

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features five pages of the latest news, including our **Corporate Update**, plus a full page from **Celebrity Cruises**.

## Sail like a Celebrity

**CELEBRITY** Cruises is offering travellers up to 75% off their second guest, as well as up to \$1,000 savings per room, as part of its biggest sale of the year. See the **back page** for details.

## Vale Carmelina Vitale

**THE** industry is mourning the loss of Carmelina Vitale (de Angelis) (**pictured**), who sadly passed away on Wed night.

Described as a "powerhouse within the Queensland travel industry", Vitale held training manager, national key account management and sales roles with Ansett, Garuda Indonesia, and more recently represented Hotel Grand Nikko Bali and Finns Beach Club.

Envoyage Group's Karen Dowling paid tribute to Vitale on LinkedIn, sharing: "Carmelina's vibrant personality and infectious energy shone throughout her incredible career in the travel industry".



## TA announces new boss

**TOURISM** Australia has announced its new managing director (**TD** breaking news), with long-time staff member Robin Mack to take on the roll vacated by Phillipa Harrison, who departed in Aug last year.

Mack has been with Tourism Australia since 2012, initially as GM of international operations, before filling various roles until his previous position as executive general manager global markets & business events.

In that role, Mack was responsible for Tourism Australia's 16 key global markets, the commercial team overseeing global distribution development and partnerships, and Business Events Australia.

Since Aug 2025, he has been



in the role of acting MD for the tourism body.

"With almost 30 years experience in tourism, and many years overseeing Tourism Australia's operation in key markets around the world, Robin is well placed to take up the position of managing director," Senator Don Farrell, Minister for Trade and Tourism said.

"I congratulate Mr Mack on his appointment and look forward to working closely with him."

Prior to joining Tourism Australia, Mack spent time working at Qantas, British Airways and bgb Communications in the United Kingdom. **DF**

## All about Okinawa

**AGENTS** are invited to brush up on their knowledge of Okinawa, Japan's southernmost prefecture, by joining an upcoming webinar on Wed 21 Jan at 1pm AEDT.

Hosted by Linkd Tourism's Okinawa Trade Manager Sally Miles and Eva Air Sales Manager Jeff Kuo, the session will cover the destination's seasonal highlights, as well as its festivals, flavours, and natural wonders.

Now offering flights into Okinawa via Taipei, Eva Air will also share the latest on its products and schedules.

There are prizes up for grabs too - register **HERE**.

## CLIA names Chair

**CARNIVAL** Corporation president Josh Weinstein has succeeded Royal Caribbean chairman Jason Liberty as chair of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

Weinstein will serve a two-year term, concluding in 2027.

"I am honoured to chair the work of the global cruise sector at a pivotal time for our industry," Weinstein said.

The Carnival head began his role at the company in 2022.

## MyCruises' 2nd WC

**MY CRUISES** has announced the return of "the world's longest cruise", Explorations by Norwegian, which will sail to and from Australia in autumn 2027.

The concept was first launched in 2024 (**TD** 03 Oct 2024), with the first cruise to depart in Sep.

Explorations by Norwegian's second season will once again exceed 360 days in length, visiting more than 230 ports, with guests able to join segments of as little as 10 nights.

Oceania Cruises' *Oceania Regatta* will once again play host to Explorations by Norwegian, however the NCLH luxury brand will play no role in the delivery of the product.

The 2027-28 cruise will include new destinations, such as Kenya, the Philippines, Borneo, and Taiwan - read more in today's **CW**.

## EK premium in Aus

**EMIRATES** has extended its premium economy reach, expanding its retrofitted Boeing 777 roll-out in nine new cities.

Daily flights ex-Brisbane from 29 Mar will be operated by the B777, joining the A380 retrofitted service introduced last year.

Adelaide now offers Emirates' new premium service, which commenced from last month, becoming the fifth and final city in the airline's Aussie network.

Passengers can now fly premium economy from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, and Adelaide in the new cabin.

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## Big summer cash splash

**AUSSIE** travellers spent big over the summer holidays, generating a two-week 80% spending surge in key tourism hotspots, according to a new NAB analysis.

A spending spike between 20 Dec and 04 Jan is estimated to be worth an extra \$84 million to local economies, with restaurants, retail and accommodations seeing the biggest overall increases.

Beach towns around the country benefited the most from the cash boost, including Lorne and Lakes Entrance, Victoria; St Helens and Swansea in Tasmania; and Jervis Bay, NSW.

Accommodation providers reported the biggest rise in spending in Lakes Entrance, up more than 600% over the two weeks compared to an average fortnight in May, while the



Margaret River region in southern WA saw a 786% rise in retail sales.

"The mass exodus from capital cities to holiday hotspots is crucial for smaller, local economies," said NAB executive, metro and specialised business Julie Rynski.

"This peak period contributes to much of [business owners'] annual turnover as the increases in accommodation, hospitality and service station spending show," she added.

"A sweet-toothed surge at candy stores in Batemans Bay, a boat hire boom at Lakes Entrance and a bakery blitz in Jervis Bay are among the quirkier spend trends we're seeing among customers based on the data." *JM*

## Qatar gets linked

**QATAR** Airways has become the first carrier globally to install Starlink wi-fi on Boeing 787-8 aircraft, with three of its Dreamliners now equipped.

This move follows the rollout of Starlink across QR's Boeing 777 and Airbus A350 fleets, bringing the total of its Starlink-connected widebody planes to nearly 120.

Passengers can now enjoy ultra-high-speed connectivity at up to 500 Mbps on most QR flights in Australia and the Americas, as well as on key routes in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East.

## JQ gets in a frenzy

**JETSTAR** has launched a weekend fare frenzy, with more than 40,000 discounted seats to and from Bali up for grabs until 11.59pm AEDT on Mon 13 Jan.

One-way fares start from \$149 for flights between Perth and Bali, with travel dates available between mid-Jan to early-Apr.

The weekend frenzy includes other domestic and international routes, such as Sydney to Ballina Byron from \$37.

## Inspiring women

**INSPIRING** Vacations has launched a new range of tours exclusively for women.

The 'Inspired Women' collection offers regular sightseeing highlights combined with unique experiences that support female-first businesses in India, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea.

Itineraries are focused on wellness, connection and culture, such as the 10-day 'Inspired Vietnam' tour, which features dinner at Koto Van Mieu, a social enterprise restaurant, a cooking class in Hanoi, and a lantern-making workshop in Hoi An, with guests to learn about the role of women in Vietnamese society at the Vietnam Women's Museum.

The small group tours feature female tour leaders, and include daily breakfast and select other meals, hotel accommodation, and some transportation.

## Vic parks evacuated

**TOURISTS** have been forced to evacuate holiday parks along Great Ocean Road in Victoria due to catastrophic bushfire conditions, as the state faces temperatures of up to 41°C today.

The Kennett River and Wye River camping grounds are among the many holiday spots that are now closed until further notice.

Victorian authorities are also advising people to steer clear of parks and forests in the Wimmera, North Central, Northern Country and South West districts today.

## Royal's club opens

**ROYAL** Caribbean has officially opened its Royal Beach Club Paradise Island in Nassau, welcoming its first guests on 23 Dec (*TD* 27 Nov 2025).

An official ribbon-cutting ceremony took place a few days prior to the grand opening, with Royal Caribbean executives, Bahamian government officials, VIP and community members gathering to mark the occasion.

The exclusive destination includes two beaches and three pools, the world's largest swim-up bar, live music, and more.

## SC park on the way

**THE** development of Coochin Creek Tourist Park, a \$35 million holiday park on the Sunshine Coast, has been approved.

The 45-hectare site will include a campground with 75 villas and 75 camp sites that can cater to more than 600 visitors, with construction expected to begin within two years.

The project will preserve and prioritise natural assets, such as nearby forests and wetlands.

Visit Sunshine Coast said: "This new holiday park will deliver much-needed accommodation supply while strengthening the Sunshine Coast's reputation as a leading eco-tourism and family-friendly destination."



## Travel Daily

# 2025

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## AS spends up big

**ALASKA** Airlines has placed its largest-ever order with Boeing as the pair celebrate 60 years of partnership, with the order consisting of 105 737-10s and five 787 Dreamliners.

## New MSC campaign

**MSC** Cruises is inviting travellers to discover the magic of unplanned moments as part of a new global campaign titled 'The Best Holiday Ever'.

The new push, developed in partnership with advertising agency McCann, features a reinterpretation of The Jackson 5's iconic track *ABC* rewritten to highlight the breadth of experiences and services offered on board a cruise with the brand.

MSC's new campaign reinforces the line's spirit of discovery, warmth, and hospitality, while reimagining a globally loved hit in a way that aligns seamlessly with the campaign's spirit.

The new brand push is centred around 30- and 60-second spots, highlighting the cruise line's key experiences, such as food & beverage, entertainment, kids & family, MSC Yacht Club, the fleets' design elements, wellness, destinations, shopping, and more - **CLICK HERE** to view.



## Great Stirrup takes a plunge



**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line (NCL) has revealed a big wet addition to its enhanced Bahamas private island Great Stirrup Cay.

The development of a giant pool was revealed by new renders released this week, and comes shortly after the construction of a new pier on the island late last year, which has assisted in eliminating the need for tender boats.

Great Stirrup Cay's new pool area, which is set to be larger than the size of two Olympic swimming pools, will feature beach-style entry, kids splash area and two swim up bars.

Alongside the pool is the Vibe Shore Club, which is an adult-only retreat with a private bar, pool and cabanas.

"Great Stirrup Cay has always been a favourite for our guests, and these new enhancements make it even easier for guests to trade the winter weather for the warm tropics and enjoy an

"Escape to the Great Life," said Harry Sommer, president and CEO of NCLH.

"With the fun versatility of Great Life Lagoon, and family-friendly spots like Splash Harbour, we've created an island where everyone can unwind, play and make lasting memories

"This transformation is all about offering premium experiences and unparalleled guest services to our guests and giving them the freedom and flexibility to enjoy their vacation their way".

The second major addition to the island is the construction of Great Tides Waterpark, which is set to launch winter 2026.

Close to 20 waterslides will be on offer to guests, alongside a 244-metre dynamic river, and a 836-square metre splash zone.

Seventeen NCL cruises will make their way to the tropical island in 2026, accommodating over a million visitors. *JB*

Renders of the pool **pictured**.



## Window Seat

**THE** reputation of a popular tourist attraction in New Zealand is beginning to sour, with reports wafting in about an offensive smell at the top of Whanganui's Durie Hill War Memorial tower (**pictured**).

The heritage-listed building, which was opened in 1925 to commemorate the 513 men from Whanganui and the wider district who died in WWI, apparently smells strongly of urine.

Many visitors took to Facebook recently to vent their frustration upon being hit with the "rancid" smell while trying to enjoy views from the tower's lookout.

There were some, though, who insisted the tower has smelt like that for more than 40 years, and others who insisted it was simply "part of the attraction".

Thankfully, Whanganui District Council caught whiff of the problem and arranged contractors to clean the monument on Wed.



  
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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Events come out on top

**CONFERENCES** and events now account for 63% of Australia’s business travel, overtaking traditional meetings (53%), Flight Centre Corporate’s 2025 *State of the Market* survey has revealed.

The appetite for experience-driven travel is reflected in data for FCTG’s FCM Meeting & Events (M&E), with the division organising 35% more events in 2025 and attendance jumping nearly 30%.

Top international destinations for corporate events include the US, Fiji, Turkey, China, and NZ, while event types have also expanded beyond standard conferences,



according to FCM M&E, with incentive programs, networking events and brand activations all showing strong growth.

“Forward-thinking companies are transforming their approach to business relationships and team building,” said Katie Fraser (pictured), GM customer and operations for FCM M&E.

“Whether it’s a conference in Turkey or an incentive trip to Fiji, these investments in connection pay dividends in employee engagement and business relationships,” she added.

FCM M&E has predicted the trend will continue into 2026. *JM*

### BCD pairs with DL

BCD Travel has formed a new long-term strategic partnership with Delta Air Lines, with the aim of delivering more value and innovation for corporate travel programs around the world.

The multi-year agreement will see BCD customers gain access to all of Delta Air Lines’ fares, products and services.

“Delta’s long-term partnership with BCD reflects our shared commitment to supporting the corporate travel ecosystem,” said Bob Somers, senior vice president of global sales at Delta Air Lines.

“By working together, we’re focused on delivering solutions that help companies and their travellers navigate an evolving landscape with confidence and efficiency,” he added.

### GBTA promotion

**THE** Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has appointed Elle Ng-Darmawan as its new senior director, APAC.

The move represents a promotion for Ng-Darmawan, who joined the company in Dec 2023 as regional director, APAC, based in Singapore.

“I look forward to continuing to serve and contribute to the APAC business travel community, [and to] learn, and grow together,” she shared on LinkedIn.

### Sam has a big moment



**CRYSTALBROOK** Sam, the first South Australian hotel from the Crystalbrook collection, has reached a significant milestone in its development before it towers over the Adelaide skyline.

The hotel’s development has been predominantly the work of local efforts, with construction led by South Australian builders BESIX Watpac and SA steel fabricators Samara’s Group.

The Halifax Street property, set to open later this year, will include 196 rooms and suites as well as a 120-seat dining venue that boasts views of the city.

It will also include three meeting spaces and two conference

spaces able to accommodate a combined 100 people.

Crystalbrook’s in-house wellness centre Eleme Day Spa will also make its debut, alongside a hotel gym, pool and sauna. *JB*

### Keep us in mind

**THE** JW Marriott Hotel Tokyo has introduced a world-first mindful floor, designed for travellers looking for stays which allow for reflection and self-care.

Located on the hotel’s 28th floor, the new development contains nine rooms and suites which offer amenities such as equipment for yoga sessions, premium bath products, wireless speakers for meditation music and supplies for journaling.

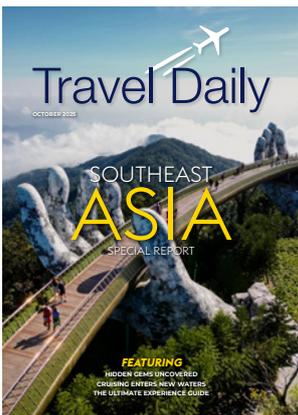
“Japan, with its Zen philosophy, deep connection to nature and seasonal culinary traditions, seamlessly blends the principles of mindfulness with modern comforts, making it the ideal location to introduce the brand’s first Mindful Floor in the world,” said hotel GM Christopher Clark. Bookings are now open.

### 80 years for Cathay

**CATHAY** Pacific has placed a special livery on its A350 aircraft to mark its 80th birthday, donning the lettuce leaf sandwich design with a green on white stripe.

The livery will be added to its B747 aircraft in the near future.

Cathay intends to spend HK\$100 billion on its fleet across the cabin, lounges and digital.



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## SPECIALS

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As the official airline partner for Melbourne's Kooyong Classic 2026, **Vietjet** is offering up to 50% off base fares on flights between Australia and Vietnam for the duration of the tennis tournament. The discounted seats can be purchased using code VJKY between 13-15 Jan on the Vietjet website **HERE** or via the carrier's mobile app.

**Brisbane Airport** is offering 15% off duty-free until 23 Jan. Travellers can save on best-selling products across a range of categories, including alcohol, fragrance, beauty, technology and more when they order between one to 60 days before their international flight. Discount applies at checkout - see what is on offer **HERE**.

**Cruise Traveller** has unveiled its Eastern Europe Christmas Market river cruise package for 2026, which begins and ends with a free two-night luxury hotel stay. Travelling along the Danube River, the seven-night cruise will showcase the seasonal enchantment of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia and Hungary. The package starts from \$5,599, and must be booked before 28 Jan. **CLICK HERE** to learn more.

**Aurora Expeditions** is celebrating its 35th anniversary by offering up to 35% off all expeditions globally, including itineraries in Antarctica, the Arctic and the Mediterranean. The discount is available on bookings made before 31 Mar. For more information, **CLICK HERE**.

**Regent Seven Seas Cruises** has brought back its 'Upgrade Your Horizon' offer. This includes a free two-category suite upgrade, a low 7.5% deposit, plus a US\$500 shipboard credit per suite on select 2026 voyages. The offer is available on bookings until 28 Feb - **CLICK HERE**.

**Uniwold** has launched its 50th anniversary sale with discounts of up to 30% available on all 2026 voyages, including the eight-day 'Castles Along the Rhine' and 10-day 'Highlights of Eastern Europe' sailings. Check out the offer **HERE** before it ends on 28 Feb.

For this week only, **Contiki** is offering an extra 5% off New Zealand tours until 11 Jan, on top of its 'Worldwide Sale' savings. Find out more **HERE**.

**Entire Travel Group** has extended its 'Whistler Summer Escapes' offer to 30 Jan, giving travellers more time to save up to \$600 per couple on its packages to the all-seasons mountain resort in British Columbia. To learn more about the deal, **CLICK HERE**.

**AAT Kings** has launched deals on several trips across Australia and New Zealand, running between Jan and Mar. Travellers can enjoy savings on itineraries like the 11-day 'Tastes of South Australia' and the 14-day 'New Zealand Vista' tours. Find out more **HERE**.

**Pan Pacific Hotels Group** is offering up to 30% off on stays booked before 28 Feb at its properties around Australia, including Pan Pacific Melbourne, Pan Pacific Perth and Park Royal Sydney - **CLICK HERE**.

## Sonata's new Horizons



**OCEANIA Cruises** has given holiday-goers a sneak peek of the suites in its brand-new Sonata class, set to launch Aug 2027.

The class will include 145 penthouse suites and 28 special suites, which make up 33% of the vessel's accommodation.

Ranging from 40-45m<sup>2</sup>, the penthouse suites are characterised by an oversized living area and private verandah.

Oceania Cruises has also launched a new style of suite, the Horizon suite - they extend over 56m<sup>2</sup> and include a walk-in wardrobe and spacious verandah.

The 16 Oceania suites range from 97-136m<sup>2</sup>, featuring a dining, living and bedroom space, plus a king-sized bed, marble-clad bathroom, and teak verandah.

Guests can also opt to stay in one of eight Vista suites, which are designed to replicate shoreline retreats and range from 140-176m<sup>2</sup>.

The master bathroom is the highlight of this category, featuring a double-vanity, rainforest shower and porcelain soaking tub.

There are also four Owner's suites available, each sitting at over 234m<sup>2</sup>, and boasting wraparound verandahs with 180° ocean views.

The space features two

bedrooms, including a master with a king-sized bed and a marble-clad ensuite, and a guest bedroom with a queen-sized bed and private ensuite, complete with a floor-to-ceiling glass door leading to a private balcony.

"We have listened closely to the desires of our guests and are delighted to unveil Oceania Sonata's thoughtfully reimagined suite accommodation," said Jason Montague, the cruise line's chief luxury officer.

"Oceania Sonata is a triumph of spacious design and meticulous craftsmanship to deliver our unwavering commitment to extraordinary experiences and our unique brand of hospitality."

Itineraries for the Sonata sailings will be available to view 22 Jan, while bookings open 29 Jan - guests are invited to pre-register **HERE**. *JB*

## TM recognition

**TRAVELMANAGERS** Australia has recognised several staff anniversaries this month.

Amanda Ralph has been an agent at the company for five years, while celebrating 10 years are Anna Campo, Tracy Lowry and Dana Brown.

Making it to the 20-year mark with the network is Liza Beylarian.

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