

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features nine pages of news, our **Sustainability** page, a product profile from **Tourism Solomons**, plus full pages from:

- Back-Roads Touring
- Inspiring Vacations
- Tokyo Tourism

## A serving of Italy

**BACK-ROADS** Touring is serving up expertly crafted moments on its small-group tours of Italy - see **page 10** to learn more.

## An Inspiring offer

**INSPIRING** Vacations is giving travellers the chance to bring a friend for up to half price.

Find out more on **page 11**.

## Win a trip to Tokyo

**AGENTS** can win a trip to Tokyo when they complete the updated Tokyo Tourism Expert Program - see **page 12** for details.

# SYD slots in new rules

**TRAVELLERS** will benefit from the new Sydney Airport demand management rules, believes ACL Asia Pacific, which was appointed slot manager at the hub earlier this year (**TD 14 Jul**).

The new framework, which was brought into effect by the federal government in late Oct, will mean greater choice for consumers, and make it easier for new and smaller airlines to access the market, said ACL Chief Executive Officer, Neil Garwood (**pictured**).

In addition, the "use it or lose it" provisions are being strengthened, leading to better use of scarce capacity and tighter exemptions around unused slots.

"Under the reforms ACL will introduce its proactive approach of reviewing operational performance, working with airlines to find scheduling solutions," Garwood explained.

"Should that fail to achieve desired results, the reforms



introduce escalation mechanisms designed to improve performance and right time departures."

The framework will also offer improved access and flexibility for regional airlines, especially during peak periods.

Regional carriers can now apply for slots at any time during the new shorter peak periods, 7am-11am and 5pm-8pm, not just the take-off and landing slots already set aside for priority access by regional NSW services. *JM*

**Travel Daily**  
ON LOCATION



**HONG KONG**

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you from **Hong Kong**, courtesy of the **Luxury Travel Collection (LTC)**.

**DAY** two of the LTC Global Business Owners Harbour Soiree will involve joining the Global Business Owners Leadership Day to gain a range of meaningful updates into luxury agency and broader travel sector insights.

Guests will then let their hair down for a cocktail event to celebrate the conclusion of the formal portion of the soiree.

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## Park Inn's Oz debut

**RADISSON** Hotel Group has debuted its Park Inn by Radisson brand in Australia, with its first location in Victoria.

Park Inn by Radisson Melbourne Carlton sits beside Princes Park, and is only four kilometres from the city's downtown area.

The property features 89 contemporary guestrooms with sweeping views of the park and the hotel's outdoor pool.

There is also a wellness hub in development.



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## LTC plots "careful growth" to 25 members

**THE** Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) has heralded 2025 as a year of "acceleration and achievement", securing a 100% membership retention rate while growing its ranks to 25.

While chasing numbers has never been the focus for the luxury network, the growth from seven agency partners to 25 in under two years was described by GM Nikki Glading as a "very exciting" chapter in line with a "careful growth" strategy.

"We still have really strict criteria around who we invite to be a part of the community and that hasn't changed," she told *Travel Daily*.

"For us, it remains about meeting that criteria, that means entrepreneurialism, a commitment to really strong customer service, and yes, selling a high percentage of luxury product," Glading added.

The LTC chief conceded there are still many suited agencies in Australia the group is continuing to discover all the time.

"We keep getting introduced to these amazing young entrepreneurs or people that have been outside of the main focus and as a result we have



just met so many wonderful new business leaders."

Typically, prospective members are coming to LTC because they are searching for a new way to elevate their business, she said.

Meanwhile, Flight Centre Travel Group Global MD Luxury and Independent Brands, Danielle Galloway, told *Travel Daily* that its recent launch of The Club by LTC (*TD* 13 Oct) for solo independent agents and its affiliate model launched late last year (*TD* 14 Nov 2024) will hold LTC in good shape for growth.

"We have landed in a really good place that sets us up for some strong growth into the next 12 months with both these models in play," she said.

## CNS-HTI takes off

**THE** inaugural service connecting Cairns with Hamilton Island departed yesterday aboard local carrier East Air.

A celebratory farewell was held for the new service, which industry leaders expect will bring significant opportunities to both regions, reinvigorating an in-demand connection between two of Queensland's most iconic Great Barrier Reef-adjacent destinations.

Forward bookings are already exceeding expectations, with additional Sun flights set to commence in Feb.

While Complex Travel Group was the foundation of the affiliate model (and is also a member of Link Travel Group), LTC has since added fellow Link member Travel Project, as well as Envoyage member National Travel Group.

"It's really wonderful for us because networks like Link have a really beautiful community, and people like Mark Trim's Complex Travel Group get to span both," Glading noted.

In further developments, while the details are still under wraps, Glading foreshadowed a coming announcement regarding key expansion news - stay tuned to *Travel Daily* for more details. *AB*

## Slojourn in Africa

**AUSTRALIAN** luxury travel representation company Slojourn Studio has made its debut in Africa via a new partnership with Mafu Haus, a four-suite coastal sanctuary on Mozambique's southern shores.

The collaboration will include an identity overhaul and a refreshed sales and marketing strategy with a key focus of attracting Australian travellers who are seeking cultural depth and authentic experiences.

Mafu Haus will soon undergo an eight-room expansion and a full brand transformation, guided by Slojourn Studio.



## Get to know the Solomon Islands

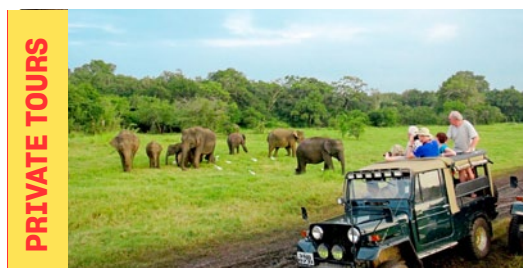
**TOURISM** Solomon Islands is highlighting the myriad of exciting offerings available to tourists across the 992-island archipelago, including its unique living culture, world-class diving, and fascinating WWII history.

See the **back page** to learn more about the Solomons Islands.

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## Window Seat

**FORGET** a relaxing vacation by the beach, travellers are now opting for 'ragecations'. Many of us have heard of rage rooms, where people pay to smash objects in a controlled environment in order to relieve stress.

Love it or hate it, smashing plates is becoming an increasingly hot activity, with Google searches for 'room of rage' up 27% in the past year and searches for 'smash house' up 38%.

According to Bokun, a Tripadvisor company that provides software to tour operators, more and more people are seeking out the activity while travelling.

"Research shows that a third of travellers now want to prioritise 'letting loose' on their next trip - highlighting how travel choices are increasingly being shaped by wellbeing," said Samuel Jefferies, Senior Growth Marketing Manager at Bokun.



## Parcell makes President



**HINTERLAND** Tourism Sunshine Coast (HTSC) has elected Wayne Parcell as the association's new President, taking over from long-serving leader Kerry Brown.

Parcell (**pictured**) will serve HTSC alongside newly elected Vice President, Narrows Escape Rainforest Retreat co-owner Xochi Lindholm.

He is the founder of the Rangebow Festival, an annual four-day event celebrating the creative life and spirit of Sunshine Coast Hinterland communities through a mix of culture, music, theatre, nature, film and the arts.

Parcell is also a board member of Maleny Community Centre and of Montville's Chamber of Commerce, and received the Public Service Medal in 1996 in the Australian Honours List for his outstanding service to Australia.

"Living on the hinterland, I appreciate the economic and cultural diversity of the entire region," said Parcell.

## Learn & Win

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## Walking in Italy

**THE** Italian National Tourist Board has added a new module to its Travel to Italy Academy.

The 'Walking in Central and Southern Italy' session offers an overview of the best experiences in Tuscany, Sardinia, Sicily and more - register **HERE**.



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"It is fundamental to community engagement and delivery that there is recognition of the distinct communities, their differences and their contribution within our region," he added. *JM*

## Win a Cali getaway

**VISIT** California has just launched a new mini webinar series for Australian and New Zealand travel advisors.

Each 12- to 15-minute episode of the six-part series spotlights a different region, with insider selling tips and inspiration to help convert interest into bookings.

One lucky agent who completes all six episodes will win the ultimate California getaway, including a \$1,000 flight credit, two nights in Huntington Beach, two nights in Yosemite Madera County, and Universal Studio Hollywood tickets.

The series is now available on Destination Webinars **HERE**.

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## Collette's evolving tour designs

### EXCLUSIVE

**AS TRAVELLERS'** demands have evolved in the years since COVID, so has the way that Collette designs its tours, Managing Director Karen Deveson has told *Travel Daily*.

Tours used to be created for convenience, Deveson explained, however in recent years, the expansion of the industry and changing traveller values have allowed Collette to get more adventurous with its product.

This includes more open-jaw tours, which depart and arrive in different destinations.

"We start and finish in the one city only if it makes sense," Deveson explained.

"I think we're doing a much better job of asking agents what they want to sell as well."

The touring sector used to be define by the coaches it travelled on, which is another anachronism



that no longer defines how Collette designs its itineraries, Deveson said.

"It's all about thinking less about the vehicle, that doesn't define us.

"We want to be on public transport...high speed trains, we're using a lot more of the local transportation," she added.

Many of Collette's most popular destinations - such as Scandinavia and Africa - are not typical coach tour destinations, which makes it easier to leave this mode of transport in the past. *MS*

## Korea shines with WWT

**WENDY** Wu Tours (WWT) has become the latest operator to partner with the Korea Tourism Organization to highlight the destination through its 'Scenic South Korea' itinerary.

The tour offers a balance of iconic landmarks and cultural experiences, as well as Korea's landscapes and heritage.

WWT will aim to tap into the growing interest in Korea among Australian travellers, with the tour operator registering a strong year-on-year increase in demand for the destination.

**MEANWHILE**, WWT has also recently launched a worldwide sale, with savings of up to \$4,000 per couple.

The offer is available across a wide selection of group tours, with more than 1,000 dates included as part of the sale.

Selected departures cover Asia, South America, and more, with the sale to run until 12 Dec.

Find out more **HERE**.

## Say Aloha to Hawaii

**HAWAII'** Tourism is encouraging travel advisors to complete the Hawai'i Badge in the Brand USA Discovery Program this month.

Advisors can enhance their knowledge of The Aloha State during Nov and go into the draw to win one of four Made in Hawaii gift boxes, valued at more than \$100 each - **CLICK HERE** to complete your badge.

## ANA biz class sale

**ALL** Nippon Airways has launched its 'Waku Waku Sale', with return business class fares from Perth to Tokyo now available from \$4,196.

Travellers will also get a free domestic side trip within Japan in economy class to destinations like Osaka or Sapporo.

The offer applies to travel between 01 Dec 2025-28 Feb 2026, for bookings made by 28 Nov - download the promotional flyer **HERE**.

# NEW CALEDONIA

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## Truly all-inclusive is our advantage: Laver

**WHILE** the recent unveiling of *Scenic Ikon* (TD 21 Oct) has attracted a lot of industry attention, the real secret to Scenic Group's strong pipeline of bookings is its truly all-inclusive nature, GM Sales & Marketing, Australia/Asia Pacific Region Anthony Laver believes.

While some cruise brands tout all-inclusivity as a selling point, Scenic lives and breathes the value proposition, the senior executive told *Travel Daily* at the Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) Business Owners Soiree in Hong Kong.

"When we say to our guests, 'you can come on a cruise and leave your wallet in the safe or at home', we truly mean that.

"That's a philosophy that our Chairman and founder Glen Moroney has as a core value - we listen to our guests and we integrate and take that full ecosystem approach to our products and services."



Laver also explained the critical importance of having a savvy network of educated travel agents to clearly explain its all-inclusive concept to clients.

When Scenic Group's partners are comfortable with explaining the luxury features of Scenic and Emerald and the meaning of truly all-inclusive, "there's a very high up-sell and conversion ratio [as a result]", Laver said.

"In cruising, it is up to the consultants - we have got very intelligent, very smart, savvy consultants selling Scenic - they are the ones who translate the value for their client."

Another competitive advantage for Scenic, according to Laver, is

the fully integrated nature of its business model, which affords the business a greater amount of quality control and insight.

"We design and conceptualise our own ships, engineer them and do all of the prefabrication, we own the shipyards, fit the ships out, train the staff ourselves, and do the marketing."

"Uniquely, we are one of the only companies globally in the ocean cruising area that does the fully integrated approach."

Laver added that one of the key reasons for approaching the business this way is to avoid leaving anything to interpretation through a third party.

"Having an external party deliver ultra-luxury seamlessly from on board, the excursions and then any land is actually quite complex," he said.

"When our guests are on board, it feels like it is one consistent, inclusive experience." AB

## CATO's on the list

**COUNCIL** of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) Managing Director Brett Jardine has attended the virtual opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum, at the invitation of Ambassador of Egypt to Australia Hani Naji.

The live-streamed event took place in Canberra, and connected diplomats, dignitaries, and travel industry representatives with the global ceremony in Cairo, marking the long-awaited official opening of the world's largest archaeological museum dedicated to a single civilisation.

The new museum is located near the pyramids, and showcases more than 100,000 artefacts.



## EMERALD

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## One last TIME in 2025



**THE** Travel Industry Mentorship Experience (TIME) celebrated its final graduation and networking evening for the year last week.

Hosted by TTC in its Bondi Junction office, the event recognised graduates from Program 59, 60 and 61, and welcomed the new intake of mentees for Program 64.

Recent graduate Jaimi Starkey from Scenic World was emcee for the evening, while well-known corporate travel figure Rob Dell was the guest speaker.

The now-retired Dell regaled guests with anecdotes from his 55-year-long career, and spoke about how he always took advantage of the opportunities presented to him.

"Fifteen years on, TIME continues to be a testament to what our industry can achieve when we invest in people,"

enthused TIME program founder, Penny Spencer.

"Congratulations to our final graduates of 2025 - the next generation of leaders." JM

**Pictured:** Graduation group from Programs 59 & 60 - Melinda Gregor, Gregor & Lewis Bespoke Travel (mentor); Kirin Greenland, Clean Cruising (mentee); David Goldman, Goldman Travel Group (mentor); Melanie Cross, Celebrity Cruises (mentee); Jack Want, Eden Corporate Travel (mentee); Kelly Wachter Corporate Magic (mentor); Katrina Humphrey, Anywhere Travel (mentee); Giorgia Constantino, Celebrity Cruises (mentee); Van Luu Nugyen, Amadeus (mentee); Deirdre Parkes-Finch, United Airlines (mentor); Anthony Potter, Globus family of brands (mentee); and Demi Kavaratzis, Etraveli Group (mentor).

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## ATIA UPDATE

from Ingrid Fraser, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy



**IT'S** been a busy fortnight of advocacy for ATIA, with more than 15 meetings held with ministers and shadow ministers

to advance the priorities that matter most to travel businesses.

This is a critical time of year. While the Federal Budget won't be handed down until May, the groundwork is being laid now as ministers and departments shape their proposals and make the case for funding.

ATIA is making sure the travel industry's needs are firmly on the agenda.

Our discussions covered a broad range of issues - from financial support for employers who take on trainees with Minister Giles, to ensuring the proposed Aviation Industry Ombuds scheme remains appropriately targeted with Minister King.

Another key focus was the Reserve Bank's proposal to remove businesses' ability to recover card payment costs

through surcharges - a move that would hit travel businesses particularly hard, as discussed with Assistant Treasurer Mulino and Small Business Minister Aly.

The RBA says only 10% of merchants apply surcharges - we know that's not true for travel.

Around 95% of travel businesses surcharge to recover genuine merchant fees - and with average transactions of \$6,400 to \$10,000, these costs are substantial.

A 1.5% fee can exceed \$100 per booking, and if surcharging is banned, those costs don't disappear - they'll have to be absorbed by the business, eroding already tight margins.

Many consumers prefer credit cards for rewards or included travel insurance, and that's their choice.

But it's not reasonable to expect small businesses to absorb the cost of those preferences - and if prices rise as a result, all customers pay more.

The good news is the RBA has delayed its decision until Mar to more fully assess the impacts.

ATIA will continue briefing parliamentarians through the final sitting weeks to ensure that the industry's voice is heard.

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## Travel goes local in '26

**FROM** discovering new local beauty rituals to swapping restaurant reservations for supermarkets, Skyscanner has revealed seven of the travel trends for 2026 in a new report.

According to figures, 33% of travellers want to experience local beauty rituals while on holiday - think facial masks from South Korean beauty giant Olive Young or lip balms from cult brand Rhode in the US.

For a taste of authenticity, 35% of holidaymakers also like to check out local grocery aisles during their trips, from Tokyo's vending machines to Iceland's geothermal baked bread.



Travellers are also chasing alpine escapes with 76% considering or planning a mountain holiday for summer and autumn next year.

"Whether it's building a trip around a must-stay 'destination hotel', getting lost in a new favourite book on a reading retreat, incorporating a beauty routine into their travel itinerary or bringing the whole family along for the journey, travel will become more curated, grounded and unique," explained CEO Bryan Batista. *JHM*

## Asia's tourism story

**TOURISM** expert and academic David Beirman has announced the upcoming launch of his latest book, *Risk and Tourism Marketing in Asia*, in Feb 2026.

The book, which Beirman co-edited alongside Griffith University's Professor Jeff Wilks, features 49 contributors from 18 countries, including former Indonesian Tourism Minister Sandiaga Uno.

"Asia has been through it all, from pandemics to political protests to tsunamis and yet it continues to lead global tourism recovery - we wanted to understand why," Beirman said.

*Risk and Tourism Marketing in Asia* is now available for pre-order **HERE**.

## True North's b'day

**TRUE** North will celebrate 40 years of adventure in 2027 with new voyages, visiting the reefs of the Raja Ampat Islands, and the frontiers of Western Australia.

Among the highlights of the 2027 program are several new and refreshed itineraries.

These include 'North of Ningaloo', which will visit the Rowley Shoals, 'Fire & Dragons', which heads to Komodo, Wakatobi National Park and the volcanic heart of Indonesia and plenty more.

Bookings are available **HERE**

## Luxury arrives in HK



**THE** Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) Global Business Owners Soiree has kicked off in Hong Kong, bringing together around 100 members and suppliers to celebrate the success and evolution of luxury travel selling.

Taking place under the theme 'the power of influence', this year's LTC gathering is exploring the psychological, technological, and cultural factors that continue to shape the trajectory of luxury travel in Australia and NZ.

Hosted at the Regent Hong Kong, members and suppliers were treated to a welcome cocktail function at the hotel's Qura Bar on Sun night, before an informative partner showcase for Travel Associates owners at The Langham Hotel yesterday.

Guest also had the opportunity to take in the full ambience of Hong Kong on board a relaxing sailing around Victoria Harbour.

Last night, proceedings were capped off at the nearby Aqua Restaurant for a luxury dinner with an impressive view, thanks to Platinum Partner Scenic Group.

LTC General Manager Nikki Glading said the decision to take the Soiree overseas for the first time underscores the brand's commitment to global connection and forward thinking.

"We wanted to take this year's Soiree to a destination that truly embodies transformation and modern luxury," Glading said.

"Hong Kong was the natural choice, it's a city that continues to capture the attention of discerning travellers and influence the way the world experiences luxury, blending heritage with innovation, and global sophistication with local authenticity," she added.

Today will see the Global Business Owners Leadership Day commence, where Flight Centre Travel Group Global MD Luxury and Independent Brands, Danielle Galloway, will deliver a presentation about the psychology of luxury influence.

**Pictured:** Travel Associates GM ANZ Rachel Kingswell taking in the stunning Hong Kong view with Galloway and Glading. AB



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## HX makes uni program global

**HX EXPEDITIONS** has announced the global expansion of its education partnership with the University of Tasmania and its Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies.

The expansion will see the HX-UTAS Antarctica Pre-Departure Course - the world's first university-developed program designed to educate Antarctic passengers - roll out across all HX destinations in 2026.

The new Arctic Introductory Courses will include programs for Alaska, Arctic Canada, Greenland, Iceland, the Northwest Passage, and Svalbard.

The courses will offer flexible, online pre-departure learning experiences that combine interactive content, live sessions, and expert insights, with guests to receive an official certificate upon completion.

"The success of our Antarctica program showed how eager travellers are to understand the environments they explore," said HX's Chief Scientist, Dr Verena Meraldi.

"Expanding these learning opportunities across all HX destinations gives our guests a deeper, more meaningful connection to the world around them."

## AAA welcomes ICAO recognition

**THE** Australian Airports Association (AAA) has welcomed a recent decision by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), which recognises the critical role of airports in decarbonising the aviation sector.

The revised resolution, which was presented at the 42nd ICAO Assembly last month in Canada, now clearly acknowledges the key role airports play in deploying and distributing cleaner energy sources to support the long-term global goal of net zero emissions.

The outcome follows strong advocacy by the Australian Government, informed by the work of the AAA.

"This recognition from ICAO reinforces that airports are essential partners in achieving global aviation's climate goals,"



AAA Chief Executive Simon Westaway said.

"Across Australia, airports are already investing in solar energy generation, ground fleet electrification, sustainable terminal design, and waste and water efficiency."

The ICAO update coincides with

the release of AAA's Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Accounting Policy Position, developed in partnership with ICF International.

The report calls for the development of a world-first SAF accounting framework in Australia, which would allow airports to credibly account for the emission reductions they support through SAF infrastructure and partnership.

"Airports play a critical role in SAF logistics and infrastructure, but current reporting frameworks don't recognise that contribution," Westaway added.

"Introducing a robust SAF accounting system would unlock investment, improve transparency, and strengthen Australia's leadership in sustainable aviation through a nationally consistent framework." JM

## Hurtigruten sets sail with 100% biofuel

**AFTER** announcing the initiative last month, Hurtigruten's *MS Richard With* has now set sail from Bergen on the company's first climate-neutral voyage (**TD 07 Oct**).

Using 100% advanced biofuel, the battery-hybrid ship will follow the Coastal Express route to Kirkenes and back, carrying goods and tourists.

"This marks a historic moment in Hurtigruten's more than 130-year legacy along the Norwegian coast," said Hedda



Felin, CEO of Hurtigruten.

"Most importantly, it's further proof that emission cuts are possible today by using sustainable biodiesel, without the need to invest billions in new ships or infrastructure."

## Vietjet discovery

**VIETJET** Airlines and Oxford University have announced the initial findings of their joint research initiative, which explores pathways to achieve net zero aviation.

The research found that Geological Balance Fuel - an innovative form of aviation fuel where carbon emissions are offset through the long-term geological storage of CO<sub>2</sub> - could offer a practical way for the sector to achieve net zero by 2050.

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## MONEY

**WELCOME** to Money, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

**AU\$1 = US\$0.654**

**THE** Australian dollar has weakened slightly this week, with the AUD/USD remaining stuck in a 0.6400-6700 range. In Australia, traders remain cautious ahead of today's RBA meeting, where policymakers are expected to keep the cash rate on hold at 3.6% following an unexpected rise in inflation.

Meanwhile, China's manufacturing slowdown, along with renewed trade tensions between Washington and Beijing, continue to dampen the Aussie.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.654
UK	£0.498
NZ	\$1.145
Euro	€0.568
Japan	¥100.8
Thailand	฿21.23
China	¥4.659
South Africa	11.32
Canada	\$0.919
Bitcoin	A\$163,425.14

## QR connects Algeria

**QATAR** Airways and Air Algerie have announced a codeshare partnership to boost connectivity between Algeria and key markets in Asia and the Middle East.

The agreement builds on an existing interline partnership between the two carriers.

Travellers can now book codeshare flights for travel starting on 15 Nov 2025.

## Perth's Adina upgraded



**ADINA** Barrack Plaza located in the heart of Perth CBD has unveiled the results of its recent \$4 million renovation, led by owner Serene Capital.

The refresh encompasses the entire hotel, from upgraded guest rooms and corridors to a revitalised lobby.

There is also new technology throughout the property, including smart TVs, upgraded wi-fi, new door lock tech, and improved air conditioning, plus a full overhaul of the hotel's back-of-house infrastructure.

All studios and apartments have been refreshed, with water-inspired design elements reflecting Adina's relaxed Australian aesthetic.

Standout features include custom-designed 2m x 2m king beds, crafted with pocket springs, memory foam, and breathable fabrics, as well as new herringbone carpets, feature walls, revitalised bathrooms and kitchens, and outdoor furniture.

"With apartment sizes ranging from 32m<sup>2</sup> to 101m<sup>2</sup>, and big balconies overlooking West Perth

and Northbridge, Adina Barrack Plaza offers a spacious, residential feel that's ideal for corporate travellers during the week and leisure guests on weekends," said TFE Hotels Group Chief Operating Officer, Chris Sedgwick.

"It's also a great fit for families and long-stay visitors, especially with the new ECU city campus just around the corner." *JM*

## Viking thrills in UK

**UK THEME** park Paultons Park has announced it will open a new £12 million (A\$24 million) Viking attraction on 16 May 2026.

Located in New Forest National Park in Hampshire, Paultons features more than 70 rides and attractions, and is rated the number one family theme park on Google, with Peppa Pig World being its biggest drawcard.

Valgard - Realm of the Vikings is Paultons' biggest investment in a new themed area to date.

Aimed at older kids and teens, the upcoming attraction's key feature will be Drakon, a high-octane thrill ride with a vertical lift hill and two twists that take riders upside down.

This is just the latest the announcement for the park, which earlier this year introduced Ghostly Manor, a A\$7 million ghoulish interactive gameplay ride.

Paultons is also waiting approval on plans to build a holiday village featuring between 85-95 lodges.

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## Think You Know the Solomon Islands? Think Again

**WE ALL** know the Solomon Islands is a pristine environmental paradise, renowned for its unique living culture, world-class diving, uncrowded surf, sports fishing, birdwatching and amazing WWII history - but there's so much more to this 992-island archipelago than meets the eye.

**Sharks are sacred** - In Rennell Province, sharks are revered as sacred spirits by locals who still practise ancient shark-worship traditions.

**Skull shrines are a thing** - Skull Island near Munda features eerie shrines built from human skulls, a remnant of the region's headhunting past.

**Pay with shells** - Traditional shell money is still used in Malaita Province for bride price, cultural exchanges, and the occasional transaction.

**An underwater museum** - Iron Bottom Sound, the stretch of water between Guadalcanal and the Florida Islands, is a world-class dive site, home to over 50

WWII-era sunken ships and aircraft.

**Who needs Maccas?** - The Solomon Islands is proudly free of international fast-food giants like McDonald's, KFC or Starbucks.

**Blondes have more fun** - Some Solomon Islanders have naturally blonde hair, the result of a unique local gene—not European ancestry.

**Fruity Flavours** - Fruit Bats, aka Flying Foxes, are considered a local delicacy.

**Clocking On** - Life here runs on 'Solomon Time', things happen when they happen.

**Very stunned mullets** - Highly illegal and very dangerous, fishing using unexploded WWII ordinance still occurs in isolated areas.

**The Trains are never late** - because there are no trains. Locals rely on boats, 4WDs and small planes for getting around.

**Languages galore** - The destination boasts incredible linguistic diversity, with over 70 distinct languages spoken alongside English

and Pidgin.

**Soccer rules** - Soccer is the national sport—don't have a ball, no worries, kids craft balls from plastic bags or coconut husks.

### 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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