



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Business Events News** page, plus a full page from **Luxury Escapes**.

Going out on a Lim

NICK Lim will be moving on from his role as The Travel Corporation's Chief Executive Officer Asia after 25 years.

Lim is a company stalwart, having worked for almost every one of its tour brands over his quarter century with the Apollo-owned firm.

He was hailed by the company as having crafted a legacy which "extends far beyond the results", building strong relationships with trade partners, fostering an entrepreneurial spirit in his teams, and serving as a trusted ambassador for the firm.

Heinrich gets high

EXPERIENCE Co has appointed Mark Heinrich as the General Manager of its Treetops Adventure business.

Heinrich will report directly to Experience Chief Executive Officer John O'Sullivan, and will bring more than 20 years of leadership skills built across a range of different industries.

He will be charged with leading one of Experience's fastest-growing divisions, where he will be responsible for the commercial strategy, as well as overseeing day-to-day business.

Rex future questioned

THERE are still "significant questions" that need to be answered regarding the longer-term details of Rex's recent acquisition by Air T (**TD** 22 Oct), Transport Workers Union (TWU) National Secretary Michael Kaine has warned.

"[There is] little known about Air T's plan for Rex's critical routes... and around the continuation of services long-term," Kaine said.

"The Federal Government must ensure it extracts further commitments from Air T on routes and services," he added.

While commending the Federal Government on keeping Rex going during the administration period, Kaine claimed "regional Australia has been left behind too frequently" in aviation, and that travellers and residents in remote regions now need "certainty" about the future for Rex.

"Air T's long-term plan for Rex must involve growing critical services and investing in the airline, which crucially means good jobs for workers," he said.

The TWU also called for a Safe and Secure Skies Commission to ensure that the "boom-and-bust cycle stops" - especially as consumer trust remains eroded after the collapse of both Rex and Bonza in quick succession.

The TWU has championed the Commission as a way to give a louder voice for aviation workers, passengers and regional Australia in decision-making and oversight.

Meanwhile, Federal Transport



Minister Catherine King this morning assured the travelling public that while Rex will soon be foreign-owned, it will remain an Australian company subject to Australian employment law.

"I'm pleased to hear that [Air T] intends to keep all of the workers and to keep the management team in place," she said.

King also clarified that the formal sign off on the purchase will only happen after a second creditors' meeting. **AB**

QF biz boost offer

QANTAS Business Rewards is offering QF Frequent Flyers (QFFs) double status credits on eligible flights when travelling for work.

The boost will help the carrier's loyalty members rise through the status tiers faster, unlocking travel benefits including access to more than 650 Qantas and partner lounges, as well as priority check-in and boarding and additional baggage allowances.

In order to avail the offer, companies must be a Qantas Business Rewards member.

Once registered for the promotion, all QFFs travelling under the ABN are eligible for double status credits.

Businesses need to register and book eligible flights by 29 Oct.

Win a Vietnam trip

TRAVEL agents can win a spot on Luxury Escapes' upcoming Vietnam fam by being one of the top six sellers between 01 Aug-30 Oct 2025, or through one of two random lucky draws.

See the **back page** to find out more about the nine-day journey.

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UA impact solved?

A UNITED Airlines flight that was forced to divert to Salt Lake City after the plane's windshield was shattered last week may have been struck by a weather balloon.

While the windshield on B737 MAXs are designed to withstand heavy impacts, the incident left the pilots with multiple cuts.

HLO eyes better EBITDA

HELLOWORLD is expecting to post an underlying EBITDA result in the range of \$64-72 million for full-year 2026, according to its AGM presentation.

That figure is up on the FY25 range of \$58-62 million - an improvement made despite a mixed bag of results this year, including gains made across wholesale and inbound, along with declines across Helloworld's agency and ticketing businesses.

Challenging economic conditions, agency closures and transfers, a decline in average airfares, and a shift towards short-haul travel were the primary headwinds noted.

Despite these obstacles, Helloworld said that moving forward it is "well positioned" for sustainable, long-term growth, having secured a strong forward bookings position for the remainder of the 2025 calendar year and well into 2026.

Significant investment in people, technology, and infrastructure will continue to support its long-term growth ambitions.

Highlights of that technology investment include a new agent portal, further refinement of the Helloworld Trips app, as well as partnerships with DataCheck and Genesys that will provide business insights and enhancements to its networks.

Investment in marketing will also continue to grow, with the future strategy to continue a heavy investment across major



metropolitan and regional media outlets throughout Australia and New Zealand.

"These partnerships are essential to drive tactical demand and brand recognition, and to showcase the diverse range of travel products we offer customers," Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes (pictured) said.

While the agency network has experienced some declines, the plan for growth and recovery will continue to be guided by geographical data, targeting key metropolitan areas and expanding its regional reach.

This pathway already includes 15 new stores planned for opening in FY26.

"Throughout FY25, we have continued to invest in empowering our agents with innovative tools and technologies, ensuring they remain competitive, efficient, and well-supported," Burnes added.

"We remain committed to agency succession planning, with future ownership pathways and training programs in place to support the next generation of business leaders." AB

Cathay's SAF deal

THE Cathay Group has undertaken a joint investment with Airbus that will inject up to US\$70 million to accelerate the development of SAF production.

Projects will now be chosen based on commercial viability, technological maturity, and potential for long-term offtake.

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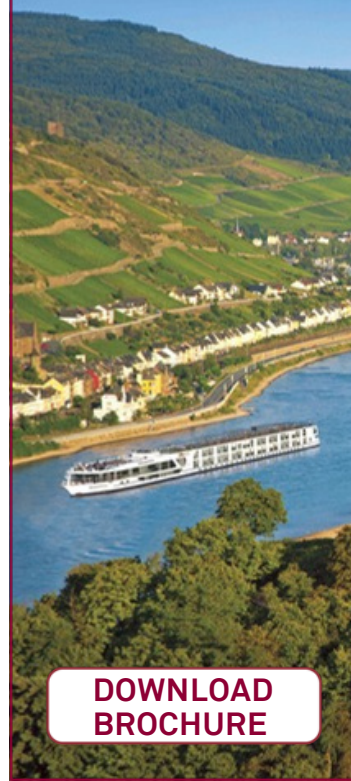


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Intrepid invests in Chile

INTREPID Travel has launched a new destination management company (DMC) in Chile in a bid to capitalise on strong bookings growth in Latin America.

Located in Santiago, the new DMC will manage the Aussie company's operations in Chile, Argentina, Brazil, and Uruguay - all strong growth markets for Intrepid over the last 12 months.

Bookings in South America are up 20% year-on-year, and are 32% higher for 2026 departures across Chile, Argentina and Brazil.

"This is a key milestone on our journey to becoming tour operator of choice across Latin America by 2030," said Gary Cohen, Intrepid's Regional General Manager, Americas.

"With a stronger local presence, we can scale responsibly and deliver even richer, more meaningful experiences in one of our most strategically important destinations, Chile, a world-class



hub for adventure travel and gateway to Patagonia."

Intrepid clarified that despite the new push in Chile, Peru remains the cornerstone of its Latin American portfolio, which has operated directly in the country for close to 20 years.

The latest development is just one pillar of Intrepid's international expansion strategy, which includes heavy investment and boots on the ground in North America, as well as acquisitions in New Zealand (**TD** 06 Aug) and a soon-to-open DMC office in Uzbekistan (**TD** 15 Aug). **AB**

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LH to slash domestic

GERMAN carrier Lufthansa has threatened to cut as many as 100 weekly domestic flights from mid 2026 in the face of rising airport fees, local media reports suggest.

Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr (**pictured**) said that the company's expenses had doubled since 2019, prompting the airline to likely cancel a large amount of domestic flights a week during the next northern summer.

He also warned that further reductions would be inevitable if local costs were not brought under control.

The comments follow a sluggish performance for domestic routes in Germany more broadly, exacerbated by a lack of business travel, which has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels.



AI trip planning

COVER-MORE Travel Insurance has launched a new AI-powered itinerary planner within its travel app, offering users a range of new trip suggestions to deepen their travel experience.

The app has tailored options to suit the needs of solo travellers, couples, friends and families, which Cover-More argues will help travellers plan more experiences before departure.

"Travel isn't just about the days you are away, it is also about the anticipation and inspiration that happen before you go," Chief Sales Officer Todd Nelson said.

The new option joins existing features such as destination information and travel discounts, while policyholders also receive real-time risk alerts and access to Cover-More's 24/7 emergency assistance team.

An insurance policy isn't required to use the app, but users can use it to directly obtain a quote or purchase a policy.

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Viking's big welcome

VIKING welcomed nine new river ships during a mammoth christening ceremony in Basel yesterday, which also saw the brand mark a major milestone of 100 vessels in the fleet.

The line-up included *Viking Annar*, *Viking Dagur*, *Viking Eldir*, and *Viking Honir* - all of which will sail the itineraries along the Rhine, Main, and Danube rivers.

Meanwhile, *Viking Nerthus*, *Viking Gyda*, and *Viking Tonle* will sail the Seine, Douro and Mekong, while *Viking Thoth* and *Viking Amun* will offer voyages on the Nile.

"We have grown from four ships to more than 100...and we have done so because of our innovative approach," Viking CEO Torstein Hagen said.



Flights tardy last month

LAST month's on-time arrivals and departures figure was lower than the long-term average for all routes in Australia, the Bureau of Infrastructure Transport & Research Economics reported.

Just under 80% of flights arrived on time (78.9%) for the month, while a similar percentage departed on time (79.9%), with both missing the long-term mark of 80.6% and 81.7% respectively.

However, Sep's on-time arrival and departure rates were better than the equivalent period last year, which were 75.5% and 76.1% respectively.

The rate of cancellations was lower than the long-term average of 2.2% as well, with only 2% of services canned for the month - the same figure at which flights were abandoned in Sep 2024.

The Qantas network, comprised of Qantas Airways and QantasLink, recorded 79.8% for on-time arrivals, beating out the



Virgin Australia network (Virgin Australia and Virgin Regional Airlines), which recorded 76.9%.

However, it was Cairns-based rural airline Hinterland Aviation that topped all carriers for the month, with 90.8% of its flights arriving on time for Sep.

Hinterland beat out QantasLink at 80.7% and fellow Cairns-based airline SmartLynx at 79.6%.

The Qantas network also topped Virgin for on-time departures, at 81.1% versus 78%.

Hinterland triumphed over its larger contemporaries in this metric also, with 94.1% of its flights departing on time. *MS*

Avia eyes APAC

DUBLIN-BASED Avia Solutions Group has revealed plans to consolidate its European Air Operators Certificates so it can focus on growth markets like the Asia-Pacific region.

The aircraft, crew, maintenance, and insurance provider made itself known locally when it purchased Aussie carrier Skytrans in 2024 (**TD** 30 Jan 2024).

Earlier this year, the Irish aviation player decided to retire the Skytrans branding in exchange for SmartLynx Australia (**TD** 29 Jul), part of a broader plan to grow and diversify its new Australian asset.

As part of its consolidation plan in Europe, Avia Solutions sold SmartLynx Latvia and plans to merge the SmartLynx Estonia and SmartLynx Malta AOCs and rebrand them.

By the end of 2025, Avia Solutions Group will establish AOCs in Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand.



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Aussies playing with fire

ONE in seven Australians went on their most recent overseas trip without any travel insurance coverage, according to new research commissioned by the Insurance Council of Australia.

The risky behaviour was most common among younger Aussies, with 23% of under-30s uninsured when they last left the country.

Director of Carter Capner Law, Peter Carter, said the research highlights the foolishness of many travellers, who are putting their lives and livelihoods at risk.

"This is high risk, particularly given they're more likely to embark on activities with elevated threats to safety," he said.

"All overseas travellers, regardless of their destination, should travel with insurance, and we've seen multiple examples of Australians injured overseas over the past few years, with some not able to immediately return."

Travellers who do not take



out insurance risk financial loss arising from a medical incident or from being denied entry to their destination, the compensation lawyer pointed out.

"The risk of exorbitant medical fees is ever-present for uninsured travellers but they also need to factor in financial losses associated with having to cancel reservations and re-route air travel."

Some countries will soon demand proof of insurance as a condition of entry, Carter said, with the EU currently trialling a new Entry Exit System that in some cases includes requesting evidence of cover (**TD** 14 Aug). *JM*



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Sabre to fight BA

SABRE has filed a lawsuit in the United States against British Airways, alleging the carrier has failed to reimburse a tax payment related to the United Kingdom's Digital Services Tax.

The travel technology company is seeking US\$450,000 in damages, claiming the payment falls under a reimbursement clause in a commercial agreement signed between the two companies in 1991.

The crux of the dispute is focused on whether the UK's Digital Services Tax qualifies as a 'tax' on the legal sense of the word, defined under the terms of the companies' agreement.



Window Seat

A SKYWEST Airlines plane taking off from Omaha to Los Angeles was forced to make an emergency landing on Tue, after pilots lost contact with flight attendants due to an unfortunate malfunction in the interphone system.

Matters were further complicated when crew began banging on the cockpit door as they could not communicate with the pilots, who then mistakenly thought that someone was trying to breach the cockpit - and declared a return to Omaha, less than 20 minutes into the journey.

Thankfully, SkyWest Flight 6569 eventually headed to its destination five hours later and the mystery of the banging door was solved after landing.

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ABEA, SITE tie-up

THE Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) has partnered with the Society for Incentive Travel Excellence (SITE) Australia and New Zealand Chapter to advance research, advocacy and the development of young leaders.

The new three-year Memorandum of Understanding will see the two organisations collaborate on research - in particular lifting ANZ participation in the annual Incentive Travel Index - as well as develop education programs, webinars and conference content.

The duo will also engage with Tourism Australia, promote each other's initiatives, and enhance sector visibility through combined communications.

Elevate in Auckland

VOCO Auckland City Centre has launched a new 'Elevate Your Experience' offer, which allows event organisers to upgrade their corporate gatherings.

Planners can choose from three amenities for just \$35 per person, including Sky Tower or harbour views with a fresh fruit bowl on arrival, barista-made coffee and bliss balls, a wellness package, or a lunch beverage package.

Voco Auckland's level 38 offers several spaces for meetings and events, with access to the rooftop bar - find out more **HERE**.

SPOTIFY SPOTLIGHTS SYD VENUES

LIVE music venues in Sydney will enjoy an international boost, thanks to a new partnership between the NSW Government and global music streaming service, Spotify.

Sydney will join New York, London and Paris as one of the first cities in the world to benefit from Spotify's new Venue Pages feature, which launched this week across nine countries.

The dedicated Venue Pages allow users to search for venues, follow their favourites, save them to their libraries, and access their gig guides and new announcements.

There will also be a live events feed updated daily, delivering show recommendations based on user location, listening habits, and venues followed, plus direct links from Spotify venue listings to official ticketing partners.



Additionally, Spotify will run an on-platform marketing campaign and education sessions for NSW venues in upcoming weeks.

The collaboration with the world-famous streaming service is part of a wider effort by the NSW Government to support the live music industry as it faces challenges from cost increases, changing audience habits, and an increase in local audiences streaming overseas artists.

"We applaud Spotify for

bringing Venue Pages to Australia and expect it to drive more local listeners to local gigs, which is great news," said Minister for Music and the Night-time Economy, John Graham.

"We've been working with Spotify, discussing ways they can use their immense global power to boost our local music scene.

"Streaming has sometimes hurt the local music scene, but this is a turning point where Spotify is increasing its support for it." JM

Unique venue takes shape in Sydney

SYDNEY'S newest world-class venue, The Cutaway at Barangaroo, has reached a major construction milestone.

The first of 13 sculptural timber elements have now been installed, marking 85% completion of the project and offering a first look at the below-ground concrete and sandstone space.

Set to become Sydney's premier venue for events, exhibitions, festivals and installations, the Cutaway will



feature two versatile levels with flexible spaces, a grand main hall, improved natural light and acoustic performance, as well as a kitchen, green room and back-of-house facilities to support premium events.

Microhire expands

MICROHIRE has announced the expansion of its Integration Division, which now delivers AV design and consultation, integration, and managed services across the hospitality and events sectors.

The expanded capabilities are complemented by Microhire's refreshed brand identity and new-look website, which features a bold, user-friendly design and dynamic content - check it out **HERE**.



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Sofitel Hotels & Resorts has appointed **Mark Burns** as the new General Manager of its Sofitel Sydney Wentworth. The experienced hotelier brings more than 30 years of international hospitality leadership, spanning a number of continents and a range of renowned luxury brands, such as The Fullerton, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group, and Dorchester Collection.

Global air charter specialist **Chapman Freeborn** has appointed **Saska Gerasimova** as its new Group CEO. She commenced her role earlier this week, taking over responsibilities from Eric Erbacher, who graduated to the company's Chair role. Gerasimova joins Chapman Freeborn from Amazon Air Europe, where she was Senior Supply Chain Manager.

Las Vegas Convention & Visitors Authority (LVCVA) will welcome **Dan Hayes** as Chief Operating Officer. He will lead operations, expansion, and renovation initiatives at the LVCVA, once he starts on 03 Nov. Hayes brings more than 25 years of leadership experience in the sector, having most recently worked at venue management company ASM Global.

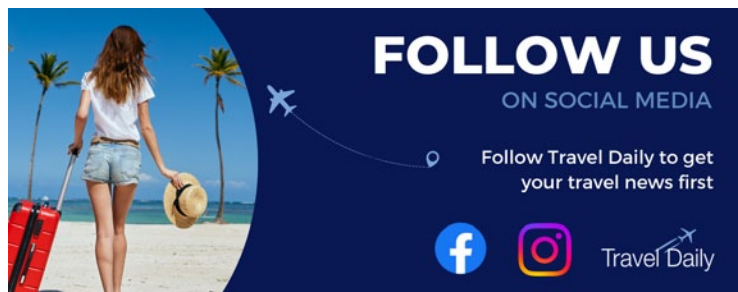
The Walshe Group has appointed **Alvaro Rodas Fernandez** as Chief Commercial Officer, amid the expansion of the airline GSA's executive team. Rodas Fernandez will be responsible for driving the next phase of The Walshe Group's new strategic direction, bringing with him experience in the travel industry and in sustainability, delivering strategy, growth, commercial outcomes and partnerships.

Anirban Dasgupta has been appointed by **Pullman Hotels & Resorts** to be the new Director of Food & Beverage at Pullman & Mercure Brisbane King George Square. He brings almost 20 years of experience in the field, with Dasgupta saying his vision is to craft dining experiences that feel "vibrant, memorable, and distinctly connected to Brisbane". Dasgupta will now commence reimagining the hotel's F&B approach.

Khaled El Sharbatly has been appointed Director of Guest Engagement at hotel developer **The First Group Hospitality**. He is an experienced business leader with more than 25 years in customer engagement, sales, reservations, and front office roles with leading hotel brands across the Middle East and Africa. El Sharbatly joins The First Group after 15 years with Marriott International, where he held multiple leadership positions.

Erik Hansen has been appointed Senior Vice President Head of Government Relations at the **US Travel Association (USTA)**. He will lead the Association's advocacy strategy and engagement with policymakers on issues critical to strengthening and growing the American travel industry, at a time when it is encountering a range of sentiment hurdles.

Rob Bevegni has been appointed Vice President of Investor Relations at **Expedia Group**, which will see him enhance how the company communicates its financial story to the investment community.



Palau wraps Aussie mission



THE Palau Visitors Authority (PVA) has completed a whirlwind Australian sales mission, which saw trade and travel advisors deepen their knowledge of the island destination.

Representatives from PVA and leading Palauan hotels and experience providers visited four cities over five action-packed days, engaging with the travel trade in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne, and Sydney.

The delegation met with key advisors and wholesalers, including Lux Voyages, Ignite Travel Group, Luxury Escapes, and Entire Travel Group.

A highlight was the 'Sip and Learn' advisor training event hosted with Room-Res, which treated attendees to premium drinks and canapes, as they learned about Palau's appeal beyond its dive sites, including cultural experiences, and the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Rock Islands.

Two lucky advisors took home prizes, including eight nights at luxury resort, Palau Sunrise Sea View Landison Retreat, and two

nights at the Palau Pacific Resort.

PVA Director Kadoi Ruluked said the sales mission was a fantastic opportunity to connect face-to-face with the industry and continue Palau's momentum in the Australian market, following Qantas Airways introducing flights to the destination from Brisbane last year (**TD** 04 Feb).

Australia is currently Palau's fastest-growing market, with arrivals more than doubling between Jan and Aug, representing a 127% increase in visitation compared to 2024.

"Australia remains a key market for Palau, with awareness, interest, and bookings from both trade and consumers continuing to build," he said.

Qantas is currently offering a limited-time self-famil fare, with 20% off base rates, which can be requested until 20 Jan. **MS**

Pictured are Geena Gerald (PVA), Karen Dilay (Pacific Resort), Kadoi Ruluked (PVA), Kellie Smith (Room-Res), Leah Gillham (PVA), Nikki Chen (Sunrise Sea View Landison Retreat), Anne Lee (GTI) and Caroline Potts (GTI).

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