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## Win a pearly prize

**PEARL** Expeditions is celebrating its launch with an exclusive Paspaley Pearl jewellery incentive, giving agents the chance to win one of three items valued up to \$10,800.

For more details, reach out to [concierge@pearlexpeditions.com](mailto:concierge@pearlexpeditions.com).

## Trade worry hits biz travel

**THE** growth in the global corporate travel segment has slowed down in 2025 under the weight of trade tensions and economic pressures, a new report from the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has claimed.

While the sector is still predicted to record a year-over-year growth rate of 6.6% by Dec - equating to roughly US\$1.57 trillion in travel spend - the figures mark a sizable decrease on the double-digit growth noted over the past two years.

Data from GBTA's study showed



the rebound from the pandemic saw the value of business travel bookings improve rapidly since 2021, including a 30% jump in US\$1.34 trillion in 2023.

However, the upward trajectory of global corporate travel spend this year is likely to be curtailed by trade policy uncertainty.

While US President Donald Trump was not cited specifically in the report, the negative impact of US trade tariffs on travel has been well documented.

A year ago, business travel spend was forecast to pile on around 10% of value in 2026, however that figure has now been revised down to 8%.

Australia is the 12th largest business travel market in the world, growing annually at 5% for a yearly spend of US\$28b. **AB**

### Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features a cover wrap from **Singapore Airlines**, eight pages of news, including our **Sustainability** page, plus a product profile from **Tourism Solomons** and full pages from:

- **Regent Seven Seas Cruises**
- **APT Travel**

## Score free flights

**SINGAPORE** Airlines and Lufthansa Group are offering travel agents a chance to win two economy class return tickets to Zurich - and all they have to do is complete a quiz.

Check out the **cover page** to find out more details.



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**NEW 2026/27**



## Expedia beefs up its advisor appeal

EXPEDIA TAAP has introduced a range of new tools designed to unlock more earnings potential, save time, and improve efficiency for travel advisors.

Based on the feedback of agents from around the globe, the modifications to TAAP include the ability to make post-booking changes to travel dates, occupancy, and room type directly within the platform.

The update eliminates the need to cancel and re-book, saving time and enabling faster responses to client needs.

Also new is the option for Aussie advisors to apply an agency service charge of up to 30% of the total lodging booking value within



the Expedia TAAP platform.

The feature has rolled out to Australia following strong pilot feedback overseas, and arrives after a recent World Travel Agents Association Alliance report (TD 09 Jul) that showed charging a fee for service was growing strongly among advisors globally.

Expedia TAAP is also allowing deferred payments to take place further in advance, replacing the previous 280 days with a full year timeframe, which the platform heralds as a key new way to make it easier to secure earlybird deals and support forward planning.

The platform has flagged the future arrival of a bank transfer feature as well, a payment method that has already gone live in markets such as Germany, Italy, France, Spain, Belgium & Finland.

"By providing more options for how agencies prefer to pay, this enhancement empowers advisors to manage bookings more efficiently and serve clients in regions where card payments may be less practical," Expedia Group said.

The latest changes follow a report published by Expedia Group in May, which flagged many upgrades to its consumer and B2B platform, including the testing of a travel insurance API on Expedia TAAP (TD 15 May).

In that report, Expedia said it would start testing an API for air, enabling what it referred to as "seamless integration of plane travel with accommodation and car rentals". AB

## 1834 takes K'gari

1834 Hotels has been appointed as the management company for Kingfisher Bay Resort and K'gari Beach Resort on behalf of Kelsian Group and its SeaLink brand.

The deal will commence on 01 Aug, and will see 1834 assume full operational management of both properties.

The management transition will be carefully planned, with 1834 Hotels collaborating closely with current resort teams to maintain service continuity for guests.

## Luxurious savings

TRAVELLERS can save 40% on Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) luxurious voyages in 2026/27 around the world - for more information, see **page nine**.

## Congratulations APT

APT has received National Travel Industry Awards nominations in three categories - details on **page 10**.

## All about Solomons

VISIT Solomons is giving out \$100 VISA cards to lucky agents who complete its online training - find out more details on **p11**.

### At Rail Europe, we believe the greenest journeys start with the right partner.

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## Tech heavyweights form OTA challenger

**HOTELS** will be able to secure more direct bookings and bypass online travel agents (OTAs) using a new AI-powered platform that has been revealed this week.

Known as DirectBooker, the new service aims to funnel hotel data and listings directly into popular AI tools ChatGPT and Gemini, creating a direct booking link to consumers and disrupting the hotel booking process.

Backing the new venture are former TripAdvisor CEO Steve Kaufer and Google Travel boss Richard Holden (**pictured**), with



Sanjay Vakil, who worked at both organisations, leading the effort.

The impetus behind the new technology venture is to help hotels offer better rates to consumers by using AI to facilitate a direct chat link with travellers and avoid paying heavy commissions to OTAs.

For its success, DirectBooker is hoping travellers will eventually put more faith in AI to make more complete travel bookings, beyond simply generating travel inspiration and itinerary ideas.

"The default behaviour is going to be for the OTAs to win again

and I would like to head off that outcome," Vakil said.

DirectBooker is still in the pre-product stage but has so far secured US\$2 million in pre-seed funding despite not having any hotel group partnerships.

The formation of DirectBooker arrives in the same month that ChatGPT's Agent functionality launched in Australia (**TD** 21 Jul), allowing users to compare and book flights, hotels and other travel products and services.

Expedia declined to comment on the new start-up. **ML**

## Finding more Treasure

**VIRTUOSO** Travel has promoted Sophie Treasure to the role of Director Global Partnerships - ANZ, Greater China, North & South East Asia.

She was previously the company's Account Director for Partner Relations.

## HA to boost Sydney

**HAWAIIAN** Airlines will increase services between Honolulu and Sydney to daily this summer.

Deploying A330-200 aircraft on the route, the changes will take place between 18 Dec and 31 Jan 2026, boosting the current five times weekly frequency.

## Pixar makes a splash

**DISNEY** Cruise Line is inviting travellers to celebrate Pixar Day at Sea on select five-night sailings to the Bahamas in 2026.

Guests will be able to rub shoulders with their favourite Pixar characters, including Woody and Buzz Lightyear from *Toy Story* and Mike and Sulley from *Monster's Inc*, during the cruise, which sails from Port Canaveral to Nassau in the Bahamas.

The voyages will feature a deck party; a parade where guests can don their best Pixar-inspired outfit; and a live cooking demonstration where pax can learn how to cook Remy's signature dish from *Ratatouille*.

Prices start from \$4,330 for two guests, with Pixar Day departure dates available between Jan-Mar 2026 - find out more **HERE**.



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## New Saudi carrier

**AIR** Arabia Alliance has won the rights to operate a new low-cost carrier in Saudi Arabia, with the aim of boosting air connectivity in the region.

The new consortium will operate the airline from the King Fahd International Airport in Dammam and provide competitive travel options for passengers, the Saudi General Authority of Civil Aviation said in a post on X.

By 2030, the new Air Arabia alliance will operate 45 aircraft and will serve 24 domestic and 57 international destinations, transporting up to 10 million passengers each year.

"The establishment of a new low-cost airline in Dammam further builds Saudi Arabia's position as the world's biggest aviation growth story, with the proposals received reflecting strong global investment in Saudi aviation," Minister of Transport Services Saleh Al Jasser said.

## New approach to polar

**BOOKINGS** are now open for the new kid on the cruise scene, Terra Nova Expeditions, which announced its official launch to the market this week.

Founded by industry veteran and Chimu Adventures co-founder Greg Carter, the company aims to introduce "a bold new approach to polar exploration".

*RMS St Helena*, a former mail ship transformed into a 98-passenger expeditions vessel, will begin offering voyages to Antarctica in Dec 2026.

The ship features an onboard science lab, and is tailored to the budget-conscious traveller looking for intimate exploration, pledging more frequent and longer shore excursions than larger rival vessels.

Additionally, in what the brand said is an industry first, its vessels will be equipped with cutting-edge VR headsets, which are designed to reduce seasickness



and improve guest comfort.

Pax will also have the unique opportunity to explore Antarctic waters aboard a second vessel, with the line rolling out additional cruise-and-sail combinations.

Fares, which start at \$13,480, cover drinks at meal times, yoga and wellness sessions, wi-fi and gratuities, as well as a wide range of activities, such as snowshoeing, kayaking, Zodiac cruises, hiking, and camping.

Learn more about Terra Nova Expeditions [HERE](#). JM

## HA axes more roles

**HAWAIIAN** Airlines has announced its third round of job losses since the carrier was purchased by the parent group of Alaska Airlines ([TD](#) 04 Dec 2023).

The 252 axed staff are all based in Hawaii, however the carrier said it also plans to hire 800 more employees by Dec.

## LE clicks into gear

**LUXURY** Escapes Agent Hub team is hitting the road in its first-ever series of physical events.

Advisors are invited to take part in the nights, which will include presentations revealing tips and tricks on how to use the hub and how agents can earn up to \$2,000 through just one booking.

There will also be plenty of prizes up for grabs, including a spot on a Vietnam fam.

The events will visit Melbourne on 06 Aug (click [HERE](#)), Sydney on 27 Aug (click [HERE](#)) and Brisbane on 03 Sep (click [HERE](#)).

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## Qantas reclaims the title

**SERVICES** operated by Qantas were more punctual than its main rival in Jun, ending a hot streak by Virgin Australia that had lasted several months.

The latest figures from BITRE showed that all Qantas-designated services took off on schedule 81.2% of the time, and landed four in every five flights as per program.

During the same month, all VA-designated services were not too far behind, arriving on schedule 78% of the time and departing just shy of 79% of the time.

While Qantas may have taken back the punctuality crown in Jun, the same could not be said for flight cancellations, with VA cutting fewer services.

The Flying Kangaroo scrapped 3.5% of all flights in Jun, while VA enjoyed a very tidy month, only cutting 1.6% of services.

Qantas Group budget carrier Jetstar also performed well for



the month, only canning 1.1% of flights and delivering flights on schedule at an average of almost 80% of the time.

Across all major Australian carriers, on-time arrivals were lower than the long-term average of 80.7%, and on-time departures were also lower than long-term norms (81.1%).

The rate of cancellations was higher than the long-term average of 2.2% as well.

Of the major capital city hubs, Hobart Airport was the pick of the bunch with 81.95% of flights on time, pipping Melbourne Airport at 81.65%.

While Sydney was the best of the major airports on departures (81.9%), it failed to make the top 10 in terms of arrivals. AB

## Tourist spots razed

**BALI** has begun to demolish around 40 tourist buildings at Bingin Beach, including homestays, villas, and cafes popular among Aussie visitors.

The businesses were issued demolition notices in the last two months, after they were found to be violating spatial planning laws and building regulations.

After weeks of negotiations with businesses attempting to halt the demolition orders, the Badung Regency Government has confirmed that work will go ahead this week.

Among the buildings being bulldozed is the popular Step Up Hotel in Jimbaran.



## Window Seat

**WHILE** travelling to concerts to see famous stars like Taylor Swift often shake up tourism numbers, fans were left literally shaken by a rush to use the exit at a recent Beyonce concert in the US.

While nobody was seriously injured in the incident, the mad push to enter the Atlanta metro station may have been caused by an unusual intruder - a palmetto cockroach.

Yes, panic was started by one woman screaming when the cockroach landed on her jumper - if only the commuters knew to use the exit to the left, right Beyonce?



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## Speedier Travelport

**TRAVELPORT** has cut the time taken for global air searches on its Travelport+ platform by 23%.

The tech company said the change enables agents to operate more efficiently and deliver superior customer experiences.

## See more of Bogota

**COLOMBIA'S** capital has launched a new stopover campaign aimed at shaking the tag of being a transit city.

The partnership between the Bogota Tourism Office and Colombia's largest carrier Avianca invites travellers to spend 24 hours seeing the best of the city through a range of new packages.

Tours include restaurant experiences, explorations of museums and historic architecture, as well as treks through some of the city's best gardens and nature walks.

Advisors can select the 'stopover' box on Avianca's website when searching routes that qualify.

Avianca also plans to open stopover options in other cities, including Lima, Madrid, Miami, Guayaquil, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, and Sao Paulo.



## Princess rejigs packages



**PRINCESS** Cruises has updated its Premier and Plus packages, which will go on sale tomorrow for sailings in the new year.

The updated Princess Premier Package will be available for \$129 per person per day pre-cruise (previously \$100), and now features new shore excursion credit depending on the length of the voyages.

Passengers can still access unlimited premier beverage packages, unlimited casual and specialty dining, four device wi-fi, and fees waived for room service delivery, as part of the package.

Pricing for Sphere-class ships *Sun Princess* and *Star Princess* will be \$134 per person per day.

Meanwhile, the Plus Package will cost \$84pp per day and includes two more casual dining meals per voyage for a total of four, as well as the Plus beverage package, single device wi-fi, and fees waived for OceanNow and room service delivery. *DF*

## Report slams Boeing

**BOEING** has come under fire in the final report into the Alaska Airlines incident, which resulted in a door panel blowing out at an altitude of 4.9km in Jan last year (*TD* 08 Jan 2024).

The National Transportation Safety Board found that the accident was mainly caused by Boeing's failure to ensure property training, guidance, and oversight during the manufacturing process, which led to the improper reinstallation of critical hardware securing the mix-exit door plug.

This lapse allowed the door plug to detach mid-flight, causing a sudden decompression.

The report also criticised the Federal Aviation Administration for failing to detect and address Boeing's noncompliance issues.

Alaska Airlines received compensation from Boeing last year (*TD* 08 Apr 2024).

## VA mid-air blaze

**COOL** heads prevailed on a Virgin Australia flight from Sydney to Hobart yesterday when a suspected lithium battery caught fire in a baggage compartment.

The incident occurred minutes from touching down in HBT, with staff extinguishing the blaze.



## Focus Canada Agent Event

Join Destination Canada and our partners for a fun educational evening.

Wednesday, 03 September 2025  
Intercontinental Hotel Sydney  
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## Boeing plots NZ

**DOMESTIC** sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) production in New Zealand could generate NZ\$1.3 billion in gross value, according to a new study by Cyan Ventures.

New Zealand's aviation sector would unlock this full benefit of its domestic production if SAF reaches 30% of the country's jet fuel needs by 2050, the Boeing supported study revealed.

The report also found that New Zealand can potentially safeguard NZ\$4.1 billion in tourism revenue and almost NZ\$200 million in trade revenue over the period to 2050, as other countries accelerate decarbonising aviation and SAF becomes in greater demand.

Boeing acting Regional Sustainability lead Kimberly Camrass said New Zealand's reliance on imported jet fuel highlights the need for a domestic SAF supply.

"This is critical for reducing emissions as aviation could rise to represent 22% of the country's gross emissions by 2050 if no action is taken, but also for ensuring sovereign security," she explained.

"The opportunity to secure New Zealand's long-term aviation fuel supply, boost economic growth and help meet ambitious climate goals through SAF is compelling."

## WORLD EXPEDITIONS AIMING FOR A 'B'

**ADVENTURE** travel brand World Expeditions has outlined its plan to obtain B-Corp certification as a key achievement of its 50th year of operation in 2025.

As part of the process, the company has released its *2024-25 Impact Report*, which highlights the steps taken to minimise its operational footprint, regenerate environments and offer more supportive community itineraries.

World Expeditions will continue to mark its milestone year by hosting a special thought-leader symposium at its Sydney HQ on 20 Aug, bringing together leaders across tourism, science and Indigenous affairs for an insightful panel discussion.

Highlights from the report include \$72,000 raised for a range of environmentally conscious community projects, with a further 15 initiatives funded for



health, education & conservation.

The company's '10 Pieces' litter initiative has also seen nearly 11,000 pieces of rubbish removed from hiking trails.

Internally, 90% of staff are now trained in B-Corp policies, while employees are also actively incentivised to contribute to local community organisations through a paid volunteer day off.

The company has also worked to digitise all documentation on

self-guided itineraries in an effort to reduce paper waste.

World Expeditions CEO Sue Badyari said the company has always believed that when travel is "done the right way", it can be good for travellers, for host communities and for the planet.

"This report allows us to pause and look back on how far we've come, be transparent about where we still need to improve, and share what lies ahead." ML

## Marriott certified

**ECOTOURISM** Australia has named the Sydney Harbour Marriott as the brand's first Sustainable Tourism Certified property in Australia.

The accolade was achieved through initiatives such as 'Serve 360', which guides eco-conscious activities such as implementing energy and water efficient systems, as well as championing sustainable, local produce.

## Singapore advancing green aviation

**THE** Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) has created a sustainable aviation centre, with the signing of a memorandum of understanding by a number of leaders in the aviation, energy, and green financing sectors.

CAAS is being joined by Airbus, Boeing, Chevron, ExxonMobil, GenZero, IATA, and Neste for the Asia Pacific Sustainable Aviation Centre

(APSAC), which will focus on policy research, collaboration and capacity building.

The APSAC will be Chaired by Han Kok Juan, Director-General of CAAS, with Philip Goh appointed as the founding chief executive officer.

The centre's immediate priority will be engaging stakeholders on their needs and plans for sustainable aviation fuel.

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## MONEY

**BETTING** against the AUD and inflation on the rise in the UK - all in Tuesday's Money column.

**AU\$1 = US\$0.652**

**INDUSTRY** super funds are betting against the Australian dollar for the first time since the currency floated, according to Tim Hext in the *Australian Financial Review*.

"Only 20% of international equity holdings are now currency-hedged, down from 30% five years ago," he wrote, asserting that meant a bet on the Aussie dollar going lower.

However, Hext also suggested that personally, "taking bets against the Australian dollar is not on my horizon".

What do we know for sure?

The alarmist headlines this week ('Aussie dollar plunging', wrote *News.com.au*) were just that - alarmist.

Across the last five days, the AUD topped out at \$0.654 and bottomed at \$0.645.

For those travellers about to head to the United Kingdom, the *BBC* recently reported inflation was still increasing, with prices having risen 3.6% over the last 12 months, driven by fuel and food.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.652
UK	£0.484
NZ	\$1.093
Euro	€0.558
Japan	¥96.17
Thailand	฿21.02
China	¥4.681
South Africa	11.492
Canada	\$0.892
Bitcoin	0.00000559

## A new-look safari stay



**BOUTIQUE** lodge and safari camp operator Elewana Collection has pulled back the curtains to reveal a significant design and culinary overhaul at two of its luxury properties in Kenya.

Elsa's Kopje and Elephant Pepper Camp, both located in the Maasai Mara, now feature enhanced furnishings and decorations while remaining true to their ethos of amplifying natural surroundings and cultural heritage.

At Elsa's Kopje in Meru National Park, all guest suites have been refurbished, bathroom flooring upgraded, and lighting brightened to maximise viewing over the savannah that sits beneath.

At the top end of the property's offerings, the Private House has also been fitted with a new bath and a redesigned outdoor shower.

Guests will also be able to enjoy a new outdoor cinema, while the spa and pool area have been retiled and expanded.

Over at Elephant Pepper Camp, new furnishings have been fitted inside all guest tents, along with the mess and bar tents to present

a new communal atmosphere.

The property has also introduced a new culinary concept focusing on fire cooking, featuring a slow-roasted open-flame experience.

"These renovations are more than just cosmetic upgrades - they're about deepening the connection between guest and place," said Elewana Collection COO, Kieren Day.

Elewana Collection is comprised of 16 boutique lodges, camps and hotels in Kenya and Tanzania. *ML*

## Liquid rule change?

**US AIRPORT** security is considering changes to rules around taking liquids on board flights, the Department of Homeland Security has hinted.

The TSA's current rule requires liquids in carry-on to be limited to 100ml or less, and stored in a single, resealable plastic bag.

"Hopefully the future of an airport...is that you walk in the door with your carry-on and walk through and go to your flight," Dept of Homeland Security said.

## First in second place

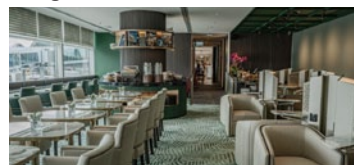
**HONG** Kong International Airport has opened the doors to its second Plaza Premium First lounge to travellers.

The new facility can be found in the West Hall at HKG, and like its counterpart, offers a variety of food and beverage options and seating to enjoy prior to takeoff.

Unlike the first lounge, which remains open in the East Hall, the new location features a Halal-certified menu, making it the first lounge at HKG to do so.

Visitors can also enjoy a variety of artworks, modern interiors and a 180° view of the tarmac.

"It is a significant milestone in our global expansion of Plaza Premium First and a pivotal step in realising our mission of making travel better," said Plaza Premium Group General Manager of Hong Kong, John Girard.



## Aegean's new jets

**DIRECT** flights from Athens to both Delhi and Mumbai will be added to Greek airline Aegean's schedule from Mar 2026, using two new Airbus A321neo aircraft.

The new planes take Aegean's order book to 60 aircraft, of which 36 have been delivered, with the latest A321neos coming in Dec 2025 and Jan 2026.

Both aircraft will feature 138 seats, among which will be 24 in business class.

Aegean plans to operate five times weekly to Delhi from Mar 2026 and three times weekly to Mumbai beginning in May.



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# Discover the Solomon Islands and win – it's Raw, Real AND Rewarding!

**Welkam** agents! Here's your chance to get to know the Solomon Islands, one of the South Pacific's most unique and untouched destinations, and be in the running to win a \$100 prepaid VISA card simply by completing some quick, very engaging online training!

From 9:00am on Tuesday, 22 July until COB Tuesday 29 July, every Solomon Islands Specialist Module you complete will earn you one entry into a prize draw to win the VISA card. The more modules you complete, the more chances you have to win!

It's the perfect excuse to dive deeper into the heart of the 'Hapi

Isles' — a 992-island archipelago renowned for its unique 'living' culture', world-class diving on technicolour coral reefs brim-full of amazing marine life, uncrowded surf breaks, sports fishing, trekking, bird-watching and a WWII history all contained within an unspoiled truly eco-environment rich in biodiversity.

Whether you're brushing up on your knowledge or discovering it all for the first time, this program equips you with the insights and selling points to inspire your clients.

So go on — get learning, get inspired, and get in the draw! It's all part of helping you share the story of the Solomon Islands — raw and real!

You'll find the modules **here**.

## NEED HELP?

Speak to the expert - Tourism Solomons' Trade Manager Australia/New Zealand, Richard Skewes is the go to point for all travel industry related enquiries:

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