

G-Nat Geo opens

NATIONAL Geographic Signature and G Adventures have formally launched their collection of high-end travel experiences around the globe (**TD** 29 Sep).

The trips are now open for booking in Australia, with the first departure scheduled for Jan next year - see more info **HERE**.

UK puts Aussies in a bind

AUSTRALIANS who are British/Irish dual citizens will no longer be able to use their Australian passport to enter the United Kingdom, starting from 25 Feb.

The new requirement means dual citizens will need an in-date British or Irish passport in order to visit the country.

Those who already have flights booked to the UK may find themselves in a bind, with wait times for a British passport between six and 13 weeks.

The option to fast-track the

process is only available to dual citizens who are already within the UK, otherwise, travellers may be able to obtain an emergency travel document if they meet certain criteria (see **HERE**).

Alternatively, travellers can use their Australian passport with a certificate of entitlement, which will set them back £589 (A\$1,180) and must be renewed each time their passport expires - this has a shorter processing time of around three weeks.

According to a report on *9News*, some Australian-British citizens are so unhappy with the new entry rule that they have chosen to renounce their citizenship.

This in itself is an expensive and lengthy ordeal, to the tune of around £482 (around \$966) and six months' processing time. *JM*

Inspiring extension

INSPIRING Vacations' 25% off sale has been extended, offering 10% off tours and up to an extra 15% saving when paying in full.

The sale has been extended to Wed, with a number of applicable Scandinavia tours on offer.

See **page seven** of today's *Travel Daily* for more details.

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Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including our **Business Events News** feature, plus a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

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Envoyage beefs up sales in New Zealand

ENVOYAGE NZ has appointed Jane Hawkins (pictured) to the role of national sales leader.

The position represents a return to travel for Hawkins, who was previously Air New Zealand sales manager - TMC before pivoting to the health and housing sectors.

"I'm looking forward to reconnecting with industry colleagues, supporting new members in enhancing their travel businesses, and contributing to the success of our hardworking and vibrant community," Hawkins said.



SL DMC targets Oz

SRI Lankan DMC Classic Destinations has appointed Alison Fleming as its new trade representative for the Australian and New Zealand markets.

The business specialises in providing wildlife photography and birding in the South Asian country under the brands Classic Sri Lanka and Classic Wild.

"We are excited to be expanding our reach into ANZ with Alison, her industry reputation, insights, and passion for high-quality travel perfectly align with our mission to showcase our award-winning experiences," said deputy general manager Rajiv Welikalala.

Classic Destinations is a subsidiary of the conglomerate Expolanka Holdings.

Baby Boomers still booming

BABY Boomers are the most active travellers in the country, planning 1.3 overseas trips a year, almost double the national average, according to Bunnik Tours' new report on the demographic's travel habits.

Older women were also shown to be taking charge of the travel decisions, accounting for nearly 70% of the holiday planning.

Baby Boomers are actively seeking cultural immersion, unforgettable destinations and stress-free travel experiences, the report noted, with the hottest destinations being Japan, Italy, Egypt, Spain and Sri Lanka.

More than 95% are interested in lesser-known regions including parts of Africa, South America and Central Asia, with primary motivations including experiencing local culture (93%).

"What this tells us is that Baby Boomers aren't chasing trends - they're chasing meaning," explained Bunnik Tours CEO Dennis Bunnik.

However, the biggest roadblock for travel for Baby Boomers were safety and political concerns (70%), followed by cost and budget, then weather events.



Meanwhile, the report also revealed that nearly half of respondents prefer to book with a human, with 74% trusting a traditional advisor over AI recommendations.

Close to 85% are willing to pay more for small group tours. *JHM*

Ningaloo adventure

ECLIPSE Expeditions has unveiled its seven-night itinerary, the 'Ningaloo Coast Voyager'.

With a maximum of eight passengers, the trip will take place on board *Eclipse*, a 50-foot sailing catamaran, sailing across the Gulf of Exmouth, the Mackerel Islands, Varanus Island and Montebello Islands.

Sabre inks new player

SABRE has signed a long-term agreement with new carrier AirBorneo (*TD 05* Jan), with the Malaysian Govt-owned airline adopting three of the technology company's services.

AirBorneo will use Sabre to manage flight schedules, codeshare agreements, pricing strategies and market insights.

"This [deal] will enable us to serve our first and future passengers effectively, make smarter business decisions, and set the stage for sustainable growth," the carrier said.

VV hunts new agency

VISIT Victoria is seeking to appoint a creative agency on retainer after a period of working on an ad hoc basis since 2020.

The change in agency tack coincides with fresh visitation targets laid down as part of its 2030 strategy (*TD 08* Oct 2025).

Goals for the successful agency include expanding the reach of the 'Every bit different' platform.

UA food for thought

UNITED Airlines is now allowing customers to order meals before flights through its website and mobile app.

The carrier said the change would give guests more choice, ensure they get the meals they want, and reduce food waste.

Customers can pre-order both fresh food and other retail items from five days up to 24 hours prior to departure.

Some meals may not be available under select conditions.



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Etti to lead carbon team

SUSANNE Etti (pictured) has been promoted by Intrepid to lead its new Climate Department, as the operator looks to accelerate its decarbonisation roadmap and plan the usage of its \$2 million Climate Impact Fund.

In the role of general manager climate, Etti will lead a new team and report to chief people and purpose officer Meegan Marshall.



Etti's responsibilities will include the rollout and implementation of a decarbonisation plan following the retirement of its carbon offset program, allocation of the new Climate Impact Fund, carbon and risk reporting, as well as helping to drive climate advocacy within the broader industry.

The latest development follows Intrepid seeking to hire a dedicated decarbonisation manager to support the delivery of measurable, business-wide carbon reductions (**TD 06 Jan**).

MEANWHILE, Zoe Tostevin has been appointed Intrepid's first-ever general manager of PR and communications for the ANZ. **AB**

VA delays pet push

VIRGIN Australia has delayed the wider rollout of letting pets fly in its cabins in order to extend its successful trial of the program.

The pilot (**TD 27 Nov**) has been extended until Jun, as talks with airport operators continue about adding more routes.

Virgin insists demand is strong, and that the policy is being well received on its trial routes between Melbourne and the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast.

Hyde coming to Bali

ENNISMORE'S Hyde brand will make its way to Seminyak in Bali as part of its lineup of 2026 openings, recently reaching the milestone of 200 hotel openings.

Set to open soon, the new hotel will hold 59 Balinese suites, with two having swim-up access.

The hotel will include a rooftop restaurant and beach club overlooking the Indian Ocean.

There will also be a Hyde opening in Perth (**TD 11 Oct 2023**), located on Pier Street in the CBD, which will boast a modern Greek restaurant.

Across APAC, Ennismore's brands will be coming to Vietnam, and The Maldives.



Window Seat

PHILIPPINE Airlines' new pre-flight safety demonstration video (**CLICK HERE**) has gone viral, after it was published on YouTube on New Year's Eve.

Since then, it has been watched by almost 5 million viewers, who have been left enthralled by the video's love triangle, which sees two men fall for the same woman.

The six-minute video delivers the mandatory safety instructions fliers are all too familiar with, while adding some spice.

Travel Daily will not reveal any spoilers about what happens in the end - this is one you need to see yourself - but the key message is that "care comes from the heart" - which also happens to be the airline's tagline.

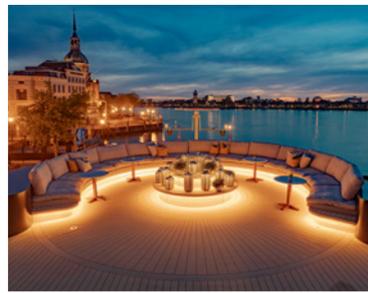


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Flix acquires stake

COACH operator Flix has announced a majority equity investment in digital airport transfer platform Flibco, which will see it brought within the firm.

The buy for the company, which recently expanded in Australia, will open up European growth.

Aussie passport holds firm

AUSTRALIA has retained its position as having one of the strongest passports in the world, with the latest global rankings by Henley placing the document in equal seventh spot.

Australia tied with Latvia, Liechtenstein and United Kingdom, offering Aussie holders visa-free access to 182 countries.

Singapore once again took out the top spot with 192, followed by Japan and South Korea in equal second position, and Denmark, Luxembourg, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland at third.

Commenting on the latest index,



IATA Director General Willie Walsh said that while a record number of people are expected to travel in 2026, further policy advancements were needed across digital border protocols.

"Many nationalities are seeing that a passport alone is no longer sufficient to cross borders," Walsh said, adding that as "many govts look to more tightly secure their borders, technological advances such as digital ID and digital passports should not be overlooked by policymakers". AB

QR fuel fee bungle

VIRGIN Australia is investigating Qatar Airways' recent addition of airline fuel fees on Velocity redemptions.

The fees were added last week and were removed by Fri.

For some of those redemptions, the surcharges increased the airline taxes, fees and carrier charges component to over \$2,000 for one-way Business Class rewards.

A Virgin Australia spokesperson relayed to *Travel Daily* that the Velocity Frequent Flyer Member Contact Centre will review all affected bookings over the next seven days.

If an overcharge is identified, the guest will be contacted directly, their ticket will be adjusted to the correct value, and a refund will be issued to the original form of payment.

Save on Japan trips

WORLD Expeditions has launched a special Jan sale on 15 of its guided and self-guided trips in Japan, with up to \$999 in savings available.

The 13-day 'Backroads of Japan' itinerary is included in the promotion, which departure dates in Apr, May, Oct and Nov, as well as the eight-day 'Nakasendo Trail Self Guided Walk', which runs from Mar to Nov.

Spots are filling quickly, particularly for the spring months - **CLICK HERE** to explore the sale, which ends 31 Jan.

Trip.com monopoly

CHINA'S market regulator has opened an antitrust investigation into Trip.com, suspecting the online travel agency of abusing its dominant market position.

The investigation under China's anti-monopoly laws has seen Trip.com's stock plummet.

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Euro events hike

THE events sector is continuing to make strong economic impacts around the globe, with Europe's event-driven tourism growing by 7% last year.

Belgium, the United Kingdom, and Ireland all stood out on the continent in event-related tourism spending, with expos seeing the most consistent rise.

Expos and trade shows rose by 6.2 percentage points year-on-year, with growth reaching 9.1% in Belgium, 5.7% in the Netherlands, and 4.5% in Ireland.

Meanwhile, sports accounted for around 57% of all tourism spending related to events in Greece, Ireland, and Sweden.

"As events continue to grow across Europe, their true value lies in the wealth they create for local communities and their capacity to help redistribute tourism activity across territories and seasons," chief marketing & communications officer Carlos Cendra said.

"That is why destination event management should be closely aligned with the destination's development and sustainability strategy," he added.

Cendra said destinations need greater metrics and predictive intelligence in order to most benefit.

CURTAINS CLOSE ON SXSW SYD

SXSW Sydney has been scratched off the NSW events calendar, with the organisers announcing the festival will not be going ahead in 2026 due to "prevailing market conditions".

The decision comes after the NSW Government abandoned its five-year contract with SXSW after just three years.

According to reports by *Mumbrella*, the \$12 million deal was inked in 2022, and stipulated for five events to be hosted between 2023 and 2027.

The government chose to invoke its break-free clause "following a review" of SXSW Sydney, it told *Mumbrella*, while acknowledging the week-long festival had "delivered cultural, economic and industry outcomes for the city over the past three years".

Between 2023 and 2025, SXSW Sydney generated an estimated



\$276 million in total economic impact, the organisers said in media statement.

The event attracted more than 63,000 out-of-region attendees and recorded 35% year-on-year growth in international visitation between 2024 and 2025.

"SXSW Sydney represented an ambitious and meaningful extension of the SXSW brand, and we are incredibly proud of what was built in partnership with the Sydney team, Destination NSW, and the broader creative

community," said Jenny Connelly, director in charge of SXSW.

The announcement attracted mixed reactions, including sharp critiques of SXSW from some.

Jessy Wu, founder of Sydney-based communications agency Encour, posted on her LinkedIn: "It was a scourge that hoovered up government funding, sponsorship, attention from corporates and [learning and development] budgets...all while delivering a conference that was, frankly, quite lacklustre." JM

NT events champion Braham passes away

FORMER Northern Territory Legislative Assembly member Loraine Braham is being remembered for her commitment to the Top End, including championing the building of the Alice Springs Convention Centre.

Braham died last week, aged 87, following an almost 15-year-career in the Northern Territory Government.

She served as speaker of the NT Legislative Assembly from 1997-1999, and aside from



backing Alice Springs' business events sector, also secured public and private funding for a railway to Darwin.

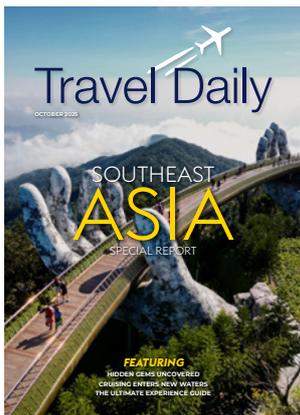
Tributes flowed in for Braham from around the Territory's political sector.

We're AIME-ing big

THE Asia Pacific Incentives & Meetings Event (AIME) is preparing to spotlight expertise across the business events sector, in what organisers say will be the "biggest show yet".

Event director Silke Calder told *C&IT* the event will feature more than 700 exhibitors, 700 hosted buyers, and over 20,000 pre-scheduled appointments.

AIME will run from 09-11 Feb at Melbourne's MCEC.

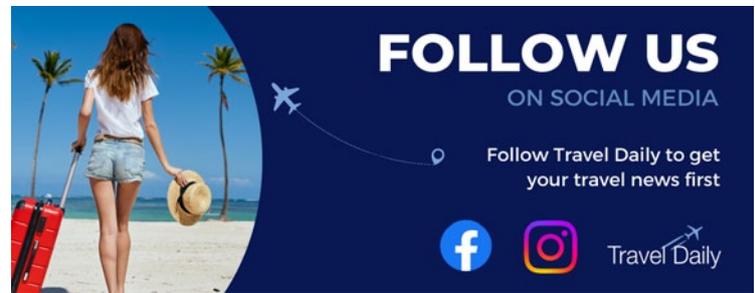


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Imagine Cruising has selected **Tony Roberts** as its new chief executive officer, taking over from Robin Deller after a three-month handover period. Roberts boasts more than 25 years of cruise industry experience, including vice president global commercial operations and guest services and head of UK and Europe at Seabourn, and vice president and managing director, UK and Europe for Princess Cruises. He also served as the chair of CLIA UK and Ireland.

Tourism PR firm **Anne Wild & Associates** has announced the promotion of **Grace Macdonald** to senior account executive. The Sydney-based professional has been working at the firm for the past two years as its public relations account coordinator.

Arizona State Governor Katie Hobbs has selected **Alix Skelpsa Ridgway** as the director of the **Arizona Office of Tourism**. Ridgway has been working at the destination marketing office since 2019, holding positions such as deputy director and acting director.

Tara MacLeod will become acting chief executive officer for this year's **Adelaide Fringe Festival**, taking over from Heather Croall, who held the top role since 2015. MacLeod will also continue to fulfill the duties of her current role as executive director - operations and finance. She has been with Adelaide Fringe since 2021.

Tourism and Events NT (formerly NT Tourism) has given **Rachel Telford** the permanent title of executive director of industry development, after she held the position in an acting capacity since Apr last year. Telford has fulfilled numerous roles with the destination marketing office over the past two decades, as well as a four-year stint at Tourism WA between 2008-2012.

Marriott International has made two appointments following the departure of key executives. **Satya Anand**, currently the president of the Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA) region, will shift to become president of US, Canada, Caribbean and Latin America. Additionally, **Neal Jones**, who was chief operating officer for EMEA, has now been promoted as the president for that region.

Chris Long has been announced as the new general manager of **Outrigger Phi Phi Island**. Long accepted the role in Apr last year, and will begin his duties when the resort opens next month. Long has worked with Outrigger since 2016 in senior culinary and operational roles across the Maldives and Southeast Asia.

Sussanah Teng has taken up the role of senior manager, regional events Asia Pacific at **Virtuoso Travel**. Teng has been apart of the luxury travel agent network for close to three years, initially as events and meetings planner, and most recently serving as regional events manager for Australia and New Zealand.

TM agents at the wheel



TRAVELMANAGERS Australia sent two of its personal travel managers, Kathy Millett and Roslyn Elsley (**pictured**), on a Wonders of South Africa famils with The Africa Safari Co.

"It's a privilege to attend famils, and Africa Safari Co certainly looked after us, offering an incredible opportunity to explore some fantastic accommodation and experiences for our clients," Elsley enthused.

The tour commenced in Johannesburg, then made its way to the Mabula Private Game Reserve in the nation's Waterburg region where a private ranger took the group across the

Savannah to get up close with rhinos, lions and other wildlife.

It finished with a trip to Cape Town in which guests were able to experience the seaside city, along with the Table Mountain and the prison on Robben Is. *JB*

Jeju hit "unsafe" wall

THE South Korean Government has acknowledged that Jeju Air's deadly crash in 2024 (**TD** 07 Jan 2025) was caused by an "unsafe" concrete mound at the end of the runway at Muan Int'l Airport.

Due to the wall's location, flight 2216 - which was forced to land with no gear and skidded on its belly - caused the death of 179 people - only two survived.

According to the government, had the aircraft landed on flat ground without obstacles, it would have likely skidded around 630m before coming to a stop, giving many passengers the opportunity to be rescued.

Last year, it was also revealed that the two black boxes on the jet stopped recording four minutes before the accident.

The airport has remained closed since the disaster.

A LOT of comfort

LOT Polish Airlines will update cabin interiors for its fleet of Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft.

Upgrades include seat enhancements, such as a six-way adjustable headrest, USB-C port and mobile phone holder.

This design palette has already been debuted in LOT's business lounges in Warsaw and Chicago last year and designs are inspired by the Polish countryside.

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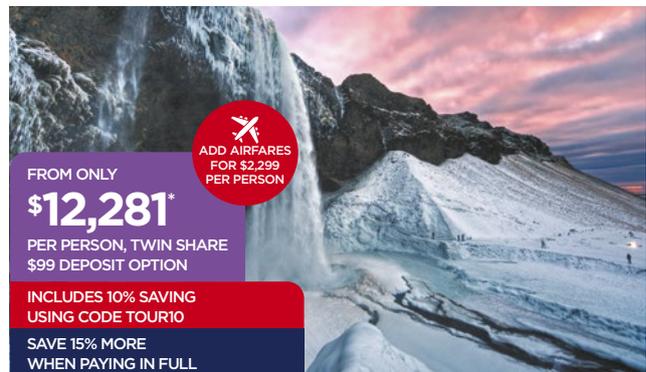
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