

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our Sustainability page, plus a full page from G'Day Group.

Meet 'the' Wendy

INDUSTRY leader Wendy Wu will be touring around the country next month in a series of exclusive in-person events for travel agents, discussing the brand's top tours, experiences and destinations for 2026.

The Wendy Wu Tours team will also share their best selling strategies and expert insights with agents.

Cities include Geelong, Mornington, Newcastle, Wollongong, Maroochydoore, Carina, as well as an online event on 25 Feb at 11am AEDT.

"These events offer a fantastic opportunity for guests to learn directly from our experts, hear insider perspectives, and ask the questions you don't often get the chance to," Wu said - click [HERE](#) to register your spot.

Nat Geo 60 yr sale

NATIONAL Geographic-Lindblad Expeditions is celebrating 60 years of expedition cruising by offering significant discounts.

Travellers can access up to 20% savings and 50% reduced deposits on selected 2026 and 2027 expedition voyages when booked by 09 Feb.

The brand marked 60 years after its first non-scientific voyage to Antarctica on 23 Jan.

G appoints local sales head

EXCLUSIVE

G ADVENTURES has welcomed on board Tarryn Mitchell as national sales manager for Australia and New Zealand.

In her new role, Mitchell will oversee the ANZ sales team, lead the regional sales strategy and work closely with agency partners alongside director of growth, Gregg Downward.

"Investing in experienced, trade-focused leadership is critical as we continue to grow in Australia and New Zealand," he said.

"Tarryn's depth of experience gives her a strong understanding of what agents need to succeed, and we're excited about the value she'll bring to our partners."

Prior to joining the adventure operator, Mitchell worked at Flight Centre Travel Group for 20 years and built a global career in hospitality and managed hotels across multiple int'l markets.

MEANWHILE, G Adventures has unveiled '15 to anywhere', a new rewards program giving agents the opportunity to earn a free trip valued at \$3,000 by booking 15 travellers.

Agents are able to choose any tour from G Adventures' range of 500 trips up to \$3,000.

If advisors select a trip above the amount, they are only required to pay 50% of the difference in price.

In addition, agents are able to invite up to three friends, who will each receive 25% off the price of the same adventure.



The sales period runs from 01 Jan to 31 Dec 2026, with all sales from the beginning of the year backdated and counted towards the incentive.

Passengers must be booked on G Adventures tours valued at \$1,000 or more, excluding National Geographic Signature with G Adventures and The G Expedition ship. *JHM*

Qantas policy win

THE Federal Department of Finance has opted to continue allowing public servants to accrue status credits for plane travel, despite strong objections from Virgin Australia.

While politicians can continue to access status credits for work-related travel, the government did however confirm that airlines cannot offer bonus status credits or promotional incentives tied to official government duties.

The decision is a major blow to VA, which had hoped a policy change would break Qantas' current stranglehold on government bookings.

VA had previously argued that Qantas' dominant loyalty position was creating unfair incentives for public servants to preference the Flying Kangaroo instead of pursuing the cheapest fare.

Say g'day to savings

TRAVELLERS can currently save 25% on selected stays at G'day Group's Discovery parks around the country.

The promotion is available to book until 28 Feb and applies to properties at Rottnest Island, Byron Bay, Kings Canyon & more. See [page eight](#) for more info.

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VA proposes routes

VIRGIN Australia is seeking to permit China Southern Airlines to codeshare on several routes to New Zealand and Vanuatu.

In a submission to the International Air Services Commission, Virgin Australia requested approval to codeshare with the Chinese carrier on services from the three east coast Aussie capitals to Queenstown.

Flagged to commence in Mar, VA's codesharing proposal also included plans to operate between four and 12 flights a week between Brisbane and Port Vila in Vanuatu.

China Southern and Virgin Australia signed a codeshare agreement late last year (**TD 09** Dec 2025), which at the time also called out Darwin for future cooperation flights.



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Expedia TAAP

Spencer docks in Melbourne



SPENCER Travel Holdings has officially welcomed its Melbourne team to the family this week.

Founder and managing director Penny Spencer marked the occasion by hosting a special welcome lunch with her growing team, providing an opportunity for staff to connect and celebrate the beginning of a new chapter.

"There is strong enthusiasm across the business as everyone looks forward to working closely together," Spencer said.

Pictured enjoying the brand-new office location are: Janine

Bubb, Penny Spencer, Debbie Kotton, Amy Baring, Kate Roberts, Tamara Ryan, Barclay Cox, and Kellie Anderson. **AB**

Diamond adds venues

PRINCESS Cruises has added two specialty dining venues to its Japan-based ship *Diamond Princess*, with reservations now open for the Makoto Ocean and Princess' signature steakhouse Crown Grill.

Both dining venues are priced at US\$55 per person and are included for guests who book the Princess Premier package.

Hyatt opens Algarve

HYATT Hotels Corporation has opened the Hyatt Regency Vilamoura Algarve in Portugal.

The launch follows the rebranding of the former Dom Pedro Vilamoura, and is being marketed as an upper-upscale coastal retreat located away from Praia da Falesia beach.

Guests can choose from 257 rooms and 21 suites across six categories, with amenities including wireless high-speed internet and keyless access.



3rd flight to Mauritius

AIR Mauritius has confirmed a third weekly service between Perth and Mauritius will return in Jul.

The additional Thu night service is designed to enhance travel options for the Australian market and support the carrier's improved onward connections to popular destinations across both Africa and Europe.

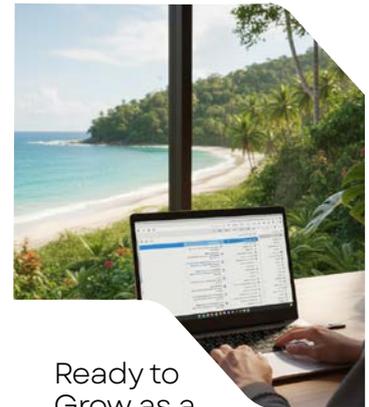
Air Mauritius has previously promoted the virtues of the Indian Ocean island destination as an alternative to luxury leisure spots like the Maldives, as well as being an emerging stopover hub for travel to South Africa and European capitals like Paris.

The current aircraft used on the PER-MRU-PER route is the A330-900 Neo, featuring 28 business and 260 economy class seats.



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Fraudulent agent sentenced

A TRAVEL agent who admitted to ripping off eight customers to the tune of \$77,000 while handling several international bookings between 2023 and 2024 has avoided further jail time.

Travel World Sydney operator Zahra Rachid walked free from Downing Centre Court after serving a minimum six-month jail term, with magistrate Susan Horan noting guilty pleas to eight counts of fraud, a lack of criminal history, and the agent's "deep and genuine" remorse.

In her defence, Rachid partially blamed the impacts of the pandemic and conflict in the Middle East as factors leading to her fraudulent behaviour.

"This was an extraordinary, admittedly serious, criminal response to an extraordinary set of circumstances," her defence team told the court.

Reflecting on the sentencing, Australian Travel Industry



Association (ATIA) CEO Dean Long told *Travel Daily* that there is no place in Australia's travel industry for fraud or criminal behaviour.

"This case is a strong reminder of why travellers should only book with ATIA-accredited travel businesses," Long said

"If a business isn't accredited, consumers should stop and ask why," he added.

Travel World Sydney's ATIA accreditation was cancelled in Jul 2019 after the business failed to meet renewal requirements, including the provision of financial documentation.

Rachid was also ordered to repay \$44,800 to the victims who had not been compensated by their banks. AB

Signature feels HoT

HOUSE of Travel (HoT) in New Zealand has formally joined the Signature Travel Network, bringing 60 retail locations to its global luxury membership.

"The group is excited to join... and is looking forward to working closely with the wider Signature team and associated businesses," said David Fordyce, chief operating officer at HoT.

"As New Zealand's largest independent travel business, we sell amazing global experiences to our customers and the synergies that Signature will bring to our VIP client base will be invaluable."

The development follows HoT's TravelManagers division signing a strategic agreement with Signature (TD 03 Feb 2022).

MEANWHILE, the Signature Travel Network has also signed up two agencies in Australia; Firstclass.com.au in Sydney and Zeppelin Travel on the Gold Coast.

Support to agents includes AI assistance and marketing tools.

Saudi clocks 122m

SAUDI Arabia recorded an estimated 122 million tourists in 2025, marking a 5% increase on 2024, according to preliminary data released by the country's Ministry of Tourism.

Total tourism spend also reached US\$81 billion, up 6% from 2024, as the once reclusive kingdom advances towards its ambitious 2030 target of 150 million annual visitors.

The numbers follow the new Saudi-backed carrier Riyadh Air taking off on its debut flight from Riyadh to Heathrow in Oct last year (TD 09 Oct 2025).

Riyadh Air has also hinted at launching a link from Riyadh to Australia down the track as it expands its global network.



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*As of 1 January 2026. Subject to change



Altura integrates

ALTURA Travel Group has launched a new tech-integrated representation model, lending further help to Australian travel professionals with how they work with global Destination Management Companies (DMCs).

The move aims to bridge the gap between operational B2B quotes and web-ready, on-brand B2C content through a custom-built workflow model.

Every DMC quote is reviewed against the original brief and communications under the new model, before being restructured into clear, client-ready assets.

“Critically, the content is rewritten to match the company’s branding, language and formatting style,” Altura said.

The trade hub also includes sample itineraries, destination planning guides for 2026 and 2027, and a structured DMC project builder designed to reduce back-and-forth and improve briefing quality.

Aviation leader honoured

FORMER Virgin Australia Managing Director Paul Scurrah has received a Member of the Order of Australia for recognition of his leadership at the airline during the COVID pandemic (**TD** breaking news yesterday).

Scurrah described the moment as “the proudest achievement of my career” in an interview with *The Australian*, reflecting on how he ensured “that there was a future for the people of Virgin so that the airline could compete with Qantas going forward and ensure that Australia had a robust competitive domestic industry”.

The aviation veteran is also well-regarded at the carrier for having built strong momentum across operations, employee engagement and customer satisfaction during his leadership.

In a LinkedIn post yesterday, Scurrah thanked “the wonderful people and staff I have led over the journey who have



delivered amazing results, sometimes in unimaginably tough circumstances”.

Scurrah most recently took on the role of managing director at Fiji Airways, assuming the role from the long-serving leader Andre Viljoen (**TD** 08 Oct 2025).

During his 30-year career in travel, tourism and aviation, Scurrah has also held senior roles in companies including Flight Centre Group, Qantas and Tourism Queensland.

He was also a founding executive and investor in the recently bought Rex Airlines. *JHM*



Window Seat

FROM a wedding dress related to a broken marriage, a record of failed songs and even a dead plant, the Museum of Personal Failure in Vancouver is celebrating the mistakes of everyday people.

Inspired by her own heartbreak, curator Eyvan Collins decided to create the space to explore what constitutes failure and garnered submissions from the public in online forums.

Each item is accompanied by a written explanation from the person who submitted it.

One exhibitor submitted a long chain of printed job applications on a wall with a blurb that said: “Sitting naked in my bedroom, just finished my 73rd Indeed application - I hope I get struck by lightning.”

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Crystalbrook Aurora on top



CRYSTALBROOK Aurora, Crystalbrook Collection's first Canberra property, topped out last week when it marked a significant milestone before its 2027 opening (**TD** 21 May 2025). The new phase was celebrated with the construction tradition of placing a tree on top of the complex, with the native Australian wattle tree chosen to symbolise renewal and resilience for the hotel.

The ceremony was joined by key figures including Crystalbrook Collection's CEO Geoffrey York, Ahmad About, group chief financial officer of Ghassan About Holdings, as well as ACT Chief Minister Andrew Barr.

York expressed the importance of topping out in ensuring the hotel's delivery.

"Topping out is always significant, particularly as we

enter a new city for the first time," he said.

"The ceremonial tree placing reflects the nature-led inspiration behind Crystalbrook Aurora's design, as well as our broader ethos of responsible luxury."

"We're proud of the project's progress and look forward to opening a hotel that contributes meaningfully to Canberra's hospitality and cultural landscape in early 2027."

The hotel will include 225 rooms as well as 11 suites, alongside the Eleme Day Spa, swimming pool, gym, sauna and a house-operated restaurant on the 10th and highest floor.

Alongside this will be the privately-run Japanese restaurant Raku on the hotel's ground floor.

The 300-seat restaurant boasts a sushi bar as well as four private dining areas. *JB*

ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



AS WE step into 2026, there's a genuine sense of momentum across the travel industry. I've been asked a lot over the past week what 2026

might hold, and the short answer is 'opportunity', but only for those who are prepared, connected and backed by strong industry leadership. Conversations across our network point to travellers continuing to seek value, expertise and confidence in who they book with.

That's exactly where professional travel advisors and accredited businesses shine.

One of the most encouraging signals to kick off the year has come from Norwegian Cruise Line, which has started Wave Season 2026 by doing something the industry has long called for - recognising, rewarding and backing travel agents in a meaningful way.

NCL's decision to eliminate non-commissionable fares is a genuine circuit-breaker.

Making the entire cruise fare commissionable (excluding taxes and fees) isn't just a commercial adjustment; it's a clear statement that travel agents are valued partners, not an afterthought.

Combined with its largest-ever Partners First Rewards incentive, this is a powerful acknowledgement that when agents are supported, the whole sector benefits.

This is exactly the kind of leadership our industry needs more of - partners who understand that trusted advisors drive conversion, confidence and long-term customer relationships.

It also reinforces something ATIA has been consistently advocating for - fairer commercial settings that recognise the role agents play in managing complexity and delivering value to consumers.

As 2026 gets underway, the importance of a strong, unified industry voice has never been clearer. From aviation reform and competition, to workforce sustainability and consumer protections, momentum doesn't happen by accident.

It's built through collaboration, advocacy and a shared commitment to lifting standards across the sector.

That's why being part of ATIA matters. Membership isn't just about accreditation. It's about influence, protection and ensuring the industry moves forward together.

We're already seeing that collective effort translate into outcomes, and the year ahead presents a real opportunity to build on that progress.

If the opening weeks of 2026 are any indication, this is a year where those who invest in partnerships, professionalism and advocacy will be best placed to thrive.

And it's great to see industry leaders stepping up and setting the tone early.

Here's to a strong start and an even stronger year ahead.

Scottish cruising

CRUISE Traveller has announced sailings of northern Europe for the 2027 season on board the *Hebridean Princess*.

The 48-guest ship will offer 37 journeys between four and eight nights with destinations including the islands surrounding Scotland as well as the British Isles coastline, the Channel Islands, Belgium, Netherlands and Northern France.

Fares start from \$4,002 per person twin-share with a 15% saving if booked before 13 Feb.

Transnusa boosts PER

TRANSNUSA has increased its flight frequency for the Perth to Denpasar/Bali route for the fourth time since Jun last year (**TD** 25 Nov 2025).

From 01 Jul, the route will have four extra weekly flights, taking the total weekly frequency between the ports up to 21.



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Ayana's impact

AYANA Komodo Waecicu Beach has spent the past 12 months championing conservation and community impact in East Indonesia.

Reforestation, coral restoration, education, emergency response, and marine conservation were just some of the projects which took place at Ayana Komodo over the last year.

Coral restoration took place in front of Ayana Komodo's jetty, which rehabilitated approximately 427m² of reef using a range of transplantation methods.

The restored reef now functions as a growing marine habitat and refuge for more than 150 observed species of fish, as well as an immersive conservation and education platform for the resort's guests.

Ayana Komodo also planted more than 1,000 tree seedlings across 2025, representing more than 15 different species.

In 2025, the resort also broadened its engagement through marine education workshops, blood donation drives in partnership with local health authorities, humanitarian assistance during regional volcanic activity, and continued cultural and community-based programs.

50°N doubles sustainability fund

50 DEGREES North (50°N) has doubled its sustainability fund, strengthening its long-term Nordic partnerships and introducing new experiences for its guests.

The Nordic tour operator will invest NOK1.8 million (approximately A\$267,000) - roughly double its funding from last year - to strengthen its commitment to climate-positive projects, nature restoration, community wellbeing, and responsible travel.

Two new three-year partners have been introduced for 2026: Snowchange, a Finnish nonprofit organisation supporting large-scale ecosystem restoration; and In the Same Boat, a Norwegian NPO conducting large-scale ocean clean-ups across the Atlantic.

Whale & Dolphin Conservation is also a new recipient this



year, supported with a smaller contribution in recognition of its advisory role in developing 50°N's animal welfare policy.

They join existing multi-year partners La Humla Suse, SeaForester, Næroyfjord World Heritage Park, and more.

The company has also introduced new expert-led urban

nature experiences in Oslo, allowing travellers to engage directly with pollinator protection and urban biodiversity as part of a city stay.

These experiences aim to demonstrate how sustainability investment can enhance itineraries in a tangible, place-based way. *MS*

Don't moose out

HOLLAND America Line and the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center have introduced a new Alaska moose shore excursion.

The new program will allow guests to see moose and other native wildlife in their natural habitat, with the tour to debut later this year.

Guests will also enjoy a scenic drive along Alaska's Seward Highway.

Aurora claims "world-first" project

AURORA Expeditions has partnered with Thermal Imaging of Polar Ice (TIPE) founder Joe Muse on what is thought to be a world-first citizen science initiative.

The project will use thermal imaging technology to help deepen understanding of polar ice and environmental change.

Now fully operational, the initiative is believed to make Aurora the first expedition

operator to apply thermal imaging technology at scale within an expedition-based citizen science program.

The project offers expeditioners a powerful new way to visualise temperature, melt, and change in polar environments, revealing patterns not visible to the human eye.

TIPE uses specialised cameras to detect temperature change.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.651

THE Aussie dollar is performing well against many of the major global currencies this week.

Among the highlights is the Aussie now exchanging for around US\$0.69, its highest return since Sep 2024.

Meanwhile the Japanese Yen is now getting around ¥107 against the Aussie dollar, which is also an 18-month high.

If the dollar's strength against the Yen rises at a constant rate, it will reach levels not seen since the 1990s.

The AUD's strength against the Canadian dollar is also at a three-year high, now paying around CA\$0.94.

Wholesale rates this morning.



US	\$0.69
UK	£0.50
NZ	\$1.15
Euro	€0.58
Japan	¥107
Thailand	฿21.57
China	¥4.81
South Africa	11.10
Canada	\$0.94
Bitcoin	A\$0.0000786

Newman swings into action



CHRISTCHURCHNZ has appointed Anne Newman as general manager of visitor economy, starting the role effective immediately.

"Anne brings a rare combination of destination leadership, major events expertise and deep local knowledge; her experience, credibility and passion for Otago make her exceptionally well placed to help lead the next chapter of our visitor economy," enthused CEO Ali Adams.

ChristchurchNZ oversees the economic development of the South Island's largest city.

The appointment comes during a period of significant financial input to the New Zealand tourism economy, including investment in infrastructure and pipelines of major events, alongside the high-profile construction of the city's new stadium.

There is also steadily increasing interest in Christchurch as a popular destination among trans-Tasman and international tourists

alike, with an 11% YoY growth in unique visitors to the city.

Newman explained that the prospect of being fundamental to Christchurch's economic growth was what attracted her to the new role.

"Christchurch has world-class infrastructure both built and in the pipeline, strong international connectivity, and a clear ambition to compete on the global stage," Newman said.

"I'm excited to build on the great work already underway and ensure visitor economy delivers for both residents and visitors."

Newman was most recently general manager of Christchurch Adventure Park, a role she held for almost 10 years.

In 2024, she won the Emerging Tourism Leader Award at the New Zealand Tourism Awards due to her efforts in steering the adventure park through challenges such as fires and floods, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic. *JB*

Kangaroo Is savings

SEALINK Marine and Tourism has announced an extension to its discounted ferry trips from mainland South Australia to Kangaroo Island for SA residents.

The new initiative is designed to support the recent Coast is Calling program from the South Australian Tourism Commission, which gave away \$100 vouchers to those tourism operators affected by the algal bloom.

A redraw was done last week due to the unclaimed vouchers from the previous draw.

An extra \$50 discount will be applied to Sealink bookings of two or more, adding up to savings of \$150.

Bookings with the discounts will be valid until 19 Feb.

Detroit car crash

CHAOS ensued at the Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport over the weekend as an out-of-control car drove through the entrance of one of its terminals, causing injuries.

The Mercedes-Benz S-Class hit a Delta Air Lines ticket counter at the airport's McNamara Terminal, injuring six people, all of whom were treated at the scene.

Authorities have confirmed that the unidentified driver is currently in custody.

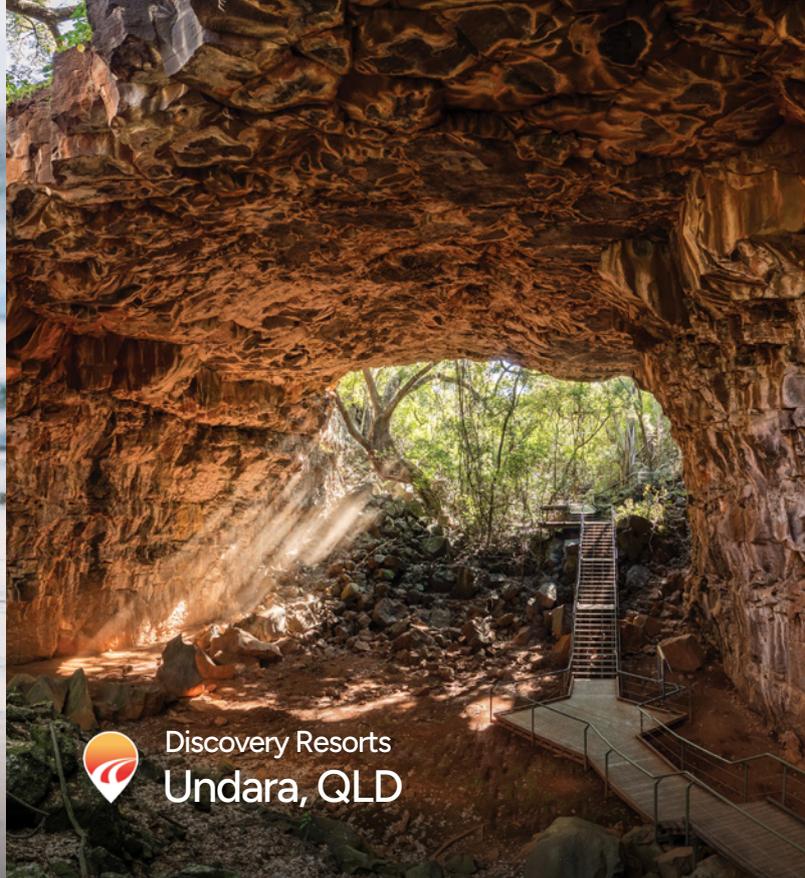
Despite the crash, flight schedules for both departures and arrivals were not affected, however some passengers were forced to check in through the airport's other terminals.

Operations at the counter continued shortly after without further incident.

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