

Today's issue of TD
Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest industry news, plus a full page from Norwegian Cruise Line.

A4ANZ calls for action

THE Federal Government needs to urgently investigate why there are still air traffic control shortages impacting flights several years on from the pandemic, Airlines for Australia and New Zealand (A4ANZ) chair Graeme Samuel has asserted.



Comments from the A4ANZ's chair follow major delays and cancellations at Sydney Airport late last week after several air traffic controllers at the hub called in sick (TD 16 Jan). Citing similar disruptions experienced at Brisbane Airport in Dec, Samuel told *The Australian* that "heads must roll" at the top of Airservices Australia. "Airservices Australia has consistently blamed COVID but for heaven's sake, [it] finished in terms of the impositions three years ago," he argued. "The airlines had a much greater impact and yet they have managed to restore their services but Airservices can't seem to get it right," Samuel added. A4ANZ also suggested that "extraordinarily deficient management" had led Airservices to be ignorant of the burden absorbed by the carriers when mass cancellations take place, like the one last week in Sydney.

Her previous experience also includes stints with youth operator STA Travel. Yvette Thompson is the GM sales and marketing for ANZ.

"It's an extraordinary cost to the airlines...and it's not a diminished service [Airservices] provides, it's an atrocious service." A spokesperson for Airservices said it regularly meets with airlines with regard to air traffic controllers and future plans. Air traffic controllers are entitled to unlimited sick days to deter workers from coming to work if they are feeling fatigued. AB

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Intrepid sales move

INTREPID Travel has appointed Mariana Karavias to temporarily take on the sales head role for Australia and New Zealand.

Karavias has been with the Melbourne-based tour operator for close to four years, previously occupying the position of sales and customer service manager.

Her previous experience also includes stints with youth operator STA Travel.

Yvette Thompson is the GM sales and marketing for ANZ.



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Doha safety warning

DFAT has raised the travel advice level for Qatar to exercise a high degree of caution amid a deterioration of the security situation in the Middle East.

The country is frequented by Aussies transiting through to Europe with Qatar Airways and Virgin Australia, and is also a growing stopover destination. Smartraveller last week issued a broader warning for the Middle East, which may see the US soon launch military strikes on Iran.

Warnings were also issued for other popular travel hubs such as the United Arab Emirates.

NCL offers a million

VISIT Norwegian Cruise Line's Wave Hub to find out what's on offer this wave season, including booking incentives, new destinations and more.

Agents also have the chance to win their share of 1 million points when they book more NCL sailings - see page six for details.

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ACCC slams airport power

THE Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) has told the Senate that it “no longer acts as a restraint” on monopolistic behaviour carried out by the big four airports.

In a submission prepared by the competition watchdog, it claimed that major investment in technology and runways by SYD, BNE, MEL and PER will ultimately be passed on to consumers through higher airfares when airlines are charged increased fees to recoup construction costs.

“The existing framework, based on ACCC monitoring and reporting, no longer acts as a constraint on behaviour because there is less of a threat of regulatory action than there was when the regime was first introduced over two decades ago,” the ACCC told a parliamentary inquiry.

To remedy this, the ACCC wants to see a commercial arbitration



scheme introduced to address concerns with the major airports exercising heavy market power.

In response, Australian Airports Association (AAA) CEO Simon Westaway told **TD** that Australia’s existing airport regulatory framework continued to support strong outcomes for both passengers and airlines.

“Four separate Productivity Commission reviews have found the framework to be fit-for-purpose and confirmed that major airports have not misused market power,” Westaway said.

“The AAA notes the ACCC’s submission to the Senate inquiry and welcomes its focus on transparency and data-driven reform, including its [suggestion] to extend airline monitoring beyond 2026.” **AB**

Polar CEO passes

THE expedition cruise sector is reeling from the news that Polar Latitudes CEO Patrick Shaw (**pictured**) passed away last week.

“Pat was a dear friend, a trusted partner, and a true polar enthusiast who helped us shape our company into what it is today,” a condolences statement from Polar Latitudes read.

“His vision, leadership and spirit will remain a lasting part of who we are...and our top priority is supporting Pat’s family, our team, and our partners as we navigate this loss,” the business added.

Shaw was pivotal in a recent push on the Aussie market through a deal with Chimu Adventures & investment partner Nordic Hamburg (**TD** 22 Oct 2024).



Kilpatrick returns

FORMER Flight Centre Travel Group national sales leader Glen Kilpatrick has returned to travel as general manager - tours and wholesale for Luxury Escapes.

Kilpatrick was most recently the chief revenue officer at seniors care business Trilogi Care.



CLIA finalists named

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has announced the finalists for its 23rd Cruise Industry Awards, after a record amount of nominations.

A total of 83 finalists have been named who will be in the running to win one of 15 awards to be announced at a sold-out gala celebration in Sydney in Mar - read more in today’s **CW**.

New year, new adventures

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*As of 1 January 2026. Subject to change



Window Seat

A CALIFORNIA startup is in the throes of opening the first hotel on the moon - but booking a room will cost you.

Galactic Resource Utilization Space (GRU Space) plans to build accommodation by 2032, offering "views of the lunar landscape and Earth, along with envisioned experiences such as surface experiences including moonwalks, driving, golfing, and other activities".

Minimal deposits are up to \$1.5 million and although final pricing is not yet confirmed, reportedly room reservations could exceed \$15 million.

According to GRU, the hotels will be built on Earth and delivered by a lander, offering multi-day stays for groups of up to four people.

That's one small step for man, one giant leap for hotels.

Kerzner's Dubai buy

DUBAI'S trackside landmark The Meydan Hotel has reopened with a bold new look under the Rare Finds brand after being acquired by luxury hotels and resorts operator, Kerzner International.

The property boasts 284 redesigned spacious rooms and suites, each featuring floor-to-ceiling windows and private balconies with racecourse views, as well as two restaurants, a rooftop infinity pool, and more.

Seeking more from cruise



WINDSTAR'S brand-new yacht *Star Seeker* has debuted in Miami following delivery last month in Portugal (TD 17 Dec 2025).

The 112-cabin vessel was christened in a ceremony led by godmother Libby Anschutz - daughter of the cruise line's owner Phil Anschutz - who continued maritime tradition by breaking a champagne bottle against the yacht's hull.

Star Seeker will now embark on her eight-day inaugural journey from Miami to San Juan, calling at the Dominican Republic as well as the British Virgin Islands.

Afterwards, she will travel around the Caribbean and Alaska before heading to Asia to offer sailings across Japan, Thailand and Vietnam.

President of Windstar, Christopher Prelog, reflected on the impact of the cruise line on its guests and why it manages to continually attract travellers year in and year out.

"It's the way you feel when you are on board a Windstar ship," he said.

"The smiles from the crew, the genuine conversation, the kindness and caring that flows through the ship every day." JB

Pictured: *Star Seeker* sets sail after the christening.

HAL cultural tours

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has introduced more than 150 new cultural tours, introducing 'Meet the Maker' and 'Community Connections'.

Guests will be offered authentic, hands-on experiences with local culture, in places such as Tasmania, where Holland America will offer a 'Tassie Tasting Trail' 'Meet the Maker' excursion.

This will see passengers journey from Burnie to meet local artisans, such as House of Anvers chocolatiers, 41° South salmon farm, and more.

Kruger is flooded

SOUTH Africa's northeast and Kruger National Park is experiencing significant flooding, which has seen the nearby airport in Hoedspruit closed and many flights cancelled.

Evacuations are taking place across the region, with Aussies urged to follow local advice.

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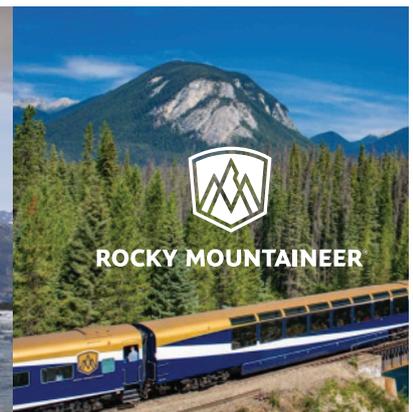
Win the Ultimate Rockies & Alaska Famil

HX Expeditions and Rocky Mountaineer are giving travel advisors the chance to join the ultimate famil — exploring the Canadian Rockies by rail and Alaska's Inside Passage by sea.

Simply book and deposit any HX Expeditions or Rocky Mountaineer journey between 17 November 2025 and 27 February 2026 to go in the draw to win a spot on this exclusive April 2026 famil.



Scan the QR code to register your bookings and increase your chances to win with every deposit made. Conditions apply.



Gen Z chasing quick trips

QUICK trips are set to be all the rage for Gen Zs this year, with one- to two-day getaways rising over the past three years, claims a new report from Airbnb.

The holiday rental platform, which has released its top five predictions for travel trends in 2026, believes the trend is largely being driven by sporting events and concerts, as well as the desire for destinations that can be easily reached via car.

Australia's regional centres are particularly popular for these shorter trips, including Launceston in Tassie, Victoria's Shepparton, Qld's Southern Downs and Albany in the West.

The report also predicted that more Aussies will ditch city breaks to go off-grid and spend more time in nature, with many heading to areas close to the coast and waterways.

Trending spots including Shoalhaven on NSW's South Coast, Tasmania's Glamorgan Spring Bay, and Busselton in WA. Abroad, this trend has seen



interest in US national parks surge by 35%, and bookings for nature and outdoor experiences outshine all other categories.

Additionally, Airbnb has reported that 65% of destination searches in the new year align with major events, with Aussies in particular flocking to the Australian Open and the Asian Women's World Cup.

Onto the next trend, and the solo travel craze has recently seen a large resurgence - one that shows no signs of slowing down in 2026, said Airbnb.

The platform credited the spike to recent online conversations around choosing self-discovery over relationship status, with lone travellers tipped to travel to various locations across Europe and South America.

Culinary-focused trips are also on the rise, Airbnb reported, with wine tours and cooking classes flooding travel inspiration pages across Instagram and TikTok.

Trending foodie destinations include Canberra, NSW's Bega Valley, East Gippsland, and Bundaberg in Queensland. *JB/JM*

GC's golden month

GOLD Coast Airport posted a record month in Dec, with a total of nearly 600,000 travellers passing through its terminals, including more Kiwis than any other Dec in history.

The airport's CEO Amelia Evans said that this was only a small highlight in a huge year, which saw the hub serve 6.2 million travellers during 2025.

"Overall, we saw 14% growth in international passenger numbers in 2025 compared to the year prior, which is a very positive sign," Evans said.

"Our focus continues to be on improving connectivity across all the regions we operate and these results for Gold Coast Airport are largely driven by the increased capacity and new routes added to the airport's network last year."

SA carriers team up

SOUTH African Airways (SAA) has formed a new codeshare partnership with privately owned South African airline, CemAir.

The agreement is exclusively domestic, and is designed to offer more convenience to travellers across South Africa.

Carriers will place their codes on each other's flights, allowing customers to book integrated itineraries through official websites, mobile apps, and authorised agents, with seamless connections and baggage checks.

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FEATURE

NCL is Doing Things Differently in 2026

With Ben Angell, Managing Director & Vice President, Asia Pacific – Norwegian Cruise Line®



As we kick off 2026, one thing is clear: this year is about momentum, connection, and making it

easier than ever for our partners to succeed. At NCL, we're starting the year with purpose and bold new initiatives that reflect who we've always been, while firmly setting our course for the future.

At the heart of this is the launch of our new brand identity, inspired by our iconic 90s tagline, "It's Different Out Here". More than a campaign, it's a recommitment to the values that made NCL an industry disruptor. From inventing Freestyle Cruising to pioneering private island experiences and solo staterooms, innovation, freedom, and flexibility have always been in our DNA.

In 2026, you'll see even more of it.

Our refreshed brand platform brings the NCL story to life—effortless escapes, authentic experiences, and the freedom to explore on your terms. Supported by a high-impact CTV, Out-of-Home, cinema, print, digital, and social campaign, "It's Different Out Here" speaks to the more personal, more meaningful way people want to travel today.

Just as importantly, we're also launching our most impactful WAVE season trade initiatives

yet, designed to put partners first. We've **eliminated all Non-Commissionable Fares (NCFs)** putting more money in your pocket and introduced our biggest **Partners First Rewards incentive** to date—one million points up for grabs.

Our philosophy is simple: when you succeed, we succeed. Beyond rewards and commission, we're committed to being the easiest cruise line to work with and the brand your clients love.

That's why we've introduced our all-new **WAVE Hub**—offering intuitive tools & refreshed marketing collateral, along with the backing of our Sales team and expert Australian-based Groups and Reservations team.

Locally, we're thrilled to have **Norwegian Spirit**® sailing Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific through to 2028, with buzz already building for our new four-day Tasmanian Taster cruises in January 2027—perfect for first-time cruisers and short escapes.

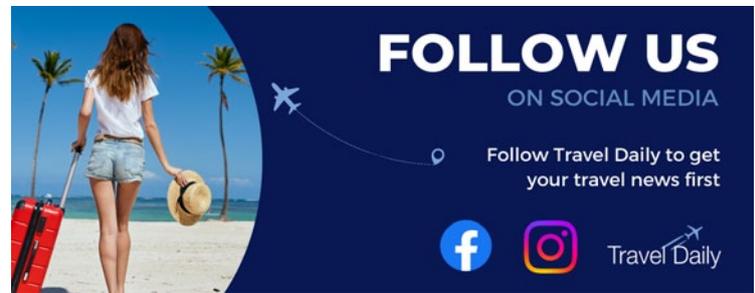
Globally, our 21st ship, **Norwegian Luna**™, sets sail this quarter, giving guests even more freedom to travel their way—exploring over 400 destinations worldwide with the flexibility and choice that define the NCL experience.

It's going to be a big year—we can't wait to share it with you.

Explore our new **WAVE Hub** and let our team help you make the most of 2026.



It's Different Out Here™



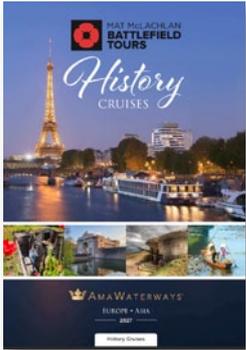
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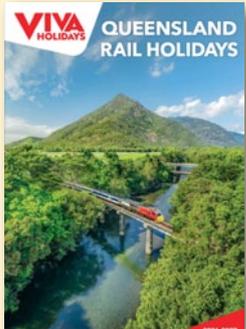
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Matt McLachlan - History Cruises 2027

Matt McLachlan Battlefield Tours has partnered with AmaWaterways to offer river cruise itineraries tailored to history buffs for the 2027 sailing season. The 12-page brochure details the various cruises on offer across Europe and Asia, each combining immersive history storytelling with luxury river cruising. Guests can expect exclusive battlefield touring, onboard seminars, all-inclusive access to AmaWaterways' shore excursions, premium dining, and more. Itineraries include the eight-day 'D-Day Anniversary: Normandy',

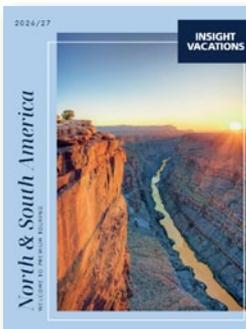
the eight-day 'Riches of the Mekong & Vietnam War', and more. The full brochure can be viewed [HERE](#).



Viva Holidays - Queensland Rail 2026/27

Viva Holidays has released a 36-page brochure showcasing rail journeys across the Sunshine State departing in 2026 and 2027. Readers can learn about itineraries that extend up and down Queensland's coastline, including a six-day 'Whitsunday Escape' tour, which includes travel on the Spirit of Queensland train and a platypus encounter, and a Whitehaven Beach cruise. There are also rail itineraries covering the state's outback and gulf savannah regions. Pricing details are included for each tour, as

well as highlights and inclusions. Agents and their clients can browse the brochure online [HERE](#).



Insight Vacations - Nth & Sth America 2026/27

Travellers can discover 24 escorted journeys across America's most sought-after destinations in Insight Vacations' latest brochure. Whether it is a journey through the paradise of the Hawaiian Islands, the majesty of the National Parks, or vibrant cities like New Orleans and New York, there is an option for everyone. Clients will travel in comfort with a smaller, more personal group of like-minded English-speaking travellers from all over the world, and can expect leisurely paced

itineraries, staying in quality hotels and enjoying authentic regional cuisine. Read the brochure [HERE](#).

Bali makes peace in Kuta



A NEW museum is set to be built on the location where the 2002 Bali Bombing attacks occurred, taking the lives of 202 people - including 88 Australians.

Slated for completion by late 2026, the project was first mooted last year, however there are now confirmed construction plans for the museum to operate where Kuta's thriving Sari Club once stood.

The Bali Peace Museum will commemorate and further strengthen ties between Australia and Indonesia.

"We are grateful and fully support the construction of the museum as a symbol of friendship and a reflection of history," said Australian consul general for Indonesia Jo Stevens.

The local government in Bali's Badung Regency said it hopes the upcoming site will attract visitors as a symbol for reconciliation, hope and peace.

"This museum will store important documents of the Bali Bombing tragedy, as well as being

a reminder to future generations to always maintain peace," said Gusti Anom Gumanti, the chairman for the regency.

"We want to ensure that the values of humanity and peace never fade." JB

Spain train disaster

A TRAIN on Spain's high-speed rail network derailed and collided with another passenger train, killing at least 20 people and critically injuring 100 more.

Spain's national train operator Adif reported that the train heading from Malaga to Madrid derailed in Adamuz near Cordoba, a province in the country's south, around 7.39pm local time and hit a train heading from Madrid to the city of Huelva.

The train bound for Madrid had 317 passengers on board.

The situation to rescue pax from the wreckage is currently ongoing, with the full number of travellers still trapped by the accident yet to be confirmed.

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