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Go above & Beyond

JOURNEY Beyond's Ultimate Agent Incentive has returned, with a nine-day itinerary featuring the Indian Spirit and a Margaret River tour up for grabs.

See more on the **front page**.

Book Andaz GC

RESERVATIONS are now open for Andaz Gold Coast, first announced in 2024.

The 202-key hotel will open its door on 14 Dec. *JB*



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APT-7869

Insurance exemption close

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIAN Travel Industry Association (ATIA) CEO Dean Long said its advocacy efforts for members to continue to sell travel insurance at the same time as other travel products are in "a really good position".

The current exemption expires in Oct 2026, with Long confident of securing another five years following similar success in 2021.

"We are not seeing anybody at the moment who is going to be voting against the regulatory changes, and we are confident that we have run a really good campaign," Long told *Travel Daily*.

"We have worked really closely with the Insurance Council of Australia, consulted widely with

consumer groups, and so we are very confident it is going to go through Parliament shortly."

An exemption for travel sellers was required following the govt implementing a deferred sales model for insurance five years ago, citing concerns raised by the Hayne Royal Commission around misleading sales practices.

Long said the benefits of agents and tour operators selling travel insurance are twofold: firstly, it is a key part of the commercial model, and secondly, travellers are more likely to get the right insurance policy that matches their travel experience.

There were previous discussions about lobbying to make the exemption permanent, however Long said there was "a strong appetite" from regulators for a five-year extension, with ATIA to ensure the value created by selling travel insurance is recognised by government.

If no exemption is secured, sellers will need to wait four days to sell add-on travel insurance. *AB*

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, a cover wrap from **Journey Beyond**, and our **Sustainability** feature, plus a special feature from **Tourism Solomons** & full page from **Emirates** and **Crystal**.

EK sees the light

AGENTS can now be in the running to win a four-night Christmas trip to Helsinki.

To enter, advisors must book eligible Emirates flights by 25 Sep. See more info on **page eight**.

Dive into Solomons

THE Solomon Islands has a wide variety of diving locations, including the last frontier dive experience in the South Pacific.

See details on the **back page**.



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Explorations

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TTF to absorb Fiji tax

EXCLUSIVE

HELLOWORLD'S Fijian transport business Tourist Transport Fiji (TTF) has confirmed it will not seek collection of the additional 5% Tourism Services Tax (TST) from partners and customers on bookings confirmed prior to 01 Sep 2026.

In a letter to partners seen by *Travel Daily*, TTF said it was making the decision in the interests of minimising disruption, while ensuring an orderly implementation of the Fijian Govt-imposed change.

"TTF recognises the significant practical and administrative difficulties associated with



retrospectively collecting additional taxation on bookings that have already been confirmed and, in many cases, fully paid under the previous tax regime," the letter stated.

Helloworld COO and executive director Cinzia Burnes told *TD* that it would be "unreasonable" to ask partners to make the changes, lamenting that "unfortunately for the existing bookings, we'll have to absorb it".

Burnes said that while she hopes a recent meeting between the Fijian Govt and ATIA (*TD* 21 Aug 2026) may stop the TST from being retrospectively implemented, it was important that Helloworld made the call with its TTF business "because it is the right thing to do". *AB*

Crystal really rocks

CRYSTAL'S 2029 World Cruise will sail for 127 nights, visiting 72 destinations and 22 countries, with 13 overnights included - see **page nine** for more information.

Godmother Galloway

VIKING has recognised industry leaders Flight Centre Travel Group's Dani Galloway and Virtuoso's Michael Londregan as the godparents of its new river ships, *Viking Sjofn* and *Viking Ptah*, respectively.

Reflecting its valued relationships with the trade, the luxury cruise line has made seven travel partners from around the globe the godparents of several new river vessels, which will all be named in a ceremony on 15 Oct in Amsterdam.

"For nearly 30 years, our travel advisor partners have helped curious travellers explore the world with Viking," Leah Talactac, Viking president and CEO, said.

"These seven individuals represent the strength of those longstanding relationships, and we are proud to honour them as godparents of our newest river ships," she added.

Sjofn will sail the Rhine, Main & Danube & *Ptah* will sail the Nile.

NTIAs make News

NEWS Corp has joined forces with the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) for the fifth consecutive year of the National Travel Industry Awards' People's Choice Award.

The competition invites consumers to nominate their preferred travel brand in 50 words or less.

Category eligibility spans cruise lines, ATIA-accredited tour operators, retail agencies, and online travel platforms.

Voters enter the draw for seven major prize packages supported by industry sponsors including Singapore Airlines, Trafalgar, Flight Centre, Intrepid, VIVA Holidays, Viking, and Cover-More.

The initiative places the travel industry's premier consumer-voted award in front of the country's largest travel audience, reaching a network of more than 6.5 million readers monthly across brands including *The Australian* and other mastheads.

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Customer deposits sink

CUSTOMERS left stranded by embattled cruise company Kimberley Pearl Tours (KPT) could lose tens of thousands of dollars after the line went into administration earlier this year.

Several customers who paid deposits for their trips have still not been refunded, with little communication from receivers and administrators Hall Chadwick, according to an ABC report.

One customer only realised that his cruise would not be departing after an online search, while another was sent an invoice requesting payment after KPT had gone into receivership.

KPT is still promoting its sailings on social media and its website, with 2027 cruises now open.

Hall Chadwick claimed invoices for outstanding payments were sent by KPT's sole director Daniel Brown, who has refused to share the company's records and online login details.



Meanwhile, Brown has also faced his own private credit challenges, after borrowing \$395,000 from Blackbird Private Equity in 2024 to pay for the *Kimberley Pearl* - a debt that has allegedly ballooned to more than \$1 million within only 19 months.

Blackbird has been hit with a class action from Adero Law over allegations of unfair lending practices and the matter is now before the Federal Court.

As for KPT's customers, Brown said he was "deeply sorry" and that his "firm intention" was to refund customers and see *Kimberley Pearl* sail again. JHM

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New keys near WSI

A **NEW** hotel, Atura Oran Park, is set to open just 20 minutes away from the new Western Sydney International Airport (WSI) this Oct.

Operated by EVT Hotels & Resorts, the property will comprise of 184 rooms and suites, an Italian-inspired restaurant and bar, a resort-style pool and terrace, and flexible conference and event facilities.

"We're opening at a time when South Western Sydney is experiencing extraordinary growth and momentum, and being the closest hotel to the new WSI puts us in a commanding position to support travellers in and out of Sydney," Shannon Craig, area GM of Atura Oran Park, said.



Explore more Nepal

AUSTRALIAN travel agents are invited to take part in a famil in Nepal's Upper Mustang region this Dec with the Community Homestay Network (CHM).

Criteria for selection will be determined by the volume of Nepal trips that agents book their clients on, as well as the kinds of travel experiences they want from CHM's famil.

While all ground arrangements are covered, agents will be responsible for covering the cost of their own flights.

Running from 05-16 Dec, the round-trip from Kathmandu will take advisors to some of the most remote locations in Nepal, engaging with local families in Narchyang, Kagbeni, Lubra, Hemjakot, and many more.

Guests will also delve into natural wonders such as the Annapurna foothills and the Sky Caves of Chhoser.

Agents who are interested in taking part can apply [HERE](#). JB

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SAA CEO on leave

SOUTH African Airways acting group CEO Matshela Seshibe has been suspended after just four months in the role (**TD** 13 Apr).

SAA stated that the board “has resolved to place the acting group chief executive officer Matshela Seshibe on special leave with immediate effect, pending the outcome of an internal process”.

Chief legal officer Koeki Mbeki has taken over Seshibe’s role.

Seshibe followed the resignation of John Lamola, who led SAA through a major restructure and near-bankruptcy chapter.

Lamola left the company just days before closing the 2025/26 financial year, amid questions surrounding the company’s financial accounts.

The African carrier has had a staggering 15 CEOs since 2010.

Local media has reported the discovery of alleged irregularities with the airline’s catering subsidiary Air Chefs, which Seshibe previously led. *JHM*

THL faces tough 2027

TOURISM Holdings (THL) has posted a turnaround in net profit and solid growth in revenue after a challenging financial period following the pandemic.

The ASX-listed RV business reversed a NZ\$14.1 million loss in the previous reporting period to a NZ\$39.9 million profit for the 12 months to 30 Jun 2026.

THL also recorded an 11% increase in sale-of-service revenue to NZ\$517.5 million - driven primarily by RV rentals - as well as a 14% rise in underlying EBITDA to NZ\$222.4 million.

Australian rental revenue also increased by 20% to NZ\$172 million, with revenue per vehicle rising by 3%.

While the latest period delivered pleasing numbers for THL, the impact of the Middle East conflict has left a gap in forward bookings in FY27, with the company stating the hole is “unlikely to be recoverable” and



may effectively scuttle its target of NZ\$100 million net profit after tax for next year.

Despite this disappointment, THL said the fundamental drivers of the slated profit target “remain intact”, such as rental fleet growth, revenue increases, and a broader recovery in RV sales.

The last year has seen THL make a number of major restructuring decisions, including selling its UK and Ireland business (**TD** 16 Feb 2026), consolidating Australasia manufacturing into Hamilton, and opening a site in Queenstown.

THL also revealed it currently has two acquisition offers before the board, one is a revised bid from BGH after a failed previous takeover (**TD** 04 Aug 2025), as well as another offer from an unnamed party. *AB*

Solomons’ new man

ANDREW Nihopara has been appointed as the new CEO of Tourism Solomons (TS).

Nihopara previously served as head of marketing for TS from 2001 to 2004, before heading to the Pacific Tourism Organisation, where he was its marketing manager and deputy CEO between 2006 and 2011.

The new CEO has also worked for the Solomon Islands Government as permanent secretary of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

The CEO position at TS has not been formally occupied for the past five years. *JB*



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Offer applies to new bookings made from 1 May 2026 to 31 August 2026 (“Offer Period”) and is capacity controlled for selected HX departures from 16 October 2026 to 31 December 2027. Departures may be removed at any time. Bookings made outside of the Offer Period will not qualify. Offer is subject to suite availability at the time of booking. Availability must exist in the following suite categories – ME (MS Roald Amundsen & MS Fridtjof Nansen) and Q2 (MS Fram). Offer is not applicable to any other suite category (ie MG on MS Fram and MF, MD, MC, MB and MA on MS Roald Amundsen & MS Fridtjof Nansen. 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 double occupancy of cabin on the specified sailing or Tour Code. Offer is subject to availability and may be withdrawn at any time without prior notice. Single supplements may apply and apply to all offer occupancies.

Tuesday 25th Aug 2026

Carriers pick up performance

AUSTRALIAN airlines' on-time performance for last month smashed the equivalent figures for the same time last year, but still fell below the long-term average, according to the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE) monthly report.

The on-time performance over all routes by participating airlines averaged 78.8% for departures and 78.4% for arrivals, while



cancellations came in at 1.5%.

The equivalent figures for Jul 2025 were 74.2% for on-time departures, 73% for arrivals, and 3.1% for cancellations.

However, both departure and arrival figures were lower than the long-term averages, which stand at 80.5% and 81.6%.

The rate of cancellations was lower than the long-term average however, which stands at 2.2%.

Qantas Group outperformed rival Virgin Australia in both its on-time departure and arrival metrics for the month.

The report stated that Qantas had recorded 82% of departures on time and 81.4% of arrivals, ahead of Virgin's 77.1% and 76.3%, respectively. *MS*

Thai expands ZRH

THAI Airways will be adding new services between Bangkok (BKK) and Zurich (ZRH) from 16 Jan 2027, bringing the total frequency to 11 flights per week.

TG972 from BKK to ZRH and TG973 from ZRH to BKK will operate every Tue, Thu, Sat and Sun, complementing the existing TG970 and TG971 services operating daily. *JB*

ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



OVER the past couple of weeks, the ATIA team has been working hard across all fronts to support our industry.

We have been in Canberra progressing the regulation needed to allow the ongoing sale of travel insurance, hosted a webinar for more than 300 members on the 01 Oct surcharge changes, joined Vietjet's announcement at Western Sydney International Airport as a potential new domestic entrant, and travelled to Cairns for the Envoyage conference to highlight how the CATO Academy can help grow frontline skills across the industry.

The incoming ban on credit card surcharging remains one of the most significant issues facing members. Our webinar with Gadens was highly successful and provided clear guidance on the strategies members should now be considering. If you missed it, the replay is available through the member portal. We will also

release further fact sheets in the coming weeks to help agents, independent advisers and tour operators manage this change.

We are also in the first week of NTIA judging, which means we are just 45 days from Beyond Borders, the Viking finalist celebration and the NTIA gala dinner.

As we announced last week, the standard of entries this year has been exceptionally high, with many demonstrating measurable outcomes and clear customer experience gains.

In such a strong field, the interview stage gives industry judges the opportunity to test each finalist's case further.

Finalists will need to demonstrate not only what they achieved, but also the thinking, leadership and impact behind those results.

The most rewarding part of recent weeks has been hearing directly from members that this work is making a practical difference. Whether through advocacy, education, industry engagement or member support, our focus remains the same: ensuring members have the information, representation and tools they need, when they need them.

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*Competition closes 11.59pm (AEST) 26 August 2026.
Terms and conditions apply.



GOOGLE UK'S MISSION FOR BLUE SKIES

GOOGLE UK has collaborated with the UK Government and the aviation industry to launch Operation Blue Skies, a new project using AI to help airlines avoid contrails across the entire oceanic airspace.

Condensation trails are clouds that are created when water vapour condenses around soot particles in jet exhaust, accounting for about one third of the aviation industry's total climate impact.

Operating within Shanwick, the North Atlantic Corridor, the landmark 30-month program will include two trials, where 10,000 flights will pass through.

A small percentage of these flights that would otherwise travel through contrail-sensitive airspace will be slightly deviated, avoiding the formation of condensation trails.



Partners involved in the trial include leading air navigation service provider NATS, Contrails.org, the Imperial College London, the University of Cambridge and the Met Office.

Last year, Google also created AI-powered forecasts that helped flight crews and air traffic controllers to avoid contrail-sensitive regions.

According to Google, "research

suggests that avoiding contrails could be one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce aviation's climate impact".

"Operation Blue Skies aims to demonstrate that solving the challenge of contrails is operationally practical, providing a validated blueprint for how our airspaces can be managed to drastically reduce aviation's climate impact." *JHM*

Freediving offer

MINOR Hotels Maldives is welcoming world-record freediver and ocean conservationist Hanli Prinsloo for two retreats at two of its properties next month, exploring the Baa Atoll UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

To kick off Ocean Aware Month at Avani+ Fares Maldives, Prinsloo will lead a family freediving retreat from 07 to 10 Sep through breathwork, floating, snorkelling, gentle duck dives and underwater games.

Then, from 17 Sep, Prinsloo will host the Into the Blue retreat at NH Collection Maldives Reethi for guests aged 16 years and over who are comfortable swimming.

Participants will combine yoga, meditation and guided breathing with house reef snorkelling and drift dives.

"Both retreats are about building confidence in the ocean and understanding why this remarkable environment deserves our care," Prinsloo said.



Eco experiences

OUTRIGGER Resorts in Southern Thailand is offering guests interactive sustainable experiences at four of its upscale resorts.

These include mangrove planting and sea turtle nursery care at Khao Lak, crab bank support at Koh Samui, an upcycling workshop at Phi Phi Island, and an upcycling workshop and beach clean-up at Surin.

Virgin Voyages' Valiant connection

VIRGIN Voyages made its first connection to shore power in Europe at Portsmouth International Port's new system last week.

"Progress happens when the infrastructure on land and the technology at sea come together, which is exactly what this moment represents," Jill Stoneberg, senior director of social impact and sustainability at Virgin Voyages, said.

"Seeing *Valiant Lady* connected in Portsmouth turns that ambition into something tangible," she added.

Portsmouth is the UK's first multi-berth, multi-user, multi-frequency shore power system, allowing several ships to connect at the same time.

Three VV ships are shore-power-ready, with *Valiant Lady* connecting again across three Portsmouth calls this month.



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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.716

THE AUD has extended its multi-week recovery, finally approaching the key 72-cent barrier, having been gaining momentum since last month.

The rise of the AUD has mostly been underpinned by the RBA's cautious stance, with the bank's minutes release slated for later today.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.716
UK	£0.525
NZ	\$1.200
Euro	€0.614
Japan	¥113.9
Thailand	฿23.39
China	¥4.812
South Africa	11.46
Canada	\$0.991
Crude oil	US\$85.17

Fly free with Mitsui

CRUISE Traveller has a fly-free package aboard *Mitsui Ocean Sakura*, set to debut next month.

Fly-free trips depart 17 Sep 2027 on a nine-night round-trip from Yokohama, with prices starting from \$11,299 per person, twin-share in a verandah suite.

The voyage circles the main island of Honshu, calling at the ports Senzaki, Tottori, Nanao, Kuji and Oarai.

Complimentary return flights are available from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane for bookings with Cruise Traveller before 30 Nov. *JB*

Australia says 'arigato'



THE Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) has concluded its annual Japan Roadshow, a series of networking events across Melbourne, Brisbane and Auckland.

Welcoming 426 members of the travel industry across three events, the meetings allowed delegates to connect with Japanese tourism specialists and cultivate opportunities for business development and product growth.

Suppliers showcased a variety of travel opportunities, including major cities, regional areas, luxury accommodation, rail travel and nature-based adventures, all of which are seeking stronger engagement with the Australian and New Zealand markets.

"The continued enthusiasm from travel advisors and industry partners across Australia and New Zealand demonstrates the strength of demand for Japan and the importance of face-to-face engagement," Naoki Kitazawa, executive director of JNTO Sydney Office said.

"The roadshow provided a valuable platform for our industry

partners to build relationships, exchange ideas and create new opportunities that ultimately enhance travel experiences for visitors to Japan." *JB*

IASC gets new heads

THE Governor General has made two new appointments to the International Air Services Commission (IASC), with Jane McKeon named as chairperson for three years, and Tim Grinwade stepping in as a commissioner for four years. *JB*

The Choice is Umeda

CHOICE Hotels has announced the opening of Hotel Geometiq Osaka Umeda, its second Ascend Collection property in Japan.

The 132-key boutique property is a six-minute walk away from JR Osaka Station and directly connected to the Whity Umeda underground shopping mall.

Throughout the property is an art deco-inspired geometric design, complemented by handpicked materials, bespoke lighting and artwork by local artist Saeko Kubo. *JB*

Window Seat

A GROUP of light planes in Forlì, Italy were overturned and ravaged by powerful winds and an especially violent storm this week.

Footage captured at Forlì Airport shows one aircraft blown off course whilst attempting to land, with three other stationary aircraft thrown across the runway.

The airport's main hangar also reportedly took heavy damage, with its walls being ripped off and the roof copping severe dents.

Following the storm's passing, emergency crews were quick to inspect the wreckage, checking for any hazards such as fuel spills.

Check out the video **HERE**.

Extreme weather seems to be the flavour of the day in Italy, as the 120km/h winds seen in Forlì are a small part of the violent storms ravaging northern Italy, especially in regions such as Liguria, Lombardy, and the Italian Alps.

The storms have caused flash flooding, landslides and power outages, with the Italian Air Force National Meteorological Service informing citizens to "be prepared".



THE LIGHTS ARE ON IN **HELSINKI**



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Follow the lights with us to Helsinki! Just book Emirates flights from our gateways in Australia to any city on our network, including Dubai and Helsinki. Then register your eligible tickets on the Emirates Partners Portal by 25 September 2026 to get closer to a 4-night Christmas adventure in the newest destination on our network.

The Emirates logo, featuring a stylized falcon head in white above the word "Emirates" in a bold, white, serif font, all set against a red background.



Dive Adventures' Solomon Islands Dive Collection Frontier Waters, WWII History & Barefoot Paradise

AS THE last frontier dive experience in the South Pacific, the Solomon Islands underwater world is custom-made for divers - think warm water, an extraordinary WWII heritage, uncrowded reefs teeming with marine life and a true sense of discovery.

Taking full advantage of this, [Dive Adventures](#) has curated a trio of packages designed to showcase the very best of Honiara, Gizo and the iconic liveaboard *Emperor Bilikiki*, with all three programs designed to offer a choice of comfort, culture and world class underwater exploration.

Priced from AU2420 per person twin share*, a [Heritage Park Hotel & Emperor Divers five night package](#) based in Honiara features famous Iron Bottom Sound, one of the world's most significant WWII underwater sites. The package comes complete with executive room accommodation with free Wi-fi, two days of two tank shore dives plus a two

tank boat dive day with lunch included. A bonus half day 'Choose Your Own Adventure' element, offers a choice of cultural, historical and coastal exploration tours.

For a barefoot island escape, [Imagination Island Eco Resort in Gizo](#) delivers seven nights of rustic, overwater simplicity surrounded by turquoise water and exceptional marine life. Priced from AUD1765 per person twin share*, the package includes a standard room, continental breakfast, airport boat transfers and 10 boat dives with tanks, weights and guide services. Gizo's waters are famed for the Toa Maru wreck and vibrant reefs with kayaking, paddleboarding and fishing available straight from the resort's jetty.

For divers seeking the full-frontier experience, complete with pristine reefs, pelagic encounters, dramatic drop offs and remote WWII sites, the [Emperor Bilikiki liveaboard](#) package offers a choice

of seven to 14 nights. Prices lead in from USD4935 per person twin share* for the seven-day options including air conditioned ensuite cabins, all meals and up to five dives per day with free Nitrox. Three destinations. Three distinct adventures. One unforgettable dive journey through the Solomon Islands.

*Conditions apply. Note packages do not include international airfares.

MORE INFORMATION:

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