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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of the latest travel industry news, including our **Luxury page feature**, plus full pages from:

- Scenic
- Inspiring Vacations

Rex loyalty grounded

THE ability for travellers to earn frequent flyer points with Rex's loyalty program, Rex Flyer, is suspended after the company managing the program was placed into voluntary administration overnight (**TD** breaking news).

Rex Flyer Pty Ltd is now in the hands of administrators EY, which stated it is now assessing the next steps for the loyalty brand and will issue an update to members as soon as practicable.

The development followed confirmation late yesterday that US company Air T had entered into an agreement with Rex administrators to buy the beleaguered regional carrier.

Air T said it expects to close the acquisition of Rex by the end of the year, so long as creditor and other approvals are obtained.

Sources close to the acquisition had leaked several key details yesterday (**TD** 21 Oct), with Air T



confirming plans overnight to not only buy the Rex business and retain staff, but also to pursue growth opportunities.

Crucially, Air T will fund Rex's engine renewal program and work to return its full fleet to service as soon as possible.

Just over 30 of Rex's 56 Saabs are currently in service, with the remainder grounded awaiting parts and engines.

Rex was placed in administration in Jul 2024, saddled with debts in excess of \$500 million. **AB**

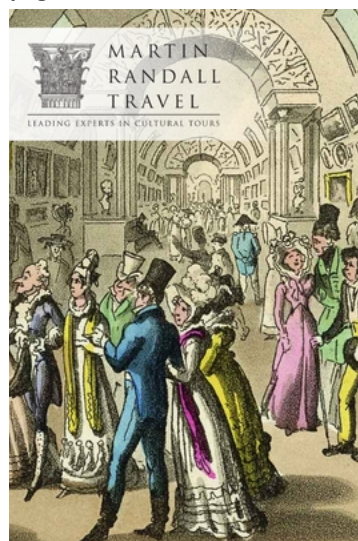
An inspiring sale

INSPIRING Vacations has extended its celebration sale, offering 30% off tours, including adventures to Sri Lanka and Africa - see **page 10** for details.

Scenic sale now on

EARLYBIRD offers are now available for Scenic's 2026 cruises that sail for 11 days or longer, including economy flights or a business class air credit of up to \$4,500 per person.

Agents will need to hurry, as the promotion ends 07 Nov - see **page nine** for information.



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VIEW DEAL

AI browser travels

OPENAI has launched a new AI web browser, ChatGPT Atlas, which features an agent function capable of booking reservations, flights, and more.

Available globally, the browser can be accessed through Apple's macOS, with support for Windows, iOS and Android coming soon.

However, the agent feature will only be available to users who pay for the subscription versions of ChatGPT.

New AI tool for DMCs

TRAVEL software company TourConnect AI has announced the launch of Itinerary Assist 2.0, in response to feedback from its destination management company clients.

Scheduled to roll out on 04 Nov, the new tool retains all of the itinerary creation and inventory integration capabilities of the original Itinerary Assist AI, now enhanced by a new conversational user experience.

According to TourConnect AI, DMCs are demanding chat and agentic AI tools in order to remain at the forefront within the luxury and group travel sectors.

With Itinerary Assist 2.0, DMCs can automate the creation of itineraries for any quote request, from broad requests with little information to detailed requests with specific service lines for each day and time.

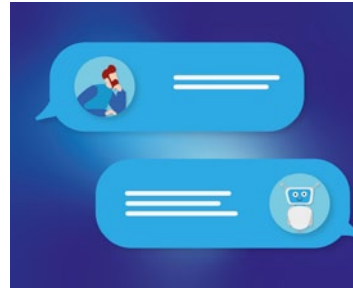
This functionality is accessed using the new conversational chat flow in Itinerary Assist AI, meaning that DMC staff can converse naturally to create, refine and edit - all without having to open their booking system.

"The launch of Chat features extends our moat within the B2B travel AI space," said Michael Herrmann, President and founder of TourConnect AI.

"DMCs are seeing value in less context shifting and faster turnaround times.

"We're expecting DMCs that work with a diverse range of suppliers will enjoy how 2.0 wraps around their pre-booking flow."

Since its launch in Apr 2024, DMCs using Itinerary Assist AI have created itineraries that combine to over 130,000 service



lines, with 92% of those making it through to the final itinerary sent to the client. *JM*

Italia joins La DMC

LA COLLECTION has expanded its destination management company arm, LC DMC, with the addition of Privilege Italia.

The partnership with the Italian luxury concierge specialist means travel agents will have direct access to a suite of bespoke travel services through Italy, from the Amalfi Coast to the Dolomites, including VIP transfers, 24/7 support, and charter services.

Discover more updates on La Collection on our [luxury page](#).

Marvellous Egypt

TRAVELMARVEL has launched its full 2026-28 Egypt and Jordan program, featuring new river ship *Travelmarvel Sirius* (**TD** 16 Sep).

Launching Sep 2026, the new-build will sail round-trip from Luxor on seven-night Nile River cruises, exploring the Valley of the Kings, the temples of Luxor and Karnak, and the Temple of Hathor at Dendera, with guests to also enjoy a private charter flight to the Abu Simbel.

The program also includes the flagship 11-day 'Treasures of Egypt and the Nile' itinerary and the 18-day 'Treasures of Egypt and the Nile with Hidden Jordan' journey - also available as a reverse itinerary.

Earlybird offers are available now, with savings of up to \$5,000 per couple on select departures.



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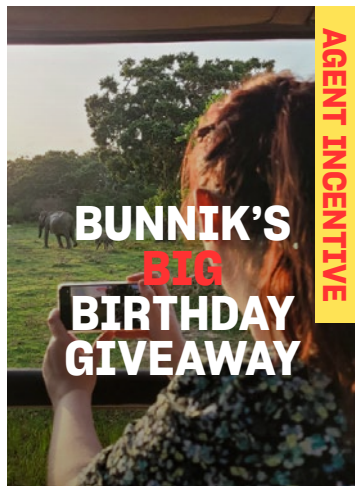
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US softness drags Air NZ

AIR New Zealand is on track to be \$80 million worse off than its H1 forecast released in Aug, an update to the market delivered this morning has revealed.

Several factors have led to the lower than expected earnings outlook, most notably a poor performance in US-bound and domestic bookings.

The airline had anticipated a 2-3% uplift in revenue across the two key segments, however the airline conceded those gains had "not materialised" and is "not yet evident in the current forward-booking profile".

The impact of that drop on Air New Zealand is estimated to be \$50 million for the half.

"[NZ's] economy remains subdued, with ongoing softness across business, govt and leisure segments," the carrier noted.

Adding further strain to the bottom line is a rise in engine lease costs, which are now



expected to be \$20 million higher than previously stated, due to end-of-lease obligations on two short-term aircraft leases not included in the prior outlook.

Financial obligations under the mandatory Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation have also increased by \$10 million since the Aug outlook, which Air NZ said will result in increased fuel costs.

While the carrier said it will drive more cost-saving initiatives to mitigate the added earnings pressures, it also pointed to a need for more affordable airport landing charges and third-party sector costs to help alleviate the adverse market conditions.

Air NZ now expects a loss before taxation for the first half in the range of \$30-55 million. **AB**

Korea comes to Syd

THE Korea Tourism Organization (KTO) Sydney office is inviting Aussie travel trade to its upcoming event on Wed 19 Nov, which is set to provide a fresh look at the country's newest attractions, cultural highlights, and premium travel experiences.

Co-hosted by Ignite Travel Group, The Travel Corporation, Korean Air, Asiana Airlines, T'way Air, and Jetstar, the Discover Korea in Sydney 2025 event will feature presentations from KTO, and networking opportunities with Korean tourism partners.

Attendees will enjoy a Korean-inspired dinner, fun games, and major prize draws, including return flights to Korea.

Spaces are limited - people can register their interest to attend **HERE** by Fri 31 Oct.



Quark goes early

QUARK Expeditions has opened bookings for its Arctic 2027 and Antarctic 2027/28 voyages earlier than any time in the expedition cruise line's history.

The company said it made the decision following strong demand for upcoming product, with the latest collections boasting sailings to new waters and a range of refreshed itineraries.

Some of the new voyages on offer include the 'Antarctic Peninsula, A Rare Exploration of the Weddell Sea: Journey', which takes pax into one of Antarctica's rarely visited regions.

Guests can also go farther north on the west coast of Greenland than any other itinerary offered by Quark via its 'West Greenland, Exploring the Far North' option, which will visit the Qanaaq and Upernavik communities.

Quark is offering an earlybird bonus for select departures until 31 Dec, saving guests up to \$2,000 + 10%.



Discover Vietnam Hoi An

Suggest Route:

Depart from Sydney/Melbourne/Perth - Ho Chi Minh City/Da Nang - bus transit to Hoi An

Best season to Visit:

From February to April, during the dry season. The weather is cool, dry, and sunny-perfect for discovering the ancient town and enjoying outdoor activities.



vietnamairlines.com



Flydubai ups game

FLYDUBAI customers will enjoy an elevated onboard experience in economy from next month, which will include upgraded meals and inflight entertainment.

Passengers will be able to enjoy a more diverse menu, as well as more than 1,000 of the latest Hollywood, Bollywood, Arabic and international films.

Travellers will also be able to access interactive games from next month, as well as e-magazines and more than 700 music albums and podcasts.

MEANWHILE, flydubai has also announced seven new interline agreements across Asia and Europe, including Aegean Airlines, ITA Airways, Myanmar Airways International, Air China, China Eastern, Hainan Airlines, and Sichuan Airlines.



Serving up 'fine-casual'

A SHIFT from fine dining to casual luxury and a rising interest in immersive dining experiences and local flavours are just a few emerging hotel culinary trends in APAC, according to *The Future of Food* report from Marriott.

The research drew upon insights from over 30 chefs, mixologists, and industry insiders, as well as findings from Marriott's survey of food and beverage teams in 270 properties in the APAC region.

Now dubbed 'fine-casual', guests are increasingly looking for elevated versions of classic dishes, such as caviar-topped fried chicken, as seen in Singapore and Tokyo, where chefs are taking a more relaxed approach to luxury.

This trend was reflected in 59% of respondents, who said that guests are opting for casual dining over formal experiences.

From surprising omakase experiences to exciting themed



environments, dining is becoming "a sensory journey", with almost half of respondents (48%) reporting more guests seeking interactive dining experiences.

In an effort to showcase culinary identity, chefs are including more indigenous ingredients in their dishes, as 85% of properties now incorporate locally sourced components in their offerings.

Meanwhile, AI is becoming more embedded in the hospitality industry, driving greater efficiency and creating personalised dining experiences, with 76% of properties adopting booking management technologies. *JHM*

Thailand derailed

A HIGH-SPEED rail project linking three of Thailand's major airports is on the brink of collapse, according to *Khaosod*.

The project, which was birthed from a public-private partnership six years ago, has made virtually no progress, and appears likely to be terminated, local newspaper have reported.

It was hoped the project would connect Don Mueang and Suvarnabhumi airports in Bangkok with U-Tapao International in Pattaya.

Four Seasons chef

FOUR Seasons Yachts has unveiled a chef-in-residence program, which will debut alongside *Four Seasons I* on select cruises next year.

The program will feature a revolving roster of internationally acclaimed chefs from Four Seasons hotels in Athens, Hong Kong, and Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

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Aussies tell tall travel tales

MORE than a quarter of Australians (27%) have lied about the cost of their holiday to friends or family, new research from Money.com.au has revealed.

Their motivations for doing so vary, with 10% having downplayed the cost of a trip to avoid criticism from loved ones, while 9% said they overstated the cost to make their holiday seem more impressive.

Some (8%) have even lied both ways, depending on who they were talking to.

The younger generations were the most likely to fib about how much they spent on their holiday, with Millennials usually exaggerating costs, while Gen Z were more likely to talk down how much they spent.

By contrast, older Aussies were more likely to say they do not discuss the cost of their holidays with others, including 46% of Baby Boomers and 26% of Gen X.



"Amid the cost-of-living crunch, some Aussies want to appear to be travelling with a sense of financial responsibility," said Money.com.au's Finance Expert, Sean Callery.

"Others like to stretch the truth to make their trip sound a little more glamorous than it was.

"It can be innocent fibbing that happens when travel and money mix, but you want to make sure it doesn't cross the line into something more serious, like going into debt to fund a trip and then understating the expense to make your spending seem more manageable," Callery warned. *JM*



Ikon adds more Asia

SKI and snowboard pass Ikon Pass has added nine new resorts throughout Japan, China and South Korea for the 2025/26 winter season.

The 77-day pass now offers access to 72 global destinations across five continents and 13 countries, with Yunding Snow Park in China joining the line-up.

Other new additions include Shiga Kogen Mountain Resort, Mt. T, Myoko Suginojara Ski Resort, Furano Ski Resort, Appi Kogen Resort, Nekoma Mountain, and Zao Onsen Ski Resort in Japan, and Mona Yongpyong in South Korea.

Ikon Pass holders will have seven days combined access at Shiga Kogen Mountain Resort and seven days each at all other new Asian destinations with no blackout dates - learn more **HERE**.



A yarn in Blue Mtns

SCENIC World in the NSW Blue Mountains has introduced the Buunyal Yarn to its Indigenous experience offering.

The Yarn is a 30-minute talk with an Indigenous guide, where guests will hear traditional stories and learn about Indigenous culture, native animals and plants, and the natural wonders of the Blue Mountains.

Suitable for both young and old visitors, the interactive session caters to up to 20 people and includes time to ask and listen to others' questions after the talk.

The Yarn, which was introduced over the Oct school holidays, is designed to complement Scenic World's popular three-hour guided Buunyal Tour, which caters to up to 12 people and includes going on all rides and the 10-minute rainforest boardwalk with the guide.

Prices for adults start from \$82 - discover more details about the experiences **HERE**.

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Window seat

JAPAN is famous for its hospitality, which is known as 'omotenashi' - a selfless and attentive approach that anticipates a guest's needs.

Some hotels are now taking this concept further than ever before, providing a bed and pyjamas for their guests who travel with their little plush dolly (pictured).

Japanese hotel chain Toyoko Inn has begun rolling out the new service, with plush toys provided with a pillow, pyjamas and bedsheets - all made from the same fabrics it uses for its human guests.

The program was first tested out at Toyoko Inn Osaka Dome Mae, nearby to a venue which hosts conventions which are well-known for being a magnet for travellers with their dolls.

Its success has now seen it rolled out to 55 other locations around Japan.

The service is not free either, with travellers forking out the modest cost of ¥300 (around A\$3) so their cherished toy can get a good night's sleep.



Dertour refreshed

EXPLORE Worldwide's new parent company Dertour Group has made several new board appointments to steer the company in its "new chapter with clarity and purpose", CEO Christoph Debus has revealed.

Chief Technology Officer Boris Raoulis is among the new faces to join from 01 Nov, where he will be charged with accelerating the group's technological transformation and innovation across regions and markets.

Long-standing CEO of DMCs, Klaus-Ulrich Sperl, will also join the board to focus on expanding experiences and ancillaries.

"Our focus remains on creating exceptional experiences, building strong partnerships, and shaping the future of travel together," Debus said.

Shucking in Croatia

UNFORGETTABLE Croatia has launched a new private island oyster tasting experience.

The new excursion will be part of the cruise line's calls to the oyster hotbed of Ston, and is included at no additional cost.

Guests travelling on itineraries operating between Dubrovnik and Split will be transported via a small boat from Ston to the small private island of Banja, in the Bay of Mali Ston, where they will hear about the oyster growing and harvesting process.

The tasting experience will be paired with locally produced wine from the region.

Travel Daily

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ATIA UPDATE

from Christian Hunter, Chairman



AT ATIA, everything we do starts with our members.

Project A30, first announced at Beyond Borders 2024 and updated last week in Brisbane at

Beyond Borders 2025, is about delivering real, tangible benefits for members by shaping the next generation of our association.

It's ensuring every part of our membership has the space, support, and opportunity to contribute meaningfully to our shared future.

We know that strength comes from representation that reflects the full breadth of our industry.

Every member segment - including independent, retail, corporate, tour operator, and wholesaler - faces its own opportunities and challenges.

Ensuring each has a genuine voice in shaping our direction is at the heart of Project A30.

That's why we've launched the Committee of Independent Travel Agents and Advisors (CTA), a dedicated forum giving independent members a formal seat at the table.

CTA allows independent agents to help set priorities, guide advocacy and policy work, and stay closely connected to the issues that matter most to their businesses.

This builds on the direction we set at Beyond Borders 2024, when we introduced dedicated Board responsibilities for each member segment.

Over the past year, that framework has expanded, starting with our partnership with the Australian Travel Management Companies (ATMC) to formally represent corporate agents, and now through CTA for independents.

ATIA has never taken a one-size-fits-all approach however the Board was united in our views as we shaped Project A30 ahead of its October 2024 launch of the need for dedicated formal segment paths.

We're proudly creating the right spaces for every segment to be heard, to lead, and to strengthen our united voice.

Expressions of interest are now open - **CLICK HERE**.

If you're an independent agent and not yet part of ATIA, now is the time to get involved.

The more voices we have at the table, the stronger our industry becomes.

Beautiful
SAMOA

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2025**

11 NOVEMBER | BRISBANE

Rydges Hotel, 9 Glenelg Street, South Bank | 5.30pm - 8.30pm

12 NOVEMBER | MELBOURNE

Rydges, 186 Exhibition Street, Melbourne | 5.30pm - 8.30pm

13 NOVEMBER | SYDNEY

The Australian Museum, 1 William St, Darlinghurst | 5.30pm - 8.30pm

Coogee Beach lux

IHG has announced the launch of its latest luxury hotel, with the InterContinental Coogee Beach Sydney, set to open its doors in Dec.

The new property will feature 198 guestrooms and suites, including 22 premium suites with outdoor baths.

Also in the hotel will be the signature restaurant, Shutters Restaurant & Bar.

A second phase in Mar 2026 will see the leisure deck, poolside bar, spa and Club InterContinental open to the public.

The hotel will also feature an ocean-facing infinity edge swimming pool designed to merge seamlessly with the Coogee horizon line.

Blurred lines of luxury provide opportunity

THE definition of luxury is evolving and it's being democratised, according to a panel of senior industry experts speaking at Beyond Borders in Brisbane last week.

Hosted by communications and corporate affairs expert Chris Waite, the panel also included Jack Taylor, Managing Director, Performance Travel; Brad McDonnell, Managing Director, Entire Travel Group; Jo Palmer, Founder & Managing Director, Gate 7; and Accommodation Australia Chief Executive Officer, James Goodwin (**pictured**).

The panel discussed how the evolution of the term 'luxury' was being put under the microscope in front of the sell-out crowd.

"The democratisation of luxury has blurred the lines between premium and everyday



experiences," Waite said.

"I think hotels are probably a really good space where traditionally, you would've had star ratings, but that's sort of gone away, and now we talk about segment matrix... and luxury means something different to everyone."

Goodwin explained that brand revisions were becoming common, where "big companies running different hotels are looking at rebranding to really focus on those different niche markets that people want".

He suggested travellers were still wanting luxury, but also are seeking more personal experiences as well.

Waite added that many brands were focusing on certain segments and therefore concentrating specifically on what the definition of luxury was for that segment.

"Luxury does mean something different to everyone, 'feel good' has maybe replaced 'five star' and 'value from memory' maybe has now overtaken the idea of 'value for money'." *DF*

Lounge around at KTI

PHNOM Penh's new Techo International Airport (KTI) has welcomed the opening of the Plaza Premium First (PPF) and Plaza Premium Lounge (PPL).

PPF interiors include aesthetics inspired by Cambodia's cultural heritage, feature Bill Bensley art, and have capacity for 110.

PPL celebrates the country's art scene in partnership with internationally acclaimed artist Dina Chhan and is able to take in 120 people.

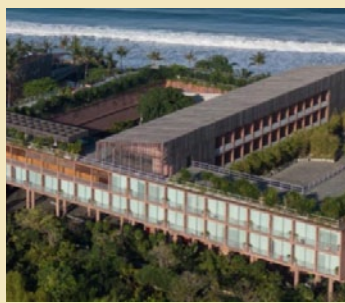
Multiple airlines have partnered with the lounges.

La Collection announces landmark addition that raises sustainability bar

LA COLLECTION, a portfolio of design-led luxury properties, has revealed the addition of Desa Potato Head Bali in Seminyak, Indonesia, to its group of Asia Pacific hotels and resorts.

It said the addition of Desa Potato Head illustrated its commitment to responsible luxury and creative innovation, as well as providing Potato Head with representation in Australia and New Zealand.

The property operates with a near-zero-waste-to-landfill goal,



actively transforming surplus materials into functional art, design objects, and amenities through its on-site Waste Lab. Guests are invited to

participate in its circular ecosystem, with activities including 'Follow the Waste Tour,' sustainable workshops, and farm-to-table dining concepts, including Ijen, SE Asia's first zero-waste restaurant.

"We are incredibly proud to welcome Potato Head into the La Collection family," Craig Farrell, co-founder & Director of Sales at La Collection, said.

"This is more than a beautiful resort; it's a blueprint for the future of hospitality."



PONANT
EXPLORATIONS

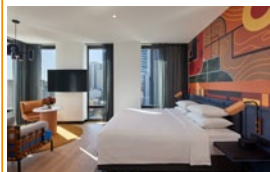
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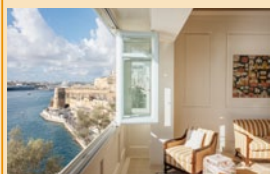
Hyatt Hotels Corporation announced the opening of **Caption by Hyatt Central Sydney**, marking the debut of the innovative Caption by Hyatt brand in Australia and the Pacific. Located in the heart of Haymarket, the 174-room hotel blends community-first hospitality, tech-led convenience, and a locally inspired design. The hotel's centrepiece is Talk Shop, an all-day social hub that features a cafe, bar, co-working space and venue.



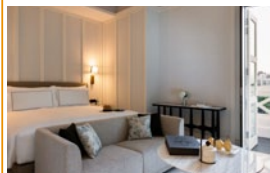
COMO Metropolitan Bangkok has reopened this month after an extensive renovation, resulting in the refresh of its 137 rooms and suites. The new aesthetic blends colourful contemporaneity with local materials, drawing inspiration from Thai masonry and temple walls. Guests can now dine at **COMO Cuisine**, a new restaurant on the second floor, which offers an all-day dining menu developed by Australian chef Daniel Moran.



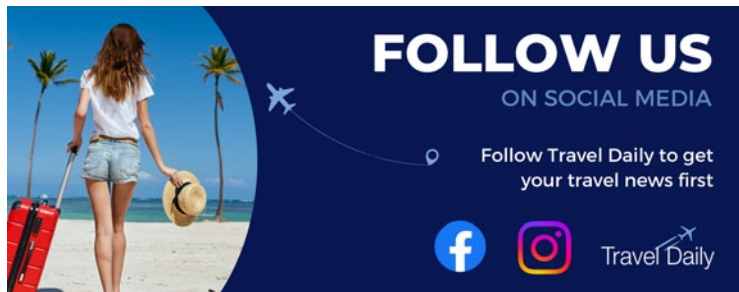
Abercrombie & Kent has announced that **Gorilla Forest Lodge, An A&K Sanctuary**, has officially reopened following a complete rebuild and redesign. Located within the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, the lodge now features 10 spacious suites with floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive decks, large baths, woven banana leaf ceilings, and papyrus thatch roofs that blend into the tree canopy.



Iniala Harbour House in Malta has launched a new townhouse-style accommodation, **La Maison**. Positioned on the St Barbara Bastion overlooking Valletta's Grand Harbour, the three-bedroom, six-floor property features a lobby, living and kitchen area, a front terrace with a barbecue grill, a back terrace with an outdoor shower, and a heated pool, which appears suspended over the harbour.



The Elysee Collective has welcomed the recently opened **METT Singapore** to its portfolio. The heritage-listed property marks the Asia-Pacific flagship for Sunset Hospitality Group, featuring 84 rooms and suites with views across the park and skyline. Guests can enjoy two outdoor pools, pickleball courts, boutique fitness studios, a grand ballroom, and several dining venues.



Intrepid hops onto the field



INTREPID Travel will be front-of-mind for footy fans after the company announced a two-year partnership extension with North Melbourne's AFL and AFLW clubs, also known as the Kangaroos.

The tie-up will see the Intrepid logo splashed across the players' guernseys for the 2026 and 2027 seasons, as the platinum partner of the AFL team and co-major partner of the AFLW side.

As the club's official Membership partner, Intrepid will also offer members exclusive deals on travel packages for trips across Australia and the world.

The extension comes at a historic time for the 'Roos, which recently became the first professional sporting club in Australia to achieve B Corp certification.

Senior leaders from Intrepid gathered alongside the club at the national B Corp conference on the NSW Central Coast on Mon night, when the announcement was made to over 300 businesses.

"We're proud to continue our partnership with the Kangaroos. "Becoming a B Corp takes time, care and a genuine commitment

to doing good - something we share with North Melbourne," said GM Sales & Marketing ANZ, Yvette Thompson.

"We're excited to bring our experience-rich small group adventures to the club's passionate fan base and inspire more North fans to explore the world the Intrepid way." *JM*

NYC icon enhanced

THE Empire State Building has opened a new ticket office for its observatory experience, which recently underwent a US\$165 million refurbishment.

Located next to the observatory entrance, the new centre offers 12 self-service ticket kiosks, a staffed information desk for visitor enquiries, and museum-style imagery of celebrity visitors and views from New York City's top attraction.

Guests can buy tickets up to one hour before the observatory opens, with the experience now featuring an interactive museum with nine galleries, bespoke host uniforms, and a reimagined 102nd floor observatory.



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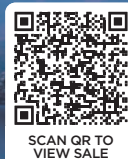
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Spot wildlife on Yala safaris, enjoy a cooking class and high tea in Nuwara Eliya, then unwind with three blissful nights on the Maldives' pristine beaches.



4 & 5-star accommodation, breakfast daily, 16 meals



Enjoy the personalised service of a professional, private guide



3-night stay in the Maldives at a luxury, all-inclusive resort



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TRAVEL IN 2026



FROM ONLY
\$5,807*
PER PERSON, TWIN SHARE
\$99 DEPOSIT OPTION

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AIRFARES
INCLUDED

PRICE INCLUDES 30% SAVING
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30 DAY GRAND AFRICA SMALL GROUP TOUR

Experience Africa's wild beauty—Kruger safaris, Table Mountain, Victoria Falls, Kenya's savannas, Serengeti plains, and Uganda's gorillas. Nature, culture, and adventure unite.



3 to 5-star hotels, lodges, chalets & tented camps, with en-suites



Small group tour, max 12 guests, fully escorted by local guides



Dedicated private transport throughout



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view full itinerary
and inclusions

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FROM ONLY
\$24,147*
PER PERSON, TWIN SHARE
\$99 DEPOSIT OPTION

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AIRFARES
INCLUDED

PRICE INCLUDES 30% SAVING
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19 DAY ULTIMATE AFRICAN SAFARI

Safari through South Africa, Botswana and Zimbabwe, with up close encounters with the Big Five, float along the Okavango Delta and witness the thundering power of Victoria Falls.



3 & 4-star hotels, lodges and safari camps



Small group safari experience, maximum 14 guests



All internal flights and dedicated transport



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and inclusions

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FROM ONLY
\$11,757*
PER PERSON, TWIN SHARE
TYPICALLY \$22,881

PRICE INCLUDES 30% SAVING
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AGENTS WEBINAR FRI 24 OCT 1PM AEDT - REGISTER ON OUR TRAVEL AGENTS HUB

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