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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* features eight pages, a cover wrap from **Singapore Airlines**, a photo page from **TravelManagers**, plus full pages from:

- Helloworld
- Tokyo Tourism

## Stronger together

**SINGAPORE** Europe Pacific Joint Venture offers agents' clients more choice for travel. See the **cover page** for details.

## SL to scrap visa fee

**AUSTRALIA** is on a list of 40 new countries that will no longer have to pay the visa on arrival fee in Sri Lanka, an update from Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath has confirmed.

The Asian country said the move will likely result in a shortfall in revenue in the short term, but in the long run would increase tourist numbers and result in a stronger visitor economy.

There is no date yet confirmed for when Australia will be formally added to the list.

## Hello nominations

**HELLOWORLD** Travel Limited is thanking the industry for its support after receiving two NTIA nominations - details on **page 9**.

## Take off to Tokyo

**ADVISORS** can win a trip for two to Tokyo when they complete the destination's updated expert program - more info on **page 10**.

# Accessible market boom

**TOURISM** Research Australia has published its inaugural report into the accessible tourism sector, revealing a market outlay that spent more than \$29 billion on domestic tourism in 2024.

The report, which for the first time documents the economic contribution of the accessible market over a calendar year, found one in every five domestic trips were made by somebody with accessibility needs and their travelling companion.

Accessible travellers took 23.9 million domestic trips in 2024, with a further 342,000 visitors coming from overseas, accounting for 97.1 million nights away.

The average domestic trip length for accessible travellers was 3.6 nights, up from 3.4 nights set by other travellers.

Accessible guests also spent 58% of trip nights recorded in regional Australia, equal to the mark set by other travellers.

The study also reinforced Australia's demographic is ageing, presenting evidence showing



the proportion of the population aged 65 and over increased from 13.3% in 2009 to 17.1% in 2022.

"By continuing to advance accessibility, the tourism industry can meet the growing demand from travellers with accessible needs," the report stated. *ML*

## NSW takes off

**THE** NSW Government has allocated an extra \$12.5 million to attract more int'l and domestic air connections to the state.

Unveiled as part of the 2025-26 NSW Budget, the NSW Take Off Fund has been welcomed by Sydney Airport CEO Scott Charlton, who labelled it "fundamental" to achieving the goals set out in the state's 2030 Visitor Economy Strategy.

"Every dollar invested into aviation attraction at Sydney Airport generates a \$9 return, with a typical international service supporting 1,200 full-time jobs and delivering \$130 million in annual benefit," Charlton said.

The last year has proved fruitful for SYD, with the hub landing services to Istanbul with Turkish Airlines, Shanghai with Juneyao Air, as well as increased capacity on key routes to India, South Korea and Southeast Asia.

## Costa cancels ME

**COSTA** Cruises will not proceed with its 2025/26 winter season in the Middle East, citing a "fluid situation" in the region.

Travellers booked on all Middle East itineraries, including repositioning voyages, will be reaccommodated, the line said, with new Mediterranean cruises to be made available soon.

## Win a \$250 voucher

**ENTIRE** Travel has launched a new four-part mini-series via Destination Webinars, designed to inform and inspire agents.

One lucky advisor who completes the full series by 31 Jul will win a \$250 voucher with the operator - more info **HERE**.

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## btTB hotel discount

**REGISTERED** attendees at the upcoming btTB conference in Sydney next month can take advantage of new accommodation discount offers.

The special rates are available through its partner Minor Hotels, using code 'PASA25' - see [HERE](#).



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## MTA enjoys TTV growth

**MOBILE** Travel Agents (MTA) has enjoyed a significant growth in total transaction value (TTV) this year when compared to pre-pandemic figures.

Speaking on the sidelines of the MTA National Conference in Adelaide over the weekend, founders Roy and Karen Merricks and CEO Don Beattie told *Travel Daily* that on average, TTV was now sitting at just under \$1 million per travel advisor.

"If we look at pre-pandemic numbers, we could [see] around \$611,000 per member on average, but today we are talking around \$980,000 per person," CEO Don Beattie said.

"Being a big organisation of course, that makes the equation even more impressive because if you have a smaller base it is easier to do that, so for us, we are very proud of the people who are producing - that is why our focus is to help them be whatever they want to be.

"I think that is where we excel as a head office - we are not a separate organisation telling people what to do, we are trying to help them be as successful as they want to be [with no sales targets]," he added.

Roy Merricks attributed part of the success to rethinking how the business works, including the renaming of the 'business development manager' to the 'business success manager'.

"Really it's for those people seeking that [difference]," he



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## Ansett back, sort've

**DEFUNCT** airline Ansett Australia has re-emerged 24 years after its collapse, but now as an AI-operated travel platform.

The carrier, formerly operated by Air New Zealand, has announced its revival as The Ansett Travel Platform, launched by Melbourne tech entrepreneur Constantine Frantzekos.

Describing the platform as "like the Costco of travel", Frantzekos claims Ansett is the country's first "truly AI-run travel agency" and will offer discounted hotels, flights and holiday packages.

The new website is live [HERE](#) with deals to destinations like Tokyo, Athens, Las Vegas and Bali.



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## HLO improves outlook

**IMPROVING** margins have helped power Helloworld Travel to an improved FY2025 underlying EBITDA guidance of between \$58-62 million (**TD** breaking news).

Previously forecast to land between \$52-56 million,



Helloworld said the rosier outlook has also been fuelled by stronger cost management and solid gains made through its shareholding in Webjet Group Limited.

Further bright spots include its Ready Rooms division more than doubling its earnings on the previous corresponding period, as well as continued strong traction in cruise sales.

Despite the revised forecast, a change in the destination mix from Aussie travellers from higher spending long-haul trips to short-haul has dented passenger TTV, which has declined YoY.

Helloworld bookings in recent months have seen a preference for destinations like Japan, Bali, Fiji, and Thailand.

TTV has also been impacted by lower airfare prices, including a decline in average fares in premium classes.

The latest outlook noted that agents are continuing to experience high demand for leisure and business travel in Australia and New Zealand, while Express Travel Group, MTA, and Phil Hoffmann Travel have all performed "very well" over the past 12 months.

Helloworld will release its full results on 26 Aug 2025. **AB**

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## TA glitters in Tinseltown



**TRAVEL** Associates kicked off Flight Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Global Gathering in Los Angeles with a pre-stay faml, hosted in partnership with Visit West Hollywood.

Twenty of the brand's top performers for FY25 from Australia and New Zealand enjoyed the one-of-a-kind experience, which saw them stay at two luxury hotels in the area, The London West Hollywood and The Pendry West Hollywood.

The group also participated in an array of events showcasing the best of what West Hollywood has to offer, including dinner at the iconic Catch LA restaurant.

"West Hollywood is the epicentre of luxury in Los Angeles, so we are incredibly grateful to Visit West Hollywood for hosting us on this exclusive faml to celebrate a deserving collection of our top achievers," said Travel Associates General Manager, Rachel Kingswell.

"California, specifically LA, is one of our top destinations, so

it's important that our advisors are experts and know the best hotels, restaurants, activities and more, so they can bring back leading recommendations to our clients, first-hand." **JM**

### In for another 10

**G ADVENTURES** has extended its decade-long partnership with National Geographic for another 10 years.

Since launching National Geographic Journeys and Family Journeys together in 2015, the duo have created more than 100 itineraries connecting travellers with science, as well as supporting 25 social enterprise projects around the world.

Sean Martin, G Adventures MD Australia, NZ and Asia, spoke to the collaboration's "incredible success sharing the world and changing communities" in a post on LinkedIn.

"These tours are seriously life-changing," he added.

Reflect on the journey **HERE**.

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## Virtuoso product shuffle

**VIRTUOSO'S** product division has undergone a strategic realignment since the departure of Thatcher Brown, who exited the luxury network to lead Crescent Seas (**TD** 24 Jul).

Under the changes, Senior Vice President, Global Marketing Helen McCabe-Young (**pictured**), has been promoted to Senior Vice President of Global Products.

Further updates have seen the recently recruited Amy Logan move to Vice President of Global Network Product, and Lucy Lieberman named Vice President of Global Digital Experience.

Commenting on the rejigged product team, Virtuoso Chief Operating Officer Brad Bourland said McCabe-Young's varied marketing expertise will bring an added edge to the company's product development strategy.

"We are excited to have Helen bring her marketing expertise and creative vision to a part of



the business that is primed for significant growth," he said.

The new product chief has been with Virtuoso for five years, and before that led the marketing strategy for resort and hotel businesses Kerzner International (One&Only Resorts and Atlantis The Palm) in the UAE, and Grupo Vidanta in Mexico.

It is understood McCabe-Young will now assist with the search for a new head of marketing. **AB**



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## Flights OK despite hit

A **VIRGIN** Australia plane that collided with a tow vehicle at Melbourne Airport after becoming disconnected from a tug vehicle is not expected to disrupt any flight schedules.

No passengers were on board and there were no injuries reported during the incident that took place last night, however a spokesperson for the carrier has confirmed to **TD** an investigation is now underway to learn how the collision occurred.

The impacted aircraft was a Boeing 737, typically used on VA's domestic routes.

Footage of the plane after the accident showed the jet had sustained a long crack along its front left side.



## AKL lounge to double

**PLANS** have been unveiled by Air New Zealand for a new Koru Lounge at Auckland International Airport, which will include exclusive spaces for the carrier's Airpoints Elite and Business Premier customers.

Expected to open by late 2027, the new lounge will feature 70% more seating capacity, double the floor space, and a dedicated area for families to relax before flights.

The barista bar will also be relocated closer to the entrance for added convenience.

"We know our customers value having spaces that are suited to their travel needs, whether that be a quiet business area that allows focus, room for families to play before jumping on board a flight, or a social space to enjoy a coffee before departure," Air NZ CEO Greg Foran said.

Construction will begin early next year, with the carrier assuring lounge access will not be disrupted during the build.

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ON LOCATION

**ADELAIDE**

Today's issue of *TD* is still coming to you from Adelaide, this time courtesy of Beyond Borders on the Road.

**THE** MTA national conference finished with a bang and now Adelaide will continue to play host to the travel industry, as ATIA takes centre stage with its On the Road evening conference, part of its new Beyond Borders concept.

There are some big names scheduled to speak tonight from the likes of Adelaide Airport, Cathay Pacific, My First Job and Roy Morgan.

Stay tuned to *Travel Daily* for all of the action, and also look out on Fri for a special edition dedicated to both the Adelaide and Perth events.

## 50km warning issued

**ESCALATING** military conflict between two major outbound markets has prompted DFAT to broaden its warning for Aussies.

Over the weekend, Smarttraveller said that Australians should now avoid visiting areas within 50 kilometres of the Thailand-Cambodia border, after previously isolating only a handful of border provinces to steer clear of (*TD* 25 Jul).

Armed conflict between Thai and Cambodian military forces along the countries' border has increased rapidly, the updated warning noted, pointing to an uptick in military strikes, violence, and landmines placed in the area.

The increase in military conflict has also seen Cambodia close its airspace along the affected border area, while Thailand has also restricted some airspace.

Despite the precaution, the Civil Aviation Authority of Thailand said the move would not affect



the flow of commercial air traffic in and out of the country.

Flights can safely reroute around the restricted zone so domestic and international services can continue operating normally without significant delays or cancellations at Thai airports, the aviation body said.

The latest flare-up is related to a long-standing dispute over unresolved territory claims laid out in the *1907 Franco-Siamese Border Treaty*.

Around 40 combatants have already been killed in border skirmishes, with more than 200,000 civilians displaced. *AB*



## Window Seat

**MTA'S** national conference in Adelaide recently celebrated 25 years in business, and it went off without a hitch until there was a certain realisation about one of the keynote speakers.

It didn't take long for Glow London boss Emma Harris to out herself as a tragic Tottenham Hotspur Premier League football supporter, much to the delight of *Travel Daily's* Editorial Director Damian Francis, who is also of that persuasion.

MTA Chief Executive Officer Don Beattie may not have been as thrilled though.

A mad Leeds United supporter, Beattie has just seen his team have one of its biggest talents, Manor Solomon, recalled to the team that was loaning him out to Leeds - Tottenham Hotspur.

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## HLO bites Big Apple



**ALYCE** Muscat from Helloworld Travel Stanhope Gardens is off to the Big Apple, after winning the Hello NYC Agent Incentive run in conjunction with Viva Holidays and Air New Zealand.

Thanks to her impressive performance during the qualifying period, Muscat has

scored two return economy flights with Air New Zealand to New York City; five nights' accommodation at Hotel Beacon NYC; return airport transfers; and VIP passes to Top of the Rock.

**Pictured:** Sharee Stolarski, Business Development Manager at Air New Zealand with Muscat and Amy Elliot, NSW Account Manager at Viva Holidays. *JHM*

## JdV lands in Bali

**BOUTIQUE** hotel KLEO Seminyak has opened its doors, marking the first JdV by Hyatt lifestyle property to operate in Southeast Asia.

Located near Petitenget Beach, Hyatt said the new 60-key hotel fuses local culture with stylish mid-century-inspired design, with communal spaces.

Guests are welcome to enjoy Southern Italian restaurant Zia Tina by renowned Chef Maurizio Bombini, or relax at Rooftop Social, where they can admire panoramic city views and recline at the pool lounge.

## EY upgrades SYD

**ALL** Etihad Airways B787-9 Dreamliner services to Sydney will feature the latest generation signature-style cabins from 30 Jul, Australia Country Manager Mark Mulville has confirmed.

Meanwhile, the airline has also taken delivery of its first Airbus A321LR at its facility in Hamburg.

The aircraft brings Etihad's signature widebody experience to short- and medium-haul routes.

Etihad's premium cabins had typically only been available on its long-haul flights.



## Discover our River Cruise Special Report

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## Merricks celebrated at MTA

**MOBILE** Travel Agents' (MTA) 2025 national conference in Adelaide drew to a close in a big way last night, with founders Roy and Karen Merricks presented by the MTA team with a personalised photo book celebrating 25 years in business.

Hosted at the Wolf Blass Event Centre at the Morphettville Racecourse, the evening included a select number of awards for advisors, suppliers, and MTA staff, as well as speeches from both Roy and Karen Merricks before they were surprised with their personalised gift from the team.

"I look around the room and it is just incredible, the amount of people who have come on this journey with us," Karen Merricks reflected on stage.

"It's all about people for us, and the people we have around us, the support team, as you all know, are second to none - they are nice people, they do an amazing job and they are caring."



Merricks also added that she was "so very proud [its travel advisors] and we love each one of you, I am in awe, and it is a bit tough for me to say how proud I am of our company".

To end the formalities, Roy Merricks took the stage to announce that Melbourne will play host to the 2026 conference, before actor and entertainer Rob Mills (**pictured** strutting his stuff) and a backing band got the party well and truly started. *DF*

## PER sensory room

A **SENSORY** room has opened at Perth Airport's T1, with the new facility designed to better assist neurodivergent travellers before they take off.



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# A toast to partnership: TM hosts appreciation lunches

**TRAVELMANAGERS** recently hosted a series of appreciation lunches in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth for key partner suppliers, thanking them for their ongoing support and celebrating their collective successes through the shared enjoyment of fabulous food.

Hosted by representatives from TravelManagers' National Partnership Office, the lunches created a relaxed setting, perfect for catching up with friends and colleagues from across the travel industry.



**WA-BASED** suppliers joined TravelManagers at Perth's Kitsch Bar Asia.



**BRISBANE'S** Siam Samrarn Thai restaurant provided the setting for an indulgent networking lunch.

**GREAT** networking and even better food awaited TravelManagers and key partner suppliers at Holy Basil in Sydney.



**A BIG** thank you to the team in WA for their support.



**THE** Brisbane lunch was a wonderful way to relax and connect.



**CHEERS** to TM's Qld suppliers.



**ADELAIDE'S** Hotel Alba was the South Australian venue for TravelManagers' annual supplier appreciation lunch.



**SMILES** all around during the appreciation lunch in WA.



## BROCHURES

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### APT - Small Ship Cruising 2026/27

In response to demand from travel partners and guests, APT has unveiled the first standalone brochure for its small ship cruising portfolio in years. The guide acts as a dedicated showcase of APT's curated small ship journeys across Australia, New Zealand, Europe and Antarctica, bringing together the brand's diverse range of expedition and luxury voyages. With immersive shore excursions, intimate guest numbers, and exclusive Signature Experiences, these journeys are all about combining comfort with access to

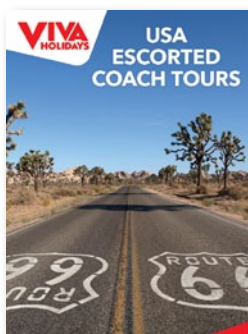
remote and culturally rich destinations. Land touring extensions and luxury city stays are also available.



### Trafalgar - Worldwide Tours 2026/27

With more than 240 trips across 70+ countries, Trafalgar's 2026/27 Worldwide brochure is packed with inspiration for travellers looking for their next adventure. For 2026, the brand has introduced South Korea as its newest destination, as well as 13 fresh tours, including 'Best of Sri Lanka', 'Japan Winter Adventure' and 'Villages of France'. Additionally, for the first time, travellers can explore Europe with Trafalgar via cruise. A highlight of the brochure is the new 10-day 'Best of South Korea'

itinerary, which encompasses five cities including Seoul and Busan. Guests will ride high-speed trains and taste street food at Gwangjang Market.



### Viva - USA Escorted Coach Tours 2026/27

Viva Holidays has partnered with AmericanTours International to release its 2026/27 USA Escorted Coach Tours brochure, which features some of the most popular escorted coach tours across the USA, including the Rocky Mountains. New in 2026 is the eight-day 'Florida Sunshine' itinerary and the 15-day 'Centennial Historic Route 66' tour, specifically planned to commemorate next year's 100th anniversary of the iconic highway. The operator offers guaranteed

departures and tours available in different travel styles. See the digital version of the 44-page brochure [HERE](#).

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## Kia ora, Webjet NZ



**WEBJET** CEO and MD Katrina Barry recently visited the online travel brand's New Zealand team.

"Big shoutout to our cars and motorhomes teams for the great work you're doing - always inspiring to see the energy and passion on the ground," Barry enthused while in town.

A new GM for the region recently came on board at Webjet (**TD 17 Jul**), with Taras Lee now leading the strategy and operations for the group's cars and motorhomes rental division.

**Pictured:** Lee takes a selfie during Barry's visit. *JHM*

## See Japan on foot

**WALK** Japan has announced the launch of two new immersive tours - one is focused on astronomy, while the other is set in a UNESCO Global Geopark.

Scheduled year-round, 'Onsen Gastronomy: Kiso in Nagano' pairs onsen hot spring bathing with Japan's finest regional cuisines, such as handmade soba, locally foraged mountain vegetables and sake from boutique breweries.

With a maximum group size of 12, the guided four-night tour also includes strolls through Edo-period post towns including Kiso-Fukushima, Narai and Kiso-Hirasawa, and seasonal activities such as alpine cable car rides and snowshoeing through woodlands.

The Japan-based tour company has also introduced 'Izu Wayfarer', a five-night self-guided tour, which takes in the dramatic volcanic landscape of the Izu Peninsula, including basalt-columnar Jogasaki cliffs, sandy beaches, and the waterfalls of Kawazu.

## Air NZ explores AI

**AIR** New Zealand has partnered with ChatGPT developer Open AI to deploy a range of AI initiatives across the airline.

Early areas to explore will include self-service experiences for customers, along with how AI can be used for integrated planning across aircraft maintenance and operations.



# WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

VIVA Holidays, Cruiseco and Creative Crusing are thrilled to be nominated for the following categories:

## CATEGORY 23

MOST OUTSTANDING  
WHOLESALE - PRODUCT/SERVICE

## CATEGORY 32

MOST OUTSTANDING  
RESERVATIONS TEAM

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Helloworld Travel has also been nominated multiple times across the following categories in the 2025 NTIAs:

### CATEGORY 07

MOST OUTSTANDING  
SALES EXECUTIVE - CRUISE

### CATEGORY 09

MOST OUTSTANDING  
SALES EXECUTIVE - WHOLESALE

### CATEGORY 19

MOST OUTSTANDING  
BRANDED TRAVEL AGENCY GROUP

### CATEGORY 20

MOST OUTSTANDING  
TRAVEL AGENCY NETWORK

### CATEGORY 33

MOST OUTSTANDING  
TRAVEL INDUSTRY TRAINING PROGRAM

### CATEGORY 36

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