TRAVELDAILY

Wednesday 4th Nov 2026



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Huge river savings

EMERALD Cruises is offering savings of $500pp on 2027 European river sailings.

See details on **page nine**.

Get your FACTS

AUSTRALIA'S largest corporate travel summit is returning to Sydney this month.

See updates on **back page**.

NCLH ship finance

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) has inked credit facility deals with Credit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank to help pay for the third and fourth ships in Norwegian Cruise Line's next-generation series. *AB*

Rex T2 return at SYD

REX has returned to Sydney Airport's Terminal 2 today after a period of relocation in Terminal 3 due to make way for key upgrades (***TD*** 20 Feb 2025).

All Rex passengers will now check in and clear security at T2, with Rex flights departing from Gate G2, close to the Rex lounge.

Pax will benefit from new self-service check-in & bag drop tech.

All Rex passengers landing at Sydney will continue to arrive into T2 as normal, including the same baggage collection points. *AB*

Bomb threats hit Europe

AIR travel across Europe has been thrown into chaos after a series of bomb threats forced several aircraft to divert or make emergency landings overnight.

The 10 affected flights spanned five countries, the UK, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria and Poland - leading to the temporary closure of a Warsaw airport and the diversion of several services.

Irish budget carrier Ryanair appears to have been the most affected, with four of its flights targeted by the bomb threats.

Two planes heading to Warsaw were also targeted, including a Scandinavian Airlines flight from Copenhagen and one LOT Polish Airlines from Heathrow.

No explosive devices have been found on the seven confirmed flights searched at airports so far, and while the immediate safety of passengers is assured, flight delays may last at least several days, according to aviation expert Justin Crabbe.

He told *Independent.co.uk* that passengers on affected planes may need to wait for up to two days for replacement flights, but the larger concern was the "operational disruption" caused to the wider network.

"At busy airports, even a relatively short interruption can create a significant backlog because aircraft, gates and crews are all operating on tightly coordinated schedules," he said.

"There's also a ripple effect across the airline's network." *AB*

Bonvoy upgrade

MARRIOTT Bonvoy is currently trialling a new in-app feature that allows eligible guests to see their position in the complimentary upgrade list.

The new feature provides an estimate of available rooms, giving members a clearer idea of their chances of securing a better room before arriving. *JM*

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Luxury page**, plus full pages from:

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- **Scenic**
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Banking key to rankings

EXCLUSIVE



QANTAS' and Virgin Australia's loyalty programs have been penalised in global rankings by their limited points-earning partnerships with US credit card providers, according to The Points Whisperer founder Steve Hui.

"The biggest part of the score is how easy it is to earn points... that is where Qantas and Velocity lose out," Hui (**pictured**) told ***TD*** in response to a fresh batch of loyalty program rankings via US-based point.me.

Over 30 loyalty programs were scored across eight categories alongside a member survey.

Ease of earning points, redemption rates and transfer partners accounted for 60% of scores, with reward seat availability and redemption experience contributing 25%, while customer service and change fees were attributed to the remaining 15%.

Top-ranked Air France Flying Blue accepts points from all six major US credit card programs, compared with three for Qantas and zero for Virgin Australia.

Hui said the picture was reversed in Australia, where almost every major bank card offers opportunities to earn Qantas or Velocity points.

He also highlighted the greater value of redeeming points for business class flights rather than shopping rewards.

Qantas ranked 15th globally, while Virgin Australia placed 26th, with a spokesperson disputing the methodology as too 'US-centric' (***TD*** 03 Nov). *ZH*

VA eyes three daily

VIRGIN Australia (VA) will add a third daily flight to Doha from Sydney and Melbourne under its codeshare agreement with Qatar Airways, should its application for more capacity between Australia and Qatar be approved by government regulators.

VA lodged an application for a further seven weekly flights to the IASC on 30 Oct (***TD*** 03 Nov).

If the frequencies get the green light, from 27 Jun 2027, Virgin Australia and Qatar Airways will together offer three daily services to Doha from Sydney and Melbourne, and two daily services from Brisbane and Perth.

Qatar Airways also operates services between Adelaide and Doha, with Canberra-Doha services via Melbourne resuming from 09 Dec 2026.

Meanwhile, Virgin Australia is yet to make an announcement regarding its plans to utilise slots at the recently launched Western Sydney International Airport. *ZH*

Holiday Inn regions

IHG has signed two new Holiday Inn hotels in Tamworth and Rockhampton, bringing a combined 190 rooms to the regional destinations.

Holiday Inn Tamworth will see the existing 60-key Best Western Sanctuary Inn refurbished in 2027, with 30 new rooms to be added by 2029.

The new-build Holiday Inn & Suites Rockhampton will deliver 100 rooms & large events spaces, with no opening date confirmed.

FCM appoints Ping

NICOLA Ping has joined FCM Travel as head of content - a new role designed to strengthen customer content strategies.

Based in London, Ping will draw on more than 10 years of experience in travel distribution, including delivering NDC for British Airways before she joined FCM's parent company Flight Centre Travel Group in 2019. *JM*



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Atura Oran Park its own destination

EXCLUSIVE

WHILE the recently opened Atura Oran Park (***TD*** 30 Oct) is well positioned to take advantage of traffic flows created by the new Western Sydney International airport, it will only form one key pillar of its future success.

Speaking with ***Travel Daily*** a week after opening, the property's area general manager Shannon Craig (**pictured**) said its model will look to tap into several important growth segments.

"Success is not solely reliant on airport-related demand, we anticipate strong business from the local community, corporate travellers, sporting groups, and the meetings, conferences and events market," Craig said.

"We see opportunities across multiple segments rather than relying on a single market as well, that includes visitors travelling through to the airport and visiting friends and relatives."



When asked how the property intends to leverage new players flying into the region soon such as Singapore Airlines, Craig said she saw "strong opportunities" to explore partnerships that drive visitation and awareness.

"Atura Oran Park is not only a gateway to various tourist destinations such as the Blue Mountains, it is also well positioned to be a destination in its own right, offering travellers an escape from the predictable.

"As Western Sydney's visitor economy continues to evolve, we expect new opportunities to emerge with airlines, tourism operators and industry partners."

Craig emphasised that Atura Oran Park brings a signature people-first approach to the region, serving a community built around connection, growth and opportunity.

"Guests can enjoy contemporary accommodation alongside signature dining at Tavola, a resort-style pool, flexible event spaces and welcoming communal areas that encourage connection and relaxation," she noted.

Speaking more broadly about the need for hotels in Western Sydney, Craig said additional investment was "critical" to support the growth of the region's visitor economy and ensure accommodation supply keeps pace with its evolution. *AB*

TRAVELDAILY
ON LOCATION

KANGAROO ISLAND

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you from Kangaroo Island, where Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* is docked.

CELEBRITY Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* has arrived in Kangaroo Island for the first of two calls the ship will make in SA on her 'Australia Wine & Tasmania' cruise from Sydney.

Australia's third-largest island, after Tasmania and Melville Island, Kangaroo Island is separated from the mainland as its closest point by 13.5 kilometres, at Snapper Point, which lies just off the state's Fleurieu Peninsula.

Passengers will visit local sites such as Seal Bay and Flinders Chase National Park, home to attractions like Admirals Arch.

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Two Aussies killed

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has confirmed that two Australians died in a train collision in Spain last week (***TD*** 29 Oct) which claimed the lives of 69 people.

Consular assistance to the families is now being provided.



FCTG cooks up a storm

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Brisbane headquarters played host to the launch of the Great Aussie Athlete BBQ, raising money for the Aussie Athlete Fund (AAF) in the process.

Conceived of by five-time Olympian Natalie Cook (**pictured** right), the AAF supports both professional and aspiring athletes in their travel requirements, coaching and recovery, an essential service with over half of Aussie sportspeople earning less than $23,000 per year.



The evening kicked off with an opening address from FCTG founder and CEO Graham Turner (**pictured** left), who urged guests to get behind Australian athletes, especially in the lead up to the Brisbane Olympics in 2032.

Several awards were handed out throughout the evening, including beach volleyball player Luke Ryan earning the Biggest Fundraiser Award, raising $47,252 for the AAF.

Other awards included deaf footballer Justeen Kruger winning the all-rounder award and fencer Daniel Iliffe taking out the Rising Star Award.

This summer, the AAF plans to raise $500,000, selling branded kits for $99 each. *JB*

Disney dumps staff

DISNEY is set to let go of 100-200 employees in its Disney Experiences division, the department which oversees its theme parks globally.

A majority of these layoffs will be in Walt Disney Imagineering, its in-house theme park design group based in Glendale, CA.

The *LA Times* reported that the mass culling of staff "stemmed from a regular evaluation of the division's priorities, investments, and project timelines", according to a person familiar with the matter who was not authorised to comment publicly. *JB*



Everest accident

TWO helicopters have collided while trying to land below Mount Everest's south base camp in Nepal, leaving one Indian national dead and a traveller from New Zealand seriously injured.

The choppers were operated by private firms Fishtail Air and Dynasty Air, and were ferrying trekkers hiking to the base camp when the accident occurred. *AB*

Window Seat

IT HAPPENS a lot more often than many think in the air - someone annoyingly resting their bare feet on the passenger seat in front.

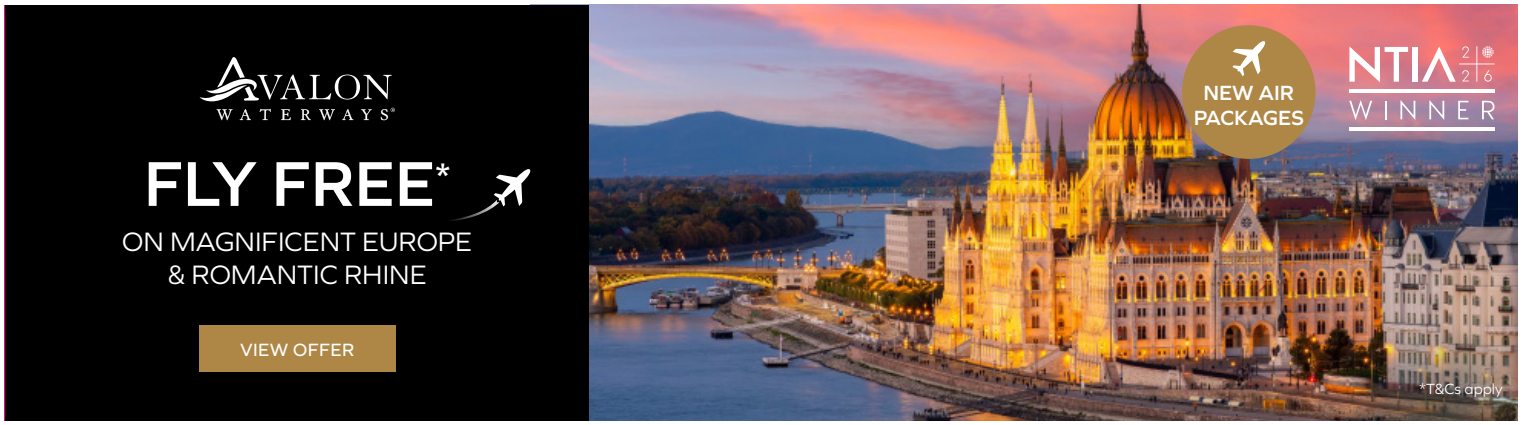
However, a US country singer has taken to Instagram to demonstrate how she deals with the problem.

Jesse James Decker shared a video to her 4.4 million Instagram followers where she used an unidentified spray on a man's sweaty foot resting next to her right shoulder.

Many of her fans shared their support of Decker's actions, even a former flight attendant who said that these people are quite common and have to be reminded that a plane is not a lounge room.

However, many have speculated that the foot belongs to her husband and former NFL player Eric.





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Albo needs to do more

AUSTRALIA'S working holiday visa program needs urgent attention alongside proposed changes to British backpacker arrangements, the Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP) has reaffirmed.

Responding to reports of Prime Minister Anthony Albanese meeting with UK counterpart Andy Burnham to discuss the prospect of British backpackers returning to rural Australia (***TD*** 02 Nov), BYTAP argued the move alone would not address the sector's broader challenges.

The group pointed to offshore visa processing times exceeding three months as a major issue, claiming international intakes were down by as much as 90% YoY across global markets.

Its latest statement claimed that delays had severely damaged Australia's international reputation, calling for action on processing times, the treatment of working holidaymakers in net overseas migration figures and a need for renewed investment in



the program.

"BYTAP agrees there is an urgent need to deliver greater sustainability and confidence back in our once globally leading Working Holiday/Youth Tourism program, which usually delivers over $4 billion in annual economic benefit," the body said.

"A future return of UK backpackers into a regional and rural setting would deliver excellent medium- to long-term benefits," it added. *ZH*

Maximising Canada

DESTINATION Canada's Together for Impact Virtual Summit is on tomorrow.

The session will provide a chance for agents to gain practical advice and insights from industry leaders and Canadian operators about how purposeful travel can create commercial opportunities.

Register to attend **HERE**. *AB*

WA taps attractions

THE Western Australian Government has launched the Tourism Accommodation and Attractions Proposal (TAAP) program, designed to fast-track new accommodation and visitor attraction projects statewide.

TAAP will offer up to $50,000 for early-stage projects, with funds going towards site investigations and technical studies.

Eligible people and bodies can apply for the grants between now and 14 Dec at 5pm AWST.

Applications for TAAP can be made **HERE**. *JB*

Stars shoot out the back



VIVA Holidays has sent a group of its best-performing advisors from Australia and New Zealand on a trip to the Red Centre.

The advisors, who represented brands including VIVA Holidays, ReadyRooms, GO Holidays and My Way Travel & Events, were able to experience highlights such as Alice Springs, Kings Canyon and Uluru, with an itinerary designed to foster connection.

Furthermore, 10 advisors were deemed Mega Stars, enjoying an elevated itinerary which included a scenic flight over Uluru and Kings Canyon.

Speaking on the success of the trip, the Northern Territory's Minister for Tourism and Hospitality Marie-Clare Boothby said that the "spotlight is well and truly on Central Australia".

"Participants will no doubt have experienced for themselves our warm hospitality, authentic experiences, and spectacular landscapes - the kind you won't find anywhere else." *JB*

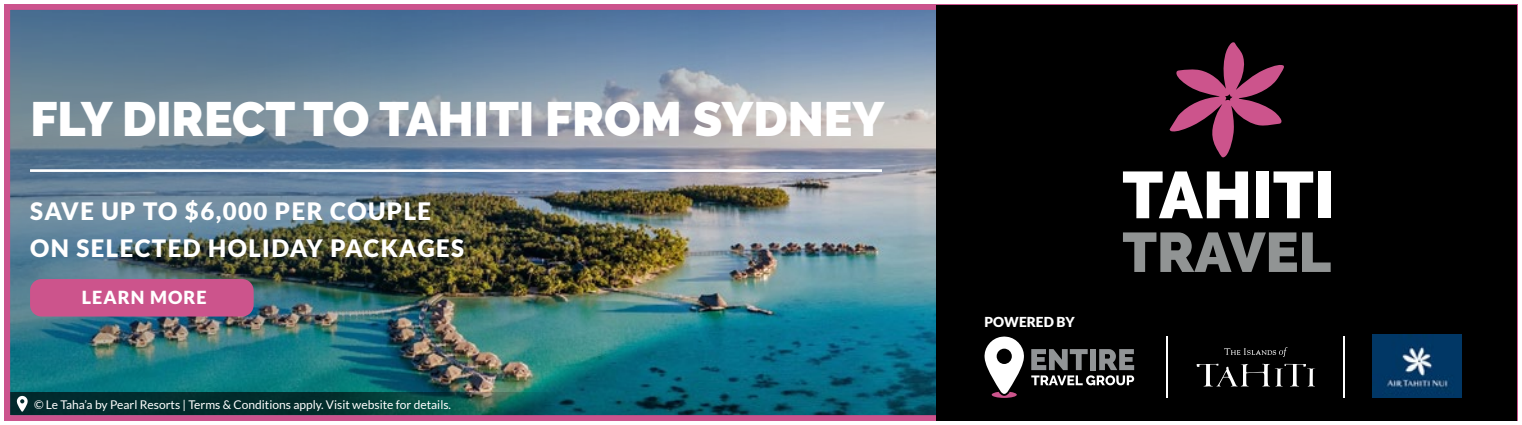
True North adds three

TRUE North Adventure Cruises has introduced a brand-new 10-night Kimberley sailing, in addition to new voyages in Raja Ampat and the Top End, as part of its newly-released sailing schedule for 2028.

Running between Broome and Wyndham, 'Kimberley Disconnected' allows guests to witness sights such as Buccaneer Archipelago, Montgomery Reef and the Prince Regent River.

The 10-night 'Raja Ampat Explorer - North' trip takes travellers across the equator, starting from Sorong (via included charter flight from Darwin), seeing the Habera Islands, the Fam Lagoons and the Ayu Atoll.

Curated in conjunction with local elders, the 10-night 'Top End Explorer' voyage sails from Gove in Arnhem Land to Thursday Island in the Torres Strait, with a focus on education from traditional owners, helicopter flights and wildlife encounters. *JB*



JONES CELEBRATES DECADE OF AGENCY SUCCESS

EXCLUSIVE

DONNA Jones has celebrated 10 years since launching her own award-winning agency, which she said was increasingly focused on luxury, where personalised service and unique experiences are central to her approach.

Having returned to the industry after several years away, Jones (**pictured**) launched her business Luxury Travel Style and Cruise from scratch without an existing client base, relying on social media, community engagement and, ultimately, word-of-mouth referrals to grow her business.

"I just think if you do the right thing by people...it was referral after referral after referral [that helped], and it continues to be that way," she told ***Travel Daily***.

Following the pandemic, Jones shifted towards luxury travel, joining MTA and Virtuoso.



She believes Australia's luxury market is growing as travellers move beyond traditional package-style itineraries in favour of tailored experiences and premium accommodation that complements the destination.

"People want tailored itineraries, they want accommodation and properties that complement their destinations with something unique," Jones said.

"If you go to Matera in the Basilicata region, people want to stay in a cave; if you go to Alberobello, they want to stay in a trullo; if you go to Tuscany, they want a beautiful Tuscan villa."

One client summed up the philosophy with a comment that has stayed with Jones: "I believe when you travel, where you stay has to be nicer than where you live," she shared.

However, Jones said luxury does not necessarily mean five-star accommodation throughout an entire itinerary.

It could mean incorporating one or two standout properties that deliver a memorable experience, while balancing the remainder of the trip around the client's preferences and budget.

Jones also believes uniqueness is an increasingly important part of luxury, with travellers who have already explored far-flung destinations looking for something different.

An upcoming trip to Papua New Guinea (PNG) off the back of Luxperience in Sydney proves just that point.

With PNG preparing to enter the NRL competition in 2028, Jones sees an opportunity to showcase the destination and its swathe of experiences to Australian travellers, including NRL fans travelling to support their team.

"Luxury comes in the form of uniqueness as well," she said.

Jones was named Australia's Most Outstanding Travel Advisor in 2024 before receiving Virtuoso's global Most Admired Travel Advisor award in Las Vegas in 2025. *ZH*

KL tops luxe survey

BANGKOK, Bali and Kuala Lumpur have been named among the top Asian destinations for luxury travel, according to Agoda's recently-released *2026 Travel Outlook Report*.

The study identified that 31% of luxury travellers in Asia prioritised culinary experiences, while 25% said they were motivated by cultural exploration.

Singaporeans also favoured KL for high-end holidays. *JB*

Ertan Vasvi to steer new Aman luxury yacht

AMAN at Sea is continuing its preparation to enter the luxury cruise market with *Amangati*, its first ocean-going yacht, appointing experienced ultra-luxury cruise captain Ertan Vasvi to lead its inaugural voyages.

Developed through a joint-venture between Aman and Cruise Saudi, the 180m, nine-deck vessel will accommodate 94 guests across 47 suites, each featuring a private terrace and uninterrupted sea views.



Each suite will also have a dedicated host with *Amangati* set to debut in Palma De Mallorca in May 2027.

Vasvi brings almost two decades of experience with Silversea and Seabourn, having held command since 2023 and overseen the delivery and inaugural operations of two new-build vessels. *ZH*

Ruiter to GM in NZ

PETA Ruiter has been announced as the new general manager of Sofitel Auckland Viaduct Harbour.

Ruiter brings 25 years of experience in luxury hotel operations, including two decades with Hilton in APAC.

"[I am] delighted to return to luxury hospitality in such a wonderful waterfront location," Ruiter said.

She succeeds Reto Borer, who has relocated for a position in Australia. *ZH*

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ACCOMMODATION

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Aman Le Melezin will reopen for the winter season on 10 Dec. The ski-in, ski-out property on France's Bellecote Piste has a range of new experiences for the 2026/27 season, including an expanded kids club and two new wellness journeys designed for skiers wanting recovery and non-skiers seeking restorative treatment and mindfulness. Headlining its new culinary experiences is an apres-ski afternoon tea with live music at the hotel bar.



NHAAN Resort & Spa Hoi An, Tapestry Collection by Hilton has opened its new signature riverside restaurant Plait. The menu has a strong focus on seafood sourced from Central Vietnam, in addition to seasonal produce and charcoal cooking. Delicacies such as golden rabbitfish, silver pomfret, moray eel and the catch of the day are sourced each morning from Duy Hai Fish Market. Guests can choose their preferred fish and how they want it cooked.



Minor Hotels has announced the signing of a hotel management agreement with Amal Group of Companies to launch Gardens of **Eden Resort Phuket, Minor Reserve Collection**. The property will feature 100 hotel rooms and 210 residences, in addition to a wellness facility spanning 5,000m². Culinary venues are set to include an all-day dining restaurant and an organic cafe.



Melia Hotels International has unveiled a US$55 million renovation at Mexico's **Paradisus Cancun**. The revamp includes upgrades to the YHI Spa, fitness facilities, accommodation and leisure amenities. Additionally, it has also debuted the Longevity Suite, which uses binaural sound technology, Therabody compression, Celluma light technology and sleep masks to stimulate relaxation and recovery.



Renovations have begun at the **Tallink Spa & Conference Hotel,** highlighted by a complete overhaul of the water and sauna centre, in addition to the property's third and fourth floors. Upgrades will also occur across the beauty and wellness centre, restaurant and communal areas. The property is set to welcome back guests in Jun 2027.

VA rejects Shonky tag

VIRGIN Australia was called out for unwanted attention in this year's Shonky Awards presented by consumer advocacy group Choice, with the carrier criticised for its credit policies.

As a result of cancelled flights between 2020 and 2022 during the pandemic, Virgin Australia held around $93 million in unused flight credits as of Feb, a liability that ultimately became revenue when the airline absorbed $75 million worth of credits after the date of redemption expired earlier this year.

"Customers who did not successfully scramble to book a flight in time lost their money to Virgin Australia's revenue," Choice CEO Monique Perry said.

"A business not providing a refund for a service it failed to deliver and then pocketing the money? Virgin Australia is certainly deserving of the Shonky Award it is receiving this year."

However, a spokesperson for VA told ***Travel Daily*** that more than 93% of COVID credits were redeemed by guests, supported



by strong bookings over the past four years.

"Following a number of extensions between 2023 and 2025, we regularly communicated the expiry date and later extended the fly-by date to 27 May 2027, giving guests almost another year to travel," VA said.

COVID credits were between four and six years old when they expired, with more than $1 billion worth redeemed by Virgin Australia customers.

The redemption deadline was also extended three times, most recently in Apr 2025. *AB*

HAL in the black

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has opened up registrations for early access to its Black Friday sale, offering discounts across Asia, Europe, Alaska, Australia, New Zealand and South America.

Registrations will be open from today until 10 Nov, with signed-up shoppers accessing offers from 11-17 Nov.

The sale will be live for the general public from 18 Nov.

Registrations for early access can be done **HERE**. *JB*

EK's A380 dilemma

ENGINE overhaul times for Emirates' A380 fleet have grown from the contracted 85 to over 350 days, delaying the return of its grounded aircraft.

Out of the 84 A380s that Emirates has in service, 24 are currently parked in reserve and seven are in storage.

Speaking on *Aviation Week's Window Seat Podcast*, president Tim Clark could not confirm the return date for bringing back aircraft into service, adding that the A380s are one of the airline's most profitable assets.

Emirates has plans to keep its A380s in service until 2041.

Next year, it expects to begin receiving Boeing 777-9s, however it will accommodate 150 fewer passengers than an A380. *JB*

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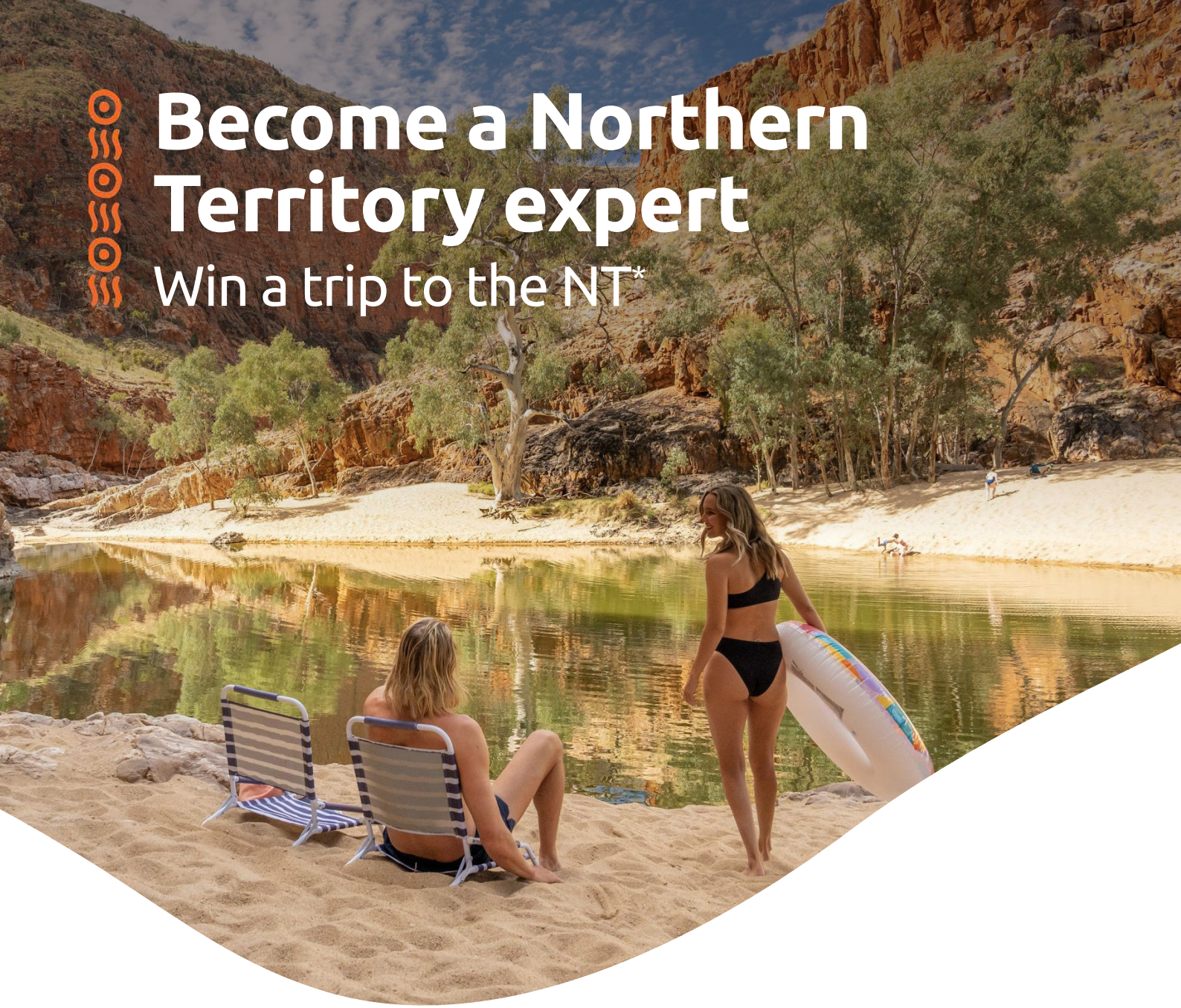
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