

Rex director resigns

A REX director who remains subject to ASIC pecuniary action in the NSW Supreme Court (TD 11 Dec 2024) has resigned from the company, an ASX update posted today has confirmed.

Lincoln Pan formally exited the struggling business yesterday.

US spend down US\$12.5b

NEW research suggests the United States is on track to haemorrhage a massive US\$12.5 billion in international visitor spending this year.

The World Travel & Tourism Council's (WTTC) latest economic impact research found tourist spending will dwindle to around \$170 billion, a 22.5% decline compared to the previous peak.

WTTC President Julia Simpson excoriated the approach the US has taken to tourism in 2025, suggesting that while other countries are rolling out the welcome mat, the US Govt is "putting up the closed sign".

"Without urgent action to restore international traveller confidence, it could take several years for the US just to return to pre-pandemic levels of international visitor spend, not even the peak from 10 years ago," Simpson warned.

While the WTTC chief did not mention Trump or his economic and border policies by name, Simpson did urge greater "leadership from DC" to enact a turnaround in visitation spend.

Among the calls-to-action from the WTTC is an urgent need for the US to rebuild international

marketing efforts.

Locally, things look brighter, with new ABS stats on Australian visitation to the US for Mar showing it moved up from sixth to fourth in the rankings when compared to Feb.

Aussies made close to 56,000 trips, up from 40,170 last month.

QF adds AKL-ADL

QANTAS will launch seasonal services between Adelaide and Auckland on 31 Oct, with the four times weekly flights to wrap up on 03 May 2026.

The carrier said the upcoming international route will expand opportunities for South Australians flying to North America, with New Zealand offering connections to major hubs like New York City.

Available to book now, the new seasonal option will add more than 30,000 seats between the two cities, which SA Minister for Tourism, Zoe Bettison, said would be a boon for the state's tourism.

"NZ is presently the equal second-biggest source market for visitation behind only the UK and equal with China," she said.

Qantas also confirmed the opening of a new domestic business lounge at Adelaide Airport, which has a capacity for 190 travellers and features gourmet food appeal, such as a live cooking station inspired by the local producers including Maggie Beer.

SIA boosts BNE

SINGAPORE Airlines is preparing to boost its Brisbane services, which will increase to four daily flights from 16 Jun.

Aussies can enjoy fast connections to London, Rome and Zurich - to learn more, check out the [back page](#) for details.

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including a photo page from HX and our Corporate Update, plus a full page from Singapore Airlines.



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Fiji flags major low season transit push

TRAVELLERS transiting through Fiji will soon be able to make the most of their time on the island, thanks to an upcoming low season stopover campaign in the works, revealed Tourism Fiji CEO Brent Hill this week at the Fiji Tourism Exchange.

Plans to ramp up stopover infrastructure were initially flagged by *Travel Daily* in Jan (*TD* 16 Jan), with the newly-flagged stopover push inspired by similar popular initiatives launched in Dubai and Singapore.

Hill said Fiji will be able to run the campaign now that major suppliers such as the Crowne Plaza and the soon-to-be-open Westin can support the project during the shoulder season.

A pilot is planned for Oct or Nov this year, with an official launch slated for Dec.

Up to 50% of inbound air passengers transited through Fiji in Feb, but Hill noted it will be



important that the campaign is strategically orchestrated much like “a red carpet process”.

This is particularly the case given the increased numbers of American tourists to Fiji, due to Fiji Airways’ new route through Dallas, although Australians travelling to the US during the low season will be able to take advantage of the initiative too.

According to Vara Natuilagilagi, Fiji Airways’ Senior Manager Global Sales Operations & Support, the campaign will attract the North American market often described as

“snowbirds” who escape the cold weather in the north and usually chase the warm weather on an island, typically Hawaii.

Hill imagines that through a successful stopover campaign, after a 13-hour flight, guests will land at the airport in the early morning, then transfer to their hotel through a dedicated transport service.

They will then go through an early check-in process and a few short hours later, be by the pool, getting a massage before jetting off at a later date.

“You would spend the night here, then potentially get transported back the following evening,” Hill said, adding that Tourism Fiji plans to put “decent spend” behind the push.

Hill described that transit period as being a potential ‘entree’ for stopover travellers, who may be inspired to return to Fiji for the ‘main course’. *JHM*

ATAC breaks record

THE Australian Travel Agents Co-operative (ATAC) has delivered a record-breaking \$705,000 in override payments to members in 2025, marking the highest annual rebate in the network’s history.

Three-quarters of all overrides collected were rebated directly to members, with ATAC stating the figure reflected the strength of its preferred partner relationships and success of its performance-based override model.

One standout agency received nearly \$60,000 alone, with CEO Michelle Emerton also hailing the milestone as proof of the power of the co-operative model.

“[We are] putting money back into the hands of independent agents,” Emerton said.

“Our tiered override structure combined with super low fees is working, and it’s rewarding performance, encouraging deeper support of our preferred partners, and ultimately reinvesting into SME businesses.”



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Beware of virtual cards

EXCLUSIVE

CVFR Travel Group CEO Ram Chhabra has advised agents to take caution before adopting virtual credit cards as a method of remittance, warning it may be a breach of IATA conditions.

According to IATA's Passenger Agency Conference Resolutions, clause 890 requires a travel intermediary to use either the passenger's credit card when issuing tickets or a pre-approved corporate credit card.

Chhabra's comments are in response to a recent report from virtual payments company Wex (**TD** 13 May), which encouraged agents to use virtual credit cards to secure a speedy chargeback in the event of airline failure.

He said many airlines do not allow virtual credit cards to be used to issue tickets in adherence to IATA's resolutions.

"They don't like virtual credit cards because these cards are often issued somewhere in Europe, and there are high merchant fees [which] the airline has to absorb," Chhabra told **TD**.

The CVFR boss added these virtual credit cards are generally associated with a sole transaction before they are dissolved, making chargebacks an "administrative nightmare" due to refunds being possible up to two years after a ticket is issued.

Chhabra said agents should simply be smart when it comes to remitting airlines via traditional bank transfers, saying it is fine to



pay major carriers like Emirates, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways or Singapore Airlines as there is little to no risk of them going under.

Smaller airlines or regional carriers in remote parts of the world would warrant some extra security for payment, such as a credit card.

Chhabra added that agents should take comfort in the fact Australia's geographical region is something of a security blanket, with the high financial barrier to operate an airline here meaning only carriers with financial surety can afford it. *ML*

CT Partners pivots

UNFOLDING unrest in the Maldives fuelled by youth protests has prompted CT Partners to relocate its annual conference to Singapore.

The gathering will now take place at the Four Seasons in the Lion City on 28-31 Oct.

"Our decision to move the conference location is a reflection of our commitment to members and partners," CEO Matt Masson said, adding a standout program across Singapore is in store for conference attendees.

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Private air expanded

FOUR Seasons Private Jet Experience has introduced Cartagena, Colombia and Tamarindo, Mexico as new destinations for 2027 itineraries.

The expanded season also includes returning favourites such as premium flights to the Serengeti, Antarctica, Paris, Tokyo, Bangkok and Dubai.

Prices lead in at US\$167k (A\$260k) per person, twin share for the 'Asia Unveiled' trip, which departs 11 Feb through to 26 Feb and visits Tokyo, Bali, Angkor Wat, Hoi An, Bhutan, and Bangkok.

Check out the full range of private journeys **HERE**.

IATA baggage plan

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has launched a 10-year global baggage roadmap in response to polling calling for more tracking and accountability.

The major pillars of the new blueprint include a push for airlines to be better at sharing baggage details with each other and airports, as well as the replacement of legacy systems like teletype with modern tech.

More electronic baggage tags, GPS, and robotics are also needed to enhance tracking to enable real-time retrieval, in addition to better protections from the scourge of baggage-related fraud.

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Africa's untapped billions

A NEW report unveiled at WTM Africa has found that the continent may be pricing itself out of billion-dollar international tourism markets.

The recent 2025 *State of the African*

Industry Report: Ignite Africa! uncovers why African safaris are priced 35-50% higher than comparable global experiences, such as Galapagos expeditions.

The report found that, rather than excessive profits, the misunderstood 'Africa Premium' effect is due to infrastructure deficits (such as flights costing 45% more than in Europe/Asia), currency volatility, and operating risks, which force tourism businesses to maintain higher margins simply to remain viable.

Africa is currently sitting at just 81% of its pre-pandemic



arrivals, Chief Executive Officer of Southern Africa Tourism Services Association, David Frost, pointed out. "We're

underperforming our potential - we need smarter

aviation policies and targeted marketing efforts if we want real recovery," he added.

The report also highlights Africa's "limited brand identity", created by an over-reliance on marquee experiences like safaris and gorilla trekking, and argues that the continent should expand its tourism offerings in order to increase length of stay and spread economic benefits to its lesser-known destinations.

"Africa's next chapter isn't about replacing its icons - it's about building more reasons to visit," the report concluded. JM

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Envoyage enjoys triple opening

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's Envoyage brand celebrated the opening of three shopfronts across Sydney this week.

Located in Drummoyne, Ryde and Miranda, the three stores operate under the Envoyage brand but are independently owned and operated by local travel agency owners.

"Each new shopfront strengthens our entire network through heightened brand awareness and reinforces the confidence our members have in the Envoyage brand," said Envoyage GM Nick Queale.

Pictured: The Miranda team with FCTG Global MD Director - Luxury and Independent brands Danielle Galloway.



Crystal finds a way

CRYSTAL has launched the Experience Finder, a new tool designed to help travel agents quickly and easily explore the cruise line's range of shore excursions for guests sailing aboard *Crystal Symphony* and *Crystal Serenity*.

Now accessible through the travel partner centre, the new feature offers access to hundreds of global experiences, from half- and full-day excursions to exclusive overland journeys, major global events, and pre- and post-cruise adventures.

The Experience Finder allows agents to search by region, country, month and year of travel, duration of experience, and areas of interest.

"We're giving our travel partners a powerful, intuitive tool to better serve their clients and drive sales," said Debra Fox, Managing Director Australasia - A&K EVP, Trade Sales APAC - A&K Australia TOC.



find your

Outback Spirit

Congratulations to Kate Turner from Flight Centre Bridgepoint (NSW), who has won a spot on Outback Spirit's 8-Day Arnhem Land & Kakadu Explorer tour just by participating in our recent Arnhem Land webinar!

Getting FOMO? Click the link below to become a Journey Beyond expert and stay tuned for our next webinar announcement. You could be the next winner!

AGENT EXPERIENCE HUB

JOURNEY BEYOND

Friday 16th May 2025

HX EXPEDITIONS this week hosted exclusive travel trade events in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane, welcoming 150 travel agents for a private screening of *Ocean*, the breathtaking new documentary narrated by Sir David Attenborough.

In Sydney, guests also enjoyed an inspiring fireside chat with Amber Wilson, Director of Sales at HX, and Tom Park, one of the film's underwater cinematographers.

Wilson spoke about HX's commitment to purpose-driven travel in its daily operations, while Tom shared insights from filming the documentary.

"At HX, we believe exploration and conservation must go hand-in-hand," Wilson said.

"The ocean connects every

part of what we do - from the communities we visit to the wildlife we protect - travel can be a powerful force for good."

Park added that being beneath the surface changes one's perspective, witnessing the fragility, but also the resilience of the oceans.

"If we're going to protect these places, we need to rethink how we value them - not just as scenery, but as living systems," Park said.

In each city, HX donated \$1,000 on behalf of attendees to a local impactful organisation, based on audience vote, with the donations going to the Australian Marine Conservation Society (Melbourne and Brisbane) and the Seabin Foundation (Sydney).

As the world's most experienced expedition cruise company, HX remains committed to driving positive change through exploration, science, and sustainability.

HX treats agents to a deep Ocean dive



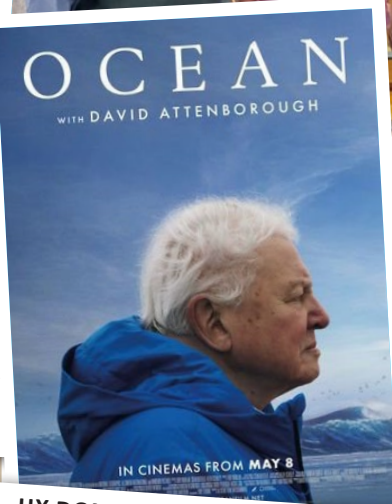
UNDERWATER cinematographer Tom Park joins HX's Amber Wilson to talk ocean conservation, sea life, and what really lies beneath.



MIND and Body Travel's Steven Demedio, Mark Hodgson and Jo Brooks with Karen Dowling from Envoyage.



HX SENIOR Marketing Manager Shannon Davis, with Tom Park, underwater cinematographer and Amber Wilson, HX Director of Sales.



HX DONATED \$1,000 in each city - voted by agents - to Australian Marine Conservation Society and Seabin Foundation.



KATE Moulton from CruiseAbout with HX's Kirsty Fruin.



KIRSTY Fruin and Shannon Davis from Team HX in Brisbane - spreading smiles, stories, and a love for the deep blue sea.



SOME Melbourne-based HX call centre stars - Lucinda, Laura and Jennifer - joining the evening to share the spirit of exploration and connection.

WILSON shares the mission of the HX Foundation and gets the room ready to vote - \$1,000 going to a local ocean charity, chosen by agent partners.



CORPORATE UPDATE

No US sting for Accor yet

EXCLUSIVE

HOSPITALITY giant Accor said it has not yet observed a decline in corporate client bookings or changed travel policies in response to economic uncertainty linked to US President Trump or ongoing cost-of-living pressures.

Speaking to *Travel Daily*, Accor Chief Commercial Officer MEA Premium, Midscale and Economy, Kerry Healy, said if any impact is likely to materialise, some businesses may swap five-star hotels for four-star.

"When there's cost-of-living pressure, I think [Accor] still does well," Healy said.

"But I also think cost-of-living pressure is reshaping how people travel, but it doesn't always mean they're travelling less."

Healy said that from prior experience with recessions and global downturns, one of the first things to change are corporate travel policies, but Accor has not seen a shift yet.

"Corporate and GDS bookings for Q1 are up," Healy refuted.

"You know, if you look at the devil in the detail, I'm sure some of the companies might be down, but others are trading up."

"We had an extremely strong start to Jan [and] Feb across the Pacific," Healy said.

"Obviously [in] Mar, you have Tropical Cyclone [Alfred], but if you remove the cyclone impact, Q1 was a great result."

"The pace into Apr and May is continuing into Jun, because what



we're looking at now is looking good," Healy added.

Despite bookings tracking well, Accor is set to ramp up brand-specific marketing campaigns across the remainder of 2025 and into 2026, particularly in line with upcoming major events.

The push comes from an 8.4% rise in awareness for the Mantra brand on the back of a stadium and event takeover during last year's State of Origin in Sydney, which took place at the self-titled Accor Stadium (pictured).

Healy said the stadium and State of Origin initiative took the Mantra brand to new heights.

"Mantra took over the entire stadium, with 3.4 million live viewers and 15 minutes of prime time brand visibility, it delivered \$4.6 million in media value."

"Brand awareness for Mantra jumped 8.4% year-on-year, and 3.9% of that lift was from the audience," Healy said.

Consumers can now expect to see greater emphasis placed on the Novotel and Pullman brands.

"We will spend more money on mono-brand campaigns to really build the communication and the advocacy for these brands, as well as still running our all-encompassing 'ALL' campaigns as well," Healy foreshadowed. *ML*

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Advisors combine skills



ACTING on a shared desire to do corporate travel differently, four experienced corporate travel professionals have banded together to launch Elk Travel - a new hybrid corporate agency.

Led by Travel Managers and Directors Leah Villari, Kristy Huysmans, Kerri-Ann Coleman and Vannin Elliott (pictured), the idea for Elk Travel came from years of living the work-trip chaos.

"We are all very experienced corporate travel agents and we wanted to form something where we could look after our clients the way they want to be looked

after," Coleman told *Travel Daily*.

"We wanted to create a boutique agency different to the big guys but with the same technology and with a particular focus on customer service."

"We don't want to be automated but we want our clients to know we're behind the automation," Coleman added.

"We're very customer-focused and we want that family feel."

"Our point-of-difference is going to be us - we're the best in the industry," Coleman said. *ML*

RCI's S'pore debut

ROYAL Caribbean's *Navigator of the Seas* is making her Singapore debut between Oct 2026 and Feb 2027, offering short getaways and longer holidays in Asia.

Itineraries include three- to five-night trips around Penang and Langkawi or 10-day escapes through Thailand and Vietnam.

New SYD campaign

SYDNEY Airport is inspiring travellers to plan their next overseas escape using intuitive tools from global travel search engine Kayak.

The new campaign, 'Life Takes Off When You Do', shows guests how easy it is to book using tools such as 'Best time to Travel', 'Price Check' and 'Price Alerts', displayed via an interactive map.

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Trafalgar's most popular tours are now 15% off, thanks to the brand's Sep savings. Selected departures of the 'European Whirl', 'Highlights of Spain & Portugal', and 'Contrasts of Italy' are now available at the discounted rate - browse all the deals [HERE](#).

A new luxury Christmas cruise package for this year in New Zealand is now available with **Cruise Traveller**, with a free flight and hotel stay available for those booking by the end of the month. [CLICK HERE](#) for more information on the exclusive offer on the deluxe, 17-night fly, cruise, and stay package, which sails with Silversea.

A free premium economy upgrade awaits for those booking a **Wendy Wu Tours** Southeast Asia itinerary by 13 Jun. Passengers can score the free upgrade one-way, or from \$499 per person return, across a range of tours when departing Sydney or Melbourne. Discover the full range of 80 itineraries [HERE](#).

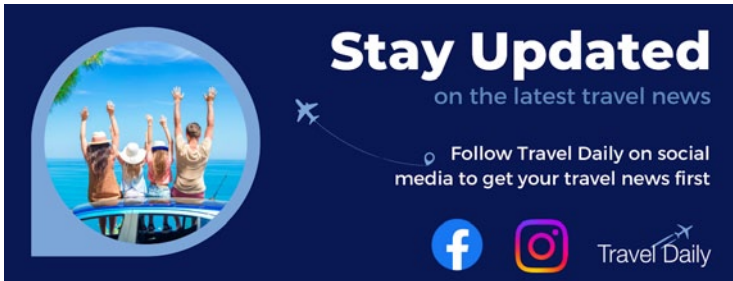
A spontaneous Arctic escape awaits with **Aurora Expeditions**, with deals on a number of this year's cruises. Passengers can score an air credit of up to \$3,000 per person, plus save up to 20% off on select voyages, when booking one of Aurora's last-minute offers - explore the full range [HERE](#).

The soon-to-launch **voco Gosford** is set to introduce the first rooftop grand ballroom on New South Wales' Central Coast, with an opening offer for MICE bookings available through to the end of Aug. Receive 10% off, triple IHG Business Rewards points, and double Bonus Elite Qualifying Nights with every eligible meeting or event booking. Bookers will also enjoy a complimentary upgrade to Level 28 and a chef's selection of canapes on arrival for gala or dinner events held before Mar. Contact the team on +61 2 4327 0700.

HX is offering a 130th anniversary offer on free suite upgrades or reduced prices on its network of voyages. Destinations include Antarctica, Alaska, Arctic, Northwest Passage, Norway, the Galapagos Islands, more. Suites start from only \$12,676 per person - visit travelhx.com for further information.

There are only a few days remaining to enjoy up to 30% off at **Crowne Plaza Hobart**. Book now [HERE](#) to access the offer, available on stays until 18 Dec.

Riad Botanica in Marrakech has launched a seven-day shopping & design retreat, 'Muse Marrakech Instyle', taking place between 04-11 Nov 2025 and 12-19 Apr 2026. The retreat - led by interior designer Claire Cau-Cecile and Riad Botanica owner Angela Mellak - goes beyond the souks and retailers, visiting hidden ateliers, private studios, and workshops of Marrakech's artisans. Double occupancy on the retreat is presently available from €4,200 for earlybirds - [HERE](#).



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TA's frozen adventure



TEN Travel Associates advisors recently embarked on an adventure to Antarctica with Aurora Expeditions, as part of the brand's exclusive famil program.

The trip was an opportunity for the agents to enhance their knowledge of the destination, which is pertinent given Travel Associates' bookings to Antarctica have increased by 50% on the prior year-to-date.

"Antarctica is such a special destination, but given it's only accessible via small cruise ships, it's rare for advisors to get the opportunity to go on a famil there, so we're grateful to Aurora for taking 10 of our advisors there," said GM of the FCTG-owned group, Rachel Kingswell.

One of the advisors on board, Lisa Clarke from Lewis & Turner

Travel Associates, said it was "an unforgettable adventure".

"From boarding the Zodiacs to every staff member knowing your name, everything was so effortless, and we really felt like we were part of the Aurora family." *JM*

Pictured: The group taking in the majestic arctic views.

Luton plan panned

A LEGAL challenge has been filed to stop the planned expansion of London Luton Airport, with campaigners arguing that the consent order approving the plan is "unlawful".

The Luton and District Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise is seeking a judicial review, on grounds that Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander, who granted the application last month, ignored the planning inspectors' recommendations about the risk of environmental damage and other concerns.

The expansion plans consist of a new terminal building and new taxiways, and would enable passenger traffic to double to about 32 million within 20 years.

EK adds more class

EMIRATES has unveiled the latest enhancements to first class, including keepsake menus, gloved service, and lounge-inspired check-in areas in Dubai.

Other innovations include onboard electronic privacy doors and temperature control.

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DAILY	14:45	20:45	SQ236	A350-900	DAILY	07:10	16:45	SQ265	A350-900
DAILY	18:10	00:10(+1)	SQ266	A350-900	DAILY	09:55	19:30	SQ245	A350-900
DAILY	23:50	05:45(+1)	SQ246	A350-900	DAILY	21:30	06:55(+1)	SQ235	A350-900

The additional services will operate on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from Brisbane to Singapore, commencing 16 June 2025.

*Accurate as at 15 May 2025 and based on the following flight connections from Brisbane - SQ266/SQ306 to LHR, SQ266/SQ346 to ZRH and SQ266/SQ366 to FCO.

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