



## Cruise into a bonus

**INSPIRING** Vacations has teamed up with Celestyal to offer an exciting new booking incentive for travel agents.

Advisors will get a \$100 gift card per cabin booked before 31 Oct on Greece itineraries featuring a Celestyal cruise - details on **p9**.

## Are regional airfares fair?

**THE** Federal Government has released the terms of reference for the Productivity Commission Inquiry into regional airfares.

The inquiry will look into all cost factors - including competition, pricing practices and whether profits along the supply chain are fair - to build a clearer picture of how operating costs affect regional connectivity.

"Regional Australians deserve reliable air services at reasonable prices and that's what this review is about," the Federal Government said.

Australian Airports Association CEO Simon Westaway added: "this review offers a timely

opportunity to better understand the mechanics of regional air travel and the key cost drivers behind it."

The inquiry will also look at airport charges, Westaway said.

"Airports have consistently demonstrated a willingness to work with both new entrants and established airlines to improve choice and connectivity.

"[This] inquiry should consider connectivity outcomes alongside fare levels, reflecting the real needs of regional Australians."

The airfare review is a response to the Aviation White Paper, which found the average ticket price per kilometre was 52% higher for flights involving regional airports than for flights between two capital cities.

Questions around high regional airfares arrive as Rex looks set to restore itself as a full player after being bought by Air T (**TD** 21 Oct).

A final report will likely be tabled in mid-2027. *JM*

## Earlybird cruise perks

**SCENIC** is highlighting its 2026 Europe ultra-luxury cruising collection, with a super earlybird deal currently up for grabs.

The offer is available until 07 Nov and includes economy flights or a business class air credit - see the **back page** for more info.

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

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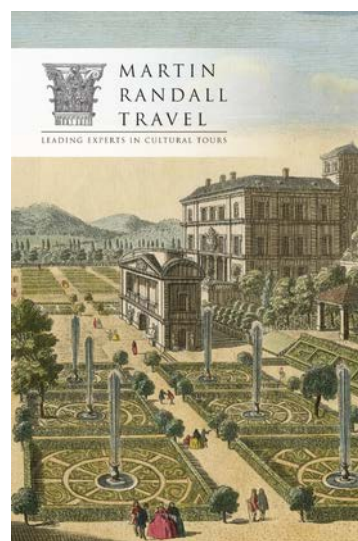
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## Growth not an issue: Scurrah

### EXCLUSIVE

**INCOMING** Fiji Airways CEO Paul Scurrah (**TD** 28 Oct) has rebuffed suggestions there is limited room for growth in the Australian market.

Responding to recent comments made by outgoing CEO Andre Viljoen that there are few growth prospects in Australia, Scurrah pointed to rising demand for North America via Fiji as an important platform to build bookings in Australia.

"The product to North America offered by Fiji Airways is so good, and it's important to remember that Virgin Australia had a big chunk of that and is no longer a player, so we feel there's a ready-made pool of customers looking for an alternative to North America that we can deliver on.

"International aviation in the APAC region is also slated to grow to 5% plus a year for the next 30 years - that's incredible growth.



"I think the challenge for any company in our region is really getting enough aircraft to service that demand," Scurrah added.

When asked if recent softness in the US market was a concern, the carrier's new chief said he did not foresee that drag impacting FJ.

"This is where Fiji Airways' business class product is so important because it attracts more corporate traffic and we are seeing a very resilient amount of business still happening between the US and the rest of the world.

"Things are settling [in the US] and I don't see that softness impacting us," he added.

Scurrah also pointed to Fiji's growing appeal as an alternative to places like Bali as a strong growth factor in Australia. **AB**

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## Carnival in Adelaide

**CARNIVAL** Cruise Line (CCL) will homeport in Adelaide for the first time in 2027-28, becoming the fourth Australian base for the major cruise brand.

CCL's *Carnival Adventure* will sail four voyages from the South Australian capital over Feb and Mar 2028, including three round trips and one ending in Sydney.

With itineraries spanning from three to five days, the cruises will feature destinations such as Kangaroo Island and Port Lincoln, with bookings now open.

The 2027-28 program will also see *Adventure* homeport in Auckland, marking the cruise line's inaugural season in the New Zealand city, as well as Sydney and - after returning from dry dock in Mar 2027 - Melbourne.

Meanwhile, *Carnival Splendor* will continue to home port year-round in Sydney, with *Carnival Encounter* to be based in Brisbane, being joined by *Carnival Luminosa* in the summer.

## Vietnam disruptions

**TRAVELLERS** visiting Central Vietnam, including Hue City and Hoi An, are being advised by DFAT to be wary of possible disruptions due to major flooding and power outages, following heavy rainfall in the region.

Tourists were evacuated by boat from Hoi An yesterday and relocated to other hotels after the Hoai River rose by two metres.

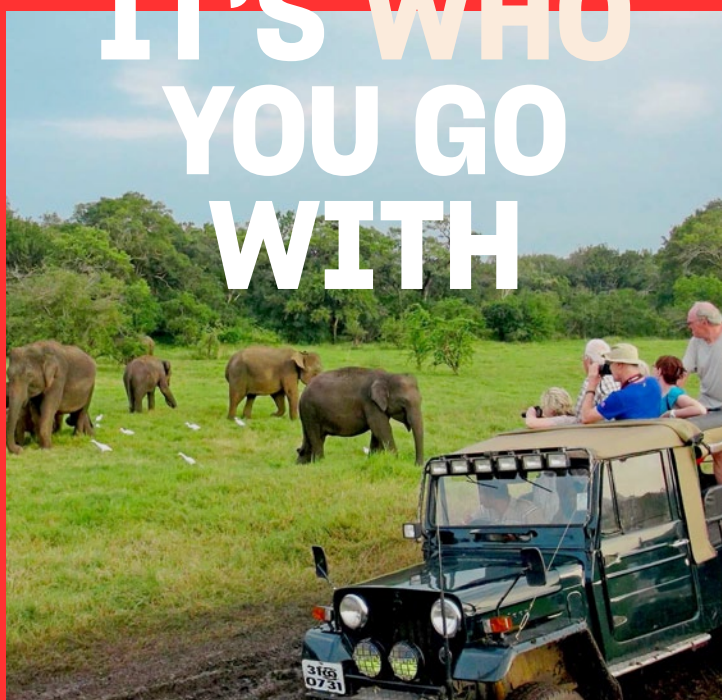
## Europe in the Club

**ROYAL** Caribbean Group has announced it will bring its Royal Beach Club concept to Europe, with Royal Beach Club Santorini set to open in summer 2026.

Set against the backdrop of the Greek island's volcanic beaches, the club will welcome pax from Royal Caribbean International and Celebrity Cruises as part of an 'Ultimate Santorini Day'.

Meanwhile, the first Royal Beach Club will launch in The Bahamas this Dec.

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## Evolving with niche

**EVOLUTION** Travel Collective (ETC) has launched a new service catering to a growing demand for niche travel, offering a more strategic account management solution called National Account Manager (NAM).

After consulting with its agency network partners and identifying a “growing gap in the market”, ETC said the new service is tailored to suit multiple specialist businesses seeking to engage with trade partners.

“Our agency partners told us time and again, ‘we have more than one niche brand that needs the representation and servicing of an account manager but isn’t big enough to utilise your full multi-state BDM team’,” ETC Managing Director (**pictured**) Ingrid Berthelsen said.



“We saw no one else in our space within the market delivering exactly that, so we built it,” she concluded.

The first appointment under the new model is Peter Topping, who has joined ETC as National Account Manager.

He has already started work with the debut NAM client, Vio Travel, the online DMC specialising in bespoke Asia-focused travel experiences.

ETC said that Vio Travel will benefit from a singular point of contact for all trade-engagement, strategy, and performance reporting, enabling deeper collaboration with ETC’s management team. **AB**

## Melissa makes impact

**MULTIPLE** cruise lines have altered itineraries to avoid the path of Hurricane Melissa in the Caribbean, while Jamaica’s main airports have also restricted traffic to prioritise safety.

Around 25,000 tourists have been forced to hunker down as the now category four tropical storm as it thunders its way through the region, with local reports suggesting a third of Jamaicans are without power.

ABC meteorologist Nate Byrne said it may be “quite some time” before we understand the full extend of the damage caused.

## Vietnam super cheap

**VIETJET** has launched a three-day super sale that offers airfares to Vietnam from \$199.

Available from today through to 31 Oct, the promotion is valid for travel from 10 Dec 2025 to 27 May 2026 - find out more **HERE**.



## A warm goodbye for Anil



**WELL-KNOWN** aviation executive Anil Rodricks recently completed a double-header of farewell events in Sydney and Melbourne, where he was honoured for his important contributions to the industry.

Completing a more-than two-decade run at Lufthansa with The Walshe Group at the end of the month, Rodricks helped to steer the flagship brand locally, as well as subsidiaries such as Swiss International, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines and Eurowings.

Rodricks was joined by former and current colleagues, as well as close friends, to mark his professional achievement before he leaves to pursue new interests.

Reflecting on his time at Lufthansa, Rodricks told **Travel Daily** he was honoured to have colleagues from his earliest days in Australia join his farewell.

“This was more than a career

for me and it will always be connected with our move to Australia in 2000,” he said.

When his departure was first announced in Jun (**TD 11 Jun**), The Walshe Group Managing Director Jacquie Walshe praised Rodricks’ leadership, dedication and professionalism.

“His deep knowledge of the aviation landscape, commitment to excellence, and long-standing relationships have made a lasting impact on our business, our partners, and the wider travel industry in Australia,” she commented at the time.

Nigel Bale has been appointed by The Walshe Group as its new General Manager Australia and New Zealand to manage the Lufthansa Group (**TD 12 Aug**).

Rodricks is **pictured** with his long-time collaborator Jacquie Walshe at the recent farewell event in Sydney. **AB**

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**Kuala Lumpur**

Today's issue of TD is coming to you from Kuala Lumpur, where we are sailing with Princess Cruises.

OUR next port of call during our five-day Malaysia cruise is KL, where guests will choose from a number of shore excursions, including the Batu Caves, National Museum or Lake Gardens, or checking out the Petronas Twin Towers and Kuala Lumpur Tower, before wandering the famous Merdeka Square.

When we are back on board *Discovery Princess* tonight, we will have dinner at Crown Grill, then watch *Viva La Musica* at the Princess Theatre, a new show for Australia.

## Uniworld grows by four

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises has announced its largest-ever fleet expansion, unveiling four new ships and six fresh itineraries launching in 2027.

The new vessels include three Super Ship builds - *SS Audrey*, *SS Marlene* and *SS Sao Rafael* on Portugal's Douro River - as well as exclusive sailings on *Aqua Blu*, marking the brand's debut in Singapore and Indonesia.

Paying homage to silver screen icons Audrey Hepburn and Marlene Dietrich, *SS Audrey* and *SS Marlene* (render pictured) will join the fleet in 2027, offering European river sailings.

The two vessels will feature similar layouts to sister ship *SS Emilie*, which debuts next year (TD 14 Mar 2024).

Joining them is *SS Sao Rafael*, a brother ship to *SS Sao Gabriel*, expanding Uniworld's popular Douro River voyages in Portugal.

The final addition to the fleet



is *Aqua Blu*, an expedition yacht operated in partnership with Aqua Expeditions, which will offer two sailings per year offering rare access to the islands of Indonesia and Singapore.

In 2027, Uniworld will also launch six new itineraries across Europe and Asia, including a 13-night journey that pairs three nights in Bali with a seven-night expedition cruise aboard *Aqua Blu*, followed by a three-night luxury stay in Singapore.

"These additions mark an exciting chapter of growth and continued elevation for Uniworld," said President and CEO, Ellen Bettridge. JM

## Crowne Plaza Parra

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the signing of a new Sydney property - Crowne Plaza Parramatta, set to open in 2029.

The 217-room hotel will be situated in the centre of a new landmark mixed-use development directly opposite Parramatta Train Station, which is connected to Westfield Parramatta.

Travellers staying at the hotel will also be close to the new Powerhouse Parramatta Museum and the expanded Riverside Theatre precinct.

Crowne Plaza Parramatta will feature several dining options, including an all-day restaurant and intimate lobby bar, as well as flexible meeting and event spaces and a rooftop infinity pool with an outdoor terrace.



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## No easy run for sponsors

**THE** Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has been “on a mission” to overcome scepticism about how a company’s sponsorship of the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) might influence the results.

In her latest column penned for *Travel Daily* (TD 28 Oct), ATIA’s National Manager Events and Corporate Partnerships, Jenny Le (pictured), said while the event’s sponsors certainly help cover the cost of running the NTIAs, it has no bearing whatsoever on who is declared a finalist or winner.

“The two [aspects of the NTIAs] operate independently of each other,” Le explained.

“The NTIAs judging process has been built on merit, ensuring that every winner is determined based on their outstanding conduct.”

Responding to some of the feedback from the NTIAs in Brisbane, Le stressed there is “no easy run” for anyone in this



process - including the sponsors.

“The integrity of the awards is not worth compromising and, hand on my heart, I can promise you that we have, and will, continue to invest the time and resources in the independence of the process to ensure this.

“Yes, I am best buddies with our NTIAs sponsors - that is because they are amazing to work with - but if they decide to enter an award, it is still their responsibility to secure a nomination and go through the judging process like everyone else.”

A sold-out crowd at The Star Brisbane celebrated the NTIAs this year - read more [HERE](#). AB

## Coral cruise death

**THE** Australian Maritime Safety Authority is expected to speak with the crew of *Coral Adventurer* when she docks in Darwin soon after a guest was found dead on Lizard Island on Sun.

An 80-year-old Australian woman’s body was recovered by a search crew, a day after she became separated from a Coral Expeditions hiking group.

Staff aboard the cruise ship reportedly only noticed the elderly guest was missing after setting sail from Lizard Island.

In a statement, Coral Expeditions CEO Mark Fifield expressed condolences for the woman’s family.

“The Coral team have been in contact with the woman’s family, and we will continue to offer support to them through this difficult process,” he said.

“We are working closely with Qld Police...and we are unable to comment further while this process is underway.”

## ADL-CHC takes off

**AIR** New Zealand has launched its first-ever Christchurch-Adelaide service, a new milestone in its trans-Tasman network.

The inaugural flight - first flagged in Jun (TD 04 Jun) - departed CHC this week, with the seasonal service to operate twice weekly on Mon and Fri through to 27 Mar 2026, providing around 15,000 seats across the season.

## SK capacity issues

**AROUND** 700 global leaders attending the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in South Korea over the next several days will stay in a cruise ship docked around an hour away from the conference venue.

The less-than-ideal arrangement is due to an accommodation shortage in host city Gyeongju, which only offers around 12,800 hotel rooms within 10km of the venue, and is already at capacity due to being peak tourist season.

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## Perusing around Peru



**SOUTH** American specialist Contours Travel recently hosted nine lucky advisors on a deluxe Peruvian famil travelling throughout the country.

Guests visited Lima, the Sacred Valley, Machu Picchu, Cuzco, Lake Titicaca, and Arequipa on the famil, which was hosted by Contours co-Director Ines Vivot.

Highlights of the trip also included overnight stays at the new luxury camps Tinajani and Puquio, and a night suspended high above the Sacred Valley at the Starlodge Adventure Suites.

Guests sampled local Peruvian cuisine and drinks throughout the trip, with agents enjoying a private cocktail class in Lima, a surprise luxury outdoor picnic, and the Pachamama ritual in the Sacred Valley.

The Classic Peru famil was in

celebration of Contours Travel's 50th birthday celebrations this year, and was supported by PromPeru, the country's official trade commission in Australia.

While the South American destination is currently under a 30-day state of emergency enacted last week (**TD** 24 Oct), it proved no barrier to agents on the Contours trip. **MS**

**Pictured** at Machu Picchu are Stewart Evans, Travel Associates Mosman; Linda Bottrell, South Perth Travel; Penni Mason, Bayview Travel; Jacqui Nolan, New England Travel & Cruise; Sue Ritter, Waverley Professional Travel; Khush Suntok, Globetrotter Travel; Cathy Moir, TravelManagers; Emma Komadina, Travel Associates Geelong; and Lisa Caldwell, Spencer Travel.

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## Azamara extends Oz

**AZAMARA** Cruises has unveiled its 2027-28 program, with the line set to make waves in Australia by arriving earlier and staying longer than ever.

The extended Aussie season will sail on more than 20 itineraries featuring a number of new ports, including two new destinations: K'gari and Gladstone.

Highlights will include *Azamara Pursuit* staying for two nights in Hobart over New Year's Eve, as guests celebrate Tasmania's Taste of Summer Festival, and Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race festivities.

Passengers can also look forward to the cruise line's return to Brisbane, as well as *Azamara Onward* visiting local shores in early 2028.

Director of Sales Victoria Chigwidden said the news is a testament to Azamara's strong regional partnerships and growing presence, as the cruise line emphasises its genuine commitment to Australia.



## Window Seat

**SOME** may think it tasteless to celebrate another's moment of weakness, but equipment company Boecker has taken no pause, after one of its furniture lifts was used in the recent Louvre robbery.

The German company is in fact basking in the publicity it has receiving following the daring robbery, which saw thieves quietly break into France's national art museum and steal priceless artefacts.

Boecker posted a picture of the mounted truck outside the Louvre on social media with the caption: "When you need to get going again quickly", and also described its machine as "quiet as a whisper".

However, the company was very quick to point out it had no hand in the theft.

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## Mandarin golf resort

**MANDARIN** Oriental is to open its first golf resort and residences in Dubai, becoming the Group's third property in the city.

Set to open in 2030, the resort will be uniquely positioned within the prestigious Jumeirah Golf Estates, the Next Chapter.

With 121 spacious rooms and suites, and 97 branded residences ranging from three- to six-bedroom villas, the resort is not only for golfers - a highlight will be The Spa at Mandarin Oriental, presenting an extensive range of the Group's signature wellness, beauty and massage treatments in immersive facilities set amid natural surrounds.

## LUXURY SALES ON HEALTHY TRAJECTORY

**FUTURE** luxury leisure sales are projected to increase by 24% percent over the next two years, while high-value bookings of US\$50,000 or more are expected to rise by an impressive 36%, Virtuoso's Executive VP of Strategic Communications David Kolner revealed at a recent Chairman's event in Los Cabos.

Additionally, the year-to-date sales for Virtuoso's Jan-Sep period showed a 13% year-over-year increase, which Kolner said underscored the continued momentum across the network.

The senior Virtuoso executive also discussed insights from the luxury network's recent reporting, highlighting the fact that 67% of its advisors anticipate a slight to significant increase in travel demand for 2026.

Meanwhile, Virtuoso Chairman



and CEO Matthew Upchurch also addressed Virtuoso's highest-performing travel agency members at the event, reminding them of the network's power.

"The World Travel & Tourism Council predicts the travel and tourism industry will contribute an all-time high of US\$11.7 trillion to the global economy, with international visitor spend reaching a record US\$2.1 trillion - you are the engine behind that," Upchurch enthused.

"I couldn't be prouder of what you accomplish day in and day out and this event is intended to celebrate you, and to thank you for your dedication to your clients, to Virtuoso and to the wider industry we are all part of."

This year's Chairman's Event took place at the all-inclusive luxury retreat, Grand Velas Los Cabos, which saluted 133 agency owners and managers from nine regions around the world. **AB**

**Pictured:** Upchurch on stage.

## Mega wellness funding

**RED** Sea Global (RSG) has secured A\$2.6 billion in funding for the development of Amaala, its tourism megaproject in Saudi Arabia (**TD** 14 Jun 2023).

The loan agreement sees RSG partner with Riyad Bank for the second time, after the developer secured the first-ever Riyal denominated green finance credit facility for The Red Sea destination in 2021.

Since then, it has built and opened nine hotels at The Red Sea destination as well as supporting infrastructure.

## Honey, it's time to enjoy our un-honeymoon

**CRYSTALBROOK** Collection has launched Un-Honeymoon, a new travel experience for couples that want the romance without the wedding.

The new offering "flips classic honeymoon indulgences on their head", as marriage rates in Australia hit a 20-year low.

Guests will enjoy Champagne minibars instead of wedding cakes, after-dark dessert deliveries, in-room 'Un-Honeymoon favours' to spark connection, and an Un-Registry,



a gifting platform where loved ones can chip in for indulgent upgrades like spa treatments or caviar pairings.

The unique experience is available across Crystalbrook's luxury properties around the country until Mar 2026.

## W Hoboken renewed

**W HOTELS** has announced the reopening of W Hoboken in New York following a complete transformation of the luxury waterfront hotel.

The 223 guest rooms and suites have been fully refreshed with a modern maritime-inspired aesthetic.

Additionally, the main lobby area and signature bar/lounge have been re-designed for better flow, and public spaces throughout the hotel have been revitalised.

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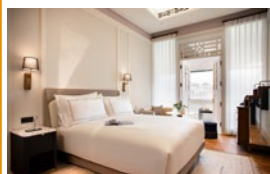
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**METT Singapore** officially opened its doors this week, marking the debut of the METT Hotels & Resorts brand in Asia under Sunset Hospitality Group (SHG). Set within Fort Canning Park, the new five-star property features 84 rooms and suites, two outdoor

pools, four premium dining concepts and a focus on next-generation wellness through The Longevity Suite and Madison House, a private members' club launching soon.



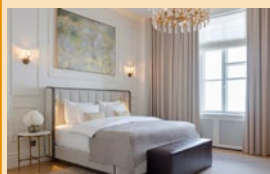
In an effort to bolster its MICE credentials, **The Grace Hotel Sydney** has unveiled the refurbishment of its conference and events spaces, encompassing a full redesign of 10 meeting rooms across two dedicated floors. The makeover delivers flexible room

layouts, upgraded audio-visual infrastructure in partnership with Microhire, and modern breakout and pre-function areas, with a design that pays homage to the hotel's 1930s Art Deco heritage.



**Pullman & Mercure Melbourne Albert Park** has relaunched its Windows Restaurant with a new menu that highlights seasonal ingredients found throughout Victoria and is rooted in sustainability practices. There is also a dessert selection

featuring elaborate dishes like the Dark Sphere - a chocolate sphere covered with coconut mousse, passion fruit and mango, served with strawberry coulis and dark chocolate crumble.



Hilton has announced the Nordic debut of its Waldorf Astoria brand with the opening of a 116-key hotel in Helsinki, Finland. Located across four historic buildings in the Kruununka neighborhood, **Waldorf Astoria Helsinki** offers 32 suites, some of

which feature in-room saunas and private terraces with hot tubs. Guests can enjoy cocktails and light bites at the signature Peacock Bar.



This festive season, **AYANA Bali** and **AYANA Komodo Waecicu Beach** are hosting a 'Festive Sunsation' - an end-of-year program featuring Christmas-themed culinary events, live entertainment, and celebratory activities. Both properties will

hold tree lighting ceremonies on 06 Dec, complete with carol performances from local orphanage choirs.

## Nordic Roadshow wraps up



**THE** Nordic Roadshow from 50 Degrees North came to an end last week after a number of trade and networking events in Melbourne and Sydney.

More than 250 Australian travel agents had the opportunity to meet face-to-face with suppliers from Norway and Finland.

The event also included a welcome dinner at Salted Egg restaurant in Quincy Hotel in Melbourne, which was attended by select local agency leaders.

Breakfast presentations kicked off the next day, a networking lunch and an evening supplier showcase at Denmark House, where attendees spoke with representatives from hotels, resorts and experience providers.

In Sydney, the roadshow continued with a Viking-themed dinner at Mjolner, as well as supplier presentations and networking at the Golden Age Cinema, a casual fika-style lunch at a Swedish cafe in Manly and an evening showcase.

"Strong partnerships and trust are the foundation of everything we do," explained Salla Ekman, Head of Partnerships APAC at 50

Degrees North.

"This event offered advisors a valuable opportunity to truly connect, hear authentic stories directly from the source, and deepen their understanding of the Nordic region - and we're here to help turn that inspiration into seamless Nordic itineraries," Elkman added. *JHM*

**Pictured:** Nordic suppliers.

## HRW plan too rich

**THE** International Air Transport Association (IATA) has warned the current plan to expand Heathrow Airport will "seriously handicap" the UK in if the government fails to build put forward a model that is more affordable.

"There is general agreement that the cost impact of Heathrow's current proposal, under the existing regulatory framework, will make the airport unaffordable in both the short- and the long-term," IATA said.

"Heathrow's addiction to gold-plated construction costs has already earned it the unenviable standing as one of the most expensive airports in the world."



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