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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of industry news, plus a cover wrap from **G Adventures**, our **Business Events News** update, and a full page from **Crystal Cruises**.

Book 15, get \$3k

BOOK 15 travellers with G Adventures this year and receive \$3,000 to travel your heart out. Head to the **cover page** of today's *Travel Daily* for details.

Atlas to open Aussie office



EXCLUSIVE

LUXURY small-ship expedition cruise line Atlas Ocean Voyages is planning to open an Australian office and base a ship locally, as revealed by *Travel Daily's* sister title **Cruise Weekly**.

President and chief executive officer James Rodriguez, speaking exclusively to **CW**, said Atlas is currently ironing out the final details of a local headquarters and home ported ship.

"We're actually looking at it now, we're in the process of determining how fast we can do it," Rodriguez said of Atlas' upcoming office.

Although Rodriguez did not offer a timeline for the local bureau's opening, he left no doubt Atlas will soon boast a physical presence Down Under.

"It's a foregone conclusion that we are going to do it, it's just a matter of when."

Rodriguez explained Atlas had already hoped to be sailing Down Under by now, but that logistics and fleet size had thus far prevented a local program from being realised.

This issue is particularly acute, as Atlas' core business is its Antarctica season.

"We hope to have a vessel there

in Australia, the South Pacific, in that area of the world," he said.

"We're trying to figure out logistically how to get a vessel over there and back in time for the Antarctica season."

"We have looked at the Kimberley, because we would love to have already gone there, but our current yachts are in Antarctica between Nov and Mar," Rodriguez explained.

Atlas' urgency to expand in Australia comes as the market is currently the fastest growing for the cruise line.

"This style of the current vessels we have and our style of cruising really resonate with the Australian market," Rodriguez told **Cruise Weekly**.

"This kind of relaxed luxury is not intrusive, it's not pretentious, it really resonates." **MS**

Save on Crystal

TRAVELLERS can save up to \$8,000 and receive up to US\$500 onboard credit per couple, to spend as they wish on a range of Crystal's worldwide cruises.

The 'Sail & Save' offer is combinable with the cruise line's other live promotions.

Find out more on the **back page**.

Get Tonga trained

TONGA Tourism Authority has unveiled an online training portal to help Aussie advisors build their knowledge of the destination through bite-sized modules.

The DMO is also running an agent-only competition, with major prizes including a gift hamper and a signed copy of *Driving Three Kings* by Louise Waterhouse, tracing Australia's relationship with the nation.

For more details on the initiative, **CLICK HERE**.

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Delta orders more

DELTA Air Lines is continuing to expand its widebody fleet, putting in an order for 16 Airbus A330-900s and 15 A350-900s.

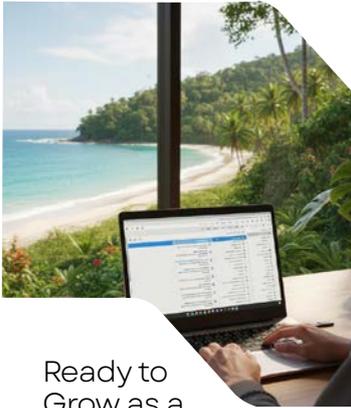
Deliveries are expected to commence in 2029.

The purchase follows the US carrier's Boeing order earlier this month (TD 14 Jan).



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Border investment needed

INTERNATIONAL travel growth could unlock \$380 million a year for the Federal Government if it reinvests in long-overdue border modernisation at our international gateways, according to the Australian Airports Association (AAA).

The organisation is calling for an additional 5% of total passenger movement charge (PMC) revenue each year to be allocated to border and airport processing infrastructure at international airports, as part of its 2026–27 budget submission.

More than \$1.3 billion per year is currently raised by the PMC, of which less than half is reinvested for border management.

Increased funding would help upgrade the passenger experience and national productivity at Australia's airports, such as additional SmartGate kiosks and digitising the incoming passenger card.

Recent research from the AAA showed that 71% of Australian travellers support digitising the incoming passenger card - a move



the government has lingered on for years (TD 06 Aug).

A further 78% back passport-less border processing.

Meanwhile, annual international passenger volumes are projected to grow around 23% by the end of the decade.

"After a long international flight, passengers expect to clear the border efficiently, not spend an hour standing in queues wondering why systems cannot keep up," said CEO Simon Westaway (pictured). MS

Learn media skills

AUSTRALIA'S first dedicated media relations course for tourism operators has launched.

Participants will be guided through promoting their tourism business by some of Australia's top travel editors, journalists, and content creators.

The course covers every aspect of the media relations process, from determining which media to approach to maximising the return from hosting.

Delivered as a series of self-paced workbooks, it contains real-world case studies for tourism operators who have successfully secured media coverage - **CLICK HERE**.

Sky rep'd in ANZ

CHILE-BASED Sky Airline has appointed AVIAREPS as its general sales agent in Australia and New Zealand, in addition to the UK, Spain, Germany and more.

Under the new partnership, AVIAREPS will support the carrier's international expansion and brand development.

Brendan sale still on

BRENDAN Vacations has extended its launch sale for the ANZ market, with travellers now able to secure up to \$3,000 savings per couple on 2026 journeys until 27 Feb.

There is also still time for agents to qualify for the Oct famil trip - click **HERE** for the latest updates.

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Window Seat

CONSIDER yourself lucky if you managed to escape staying at the Embassy Suites in Oklahoma recently.

Guests at the hotel filmed the dining room being flooded during breakfast last week, causing the ceiling to suddenly collapse.

Thankfully, no injuries were reported from the incident, which may have been caused by burst pipes.

"The lights start to flood down and I'm like, oh my gosh, I'm like, 'Tony, you need to move, and we all just [scattered]," recalled one guest, Rachel Burrow.

She added that she was unhappy with the hotel's only communication - asking her to rate her stay at the property.

Travellers are less sustainable

DESPITE the industry's efforts to improve its carbon footprint, being in 'holiday mode' makes tourists less environmentally responsible, according to a new University of Queensland study.

Researchers found that, although tourists' core environmental values don't change, travelling can activate a 'vacation place identity' which makes them feel freer and less accountable for sustainable behaviour than at home.

Dorine von Briel from UQ's Business School said the temporary identity switch explains why even conscientious travellers waste more and conserve less when they are away from home.

"Vacation place identity [is] a distinct, measurable psychological state that emerges with travel, or even when people mentally step into a vacation setting," she said. "This contrasts with the more



commonly known 'home place identity', which is rooted in routine, responsibility and long-term emotional connection."

Researchers conducted three studies and found participants consistently described themselves as less environmentally responsible when on holiday compared to at home.

They found that although it is not unusual for people to switch identities - for example, from 'professional' to 'parent' - this is the first study to identify a unique vacation identity and its implications for environmental sustainability. *MS*

Vale Margaret Hill

MUCH-LOVED travel pioneer, Margaret Hill, has passed away, aged 93.

The lifelong travel devotee died last week, following a decades-long career in the industry.

Hill worked with Stewart Moffat Travel, YALLA Tours, and later International Destinations in Sydney, where she shared her knowledge, enthusiasm, and genuine care for her clients.

Fellow travel veteran Phil Hoffmann described Hill as the 'Godmother of Middle East destinations', saying "her expertise allowed us to offer unique experiences few other agents could".



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Aqua adds Mekong

AQUA Expeditions has announced new itineraries, exclusive expeditions, and seasonal offers across 2026, 2027, and 2028.

New low-water itineraries have been introduced, traversing lesser-explored stretches of the Mekong, and offering deeper cultural and wildlife immersion.

Four- and seven-night sailings will launch this year, followed by more three-, four-, and seven-night cruises in 2028.

Eumundi firmly on the map



THE Eumundi Markets have been identified as one of South East Queensland's top tourism assets, according to an independent economic impact report.

The world-famous markets generate \$54 million in annual visitor expenditure, representing more than 2% of all non-accommodation tourist spend on the Sunshine Coast, with approximately eight cents in every dollar spent reinvested directly back into the community.

Around 1.2 million visitors attend the Eumundi Markets each year, generating 30,000 room nights and contributing an estimated \$9.3 million in accommodation spend across the Sunshine Coast and Noosa.

The major event occurs twice a week year-round, featuring more than 600 stalls with handmade goods, art food, and entertainment.

"Eumundi Markets are not just a much-loved national icon - they are a tourism asset of state-level significance," Experience Eumundi general manager Mark Cameron said.

"This independent research confirms the markets are a powerful economic driver for the Sunshine Coast, supporting local jobs, small businesses and community organisations, while delivering real value back into the region."

Visit Sunshine Coast's CEO Matt Stoeckel commented on the research: "The Eumundi Markets are a true Sunshine Coast icon."

"They offer an incredible experience for visitors and have played a big role in putting Eumundi on the map," he added.

"Experiences like this allow visitors to meet the locals behind the stalls and enjoy the quintessential Eumundi atmosphere, all while supporting the local economy."

Stoeckel added that the findings provide a strong evidence base to support future conversations with government, industry and community stakeholders about infrastructure, investment and long-term destination planning.

The report was commissioned by Experience Eumundi and prepared by Urban Economics. *JM*

Solomon's new CEO

SOLOMON Airlines has welcomed Matthew Findlay as its new chief executive officer, effective 16 Feb.

Findlay boasts an extensive career in the aviation industry in Oceania, Europe and North America, with the past six-plus years spent at Ailevon Pacific Aviation Consulting.

The announcement follows the departure of Sean Teo, who stepped down from the role last year (*TD* 18 Aug 2025).

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New VCET faces

THE Victorian Convention and Event Trust (VCET) has welcomed on board Andrew Fairley and Glenn Carmody.

Fairley has held past roles such as Director of Tourism Victoria, Deputy Chair of Tourism Australia and Chair of Parks Victoria and Zoos Victoria, while Carmody brings more than 35 years' experience in governance and financial reporting to the organisation, and has been a Director of the Victoria Racing Club for eight years

"Andrew Fairley and Glenn Carmody's exceptional experience...will strengthen the VCET as we continue to deliver outstanding events that drive jobs, visitation and economic growth for Victoria," enthused Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos.

BYRON'S WELLBEING ELEMENT

LUXURY beachfront resort Elements of Byron is tapping into growing demand for wellbeing-led corporate travel, as organisations increasingly seek meetings and retreats that prioritise focus and connection.

Located on 50 acres of beachfront and native rainforest at Belongil Beach, the property combines large-scale conference capability with personalised experiences in a relaxing, nature-based setting.

Onsite experiences at Elements include guided rainforest walks, sunrise yoga or forest bathing and forest-to-foreshore dining incorporating seasonal produce from local suppliers.

Offsite activities are also available, such as horse riding in the Byron hinterland.

"When people feel better, they think better - our role is to create an environment where



teams can focus, connect and make decisions without the distractions, or ambivalence, that usually come with corporate travel," said Michael Skinner, GM of Elements of Byron.

The resort has launched a winter conference offer available for bookings made by 28 Feb, with a 15% saving on accommodation, valid for travel

until 31 Aug.

The package is available from \$475 per person, with a minimum of 10 attendees, and includes catering, one night's accommodation with breakfast and conference venue hire.

Audiovisual support is also available at \$500 per conference room per day.

Find out more [HERE](#). *JHM*

Savings at Voco

AN EXCLUSIVE IHG Business Rewards Offer is now available at Voco Gosford in NSW, giving members the chance to enjoy 10% off their master bill, double IHG Business Reward points and two bonus Elite Night Credits for every US\$3,000 spent.

Bonus inclusions are also on offer, from free accommodation upgrades to pool-view post-conference cocktails and canapes and barista coffee served to delegates - [CLICK HERE](#) for more.

Club Med welcomes new MICE manager

CLUB Med has welcomed Nui Jirasakstaporn as MICE BDM for the Pacific market.

Jirasakstaporn has spent more than a decade at Club Med, where she began as a call centre travel experience designer in 2013, before taking on the role of call centre supervisor, then moving into meetings and events last year.

"Nui's extensive experience within Club Med, combined



with her strong relationships with our travel agent partners and the wider travel industry, makes her a fantastic addition to our MICE team," enthused Club Med GM Michelle Davies.

NZICC public day

THE New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) is hosting a public open day on 21 Feb, featuring a series of speaker sessions offering insights into the brand-new venue.

Speakers will include executive chef Rob Cullen architects and members of the construction team, each sharing what it takes to deliver experiences at NZICC.

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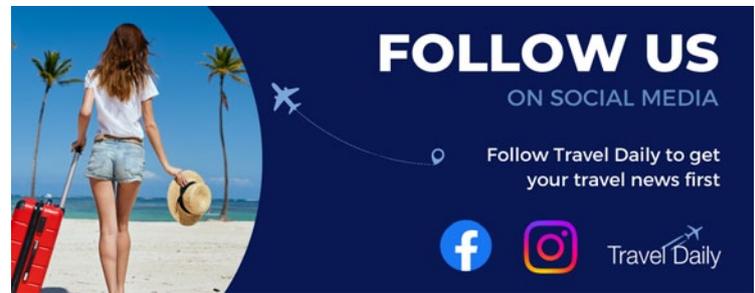
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APPOINTMENTS

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Meghan Montana has taken on the role of new chief strategy officer at **Norwegian Cruise Lines Holding** effective immediately. The newly created position will be a part of the NCLH executive committee, reporting to CEO Harry Sommer. Montana spent the last seven years at American Airlines in several financial-lead positions.

Mandarin Oriental has appointed **Paul Jackson** as GM of Mandarin Oriental Hong Kong and area vice president operations. He will be responsible for overseeing operations at Mandarin Oriental's properties in Hong Kong, Macau and Tokyo. Throughout his career, Jackson has held several general manager positions across APAC and Europe.

Moxy Sydney Airport has appointed **Aidee Medina** as its new marketing manager. She brings more than 10 years of hospitality experience, most recently as marketing manager at Paradox Sydney (formerly Radisson Blu). Her other experience includes digital marketing at Ovolo Hotels as well as performance and brand marketing coordinator at TFE Hotels.

Wafaifo Resort Hoi An has made several appointments across the board as the resort enters a new phase of growth. **Tang Hoang Duc** is now the resort's general manager, **Nguyen Thi Kim Hang** has been promoted to director of talent, **Tran Minh Hau** is the new executive chef and **Tran Thi Thuy Van** has been promoted to revenue manager.

Adventure World has announced **Heath Ashcroft** as its new national accounts manager. Ashcroft will be based in Melbourne overseeing the brand's growth across Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania. Before an eight-year stint away from the travel industry, Ashcroft was at G Adventures as sales director Asia and before that was based in London as the sales and marketing director at Acacia Adventure Holidays, specialising in African travel.

Hyatt Hotels Corporation has appointed **Maria Zarraluqui** as SVP, growth and owner relations at Global Hyatt Inclusive Collection, effective 01 Mar. She most recently held the position of vice president of global development at Melia Hotels International, where she worked for the past 26 years.

Former Tripadvisor head of engineering and interim CTO **Robert Matsuoka** has been appointed chief technology officer at hospitality strategy platform **Duetto**. Matsuoka was the co-founder of CityMaps before it was acquired by Tripadvisor, where he spent eight years.

Virtuoso's senior vice president, culture and human resources **Michelle Rashid** has been promoted to senior vice president, culture, talent and global operations. Rashid has been part of Virtuoso since 2005, however she has held her current role since 2022. The expansion of the role into global operations is a part of Virtuoso's future plans.

Brooki takes on the world



INTERNATIONAL travellers departing Brisbane can now grab Brooki Bakehouse's cookies to go, with the airport unveiling the world's first Brooki Bakehouse vending machine.

Customers will have 24/7 access to the signature chunky cookies, with each cookie freshly baked, sealed for freshness and packaged for travel.

The vending machine will stock bestselling variations, such as Biscoff, milk choc chip, Nutella, red velvet, NYC (choc chip walnut) and salted caramel, as well as rotating specials.

"Brooki Bakehouse has become a Brisbane icon, and we're thrilled to showcase it to the world," said founder of Brooki Bakehouse, **Brooke Bellamy (pictured)**.

"Our cookies are made with ingredients we're proud of, using the best local produce such as Queensland macadamias, Bundaberg sugar, flour from local mills and Australian butter.

"Being able to offer them to travellers at the International Terminal means visitors can get a true taste of Queensland and take a little piece of Brisbane wherever

in the world they go."

Executive general manager commercial at Brisbane Airport Scott Norris added, "The internet's favourite cookies are the perfect treat for long-haul flights, last-minute gifts or a sweet farewell".

It is a natural expansion for Brooki Bakehouse, which opened a store in Brisbane Airport's Domestic Terminal in Sep 2024, followed by Sydney Airport last year (**TD** 19 Sep 2025). *JM*

Cosmos new for '27

COSMOS has launched two new Canada and North America tours for 2027, now open for booking.

Travellers can join a 13-day journey through the American West, exploring national parks and concluding with three scenic days aboard Rocky Mountaineer's Canyon Spirit train.

Also new is an 18-day adventure beginning with the Calgary Stampede before travelling through Banff and Jasper National Parks, followed by Vancouver and Victoria, complete with a rail journey and cruise.

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