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Travel Daily

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news, plus a front cover from **A Force for Good**, and our **Corporate Update**.

ATC chaos at SYD

DOZENS of flights were cancelled and many more delayed at Sydney Airport as an air traffic control (ATC) shortage hit flights yesterday.

The airport was forced to halve the number of flights taking off for hours amid acute shortages in air traffic control staff, in the worst disruption to air travel in the country since the pandemic.

The *Australian Financial Review* reported at least 30 Qantas Airways and Jetstar Airways flights were cancelled because of the issues, along with about 10 Virgin Australia services.

Airlines for Australia & New Zealand (A4ANZ) chief executive officer Stephen Beckett told the *AFR* yesterday's chaos is not an isolated incident.

"There have been ongoing and protracted issues with Airservices' ability to staff the air traffic control towers."

"It's causing chaos, it's causing consumers a great deal of frustration," he said.

Airservices Australia said a number of its local staff are on short-notice sick and carers leave, and that it had briefed airlines on the need for spacing intervals ahead of time.

Passport rule confusion

EXCLUSIVE

FROM logistical headaches to travel plans being cancelled or rescheduled, trade professionals have expressed significant concerns with the new UK passport rules.

From 25 Feb, British/Irish dual citizens will not be able to use their Australian passport to enter the UK, forcing some to apply for a new British or Irish passport to visit the country (**TD** 15 Jan).

"This is going to cause unbelievable confusion and frustration, especially at airline check-in desks," Traveltoo MD Neil Wood told *Travel Daily*.

"If you were born in the UK, you can't relinquish citizenship, unlike most other nationalities."

Similarly, Travellers Choice MD Christian Hunter noted the "major headaches" for people with British heritage, such as those who were born in Australia to British parents who could be considered a British citizen, despite never having a British passport or visiting the UK.

Meanwhile, Main Beach Travel's Mike Dwyer was concerned that some clients may not have recorded their dual-nationality with advisors, making it difficult for the full extent of the problem to be identified.

"An airline may also uplift a passenger who presents an Australian passport without being aware of a client's dual-

nationality status," Dwyer said.

"It's crazy and unfair to introduce a policy like this at such short notice, especially when the processing time for new documents is so long," he added, noting that some may need to cancel their plans or change their itinerary to avoid the UK.

While individual passport and entry requirements are the traveller's responsibility, TravelManagers' (TM) Michael Gazal said "that there is still a level of confusion for both travellers and the travel trade".

The agency network is now liaising with ATIA to ensure its advisors are well-equipped to guide clients.

TM advisor Jessica Gravenor, who is a dual citizen that travels with two passports, described it as "a simple and easy process", saving travellers a lot of time, with no need for visa application.

"I'm looking forward to it being introduced, I think it will actually make travellers' and travel agents' lives easier," she said.

CLICK HERE for more. *JHM*

NCL unveils Aura

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has unveiled the largest ship in its Prima-class, *Norwegian Aura*.

The recently named vessel's first sailings will depart from May 2027, and can be booked now.

Aura will home port in Miami, and be able to accommodate 3,840 guests at double occupancy, larger than the 3,571-guest *Norwegian Aqua* and *Norwegian Luna*.

She will offer seven-day Caribbean sailings, with a call to Great Stirrup Cay, NCL's newly enhanced private island in the Bahamas (**TD** 09 Jan).

One of the highlights of *Aura* will be Ocean Heights, an open-air activities complex, which will transform from day to night using immersive lighting and LED projections - learn more in *CW*.

Eight weeks to go

THERE are only eight weeks left to get your ticket for A Force For Good, which will span two days in Mar - head to the **cover page** of today's *Travel Daily* for more.

AKL disruptions

CONSTRUCTION has begun on Auckland Airport's duty free upgrades, with completion on the works expected later this year.

Part of a wider overhaul of the airport (**TD** 28 Aug 2025), the project will deliver an upgraded duty-free space with a more modern retail environment, plus a broader range of brands and experiences, which will be progressively introduced.

Retail stores will continue to trade during the refurbishment via temporary shopping bays.

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VIRTUOSO

Industry welcomes EK's Finland flights

EXCLUSIVE

THE travel industry has hailed Emirates' planned launch of year-round flights to Helsinki, which are set to be implemented from Oct (**TD** 14 Jan).

Chief executive officer of Nordic tour operator 50 Degrees North Mari Rasanen told **Travel Daily** the flights will help position Helsinki as a practical gateway into Northern and Eastern Europe for a wide range of Australians.

"The new services are likely to broaden the traveller profile," Rasanen said.

"Emirates' network tends to appeal to premium long-haul travellers, while Finnair resonates with experience-led, destination-focused guests, supporting demand for higher-comfort journeys, travel outside peak summer, and more in-depth regional exploration - all of which align closely with how



we design and deliver our Nordic itineraries," she added.

"Improved long-haul connectivity is also likely to influence how advisors plan entry and exit points, and we expect this to translate into increased bookings for itineraries that start or finish in Helsinki, particularly across Scandinavia and the Baltics," Rasanen said.

50 Degrees North has recently added a small selection of Helsinki-based city breaks and short stays.

"Our product team will continue to develop Helsinki-led options that advisors can use either as stand-alone experiences or as

flexible add-ons to longer Nordic journeys," Rasanen added.

Adventure World (AW) also welcomed the news, with Nordics product manager Lubi Sibikova telling **TD** they will significantly reduce both travel time and complexity when flying to Helsinki and beyond.

"The timing of both Emirates and Finnair introducing these new routes also means that capacity will increase for winter 2026, which could potentially lead to more competitive pricing," she said.

AW offers tours in the region including 'Authentic Finland', 'Christmas in Lapland'. *MS/JB*

SHARE-ing wellness

LUXURY travel expert Ernestina Bertarini has announced the launch of SHARE, a dedicated B2B platform for travel agents.

The free-to-join educational platform offers online resources and the support of dedicated wellness specialists to help advisors navigate the complexities of wellness travel.

SHARE also links agents to contacts at high-end hotels, resorts and spas around the world - such as Chiva Som - which pay an annual fee to showcase their offerings.

Agents are also able to search for holistic practices by theme or by country.

Complimentary webinars, seminars, virtual site inspections, newsletters, events and industry rates will be offered to the trade on a monthly basis, with further educational programs available for an additional fee.

For more details about SHARE and how to join, **CLICK HERE**.



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Uniworld is golden

UNIWORLD Boutique River Cruises will be throwing a 'Golden Party' on board all 2026 sailings to celebrate its 50th anniversary, along with many other incentives.

The cruise line has launched a sale to mark the milestone, with up to 30% off on all departures this year for bookings made by 28 Feb - check it out [HERE](#).

Additionally, Uniworld Boutique River Cruises has announced two new mystery sailings for 2026, as well as the brand's first-ever Grand Mystery Cruise combining both departures.

Also new this year is the 50-night 'Rivers of the World' cruise, which spans three continents and four ships, plus additional Generations Collection family sailings and a raft of other new itineraries.

Azamara fleet upgrades

AZAMARA Cruises has announced the largest renovation investment in its history with the unveiling of Azamara Forward, a fleetwide transformation program.

The cruise line will add an all-new Penthouse Deck aboard Azamara Quest, featuring two new suite categories - Panorama and Grandview.

Offering the ship's most luxurious accommodations, the two Panorama suites will feature 270° ocean views, separate living, dining, and bedroom spaces, a walk-in closet, and an oversized spa-inspired bathroom.

Also housed on the new deck will be 10 Grandview suites, described as "a refined, contemporary retreat".

Meanwhile, fleetwide enhancements include refreshed staterooms, which will receive new furnishings, plush carpets, and a lighter colour palette; a



new Chef's Table experience; a reimagined cocktail lounge; and upgraded public spaces.

"Azamara Forward is Azamara Cruises' vision for thoughtfully elevating the onboard experience while honouring the hallmarks that have long defined the brand," said Dondra Ritzenthaler, CEO of Azamara Cruises.

"This transformation reflects years of listening to our guests and travel partners." *JM*



Window Seat

PASSENGERS on a recent Southwest Airlines flight were in for a bit of a surprise as they became the unwitting guests of a wedding.

Couple Tina and Roger tied the knot at the front of the cabin's walkway with one of the flight attendants assuming the role of celebrant.

While the passengers were all seated for the 'ceremony' and gave the newlyweds the deserved applause, some were in uproar as they couldn't go to the nearby toilet during this time, instead needing to make the long voyage to the facilities at the plane's rear.

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Royal adds Choice

ROYAL Caribbean has introduced Points Choice, a new loyalty initiative offering guests flexibility across Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises, and Silversea.

Launching this month, the program allows guests to earn points on any of the three brands and apply them to the loyalty program of their choice, regardless of which they sail with.

Guests can move points up to 14 days after their cruise.

CX turns new leaf

CATHAY Pacific touched down at Sydney Airport on Wed, displaying its 80th anniversary livery (**TD 09 Jan**) for the first time in Australia.

The aircraft made its way to Brisbane yesterday following a brief return to Cathay's air base in Hong Kong.

'Lettuce leaf' sandwich designs were used on Cathay Pacific jets from the 1970s to the 1990s.



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CORPORATE UPDATE

Sabre AI agents coming

SABRE Corporation has announced a strategic partnership with agentic AI travel platform, BizTrip AI, to develop a suite of AI-powered corporate travel assistants.

The digital agents will use natural language processing to handle complex booking workflows, real-time itinerary management, and intelligent policy automation for travel management companies, as well as airlines, hotels and corporate clients worldwide.

Sabre has also made a minority investment in BizTrip AI.

“Sabre’s travel mastery, pace of transformation, and extensive travel data fuel cutting-edge innovation for partners like BizTrip AI and their sophisticated



agentic solutions,” said Garry Wiseman, chief product officer at Sabre Corporation.

“Additionally, our minority investment reflects our confidence in the transformative potential of agentic AI and our commitment to fostering innovation across the travel ecosystem.”

Scott Persinger, co-founder and CTO of BizTrip AI, added: “The SabreMosaic platform and MCPs provide the scalable foundation we need to serve thousands of TMCs globally, while our agentic AI delivers the personalisation and automation that modern travellers and travel managers demand.” JM

CT starts ‘26 strong

CT PARTNERS has already welcomed its first new member of the year, with Sydney-based corporate agency World Business Travel becoming part of the buying network.

“By joining CT Partners, we are strengthening our buying power, expanding our supplier partnerships, and creating even greater value for our clients,” said Russel Amaral, MD of World Business Travel.

CT Partners CEO Matt Masson said the network was “incredibly proud” of the addition, pointing out the agency’s four-decade history of business success.

WWT biz upgrade

WENDY Wu Tours (WWT) is offering one-way business class upgrades from \$399pp across some of Asia’s most in-demand regions - China, Japan, Southeast Asia, India and Sri Lanka.

The ‘Ready, Set, Upgrade’ promotion is available with certain airlines departing from major Australian cities on select 2026 tours, including ‘Japan Uncovered’ and ‘Classic China’.

Availability is limited - **CLICK HERE** to find out more.

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KE pours on the prestige



KOREAN Air has unveiled its newly renovated Prestige East (Left) Lounge in Terminal 2 at Incheon International Airport. Spanning 1,553m² with 192 seats, the refreshed space is designed to have the look and feel of a luxury hotel lounge.

The venue offers a full range of amenities, including a buffet and live cooking stations, dining areas, a bar, and shower facilities, as well as dedicated work-friendly areas for business travellers.

Guests can also enjoy several interactive facilities, including the Ramyeon Library - a self-service station allowing guests to customise their own instant noodles with their preferred type and toppings, and cook them instantly at automated machines.

Operated in collaboration with chefs from the Grand Hyatt Incheon, the lounge also features Cooking Studio L’atelier, which offers participation-based classes

such as chocolate bark making.

In a bid to attract younger travellers and families, there is also a dedicated entertainment zone featuring photo booths, claw machines, air hockey and car racing game.

Korean Air has also integrated IT and data-driven services into its lounge operations, including real-time crowd monitoring, which uses data from automated entry gates to display current crowd levels, allowing passengers to choose less congested facilities.

Additionally, customers can be alerted when seats become available during peak hours.

Passengers who are using vouchers or mileage can secure access to the lounge in advance via the Korean Air website or mobile app, while first and Prestige class passengers, as well as SkyTeam Elite Plus members, retain priority access without the need for reservations. JM

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Railbookers and **Hurtigruten** have collaborated to offer several Norwegian trip packages that combine scenic rail travel with cruising. Booking before 25 Jan means clients can save up to \$1,100 as well as an additional \$400 for couples. The 17-day 'Grand Norwegian Circle by Rail and Coastal Voyage' offers savings of up to \$1,500 per couple. Journeys can be booked **HERE**.

IHG Hotels and Resorts has kicked off its summer sale with up to 25% off its Asia-Pacific destinations. The offer is available across several leading IHG brands including Regent Hotels & Resorts, InterContinental, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express. The sale ends 04 Feb and is valid for stays between 18 Jan and 31 Aug. Find out more about the offer **HERE**.

Clients can save up to \$3,000 per couple on **Collette's** guided tours across all seven continents. The sale is valid through to 28 Feb - use offer code 'NEWYEAR26'. Learn more **HERE**.

Rocky Mountaineer's Explore promo is running until 10 Feb, with savings on select Canadian routes in 2026. Those who book the SilverLeaf Service can save \$375 per person and \$750 per couple, while GoldLeaf bookings save \$550 per person and \$1,100 per couple. View more **HERE**.

With **Crystal's** Sail & Save offer, travellers can secure up to \$8,000 in savings per suite as well as \$500 onboard credit on select departures between now and 2028. The promotion ends 01 Feb - see **HERE**.

Qatar Airways is running a sale until 28 Jan. Economy fares start from \$1,709 return while business class starts from \$8,259 return. The offer is available for travel up to 30 Nov and applies to departures from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and more. Details can be found **HERE**.

World Expeditions has introduced savings of up to \$999 on 15 Japan tours, both guided and self-guided, from Mar to Nov. Walking and cycling trips range from introductory to moderate and cover regions such as Edo, Hokkaido and the Nakasendo Trail. The sale, which can be viewed **HERE**, ends 31 Jan.

Globus Family of Brands (GFOB) has launched a sale with savings of up to \$2,600 per person, as well as the option to fly free on select itineraries, across 2026 departures on Avalon Waterways, Globus, and Cosmos trips. The promotion includes Globus' 11-day 'Majestic Rockies' tour, departing 10 May - find out more **HERE**.

Emerald Cruises has introduced super earlybird sales for select departures in 2027. For trips over \$7,545pp*, travellers can fly for free, with savings of up to \$3,500 across the board. The offer ends 28 Feb. Bookings can be made **HERE**.

TravelManagers do Cannes



TRAVELMANAGERS (TM) advisors attended the annual ILTM Cannes expo last month to grow their skills in providing luxury options for their clients.

The four-day event in the French Riviera city saw TM engage in several meetings with leading luxury travel companies and hotel groups, alongside various networking opportunities at lunch and dinner functions.

NSW-based travel manager Danielle Goncalves expressed the importance of events in building her repertoire and connections in the sector.

"From global luxury brands to

incredible boutique properties around the world, my experience at ILTM Cannes has ensured that I am well-informed to think outside the box when a client is looking for a unique destination or experience," she said.

"These connections will come in handy when it comes to adding a personal touch to a client's stay."

Pictured: Kerstin Rhineland, Julia McLean, Emma Lucas, Claire Crosby, Cathy Moir, Stacey Lekias, Danielle Goncalves, and Julianne Gazal-Rizk. *JB*

New limits on power

SWISS International Air Lines and Lufthansa Group have introduced tighter powerbank laws, effective from yesterday.

There is now a maximum of two power banks per passenger with a power limit of 100 watt-hours.

They cannot be used or charged throughout the flight except to power essential medical devices, and must be stowed under the seat or in the seat pocket.

Beyond the norm

BEYOND Travel has reported 2025 as a strong year for bookings to Scandinavia and Iceland, with numbers set to rise for 2026 and 2027.

Last year, enquiries for trips to the region increased by 91% compared to the previous year.

The company credited the spike in sales to its partnership with Havila Voyages, which saw both companies come together to create tailored land and sea itineraries in regions such as Norway's coastline.