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TRAVELDAILY
traveldaily.com.au
Friday 13th Nov 2026

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today features nine pages of news, plus a front cover from **Luxury Escapes**, our **Corporate Update,** and full pages from:

- **Tourism NT Training**
- **Air Mauritius**
- **Crystal Cruises**

VA strike action

VIRGIN Australia cabin crew have voted overwhelmingly in favour of protected industrial action, raising the prospect of disruption ahead of the busy summer travel period.

A TWU ballot found 98% of members supported potential stoppages and work bans, as the Flight Attendants Association of Australia prepares its own ballot, seeking shorter duty hours. *ZH*



Big blocks for regional air

THE lack of competition on Australia's regional routes was laid bare in a new report from the Productivity Commission, which showed that 72% of routes were only a served by a single carrier in 2025.

The duopoly enjoyed by Qantas and Virgin Australia also saw 90% of passengers on regional and remote routes boarding with either company.

Commenting on the current barriers in place for new players wanting to enter the regional aviation space, the report suggested that routes carrying fewer than 50,000 passengers a year could simply not sustain multiple airlines.

As passenger numbers increase beyond this threshold, competition becomes more viable, however the Productivity Commission conceded duopolies tend to emerge on some routes carrying between 50,000 and 150,000 passengers a year.

Routes above 150,000 passengers annually can support more than one airline and have the potential to be profitable, but even at this scale, the odds are stacked against new players for several key reasons.

These include not having enough brand loyalty or corporate travel relationships in place to gain a foothold against the larger players.

The report also explored the double-edged sword of govts providing financial assistance to carriers to maintain regional air links, arguing that while the intentions might be to keep services going, it in effect weakens the incentive for new players to commence new operations.

Over time, a new entrant on major city routes could strengthen competition and create opportunities for airlines to expand into some regional markets, the report noted.

There are several new players planning domestic operations, including a Vietjet subsidiary, Koala Airlines & Zinc Airlines. *AB*

United bans AI

UNITED Airlines has banned AI agents from booking flights, saying customers who give their personal and credit card information to AI businesses run the risk of having their sensitive data exposed.

The ban extends to third-party agents such as Meta's Muse and custom agents built on Claude, with the restriction now included in United's Contract of Carriage.

Human-led bookings through platforms such as ChatGPT remain permitted, while agencies require explicit airline approval to use their own AI tools.

For Australian travel advisors, the decision raises broader questions about how local airlines will regulate the use of autonomous AI across agency distribution channels. *ZH*

VU firetruck down

SMARTRAVELLER has urged Australian travellers visiting Vanuatu's Espiritu Santo to contact their travel agent or travel provider amid safety restrictions at Santo International Airport.

Authorities have placed a ban on all aircraft carrying over 30 passengers due to an out-of-service airport firetruck.

"Airport operations may be disrupted on the island of Espiritu Santo," a Smartraveller alert said.

Solomon Airlines is among the carriers affected, cancelling its Brisbane-Santo return services on 08 Nov and offering affected date changes, travel credits or rerouting via Port Vila. *ZH*

Crystal savings

SET sail with Crystal's Seasonal Savings and save up to 40% on more than 200 voyages around the world.

Discover more on **page 12**.

Earn more with LE

LUXURY Escapes is offering a 15% agent commission on its trade hub, as well as exclusive deals and instant bookings.

See the **cover page** for more.

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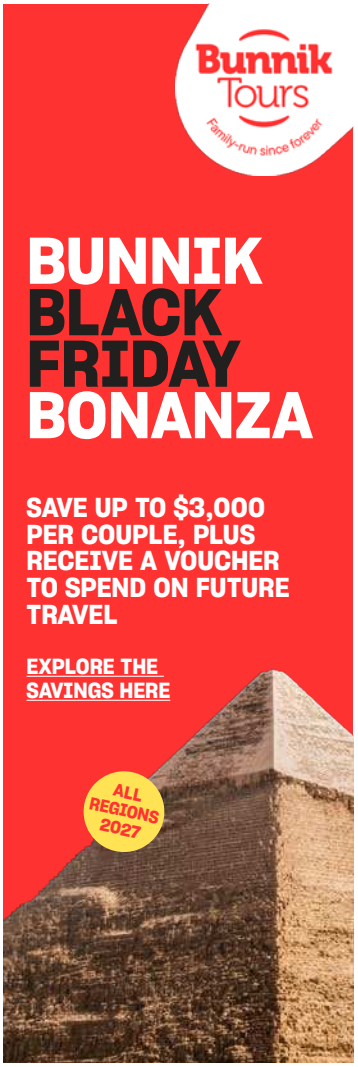
BECOME a Northern Territory expert and discover why Sep to Apr is its best-kept secret during a live webinar highlighting incredible experiences.

Learn more on **page 10.**

Think more Mauritius

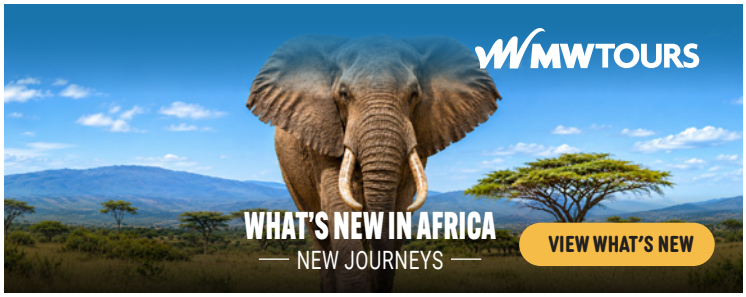
DISCOVER island escapes and iconic cities with Air Mauritius, which connects Australian travellers to Mauritius, Africa and Europe.

Further details on **page 11**.



TRAVELDAILY

Friday 13th Nov 2026



Travel execs reveal why sector is still in great shape

EXCLUSIVE

WHILE a recent interest rate rise of 0.25 percentage points has placed further pressure on the discretionary spending of Aussies, travel bookings are far from being scrapped from the household budget, according to Intrepid Travel's MD ANZ Brett Mitchell.

Discussing rising cost pressures on travellers with ***Travel Daily*** this week, Mitchell explained that while Aussies may be more selective about where they want to go, travel is still very much on the agenda for most people.

"What we tend to see is that rather than giving up on a holiday entirely, Aussies ring-fence that money," Mitchell said.

"Globally, Sep was our biggest sales month on record - 11% YoY traveller growth - and Aussies made up the largest proportion of these travellers (43%), so we are still seeing strong travel demand."





While recent trends have suggested more Aussies are waiting for last-minute deals to get more bang for their buck, Mitchell said Intrepid's data showed the opposite was true, with those booking more than 300 days out becoming the operator's largest lead-in time group in '26.

"This suggests people are looking further ahead and getting their next holiday in the diary," Mitchell reasoned.

"If there is a particular destination or departure people are keen on, planning ahead can also give them more choice."

Currently, the average booking lead-in time for Intrepid is around 61 to 90 days.

In terms of identifying how different demographics are coping with the cost-of-living crisis, Mitchell said that travellers over the age of 50 were the most resilient.

However, Intrepid has also seen positive growth among younger travellers.

"Bookings for Intrepid's 18-35s range are up 20% YoY into 2027, and family travel is also performing well, up 21% globally and 11% in ANZ," he revealed.

Another way travellers are stretching the travel budget is by holidaying closer to home or choosing countries with a favourable exchange rate.

"Japan has seen a surge in popularity alongside the stronger Australian dollar and we are also seeing more Aussies choosing to holiday closer to home.

"Domestic travel has consistently ranked among our top five most popular destinations this year," Mitchell said.

Other popular destinations at Intrepid have included Vietnam, Sri Lanka and India, which Mitchell said was linked to the diverse travel appeal on offer at an accessible price point with a wide range of air access.

Meanwhile, Scenic Group director of global marketing & branded content Katherine O'Neill told ***TD*** that it continues to enjoy strong demand from its luxury clients, who view travel as an investment in memories.

"People still want to explore the world, discover new places and have those once-in-a-lifetime experiences, and we don't see that changing," she said.

O'Neill added that Scenic was riding out the storm of cost pressures because of its all-inclusive model, Aussies' appetite for visiting remote destinations in style and a strong demand for its Scenic and Emerald yachts. *AB*

QANTAS oneworld

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Secret Atlas pins Australia

EXCLUSIVE



FRESH from recruiting expedition specialist Marta Purwin (**pictured** left) to start a strong on-the-ground push on the Australian market, Secret Atlas co-founder Michele D'Agostino (**pictured** right) made a trip Down Under this week to talk up the selling points of the micro-cruising brand.

During a media briefing in Sydney, D'Agostino said Australia was a logical choice for expansion as the market was already its third-largest source of passengers without any trade office in place or specific resource allocation.

He also contended that some rival brands had shifted away from offering smaller, more intimate vessels for Antarctica in recent years, in his view leaving a significant gap in the "mature cruise market" of Australia for Secret Atlas to thrive.

Speaking about the Australian trade strategy, Purwin told ***TD*** that because of the limited capacity on Secret Atlas ships, the plan is to partner with specialist agencies which are the right fit.

"We are not just going for everyone and anyone...we have to really focus on which agencies truly understand our product and have clients that would fit our brand," Purwin said.

Secret Atlas' new BDM for Australia suggested advisors who sell safaris are one key target, with the small group size and focus on far-flung adventure viewed as similar propositions.

The typical demographic for the brand to date has skewed younger than most expedition lines, attracting curious working professionals in their mid-fifties who have already travelled extensively and are not necessarily avid cruisers.

The micro-cruise specialist boasts a three-ship fleet, with its 36-guest purpose-built Antarctic expedition ship *Aureum* viewed as the most attractive option for Aussie cruisers looking for greater immersion in the waters of the frozen continent.

Six polar guides are aboard every voyage, typically ranging from naturalists, geologists and ornithologists, and with the micro vessel operating under the IAATO 100-person shore limit, every guest can land at every site in a single Zodiac deployment without the need for long queues or time-consuming sequencing.

While there are plans to add another ship to the fleet, D'Agostino said staying a polar specialist was key to its future and he was not keen on scaling up for the sake of growth. *AB*

Sampling Queenstown



YESTERDAY'S final day of the Luxury Travel Collection's remarkable soiree saw delegates participate in a destination immersion experience around the Queenstown region.

Attendees chose from eight different experiences, including a jetboat and Gibbston wine-tasting experience which saw participants fly across Lake Whakatipu to the Kawarau and Shotover rivers, before tasting wines from boutique producers at Kinross Winery, Cellar Door, and Cottages (**pictured**).

Some delegates preferred to explore Gibbston's winemakers in greater depth, with a private tour through New Zealand's largest wine cave, followed by a tasting.

Others headed for Jack's Point Golf Course for nine holes at one of Queenstown's most scenic destinations for the sport, positioned between The Remarkables mountain range and Lake Whakatipu; while others headed up above the Shotover River for an onsen hot pools and massage experience.

Delegates also enjoyed a tree-planting experience in Arrowtown followed by a traditionally prepared hangi lunch; a sunrise helicopter and champagne breakfast, which flew participants over The Remarkables and Lake Whakatipu into the Southern Alps; and a guided e-bike tour from Arrow Ju. *MS*

A Legend is born

ROYAL Caribbean's *Legend of the Seas* was formally welcomed to the fleet overnight at Port Everglades in Florida, the third Icon-class ship for the brand.

Retired US air force officer Lori Robinson was named godmother, while president and CEO Michael Bayley was saluted for 45 years at Royal Caribbean. *AB*



TRAVELDAILY

Friday 13th Nov 2026



Resorts not well with agents



EXCLUSIVE

WELLNESS properties across the globe have an alarming disconnect with the travel trade, according to Ernestina Bertarini, founder of the wellness-focused travel agent platform Share.

Speaking with ***TD***, Bertarini (**pictured**) explained that most wellness hotels and resorts are marketing directly to consumers rather than using travel agents as a distribution avenue.

Bertarini also explained that the Share platform is trying to address this issue from the advisor end, providing more education for agents to sell wellness travel to their clients.

"[There is a] lot of confusion around what true wellness is and even around what wellness is in general terms," she said.

"What we are trying to leverage is how important it is for the trade to continuously educate themselves in a particular way on the subject of wellbeing."

According to Bertarini, wellness is about ensuring a client feels a particular way either mentally or physically once the trip has ended, something which varies for everyone.

"Most of us are chronically stressed, exhausted and as a hotel, I need to have that duty-of-care when I welcome an individual in a standard luxury hotel and [it's] the same for the travel designer," she explained.

Bertarini also emphasised that, compared to other forms of travel, wellness has stronger potential for repeat business and fostering long-term client relationships.

"You can go from a nature retreat all the way to areas like preventive health, detox and longevity," she said.

"The word-of-mouth among wellness travellers is very strong because once they experience a positive change, they want to share it," she concluded. *JB*

It's just about you Aussies

EXCLUSIVE



AFTER marking a strong first year in the Australian market, Just You has firm ambitions to be the undisputed go-to solo touring brand for local travel advisors.

Speaking with ***Travel Daily*** as the brand celebrated its first anniversary in Australia, sales director Tom Morgan (**pictured**) said the way the trade has embraced Just You as a new player in the market has been a "fantastic surprise".

"The appetite from agents looking for a dedicated, hassle-free solo solution for their clients has been phenomenal and the feedback confirms that the market was crying out for a pure solo specialist," Morgan said.

To keep the agent love flowing, Morgan said the company has ambitious, trade-focused expansion plans in store, including the rollout of a dedicated online agent training module in the coming months.

"We want to make selling Just You as effortless as possible.

"Trade support is front and centre for us, and we have our fantastic senior key account manager Natalie Chappell on the road conducting face-to-face training and attending industry events across the country.

"We have also launched a dedicated marketing toolkit where agents can download ready-to-use digital assets, social tiles, and flyers," Morgan said.

Addressing misconceptions that solo travel is a segment devoid of social interactions, Morgan said the reality with Just You is "the exact opposite".

"Our model is all about social group touring with the luxury of your own personal space at the end of the day," he explained.

"Our standard tours average around 24 guests, which is the sweet spot for group dynamics.

"For clients who prefer a more intimate setting, we offer our 'Max 20' range, which caps departures at 20 travellers and averages around 16."

Part of the ethos of Just You trips is to front-load the first few days with shared experiences so solo travellers bond quickly.

"[This works] because every single person in the group is travelling solo, and it means there are no awkward cliques or feeling like the odd one out."

Typically, the average Aussie Just You guest books around nine months out, roughly three months closer to departure than couples or families.

One of the best sellers has been the seven-night 'Treasures of Andalucia' tour, exploring the Spanish towns of Mijas, Ronda & Picasso's birthplace Malaga. *AB*

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China will be number one

CHINA is expected to become the world's largest travel and tourism economy by 2036, overtaking the US, World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) CEO and president Gloria Guevara revealed at the Railbookers Group Global Summit in Vancouver.

"China is like a giant that has been quietly moving in the right direction and implementing the policies that we see are helping to unlock growth," she explained.



"Currently, the largest country in terms of the tourism GDP is the US, but the US is declining, with international spend at -5%, while China is growing at 10%."

Within the next 10 years, China is predicted to add US$1.7 trillion to the industry's GDP, she added.

This year alone, the country experienced the biggest rise in leisure and business spending, with increases of US$60.6 billion and $19.7 billion respectively, according to data from the WTTC.

Unlike other countries, China has focused on making travel easier for international guests, including the creation of visa-free entry for 50 nationalities, which resulted in an additional 4.3 million visitors last year.

Furthermore, China has worked towards seamless connectivity at airports and train stations through the use of biometrics, while collaborating with the private sector to develop fresh experiences for tourists.

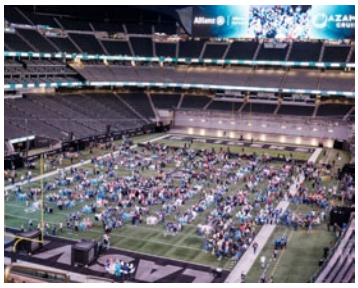
"They do not make big announcements, they do not say a lot, but when you look at what they have done, it is impressive... and they make life easy for the travellers," Guevara said. *JHM*

Signature in Florida

SIGNATURE Travel Network's 2026 conference is kicking off in Orlando on Sun, with the four-day event its first annual conference outside Las Vegas in more than two decades.

Over 3,000 attendees are expected at the Orlando World Center Marriott, including network members, preferred partners, Signature workers and the global travel media.

This year's itinerary features over 50 preferred partner workshops, as well as Signature-led sessions and a networking trade show with 500-plus booths and one-on-one appointments. *JB*



A wider Pacific focus



TREASURES of the South Pacific (ToSP) hosted its annual VIP appreciation event at Cafe del Mar in Sydney's Darling Harbour on Wed, where the travel trade mission announced a rebranding to Treasures of the Pacific.

ToSP's impending new identity is an attempt to expand the company's reach, creating a platform for tourism partners in both the North and South Pacific.

"The Pacific is an incredibly diverse region, and our new identity will better reflect the breadth of destinations and experiences represented within our organisation," said ToSP coordinator Richard Skewes.

"While our name is changing, our commitment remains exactly the same: bring the Pacific travel industry together, build strong trade relationships and help our destinations grow their presence in the Australian and New Zealand markets," he added.

Before the new branding takes effect, ToSP's event allowed representatives from its 11 member nations to thank industry partners such as airlines, online travel agencies, wholesale travel companies and media for their continued support.

"Our airline partners, wholesalers, OTAs and travel media play an enormous role in keeping our destinations front of mind with Australian travellers," Skewes said.

"Their support makes our products more visible, more accessible and more sellable.

"We wanted to take the opportunity to personally acknowledge their contribution and spend some quality time with the people who help make Pacific tourism such a success."*JB*

Pictured: Onorina Fugawai, Pacific Trade Invest; Jules Miall, Tourism Fiji; Rita Mardirossian, Tahiti Tourisme; Rebecca Marchal, New Caledonia Tourism; John Nickel, Fiji Airways; Tim Martin, Pacific Trade Invest; Richard Skewes; Caroline Brunell, Tahiti Tourisme; Anne Lee, Palau Tourism; Crystal Kranz, Cook Islands Tourism; and Caroline Potts, Vanuatu Tourism.



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Domestic's time in the sun

DOMESTIC destinations are shaping up as the big winners for Australian family travel this summer, with the Gold Coast leading Webjet's top 10 most-booked destinations.

New research from the online travel agency found 43% of families planning a summer holiday intend to travel within their home state, while 42% are planning an interstate getaway and 37% an overseas trip.

The Gold Coast topped domestic bookings, ahead of Melbourne (14%), Brisbane (13%) and Sydney (11%), with Perth, Adelaide and Maroochydore in Qld also featuring prominently.

The findings come as 78% of Australian families plan to take at least one trip this summer, despite cost-of-living pressures, with 74% deliberately cutting back to fund travel.

"Families are being very deliberate about how they make their summer holiday work," Webjet CEO and MD Nicole



Sheffield said.

"For many families, that time away together remains something they're willing to plan and save for," she added.

Meanwhile, Bali is the most popular international destination, accounting for 18% of bookings, ahead of Auckland (10%), Tokyo (7%) and Fiji (5%). *ZH*

Luxury air & culture

FOUR Seasons has unveiled 'Coastlines & Culture', a 23-day private jet journey departing in May 2028 and flying across Asia, Africa and Europe.

The itinerary includes visits to Seoul, Sri Lanka, Zanzibar, Egypt and the French Riviera, with private yacht excursions and cultural experiences included, starting from A$350,000pp. *ZH*

SIA's record revenue, profits down

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) Group's half-year net profits have dropped 43.9% to S$134 million (A$152 million), despite seeing a record revenue of S$11.3 billion (A$12.8 billion).

SIA said the results for the six months to 30 Sep 2026 were impacted by a 56% surge in net fuel costs, with the average price skyrocketing by 86.7% to US$171 per barrel.

The group carried a record 21.8 million passengers across Singapore Airlines and Scoot, up 5%, while cargo revenue increased 30.2%.

For the northern winter 2026 operating season (25 Oct 2026 to 27 Mar 2027), SIA will increase frequencies to selected destinations, including Adelaide and daily WSI services. *ZH*

Hawaiian holiday homes



HAWAI'I has again emerged as a top-tier family holiday destination after eight Australian travel advisors experienced the best accommodation and adventure offerings it has to offer.

The five-night famil hosted by Aqua-Aston Hospitality, Hawai'i Tourism Oceania and Hawaiian Airlines, invited agents from TravelManagers, itravel, Envoyage, MTA and Connected Travel to inspect several Aqua-Aston properties across O'ahu, including Aston Waikiki Beach Tower and Aston Waikiki Sunset, with stays at Aqua Palms Waikiki and Ilikai Hotel & Luxury Suites.

Adventure itinerary highlights included a Diamond Head hike, ziplining at Kualoa Ranch, a Waikiki luau and snorkelling at Turtle Canyon.

Connected Travel advisor Jade Sharp, who won her place during an Aug webinar, said the group's apartment-style accommodation was a standout.

"I particularly love the apartment-style accommodation, with kitchens, separate living areas and multiple-bedroom options that create that real Hawaiian home-away-from-home feeling," she said.

TravelManagers' Jilda Jack added the properties offered families greater flexibility for longer stays.

"The Ilikai is exactly what I will be recommending to my longer-stay families," she said.

"It is spacious, has a full kitchen, and is just five minutes from the heart of Waikiki," she said.

Aqua-Aston has 11 properties across O'ahu, catering to different budgets and traveller needs. *ZH*



SUSTAINABLE TRAVEL THAT MAKES AN IMPACT

HX Expeditions' Amber Wilson on inspiring travellers to take action.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

LTC Soiree now ready for Japan

THE Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) fourth annual Soiree event has wrapped up in Queenstown.

This year's gathering was the biggest to date, welcoming more than 100 delegates who celebrated the final night at SODA restaurant on the city's lakefront.

The night was hosted by Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, which threw a Yacht Club party, inviting delegates to dress in their best 'yacht club chic'.

This year's Soiree was the second time the event had been hosted outside of Australia, and will head overseas once again next year, general manager Nikki Glading announced, heading to Club Med Kiroro Grand in Hokkaido, Japan.

The conference's main plenary sessions featured keynote speakers such as former All Blacks captain Richie McCaw and Rodd & Gunn chief executive Mike Beagley.

Delegates also heard from FCTG luxury and leisure leadership including Danielle Galloway and James Kavanagh, as well as Steve Odell from Regent Seven Seas and Karla Pound from Lindblad Expeditions.



THE Luxury Travel Collection and Ponant Explorations teams.



MICHELLE Keatinge and Rachel Kingswell, Travel Associates.



STEVE Odell, Regent Seven Seas Cruises and Julie Rogers, Ponant Explorations.



SERENA Luxmoore and Rachel Steele, Global Travel Network.



NEIL Rodgers, Adventure World; Danielle Galloway, FCTG; Karla Pound, Lindblad Expeditions; Rachel Kingswell, Travel Associates; and Elsa McLean, Lindblad Expeditions.



FORMER All Blacks captain Richie McCaw presents at Leadership Day.



KATE Kneipp, Edward Yee, Rin Jensen, Travel Associates, with Nikki Glading, LTC.





LUXURY Travel Collection Travel Associates members.

TRAVELDAILY



CORPORATE UPDATE

Travel teams understaffed

CORPORATE travel teams are struggling to keep pace with growing responsibilities, a new report from GBTA has found.

A survey of travel managers in North America and Europe revealed that 62% believe their programs are understaffed, with an average of just 4.9 full-time employees who spend at least 75% of their time working on travel-related issues.



Thirty-five percent identified data analysis and reporting as the skill they most want to strengthen, and 88% are involved in travel risk management, demonstrating the breadth of responsibilities they handle.

The survey also found that specialised travel manager roles were uncommon - only 17% had a full-time tech admin, 13% had a hotel-sourcing expert and 10% had a full-time tech strategist.

There was also a strong trend found towards greater integration of travel and meetings, with 39% of respondents saying the two functions overlap more within their organisation today than two to three years ago.

Eighty-two percent of travel managers believe their business would benefit from at least a little more integration between travel and meetings, with the key upsides being consolidated data, more savings, and a better employee experience.

Meanwhile, when it comes to AI, GBTA found that in 27% of organisations, there was no one driving AI transformation in travel programs, with this number rising to 38% for meetings programs.

Moreover, 44% of travel programs did not have a budget or allowance for AI. *JM*

UAE assists biz entry

THE United Arab Emirates has become the first country outside Europe to introduce a fully digital ATA Carnet system, streamlining customs procedures for business travellers carrying professional equipment overseas.

Going live this week, the eATA platform allows eligible goods to be temporarily imported without customs duties or taxes, provided they are subsequently re-exported.

The system covers items such as exhibition displays, commercial samples, filming equipment and musical instruments.

Travellers can manage declarations through a mobile app, with QR codes enabling customs authorities to verify transactions electronically.

The move follows the rollout across 30 European countries in Jun, with the International Chamber of Commerce targeting global digitalisation by 2028. *AB*

Read more details **HERE**.

TA CFO avoids jail

FORMER Tourism Australia chief financial officer Quan Liu has avoided prison despite being sentenced to 30 months in jail for dishonestly claiming almost $50,000 in taxpayer-funded business class flights and upgrades to China.

She was earning $275,000 a year when she made six trips to visit her parents between 2022 and 2023 (***TD*** 16 Jun 2025).

Liu claimed business class travel would reduce her risk of contracting COVID-19 and passing it on to her elderly parents.

NSW District Court Judge Ross Hudson allowed Liu to serve her sentence in the community under an intensive corrections order, citing her remorse, rehabilitation and lack of prior criminal history.

Liu also pleaded guilty to falsifying official documents to secure an Australian business visa for her cousin. *ZH*

Victory fuel surcharge

VICTORY Cruise Lines is reportedly considering fuel surcharges as early as next year.

CEO John Waggoner told *Travel Weekly US* that the company is planning surcharges that may give its booked customers as little as two weeks' notice of the added charges.

"A fuel surcharge would provide greater flexibility to respond to changes in operating costs without adjusting fares," Waggoner said, adding that he anticipates a decision by Q127. *ZH*

Window Seat

TWO Ryanair passengers have been left scratching their heads after buying every single scratch card on their flight, only to walk away without a cent in winnings.

Mates Ethan and Vik decided to test their luck at 30,000 feet, snapping up all 68 packets available on board.

The onboard scratch cards cost around €2 (or €5 for a pack of three), offering instant prizes and the chance to win up to €1 million.

The mates' haul was so substantial that fellow passengers were even recruited to help scratch through the tickets.

However, the pair failed to land a single prize, with Vik admitting he couldn't even match two symbols.

The stunt was documented on TikTok, where viewers questioned the odds of winning anything through the airline's onboard lottery.

Talk about a very scratchy situation in the air. *ZH*



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SPECIALS

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Norwegian Cruise Line is offering up to 50% off cruises, beginning 17 Nov until 01 Dec. In addition, guests can combine this offer with the Free at Sea upgrade at half price on select sailings and staterooms. Fares on this sale start from $1,717 for a seven-day Alaska cruise. To make a booking, call 1300 255 200.

Explore Worldwide has savings of up to 20% on over 1,500 small group departures throughout 2027. Before 02 Dec, travellers can save on trips such as the seven-night 'Cycle the Dalmatian Coast', the 13-night 'Simply Japan' and the 14-night 'Sri Lanka in Depth'. Travel is valid from 01 Mar through to 31 Dec 2027. Call 1300 439 756 to find out more.

Intrepid has up to 20% off selected trips before 04 Dec. Discounted trips include the eight-day 'Turkey Highlights' itinerary, the 15-day 'Classic Rajasthan' tour, the 11-day 'Sabah Adventure' and the 11-day 'Wild Kimberley Overland' tour. Valid trips depart between 01 Dec and 14 Dec 2027. To book, call 1300 797 010.

HX Expeditions is offering guests savings of up to 35% on select departures when booked before 02 Dec. Thirty-five percent discounts apply on itineraries in Alaska, the Galapagos and Greenland, while savings of 25% are available on expeditions to Antarctica. Guests can also save on Svalbard, South America and the Northwest Passage. Call 1300 513 684.

With **Wendy Wu Tours**, travellers can save up to $8,000 per couple across all small group tours. WWT's portfolio spans China, Japan, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, India, Sri Lanka and Central Asia. Travellers can also get an extra $100 off when joining the Loyalty Club, which is free to do. For bookings, call 1300 727 998.

Before 02 Dec, **Crystal** has a range of Mediterranean sailings up to 40% off. Departing in May and Jun 2027 aboard *Crystal Symphony*, travellers can take in the sights of Sicily, Rome, Cote d'Azur, Barcelona, Lisbon and the Balearic Islands. Voyages range from seven to 11 nights. Please call 1300 503 640 to make a booking.

APT Luxury Travel is offering savings of up to $4,000 per couple on its most searched destinations. Itineraries on offer include the 15-day 'Magnificent Europe' tour, the 18-day 'Japan Land of Wonders' tour and the 14-day 'Douro Delights with Madrid and Lisbon' itinerary. Other destinations on sale include the Kimberley and Croatia. To book, call 1300 336 932.

With **Flight Centre**, travellers can save up to 50% across tours, flights, packages, cruises and hotels from 19 Nov to 03 Dec. Notable deals include Melbourne to Bangkok on Finnair from $894 return, $400 off the 17-day 'London to Athens' Contiki tour and a six-night 'Great Barrier Reef Cruise' with Carnival from $939 per person. Call 1300 463 078 to make a booking.

AI a big productivity boost?

ARTIFICIAL intelligence could unlock travel advisor productivity, Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) luxury leaders believe.

The company's luxury & independent MD Danielle Galloway, speaking at this week's Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) Remarkable Soiree, identified advisor productivity as the number-one problem facing the industry, and that AI provides an opportunity to solve it.

She told ***Travel Daily*** advisors are spending too much time on administrative and transactional work rather than the experience and customer-service aspects of their jobs.

"I think the number one problem that faces the travel industry is the productivity of advisors," she said.

"The exciting evolution of that is now with AI, and combining that AI with the ability to bring together this unproductive disaggregated travel industry will be the companies that fit into their future.

"FCTG is investing significantly in both of these areas and it will be the game changer in the travel industry if you can find the answer to increasing the productivity and heavily utilising AI," Galloway added.

She said the end goal will be to "make the advisor famous for the experience layer for travel", as opposed to operative tasks they spend their time on today.

LTC general manager Nikki Glading described to ***TD*** the divergent viewpoints on AI from her organisation's membership.

"We've got such a diverse member set - there are people that are afraid of it, still have their head in the sand, not even using it to reply to e-mails."

Even though customers are more educated than before, Glading emphasised "humans will win every time".

"We understand now that AI will only make our customer more educated and therefore our advisors are important in bringing them back to the centre of what they truly want." *MS*

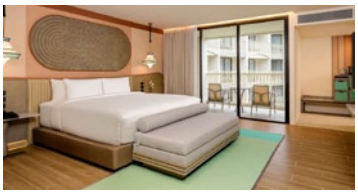
A new spot in Krabi

GRAND Mercure Krabi Ao Nang has opened on Thailand's Andaman Coast, providing the region with an extra 202 rooms and suites.

A 40-minute drive from Krabi International Airport, the property gives guests the choice between Superior Rooms, and Deluxe Rooms for couples, as well as Premier Rooms, Junior Suites and Family Suites suited to families and groups.

The property also has an expansive lineup of culinary concepts, with Thai staples at Chill Kitchen, handmade pizza and pasta at Da Vino Trattoria, cocktails at the SAN Pool Bar, as well as views of the mountains and Andaman coastline at Typsy Rooftop Bar and Lounge.

There are two lagoon-style swimming pools, a spa and wellness centre and several meeting and event spaces. *JB*



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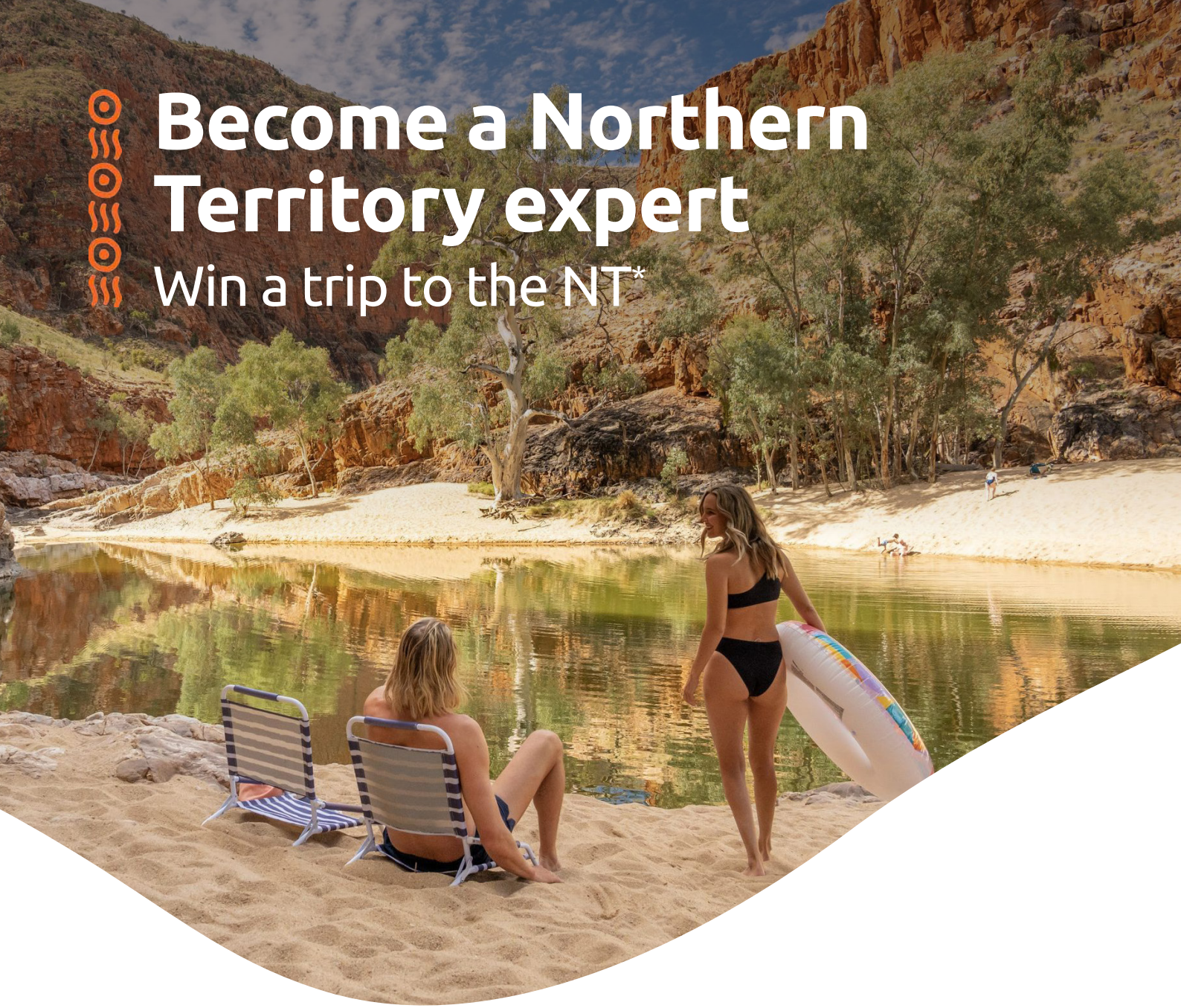
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