

## Qantas does Dallas

**QANTAS** has upgraded all its daily nonstop Sydney-Dallas Fort Worth services with its A380 aircraft, significantly boosting capacity on the route.

"If there's any indication that this year is going to be big at DFW Airport, this is it," the major US hub enthused.

## WebBeds inks UK deal

**WEBBEDS** has signed a strategic partnership with the UK's largest tour operator Jet2holidays, which will see the British company integrate its product into the Aussie bed bank's global distribution network.

The partnership stands to offer Aussie sellers a range of benefits, including more competitive supply, pricing, and packaging options through WebBeds across Europe, the Mediterranean, the Canary Islands and North Africa.

Jet2holidays general manager of third-party supply & distribution, Doug Turner, said the deal would be beneficial for travel advisors around the world.

"This strategic alliance will see the award-winning Jet2holidays product integrated into WebBeds'

## WebBeds

global distribution network, enabling travel sellers to access our fantastic product more efficiently and at scale," he said.

Lola Diaz, senior VP sales - Europe added the tie-up would unlock new opportunities for both companies and provide its hotel partners with greater access to travellers from the UK.

WebBeds has access to 500,000 properties in 140 markets. *AB*

## Open Skies for Peru

**PERU** and Australia have formally entered into an Open Skies agreement that removes restrictions on air services between the two countries.

The agreement means both countries can now operate with few limitations on routes, capacity, frequencies, aircraft types or codeshare deals.

## Safari bookings open

**JOURNEY** Beyond has opened reservations for its Safari Lodge at Monarto Safari Resort, which features 20 luxury tents surrounded by grassland plains.

Stays are available **HERE** from 02 Apr, and include a 4WD Wild Africa Sunset Safari experience, all-inclusive dining, and more.

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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features five pages of industry news, including our **Luxury page**.

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## Nugent promoted

**DESIGNER** Journeys has promoted Elodie Nugent to the role of chief experience officer, where she will be charged with leading the agent success and designer network teams. The added management responsibilities will join her concierge team leadership duties.

## Smaller is getting bigger

**EUROPE** remains high on Australian travellers' bucket lists this year with one in four people flagging plans to travel to the continent in 2026.

However, around a third are choosing less-crowded, under-the-radar destinations, according to the annual *NowNext* report from travel platform Omio.

Although capital cities remain high on travellers' lists, almost half are now choosing lesser-known destinations thanks to lower prices (49%), unique culture or attractions (45%), fewer crowds (42%), and more authentic, local visitor experiences (40%).

The sentiment is mirrored in Omio's own data, where bookings to secondary cities rose by 30% year-on-year, compared with 15% for top tier cities.

Small trending destinations for this year include Spain, with Salamanca (pictured) & Marbella up 168% and 159% respectively.

Meanwhile, Italian destinations Monopoli, Polignano a Mare, and Alberobello are up 141%, 127%, and 121% respectively, while Matera, and Bari have also risen by around 90%.

"Travellers are rethinking what makes a city break memorable - instead of defaulting to major capitals, they are seeking places with character, better affordability and a strong sense of local identity...secondary cities often offer exactly that," president B2C & supply Veronica



Diquattro said.

"At Omio, we see this shift reflected in booking patterns across Europe, driven in part by how easy it has become to reach these destinations through a mix of transport modes.

"This trend shows no sign of slowing as we move into 2026," she said. *MS*

## Seabourn '28 WC

**SEABOURN** has unveiled the details of its 2028 Cape to Cape World Cruise, a 120-day voyage aboard *Seabourn Quest* that will visit five continents and more than 50 destinations.

The epic 2028 voyage will also mark the first time the line will offer complimentary expedition-style experiences led by a large 18-person expedition team.

These more immersive adventures will be available in destinations like Antarctica and the Chilean Fjords.

Further highlights of the world voyage include visits to hidden gems like Robinson Crusoe Island and Santa Clara Island in the South Pacific, as well as Nightingale Island in the Atlantic.

## 360 joins Virtuoso

**VIRTUOSO** has welcomed 360 Private Travel into the fold, with the luxury agency now a member in both Australia and Dubai.

James Turner, founder and CEO of 360 Private Travel, said the partnership "allows us to further elevate [our] access, expertise and value".

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## IATA to remove flexibility

**EXCLUSIVE**

**THE** Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has echoed concerns that a new proposal put forward by IATA to globally standardise remittance periods has been done so without adequate consultation with travel advisors or tour operators.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* about the draft changes slated for Jun, ATIA CEO Dean Long said the organisation is aligned with the criticisms expressed by the World Travel Agents Associations Alliance (WTAAA).

"ATIA has not been formally notified of the changes and this is another demonstration of the one-sided nature of the IATA system," Long contended.

"While there are consultative measures, there is no process that allows agents or tour operators to truly negotiate with airlines on how they settle funds." ATIA has since requested formal



advice from IATA and it will look to support members through the mooted changes as it receives further information.

It is understood that Australian advisors will be less impacted under the changes than most sellers overseas, because the proposed five- to seven-day frequency is similar to what was already negotiated with IATA.

At worst, there may be two fewer days for Australian agencies to finalise airline payments.

WTAAA executive director Otto de Vries said the move by IATA to override regionally negotiated time periods would deprive agents of the ability to tailor remittance schedules to their needs - especially with regard to high-volume corporate and tour operator accounts. *AB*

## Asiana to fold into KE

**ASIANA** Airlines is set to disappear from the skies as the carrier integrates its brand into Korean Air (*TD* 13 Dec 2024).

The airline will now operate under the Korean brand going forward, creating a combined fleet of 240 aircraft, and is now eyeing further expansion.

Parent company Hanjin Group will also consolidate its two low-cost carriers Air Busan and Air Seoul into the Jin Air brand.

**MEANWHILE**, T'way Air, Air Premia, and Alaska Airlines will replace Korean Air and Asiana on a number of key international routes, as mandated by South Korea's Ministry of Transport.

Antitrust regulators ordered the replacement of three international routes formerly served by Korean Air and Asiana, with T'way selected by the government to serve the Incheon-Jakarta route, Premia the Incheon-Honolulu route and Alaska the Incheon-Seattle route.



## Window Seat

**ILLINOIS** teen Eric Klabel has earned himself a Guinness World Record for creating the largest toothpick sculpture of one of the most famous global tourism landmarks.

The replica Eiffel Tower stands at 5.3 metres and was made using 20,000 toothpicks.

His latest feat is Klabel's second world record after he previously built a 6.16m tower from popsicle sticks in 2021.

Klabel (**pictured**) said he owed his talent to his father being an civil engineer.



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### Mantis prays for more

**MANTIS** has announced it will open three new properties to expand its global eco-luxury presence.

Mantis Hiddn in Addo, South Africa will open on 01 Mar, Saij Mountain Lodge by Mantis, UAE will open Q2 2026, and Basiqat by Mantis, Riyadh will allow bookings from Q4 2026.

Craig Erasmus, CEO of Mantis, said, "booking and enquiry insights from the Travel Desk show a growing appetite for nature-led and purposeful travel.

"The new properties... make these journeys possible, offering guests adventure, wellness, and meaningful cultural connections," he added.

## Emirates upgrades first class amenity packs

**FLYERS** of Emirates Airlines' pointy end of the aircraft will be treated to an upgraded experience this year, including fresh products from luxury brands such as Bowers & Wilkins as well as new services while flying.

The upgrades include new lounge wear, bed linen, and turndown service for first class customers, as well as premium drinks served in new cut crystal glassware, the latest noise-cancelling headphones from Bowers & Wilkins, and an A380 shower spa experience enhanced by a new range of VOYA products.

In addition, Emirates is introducing premium 300-thread-count cotton bed linen, including pillows, duvet covers and mattress covers.

Of most importance to luxury flyers, on select long-haul flights



customers will be offered new lounge wear, slippers and eye masks to take home and add to their collection.

Crafted from super-soft modal, the collection is more breathable and lightweight, using premium fabric and fully traceable botanic fibres sourced from sustainably grown beech trees that help regulate body temperature.

The two-piece loungewear set

features a relaxed top and bottom silhouette, with a fluid drape.

And while most flyers will BYO when it comes to noise-cancelling headphones, forgetful ones can use the Bowers & Wilkins E2, provided on board.

The cans are custom-tuned exclusively for Emirates' first class suites, deliver improved noise reduction and are optimised for extended wear. *DF*

### A little bit of Paris luxe in the heart of Seoul

**MARRIOTT** Bonvoy's Luxury Collection, a group of over 30 hotels, has added L'Escape in Seoul's Myeongdong.

The hotel is the second location in the city for the Collection, joining Josun Palace, Seoul Gangnam.

Positioned in the Korean capital's shopping precinct, L'Escape Seoul Myeongdong is positioned well for access to landmarks including Myeongdong Cathedral, Gyeongbokgung Palace, N Seoul

Tower and Bukchon Hanok Village, as well as being easily accessible to Seoul's Incheon and Gimpo airports.

L'Escape, Seoul Myeongdong features 204 well-appointed guest rooms and suites, including bedding crafted from handmade 100% natural cotton, Ace Heritz mattresses with Hybrid Z Springs, BYREDO bath amenities and Nespresso Vertuo coffee machines.

The hotel was designed by French architect Jacques Garcia.

### RSSC invites cruisers to upgrade horizons

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has announced the return of its popular Upgrade Your Horizon offer this year.

The promotion features a complimentary two category suite upgrade, up to a Penthouse Suite, and a 7.5% deposit on select 2026 voyages.

"We are delighted to unveil Upgrade Your Horizon, an invitation to transform your journey aboard The World's Most Luxurious Fleet into something truly extraordinary,"

said Jason Montague, chief luxury officer, Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

"With complimentary suite upgrades and flexible reduced deposits on 2026 voyages, there has never been a better time to discover why nobody does it better than Regent Seven Seas Cruises."

The Upgrade Your Horizon promotion is available for new bookings made on a select range of voyages between now and 28 Feb.



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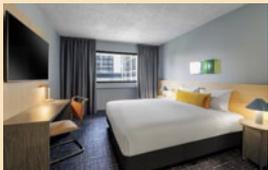
**The Ala Moana Hotel by Mantra** in Honolulu, Hawaii has pulled the curtains back on its biggest-ever transformation. The last phase of the wider upgrade, which began in 2021, focused on the refresh of 1,176 guest rooms across the hotel's Waikiki and Kona Towers. The rooms now feature custom furnishings, modern lighting, and lei-inspired accent walls. The renovation also included enhancements to common spaces and a new outdoor activity centre.



Saudi Arabia is set to welcome a new level of luxury hospitality in 2030 with the opening of **Mandarin Oriental, Jeddah**. Positioned in the heart of the waterfront destination, Jeddah Central, the new property will feature 140 guest rooms and suites with panoramic views of the Red Sea, as well as 115 spacious apartments for longer-stay guests, five dining venues, extensive meeting and event spaces, and wellness facilities.



**Carawirry Forest Escape**, a boutique hideaway in the foothills of the Barrington Tops, has introduced a new 'Graze and Stay' package for summer. Guests who stay for at least three nights before 31 Jan will receive a complimentary seasonal grazing box of local produce and ingredients to cook their own gourmet dinner in their cabin, including succulent steak, fresh sides and a Basque cheesecake.



The Ascott Limited has announced the opening of its second **lyf**-branded property in Melbourne, with **lyf on Elizabeth Melbourne** now welcoming guests. With 90 rooms, the hotel features playful interiors and creative social spaces, an on-site restaurant, and communal kitchen, laundry and gym. The property also houses a range of conference and events spaces.



Marriott International has welcomed **Legacy Mekong, Can Tho, Autograph Collection** as its 700th property in Asia Pacific, excluding China. Opening on a private islet in Vietnam's Mekong Delta, the new property features 86 bungalows and private pool villas, each offering views of the river, lake, or garden. Guests can enjoy a wide array of wellness offerings, including a yoga and pilates studio.

## Hudson refutes AI fears



**QANTAS** CEO Vanessa Hudson has rejected the idea that the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) will result in mass job cuts within the airline industry.

"Despite all the doomsday scenarios about the impact on jobs, the reality is AI isn't going to replace most jobs needed to operate an airline," she said in response to *The Australian's* CEO Survey 2026.

"For us, AI is about working smarter and delivering a better experience for customers, and providing the tools to set our employees up for success."

The carrier will scale AI across the business throughout 2026, Hudson added.

She revealed that Qantas is currently trialling the use of AI and cameras at Brisbane Airport to create a digital record of its operations in real time, with the aim of better understanding the cause of flight delays. *JM*

## VV compensates

**VIRGIN** Voyages has begun issuing full future voyage credits for guests impacted by the military action that took place in Venezuela over the weekend.

Airspace restrictions affected some travellers who were due to fly out of the US to San Juan, Puerto Rico, where Virgin's *Valiant Lady* departed on 03 Jan.

The week-long sailing will now call at Barbados and St Lucia instead of Aruba and Curacao, which are located close to the Venezuela coast.



## Khiri gets certified

**ASIAN** destination management company Khiri Travel achieved Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) certification late last month in all destinations where it operates, including Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.