



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel industry news, including our **Corporate Update** and full pages from:

- Martin Randall Travel
- Travelmarvel

Europe EES starting

EUROPE'S new biometric border check system, dubbed the EES, will commence from Sun.

Visitors arriving in any of the Schengen area's 29 countries will have their faces and fingerprints scanned under the new system.

Alaska HA updates

THE recently merged Alaskan Airlines and Hawaiian Airlines are integrating their booking systems and aligning their cabins and seat names across their fleets.

Passengers on both airlines will start to see some changes for travel booked from Apr, providing a more consistent experience.

US cops US\$1 billion hit

THE US Government shutdown, now in its tenth day, has cost the country an estimated US\$1.2 billion in travel dollars, according to the US Travel Association.

The organisation is tracking the economic repercussions through its real-time cost ticker, with the financial burden expected to continue growing each day.

Airports across the US are grappling with staffing shortages amid the government closure, leading to delays and a reduction in the number of flights.

"This shutdown is doing real,

irreversible damage," said Geoff Freeman, President and CEO of the US Travel Association.

"Travellers are facing longer TSA lines and flight delays.

"Airports are reducing flights and we've seen entire control towers go dark.

"The longer this drags on, the worse the cascade of damage will be - for local communities, for small businesses and for the country," Freeman emphasised.

"Congress needs to act now and reopen the government."

The blow to America's travel industry comes after research earlier this year from The World Travel & Tourism Council (**TD** 16 May) revealed the country is already on track to lose US\$12.5b in international visitor spending this year, with the decline attributed to US Govt's closed-door approach to tourism. *JM*

Cruise Egypt in style

SECURE your clients' spot to cruise in Egypt in style with Travelmarvel aboard its new river ship *Travelmarvel Sirius* (**TD** 16 Sep), with savings available for those booking before the end of the month.

Head to **page eight** for more information on the offer.

Martin's great trips

EXPERIENCE the world's greatest cultural achievements with Martin Randall Travel.

The tour operator offers expert speakers, seamless travel, and privileged access on its small-group journeys, which explore art, architecture, and more.

See **page seven** for details.



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Win a trip to Croatia

EXPLORE Worldwide has teamed up with Strava to launch a global competition, offering travellers the chance to win the trip of a lifetime.

From 08-14 Oct, participants are invited to join the Explore Cycle Croatia Challenge on Strava and complete 28km in one week.

All finishers will receive a 20% discount on an Explore trip, while one lucky participant will win a 'Cycle the Dalmatian Coast' tour valued at up to \$3,800.

Find out more details **HERE**.


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Victoria to accelerate interstate value

EXCLUSIVE

VISIT Victoria CEO Brendan McClements has hailed an additional \$43.7 million in state government funding over two years as “hugely energising” for Australia’s entire tourism sector.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** on the sidelines of the Destination Victoria conference in Melbourne this week, the Visit Victoria chief said the extra funding - first revealed by **TD** last month (**TD** 18 Sep) - reflected a confidence in tourism that extends well beyond the needs of the state.

“There is still going to be challenges and difficulties, but to have that sort of support from the state for this industry I think is a huge vote of confidence about where the state sees it,” McClements explained.

“The benefits will not just be about Visit Victoria, but about the tourism industry as a whole & the future of the visitor economy.”



The funding has enabled Visit Victoria to launch a new 2030 strategy (**TD** 08 Oct), which will seek to drive interstate, intrastate and international visitation to a value in excess of \$54.3 billion in just under five years.

While international visitation has rebounded strongly, McClements believes the real opportunity for Victoria is where it can accelerate Aussie visitation to work in lockstep with its growing appeal overseas.

The value of both interstate and intrastate travel are marginally down on pre-pandemic numbers.

“We need to be able to try and turn on all those markets... and [the funding] gives us a real opportunity to turn those taps back on,” he said.

“It can take a while - it’s not

something that can be done tomorrow, but we have a real focus on how we can get back and participate strongly.”

Part of that rebound is already taking place, with Victoria recently reclaiming second place in terms of market share of travel spend compared to other states and territories.

Queensland had overtaken Victoria for several years following the pandemic, however the state is now back to accounting for around 25% of the national travel spend, only behind NSW, which has close to 32%.

While encouraging Aussies to visit a state repeatedly comes with its challenges, McClements pointed to Victoria’s constantly evolving events calendar as its biggest asset - especially across sports tournaments like the Australian Open (**pictured**), which will “always have a different winner every year”. **AB**

Expedia scales AI

ONLINE travel giant Expedia has launched a new suite of AI-powered tools and APIs designed to help partners improve search speed and personalisation.

The new Smart Trip AI is a conversational tool that provides real-time trip recommendations to help with planning, discovery and booking of new options.

Another new addition is Typeahead API, which pre-emptively searches for a destination or location being searched to improve the time users spend on site and the overall shopping experience.

A new merchandising solution designed to help partners run better promotional campaigns and spotlight better deals for price-conscious travellers is now in its beta testing phase and is earmarked to roll out next year.

Expedia Group’s marketplace now has more than 350 AI models integrated to perform various efficiency and personalisation functions.

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Qantas data threat

QANTAS has reassured its customers that legal protections are in place as cyber criminals threaten to release pax data.

The airline said it continues to support customers impacted by the breach committed by cyber crime collective Scattered Lapsus\$ Hunters, gaining an injunction in Jul to pre-emptively block the release of pax data.

Scenic account switch

SCENIC Group has appointed Catalyst Communications as its new PR agency.

The firm is led by industry veteran Gaynor Reid, who will work in collaboration with Chris Waite to manage media relations across the Scenic Group, including Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours and Emerald Cruises & Tours.

Black Communications previously handled the PR account for Scenic Group.

We are wellness

AUSTRALIA has been named the number one wellness destination in the world, as interest surges for travel trends like wild swimming, thermal springs, and ice baths.

The country beat its neighbour New Zealand, as well as Bali, Japan, and the South Pacific islands as the new top destination for wellness experiences.

Research also showed 56% of Australians intend to take a holiday that includes a wellness component in the next year.

Win a million Velocity pts

VIRGIN Voyages has partnered with sister aviation brand Virgin Australia to launch a new travel agents incentive in Australia and New Zealand, with a million Velocity points on the line.

From 07 Oct through to 31 Oct, advisors who book 2027 Base, Essential, or Premium fares with the cruise line and log sales via the Sales Tracker will be in the running to win the massive swag of VA loyalty points.

Every booking logged in the Sales Tracker counts as an entry,



with agents also needing to have a Velocity account to be eligible to claim the prize.

This is not the first time the two Virgin brands have collaborated in Australia, announcing in 2023 that Velocity points can be used to purchase Virgin Voyages sailings (**TD** 22 Sep 2023).

Virgin Australia also inked a deal last year with Cruiseplanet, allowing Velocity members to earn points with a range of cruise lines outside of Virgin Voyages.

These included Royal Caribbean, Princess Cruises, Norwegian Cruise Line, Celebrity Cruises, Carnival Cruise Line and more. **AB**

More flight delays?

A DECISION by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to reject a rise in the global mandatory retirement age of pilots from 65 to 67 could lead to higher airfares and flight delays, experts have warned.

While not completely killing off the proposal, the ICAO called for more medical evidence before committing to a decision to increase the pilot retirement age.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) was a key proponent of the idea, arguing that it would help alleviate the ongoing pilot shortage crippling the aviation sector globally.

Some industry experts also support IATA's view, backing up a recent Boeing paper that suggested without a policy change, pilot shortages will mean fewer flights, more delays, and an increase to the price of tickets.

Safari spots still left

THE Africa Safari Co has a few spots remaining for advisors to embark on a safari in Zimbabwe and Botswana.

The itinerary travels from 1422 Nov, at a cost of \$3,395 per person twin share.

CLICK HERE for full details.



Hotel loyalty failing

HOTELS in the APAC region have a major problem with retaining loyalty among guests, a new report by customer data platform Ireckonu has claimed.

Despite 86% of travellers in APAC reporting "high satisfaction" with hotel stays, only 37% return to the same property, with the report labelling the data "a surprising gap in a market".

Ireckonu APAC Director Sam Samsudi said the key to reversing the trend is personalisation.

"A satisfied guest is not necessarily a loyal one - hotels are leaving recurring revenue on the table...by not creating tangible emotional connections," he said.

Crooked USSR tour

CROOKED Compass will take travellers behind the Iron Curtain and deep into the heart of Soviet Union history on its new 2026 Founder's Tour into Central Asia.

Departing from Kazakhstan and running from 13-25 Aug 2026, the one-time-only itinerary explores decommissioned relics of the former Soviet empire and will be hosted by founder, Lisa Pagotto.

Travellers will explore locked-down spaceports, hidden metro systems and the restricted city of Baikonur, which is still under Russian control.

"We are lifting the veil on stories that most of the world has never seen and may never see again," Pagotto said.

"Access is rare, the stories are confronting" - **CLICK HERE**.

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OTST heads to Malaysia

THE Australian Travel Careers Council (ATCC) Overseas Technical Study Tour (OTST) will return next year, with Malaysia selected as the host country.

This year's success with the OTST in Japan, where 213 students and graduates visited Osaka and Fukuoka for work experience, was the catalyst for the program's return next year, with the ATCC stating it is expecting similar numbers.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's largest city, has been chosen to host the students, with potential side trips to be organised as well.

The tour is designed to provide invaluable overseas work experience in various travel and tourism corporations for the students before they enter the industry locally.

ATCC CEO Rick Myatt told **Travel Daily** that while the trip was hugely beneficial for the students, it was also an eye-opener for the

parents, a lot of whom didn't realise that there was so much career opportunity for their children in travel.

"It has actually shaken up a lot of parents who think that our industry had been decimated, which is of course not the case," Myatt explained.

"I wanted to profile the fact that globally you can still find different opportunities and then come back and work locally - it will benefit our local industry a lot with that sort of approach, and it has been hugely popular."

Myatt added that the ATCC was always on the lookout for more partners to assist with the program, particularly in terms of industry experience as well as accommodation.

The OTST for 2026 is likely to take place in Apr or May.

Businesses wanting to learn more can email Rick Myatt for further details - **CLICK HERE**.

A bridge to the sky

THE world's tallest bridge has opened in the Chinese province of Guizhou, boasting a range of tourist attractions.

Visitors to the top of the Huajiang Grand Canyon Bridge - standing at 630 metres above the canyon floor - can enjoy a stroll across a glass sightseeing walk, as well as a cafe located at the top of one of the bridge's towers.

A 1,000m² glass observation hall is also part of the complex, with plans in place to add several adrenaline activities.

These include bungee jumping, paragliding, low-altitude skydiving, as well as a mooted concept called the 'Sky Balance Beam', described at this stage as a "narrow walkway structure".



Window Seat

CIGARETTE smugglers recently caused a complete shutdown of Vilnius Airport in Lithuania when illegal balloons invaded its airspace.

The balloons were packed with cigarettes to secretly ferry them over the border, however they blew their mission when they interfered with 30 flights - impacting around 6,000 passengers.

In the end, authorities recovered 18,000 packets, sending the criminals' plan well and truly up in smoke.



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CORPORATE UPDATE

SAP, Amex shake on AI

TRAVEL expense platform SAP Concur has partnered with American Express Global Business Travel (Amex GBT) to launch Complete, a co-developed next-gen solution with AI at its core.

Benefiting from each company's tech and business travel expertise, the streamlined tool is designed to combine bookings, servicing, payments, and expensing into one experience.

Concur Expense will also integrate with Amex GBT Egencia,



providing more options for customers interested in a joint travel and expense solution.

Complete also offers users access to unified traveller support via an AI chat agent designed to deliver a single experience to manage the entire trip.

The two companies will allocate funding and development resources to build joint innovations on behalf of mutual customers with the vision to redefine the corporate travel and expense experience.

"This strategic alliance represents the future of travel and expense management," said Fred Fredericks, GM and Chief Product Officer at SAP Concur.

"By uniting SAP Concur technology and global expertise with Amex GBT's unmatched marketplace, software, and service plus our mutual AI capabilities, we are delivering a unified solution that makes business travel not only easier, but smarter and more impactful for organisations everywhere."

Mutual customers will have access to Complete later in Oct, with additional features to follow into next year. *JM*

TMCs give returns

NEW research shows businesses who use a travel management company enjoy financial benefits.

According to data presented by the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), for every US\$1 a company spends on managed travel, they see around 20 cents in additional revenue.

The 20-cent figure was calculated by Rockport Analytics, which studied thousands of corporate travel transactions to identify margins and profits.

The findings were shared by ASTA Chief Executive Officer Zane Kerby during the association's recent Travel Industry Forecast event in Washington, DC.

Additionally, Dave Hershberger, President of Prestige Travel in Cincinnati, said that figure would likely be higher - around 25% to 30% - for companies that move from unmanaged travel to a travel program.

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An Unforgettable rebrand



UNFORGETTABLE Croatia unveiled a refreshed brand identity and new-look website at Luxperience in Sydney, as part of the Unforgettable Travel Company's 10th anniversary celebrations this week.

The luxury small ship operator's new branding aims to capture the human touch that Unforgettable's travel specialists bring to the table in helping clients discover authentic travel experiences in a personalised way.

The new logo incorporates a subtle fingerprint, a symbol that "represents individuality and reminds us that no two journeys are ever the same", according to Graham Carter, co-founder of Unforgettable Travel Company and Unforgettable Croatia.

"Our new brand embodies the authenticity, expertise, dedicated hospitality and human touch that have always been at our core, all possible thanks to the incredible

people in the Unforgettable family.

"The trade has been essential in driving our success and will be even more central as we move into our next decade," Carter added, revealing a dedicated trade portal is in the works. *JM*

Pictured: Unforgettable Croatia's Aussie reps, Sarah Whitty and Aurore Bertomeu.

Westjet recline fee

TRAVELLERS who fly with WestJet will now need to pay extra for a seat that can recline, after the Canadian airline began rolling out updated cabin interiors on select Boeing planes across its fleet late last month.

The three distinct seat classes include premium, extended comfort and economy, with those wanting their seats to recline needing to book premium - of which there are only 12 available per aircraft.

NEXT ISSUE: Southeast Asia special report

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Aurora Expeditions is offering up to 20% off select 2026 Svalbard and Greenland voyages, plus a bonus \$3,750 air credit. Secure your clients' stateroom by 31 Dec to take advantage of the deal - more info [HERE](#).

Aussies can snag discounted flights to Bali with **Batik Air**'s latest flash sale. One-way seats start from \$192 from Perth for travel between 26 Oct - 03 Dec 2025. Bookings must be made before 15 Oct. Download the promotional flyer [HERE](#).

Vietjet's biggest sale of the year kicks off today, offering Australian travellers half-price flights, free baggage, and resort discounts. The 10-day super sale includes 50% off Eco tickets, plus free checked baggage up to 20kg, discounted inflight meals, and up to 50% off stays at the five-star Furama Resort Da Nang. Travellers can enter promo code 'SUPERSALE1010' when booking on the airline's website [HERE](#) - applies to travel between 01 Nov 2025 and 27 May 2026.

Adventurers who secure their place on **Travelmarvel**'s 2026 Canada tours before 28 Oct will score a free flight with Air Canada for their companion. The offer applies to popular itineraries like the 22-day 'Reflections of the Rockies & Alaska Cruise'. [CLICK HERE](#) to explore all the journeys included in the sale.

Last-minute travellers can take advantage of a limited opportunity to save \$1,000 per person on seven-day sightseeing journey to Tasmania with **Australian Air Safaris**. Fly high above the Apple Isle on the 'Tasmanian Wilderness' itinerary, departing on 01 Nov from Moorabbin Airport in Melbourne. Highlights include a chance to breathe the world's purest air at Cape Grim, a cruise on the Arthur and Gordon Rivers and a ride on the West Coast Wilderness Railway - [CLICK HERE](#).

Travellers can take advantage of new accommodation deals from TFE Hotels, including **Vibe Gold Coast's** Bed & Breakfast offer, on now until 30 Dec 2025. The deal includes an overnight stay and daily breakfast from just \$231 per night - see [HERE](#) for more information. Travellers can also save up to 20% when they book three nights or longer at Adina Apartment Hotel Coogee - more details [HERE](#).

Jetstar has dropped a Japan and South Korea sale, with one-way fares available from \$179. Routes on sale include Cairns to Osaka, Brisbane to Seoul, Sydney to Tokyo, and many more. Travel dates vary per route but include mid-Nov 2025 through to late Aug 2026. The promotion ends 11.59pm AEDT on Sun 12 Oct, unless sold out prior - see T&Cs [HERE](#).

Cruisers who lock in their 2026 or 2027 voyage with **Crystal** at least nine months in advance and pay upfront will enjoy 10% with the line's new Explorer Fare. The offer applies to sailings like the 18-night journey between Amsterdam and Barcelona aboard *Crystal Serenity*, now priced at \$19,860 per guest - down from \$21,900.

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Innovators at oneworld



AVIATION technologies - both being successfully deployed and those being finessed for the future - were on show recently at oneworld's first-ever Innovation Summit in Lisbon.

The event served as a warm-up for the World Aviation Festival, also held in the Portuguese capital, and was attended by leaders representing digital, customer experience and sustainability across the alliance.

The event featured a dynamic mix of panel discussions, presentations and networking opportunities, allowing delegates to deepen ties in aviation technology and innovation.

Presenters included JetZero CEO Tom O'Leary, who outlined the next steps in revolutionising air travel through aircraft design.

Also on stage was Volantio CEO Azim Barodawala, who showed how AI is being deployed to improve the passenger experience during irregular operations and disruptions - a system already used by Qantas, Alaska Airlines and Japan Airlines. Further discussions also took

place on sustainability, with the alliance already the first to commit to net-zero by 2050, with numerous initiatives underway across its member airlines.

Oneworld CEO Nat Pieper said members are investing heavily in innovation that is reshaping the global aviation industry.

"There's a wealth of expertise across our alliance, which makes us uniquely positioned to bring all parties together to share best practices and spark new ideas to help solve common challenges at scale," Pieper said. *ML*

Azamara evenings

MORE than 30 new AzAmazing Evenings celebrations have been unveiled by Azamara as part of its 2026 cruising line-up.

New additions include a visit to the Helsinki Music Centre in the Finnish capital and a concert set to more than 1,000 candles under St Michael's Cave in Gibraltar.

All Azamara cruises of nine nights or longer feature at least one AzAmazing Evening, with on-ship activities on shorter sailings.

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