

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news, including our **Luxury** page, plus a full page from **HX Expeditions**.

## New Celebrity ship

**ROYAL** Caribbean Group has secured financing for Celebrity Cruises' sixth Edge-class ship, which is scheduled for delivery from Chantiers de l'Atlantique in the fourth quarter of 2028.

Currently dubbed 'Xcel 2', the vessel will be a sister of the recently introduced *Celebrity Xcel*, and brings Royal's total order book to eight ships.

## FCTG taps Zenith

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has appointed Zenith Australia to handle its media strategy, planning and buying in Australia from this month.

"FCTG's appetite to build clever and exciting campaigns that amplify their brand purpose will allow us to tap into a wealth of products and insights that sit within Zenith Australia," Zenith Brisbane GM Kate Lippett said.

# Qantas cyber attack

**SIX** million Qantas customers have been impacted by a major cyber attack carried out on one of its data centres this week (**TD** breaking news).

While the carrier said the incident is now contained, Qantas conceded the "concerning" hack perpetrated by a yet-to-be-identified cyber criminal has compromised names, emails, phone numbers, birth dates, and frequent flyer numbers.

No credit card details or passport numbers were held in the impacted system, and while loyalty account numbers were accessed, Qantas insisted frequent flyer accounts have not been breached, nor have passwords, PIN numbers or log-in details been accessed.

Qantas has since established



a customer support line for impacted customers - 1800 971 541 - as well as a dedicated page on [qantas.com](https://qantas.com) to provide the latest updates.

"We sincerely apologise to our customers and we recognise the uncertainty this will cause," CEO Vanessa Hudson said.

"We are working closely with the Federal Govt's National Cyber Security Coordinator, the Australian Cyber Security Centre, and independent specialised cyber security experts."

The cyber attack occurred on Mon when Qantas detected unusual activity on a third-party platform used by one of its contact centres. **AB**

## Sell NZ confidently

**TOURISM** New Zealand's upcoming webinar, hosted next Wed, will dive deeper into the DMO's latest campaign.

The session will help travel advisors sell the island country with confidence - register **HERE**.

## HX's biggest offer

**SELL** three and sail free with HX's biggest giveaway ever, marking the brand's 130th b'day. More details on **page eight**.

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**Travel Daily**  
ON LOCATION

**MONARTO**

Today's issue of *Travel Daily* is coming to you courtesy of Journey Beyond at the new Monarto Safari Resort near a Safari Park in South Australia.

THE chic rooms of the fresh resort were a welcome sight after severe weather delayed our trip from Sydney to Adelaide yesterday.

Landing in time for a quick tour and canapes, today will see us take part in a morning safari before enjoying a tour of the resort, including the impressive pool and spa facilities.

Then it is back to Adelaide airport (just an hour's drive away) and, weather permitting, a flight back to Sydney.

## Crystal ships locked

**CRYSTAL** has finalised the financing for its two newbuild ships flagged last year (**TD** 28 Jun 2024), which are scheduled for delivery from May 2028.

The export credit is backed by Italy's SACE, with A&K Travel Group Executive Chair Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio hailing the success of the venture.

"Securing this financing represents a decisive step forward in Crystal's expansion and demonstrates the strong market confidence in our strategy," d'Ovidio said.

## Hinterland to be sold

**QUEENSLAND-BASED** airline Hinterland Aviation has enlisted advisory firm William Buck to sell 100% of its operations.

Documents released by the agent to a handful of potential buyers have been obtained by the *Australian Financial Review*, which lists succession planning as the major driver for the sale.

Started in 1984, the regional airline has steadily grown its route map from its headquarters in Cairns, now flying to destinations such as Lizard Island and Cooktown, as well as a range of locations in the Torres Strait, such as Horn Island.

The carrier also offers a range of charter services to companies in the mining, medical, and government segments.

According to the sale flyer, Hinterland is in the air roughly 13,500 hours every year, carrying 100,000 pax on 16,000 flights.

The company is expected to generate \$31 million in revenue for the 2025 financial year, solid growth on the \$23.7 million it recorded just two years ago.

Prospective buyers were told Hinterland was a good investment because of the high bar of entry for competitors, and the increasing need for better regional air connections in Qld and Torres destinations.

"Regional routes in far-north Queensland have historically faced inconsistent service, creating frustration and uncertainty for local

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communities," the flyer stated.

"In contrast, Hinterland Aviation has earned the trust of these communities by delivering safe, reliable and consistent operations," it added.

Further growth opportunities are on offer through network expansion, bolt-on acquisitions, and leaning more heavily into charter and freight services.

The company is owned by John and Peter Christoudias, employs around 90 staff, and operates a fleet of 13 12-seater Cessna Caravans, with two Cessna C408 Sky Couriers on the way. **AB**

## HA Travel Guides

**THE** Nine Network's *Travel Guides* is heading back to Hawaii this weekend, in the latest episode of the popular show.

*Travel Guides* cast members are kept in the dark about their destination ahead of their trip, and this time is no different - tune in this Sun on Nine at 7pm to see where Hawaiian Airlines flew the famous group (**pictured**).



## Ponant South Pacific

**PONANT** Explorations has announced new cruises in French Polynesia next year, aboard *Le Jacques Cartier*.

The 15-day journeys will be available between Oct 2026 and Jan 2027, across 13 departures to some of the region's most remote archipelagos - more info in **CW**.



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## CT strikes a chord



**SANFORD** Travel has joined CT Partners, citing the Australian buying network as the “right fit for our business”.

The addition of Sydney-based Sanford brings CT’s membership to 33, with the travel agency’s Managing Director Georgina Byrt stating the network’s transparency and financial model were attractive reasons to join.

“In addition to the compelling commercial advantages CT Partners provide, it’s about shared values,” she said.

“We’re focused on growing our presence in events and leisure over the next two years, and CT Partners offers the ideal environment to support that growth while staying true to who we are,” Byrt added.

The travel agency was founded almost 40 years ago, and has become a well-established player in the corporate travel sector, which now represents around 70% of its business. *MS*

## Lindblad agent focus

**NATIONAL** Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions and Approach Guides have expanded their partnership, with travel advisors now offered a branded website, alongside customised content experiences.

The new website provides a personalised, trade-friendly version of Lindblad’s consumer-facing site, [www.expeditions.com](http://www.expeditions.com), allowing agents to confidently share any of the line’s web pages with their clients.

Sites include real-time pricing availability and full personalisation, while ensuring all leads are sent directly and privately to travel advisors.

Lindblad and Approach Guides have also recorded a detailed demonstration webinar for advisors, available on the cruise line’s YouTube channel [HERE](#).

The brand became the first supplier to partner with Approach Guides in 2023.

## Ted exits the driver’s seat

**LATIN** America travel specialists Contours Travel has new owners, with founder Ted Dziadkiewicz (**pictured**) deciding the time was right to hand over the reins after 50 years driving the business.

Senior Travel Specialist Heather Poppelier and Product Manager Ines Vivot have taken over as co-owners of the company, after having been in the business for just over 15 years.

In that time, the pair have been involved with all aspects of the Contours, including sales, marketing and finance.

“This feels like a natural step, both for us and for the business, and we are really motivated to continue nurturing and developing our reputation as Australia’s leading Latin America



specialists,” Poppelier said.

Vivot added that with Poppelier based in Melbourne and herself in Buenos Aires, they are both well placed to manage operations around the clock, as well as offering exceptional service to clients on the ground.

While Dziadkiewicz will be stepping away from the business, he will remain in an advisory capacity in the short-term.

The focus moving forward will be increasing agent engagement through workshops, webinars and events throughout 2025. *AB*

## TIME to be a mentor

**TIME** is currently on the lookout for new mentors across the country to support up-and-coming leaders in the industry.

The training organisation prioritises eight key criteria when appointing new mentors, including:

- Help mentee define goals
- Ask about the big picture
- Be consistent with time
- Keep an open mind
- Make referrals
- Remember it is not about you
- Practice active listening
- Maintain confidentiality

Interested parties can complete the EOI on the link [HERE](#).

## EK retrofit expands

**EMIRATES** schedules to Shanghai and Zurich will be upgraded with the airline’s retrofitted Boeing 777s and Airbus A380s, offering more opportunities for pax to enjoy its premium economy service.

Shanghai and Singapore services will also be upgraded with A380 deployments, while EK will also expand its schedule to Milan, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Aires later in the year.

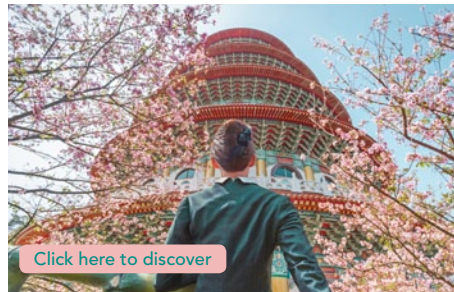
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## Hoffmann exits with lessons for agents

**EXCLUSIVE**

"**WE ARE** now in a growing-up phase of the industry," believes travel titan Phil Hoffmann (pictured), who announced his retirement from his namesake business yesterday (**TD** 01 Jul).

In an exclusive interview with **Travel Daily**, Hoffmann said that travel agents need to recognise that they are professionals and should charge for their services, like dentists and accountants.

While he is taking a step back from Phil Hoffmann Travel (PHT), this shift is what the travel icon is most excited about for agents.

"That's the biggest learning curve coming out of COVID," Hoffmann reflected.

"We can't do work for nothing anymore - if you want to get good professional advice and great itineraries that are well-curated, you need to pay for that."

Hoffmann also noted that since the end of the pandemic, more



consumers have turned away from booking their trips online to searching for agents who can provide that "24/7 back-up".

"A lot of people right from the start said to us, 'you guys will be out of business with online'," Hoffman recalls.

"But we've seen the opposite - we keep growing year after year.

"You just need to have well-trained staff [who are] passionate about travel, building their clientele and giving that service.

"My motto has always been: 'A client for life, not just for

one trip'."

However, as consumers are now more educated than ever, it is imperative that agents make it a priority to continually improve their own product knowledge and stay on top of industry news.

"We [used to] control the brochure and information and now we don't," Hoffmann said.

"[Consumers] have got as much info as we do in some cases, but they don't have the technical knowledge, ability and sheer experience that we have - [they are] paying for the knowledge that you have built up over all of those years," he added.

The industry veteran launched PHT in 1990, with his first store in Glenelg, Adelaide.

The business will continue to be led by MD & CEO Peter Williams, who is supported by new COO Michelle Ashcroft.

To read the full interview with Hoffman, see **HERE**. *JHM*



## Window Seat

**THE** next time Aussies are in London travelling on the Tube, they should keep their eyes peeled for King Charles and Queen Camilla, who recently made the call to scrap their Royal Family train.

The British monarchy has been using its own locomotive since Queen Victoria first boarded from Slough to Paddington Station in 1842.

However, a cost-cutting frenzy enacted by King Charles will see the train sold.

One domestic trip by the Royals can cost British taxpayers as much A\$93,000.



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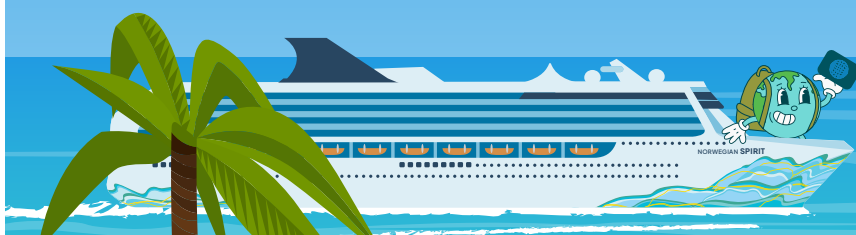
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## Thailand beefs up security for tourists

**EXCLUSIVE**

**THAILAND** has ramped up its security this week off the back of several recent bomb threats targeting tourists.

Late last week, a number of explosive devices were discovered and defused by authorities at Phuket International Airport, as well as tourist hotspots in Phuket and Krabi.

Two suspects are under investigation and while the motives are unclear, police claim the devices were meant to create alarm, not cause harm.

Authorities have heightened screening at all Thai entry points by land, air and sea as a result, as well as implementing an increased police and surveillance presence in key tourist areas.

Multilingual communication



systems and expanded CCTV coverage are also now in place.

"Travellers can carry on with their plans, exercise normal precautions and awareness," Tourism Authority of Thailand TAT Director, Pichaya Saisaengchan, told **Travel Daily**.

"All airport operations, public transportation, tourist attractions, and business activities are continuing as normal."

Meanwhile, Topdeck Travel and Intrepid Travel have confirmed their business operations in Thailand are running as usual.

While there are no G Adventures trips currently taking place in the country, upcoming trips are also scheduled to continue, the operator confirmed.

The recent bomb scares come in the midst of a border dispute between Thailand and Cambodia, with land border closures currently in place.

In response, the Thai Government has established a new agency with humanitarian authorities, security and border control to protect the community.

An action plan has been created to manage border activity between the countries, particularly along the seven provinces that border Cambodia.

Smarttraveller has advised Australians in Thailand to exercise "a high degree of caution". *JHM*

## W opens in Florence

**W HOTELS** has unveiled the W Florence, its debut in the capital of Tuscany, and the brand's second Italian property.

The hotel takes over the former Grand Majestic, close to the Basilica of Santa Maria Novella.

## Carnival loves Cola

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line has announced its decision to switch back to Coca-Cola products, after stocking Pepsi as its onboard beverage option since Jan 2020.

The move comes in response to customer feedback, and will see Coke become the preferred partner for the cruise line for soda drinks, sparkling flavoured water, and both zero-sugar and low-calorie options.

"Carnival Cruise Line and Coca-Cola are two iconic brands that celebrate fun, family, friendship, food and fabulous memories," said Christine Duffy, President of Carnival Cruise Line.

Coca-Cola will also offer its popular Sprite, Fanta, and Powerade brands.

While there is no firm date as to when Coke products will be available on board Carnival's cruise ships, the line said the switch will begin across its North American fleet this season.



## Celestial refinances

**CELESTIAL** has announced the completion of a major refinancing initiative, marking a significant step forward in the cruise line's growth plans.

The new financing model replaces Celestial's original vessel acquisition funding, significantly lowering its cost of capital and unlocking additional flexibility to reinvest in its fleet, product, and commercial operations.

Chief Financial Officer Marios Theodosiou said the refinancing signals heightened confidence in the company's long-term business model, and is set to accelerate its next stage of growth.

## Sweden cuts aviation tax

**THE** International Air Transport Association (IATA) has hailed the Swedish Government's decision to abolish its aviation tax.

The move comes six years after Sweden introduced the flight levy, which charges airlines as much as A\$83 per passenger per flight depending on the distance flown, in an effort to combat the industry's environmental impact.

The aviation tax has now been scrapped, after it led to a significant decline in the country's domestic air traffic, which fell by nearly one-third since the impost came into effect.

Catrin Mattsson, IATA Area Manager, Nordic and Baltic, said the decision to walk back the fee "is a bold and positive move which will bring great benefits in a number of ways".

"Sustainability remains a priority for Sweden, but the focus is now on reducing emissions rather than discouraging air travel."

Airlines are already responding to the move, with Ryanair looking to expand its operations to the market once again, after scaling back its domestic flights in Sweden due to low profitability as a result of the tax. *JM*



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## Soak away the blues

**CRYSTALBROOK** Collection has launched Australia's first premium spa experience specifically designed to combat the winter blues.

Developed in consultation with leading psychiatrist Dr. Kieran Kennedy, The Light Retreat offers light therapy and mood-boosting sensory rituals to target low moods experienced during winter.

The luxury package is available at Eleme Spas at Crystalbrook Riley, Flynn, and Byron, and includes a 60-minute massage, a 15-minute light therapy session, and dopamine-boosting refreshments.

Guests can also choose a 30-minute add-on, such as a foot massage - details [HERE](#).

## Silversea Venetian '26

**SILVERSEA** has unveiled its 2026 Venetian Society Reunion Voyage, which will take in some of Italy's finest destinations on board *Silver Shadow*.

The 12-day sailing will depart Nice on a round-trip itinerary on 19 Jun 2026, and will be hosted by Bert Hernandez, President of Silversea.

Guests will enjoy farm experiences, cheese-making, and wine tastings in Val D'Orcia; a visit to a historic family-run estate nestled on San Miniato hill; a Sicilian cooking lesson; and much more.

## WHERE LUXURY MEETS HORSEPOWER

**AUSSIE-BORN** ultra-luxury experiential travel operator, Ultimate Driving Tours, has officially rebranded as HunterMoss, as it prepares to take on the US market.

Since its launch in 2008, the company has offered supercar driving holidays, luxurious short getaways with self-guided driving tours, exclusive F1 hospitality packages and bucket-list track events across the globe.

The new name reflects the journey of its Melbourne-based co-founders, Julie Hunter and Anthony Moss, who have curated and personally hosted hundreds of events for more than 1,500 guests all over the world.

"We're so excited to step into this new chapter as HunterMoss - a name that reflects our evolution," said Julie Hunter, co-



founder of HunterMoss.

"What began as small group driving tours has grown into something far more personal: tailor-made journeys that embody a lifestyle of exclusivity, discovery, and refinement."

From the Northern Hemisphere summer 2025, HunterMoss will be debut a series of luxury supercar weekend vacations and corporate incentives through

America's most iconic landscapes, from the East Coast to the West.

The experience offering will focus on high-end accommodation, unique gastronomic experiences, and curated local activities.

Leading the company's foray into the United States is Paul Hanzel, who has been appointed as HunterMoss' General Manager of North America. *JM*

## Learn to surf in style in Costa Rica luxury

**A NEW** luxury surf and wellness retreat has opened in Costa Rica's Osa Peninsula, perched 356 metres above sea level in a secluded rainforest.

Lamangata Luxury Surf Resort offers a surf program for all levels, as well as tailored wellness programming.

The property features six ocean-facing suites and shared spaces, including an infinity pool, yoga deck and communal dining table.

Guests can enjoy in-suite and



open-air massages, daily yoga across multiple disciplines, and access to off-site experiences like herbal baths and IV therapy.

Dining is personalised, with gourmet chefs to prepare meals tailored to individual preferences and dietary needs.

Rates start at US\$7,630 (A\$11,600) a week, twin share.

## Mandarin's dream

**MANDARIN** Oriental has launched *Inside The Dream*, an original film that takes a behind-the-scenes look at the brand's luxury hospitality.

Viewers will get a glimpse of the effort and creativity that went into three events hosted at the group's properties across Europe and Asia.

The film premiered on 27 Jun at Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong and is available on Prime Video, Canal+ and Tencent worldwide.

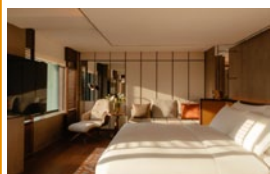
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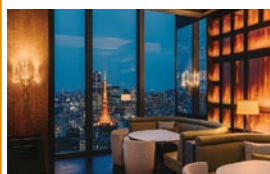
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**Grand Hyatt Singapore** has reopened the refreshed Grand Wing and Grand Club, signalling the completion of its multi-year transformation. The hotel now offers 699 redesigned rooms and suites, seven dining concepts, an extensive wellness hub, and 16 event spaces. All 407 rooms in the Grand Wing, including redesigned deluxe rooms, now feature open-plan spaces with warm walnut flooring and Patagonia stone in the bathrooms.



A new premium events space has opened at **Hotel Marvell** in the heart of Byron Bay. Located on the property's ground floor, the Byron Boardroom offers a naturally lit space for up to 10 guests. The room features raw concrete, rich timbers and lush greenery, offering an ideal environment for focused work and collaboration. The Byron Boardroom features complimentary high-speed wi-fi, whiteboard and monitor, notepads and pens, and more.



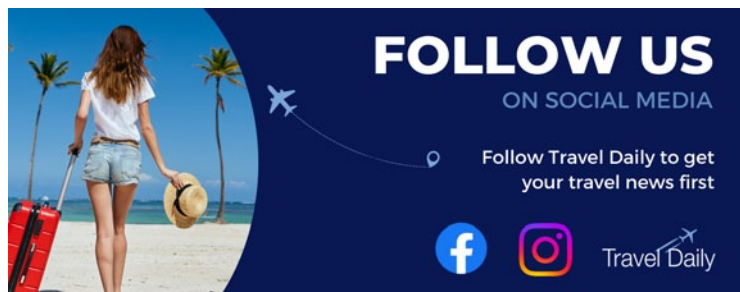
Fairmont Hotels and Resorts has announced its debut in Japan with the opening of **Fairmont Tokyo**. Located 13 minutes from Haneda Airport, the hotel offers 217 rooms, including 29 suites, each offering views of the Tokyo skyline through expansive floor-to-ceiling windows. Guests can access the hotel's seven dining and drinking venues, a 24-hour gym, a spa, a 20-metre indoor infinity pool, and a sundeck.



The recently opened **Ritz-Carlton, Bangkok** has unveiled The Ritz-Carlton Suite, a 439m<sup>2</sup> sanctuary featuring three spacious bedrooms complemented by three balconies and two entrances. The suite offers capabilities for hosting luxury trunk shows, private showcases, boardroom meetings, and social celebrations, and is also ideal for extended stays.



**QT Auckland's Rooftop** at QT has launched Le Salon, a 1920s-inspired hideaway offering late-night soirees, ragtime rhythm and weekend lunches, all paired with Perrier-Jouet pours. Open until 31 Aug, the velvet-draped venue will offer champagne tasting flights daily until 8.30pm, priced from NZ\$49, as well as a two-course 'La Vie en Champagne' luncheon on weekends for \$69pp.



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## Intrepid was Born-eo for this



**TRAVELLERS** Choice travel advisors have returned from a seven-day "unforgettable" famil with Intrepid to Borneo.

Eight advisors experienced the destination's wildlife, culture, and expert local guiding, deepening their product knowledge.

The famil was hosted by Intrepid Key Partnerships Manager Nicola McKenzie, alongside a local guide, with the group experiencing river safaris, as well as World War II memorial sites along the Sandakan Death Marches route.

The group also spotted the destination's famed 'big five': the Borneo elephant, the proboscis monkey, the orangutan, the rhinoceros hornbill, and the saltwater crocodile.

There are five more famils to come in 2025, in addition to Intrepid's 'Sell 15, Get 1 Free' incentive, which runs all year.

The 12-month initiative sees advisors who book 15 trips worth more than \$1,000, with a minimum deposit of \$99, able to score one of more than 50 adventures with Intrepid. MS

## Royal heats it up

**ROYAL** Caribbean has inked a new partnership as the official holiday partner of the Brisbane Heat and Queensland Cricket for the 2025-26 season.

The tie-up will see the cruise line offer exclusive deals, sneak peek product updates and weekend getaway giveaways for Brisbane Heat members, along with family-focused community and fan event experiences throughout the summer season.

Starting in Dec 2025, Royal Caribbean will also serve as the presenting partner of the Gabba Park 'Fan Zone', as well as creating 'The Royal Caribbean Countdown'.

The partnership comes on the heels of the Australian sailing season, including the return of Royal's *Voyager of the Seas* to its new home in Brisbane.





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