

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features five pages of news, including our **Corporate Update**.

## Royal perks up 26-27

**ROYAL** Caribbean's *Anthem of the Seas* and *Quantum of the Seas* will cruise from Sydney and Brisbane respectively in 2026-2027, with the pair to sail a range of three- to 11-night getaways.

The new cruises are available to book now, and will visit an array of destinations across Australia, the South Pacific, and New Zealand between Oct 2026 and Apr 2027.

The season will kick off with a 25-night cruise from Los Angeles to Sydney, visiting Hawai'i, French Polynesia, and Santa Catalina Island.

Passengers will also be able to sail from Sydney on two four-night getaways to Hobart on *Anthem*, or venture further to discover the South Pacific with all-new nine-night getaways.

*Quantum* will also make her comeback to Brisbane in Oct, for her fourth year as the largest ship in the region.

Cruisers can choose from 28 holidays ranging from three to eight nights, exploring the South Pacific across destinations such as Noumea and Vanuatu.

"Australians know they can trust Royal Caribbean for getaways that combine convenience with non-stop adventure," Vice President & Managing Director Gavin Smith said.

## We are not in decline

**THE** Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has slammed a report by KPMG that claims the travel agent segment is in notable decline (**TD** breaking news).

Labelling the findings as "misleading and disconnected", ATIA CEO Dean Long disputed KPMG's conclusion that travel agents represent the biggest decline of any major occupation in Australia, which the report primarily attributed to the impact of online commerce.

One of Long's major gripes with the methodology of KPMG's findings is the reliance on Aug 2021 Census data, which he said reflected the sector at the height of COVID-19 lockdowns and international border closures.

At that time, ATIA noted the industry had suffered revenue losses exceeding 90%, and more than a third of the workforce had been terminated as international travel was suddenly halted.

"KPMG's report unfortunately fails to reflect the devastating impact of COVID on our sector," Long lamented.

"The Census...reflected a time when the borders were closed and the industry was in survival mode, given this, the bulk of the bookings made through our members are for int'l travel."

Long also called out gaps in the usage of Jobs and Skills Australia data from May 2024, which he said ignored accompanying forecasts that the sector would grow by 4.3% over the next five

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years, and by nearly 10% within the next decade.

More than 70% of international air sales and over 90% of corporate travel bookings are still made through agents, a point ATIA argues proves that travel professionals are not only relevant, but central to how Australians still travel in 2025.

While acknowledging the shortage of agents is still being felt today, Long clarified that demand for travel professionals is stronger than ever before.

"We are in the golden age of travel professionals, as more Australians, many of whom were burnt by COVID travel experiences, turn to expert advisors for complex travel needs and crisis support," he said. **AB**

## Qantas uses its own

**QANTAS** has activated a contingency plan flagged earlier this year (**TD** 11 Feb), deploying A330 aircraft to plug the gap left by wet-leased Finnair planes on flights from Sydney to Singapore as the Nordic airline stands down 36 pilots over a work dispute.

Finnair had previously threatened to walk away from its wet lease deal with Qantas.

## Agents after dark

**AVALON** Waterways is celebrating the launch of Avalon After Dark with a Vivid Sydney trade competition.

Agents can earn a \$1,000 taste of Avalon After Dark experience next month on a Vivid Harbour cruise for two - see more **HERE**.



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## Viking big bonuses

VIKING'S latest incentive offers travel advisors the chance to earn bonus rewards on river and ocean extensions booked this month.

Advisors receive 2,000 Rewards by Viking points when they book any Viking pre- or post-extension, and 4,000 when both are added.

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## Pledges could sink students

**ELECTION** pledges made on both sides of the political aisle to raise visa fees on international students could see up to half of prospective education visitors dump Australia as a destination.

According to a report in the *Australian Financial Review*, warnings from experts suggest that one of the country's largest export sectors could collapse if visa charges are raised again.

Australia has been cautioned not to follow the path of Canada, which raised fees by close to 5% and capped study permits, seeing a significant decline in student numbers last year as a result.

Cementing this view is a recent survey by global student recruitment firm IDP Education, which found 42% of overseas students who scrapped plans to study in Australia last year were influenced by the previous hike in visa fees from \$710 to \$1,600.

In the lead-up to tomorrow's federal election, Labor has pledged to increase fees to \$2,000 on 01 Jul if re-elected, while the Coalition will raise visa charges to \$2,500 for study at most universities if they can dislodge PM Anthony Albanese.

"The additional real risk to high fees and high visa refusal rates is that sudden or dramatic shifts in policy lead to unwelcoming messaging which will damage our destination brand," IDP Head of Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Joanna Storti said.

"We risk deterring the very

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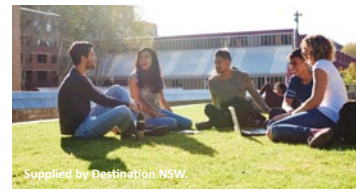
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people we want to attract - genuine, high-quality students who contribute meaningfully to Australia's economy, communities and future," she added.

A major drop-off in student numbers could be disastrous for Australia's tourism sector, which relies heavily on student workers to plug staffing gaps. *AB*

## Virtuoso rejig execs

**TO BETTER** serve the varied needs of its member and partner base, Virtuoso has restructured its management team.

Cheryl Bunker's position has expanded to include the strategic direction of Virtuoso's global membership - including APAC.

As Senior VP, Memberships, she will spearhead stronger growth and deepen member engagement to reinforce the Virtuoso brand.

Cory Hagopian has also been promoted to Senior VP, Global Partnerships, where he is charged with focusing solely on driving partner strategies across segments like hotels, cruise lines, tourism boards, land tours, and the network's new Ultra-High-Net-Worth division (*TD* 24 Jan).

Both roles are effective immediately and will report to COO Brad Bourland.

## Aussies' US warning

**AUSTRALIAN** travellers are being warned by immigration lawyer Melissa Vincenty they may be "targeted" by border officials in the United States.

Those travelling for work like au pairing are being urged to check they have the right to do so.

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## Portal entertains savings

**THE** Entertainment Group unveiled its 2026 travel program in Sydney yesterday, including a range of members-only travel & cruise experiences.

Partners on board with the discount brand's latest foray into travel include Rocky Mountaineer, TFE Hotels, Emirates, Princess Cruises, Celebrity Cruises, Scenic, Oceania, and many more.

Packages that can be accessed via the \$70 annual membership to The Entertainment Group's new travel portal include a 'Pathways to Japan' itinerary, featuring a 15-night Azamara cruise, flights, hotel stay in Tokyo, a day tour, beverage package, gratuities and an AzAmazing event from \$8,299 per person.

Booking the package via The Entertainment Group portal will save travellers around \$2,400.

Discounts of up to \$2,690 per person can also be accessed on the 'Timeless Treasures of Egypt' package, offering flights, as well as an eight-night hosted tour and cruise in Egypt from \$8,499pp.

Outside of the discounts, The Entertainment Group CEO Heidi Halson said the new travel portal also provides travellers with a stamp of reliable quality.

"What we can see from our data is that what we promote through Entertainment is rated higher than a recommendation from a friend or relative," she said.

The new travel portal has



returned after a four-year hiatus and has been restored through a partnership with Ecrusing.

Speaking at the launch event yesterday, Ecrusing CEO Dean Palmer said linking the two organisations had created travel deals in the market that are second to none.

"We offer a range of international tours, cruises, business class flights, premium dining, travel insurance - you name it, we do it," Palmer said.

On the accommodation front, The Entertainment Group portal offers members access to exclusive savings at over 750,000 hotels globally, including brands such as Hyatt, Club Med, TFE Hotels, Adina, Vibe, and Travelodge. **AB**

**Pictured:** Halson and Palmer in Sydney yesterday.

## Double the Doha

**CELESTYAL** has confirmed plans to double the number of guests it brings into Doha over the next three years, a commitment made this week via a deal with Qatar Tourism and Visit Qatar.

The cruise line's debut 'Desert Days' season saw 14,500 guests sail into Doha, with a return now confirmed for Dec offering twice the weekly calls to Qatar.

Celestyal's seven-night round trip voyage from Doha calls at Sir Bani Yas Island, Abu Dhabi and Bahrain, with an overnight stay in Dubai, UAE.

As part of a current two-for-one promotion, prices start from \$2,078 for two people on a seven-night voyage, with all meals, soft drinks, wi-fi and gratuities included.

For more details on the Desert Days, **CLICK HERE**.

## PONANT EXPLORATIONS FAMIL: ANCIENT WONDERS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN



**WELCOME TO DAYS FOUR AND** five of PONANT EXPLORATIONS' exclusive Mediterranean famil, hosted by Kristina Sambaher, State Manager NSW & ACT, where partners were treated to a thoughtfully curated itinerary of included and enriching excursions, capturing the spirit of small-ship discovery.

In Santorini, the group explored the ancient site of Akrotiri, a remarkably preserved Minoan city frozen in time by volcanic ash. This was followed by a scenic drive across the island's iconic caldera to the postcard-perfect town of Oia, where the group soaked up sweeping views of the Aegean. The day concluded with a signature PONANT moment: away from the crowds on land, guests enjoyed a private champagne evening on the pool deck as the sun dipped below Santorini's cliffs, a spectacular experience.

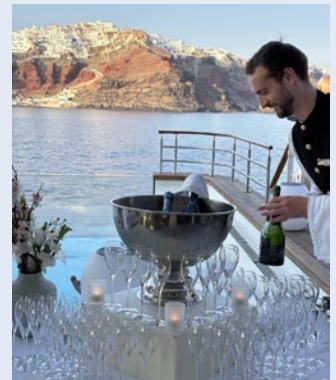
The following day featured a thrilling local shore excursion, beginning with a dramatic transit through the Corinth Canal before arriving in Nafplio. Guests climbed to the castle for panoramic views of the Argolic Gulf, then enjoyed time to explore the city at their leisure thanks to port-side access. The day ended with an elegant Kaviari caviar and vodka tasting at port.

Stay tuned as *Le Dumont-d'Urville* continues her voyage to Italy, by crossing the Corinth Canal.

**TOP:** *Le Dumont-d'Urville* port side in Nafplion.

**MIDDLE:** Champagne toast to the Santorini sunset.

**BOTTOM:** Impromptu traditional dance lesson crossing the Corinth canal with locals.



**Famil IN FOCUS** is our feature showcasing some of the photos from recent industry families. If you want your famil to be featured, email [advertising@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:advertising@traveldaily.com.au)

## TA wants a deep dive

**TOURISM** Australia has submitted a tender requesting support to deliver a "deep dive" into Australia's key markets, forecasted visitation, and spend of Australia's top 20 inbound markets through to 2035.

Posted on the Federal Government's tender website, the contract is worth between \$280,000-\$380,000, with submissions needing to be in by 12 May at 5pm ACT local time.

## CORPORATE UPDATE

### CTM cites tariff pressure

**CORPORATE** Travel Management (CTM) is the latest listed travel company to be hit by tariff uncertainty, with the business expecting this year's revenue to be approximately 4% softer than forecasted (**TD** breaking news).

An updated posted to the ASX this morning noted EBITDA will be impacted by around \$30 million relative to the target metrics which were presented in CTM's first half results (**TD** 19 Feb).

The reference to the original target does not appear to be publicly available.

The company cited "broad economic and tariff uncertainty in North America and Asia" as leading to reductions in client activity, which has slowed growth during what is traditionally the busiest period of the year.

CTM now expects revenue and EBITDA growth from its "rest of world" category (which excludes Europe) to be approximately +5% and +10% respectively, versus the prior fiscal year.

Target metrics previously announced for Europe remain on track, CTM noted.

The outlook assumes the tariff uncertainty impacting Mar and Apr activity remains consistent through the rest of the financial year, and there is no further deterioration to Apr client activity in May and Jun.

Positive news however saw CTM's new client wins total \$1.6 billion, surpassing its annual



target of \$1 billion.

The adjustment follows Flight Centre Travel Group's own profit downgrade on Mon. **MS**

### India capacity tripled

**STRONGER** ties between India and Australia has seen flight capacity from Australia to the subcontinent grow by 346% when compared to pre-pandemic volumes, according to new figures released by Flight Centre's Corporate Traveller.

Vietnam (263%) and South Korea (153%) have also seen air capacity eclipse 2019 levels, a trend that Corporate Traveller's Global Managing Director Tom Walley believes is significant for the corporate travel segment.

"It highlights how airlines are racing to keep pace with the popularity in Australia-Asia business," he explained.

"Direct routes are increasing, codeshare agreements are multiplying, and we're seeing renewed demand for premium cabins, as carriers boost seat capacity to keep pace with intensifying trade ties and the renewed emphasis on face-to-face engagements."

The same data also showed Singapore at 107% of 2019 and Indonesia at 128%.

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### Waving the magic wand

#### CRUISE WISH LIST

*This special feature is coming to you courtesy of Aussie mystery cruise executive, Excess Baggage.*

#### WELCOME

to more from my 'If I Had A Magic Wand: The Completely Unrealistic, Under Researched, Unethical, Slightly Offensive, Environmentally Unfriendly, Cost Prohibitive, Cruise Wish List'.

Take caution with some of these ideas because they are set to rock your cruise world.

1. Create a massive archipelago from Los Angeles to Sydney. I could ask for cheaper fuel costs here or get politicians to embrace cruise, but this is more do-able. We may need help from mother nature, and severe volcanic activity, which would cause irreversible environmental damage both to our ocean and air, but hey, if our cruise ships used LPG gas, that would offset the volcanic emissions, right?

2. Create seamless travel from CountryLink, Queensland Rail, VLink etc to the cruise terminals. Make a sea change for those that have taken a seachange. Inner regional residents are cruising hotbeds, and if Martha and Bob can use their annual free pension rail pass from Hervey Bay, The Hunter, Gippsland etc. then holy moley, that will be bigger than the \$10 steak night at the RSL.



3. Make Wollongong the Singapore of Australia. Often, I have marvelled whilst driving through the Illawarra region about how it reminded me of the Italian Riviera. Avondale can be mistaken for Florence, Lake Illawarra for Lake Como, WIN Stadium for The Coliseum, and Wollongong for Trieste. Australian ships often have to leave this country for dry docks, so why not create a globally competitive ship yard?

4. Make love (boats), not war. In the name of all things Captain Phillips, my global politics are a bit weak, but I'm pretty sure if we have a sit-down with the Tusken Raiders and Jawas, we'd be able to open up the Suez, the Baltics, and East Africa.

5. These boats were made for Seawalking, and that's what they're going to do, and if I had a magic wand, I'd...it's not for you. It's more of a Promar idea. Hate taking a bus ashore in working ports? Hate tenders? Have I got a solution for you, Seawalk! Don't press this link unless you want your mind blown <https://www.seawalk.no/> You know a port with money is a little like a mule with the spinning wheel, nobody knows how they got it and danged if they know how to use it. If I had a magic wand, there would be chicken in every pot, and a seawalk in every port. I swear, it's cruising's only choice! Throw up your hands and raise your voice! Seawalk! Seawalk!



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Sunny shores overseas are calling with **Fiji Airways** launching its winter sale featuring fares starting from \$589 return to Nadi. Alternatively, connect in Fiji and continue on to the US from \$1,199 return; Canada from \$1,499 return or Samoa for \$779 return. Fares are on sale until 22 May and valid for travel from 24 May 2025 to 30 April 2026. See [HERE](#).

Freeze the 2025 price on 2026 departures for Japan's cherry blossom itineraries with **MW Tours** if deposited by 30 Jun. A 13-day adventure to see the natural marvel is priced from \$8,799 per person twin share, during which you'll see Tokyo, Mt Fuji, Kyoto and more. Details [HERE](#).

**Nesuto** has cut 25% from its rates on apartment stays across Australia and New Zealand for bookings made until 30 Sep for stays until the end of the year. Rates start from \$180 per night at Nesuto Melbourne Docklands or \$140 at Nesuto St Martins Auckland. [CLICK HERE](#) to book.

Those fancying an early winter getaway to Tahiti can enjoy a range of deals from **Tahiti Voyages** on sale until 25 May. Packages include five nights at Conrad Bora Bora, four at Hilton Moorea Lagoon, all flights, breakfast and transfers for \$7,440pp twin share. There are many more deals available across many Tahitian islands. Full details found [HERE](#).

Members of the **Hilton Honors** loyalty program can pick up a bonus of 1,000 points on every stay at part of a new Points Plus Promotion. Qualifying stays from 01 Jun to 15 Aug are available across the Hilton portfolio, with points able to be put towards future stays or other Hilton Honors experiences. [CLICK HERE](#) to register.

Anybody not ready for the onset of winter can warm up with **IHG Hotels** and a 30% discount on select stays at more than 750 properties across the Asia Pacific. Participating brands include Kimpton, InterContinental, Hotel Indigo, Crowne Plaza, voco and Holiday Inn. The offer is valid for bookings by 21 May for stays from 11 May-18 Dec. [CLICK HERE](#) for info.

Australia's first glamping destination, **Paperbark Camp** on the NSW South Coast, has launched new bed & breakfast packages with savings for winter and the Jul school holidays. Rates start from \$415 per night per couple for a minimum two-night stay from May to Aug and including a sumptuous breakfast at Gunyah Restaurant. [CLICK HERE](#) for details.

To celebrate the opening of its new Maldives resort, **Centara Hotels** has released a special offer at Centara Life Wisma Hotel Ratchaburi available until 31 May. Special rates start at THB 1,500 (A\$70) per night including breakfast for two and daily resort credit. [CLICK HERE](#) for information.

Explore the Dalmatian Coast with **Atlas Ocean Voyages** on a culinary themed journey to Venice and enjoy onboard credit, a bottle of champagne and two free nights in Dubrovnik afterwards with the line's new special offer. The seven-night itinerary departing in 2026 features earlybird pricing and can be booked through **Cruise Traveller** [HERE](#).

## Drive into the sunset

**TRAVEL** veteran and long-time DriveAway staffer Claire Turner (pictured) will retire on 23 May after 25 years with the company.

During her career, Turner has left an indelible mark on the company, thanks to her professional accomplishments, enthusiasm and pride.

According to the DriveAway team, Turner has developed a reputation within the industry as being a warm, reliable and supportive leader.

"While we are extremely sad to say goodbye, we are thrilled for Claire as she embarks on this exciting new chapter of her life," said the DriveAway team.

"Claire, thank you for everything. We wish you all the happiness, health, and adventure in your retirement - you will be deeply missed."



## Outrigger in Phi Phi

**OUTRIGGER** Hospitality Group has officially acquired Zeavola Resort, a beachfront property located on the northern tip of Thailand's Phi Phi Island.

The property is now poised to undergo a full transformation and rebrand as Outrigger Phi Phi Island Resort - where it will become a five-star sanctuary defined by barefoot luxury and authentic island charm.

Learn more [HERE](#).

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## Window Seat

**WHOOOPS**, a Dutch town hall has reluctantly admitted that it "most likely" accidentally tossed out more than €20,000 worth of art - including an Andy Warhol silk screen print of the former Queen Beatrix - during renovation works last year.

"That's not how you treat valuables. But it happened. We regret that," Mayor Hans van der Pas told public broadcaster Omroep Brabant.

According to a statement from the Maashorst municipality, the 46 pieces of artwork - including the one of the queen - were in storage and "accidentally taken away with the trash".

Investigators looked into the case of the missing artwork and later revealed that some were stored in wheelie bins and "not handled with care".

Apparently, there were no official guidelines for correct storage, either.

"Ownership was not properly established, no policies and procedures were established regarding the renovation and insufficient action was taken when the artworks turned out to be missing," it revealed.

This is not the first time that a Warhol print of Queen Beatrix has gone missing.

Last Nov, another work was stolen during a heist on a Dutch art gallery...then abandoned because it did not fit in the getaway car.