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Don't cancel your trips, urges Burnes

EXCLUSIVE

HELLOWORLD chief operating officer & executive director Cinzia Burnes (pictured) is urging travellers not to cancel their trips following the outbreak of a conflict with Iran last week.

Speaking exclusively to **Travel Daily**, Burnes said Helloworld had taken a survey of its network, which found a majority of its travellers are choosing stability where possible, with a minority choosing to reroute, and an even smaller total opting to cancel.

Burnes said half of all Helloworld stores have so far reported no war-related changes to current bookings, with only



27% reporting rerouting and other minor changes.

Only around 17% of stores have had cancellations.

"Our advice is, first of all, don't cancel," Burnes encouraged.

"At the moment, given that most of the peak season starts in May-Jun, there is no panic."

Travellers who are choosing to reroute are mostly being accommodated through North America, such as the United

States and Canada, or Asia, through Singapore and Bangkok.

Burnes added that if the war carries on for longer than the handful of weeks forecasted, she predicts more travellers will choose to reallocate their trip to another destination, rather than cancel their booking entirely.

Helloworld would also pivot to promoting other destinations at that point, Burnes added.

The Helloworld leader said fortunately, its network currently has very few travellers remaining in the Middle East, with one larger travelling group in Venice now safely home. *MS*

Extend your journey

RAILBOOKERS is highlighting its pre- and post-cruise extensions, which are available across popular destinations such as the Danube, Rhine, Douro, Mediterranean, Alaska, and more.

For more information, head to **page nine**.

Insight into the NT

TOURISM NT is inviting agents to join its upcoming webinar to learn why the NT is Australia's ultimate self-drive destination, and gain insider tips, itineraries and product updates.

See the **back page** for details on the live sessions.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of travel news, including our **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Railbookers
- Tourism NT

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Viking signs for four

VIKING has signed an agreement with Fincantieri to build two expedition vessels with the option for two ocean ships. The new expedition vessels will join the fleet in 2030 and 2031, with Fincantieri's Palermo shipyard charged with managing their construction. Each vessel will accommodate 378 guests in 189 staterooms and be certified as Polar Class 6. The duo of ocean ships will be ready by 2034 if they proceed. *AB*

Advisor left exposed

EXCLUSIVE

FORMER travel agency owner Josh Zuker has criticised a gap in Victoria's civil justice system, a flaw he claims has left him personally exposed to repeated enforcement orders relating to a refund dispute that was resolved several years ago.

Speaking with **TD** about his ordeal, Zuker (**pictured**) - the owner and operator of Josh Zuker Travel before it ceased trading shortly after the pandemic - said a failure in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal's (VCAT) dispute framework has caused him "stress, fear and exhaustion".

Zuker is currently the subject of an enforcement order demanding payment of \$2,600 to two clients who booked a holiday to Fiji through his Melbourne-based agency in 2019, a trip that was ultimately scuttled by COVID border closures in 2020.

The former small business owner said the clients received a \$3,136.06 refund out of their total \$4,260 outlay, with the remaining \$1,124.04 balance the result of non-recoverable cancellation fees - \$300 charged by his agency and \$824.04 by third-party suppliers.

Despite refunds being finalised in 2020 by Josh Zuker Travel, the applicants later initiated proceedings against him personally through VCAT in Feb 2022 and again in Mar 2023.

"If I were to pay the [\$2,600] personally, the applicants would receive a total benefit exceeding the value of their original booking by [around] \$1,475," Zuker said.

"Any such payment would be improper, as no personal



contractual relationship ever existed between the applicants and myself," he added.

Zuker said his angst has been exacerbated by the fact there is currently no accessible mechanism for an individual or former small business owner to correct the record.

"I'm stuck in limbo, I'm not accused of a crime, I'm not hiding assets, I'm not refusing to cooperate, but I also shouldn't have to pay a debt I don't owe just to make the problem go away," Zuker contended.

"If I don't pay, nothing dramatic happens - no arrest, no jail - but the system allows the other party to keep reapplying for warrants year after year."

VCAT has been contacted by **Travel Daily** for comment. *AB*

Adventurer docked

THE Coral Expeditions vessel that ran aground on a reef in the waters of PNG (**TD** 05 Jan) is currently docked in Singapore.

Little has been revealed about the seaworthiness of *Coral Adventurer* after she was detained by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority. *AB*

Regent's president

WESLEY D'Silva has been promoted to president of Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) after spending just over a year as chief commercial officer.

The appointment to the senior position followed a decade working for RSSC at its Florida headquarters, with D'Silva the first person to occupy the role since the exit of Andrea DeMarco last year and the installation of Jason Montague as leader in his remit as chief luxury officer. *AB*

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Tahiti in entirely new light

ENTIRE Travel Group has relaunched its specialist Tahiti Travel brand - creating the only dedicated Tahiti specialist accredited by both ATIA & CATO.

Its return was several months in the making and precedes a relaunch of direct Sydney-Papeete Air Tahiti Nui flights in Dec (**TD** 04 Mar).

"Tahiti Travel is back, but it's not about nostalgia, it is about leadership," said Entire Travel Group's MD Brad McDonnell.

"With the return of direct flights...the destination needs a credible and secure specialist partner at the front of the market, and that's exactly what Tahiti Travel is," he added.

Tahiti Travel was originally founded in 2007 operating under the banner of Tahiti Travel Connection, and while it performed strongly within Entire's portfolio, it was shelved in 2019 following a wider brand



consolidation at the company.

"We never stepped away from Tahiti - but now Tahiti steps forward again," McDonnell said.

"Our team lives and breathes French Polynesia, they know the resorts, people, and culture, and with more than 50 collective years of experience selling Tahiti, they are uniquely placed to support Australian agents with confidence," he added.

McDonnell also revealed a joint marketing campaign with Tahiti Tourisme and Air Tahiti Nui will launch next week, featuring exclusive discounts and deals. **AB**

Pictured: McDonnell with Entire Travel Group Head of Product Tina Heyer in Tahiti last month.



AirAsia gives more

AIRASIA is introducing new routes and increasing frequencies between Australia and Asia.

In addition to launching its Melbourne-Bali route on 20 Mar (**TD** 10 Dec 2025), it will boost the frequency of its Adelaide-Bali route from four to seven times weekly from 21 Mar, and 10 times a week during peak periods.

Meanwhile, the carrier is now flying daily to Kuala Lumpur from Sydney and Melbourne and is doubling daily frequencies between the Malaysian capital and Perth, increasing to three daily during busy periods.

AirAsia will also operate four daily frequencies between Perth and Bali all year round.

From 28 Apr, AirAsia will suspend its routes between Darwin, Kuala Lumpur and Bali.

AirAsia said it "plans to strengthen its footprint in Australia, with up to 100 total weekly frequencies during the peak holiday seasons". **JHM**

Red Centre boosted

THE Federal Government has announced a \$7.5 million funding boost to strengthen the Red Centre's tourism offering.

Up to \$5 million will be provided over two years to Tourism Central Australia to attract more domestic and international visitors and increase visitor spending through targeted marketing campaigns.

The remaining \$2.5 million will be delivered in grants to develop new and innovative tourism experiences and products, or upgrade existing offerings.

"These new grants will not only help local tourism operators enhance and develop new tourism experiences, they will also help tell the region's remarkable story to the world," said Federal Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell.

The new grant programs are now accepting applications.

Click **HERE** to learn more about the funding program. **JM**

Win your way to Las Vegas*

To celebrate our new direct Sydney to Las Vegas seasonal route, we're giving you the chance to win return economy flights for two. To enter, book an eligible flight to North America, log the booking through Qantas Agency Connect, and tell us in 50 words or less why you should be our lucky winner.

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*Competition closes 11.59pm (AEDT) 31 March 2026. T&CS apply.





St. Regis skis to NZ

MARRIOTT International has announced it will bring its luxury St. Regis Hotels & Resorts brand to New Zealand for the first time, with the signing of a property in the tourist hub of Queenstown.

With a slated opening in late 2027, St. Regis Queenstown will feature 145 guestrooms and suites, bar and dining options, an event and a butler service that includes packing and unpacking, garment pressing, as well as personalised in-room beverages and wake-up services.

The property will also feature a spa with a hydrothermal facilities zone and a relaxation and wellness lounge, complemented by an indoor heated pool and gym. *JM*



Airports driving airfares

TRAVELLERS could face higher airfares in the coming years, with a new report from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) revealing that airports will be looking to recover the money they have poured into infrastructure in 2024-25.

According to the watchdog's latest *Airport Monitoring Report*, Australia's four largest airports - BNE, MEL, PER and SYD - collectively invested \$1.5 billion on aeronautical facilities in FY25, marking a 43% increase compared to the previous financial year.

The jump in infrastructure spend by all four airports is a notable shift from the comparatively low levels of investment following COVID-19.

It is a trend that shows no signs of slowing down, with the hubs collectively proposing to dedicate almost \$20 billion in major infrastructure projects over the next decade.

"Ongoing investment is needed to ensure airports can continue to meet the needs of travellers and airlines, with Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth airports collectively handling about 120 million passengers in 2024-25," commented ACCC Commissioner Anna Brakey.

"Large capital programs are likely to place upward pressure on airport charges paid by airlines, which may result in higher airfares for passengers as these costs are recouped.

"It is important that airport charges reflect sensible and timely investment decisions, efficient costs and a rate of return that matches the risks involved," Brakey added.

In response, the Australian Airports Association said, "Airport charges are typically set through long-term commercial deals and don't fluctuate with demand the way airline ticket prices do". *JM*

An Instant addition

INSTANT has announced the addition of Alfagar Alto da Colina to its preferred contract portfolio.

Located in Albufeira in southern Portugal, the property offers modern apartment-style accommodation, along with swimming pools, children's play areas, and sports facilities.

The hotel also offers elevated views of the ocean, with private access to a nearby beach. *JM*

It's Yours to Explore

SEABOURN is offering complimentary two-category suite upgrades on select voyages in 2026 and beyond, as part of its 'Yours to Explore' promotion, which runs until 05 May.

Travellers can also take advantage of US\$300 credit per suite on voyages 13 days or fewer, and US\$1,000 credit per suite on sailings of 14 days or longer.

Find out which itineraries are included in the sale **HERE**. *JM*

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Sky Airline targets Oz

THE second-largest airline in Chile has activated itself in the Billing and Settlement Plan to allow Australian agents to sell its tickets via Sabre and Amadeus.

Sky Airline, represented locally by AVIAREPS, boasts an extensive domestic and international network across South America, providing access to key destinations throughout Chile, Peru, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay and many more.

Ticketing authority has already been granted to IATA-accredited agencies, Sky Airline said, adding any agency not enabled in their system should contact AVIAREPS so this can be activated. *AB*



Book Avani Mooloolaba



BOOKINGS are now open for KPAT Hotel's Avani Mooloolaba Beach Hotel in Qld, set to open 11 May (**TD** 14 Jul 2022).

The 180-key property will be the first full-service internationally branded hotel to open on the Sunshine Coast in nearly 40 years, coming at a strategic time with the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics on the horizon.

Kenneth Wagner, managing director of KPAT Hotels, described the new opening as investing "with confidence in the long-term growth of the Sunshine Coast" as the region continues to see sustainable tourism increases.

He pointed to both the expansion of the airport terminal (**TD** 26 Aug 2025) and upcoming plans for several other hotel properties (**TD** 19 Dec 2025) as key markers of growth.

The property is also designed to accommodate business events, conferences and incentive groups, which Wagner said is aimed at "distributing demand beyond traditional peak periods".

Beyond accommodation and events, the hotel will also feature a variety of gastronomic concepts such as the rooftop restaurant Sully's, specialising in local seafood and seasonal produce with executive chef Mark Godbeer, formerly of Brisbane's Calile Hotel, at the helm.

It is projected the hotel will generate around 200 jobs in the

hospitality sector, ranging from management, front of house, events, gastronomy and wellness, alongside stimulating other industries in the Sunshine Coast through local supply chains.

The hotel's construction has already provided a substantial investment to supporting trades, consultants and suppliers. *JB*

Luminara sets sail

THE Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection has announced new Alaska and Asia itineraries aboard *Luminara* for summer 2027.

Within the 21 voyages during the season are 15 journeys through Alaska, four trips across Asia and two transcontinental crossings, combining grand landscapes and less-visited ports.

Luminara's size allows her to travel to smaller ports and secluded regions, especially in Alaska at places like Wrangell and Klawock, allowing for close contact with wildlife and guided explorations around the region.

Onboard experiences include taking in the scenery from a private terrace for each guest, enjoying regionally-inspired culinary options, as well as enjoying The Ritz-Carlton Spa.

Each of the voyages will also include two guest speakers, ranging from naturalists, conservationists and historians to nature photographers. *JB*

New Europe route

LUFTHANSA is launching nonstop flights from Kuala Lumpur to Frankfurt from 25 Oct, giving Aussies an alternate route to Europe.

Offered all year round using Boeing 787 aircraft, the route will be serviced five times a week daily, except for Tue and Thu.

Flight LH 704 will depart at 9.30pm in Frankfurt and arrive in KL at 4.40pm local time the following day.

The return flight LH 705 will take off at 11.55pm in KL and land at 6.00am the following day.

LH CEO Jens Ritter said: "With the new nonstop connection to Kuala Lumpur and the deployment of our state-of-the-art Dreamliner, we are creating ideal conditions to participate in the growth in SE Asia." *JHM*

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Window Seat

AMONG all the ridiculous advice doled out by social media influencers, this one might take the cake this week - or the coffee beans, rather.

TikTok influencer Tara Woodcox, who has somehow managed to amass more than 700,000 followers, caused outrage - and a new distrust of hotel appliances - after demonstrating a rather unsavoury travel hack.

In a clip posted to TikTok, Woodcox demonstrated how to clean underwear using a coffee machine - why, we may never know.

"You close it, press 'brew', and it puts scorching hot water through it," she said.

After the video went viral for all the wrong reasons, Woodcox backpedalled, clarifying that she had never actually tried using a coffee maker to wash her underwear.

This begs the question, why would anyone offer up a 'hot tip' that they had not already tested out themselves?

In an extraordinary twist, the content creator admitted that she does not even use hotel coffee makers due to doubting their cleanliness.

"So every hotel will now be adding a 'do not use appliances for anything other than their designed purpose [sign]," one user commented.

"I will never use a hotel room coffee maker again," another lamented. *JM*



Anaheim close to home



VISITANAHEIM recently hosted trade and media partners across southeast Queensland and NSW's Northern Rivers for an event on the Gold Coast.

The day-long event included a sailing trip along Broadwater, accompanied by a private chef and finishing off with cocktails and canapes.

Alongside the VisitAnaheim team was the local Melbourne-based Disneyland Resort in California team, as well as representatives from Anaheim properties and assets such as the JW Marriott Anaheim Resort, the Howard Johnson by Wyndham Anaheim Hotel & Water Playground, Warner Bros Studio Tours, and Karmel Connect.

RSSC sells Navigator

AVORA Residences has acquired Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Navigator*, which will debut in Jan 2028 under the name *Avora Lumina*.

The relaunched ship will undergo a full conversion so she can eventually serve as the flagship of Avora's residential platform, designed for "long-duration global living, expedition capability", according to Mikael Petterson, founder of Avora Residences.

Navigator was acquired as part of a nine-year charter deal with a nominal purchase option.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings was previously planning to sell *Navigator* to Crescent Seas, in addition to an Oceania ship, but the deals fell through. *JHM*

The representatives shared key updates and future plans for their businesses, with notable scoops including the arrival of Bluey and Bingo at Disneyland Resort later this month, renovations on all the economy rooms of the Howard Johnson Anaheim, and Karmel Connect's new LA Day Tour options in conjunction with Starline Tours, offering Anaheim hotel guests the chance to explore more of LA.

Following the event, the team at VisitAnaheim continued down Australia's east coast for the Visit USA Roadshow. *JB*

WWT Ultimate Sale

WENDY Wu Tours has launched its Ultimate Flight Sale offering a combo of free flights or 50% off airfares on all group tour dates.

Destinations on offer include popular Asian regions such as Japan, China and Southeast Asia, alongside the operator's expanding portfolio in Southern Africa and Latin America.

Itineraries are fully inclusive with international flights, accommodation, domestic transportation, expert local guides, entrance fees to activities, all meals and visa fees.

The sale runs until 27 Mar. *JB*



Thank you, agents

THE Australian Travel Industry Association ATIA is expressing its gratitude for the efforts of members navigating their way through the problems arising from conflict in the Middle East.

"We want to acknowledge and thank every ATIA member contributing through supporting travellers, speaking publicly on behalf of the industry and feeding intelligence back to us," ATIA CEO Dean Long said.

"That collaboration strengthens our voice and reinforces the critical role accredited travel businesses play when disruption hits," he added.

ATIA's specialist Incident Response Group (**TD 02 Mar**) is currently working in real-time to offer members "clear, consistent and actionable information".

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Next Level events

THE Royal International Convention Centre (Royal ICC) has showcased its newly installed AV technology, venue versatility and updated menus at Next Level on Tue.

More than 100 people attended the trade event at the Brisbane Showgrounds, with clients and prospective customers getting a first-hand look at how the Royal ICC can deliver better events.

Guests enjoyed technology demonstrations, including the new large-format LED screen system, plus bespoke theming installations including neon garden and whimsical themes.

The event also featured canapes and live food stations prepared by the Brisbane Showgrounds' world-class chefs, as well as live music and entertainment. *JM*

WA'S AGGRESSIVE EVENTS STRATEGY

TOURISM Western Australia's goal is to become one of Asia-Pacific's events capitals, the group's managing director Anneke Brown recently revealed.

Western Australia has placed a heavy emphasis on the sector, capitalising on exclusive events, which over the past few years have included Coldplay concerts (**pictured**), European soccer games, and WWE events.

"It all feeds into our event strategy to be the fastest-growing events destination in Southeast Asia," Brown explained at an event in Sydney last week.

This summer has been WA's biggest season of events yet, Brown said, with the destination playing host to the AFL's State of Origin game, a SailGP meet, and games from the Women's Asian Cup soccer tournament.

Part of Western Australia's expanded hosting capabilities are owed to Perth's new Optus



Stadium, which was completed just prior to COVID.

"We're very fortunate to have some fantastic new infrastructure in the last seven to eight years that has enabled us to bid on and secure some of that great content," Brown said.

Western Australia's events resurgence has been so strong

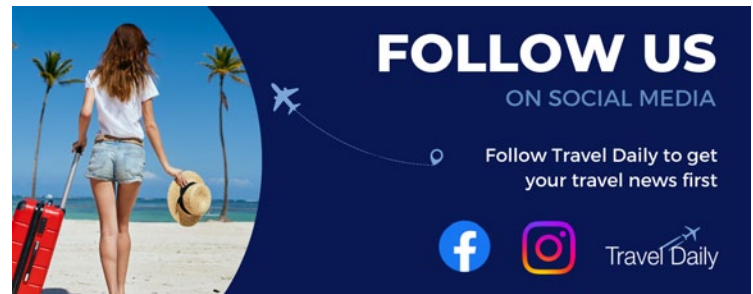
it has ticked over its pre-COVID numbers, catapulting the destination's visitor statistics to the top of the nation.

"We've actually just passed 1 million international visitors in a 12-month period...we're actually about 18 months ahead of the next jurisdiction in Australia," Brown revealed. *MS*

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Julia Wardle has taken on the role of director of sales and marketing at **Emporium Hotel South Bank** in Brisbane. She returns to Emporium Hotels after a year spent at Minor Hotels, where she was the international sales manager - western markets. Before her most recent return, Wardle held the role of business development manager for over three years. She is also the current chair of the Young Australian Tourism Export Council (YATEC) South Queensland.

Accor has appointed **Rob McIntyre** as VP operations - NZ & Fiji. He was most recently the general manager at Pullman Singapore Orchard. Based in Singapore since 2018, he also worked as GM sales & marketing at Fairmont Singapore and Swissotel the Stamford Singapore.

Katelyn Aslett has been appointed chair of **Tourism Whitsundays**. She is currently the director of Taste Whitsundays based at Whitsundays Coast Airport. Her other endeavours include co-founding event management company Whitehaven Event Co., as well as holding the position of market development manager & director sales and marketing at Adagold Aviation.

Pasi Kuusisto has been appointed as global vice president, global trade and corporate sales at **Finnair**. He has been with the carrier for nearly 15 years, most recently holding the position of area vice president, Asia, alongside several other key roles such as general manager, North America and director, business operations, North America.

OUTRIGGER has appointed **Nathan Decker** as director of group sales. He has over 20 years of hospitality sales experience across Grand Wailea Maui A Waldorf Astoria Resort, Auberge Resorts Collection, The St. Regis Princeville Resort and The Ritz-Carlton, Kapalua.

Tom Svenson has joined **South Sea Cruises Group** as its sales manager - Australia and New Zealand. He most recently held the position of New Zealand trade partnerships manager at Tourism Fiji. His resume also includes business development manager at Intrepid Travel as well as working as a Contiki tour leader.

Amadeus has appointed **Kaylene Shuttlewood** at the new VP for its Travel Sellers Pacific division, after holding the role of managing director since Mar 2022. Her experience also includes regional managing director at Travel Counsellors Australia, managing director - Pacific at Travelpport and head of affiliate at Helloworld.

ATG Worldwide has appointed **Frank Langbein** as co-managing director of ATG Business Travel Management based in Germany. This is his first gig working within the travel industry, however he has years of sales experience at several large companies throughout Germany, especially in the hire car industry, holding senior roles with the likes of Hertz, Europcar and STARCAR.

Striving high in hospo



TWENTY-THREE First-Nations trainees from the National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) received their nationally recognised Certificate III in Hospitality last week, specialising in food and beverage, housekeeping and front office.

The graduation ceremony was held at Ayers Rock Resort, Uluru and attended by 20 of the

graduates with their families, alongside Federal Minister for Skills and Training Andrew Giles, the Voyages Board, ILSC CEO Joe Morrison, Voyages CEO Matt Cameron-Smith and Journey Beyond CEO Chris Tallent.

A special gala dinner followed, which included the ceremonial song and dance Inma from Anagu elders and speeches from previous alumni sharing their inspiring career journeys. *JB*

Pictured: Graduate Jack Martin.

Chapman to rescue

AIRCRAFT charter specialists Chapman Freeborn are in the process of arranging emergency flights out of several major airports across the Middle East.

The company has been working alongside airports, carriers and regional government ministries to ensure that the rescue flights can accommodate both passenger and cargo loads.

Data from Flightradar24 has revealed that over 2,000 flights to and from Gulf airports have been cancelled, reflecting the scale of the operation and the importance of devising strategic routes and coordination through major air corridors, the company said. *JB*

Big Top End deals

WEBJET is offering up to \$175 off flights to the Northern Territory across all airlines, from today running through to Mon.

Alongside the staple NT experiences, the sale coincides with big events occurring throughout the year such as the BASSINTEGRASS music festival 16 May, the betr Darwin Triple Crown at Hidden Valley Raceway from 19-21 Jun, and the Motorcross GP of Australia from 18-20 Sep.

Flights for the promotion can be booked **HERE**. *JB*

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