

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features five pages of news, including our **Corporate Update**.

## More Mauritius flights

**AIR** Mauritius will boost its Australian network with the addition of a third weekly flight on the Perth-Mauritius route, beginning Jul 2026.

The new service will depart PER at 11.35pm, arriving into MRU at 4.15am on Fri.

## Ormina webinar

**ORMINA** Tours is inviting agents to tune into a free 30-minute webinar on Wed 28 Jan at 4pm AEDT, focusing on Sardinia, which is emerging as a hot destination for 2026 - register **HERE**.

## Railbookers goes all in for '26

**RAILBOOKERS** Group has announced the biggest new product launch in the company's history, featuring expanded rail and sail itineraries along with a fresh selection of trips.

Now open for booking for travel dates through to early 2028, the release includes a new Norway Coastal Cruises collection, which combines sea voyages aboard the Hurtigruten line of ships with rail journeys, hotel stays and sightseeing through Norwegian cities and villages.

The collection initially features five itineraries that span 10-17 days, including multiple nights cruising the Norwegian coastline - find out more **HERE**.

Additionally, Railbookers has teamed up with sister brand Amtrak Vacations to launch Beyond the Match, a series of 14 itineraries that allow soccer fans to explore the US and Canada



during the FIFA World Cup 2026.

Ranging between five and nine days, the trips all begin and end in match host destinations to give travellers the opportunity to explore the cities, national parks, and scenery across the continent by rail - see the collection **HERE**.

Also included in the launch is the Italy Uncovered series, which highlights some of the country's hidden gems, as well as a collection of more than a dozen customisable trips pairing Italy and Switzerland.

"As we are coming out of our most successful year in company history, Railbookers and Amtrak Vacations are excited to introduce our newest itineraries," commented Railbookers Group president and chief executive officer Frank Marini. *JM*

## Sig Travel expands

**SIGNATURE** Travel Network closed out 2025 with record-breaking sales and a slate of new agency members.

Same-store sales were up more than 10% YoY for preferred partners, while the luxury advisor network welcomed 16 fresh members throughout the year, including three from ANZ - FirstClassTravel.com, Zepplin Travel, and House of Travel.

The latter marked one of the largest new additions to the network, with the NZ-based House of Travel boasting more than 60 retail travel offices.

Signature Travel Network also scaled its coworker base by 13% in 2025, bringing both veteran industry names and emerging talent to the organisation.

## TD returns on Tue

**DUE** to the Australia Day public holiday, *Travel Daily* will not be published on Mon 26 Jan.

We wish our readers a safe and enjoyable long weekend.

## Gate 7 wins Peru

**THE** Peru Export and Tourism Promotion Board (PROMPERU) has appointed Gate 7 as its travel trade and public relations representative in Australia.

The Sydney agency is tasked with boosting awareness and travel demand for Peru, while implementing a program of trade and communications activity tailored to the Australian market.

Between Jan-Nov 2025, Peru received 31,493 Australian visitors, representing a 29% increase YoY.



## FREE VIKING VIRTUAL EVENT

### Pharaohs & Pyramids

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Join our **FREE, interactive Viking Virtual Events** designed to immerse your clients in two of our best-selling voyages. These live guided experiences will inspire your clients and answer questions in real time.

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## Amangati journeys

**AMAN** at Sea has unveiled the inaugural itineraries for its first ocean-going motor yacht, *Amangati*, which launches in 2027 (**TD** 14 Jan).

Reservations are now open for the vessel's debut season of five-to eight-night Mediterranean journeys, which will explore the harbours of Amalfi, Saint-Tropez, Monte Carlo and Porto Cervo.

Guests will also visit beaches in the Balearics, Greek Islets, Iberia, Turkey, and the rarely-accessed port of Beaulieu-sur-Mer, and can enjoy a program of cultural, artistic and historical experiences.

Additionally, Aman at Sea will offer seamless arrivals and departures via *Amangati's* two helipads and six tenders.



## FREE VIKING VIRTUAL EVENT

### Mediterranean Odyssey

LIVE 11.00AM AEDT  
19 MARCH 2026

Every client you register and attends **earns you \$10 in Rewards** by Viking points. Plus, a **bonus \$50 in points** if your attendee makes a booking with you from the event.

**REGISTER**



## SPLENDOR OF CHINA

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## Ambassador is back

**MAGELLAN** Travel and Globus family of brands are running their Advisor Ambassador program again this year, with Lauren Kelly from The Travel Agenda as the successful applicant.

Following its debut in 2024, the program is a professional development opportunity for travel agents, with this year's iteration giving Kelly the chance to engage more deeply with the Globus family of brands team and gain in-depth product knowledge and experience.

Andrea McNamara from Cairns Business & Leisure Travel was last year's representative.



## Australia's OTP still low

**ON-TIME** performance for Australia's airlines averaged 73.8% for arrivals and 74.5% for departures last month, broadly in line with the marks set in the prior corresponding period.

Equivalent figures for Dec 2024 were 74.7% for arrivals and 74% for departures, while the cancellation rate was 1.9% for 2025, versus 1.8% for 2024.

However the figures were lower than the long term average arrivals for all routes (80.5%), while the departures figure was also lower than the long term average (81.6%).

Among major airlines, the Qantas network (Qantas Airways and QantasLink combined) recorded 76.2% for on time

arrivals while Virgin Australia recorded 73.4%.

The Qantas network also led the way in on time departures at 77.3%, while Virgin Australia scored 74.3%.

QantasLink recorded the highest percentage of cancellations at 3% during the month, followed by Qantas at 1.4%, and Virgin at 0.9%; Virgin's rural operation notably did not cancel a single service for the month.

**MEANWHILE**, domestic air fares for Jan show a drop from the prior months.

Business, restricted economy, and discount all show a continued downward trend since Oct. *MS*

## Ryanair CEO is cryin'

**THE** war of words between Ryanair chief Michael O'Leary and businessman Elon Musk has spilled over onto social media, in what the Irish airline's boss has dubbed a "Twitter tantrum".

Musk has even threatened to buy Ryanair as part of the spat, which started when his Starlink satellite internet constellation was dubbed by O'Leary as too expensive to install, and inhibitive of aerodynamics.

## Visit rural Victoria

**THE** Victoria Tourism Industry Council is urging travellers to visit its rural areas this long weekend, following the recent devastating wildfires in the state.

Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) chief executive officer Lisa Patroni said the emotional and financial toll on tourism businesses and communities is significant, and likely to continue for some time.

"We need to fully appreciate longer-term implications...VTIC is working with government and industry to better understand the full impact of these disasters and what support packages industry needs to recover and rebuild," she said.

## New Crowne opens

**CROWNE** Plaza Geelong has officially opened today, with the \$120m prime waterfront property offering 200 rooms and suites anchored by a dynamic food and drink offering just moments from the soon-to-open Nyaal Banyul Convention and Event Centre.

## Thai cruise boost

**THAILAND** is looking to boost cruise tourism through its Andaman Gateway initiative, featuring Phuket as a focal point, as part of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Triangle project.

Using the Andaman Gateway to connect Thai coastal areas with other regional cruise hubs like Langkawi and Sabang, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) aims to increase the region's appeal to affluent tourists through the development of a series of high-end, exclusive travel packages designed specifically for this sector.

In addition to focusing on the economic benefits of the marine tourism sector, TAT is also looking to ensure it is environmentally responsible.

## Explora unveils new Owner's Residence

**EXPLORA** Journeys has revealed a new interpretation of its exclusive Owner's Residence on *Explora III* and *Explora IV* through a collaboration with celebrated architect and designer Patricia Urquiola.

The addition of a second Owner's Residence to the ships reflects "a shared vision of modern ocean living", according to Explora.

With a large dressing room, a king-sized bed with fine linen, marble bathroom with bathtub and rain shower, designer furnishings in the living room, a large terrace and private butler, the residence accommodates up to four adults when connected with an Ocean Terrace Suite.

# WE ARE HIRING!

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## Window Seat

**THE** hunt for Australia's most iconic 'Airport Dad' is on.

What is an 'Airport Dad', you may ask? The person in your life who arrives painfully early, knows the terminal map by heart, and treats every flight like a high-stakes operation.

Bargain Car Rentals is on a nationwide hunt for Australia's 'Ultimate Airport Dad', calling on the country to nominate the person in their life who keeps their trip running.

One 'Ultimate Airport Dad' will take home \$10,000 cash, with weekly winners receiving the Airport Dad Pack, including custom-designed New Balance sneakers, a luggage tag, and a premium crossbody bag to make every journey seamless.

Those who think they know Australia's 'Ultimate Airport Dad' can [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

## Pickleball at Hilton

**HILTON** Melbourne Little Queen Street has announced the return of its pop-up rooftop pickleball court this summer, running from now until 28 Feb.

The experience is available to both hotel guests and the public, and will feature vending machines stocked with sparking flavoured water and ready-to-drink cocktails and mocktails thanks to a new partnership with Mountain Franklin.

## Tap into traveller demand

**AS CONSUMERS** embrace hotel hopping, 'set-jetting' and travelling for major events, Expedia TAAP has offered practical advice for agents.

To tap into travellers' desire for holidays centred around sports and concert events this year, Expedia TAAP exec Robin Lather suggested advisors "build a 2026 events calendar for your top city markets (concert tours, sports finals, festivals) and pre-package two to three date-flexible itineraries per event - then schedule CRM nudges 60-90 days out to capture early demand".

Travellers are also now booking multiple hotels tailored for different purposes during their holidays, giving agents the opportunity to mix and match accommodation packages.



Lather suggested agents pitch a two-property plan by default, such as a design-forward stay with a wellness resort.

"Use the maximum price toggle to quickly spot the most cost-effective nightly splits and secure the best value," he said.

Lather also advised agents to stay on top of travel-related pop culture trends, such as the rise of *White Lotus* and *Emily in Paris*.

"When a destination gains attention, consider sharing quick tips like must-see neighbourhoods, photo-worthy spots, and local dining recommendations to help travellers make the most of their visit," he said. *JHM*

## Argentum takes off

**NEW** Alaska-based airline Argentum Airways completed its first commercial flight on 20 Jan.

The airline is a joint venture between Sterling Airways and Alaska Seaplanes, with the first revenue service taking passengers from Anchorage to Kenai.

The carrier is a subsidiary of another Alaskan regional airline, Aleutian Airways, which is also owned by the SterlingAlaska Seaplanes joint venture.

Although Alaska is reliant on air travel, Ravn Alaska, formerly the states's largest regional carrier, shut down five months ago.

## Kakadu Dundee

**KAKADU** Tourism has launched a new self-guided tour celebrating the 40th anniversary of *Crocodile Dundee*.

The route follows in the footsteps of the film's protagonist, outback bushman Mick Dundee, stopping at locations featured through the iconic movie, including multiple rock art sites, Cahills Crossing, and Gunlam Falls. [Click HERE](#) for more details.

## Tapestry JPN debut

**HILTON** has announced the opening of The Green Leaf Niseko Village, Tapestry Collection by Hilton in the Niseko Village Ski Resort in Hokkaido, marking Tapestry brand's debut in Japan.

The 200-key property is located at the foot of Mount Niseko Annapuri, offering direct ski-in/ski-out access to the resort's world-class slopes and an indoor-outdoor onsen fed by a natural hot spring.

The new hotel's signature restaurant Goshiki offers both Japanese and Western-style dishes, while lobby lounge Tomioka White serves coffee and cocktails by a fireplace.



## Explore with Viking

**VIKING** has announced two complimentary Virtual Explorer sessions to help advisors boost future bookings.

Taking place Thu 26 Feb at 11am AEDT, the first session will focus on the line's 12-day 'Pharaohs & Pyramids' sailing, while the second session on Thu 19 Mar at 11am AEDT will cover the 'Mediterranean Odyssey' voyage.

Agents will receive \$10 in Rewards by Viking points for each client who attends one of the sessions via their referral - register [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).



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Travel Daily

## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Mega-risks facing biz travel

**FROM** extreme weather and geopolitical conflicts to sudden changes in visa rules, BCD and Advito have identified the six “mega-risks” that will become part of the business travel landscape this year.

Other challenges the industry will face include cyberattacks involving AI misinformation, health outbreaks and capacity shortages during big events.

Meanwhile, the economic landscape will be tough this year, with Oxford Economics expecting global GDP growth to hit just 2.6%, the slowest pace since the GFC outside of COVID.

In terms of the 2026 price forecast, the report predicted that global average hotel rates will rise by 4.9%, and rental cars



and ground transport will go up by 2-4%, although airlines will only increase by 1.1%.

To manage the rising costs, businesses are already opting for more ride-hailing options over traditional rental cars.

In this environment, businesses will rein in their travel budgets, although many industries still value in-person meetings.

The report concluded that the successful companies in business travel will be those who “treat it as a strategic function rather than just an administrative cost”, using agility, real-time intelligence and solid risk frameworks. *JHM*

### Unforgettable perks

**UNFORGETTABLE** Travel Company has expanded its global employee benefits scheme, which includes its Australian team, to enhance support across wellbeing, family life, long-term loyalty, and personal development.

New to the program is a ‘Family Horizons Fund’, which offers up to £2,500 (approx. A\$5,000) towards fertility treatment, adoption or surrogacy; enhanced family leave, including five months’ fully paid maternity and adoption leave and expanded paternity leave; a business travel childcare allowance; and even ‘pawternity’ leave for pet owners.

### Connect with DMS

**DESTINATION** Marketing Services (DMS) Connect is returning to Auckland on 02 Feb, Melbourne on 03 Feb, and Sydney on 05 Feb.

The event gives agents an opportunity to connect with a curated selection of global event specialists across both corporate and high-end leisure travel.

DMS Connect will also feature a strong international hotel presence - register **HERE**.

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### Rockhampton gem sold



**THE** Mercure Rockhampton has been sold to Sydney-based investment firm Felix Capital, marking one of Australia’s first major hotel transactions to be completed in 2026.

One of the biggest hotels in the region, Mercure Rockhampton overlooks the Fitzroy River on Victoria Parade, and features 74 guest rooms ranging from 24-47m<sup>2</sup>, all with private balconies.

The property, which recently underwent a multi-million-dollar refurbishment program, also includes a conference and meeting centre, restaurant and bar, pool, gym, and on-site parking.

The accommodation will continue to operate under the Mercure brand, with Accor as franchisor and La Vie Hotels and Resorts remaining as the operator.

“This acquisition aligns with our strategy of targeting well-located assets in resilient regional markets,” said Felix Capital’s Michael Maroun.

“Rockhampton is a tightly held

market with established corporate and leisure demand, and we see scope for long term value-add via a potential combination of operational initiatives and the possibility of future development opportunities,” he added.

According to CBRE Hotels, which managed the sale, the property attracted record levels of enquiry and multiple offers.

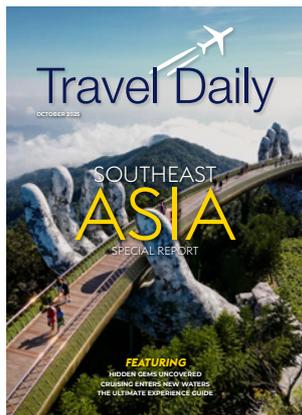
“This result reflects the depth of capital and ongoing demand for high-quality regional Queensland hotel assets,” CBRE Hotels’ Hayley Manvell said. *JM*

### Updated ANA fares

**ALL** Nippon Airways (ANA) has released an updated fare sheet for Australia to Japan, which comes into effect immediately.

The update includes a day-of-week surcharge for business class flights departing SYD only, and seasonality changes for flights taking off from PER.

See the new fare sheet **HERE**.



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**SOUTHEAST ASIA SPECIAL REPORT**  
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## SPECIALS

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**Aircalin** is offering exclusive deals for travel agents on flights to Noumea. Advisors flying from Sydney or Brisbane to the New Caledonian capital will only pay \$235 return (plus taxes), and can take a travel companion for only \$80 more. Fares are valid until 01 Dec 2026. To make a booking, email [reservations@aircalin.com.au](mailto:reservations@aircalin.com.au).

**Viking's Explorer Sale** is on until 31 Mar. Travellers who book river cruises can save up to \$5,000 per couple, while those embarking on ocean voyages can save up to \$2,500 per couple. Viking also has fly free offers available on both river and ocean cruises. See more [HERE](#).

**AAT Kings** has launched deals on two of its marquee tours. The four-day 'Kings Canyon Uluru and Kata Tjuta' departing 17 Mar has been slashed from \$2,059pp down to \$1,956pp. Additionally, the seven-day 'South Australian Eyre Peninsula Escape' departing 26 Apr was \$5,215pp and is now \$4,433pp. Learn more [HERE](#) about the limited-time offer.

**Ethiopian Airlines** is marking its 80th anniversary with a special promotion, available until 08 Apr for travel between 01 Feb and 30 Jun. The 80-day campaign features fare discounts of up to 80% for selected flights from Singapore to Africa and South America. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

**Virgin Voyages** has launched stackable wave offers on all Caribbean round trips from Miami and San Juan, for bookings made by 29 Jan. Guests can receive up to \$300 ship credit on eligible cabins, as well as enjoy up to \$400 in free drinks. Find out more [HERE](#).

**Celebrity Cruises** is allowing travellers to save up to 75% on a second guest, plus up to \$1,000 off per stateroom on sailings booked before 28 Jan. Eligible itineraries include an eight-night Greece, Malta and Turkey sailing departing 19 Jun, now priced from \$3,869, and an 11-night New Zealand cruise departing 17 Oct, available from \$3,299. See more [HERE](#).

**APT Luxury Cruises** is offering savings for couples throughout 2026. Clients can save up to \$7,000 on sailings through the Douro Valley, the WA coast, Queensland's Savannah, Western Canada, Africa as well as South America and the Galapagos islands. See the deals [HERE](#).

On 04 Feb, **Perth Airport** is launching its Flight Frenzy sale running until 10 Feb. Huge discounts will be on offer from over 15 major airlines including Qatar, Singapore and Jetstar. The sale will go live [HERE](#).

**Contours Tours** is running a 19-day adventure in Sep to the three Guianas. The trip has been reduced from A\$24,839 to A\$21,590pp twin share. Travellers will experience the highlights of Guyana, Suriname and French Guiana. You can view the full itinerary [HERE](#).

## Sydney steps into the surreal



**DIGIPARK**, a new immersive attraction, has opened in Sydney's CBD with 19 multi-sensory experiences.

The opening marks the debut of the concept in Australia, with several locations already established across Asia.

Visitors can journey through a 3D holographic tunnel, step into a giant kaleidoscope, turn themselves into 'tangible creations' using a cutting-edge 3D scanner, and use an animation pen and scanner to bring their favourite drawings to life.

The park also includes glowing planet rooms, cosmic mirror mazes and an 'orbital cinema.'

DigiPark's head of sales and marketing Jacques Wong believes the immersive entertainment venue is well-suited to the Australian market.

"We're combining world-class immersive installations with metaverse-inspired digital environments, offering a completely new way to experience art, science and creativity, which is sure to appeal to locals and tourists alike," said Wong.

"DigiPark has something for all ages and has been captivating people across the globe by bridging immersive art with meta-universe technologies, and we can't wait for Australians to join in the wonder."

DigiPark is located on level five of Westfield Sydney, Pitt Street Mall, and is open seven days between 10am and 10pm. *JB*

## Concorde's big day

**THIS** week, British Airways is celebrating 50 years since Concorde's first commercial flight by partnering with Royal Mint UK and Royal Mail Official to release a new 50p coin and a set of 12 collectable stamps.

While the supersonic aircraft retired from service in 2003, it was considered a massive feat of modern engineering when it launched in 1976.

## Happy days in Fiji

**TOURISM** Fiji has rolled out the next iteration of its global brand campaign, 'Where Happiness Comes Naturally' (*TD* 27 Jan 2023), which invites travellers to slow down and reconnect with simple joys - watch the ad [HERE](#).

Got a confidential tip? Contact Travel Daily via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#) 