

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, plus a full page from **Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours**.

Major star on the way

ROYAL Caribbean has officially welcomed its second Icon class vessel *Star of the Seas* to the fleet ahead of its debut next month from Port Canaveral in Florida.

Star will offer seven-night eastern and western Caribbean sailings from Orlando, including stops at the cruise line's private island Perfect Day at CocoCay.



Fuel switch mystery

A **DRAFT** report into the Air India disaster that killed 260 people has found both fuel control switches on the Boeing 787 Dreamliner were "cut off" seconds after take-off, stopping fuel from reaching the engines.

The tragedy that took place in Ahmedabad last month has seen accident investigators pore over the evidence to find the exact cause of the crash, however the report does not explain how or why the switches were moved.

Cockpit audio captured one pilot asking the other why the fuel had been cut off, and the other replying that he had not touched the fuel switch.

More carriers request SYD

SYDNEY Airport's new slot manager, ACL Asia Pacific (ACL), has fielded an increased demand from foreign carriers seeking to gain access to the country's largest airport.

New data from ACL showed the highest appetite for increased frequencies to and from Sydney between Oct 2025 and Mar 2026 was led by Air NZ, followed by Cathay Pacific, Malaysia Airlines, Etihad, Hong Kong Airlines, Singapore Airlines, and Garuda.

ACL CEO Neil Garwood said there had been an encouraging increase in slot requests when compared to historical levels, and that 30 carriers had bid for additional landing positions.

"In most cases we have been able to give the airlines what they have asked for, or offered the closest available," Garwood said.

"Obviously, competition is highest during the morning and evening peaks, however there is still room for growth."

Rocky adds 12 more

ROCKY Mountaineer has added 12 'Rockies to the Red Rocks' departures in 2025 due to strong demand, with the season now running through to 19 Nov.

The US rail adventure runs through from Denver, Colorado to Moab in Utah, and showcases the landscapes of the American Southwest, including the Colorado River, the Ruby Canyon, and Glenwood Springs.



Of the Aussie carriers, Qantas Group was allocated 52% of all slots, with Qantas taking 36% and Jetstar given 16%.

Meanwhile, Virgin Australia was granted 19%, while the troubled Rex brand saw its allocation reduced significantly to 8%.

Slot allocations were previously determined by an entity controlled by Qantas and VA since 1997, however after a review of fairness in aviation, the role was awarded to neutral third party ACL to make the slot capacity decisions. *AB*

Oneworld catching up

THE airline alliance that counts Qantas as a member has set the goal of integrating all 15 carriers into its technology platform by the end of the year.

When all oneworld members are connected, it will open up a host of traveller benefits, including cross-airline boarding passes on multi-airline itineraries.

Further down the track, cross-airline bag-tracking and lounge access will be introduced.

Rival airline alliances like Star Alliance and SkyTeam have historically offered better cross-member perks than oneworld, with the latter expressing a desire last month to catch up and offer travellers more value.

Scenic celebrates

SCENIC Luxury Cruises & Tours is celebrating 'France Month' with super earlybird airfare offers and a bonus hotel night on selected river cruises.

Find out more about the offers and a new agent toolkit on the **back page**.

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Deal to fuel China growth

ATTRACTING more Chinese visitors to Australia is key on the agenda for Prime Minister Anthony Albanese during his visit to the country this week.

While the backdrop is a mission to quell geopolitical tensions with China, tourism is viewed by the Federal Government as a major plank in improving relations between the two countries.

The centrepiece tourism development on the trip so far was Tourism Australia entering into a new Memorandum of Understanding with Trip.com, which will offer new travel packages and marketing activities in support of Australian visitation.

According to Trip.com Group data, Australia ranked as the top long-haul destination booked during the 2025 Chinese New Year peak period, and led Southern Hemisphere nations for Chinese travellers last year.

Visitors from mainland China



are growing at a faster pace than other markets, with a 26% increase in visitors in the 12 months to Mar 2025, compared with the previous period.

There were 860,000 trips to Australia taken by tourists from Mainland China, accounting for a total spend of \$9.2 billion.

Tourism Australia Executive GM Global Markets & Business Events, Robin Mack, said the deal spans global markets, and that Trip.com's "huge presence" in China would prove critical for Australia's tourism sector. *AB*

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Viking India debut

VIKING will embark on its first river voyages in India, with the under construction 80-passenger *Viking Brahmaputra* to debut in late 2027.

The specialist ship will sail between Guwahati and Nimati Ghat in the northeastern state of Assam as part of the 15-day 'Wonders of India' itinerary, as well as an eight-day river cruise that includes guided land tours and overnight stays in the cities of Delhi, Agra, and Jaipur.

All 40 staterooms and suites will have floor-to-ceiling sliding glass doors with a veranda, and onboard amenities include a spa and fitness centre, and an open-air Sky Bar on the upper deck.



Loyalty subscription

QATAR Airways has launched a new loyalty subscription program called Privilege Club Pro, which the carrier believes will set a new standard for boosting rewards and tier status for members.

The subscription service allows members to boost their Avios and Qpoints balance on a monthly basis, which can be spent on reward seat flights, shopping at Qatar Duty Free, and 'money-can't-buy experiences'.

The monthly subscription can be purchased across four tiers, including: Access - 2,500 Avios for US\$50; Select - 7,500 Avios for US\$130; Exclusive - 15,000 Avios per month for US\$240; and Ultimate - 20,000 Avios and five Qpoints per month for US\$350.

"By boosting their monthly Avios and Qpoints balance, members can now plan ahead for their dream trip or elevate their journey with upgrades and exclusive moments," Qatar Airways said.

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Travel Daily

Qantas Europe collab

AIR France-KLM and Qantas have extended their codeshare agreement after applying for a deepened relationship earlier in the year (**TD 08 May**).

The approval has seen Air France-KLM add its codes to Qantas' non-stop service between Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Perth, as well as Qantas flights from Singapore and Darwin.

Tokyo Haneda Airport has also been established as a new connection point for Air France and Qantas, joining Hong Kong and Singapore in the network.

Meanwhile, the collaboration will also soon see enhanced loyalty cooperation between the carriers, opening up fresh options for Qantas Frequent Flyers to earn and redeem points.



Mandala resort play

MANDALA Hotels & Resorts has purchased the Mercure Clear Mountain in Moreton Bay, Qld, with plans to redevelop the property into a luxury resort.

When the renovation is complete, the company will rebrand the property to reflect the Brisbane debut of a yet-to-be-named brand.

The property will cater to group bookings in the wedding and corporate segments, with more details to be revealed on 06 Aug.

Viva rides into sunset

EXCLUSIVE travel deals and experiences available in outback Queensland will be promoted via a new marketing collaboration between Viva Holidays and Outback Queensland Tourism.

The aim of the tie-up is to boost visitation to the state's outer regions and generate revenue and relief to an area devastated by flooding earlier this year.

Until 17 Jul, Viva Holidays will showcase a selection of special offers and suggested itineraries loaded with bonus add-ons.

Travellers can indulge in outback experiences such as glamping in Winton and Longreach, and sunset cruises on the Thompson River near Charters Towers.

The campaign will be supported with digital activity and a trade marketing toolkit featuring agent resources such as social tiles, which can now be downloaded from the Viva Holidays portal.

Outback Queensland Tourism Association CEO Denise Brown said she is excited to be making it



easier for agents and travellers to book and explore the region.

"We know our region offers unforgettable experiences - and now, through compelling packages, strong price points and targeted promotions, we're bringing those experiences to the forefront for more Australian holidaymakers," Brown said.

For more information on the campaign - **CLICK HERE**. *ML*

NCL campaign live

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line has today kicked off its six-week 'Experience more of the world' trade campaign, with the first webinar taking place this morning.

A new destination will be unlocked each week, with agents to collect a virtual passport stamp after completing a short quiz - six stamps are needed to be in the running to win one of two balcony cabins on an NCL cruise.

A special keyword is needed to answer an extra question in the quiz, which will unlock 200 Partners First Rewards points.

Agents who missed the first session today have all of this week to catch up - **CLICK HERE**.

Essex plane crashes

EMERGENCY services have responded to a small Beechcraft B200 that crashed after take-off at Southend Airport in the UK, with the cause not yet known.

Low-cost carrier Easyjet is the only airline operating scheduled services from Southend, with the carrier stating all flights have been rerouted to other airports or cancelled until further notice.

Ogilvy takes on TNZ

TOURISM New Zealand has signed with Ogilvy PR as its primary point of media contact.

The communications agency will work on promoting travel deals, Kiwi adventures and major events, along with liaising with media on fam opportunities.

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Travel mishaps abound

CLOSE to one in four Australians have suffered a mishap while travelling in the last 12 months, according to new research from Finder.

A survey of 1,010 Aussies revealed that 23% ran into trouble while holidaying, with travel delays being the number one mishap.

Ten percent of those surveyed faced delays, while 8% misplaced a belonging, and 5% experienced lost luggage.

Concerningly, 4% ended up in hospital, 3% were scammed, and 3% missed their flights.

Other travel plights, though less common at 1% each, included being a victim of theft, getting into a car or motorbike accident, being mugged, and having their credit card skimmed.

Angus Kidman, travel expert at Finder, said there are steps that travellers can take to avoid these mishaps, which can derail even



the most well-planned trips.

He suggested Australians book their holidays through reputable platforms or directly with airlines and hotels.

"Scammers often create fake websites or listings that mimic legitimate services.

"Before making any payments, verify the authenticity of the website and look for secure payment options," Kidman said.

He also advised holidaymakers to notify their bank of their intended destinations; use secure wi-fi connections when accessing sensitive information; and take out a comprehensive travel insurance policy. *JM*

The Chat

with Jenny

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The first of its kind

AIR France's new La Premiere first class suite (**pictured**) is being gradually rolled out on a number of the airline's routes this summer, including Los Angeles, Singapore, and Tokyo.

The new experience, which has been in development for three years, features a unique, fully modular seat design, including a chaise longue that transforms into a fully flat bed.

The suite extends across five windows, which is an exclusive Air France innovation.

La Premiere rolled out on New York City flights earlier this year, and will be available on all destinations by next year, with a view to introducing it on as many routes as possible.



New hub for capital

A NEW international airport will service Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh from Sep.

Techo International (KTI) will replace the destination's current major airport, Phnom Penh International, which will close after more than 65 years.

The new hub, located 28km south of Phnom Penh, will take more than an hour to reach from downtown - much farther than the current 30 minutes it takes to get to Phnom Penh International.

The downtown area is where many of the city's biggest tourist drawcards are located.

There are plans to construct a direct rail link to downtown from the airport, which is set to be one of the largest in Southeast Asia, however no date has been given for when it will be operational.

The Cambodia Airports management company will operate the new Techo International, which is expected to handle 13 million pax per year.

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Perth Airport record

PERTH Airport experienced a record 17.48 million passengers during FY25, up by 8.5% on the previous year's 16.1 million.

Among the annual passengers included 5.14 million int'l visitors, up 18.3% on the prior year.

Regional passenger numbers grew by 3.7% on last year, from six million to 6.24 million.

"With these incredibly strong numbers and the continued growth that we are expecting over the next few years, it is imperative that we keep on track and progressing with our ambitious redevelopment program," said Perth Airport CEO Jason Waters.

"This will deliver on the long-held vision for One Airport, which will create greater efficiency for airlines, a better travel experience for passengers, and major



economic benefits for WA."

The first of the airport's two multi-storey car parks is currently under construction, including more bays near the terminals.

More departure gates and seating will be added to Terminal 2 and Terminal 1 International will soon feature upgraded retail and food & beverage outlets.

Preliminary work has also begun on a parallel runway, while design work has begun on fresh terminal facilities, including a new terminal for the Qantas Group to relocate to Airport Central.

Perth Airport has also partnered with Accor to operate the first hotel on the airport estate under the Pullman Hotels & Resorts brand. *JHM*

TAP privatisation

PORTUGAL is attempting to reprivatise its flag carrier, TAP Air Portugal, with Prime Minister Luis Montenegro stating the government is aiming to sell almost 55% of the airline.

A deal would see 49.9% of TAP sold, potentially to another major European airline groups, with *AviationSource News* reporting Lufthansa, Air France-KLM, and IAG have already shown interest.

Another 5% share will be reserved for TAP's employees.

The airline flew more than 16 million passengers last year.

You did it your way

IT IS the final call to secure Hurtigruten's 'Norway, Your Way' sale bookings, with the promotion closing tomorrow.

The offer allows travellers to score up to 25% off and up to \$200 of onboard credit pp on selected Original and Signature voyages departing from Sep 2025 to Apr 2026 - **CLICK HERE**.

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Soaking up Santa Monica



ENVOYAGE leaders have soaked up the Santa Monica lifestyle ahead of Flight Centre's Global Gathering in Los Angeles.

Senior leaders from Flight Centre Travel Group enjoyed a three-day fam, hosted by Santa Monica Travel & Tourism, exploring the popular resort town near Los Angeles.

The trip showcased Santa Monica's top hotels, its dining scene, and its relaxed lifestyle, reinforcing the destination's strong appeal for Australians.

One of the trip's highlights saw the group embrace Santa Monica's active adventure, with a morning coastal tour with Bikes & Hikes, soaking up the sunshine and sea breeze.

Culinary highlights included dinners at local favourites FIG, Sirena, Terraza, and Orla, the new and Mediterranean-inspired restaurant at Regent Santa Monica Beach.

There was no shortage of hotel inspiration either, with site inspections at The Georgian Hotel, Santa Monica Proper Hotel, Fairmont Miramar Hotel & Bungalows and newly opened Regent Santa Monica Beach.

Envoyage Global General Manager Astrid Richardson said she was struck by Santa Monica's laidback luxury, describing the destination as one that "caters to every type of traveller".

"There's something magnetic about the laidback luxury of Santa Monica, enriched by the countless stories this coastal icon has witnessed over the decades, from golden age glamour to modern-day reinvention," Richardson said. *MS*

Pictured are GM Nick Queale; Richardson; Chief Product Officer Technology Wendie Lee; Global Communications Executive Naomi Green; and Chief Financial Officer Alberto Gomez.

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Air links boost hotels

A SURGE in air capacity to Australia has the potential to create a demand for close to two million hotel room night bookings annually, according to new analysis by CBRE.

The report from the commercial real estate company noted that 56 new routes will add roughly 10,500 annual flights into key Australian cities, with Sydney expected to benefit more than any other city with 542,000 room nights by the end of 2026.

Melbourne's 12 new int'l routes will add around 300,000 short-term arrivals and generate 409,000 room nights, while Brisbane will see close to 270,000 room nights added.

AW hunting Jaguars

TRAVELLERS can go in search of one of the world's most elusive big cats in its natural habitat and support conservation in a new itinerary from Adventure World.

The brand's new 'Jaguars of the Wild Pantanel' tour is a five-day exploration of the world's largest tropical wetland in Brazil, known for being the best place to spot wild jaguars along with capybara, caimans and many bird species.

Travellers will also have a chance to see the conservation work of the Oncafé Project and join their jaguar habituation team.

The itinerary serves as an optional extension to Adventure World's 'Authentic Brazil', which includes a wildlife adventure in the Amazon and Iguazu Falls.

Mr Long goes to Washington



AUSTRALIAN Travel Industry Association CEO Dean Long was in Washington DC recently, continuing his work as Vice Chair of the World Travel Agents Associations Alliance.

High on the agenda for Long's meetings around the capital

included further avenues of collaboration between travel agent representation bodies around the world. *ML*

Long is **pictured** above with American Society of Travel Advisors Executive Vice President, Mark Meader.

Ready for cruising

A GROUP of specially selected tourism businesses in Brisbane have just completed an eight-week course to better prepare for the state's booming cruise sector.

Delivered by the Brisbane Economic Development Agency, the course featured workshops, targeted mentoring and product refinement aimed at appealing to cruise travellers as shore excursion experiences or extended post-cruise activities.

Local businesses included First Nations immersions to inner-city walks and hinterland getaways.

QF bridge damage

A COLLISION between an aerobridge and a Qantas A380 aircraft at Sydney Airport has left travellers facing a 21-hour delay before a trip to South Africa.

The incident saw the aerobridge pierce a hole in the plane's engine, forcing the passengers to disembark the aircraft.

Qantas offered accommodation to passengers if needed and put them onto a new flight the next day, with no injuries reported.

The airline said it was investigating the incident and apologised to customers.



Window Seat

AUSSIES will soon be able to sample meals served up by a chef who can't taste or smell during their next stopover adventure in Dubai.

No, this is not a cool-sounding disability initiative, it is the introduction of Chef Aiman, an AI culinary maestro that will be designing the menu at WOOHOO, a restaurant opening in downtown Dubai in Sep.

The AI chef has been trained on decades of food science research, molecular composition data, and thousands of global recipes, said WOOHOO founder Ahmet Oytun Cakir.

According to Chef Aiman's developers, the success of the virtual cook will be chalked up to its ability to break cuisine down to its component parts such as texture, acidity and umami, and then link them to novel flavour combinations.

"Human cooking will not be replaced, but we believe Chef Aiman will elevate the ideas, creativity," Cakir said.

Those who have used AI searches and found it can occasionally confabulate responses may join our concern for culinary errors.

We are hoping miso soups with a dash of devon and spam never get tossed up.



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Adventure Destinations - Canada, Alaska & USA

A holiday is a lot like a jigsaw puzzle, with the perfect trip requiring all the pieces to be in the right place. Adventure Destinations' latest guide reflects this, with a lengthy range of multi-day independent touring throughout the region. Whether crossing Canada from side to side, adding an Alaska cruise, Rocky Mountains rail journey or more, every detail is covered. The guide features a top five of each country to help travellers plan.



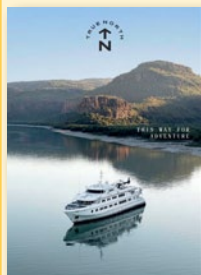
Trafalgar - Europe and Britain 2025/26

Dozens of itineraries, from short city breaks to continental immersions, are featured in Trafalgar's latest Europe guide. More than 140 itineraries across 50 countries can be found, each featuring at least one 'Make Travel Matter' experience to help tourists connect with locals and make a difference during their holiday. Fellow travellers have shared their personal holiday photos to best illustrate the kind of adventures that await.



Railway Adventures - Your World by Train 2025

When you travel with somebody genuinely passionate about what they do, it adds a layer of authenticity to the trip that impossible to teach. Scott McGregor's latest collection of fully escorted rail trips around the world are well detailed and packed with plenty of local experiences, and even advise on the level of personal fitness required. Travellers can explore parts of the world virtually inaccessible by road, riding some classic locomotives and enjoying off-track experiences like hot air ballooning.



True North - This Way for Adventure

Activity-based itineraries crafted for the most discerning traveller can be found in True North's latest guide to the Kimberley. With no sea days, guests can look forward to daily excursions and exploration of stunning coastal wilderness. Explore on ground level but also up high, with most True North itineraries featuring an onboard helicopter to take guests to see the region from the sky.

At the other end of the scale, travellers can also partake in some fishing to relax and hear all the sounds of nature.

Connecting for 25 years



CONNECTIONS Travel Group (CTG) will celebrate its 25th anniversary at the company's annual conference, Ubuntu Infinite 2025, later this month.

The travel network will gather at the InterContinental Sanctuary Cove on the Gold Coast from 25-26 Jul, under the theme 'Infinite - Living Absolutely'.

The conference will bring together 135 staff members from across CTG's specialist divisions - CT Connections (corporate travel), Edge Connections (luxury leisure travel), and Totem Connections (MICE), alongside a range of suppliers, partners, and key industry guests.

"Ubuntu Infinite 2025 is both a celebration of that shared success and a bold statement of where we're headed," said Gary Reichenberg, founder and Chief Executive Officer.

The three-day program will feature keynote speakers, including an address by Reichenberg, expert panels, technology showcases, and the inaugural Ubuntu Awards, which will celebrate individuals and organisations who exemplify CTG's values.

The event will also include the Connect Lounge Supplier Showcase, where CTG's partners

will showcase innovations, strengthen relationships, and explore new opportunities for collaboration.

"As we enter our next chapter, we remain committed to shaping the future of travel with purpose, passion, and a forward-thinking approach," added Reichenberg.

"We're not here to watch the industry evolve - we're here to lead that evolution." JM

Brazil visitor boost

INTERNATIONAL tourist arrivals to Brazil rose by 50% from Jan to May this year, with Rio de Janeiro welcoming over 1m visitors in that same time period.

The tourism sector attracted US\$81 million in foreign direct investments in Q1 of 2025, 88% more than the previous quarter.

Brazil Tourist Board President Marcelo Freixo said it was "a globally unprecedented moment", adding that int'l tourist arrivals are growing by 50%.

"At the same time, UN Tourism forecasts global growth of just 3% to 5%," Freixo continued.

"We're seeing more tourists than ever before, and they are exploring a more diverse range of destinations, which helps drive regional development."

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