Travel Daily First with the news

Monday 8th September 2025



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, plus a full page from HX.

New head at CVFR

JAMES Brooker will take on the role of General Manager Australia and New Zealand at CVFR Consolidation Services from next week (TD breaking news).

The appointment follows strong growth for the operation in Australia and the expansion of its services in New Zealand.

Brooker brings more than 25 years in travel and aviation to his new role, most recently holding the title of Senior Executive Commercial & Airline Contracting at Flight Centre Travel Group.

Sell three, sail free

AGENTS can enjoy a free cabin on an HX expedition in 2026 as part of a new trade incentive now on offer from the line - find out more details on page seven.

Tandy's taste of luxury

APT Travel Group co-owner Lou Tandy has debuted a new private investment fund with her husband Rob, targeting founderled businesses in the high-end travel segment.

The first acquisition made by the new fund is a 50% stake in premium nature-based tour operator Walk into Luxury.

Tours offered by the premium travel brand include guided nature-based experiences paired with high-end accommodation, food, and local wine in destinations across Australia, NZ, Patagonia, Norway, and Japan.

The Tandy investment will see Walk into Luxury expand its destination mix within the next year, with new tours set to be introduced in Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Peru, the Galapagos, Dolomites and Himalayas.

"Walk into Luxury is at the forefront of this shift, creating private journeys that connect



people with nature and spectacular scenery while offering the highest level of comfort and service," Lou Tandy said.

"We are delighted to partner with Nikki and her team to help take this vision to the world."

Founder and CEO of Walk into Luxury Nikki King said Lou Tandy and her partner both understand the core fabric of her business.

"Their deep experience in luxury and their personal passion for creating extraordinary journeys make them the perfect partners for our next chapter," King said.

All Walk into Luxury signature journeys are commissionable to agents, and VIP perks for clients are also on offer when booking lodges, expedition cruises and select walking tours. AB

Koala clarifies AOC

KOALA Airlines CEO Bill Astling has refuted media reports suggesting its plans have been "grounded" due to concerns around obtaining an air operator's certificate (AOC).

In a statement issued this morning, Astling said Koala never suggested it could commence passenger operations without first obtaining CASA's approval for large jet operations.

"From the outset, we have consistently informed our stakeholders, lessors, and industry partners that operations cannot begin until CASA is satisfied that all requirements have been met," Astling said.

"We will be meeting with CASA's regulatory services team to progress our approval pathway." Koala's AOC application is subject to a 'Direction not to Operate' until its current Desert Air Safaris certification is upgraded to meet the requirements for larger aircraft.



New Brochure!

Collette's 2026-2027 small group Explorations brochure is out now! Avaliable at Tifs or download a copy today.



SALE TOOLKIT

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MH ramping up Oz

MALAYSIA Airlines will ramp up frequencies to Australia over the next six months, with new flights to be operated exclusively by its Airbus A330neo (TD 19 Aug).

Melbourne and Sydney will be the first to see an increase, with services climbing from 18 to 21 weekly from both cities, effective from 30 and 31 Oct respectively.

Perth will be next, growing from 12 weekly flights to a doubledaily operation by 01 Dec, while services from Adelaide to Kuala Lumpur will increase to a daily operation from 01 Feb next year.

King ready for feedback

A PROPOSED suite of improved protections for airline passengers by the Federal Government is now open for consultation.

Announced this morning by Federal Transport Minister Catherine King, the draft Aviation Customer Rights Charter (HERE) will be pressure-tested by industry stakeholders, with a view to being paired with an ombudsman scheme and a new regulator to ensure airlines and airports abide by the new minimum standards.



Among the drafted suggestions is a move toward improved refund polices in instances of delayed or cancelled flights, as well as carriers bearing the costs of accommodations, transfers and meals when customers are required to remain away from home overnight (TD 06 Jan).

There will also be more prescriptive expectations for airlines around complaints, under the government proposal.

"[We] are taking steps to clarify the obligations that airlines and airports have to passengers in event of delays or cancellations under our Australian-first aviation consumer standards," King said.

"This includes information requirements when you book a flight and check-in, how you should be communicated with and minimum levels of assistance when a flight is disrupted, and how airlines and airports should manage complaints," she added.

Submissions are now open, and will close on 05 Oct - more HERE.

The consultation follows the Trump Administration over the weekend electing to shoot down a proposed airline compensation scheme for long delays and cancellations in the US, stating the Biden-led model would create a "burden" for carriers. AB More on page four.

Velocity delivering

FIFTEEN Velocity Frequent Flyer members will win one million points each as major prizes to be given away by the program in partnership with DoorDash.

Entries into the competition can be earned by placing a DoorDash order before 05 Oct.





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AAT Kings' "rapid" growth

THE rapid growth of the small group tour market prompted AAT Kings to expand its products into New Zealand, the company's Chief Executive Officer Ben Hall has told Travel Daily.

AAT Kings' recently released 2026/27 program (TD 25 Jul) features a range of new small group experiences in New Zealand, as smaller-sized departures continue to perform strongly with Aussies and other travellers around the world.

"Small groups are certainly highly sought out," Hall explained.

"We see that throughout other [TTC brands], that small group markets that continue to grow.

"It is growing at a faster rate than the traditional sort of groups that we operate."

Hall said AAT Kings' product ranges represent around a third of the market, which is expected to increase in the coming years.

The rapid growth of AAT Kings' small group tours comes as the inbound air market starts to even out, with the company's traditional 50-50 domestic and international passenger split

starting to return to normal.

"What we are finding is a more reasonable price for inbound air," Hall enthused.

"We are getting much more pickup from North America, and we are seeing Europeans coming down here now, so I think inbound is strong," he added.

Despite the reemergence of the international traveller. Hall noted booking trends from overseas are changing from historical norms.

"We are certainly seeing some bookings get closer to the departure date, which hasn't always been the case in those markets," he observed.

Forward bookings are well ahead though, which Hall believes is not just down to AAT Kings' product evolution, but also its engagement with the trade.

"I think we'll double down on the trade with marketing and it certainly sells and potentially we'll grow our teams to support the trade, noting that in due course, opportunities will come.

"We'll continue to enhance our tech...so we can try and become more autonomous and more seamless to work with." MS





Brand USA slashes

FRESH from having its annual funding cut from US\$100 million to just US\$20 million, Brand USA has confirmed the shedding of 15% of its workforce.

The forced restructure has impacted several departments, according to Skift, however it is not yet known which of the body's functions will be most heavily impacted by the cuts.

There has been at least one concrete casualty of the changes however, with Brand USA axing its streaming platform GoUSA TV, which promoted inbound visitation across major platforms like Apple TV and YouTube.

Viking on screen

VIKING has partnered with Focus Features, Universal Pictures and Carnival Films to celebrate upcoming film Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale.

The collaboration coincides with the line's longstanding relationship with Highclere Castle, a highlight of the series which features in many Viking pre- and post-land excursions.

Free layover tours

TRAVELLERS can now enjoy free tours of Hong Kong during layovers at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA).

Thanks to a tie-up between HKIA's operator Airport Authority of Hong Kong and Trip.com, transfer passengers with a layover of at least seven hours will be able to select from several halfday tour options around the city.

Eligible travellers can pre-book their tours online or register at the airport upon arrival.

Julia Simpson out

WORLD Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) CEO Julia Simpson has stepped down from her role on medical leave.

Her indefinite departure has seen Gloria Guevara return as interim chief, a role she will hold during the WTTC Global Summit in Rome later this month.

WTTC Chairman Greg O'Hara wished Simpson a speedy recovery from illness and offered gratitude to Guevara for stepping in at "such a critical moment".



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Uber at high speed

TRAVELLERS will soon be able to book high-speed rail tickets in Europe via the Uber app after the rideshare giant partnered with UK start-up Gemini Trains.

In what will be branded as 'Uber Trains', the service will offer up to 10 services through the Channel Tunnel, connecting London in both Stratford and Ebbsfleet initially with Paris and Brussels.

The service is tipped for a potential launch by 2029.

Globus last chance

LESS than one week remains for agents to take part in Globus family of brands' 'Book Now, Rock Later' trade incentive.

In partnership with Memphis Tourism and United Airlines, the promotion's major prize is a trip to Memphis and Nashville in 2026.

Entries can be earned by depositing any USA or Canada tour with Globus or Cosmos before 14 Sep - details HERE.

Watchdog calls for compo

CCONSUMER watchdog Choice is calling on the government to adopt a European-style aviation compensation model to offer what it believes are clearer rights for consumers in the face of delayed or cancelled flights.

"Compensation schemes in Europe have encouraged airlines to reduce avoidable delays, and provide consumers with simple cash payments when flights are cancelled or late - this is something Australians also deserve," said Rosie Thomas, Director of Campaigns at CHOICE.

"We're concerned the proposed aviation complaints body falls short compared with strong, independent ombuds schemes in other concentrated markets."

King responded to CHOICE's claims in an interview with ABC.

"In Europe, there is a compensation scheme that is, of course, defrayed across millions of passengers and hundreds of



airlines," she said, pointing out Australia's smaller market size.

"We've got the balance right here, making sure people get immediate remedies to rectify the situation that they're in, rather than the European scheme."

The upcoming standards will include an ombudsman scheme and a regulator, she added.

Last year, the Federal Government released its Aviation White Paper, which was described as "a missed opportunity to bring Australian passenger rights in line with other countries internationally". (TD 29 Aug 2024). JHM

Intrepid responsible

INTREPID Travel has extended its long-term partnership with United Nations Global Compact to help small businesses improve their own sustainability efforts.

As part of its commitment and sponsorship of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Intrepid will contribute to the development of a best-practice framework for sustainable supply chain procurement.

The tour operator will first look to its own network of more than 10,000 suppliers across 118 countries, granting each access to 'Spark', a program that helps SME business leaders to identify clean and green supply opportunities.

Spark also features regular live presentations, workshops and self-paced learning modules.

Intrepid Chief People and Purpose Officer Meegan Marshall said the company is determined to support rapid progress towards 2030 goals through collaboration and knowledge sharing.





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TC posts 'notable' profit

TRAVELLERS Choice has posted a \$2 million pre-tax profit for 2024/25, which MD Christian Hunter (pictured) declared as a "notable achievement" in light of the significant investment made by the network to grow its member support services.

While the result is down on the company's record pre-tax profit for 2023/24, Hunter is still pleased with the performance.

"Our underlying profit is almost on par with our 2022/23 result, which is a notable achievement given that over the past 12 months we have aggressively invested in growing our member support services," Hunter said.

"This includes the rollout of our innovative agent training program, ProStart, which Travellers Choice funds in full, enabling members to address the vital issue of recruitment and retention at no cost."

The network is also yet to see the full impact on revenue of its network expansion, which has seen new members added across all states over the past year, Hunter emphasised.

"The arrival of new members will further drive the growth we are seeing in overall sales volumes," he said.

Almost 90% of the profit will flow directly back into the pockets of member shareholders in the form of an unfranked dividend of 6% on issued capital (30 cents per share) and trading rebates based on sales support



for preferred partners.

"The financial benefits our members receive...far exceed the average \$3,000 per year they pay in membership fees," Hunter pointed out, adding that he anticipates the momentum to carry on throughout 2025/26. with expectations that the Travellers Choice national network will continue to grow. JM

Booking while broke

ONE in seven (14%) Australians have booked a holiday they cannot afford over the past year, new research from Finder shows.

Out of a survey of 1,014 travellers, 5% admitted they went into debt in order to book their trip, while 4% borrowed the money from family or friends, and a further 5% had to cancel the plans when they were not able to come up with the cash.

Younger Aussies were the most likely to put themselves out of pocket for a holiday, at 26% of Gen Z vs 2% of Baby Boomers.

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Qld paves the way

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) has launched its new Strategic Plan 2025-28 and Advocacy Plan 2025-26, which lays out a road map to strengthen the state's visitor economy in the lead-up to the Brisbane 2032 Olympic Games.

The strategic plan has been crafted around four pillars - powerful advocacy, memberled engagement, empowering industry capability, and organisational excellence.

The advocacy plan puts the strategy in action through five key priorities, including boosting investment in tourism infrastructure, particularly hotel rooms in Southeast Queensland.

QTIC also aims to address rising costs for business, identifying insurance reform as a key priority, particularly as the state prepares for weather events over summer.

"Our vision is to be the trusted voice that champions Queensland as the undisputed leader in the global visitor economy by 2045," said QTIC Chief Executive Officer Natassia Wheeler.

Wouda exits Globus

GLOBUS family of brands' Business Development Manager, Melinda Wouda, has announced her exit from the company after six-and-a-half years.

"I've truly loved every minute of this journey and it's definitely not easy to say goodbye to such amazing people," Wouda shared in a post on LinkedIn.



Window

TALK about a bad trip - a former pilot has been convicted after trying to shut down the engines mid-air after taking magic mushrooms.

Joseph Emerson, aged 44, was off duty but riding along in a cockpit jump seat on a Horizon Airlines flight in Oct 2023, when he seemed to lose touch with reality - probably because of the hallucinogenic drug he took before the flight.

The pilot flying the plane, which was carrying 84 people from Washington DC to San Francisco, told investigators that during the flight Emerson said: "I'm not okay", before grabbing the red fire suppression handles to pull them down, which would have cut off fuel to the engines.

The pilot and co-pilot stopped him and the plane diverted safely to Portland.

Emerson, who pleaded no contest in Oregon state court, was sentenced to 50 days in jail - which he has already served - five years' probation, 64 hours of community service and \$60,569 in restitution.





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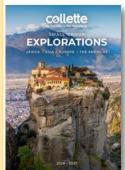
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BROCHURES

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Collette - Explorations 2026/27

Collette is showcasing more than 50 small group tours across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas in its latest brochure, including 10 new additions for 2026. Joining the line-up is an epic 24-day Cape Town to Cairo tour billed as 'The Ultimate African Expedition'. Guests will explore the beauty of Cape Town in the south, through the majestic wildlife reserves in the heart of central Africa, to the ancient wonders of the Egyptian capital in the north. The new brochure also features

Collette's most popular Classic style tours, a safari comparison tool, and more. CLICK HERE to access the new guide online.



Viva Holidays - Italy 2026

Viva Holidays' 2026 Italy brochure highlights the country's cities and coastal gems, along with a new range of immersive experiences, including truffle hunting with a local expert, touring AC Milan's home stadium with a passionate fan, and mastering Italian cooking in a local's kitchen. With touring options in Puglia too, this brochure offers even more depth and inspiration, helping travel advisors design tailor-made journeys into the heart of Italian culture - access the digital version HERE.



Sun Island Tours - Eastern Mediterranean 2026 In what marks the second of three brochures to be released this year, Sun Island Tours has released a new edition covering 2026 tours across Greece, Turkiye, Croatia, Slovenia, Egypt and Jordan. The brochure features 60 pages packed with itineraries complemented by Mediterranean photography, as well as maps, inclusions, departure dates, prices, and QR codes that lead to the corresponding webpage. Colourful icons make it easy to distinguish different trip styles. Download a copy HERE.



BNE Int'l marks 30 years



BRISBANE Airport's International Terminal marked 30 years of operation last week, celebrating the 118 million passengers who have passed through since it first opened.

In a surprising feat, construction of the \$240m facility was delivered on schedule and under budget, featuring eight aerobridges so passengers no longer needed to embark by walking across the tarmac.

Now, BNE is undergoing a major transformation as part of the \$5 billion 'Future BNE' investment over the next five years.

Changes will include smarter security screening, more selfservice check-in and bag drop options, upgraded baggage systems, expanded boarding capacity and more F&B outlets.

Upcoming connectivity increases include MH returning to Brisbane from Nov, offering five weekly services to Kuala Lumpur; the launch of Jetstar's new seasonal service to Cebu starting in Dec; the resumption of AA's seasonal flights from DFW;

and the return of DL's seasonal services to LA.

China Southern will also double its services from Guangzhou to Brisbane and CX will increase to twice daily services. JHM

Pictured: SVP and Head of Aviation Business Development Anthony Ciuttini with Nicole Cannon, Brisbane Airport.

WA route takes off

NEW direct flights from Newcastle to Perth are taking off today, with QF expected to bring 23,400 additional inbound seats to Western Australia each year.

The new year-round service will operate three times a week, directly connecting Perth to NSW's Hunter Valley region for the first time (TD 29 May).

More than one million interstate visitors travelled to WA in the year ending Mar.

"This new route is another exciting step forward in strengthening WA's domestic aviation network," enthused Western Australia's Tourism Minister, Reece Whitby.

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EDITORIAL

Editor - Adam Bishop Deputy Editor - Matt Lennon Cruise Editor - Myles Stedman Journalists - Janie Medbury Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper Editorial Director - Damian Francis Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan advertising@traveldaily.com.au

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER Matthew Vince

ACCOUNTS

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760

info@traveldaily.com.au



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