginia Miltrup believes the strong corporate travel traffic in and out of the city already presents a strong business case.

Port Hedland Airport - two hours north of Karratha - no longer has regular commercial international flights, also making connectivity an issue.

Cruise could benefit too, with the nearby Dampier port having no direct overseas flight links.

Start-up seeks a buyer

PURPOSE-DRIVEN travel start-up Heartful has made the call to shut down operations after a cyber attack eroded its core source of revenue.

Founder of the short-term accommodation platform, Jen Clark (**pictured**), revealed the news to *Women's Agenda*, explaining that a sophisticated AI bot attack from China and Singapore was to blame for wiping out 20-25 months' worth of client enquiries.

"Within days our primary



revenue stream was gone," Clark lamented, adding that by the time all functionality was restored, Heartful's crucial bookings runway had evaporated.

"Despite my best efforts in recent days to secure bridge funding or find an acquisition partner, we ran out of time".

While the business that has been operational for 14 months will cease trading on Mon, Clark said there was still scope for a buyer to rescue Heartful.

"We had the team, technology, market validation, and clarity of vision to succeed, but what we didn't have was access to the capital that would have allowed us to weather an unexpected crisis," Clark said.

"This business could have been - and still could be - an enormous success with the right backing."

One of the major selling points of the booking platform was a generous commission structure and a 1% donation model to affordable housing projects.

"We've solved the hardest problems, building enterprise-grade technology, achieving product-market fit on one side of the marketplace, validating the business model, and creating genuine community engagement," Clark insisted.

"For the right acquirer, this represents an exceptional opportunity to enter the ethical travel market with a ready-made, validated platform and passionate community already in place.

"Accessible and sustainable tourism aren't niche segments - they're the future of travel."

Interested buyers can find out more details about the business **HERE** and make contact **HERE**. **AB**

Target hotel guests

THE message to advisors from the Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection is clear, target guests who have stayed at luxury hotel properties.

Speaking at an exclusive event in Sydney yesterday, the new luxury cruise player's SVP of Global Sales, Patrick Mitchell, said Ritz-Carlton's cruise model was not to steal guests away from other brands, but rather build a new market altogether.

"We're not here to try to convince you to move a guest from Silversea or another luxury cruise line, we are a different product and our combined job is to help you understand how we're different," Mitchell said.

"We are less cruise line and more hotel... the opportunity [for sellers] is to think about guests that have been past guests at luxury hotel properties."

Around half of Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection's guests to date have come from the new-to-cruise segment, and 75% of those have come from the Marriott Luxury group of properties.

The premium line recently opened its own office in Sydney (**TD** 13 Jun) as it prepares to ramp up its local presence, with the team of eight set to be expanded to 12 by the end of 2026.

The first large-scale conferences from Australia will also sail aboard the brand next year.

Window Seat

AS THE 'official' European Christmas Capital of 2025, Vilnius in Lithuania takes its position very seriously, and on 13 Dec, it even launched its very own Christmas currency.

The first units of the currency were pine cones, but in exchange for completing a small task at the bank based on childhood memories, people can acquire the currency in note form across five locations in the city.

The notes were valid only on that day and could be swapped for hot chocolate, tea and sweets at over 40 cafes, restaurants and venues.

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Viking ventures to the Great White South

VIKING'S Joanne Cullen, Commercial Manager Vic, and Matt Jones, Director of Digital Marketing, have just returned from Antarctica after hosting nine travel advisors and their travelling companions on a 13-day 'Antarctic Explorer' voyage.

Sailing aboard Viking's purpose-built expedition ship, *Viking Octantis*, the group experienced the very best of Antarctica, made possible by Viking's state-of-the-art expedition equipment.

This included a fleet of Zodiacs and special operations boats, as well as unique exploration options such as submarines and kayaks.

On the return journey through the Drake Passage, the group were also fortunate to witness a rare sighting of a pod of orcas - an unforgettable highlight of the voyage.



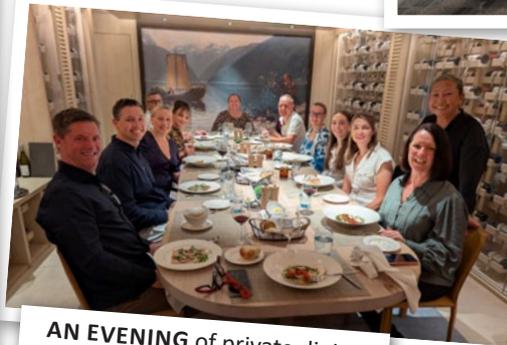
A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME moment, stepping foot on the White Continent.



ALL kitted up and ready to explore.



KARL Tailby, Tailby & James Travel Associates with good friend Thomas Macdonald.



AN EVENING of private dining aboard *Viking Octantis*.



ALL smiles as the group heads off aboard a special operations boat.



UP CLOSE with Antarctica, the group took to kayaks for a front-row experience.



THE group enjoyed encounters with wildlife.



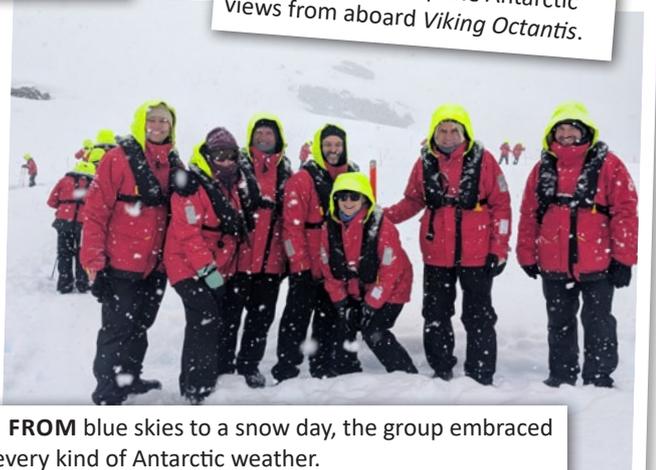
SALLY and Will Bird from Edge Connections soak up the Antarctic views from aboard *Viking Octantis*.



JOANNE Cullen from Viking and Caroline Nolly, Stars Travel, enjoying one of the many landings.



VIKING Octantis.



FROM blue skies to a snow day, the group embraced every kind of Antarctic weather.



Gaga for events

MORE than a third (36%) of Australians are crossing state borders each year to experience concerts, sporting matches, and other major events, new data from the Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) has revealed.

Travellers aged 25 to 34 led the trend, with over half (51%) saying they travel interstate for events annually, followed by 18 to 24-year-olds (46%).

A recent visit from Lady Gaga demonstrated how major events are fuelling Aussie travel, with data from Booking.com showing that Sydney surged to the number one spot for weekend accommodation searches ahead of the mega pop star's performance in the city between 12-14 Dec.

Sydney's hotel bookings also jumped during Gaga's visit, with Accor seeing its CBD properties reach 92% occupancy on Fri and 85% occupancy on Sat, equating to 19% and 17% year-on-year increases, while its Sydney Olympic Park hotels were also at capacity.

"Artists like Lady Gaga don't just sell tickets, they spark movement, and their performances inspire fans to travel, to connect, and to be part of an unforgettable shared experience," TTF CEO Margy Osmond said.

HOBART TO GAIN LUXE VENUE

THE Tasman, a Luxury Collection Hotel, has announced the upcoming launch of Lumina, a new events space overlooking Hobart's historic waterfront in Parliament Square.

Currently under development and slated to open in mid-2026, Lumina aims to address the growing demand for versatile event venues in Tasmania's capital.

Lumina will be capable of transitioning seamlessly between event styles, including conferences, cocktail parties, gala dinners, meetings, corporate events and weddings.

With pre- and primary function areas, the premium venue will be able to host 220 for a cocktail reception or seat 150 cabaret and 200 banquet style.

"This striking new event space is a symbol of our enduring aspiration to showcase hospitality excellence in Tasmania," The



Tasman GM Carolyn Smith said.

She believed it will "delight guests - from event organisers seeking rare and wild incentive destinations, to individuals searching for a trusted venue for life's most meaningful events".

Business Events Tasmania Chief Executive Officer Marnie Craig also commented on the

new venue: "The addition of Lumina to Hobart's business events offering secures our place as a world-class international incentive destination."

The Tasman is now accepting Lumina enquiries for events from July 2026 onwards - to find out more, reach out to kim.upton@luxurycollection.com. JM

Amway Korea takes over North Qld

THE Amway Korea Leadership Seminar delivered a \$13 million boost to Cairns after 22 days in the region, welcoming 2,800 delegates across five waves on 20 charter flights between 17 Nov to 07 Dec.

The groups took over Shangri-La, The Marina Cairns, while up to 14 Tropic Wings coaches and five limousines a day transferred them to tours, events and the business program at the Cairns Convention Centre.

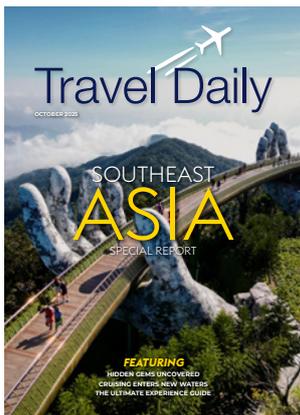
Each group enjoyed two full days of touring, taking in the Atherton Tablelands, Kuranda, the Daintree, Port Douglas and the Great Barrier Reef.

"This incentive rewarding Amway's top performers from South Korea has been a huge logistical exercise to ensure delegates are wowed by, what will be for many, their first taste of Australia," said Tourism Tropical North Queensland CEO Mark Olsen.

Coming to Darwin

DARWIN has announced the opening of Larrakia Cultural Centre next year, where incentive groups can observe the cultural ceremonies of the region's traditional custodians, the Larrakia People.

The \$58.6m centre will also feature meeting rooms, multi-purpose event spaces, an outdoor amphitheatre, and a restaurant with harbour views.

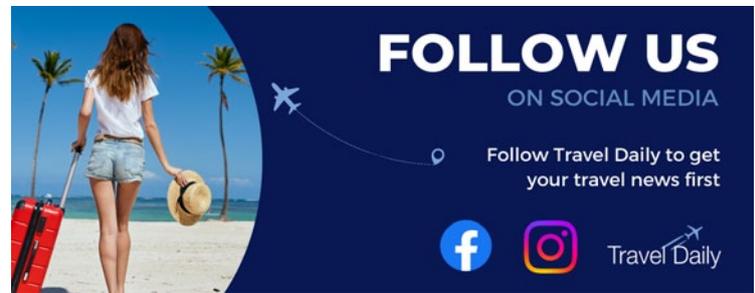


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Aurora Expeditions has announced the appointment of **Lina Trimarchi** as its new Director of Trade & Direct Marketing, APAC & EMEA. The Sydney-based marketing professional has been with the cruise line for more than three years, initially in the role of Marketing Manager Trade & Consumer. Prior to joining Aurora Expeditions, she held roles at Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection.

Toni Murphy has joined the team at national opera company **Opera Australia** in the position of Tourism Marketing & Sales Specialist. Murphy has a background in both the arts and tourism, having previously worked on the Brand USA account at Gate 7 and held various roles at Flight Centre Travel Group for a period of over five years.

Norwegian Cruise Line has appointed **Marc Kazlauskas** as its new president, effective 19 Jan 2026. Kazlauskas previously held senior roles at Avoya Travel and Insight Vacations, where he was President and CEO for more than a decade. In Kazlauskas's absence, Phil Cappelli will take over as CEO of Avoya Travel.

TasPorts CEO **Anthony Donald** will be stepping down from the role in Mar 2026, as confirmed by the company Chair, Greg McCann. Donald has worked at TasPorts for 10 years and was CEO for six of those years, overseeing several crucial port infrastructure developments.

Contiki has named Sydney-based lifestyle journalist **Tahlia Pritchard** as its Content & Editorial Executive. Pritchard has previously written for *Yahoo Lifestyle*, *Punkee/Junkee Media*, and *BuzzFeed*.

Former HX Expeditions Key Account Manager ANZ, **Kirsty Fruin**, has been tapped by **Swan Hellenic** to lead its local sales strategy and trade engagement. As Sales Director Australia and New Zealand, Fruin will work closely with the luxury cruise line's agency partners, key accounts and industry stakeholders.

Former Airbus Chair **Andre Walter** has been announced as the new CEO of **Meyer Werft**, effective 01 Jul 2026. Walter has been at Airbus since 2006, heading their air bases at Hamburg and Bremen, and is also currently the chairman of Airbus GmbH in Hamburg. He will succeed Bernd Eikens, who has been the CEO at Meyer Werft since 2023.

Clinton Hearne has been made the new Executive General Manager of **Flight Centre Travel Group's** new loyalty brand, World360 Rewards. Hearne has been with the company for more than five years, most recently as its Global Head of Marketing.

Hurtigruten has made two new appointments to its APAC sales team, with **Lauren Zischke** and **Rebecca Setchell** joining as Key Account Managers. They bring a combined 42 years of experience in the travel and tourism space.

A quality contribution



INSIDE Travel has donated \$23,100 to national children's charity Camp Quality this year as part of its ongoing Giving Back commitment, which directs 5% of profits to charities supporting families who need a break.

The operator's Australia Managing Director, Tim Oakes, said the family and kids' camps, family fun days and in-hospital programs arranged by Camp Quality provide life-changing respite to families facing unimaginable circumstances.

"We're in the business of creating dream holidays and know there are too many families that just don't have the opportunity to get away with loved ones due to cancer," Oakes said.

"Our heart behind this donation is to bring a little bit of that holiday magic to those who need it most, by supporting the brilliant work of Camp Quality who arrange camps, family fun days and retreats for families going through cancer.

"As a B Corp Certified business with a mission to be a force for good in the world and delight customers with once-in-a-lifetime holidays, we truly cherish the

opportunity to partner with a charity that makes a difference where it really counts," he added.

The Inside Travel team also volunteer at Camp Quality's recreation programs, playing a hands-on role in spreading joy through fun activities.

Camp Quality CEO Deborah Thomas said: "We are privileged to work in partnership with Inside Travel and their incredible team, who have come together to support kids and families going through the darkest of times."

Click **HERE** to learn more about Camp Quality. *JM*

Play it again, MH

MALAYSIA Airlines and Moroccan carrier Royal Air Maroc have signed a codeshare deal.

The MH code will be featured on Royal Air Maroc-operated flights between Casablanca and Doha and London and Paris, while AT will feature on Malaysia Airlines-operated flights between KL and Doha, London and Paris.

The strategic collaboration helps both airlines to strengthen their global presence and expand network connectivity.

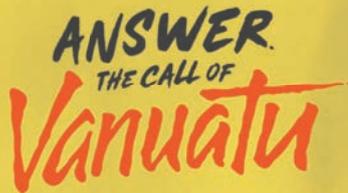


Treasures of the South Pacific

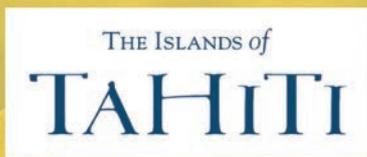
On Behalf of all the Treasures of the South Pacific, and our incredible partners, we wish you an amazing holiday season and look forward to seeing you in 2026.



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