Travel Daily

First with the news

Thursday 18th September 2025



YOUR BUSINESS. YOUR SCHEDULE **NEVER MISS A MOMENT** THAT matters

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of news including our Business Events News page a product profile from Inspiring Vacations and a full page from Hong Kong Airlines.

Fly direct to Asia

TRAVELLERS will soon be able to fly direct to Asia from Melbourne with Hong Kong Airlines, starting 13 Dec.

Learn more about the upcoming service on page nine.

New blood at ACA

THE Australian Cruise Association (ACA) has announced its new Executive this week.

Brendan Connell from Port of Brisbane has been elected as Chair, while TasPort's Kristy Little is Deputy Chair and Martin Bidgood from Port of New South Wales is now Treasurer.

The new team will be joined by fellow board members: Andrew McKinnon, South Australian Tourism Commission; Shayne Murray, Cruise Broome; Joanne Brown, Intercruises Shoreside and Port Services; and Mladen Vukic, APT Travel Group.

ACA CEO Jill Abel welcomed Connell, Little and Bidgood in their new roles.

"Their expertise and deep knowledge of the cruise sector will ensure the association is well positioned to guide our members through the exciting opportunities," she said.

Victoria's tourism backflip

A DECISION by the Victorian Government to backpedal on funding cuts for tourism marketing activities will have a "profound impact" on the state's economy. Visit Victoria believes.

An additional \$43.7 million over two years has been set aside for Visit Victoria to bolster the state's tourism appeal - a stark improvement on the



THIS year's NTIA weekend will kick off with the inaugural ATIA Wellness 5k run in Brisbane in partnership with Albatross Tours.

The social event will take place on Sat 18 Oct with a 6.30am meet-up at South Bank, followed by a parkrun at 7am.

After crossing the finish line, guests will enjoy a post-run breakfast hosted by Flight Centre and Healthwise Global, FCTG's internal wellness division.

Participants are encouraged to register now to secure their official ATIA Wellness 5k shirt and a spot at breakfast.





latest Victorian budget, which maintained a severe funding reduction implemented in 2024.

Developing more partnerships with travel agents will form part of the strategy for the extra funding, in addition to linking with hotels, airlines, and forming Tourism Australia activations.

Visit Victoria will also use the financial support to bolster its 'Every bit different' campaign, which is running nationally and overseas - with an emphasis on attracting Chinese tourists.

Other beneficiaries will be local operators and overseas travel agents, who will receive more education and training, while added trade missions to put local operators in front of overseas buyers is also flagged. AB

Learn about Spain

TRAVEL agents can join Ormina Tours' free upcoming webinar, 'Spain: The Ormina Way', on Wed 24 Sep at 4pm AEST.

Register for the 30-minute session HERE.

Be like an Egyptian

INSPIRING Vacations is inviting travellers to uncover the secrets of Egypt and Jordan, on itineraries like the 10-day 'Inspired Egypt' small group tour. More details on page 10.





BALI

Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of TravelManagers, which is hosting its annual conference at The Westin Resort, Nusa Dua in Bali.

TODAY is the final day of the 2025 TravelManagers conference, as PTMs, employees, and suppliers prepare to farewell each other.

This morning will be highlighted by a series of PTM workshops, which will focus on a number of topics.

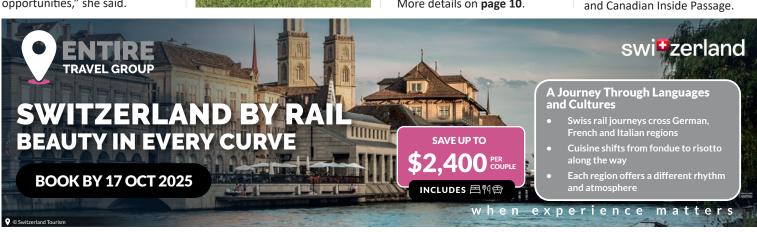
Plenary sessions will continue later in the day, before tonight's gala awards dinner at the resort's Mangupura Hall.

Encore visits Alaska

ULTRA-LUXURY cruise line Seabourn has announced Seabourn Encore will make her maiden Alaska debut from May to Sep 2026.

The ship will deliver 17 sevenday sailings and one eight-day sailing, which can be combined to offer guests a deeper exploration of the region.

Passengers will enjoy a blend of iconic highlights with unique ports of call, from Juneau and Ketchikan to the narrow inlets of Alert Bay, the Inian Islands and remote stretches of the Alaskan and Canadian Inside Passage.







25% hotel discounts

EXPEDIA Travel Agent Affiliate Programme (TAAP) has launched its 'September Sale' dedicated to travel agents, giving the trade the chance to earn more dollars on every booking.

Agents can take advantage of exclusive offerings of at least 25% off thousands of hotels across global destinations like Park Lane New York, Viceroy Washington DC and Hotel Zena Washington DC.

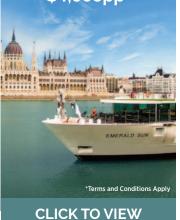
Advisors can book until 20 Oct for travel up to 31 Mar 2026.



RIVER CRUISING 2026

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BROCHURE >

TM focused on big three

LUXURY, cruise, and corporate will be three market segments targeted by TravelManagers this year, Chief Executive Officer Joe Araullo has shared.

The trio of sectors - highperforming and typically insulated against macroeconomic factors - will be the focus of added resources from the agency network this year, it was confirmed at its annual conference in Bali yesterday.

This will include specialised online booking tools, a dedicated BDM servicing each segment, and access to market-specific fares, like special corporate rates.

TravelManagers' cruise offering is already served by its Fastbook platform, with similar corporate and luxury programs set to follow in the future.

"It is the recruitment drive to tell everyone what we do, but it is also for our current network to say, 'we've upped our game'," Araullo told *Travel Daily* on the sidelines of the conference.

"If we actually want to focus on those three niches, we need to match our support and the tools that we provide our PTMs to ensure that they actually match

Scott Dunn in HK

AS FLAGGED by *Travel Daily* in Jun (*TD* 11 Jun), Flight Centre Travel Group's luxury Scott Dunn brand has now opened its Hong Kong office.

Mansha C and Luciana Lee have been appointed as Private Relationship Managers, with the Scott Dunn office to serve as a staging point for further development of its private tours.



what they need."

This week's conference will see special luxury workshops hosted, helping PTMs approach a sector of the travel industry that can be intimidating for newcomers.

The most mystifying part of the luxury sector is how to sell the product, Araullo explained, which is why TravelManagers has solicited the help of experts from Accor, as well as Signature Travel Network's Lisa Harrison. MS

Traveloka partners

EMERGING app-based OTA Traveloka has added Capella Sydney, Amora Hotels and the Wyndham Hotels and Resorts collection to its growing range.

The latest signings take the company's accommodation partner ranks to 2.2 million across more than 100 countries.

Traveloka said its aim is to help more Australian hotels to tap into the growing Southeast Asian market and to help them find more alternative accommodation styles to enhance their holidays.

The company said its data has shown a growing interest in alternative stays including villas, boutique homes and boat stays.

Data also points to a push toward secondary cities, with Traveloka working to grow visitation to lesser-known hubs.

SYD luxury concierge

SYDNEY Airport has launched a new online reservation service that allows passengers travelling through the T1 International terminal to reserve luxury taxfree products ahead of flights.

Hosted on the Sydney Airport website, the new Luxury Digital Concierge options also offers availability checks and staff conversations prior to purchase.

Customers will still need to physically visit the store to collect items before departure.



EUROPE RIVER CRUISING 2026

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Ama adds eight new ships

THE biggest announcement by AmaWaterways under the management of new CEO Catherine Powell has been made, with the cruise line confirming eight new river ships for Europe.

With the vessels due for delivery by 2030, the expanded order book will effectively double AmaWaterways' fleet size.

The latest announcement follows a flurry of new players and added hardware on Europe's rivers, amid a surge in demand from travellers in Australia and around the world.

"Our expanding fleet is a direct response to the strong demand from guests eager to discover river cruising and Europe's beautiful rivers," Powell said.

"These new ships represent exciting opportunities for our valued travel advisor partners and us to grow together.

"With each new ship, we will continue to sail our guests to the



heart of every destination while delivering our high-touch service, elegant design and immersive experiences," she added.

Competition is hotting up in Europe, with APT recently confirming to **TD** that it has booked new slots for new-builds for Europe, while brands like Royal Caribbean's Celebrity and The Travel Corporation's Trafalgar will make their river debuts in Apr 2026 and Aug 2027 respectively.

For AmaWaterways, there have been plenty of changes as well, with a CEO outside of the familyowned business calling the shots for the first time since Jul. AB



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Cruiseabout stores

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's Cruiseabout is planning to expand its retail footprint across Australia, General Manager Brad Kennedy has confirmed.

"We opened five stores last year, which bought us up to seven in total across Australia, and so far, we have plans to open three more before Christmas and six before the next financial year," Kennedy said.

Meanwhile, Cruiseabout has recently expanded its call centre from one to three teams and doubled its headcount in FY25.

Last month, the brand hosted its entire team in Brisbane for two days of strategic planning for FY26, including a motivational conference and leadership event.



Virgin Xmas Is shift

ONLY weeks after QantasLink announced it will commence twice-weekly flights from Perth to Christmas Island for the first time from 03 Nov (TD 18 Aug), scheduling shows Virgin Australia will scale back its services.

On a seasonal basis, VA will shift from regular passenger flights to a once-weekly charter service from 26 Oct, and will not be available to book by the public.

LE Signature series

LUXURY Escapes has released a new 12-day Signature Series tour to Turkiye across 11 cities, hosted by celebrity chef Shane Delia.

According to the brand's data, hotel bookings, flights and tour bookings to the destination have seen a year-on-year increase in the first six months of 2025.

Guests will enjoy visiting Cappadocia, the thermal springs of Pamukkale, cruising the Bosphorus Strait and more.



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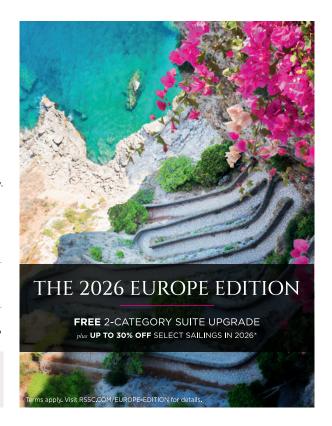
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CTM grounded until Nov

CORPORATE Travel

Management (CTM) will be suspended on the ASX until at least Nov 2025 due to significant delays in KPMG's audit of its European revenues and costs. the business has announced (TD breaking news yesterday).

According to an update on the ASX, auditors have identified

Velocity's home run

VIRGIN Australia's Velocity Frequent Flyer loyalty program has today announced a new partnership with Dream Home Art Union, Australia's biggest prize home lottery.

The latest draw is a \$13 million Gold Coast home named 'Dune', which sits high above Burleigh Beach, plus \$500,000 in gold.

New members of Dream Home Art Union can earn up to 20,000 points over the first 12 months when joining - CLICK HERE.



potential adjustments required relating to the timing of the transactions recorded across multiple financial years.

"It is expected that, in aggregate, the nature of any reinstatements would be to increase prior year(s) earnings and reduce the FY25 earnings," the update stated.

The statement also suggested that "any potential adjustments are not expected to have a cash impact", and would not affect FY26 operations.

The announcement also means that KPMG's audit will not be complete in time to finalise the full-year report by 25 Sep as originally planned. DF

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MU's longest flight

CHINA Eastern Airlines has launched a brand-new route connecting Shanghai to Buenos Aires via Auckland, the world's longest one-way route.

The two destinations lie on opposite sides of the globe, more than 20,000 kilometres from each other, making this the first route to connect such distant cities.

The service - flagged in Jun (TD 23 Jun) - will operate twice weekly using B777-300ER aircraft, and is available to book now.

Flying time from Shanghai to Auckland is roughly 11.5 hours, while the flight onward to BA is approximately 12 hours.

Air NZ capacity plug

AIR New Zealand will improve capacity out of Auckland between 31 Oct and 29 Apr with a leased A330-300 jet from Wamos Air.

The routes to benefit include Auckland to Apia, Denpasar, Nadi, Tahiti, and Tokyo.



Window

AN AIR traffic controller on the ground literally slept on the job last week, leaving passengers on an Air Corsica flight from Paris hanging midair, according to France's Civil Aviation Authority.

It was reported that while old mate was having his midshift nap, the plane was forced to fly around in circles above the Mediterranean Sea for 18 minutes.

"The intervention of the airport fire department at the control tower revealed that the air traffic controller on duty had fallen asleep at his post," the authority said.

When the controller woke up, "the flight landed safely", but the authority is now opening an investigation into the "unusual situation".



*Discount applies to bookings made from 01 September 2025 to 30 September 2025 (inclusive) for selected HX departures from 18 September 2025 and 31 March 2027 (inclusive). Offers with a saving, discount or amount off stated in AUD represents a discount applied to the "From" price quoted in AUD per person based on full occupancy of cabin on the specified sailing or Tour Code. Bookings outside of these periods do not qualify. Offer is subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Single supplements may apply and applies to all offer occupancies. \$900 off applies to bookings made from 01 September 2025 to 30 September 2025 (inclusive) for selected HX departures from 18 September 2027 (inclusive). Valid for new bookings only and can only be applied once per booking. \$900 will be redeemed first and then any subsequent discounts will be calculated after. Combinable with selected offers including the HXWELCOME voucher and not combinable with the Single Waiver Promotion. The value is redeemable against single cabin bookings.



Aurora set on biofuel



AURORA Expeditions has successfully completed its first biofuel trial using Sylvia Earle (pictured), a purpose-built expedition vessel.

The ship became the first in the Infinity-class to trial hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) as a power source, a sustainable biofuel made out of used cooking oil.

Having bunkered HVO in Valencia, Spain, Sylvia Earle then operated for several days along the Spanish coastline running on 100% of the green alternative.

According to the fuel's proof of sustainability certification, this resulted in an estimated 90% reduction in fuel-related greenhouse gas emissions compared with conventional marine fuel.

"Operating in some of the world's most climate-sensitive regions, we recognise that reducing emissions is one of our most urgent responsibilities,"

said Sasha Buch, Sustainability Manager at Aurora.

"This first biofuel trial has provided valuable insights that will guide future testing and support the broader adoption of sustainable fuels in the maritime sector." Buch added.

The trial has no impact on engine performance. DF

UN calls for digital

THE UN Secretary General Zurab Pololikashvili has stressed the importance of digital transformation and making tourism ecosystems more resilient at a recent G20 meeting.

The four global priorities for the sector identified included clearing the path for more tech start-ups to create more digital innovation, more investment in equality for sustainable progress, better air connectivity, as well more inclusive, sustainable tourism.

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QF hit by base backlash

QANTAS has come under fire from MPs and the Transport Workers Union (TWU) after it came to light the carrier is considering closing regional bases in Hobart, Canberra and Mildura upon review.

If they are shuttered, it is understood staff would be relocated to larger bases in Sydney, Brisbane and Melbourne.

There are currently around 70 staff working across the three regional bases in question.

Speaking about Hobart specifically, Independent MP Andrew Wilkie said, "Dozens of aircraft crew are currently based in the city, providing valuable jobs and a good lifestyle for the airline's staff, saving Qantas enormous layover expenses and providing operational flexibility.

"For aircraft crew to relocate, or in effect become FIFO workers, would obviously be very difficult for them and their families."

TWU National Secretary Michael



Kaine added that pilots and crew possibly affected had already previously been displaced.

"We've got pilots and crew who have uprooted their lives after the last Qantas base closures, once again facing relocation across the country with their families - meanwhile, regional Australia is facing job losses and declining passenger standards."

QantasLink CEO Rachel Yangoyan said a final decision had not been reached.

"This announcement is part of an ongoing review of our base structure, which is focused on improving reliability for customers and ensuring we can continue to grow our regional flying network into the future," she said. DF





Travel Daily

Thursday 18th Sep 2025

MENTORSHIP program TIME celebrated its 15-year anniversary last week, honouring its impact on the travel industry with 140 friends and colleagues.

The event was hosted by Cover-More at its North Sydney office and emceed by TIME committee member Richard Taylor.

The event saw TIME and its guests pay tribute to past mentors, mentees, committee and the board, all of whom have been part of its journey.

"We are very grateful to everyone who has supported and contributed to this success," TIME Founder and Chair, Penny Spencer, proudly said.

"TIME would not be where it is today without the generosity of our sponsors and partners, as well as the dedication and hard work of our graduates and mentors in shaping the future leaders of our industry."



FIONA Dalton celebrates the occasion with Penny Spencer.





from Vic included - Kristy Moore, Nicole O'Sullivan, Penny Spencer, Ingrid Berthelsen, Jayde Kincaid, David Hughes, Ivona Siniarski

and Iain

Summers.



Penny Spencer, Justin Montgomery, Sue Graham and Judith O'Neill.



takes the time to regale the audience.



TIME matriarch Penny Spencer was rightly proud of everything the organisation has achieved in 15 years.



THE TIME board with Marg Spiro, TIME's New Zealand Manager.



TIME'S New Zealand representatives included Program Manager Marg Spiro, Chair Andrew Gay and Committee member Lindy Christian.

businesseventsnews.com.au

ABEA's impact

THE Australian Business **Events Association (ABEA)** has unveiled the program for its 2025 conference, which takes place 03-05 Dec at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

Under the theme 'Partner with Impact', the two-day event will feature a mix of plenaries with globally recognised industry figures, pillar streams, special focus sessions, and hands-on workshops designed to address the issues currently shaping the sector.

The conference will be emceed by Australian newsreader Tracey Spicer, with a keynote from Emergent Global CEO Holly Ransom on leadership and change - see the full program HERE.

Legends go global

LEGENDS and ASM Global have officially merged to become Legends Global, delivering a fully integrated solution of premium services for live events, venues and brands.

Legends Global offers feasibility and consulting, owner's rep, sales, partnerships, venue management, hospitality, merchandise, content and booking.

Together, its network encompasses more than 450 venues worldwide, positioning the company to drive innovation and growth in the global live entertainment industry.

\$1.1B HOBART STADIUM UNDER FIRE

A PROPOSAL for a \$1.1 billion stadium in Hobart has been slammed as "unacceptable" by the Tasmanian Planning Commission (TPG), following a 12-month review.

The proposed venue, which emerged from negotiations between the AFL and the Tasmanian Government as part of the establishment of a Tasmanian AFL team, will have capacity for 23,000 seats plus standing room for 1,500 patrons at major sporting events, or a 31,500-guest capacity for major concert events.

TPG has called for the project to be scrapped, citing the size and location as major barriers, as well as a poor cost-benefit ratio of less than 0.5.

If built, TPG argued, the Macquarie Point stadium would "diminish the economic welfare" of Tasmania, and would have an "irrevocable and unacceptable"



impact on Hobart's landscape.

"In very simple terms, the stadium is too big for the site and the benefits it will bring are significantly outweighed by the disbenefits it creates."

Despite the slew of criticisms, Liberal Premier Jeremy Rockliff said that he would push ahead with a parliamentary vote to approve the project before the end of this year.

While he conceded the findings

were "not unexpected", Rockliff argued that the TPG report "massively underestimates" the benefits of the stadium, and said that concerns around safety, transport and other key matters can be resolved.

The stadium's design includes a 1,500-person function room, a serviced grandstand, internal and external concourses, a multi-sport field, and intimate seating placing fans close to the action. JM

Swanky new venue coming to Sydney

AN EXCLUSIVE new multimillion-dollar private event space is opening in Sydney next month on Jones Bay Wharf.

With views of the Harbour Bridge, the Penthouse Suite offers pier access for yachts and flexible layouts allowing for 50 guests seated on the ground level, 60 upstairs, or 90 for cocktail events.

The new space features bespoke furnishings, layered lighting schemes, and a



\$250,000 art collection.

Food is part of the experience, with Head Chef Danny Russo creating menus that range from intimate set dinners to live gourmet stations, along with a customisable beverage program.

Elite retreats

ELITE Havens is offering savings of up to 30% on endof-year corporate retreats in Bali, with additional discounts offered for early bookings in 2026.

Event planners will enjoy exclusive-use luxury villas for total privacy, spacious group accommodations with collaborative areas, curated wellness, adventure and cultural activities, and dedicated concierge support.



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APPOINTMENTS

Send your new appointments to: appointments@traveldaily.com.au

Following the departure of Brent Hill, Tourism Fiji has appointed its new CEO as Dr Paresh Pant. Bringing more than 25 years of experience in tourism and aviation leadership, Dr Pant returns to the association, having formerly held the role of Regional Director for Australia and NZ.

Industry veteran Chris Hall has joined Linkd Tourism as its new Account Director, bringing over 20 years of experience in country management and commercial strategy. Hall will relocate to Australia for the role after seven years living in Asia and the Middle East, and his most recent role setting up a regional office for the Saudi Tourism Authority in Riyadh.

Effective next month, Rail Europe will welcome Siebe Gerbranda as its new Vice President of Product. Bringing over 15 years of global experience, Gerbranda brings success in scaling digital products across several industries and joins from German fintech brand Taxfix.

After significantly expanding consumer demand through relationships with the trade, Princess Cruises has promoted Carmen Roig to the position of Senior Vice President of Sales. Roig has spurred demand by introducing innovative new programs and tools for travel advisors.

Two new independent directors have been appointed to drive strategic investment and productivity at ChristchurchNZ. The organisation has welcomed Mary Devine and Hamish Blackman, who will both bolster governance with investment and commercial strategy prowess.

Five new senior appointments have been made at Crowne Plaza Fiji Nadi Bay Resort & Spa in line with the resort's new ballroom and function centre opening in Nov. The property has named Regina Wilson as Director of Sales and Marketing; Anand Ravi as Director of Food and Beverage; Amlesh Kumar as Director of Events Planning; Ajit Mishra as Rooms Division Manager and Shankar Makam as Chief Engineer.

Veteran hotel GM Nick Ellis has shifted to a new side of the hotel game, taking on the role of Country Director Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific for direct booking platform **Revinate**. In his new role, Ellis has been tasked with helping hotels generate more revenue through direct bookings and cleaning up fragmented customer data streams.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection has doubled its Asia Pacific team, hiring Melissa Ong as its new Director, Travel Partnerships, Asia, who will be based in Singapore. Closer to home, the line's Sydney-based reservations team has grown from two to five to meet demand, with Christopher Menon, Nathan Gudsell and Jasmine Zaman all coming onboard. The trio will undertake training in Fort Lauderdale and Malta to try the product personally before assisting partners.

Frank Veenstra has been named Chief Development Officer for luxury brand Kempinski Hotels. Veenstra has been tasked with orchestrating the company's next growth phase as it plans to move into ultra-luxury.



Intrepid breathes fire



INTREPID team members from around the world laced up their sneakers and joined the Blue Dragon Marathon Walk over the weekend to help break the cycle of poverty and end human trafficking in Vietnam.

A combined 900 walkers across 40 countries raised more than \$320,000 for the B corp company's partner, Blue Dragon Children's Foundation.

Fundraising is still open - CLICK **HERE** to help Intrepid reach its ambitious target of \$500,000. JM

Amex travel app

AMERICAN Express has launched new digital tools to simplify the travel journey.

The new Amex Travel App will be available from today, offering destination inspiration, smart planning tools, and the ability to seamlessly book.

Amex has also added estimated wait times to the Centurion Lounge Digital Waitlist for the benefit of travellers.

MEL more accessible

TRAVELLERS passing through Melbourne Airport can now access improved airport mobility services to improve accessibility, with a new buggy and powered wheelchairs operation going live.

Operated by Travellers Aid, the service will integrate with existing airline support processes (TD 27 Aug), and is available to passengers between 6am-10pm.

Melbourne Airport Assist was based on the results of a fourmonth trial conducted last year.

"We need to ensure the airport is not a barrier to people moving around the country, and we're proud to have worked with airlines and travellers with lived experiences to deliver a service that meets their needs," said MEL CEO Lorie Argus.

Additionally, the airport is building a new drop-off and pickup location in the Terminal 1, 2 and 3 carpark, which will allow it to expand its international terminal out into the forecourt.

Travel Daily

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FDITORIAL

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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HKG - MEL	HX013	23:10	11:30+1	Mon, Wed, Fri	3
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- Breakfast daily, two dinners

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- 20 Day Essential Egypt & Jordan Premium Small Group Tour from \$8,495pp (land only)
- 10 Day Inspired Egypt A Premium Solo Small Group Journey from \$8,795pp (including flights and single-room accommodation)
- 15 Day Private 5 Star Egypt & Jordan with Nile Cruise from \$10,095pp (land only)



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