

A FORCE FOR GOOD HUB 2026 EVENTS

Mark Mathews

We are thrilled to introduce our Headline Speaker for 2026. Mark Mathews is an acclaimed Australian big wave surfer, Red Bull athlete, and three-time Oakley Big Wave award winner, known for inspiring global audiences with powerful lessons on resilience, fear, and human potential.



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Ama's big tech move

AMAWATERWAYS has appointed Virginia Suliman as its global chief technology officer, where she will be charged with making technology more seamless for guests and sellers.

Suliman recently overhauled the digital strategy for US rental business Invitation Homes. **AB**

Avoid "catastrophic" call

QANTAS' plan to operate an additional weekly service between Brisbane and Honiara in the Solomons has been fiercely rejected by the Pacific Island nation's national carrier.

Last month, Qantas requested to operate an extra weekly service from 29 Mar, however, in response, Solomon Airlines (IE) argued the Aussie carrier's move was an attempt to drive competition from the route.

"Given the state of the current



market and its likely position in the short- to medium-term, the additional service would appear to be a cynical attempt to dump capacity on a struggling route in order to ultimately reduce competition by driving out the only other player," IE claimed.

The carrier also suggested that if it was driven out of profitable int'l routes, it would have "serious implications" for its domestic network, which runs at a loss and is subsidised by the success of its overseas services.

"Domestic services operate across 23 ports and provide a much needed link for the people to travel within the far flung network of islands, however due to the great distances, the small number of people who fly...don't mount a viable operation."

Qantas declined to comment when contacted by **TD**. **AB**

Making more waves

SURFER Mark Mathews will speak at A Force for Good, discussing resilience, fear and human potential - **cover page**.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of industry news, including our **Corporate Update**, plus a cover wrap from **A Force for Good**.

Web Travel audit

WEB Travel Group has advised the market that its Spanish subsidiary is being audited by the Spanish Tax Agency.

The Aussie B2B company said the audit relates to direct taxes between Apr 2021 and Mar 2024, as well as indirect taxes between Jan 2022 and Dec 2025. **AB**

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Voyages boss calls for more NT flights

EXCLUSIVE

THE Northern Territory is in desperate need of more flights connecting with Australian cities - that is the war cry from Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia boss Matthew Cameron-Smith (pictured with Alicia Triggs).

Speaking to *Travel Daily* on the sidelines of Journey Beyond's season launch in Sydney yesterday, a company that Voyages is about to join, Cameron-Smith said that the interest from travellers to visit the NT and the investment from the travel industry should justify significantly more flights.

"We work closely with all our aviation partners, and we understand our route's got to be sustainable, but as we put more capital and more development in, we want to build more demand - demand is hard to build if it's hard to get to," he said.

Cameron-Smith revealed that over the next couple of months,



big plans for the business will come to fruition, but access was still a challenge that needed to be fixed to maximise a return.

"We're seeing demand off the charts, but we can't let it go to waste," he lamented.

"We've seen globally when we go to the big events around the world that if Uluru is hard to do, then Australia is delayable, because they can't fulfil what

they want to do."

According to the industry stalwart, prior to COVID, Uluru had 43 services in a week, but that number now sits at just 21.

He also suggested that air connections would not just make a difference for travellers, but for the travel industry as well, in terms of employment.

Investment in NT tourism has opened up a significant amount of jobs in the area, but difficulty getting in and out has limited the amount of people who are able to take positions there.

"We need the skills and it doesn't help if it's a hard place to access and a hard place to visit," Cameron-Smith said.

"This is a regional Australia challenge - you know, we've got to be able to get home and get to and from work.

"What we do not want to have is too much of a weight on FIFO (fly-in-fly-out), because it is cost prohibitive," he added. *DF*

40 more reasons to go

ADELAIDE Hills adult-only retreat Mount Lofty House is celebrating its 40th anniversary with the 40th Escape package.

The package includes a two-night escape featuring 40 inclusions such as a \$140 dining credit, \$40 spa credit, night-time

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Avani in Wollongong

MINOR Hotels has confirmed it will open the Avani Wollongong Hotel in 2027 - the brand's first new-build property in NSW.

To be located at 22 Kenny St, the upcoming 107-room hotel will feature high-tech amenities, a ground-floor restaurant, and several flexible event spaces.

Avani Wollongong will anchor a major mixed-use development by Blaq Property Group. *AB*

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Rail Europe inks tech deal

RAIL Europe has integrated its European rail offering with Juniper Travel Technology, making it easier for travel agents and OTAs to sell its train journeys.

Agents are now able to easily add European rail to their product mix alongside accommodation and flights, and agencies can access Rail Europe's content quickly and efficiently.

The new partnership "significantly expands" Rail Europe's reach within the global travel distribution ecosystem.

According to Rail Europe, once a commercial agreement is in place, "onboarding is fast, allowing partners to start selling rail within a matter of days".

Advisors will also have access to Rail Europe's commercial support, commission structure and additional services, such as group bookings.

The integration simplifies operational management for



agents, who will be able to access Rail Europe's portfolio of rail operators, streamlining issue resolution and improving overall operational efficiency.

"As rail becomes an increasingly important product to enhance conversion and enrich travel offers, this integration removes friction and brings rail closer to the heart of the booking journey," Rail Europe explained.

"For Juniper partners and the wider travel trade, the message is straightforward: selling European rail is now more accessible." *JHM*

Hook Is milestone

DEVELOPMENT approval has been granted for a \$20 million eco lodge to be built on Hook Island in the Whitsunday Islands off the coast of Queensland.

Spearheaded by Epochal Hotels, construction will commence in May with the aim of opening the resort in 2027.

Another major milestone has been the recent completion of a \$2.4 million jetty, which will support the construction, and in time, be used by resort guests and day visitors for the first time in more than a decade.

The Qld Govt contributed \$1 million for the jetty's build.

Epochal Hotels CEO Glenn Piper bought the dilapidated property in 2022 (*TD* 27 May 2022), which has been closed since 2013 and was badly damaged by two cyclones over the last 11 years.

Reports suggest the resort will feature around 40 cabins ranging from beachfront settings to forest-set retreats. *AB*

QR names tech guru

QATAR Airways has appointed Gary Harford as national sales manager - leisure (**pictured**), where he will report to regional manager for ANZ Justin Kestel.

Harford arrives after a long tenure at Travelport, rising to become Site Lead in Sydney representing the technology company's global executive team.

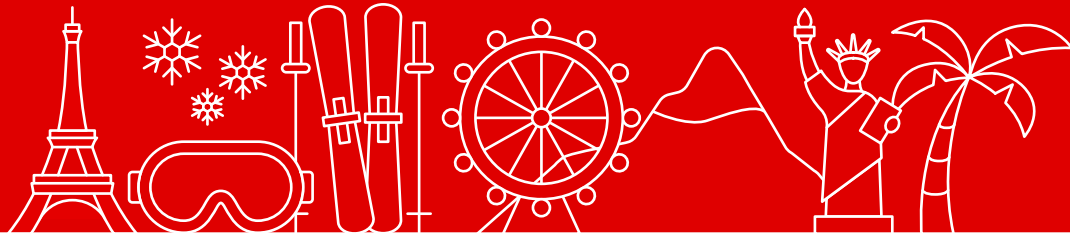
The new recruit was also the head of operations - online for Helloworld in 2008, and before that was director of reservations for Qantas Vacations.

QR's Aussie team will continue to report to Jared Lee, VP of sales for Southwest Pacific, Japan and Korea, who oversees the carrier's regional sales strategy. *AB*



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WWT beefs up tours

WENDY Wu Tours (WWT) has expanded its 2026/27 itineraries with more upgraded departures and three new tours of Asia.

Options on its added upgraded trips include five-star hotels and overnight cruises with superior service and amenities on select departure dates.

The new tours also include the 19-day 'Gems of Southeast Asia' priced from \$8,980pp, the nine-day 'Chongqing: China's City of Tomorrow' tour from \$6,980pp, as well as the 'China Wellness and Wisdom Retreat', which also runs nine days from \$5,380pp. *JB*

Two quests added

SMALL-GROUP cruise operator Kimberley Quest has added a new 11-day sailing between Broome and the Kimberley.

Offering two departures in Jul, highlights include visits to the Horizontal Falls and a scenic flight over the Mitchell Falls. *JB*

Aussies flock to Hong Kong

HONG Kong experienced an increased number of Australian arrivals from Jan to Dec last year, with a 27% year-on-year rise compared to the previous year.

In 2025, 469,000 Aussies visited Hong Kong, with Dec being the strongest month of the year with 67,789 arrivals - the second highest number of monthly visitors to Hong Kong in 12 years.

According to Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) director for Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific, Karen Macmillan, the growth in numbers was likely due to the destination's bustling events calendar and increased air capacity, such as Hong Kong Airlines' new direct flights from Melbourne and Sydney and the resumption of Cathay Pacific's direct flights from Adelaide.

Some of the highlights of Hong Kong's events last year included Chinese New Year in Jan, followed by the Hong Kong Sevens event



in Mar, which coincided with the opening of the Kai Tak Stadium, and the annual Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival in Oct.

"With a dedicated local tourism office based in Sydney, our ANZ team managed strategic initiatives throughout 2025 across trade, consumer and cruise sectors to communicate Hong Kong's appeal in terms of travel time, its breadth of attractions, and a high proportion of English speakers," Macmillan said.

"Another key marketing and sales focus was Hong Kong as a stopover city of choice." *JHM*



Window Seat

SLOW travel is on the rise for many this year, but apparently not for one coach driver in Iceland, who was billed for circling the earth 25 times in a single month.

The driver, Hlynur Bragason, is refusing to pay the ISK20 million (approx A\$235k) bill, which apparently clocked him driving at the speed of sound.

Bragason is charged by the kilometre, and when he first saw the bill, he thought his eyes were deceiving him.

"I first thought this was nineteen thousand, I was not wearing my glasses in front of the computer when I was looking at this," he joked.

Although Bragason admits he has sometimes been busy, he does not remember doing quite that much driving. *MS*

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CORPORATE UPDATE

No longer ticking boxes

THE corporate travel landscape has shifted significantly in recent years, with companies now more focused on their ability to segment, empower, and automate travel bookings.

That was a key finding from a new report published by Singaporean travel management technology company TruTrip.

Companies are no longer just managing travel costs, they are leveraging advanced tools like smart fare visibility and automated advanced approvals to turn potential savings into an actual return on investment.

TruTrip also predicted that 2026 will see a lower emphasis on compliance and a greater attempt to engineer better outcomes by understanding the changing profiles of business travellers.

The report breaks down three clear traveller personas, with one being the 'premium strategist'.

This profile is taking fewer trips



compared to the last two years, and is consolidating them into longer, more impactful journeys.

Travel management tools are used in balance with self-booking and manager-approved trips, and they look to save on airfares by booking economy for long-haul flights, but spend those savings on higher-quality hotels.

Another persona is the 'efficient maximiser', who travels frequently and strategically, increasing trip volume while looking to control spend.

The core focus of this group is on budget-efficiency by heavily leveraging corporate agreements and established supplier relationships to scale travel.

Rounding out the trio of personas is the 'regional operator', a group heavily reliant on frequent short-haul trips and the usage of budget carriers.

Travel is essential for this cohort but is also highly cost-sensitive, generally managed across a large and decentralised group of users without access to negotiated corporate rates. *AB*

Plaza taking off

PLAZA Premium Group (PPG) has opened several premium lounges in airports across Europe and the Middle East.

Rome Fiumicino Airport will have the first Plaza Premium First lounge in Europe, located in terminal 1, with capacity for over 100 people.

Istanbul will also have a new PPG domestic lounge, while Damman will see their its reopen after renovations. *JB*

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SAF takes centre stage



TODAY, the Tourism and Transport Forum (TTF) will be continuing its 'Fuelling the Future of Tourism Series' at the International Convention Centre Sydney, with a luncheon bringing travel industry professionals from across the globe together.

The aim of the gathering is to discuss how the shift to renewables could positively impact long-haul travel and visitor economies within major global centres.

Key speakers for the Sydney event include vice president of sustainability at Finnair Riku Aho, strategic advisor, sustainable aviation and former head of sustainability at SAS-Scandinavian Airlines Ann-Sofie Hoerlin, and VP of decarbonisation at Carnival Corporation Marcel Goncalves.

Local speakers will also be present at the event.

The conference comes off the back of a productive event at the

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre on Wed (pictured), in which Brisbane Airport's head of sustainability Jessica Rudd addressed how the 2032 Brisbane Olympics could establish common usage of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) throughout Australia.

Margy Osmond, CEO of TTF, expressed the importance of events such as these, especially during a turning point in the global usage of green energy.

"Learning from markets that are already progressing sustainable fuel supply and policy is essential if Australia is to maintain strong international connectivity," Osmond said.

She also noted that these changes are not just affecting the aviation and cruise industries, but all aspects of tourism.

"From hotels and tourism operators to event organisers, the entire sector relies on strong long-haul connections." *JB*



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APT Luxury Travel is offering savings of up to \$10,000pp on Seabourn ultra-luxury cruises, including sailings in the Kimberley, Europe and Antarctica. There are also savings on offer for small-ship experiences in Tasmania, New Zealand and the Mediterranean. The sale ends 24 Feb. The full range of offers can be viewed [HERE](#).

Tiny Away has launched a last-minute Valentine's Day sale with 22% off all tiny home stays across Australia and New Zealand. The promo ends 28 Feb and is valid on reservations between now and 31 Mar. The offers can be viewed [HERE](#) and redeemed with the code 'LOVE22'.

The 2026 Great Chimu Sale is on now, offering up to 20% off Arctic and Antarctica expeditions. Highlighted itineraries include the 'All Inclusive Antarctica' package, with flights included from \$19,900, as well as the 'Svalbard Circumnavigation: Ultimate Arctic Quest' cruise from \$11,962. The full selection can be viewed [HERE](#).

The Myconian Collection is offering travellers savings of up to 30% on 2026 bookings across its Mykonos portfolio. Offers include 10% off Myconian Kyma in Mykonos Town, and 19% off Elia Beach's Panoptis Escape. See the full list of hotels and destination combos [HERE](#).

There are several deals currently available in New Caledonia. Before 20 Feb, seven-night bookings at the **Ramada Hotel & Suites Nouma** can be made for a family of four from \$7,699. Before 31 Mar, seven nights of outdoor adventures are discounted to \$2,999pp at DoubleTree by Hilton Noumea Ilot Maitre Resort, or three nights in a Deluxe Garden Bungalow at the hotel are available from \$6,190. See details [HERE](#).

AAT Kings has discounted select Northern Territory small group tours, with savings on offer of up to \$1,800 per couple. The promotion ends 31 Mar and is valid for travel between 01 Apr and 31 Mar 2027. Agents can check out the full range of tours [HERE](#).

Insight Tours is running a sale giving up to 15% off European tours, including in its Best of Germany, Country Roads of Croatia and Treasures of Spain, Portugal and Morocco product. Sale ends 27 Feb - book [HERE](#).

Club Med has launched its earlybird sales for bookings in 2027. There are savings of up to 20% on ski resorts available across Europe, North America and Japan. Travel agents will also have the chance to earn commission of up to 5% on airfares. The sale will run between 03 Feb and 27 Apr and is valid for travel between 27 Nov and 28 May 2027. The full details can be viewed [HERE](#).

On **NCL's Last Chance Sale**, guests can embark on the *Norwegian Spirit* for just \$255 per person, per day on select sailings across Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific that depart from Sydney or Auckland. The sale ends 18 Feb and can be viewed [HERE](#).

Trilogy spices up capital

TRILOGY Hotels is now managing Peppers Gallery Hotel Canberra on behalf of property developer, Molonglo.

Meanwhile, the hotel is also being operated via a franchise agreement with Accor.

"This exceptional property exemplifies the kind of distinctive, high-performing asset we are passionate about managing," said Scott Boyes, Trilogy Hotels CEO.

"The hotel's unique positioning in Canberra's cultural precinct presents a tremendous opportunity under our independent management approach," he added.

A heritage-listed property built in 1927, Peppers was first developed to accommodate new public servants for the opening of the first Parliament House.

The hotel now features 80 rooms plus meeting and conference facilities, while guests are welcome to enjoy the fitness centre, library bar, and 24 hour reception services.

Peppers is located 300 metres away from the CBD and Civic Centre, and is also in close proximity to Lake Burley Griffin and the National Museum.

Boyes noted that Trilogy's



success with third-party management "has created positive momentum in the market", and that the business has received interest from other hotel owners looking to partner with an independent operator.

Trilogy currently operates 3,200 rooms across 18 hotels. *JHM*

Cater to the Chinese

AN UPCOMING tutorial from the Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) will focus on how travel companies and advisors can better tailor travel experiences to Chinese tourists.

Guest speakers for the virtual session include Jessica Xue & Garry Burns from The Gaibo Agency, as well as Nick Henderson, regional general manager for Greater China at Tourism Australia.

Key talking points will discuss current trends shaping outbound travel from China, consumer behaviour, booking preferences, and strategies for businesses targeting the major Asian market.

The workshop will be held on 11 Feb from 3-4pm (AEDT).

ATEC will be able to join for free, however non-members will need to pay a \$75 registration fee which can be done [HERE](#).

Members can register [HERE](#). *JB*

K6 Boeing expansion

AIR Cambodia has placed an order with Boeing for 10 737-8 jets, and the option for 10 more.

The order will be crucial in expanding the carrier's presence, currently possessing a fleet of just six single-aisle and regional jets on domestic and international routes to Vietnam, India, Thailand, China, Japan & HK. *JB*