

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our **Corporate Update**, plus a full page from **Air Mauritius**.

HLO puts on a show

ATTENDEES at the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) Gala on 10 Oct are set to enjoy a salute to some of Melbourne's greatest female performers, backed by Helloworld Travel.

The evening will open with a theatrical reimagining of the music of Kylie Minogue, Tina Arena, Vanessa Amorosi and Olivia Newton-John.

During the intermission, guests will be regaled with a musical journey through the work of Hans Zimmer, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Delerium.

"Helloworld Travel is delighted to again be supporting the NTIA Gala as sponsor of the evening's entertainment," the company's COO and executive director Cinzia Burnes said.

"A sold-out Palladium and a uniquely Melbourne-inspired program will provide the perfect backdrop for recognising the achievements of our industry."

ATIA chief executive director Dean Long added: "Melbourne is a city that knows how to put on a show, and Helloworld [has] helped us create a night that lives up to the city's reputation."

The NTIA gala is now sold out (**TD** 24 Sep 2026). *JM*

TD is back on Tue

TRAVEL Daily will not be published on Mon due to the public holiday; we wish our readers a safe long weekend.

Humans blamed for AI issues

THREE in four bookings that transition from AI planning to human management at the transaction phase are losing travel dates and guest details, according to new research by travel marketing agency Propellic.

While travellers in the US-based study handed AI the duties of trip research without hesitation, the study found that things fell apart at the point of sale, with the hand-off phase between AI and human causing a range of booking inaccuracies.

Interestingly, most participants impacted by the errors blamed the travel company for the loss of

dates and names rather than the AI platform used for planning.

The report stated the issues "barely dented" consumers' trust in AI's travel planning capabilities, adding that the findings ran counter to the patterns the industry had been planning for.

Users rated its AI suggestions 4.1 out of 5 for accuracy, while 70% trusted the results more than traditional search data.

Only 5% of travellers did not trust the recommendations from the AI agent at all.

Other key takeaways from the study included AI sending 71% of participants directly to the operator rather than intermediaries to book, while recognisable travel brands in an AI answer were often read as a paid placement - even in cases it was returned organically.

When asked to build a multi-day itinerary, not one participant in the study looked for an existing tour or package. *AB*



Trafalgar simplifies

TRAFALGAR has updated its river cruise group policy to help give Australian and NZ agents a competitive edge by providing greater flexibility, lower risk allocation options and expanded full-ship charter opportunities.

The operator has simplified group space holds into two clear categories, including soft allocation (no financial commitment), which holds pricing at time of quotation based on cabin category.

Space is subject to availability and confirmed upon receipt of a standard \$350pp guest deposit.

Meanwhile, the hard allocation option offers guaranteed space for a deposit of \$800 per cabin, which is fully refundable up to 12 months prior to departure.

Under the updated policy, group bookings unlock tailored incentives such as one free-of-charge twin-share place for every group of eight or 10 guests. *JM*

TD TRAVEL DAILY
ON LOCATION



Melbourne

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you from **Crowne Plaza Melbourne** for the **2026 MTA National Conference**.

THE 2026 conference kicks into gear today with addresses from Lesley Owen and Andrew Burnes, followed by presentations from Chubb Travel Insurance and World's Leading Cruise Lines.

The day culminates with a keynote address from tennis champion-turned-broadcaster Jelena Dokic, titled **Unbreakable & Fearless**.

Meanwhile, this afternoon sees delegates split into group activities such as the Sporting Capital Experience and a Melbourne City Walking Tour. *ZH*

New way to connect

AIR Mauritius' seasonal services give travellers more options to connect to Africa and Europe.

See more on the **back page**.

Manager, Oceania – 2 year contract, Sydney

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) is seeking a dynamic and results-driven individual to help drive leisure and MICE arrivals and tourism receipts from WA and QLD.

Full job scope can be found [here](#)

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Solo booms in luxe space

IF YOU are an Aussie planning a luxury solo trip next year, the chances are you will be a female mulling a trip focused on wellness in Japan, according to Virtuoso's latest annual report examining the latest trends.

Solo travel is becoming an increasingly important part of the sales mix for luxury advisors in Australia and New Zealand, with Virtuoso's data showing that Japan was the most popular destination for such holidays.

The booming Asian market ranked ahead of Italy, France, the UK, Canada and Croatia for luxury Aussie solo travellers.

Domestic solo jaunts also polled well, with Australia in 10th place and New Zealand coming in slightly ahead in seventh spot.

In terms of the type of solo experiences being sought after, health and wellness continued to dominate in top spot.

Guided tours were the next most popular, followed by adventure trekking and women-only solo tours.



Solo products exclusively for women made the top five in Virtuoso's list for the first time this year, with vice president, global public relations Misty Belles telling attendees at a launch event in Sydney this week that the category has experienced a recent surge.

"We are seeing that category come on very strongly and in the Virtuoso world, 68% of solo travellers are female - which is why you are seeing that tendency towards the women-only trips."

Belles also revealed that for solo travellers in the luxury space, it was becoming less about the destination and more about the purpose of travel.

"[For solos] it really is becoming more about what experiences they want to do once they are in destination," she said.

Meanwhile, expedition cruising was another growing segment for solo travellers.

Antarctica is leading the way for expedition destinations out of Australia and NZ. **AB**

Bahrain advice eases

SMARTTRAVELLER has lowered the overall advice for Bahrain from 'do not travel' to 'reconsider your need to travel'.

The official government travel advisory is warning Australians of military strikes that continue to take place across the Middle East.

Confidence will be crucial



TRAVEL advisors should be confident in conversations about payment methods following the RBA changes, while also bringing them to the fore of their sales process, MTA's 2026 national conference heard this week.

Speaking during an RBA-focused session, Mint Payments ANZ partnerships manager Izzy Limn (**pictured** right) and Bird's Eye View Consulting director Nicole O'Sullivan (**pictured** left) urged agents to approach the changes with conviction and provide clients with certainty throughout the booking process.

Limn said advisors should avoid overwhelming clients with technical details behind the changes and instead focus on clearly explaining how they are managing the fee changes.

"Approach it really confidently and say, 'Look, due to the rising costs of business, we have now had to introduce a new fee,'" Limn explained.

Advisors' own confidence was also important, Limn added, warning that clients would pick up on any uncertainty around additional costs.

"If you are already feeling uncomfortable about adding that

cost to cover your margin, the customer is going to be able to pick up on it straight away, and that is probably going to lead to having a tougher conversation."

O'Sullivan echoed the sentiments around composure, adding that certainty should be the guiding principle for advisors when discussing payments.

"You have to be certain in the language that you use and try to bring [that to] the conversation in the beginning," she said.

O'Sullivan added that raising the issue early would allow agents to factor the client's preferred payment method into the booking, rather than introducing an unexpected cost at the point of payment.

"Do not be afraid to just own that conversation," she said, suggesting advisors ask clients early questions like 'What have you looked at so far? How do you plan on paying for your holiday?'"

O'Sullivan also said the approach could also help agents understand how clients intended to pay before they had invested time in building and finalising their itineraries.

"The end gets clunky," O'Sullivan concluded. **ZH**

JQ workers strike

JETSTAR Airways workers are set to strike at major airports today, saying they have been "left with no choice".

Australian Services Union workers employed across major airports are embarking on the one-hour work stoppages over a pay dispute with Jetstar.

Impacted airports include Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Cairns.

Workers are also ceasing non-essential duties for the day, such as PA announcements. **MS**

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Craig heads up Atura

SHANNON Craig has been appointed GM at Atura Oran Park (**TD** 25 Aug 2026), in addition to her role of area GM NSW.

She has over two decades of experience at EVT Hotels & Resorts across Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

Craig's career has seen her hold leadership roles at Rydges Wellington, QT Canberra and Rydges Kensington London. *JB*

HLO heads to Vegas

HELLOWORLD has opened registrations for its 2027 annual summit, which is set to run from 16-20 May at the Bellagio Resort and Casino in Las Vegas (**TD** 15 Jun 2026).

Speaking at the 2026 MTA national conference this week, Helloworld chief executive officer Andrew Burnes said that all of the networks within the Helloworld family are invited to attend the event. *ZH*

JB unites marine portfolio

JOURNEY Beyond has introduced Island Connections, the new national brand for its SeaLink marine operations, which it recently acquired from Kesian Group (**TD** 09 Sep 2026).

Island Connections brings together Journey Beyond's new marine operations across Bruny Island (Tasmania), the Whitsundays, K'gari (Fraser Island), the Tiwi Islands, Groote Eylandt and Darwin-Mandorah under a single banner.

The marine operations connect more than 400,000 travellers each year with island and coastal destinations around Australia.

Jennifer Vandekreeke, managing director of Journey Beyond's experiences and attractions division, will lead the business.

"What makes Island Connections exciting is the opportunity to bring these marine services together while celebrating what makes each destination unique,"



Vandekreeke said.

"From the waters around Bruny Island and the Whitsundays to the Tiwi Islands and the Top End, these are special places with their own stories, communities and character," she added.

"Our role is to support the people who know these destinations best and bring these iconic destinations within reach of more travellers."

Bookings are now open - visit islandconnections.com.au. *JM*

Intrepid for president

MELBOURNE-BASED Intrepid is continuing its aggressive expansion in the United States, revealing the operator is on the hunt for a president to lead growth in the country.

Reporting into president, North America Leigh Barnes, the recruit will be charged with growing key network partnerships and brands.

"The USA is central to our growth ambitions through 2030 and to get there, we need a leader focused entirely on this market," Barnes said.

"We are looking for someone ambitious who makes decisions and cares about people."

While Intrepid has been growing its presence globally, North America and the US has been a key focus for expansion.

The US already generates around US\$100 million in annual revenue for Intrepid, supported by a team of around 100.

The goal is to grow revenue to over US\$350 million by 2030. *AB*

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Hey Chical, 315 Brunswick St, Fortitude Valley

20th OCT - 6pm - 9pm
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The Aviary, 140 William St, Perth

22nd OCT - 6pm - 9pm
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Hotel Indigo, Merrymaker Rooftop, 23-29 Market St, Adelaide South

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Verandah Public, 55/65 Elizabeth St, Sydney

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Friday 2nd Oct 2026

Burnes bullish on future

HELLOWORLD CEO Andrew Burnes (pictured) believes the travel industry can be confident about the years to come, with Australians continuing to prioritise holidays despite cost-of-living pressures and broader economic uncertainties.

Addressing the Mobile Travel Agents (MTA) National Conference in Melbourne this week, Burnes said Helloworld's agency networks remained strong, with more customers visiting agencies and more people seeking to join the network.

"Our business is going as well as any other retail business could be going," he told delegates.

"The actual facts are that we are growing," Burnes said, pointing to the scale of bookings being made through advisors, including cruise, hotel and flight reservations within MTA.

While acknowledging that pressures on household



budgets could eventually affect discretionary travel spending, he said the industry had reason to remain confident.

"People are just so determined, their travel is so important to them," Burnes continued.

"Whilst [conditions] will be challenging for a lot of the Australian economy, they won't be as challenging for us," he said.

Speaking on HLO's recent acquisition of Currency Exchange (TD 21 Sep 2026), Burnes told advisors the deal would bring "products and services to allow you to more efficiently and effectively, and at a better return, provide foreign currency". ZH

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Airlink gets its NDC

THE new distribution content (NDC) for Southern African carrier Airlink is now live on the Aeronology platform.

The move will allow travel advisors to book air travel in regional Africa, enabling them to shop, compare and book Airlink flights, as well as maintain full post-booking control. JB

Mont Blanc changes

TRAVELLERS looking to embark on multi-day hikes on Mont Blanc in France in 2027 may soon need to book their place in advance.

Under new laws proposed by French authorities, multi-day hikers will be required to present proof that they have booked accommodation in either a hotel, campsite or authorised area.

Stakeholders have until 15 Oct to submit final comments about the plan, with the new rules flagged to come into effect from Mar next year. JB



Window Seat

WANT to climb up a mountain without actually climbing?

Footage has emerged from Hunan in China showing tourists being carried up mountains in a device known as a huagan.

For just A\$20, tourists sit in a chair strapped to two bamboo poles, while two people carry them up steep gradients.

The mode of transport was used in ancient China to carry people across long distances and inclines.

However, inventions like the chairlift and gondola have seen the use of huagans decline rapidly in recent decades.



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Singapore sees double

DOUBLETREE by Hilton

Singapore Robertson Quay has opened in the city's downtown.

The 344-key property features two dining concepts, SAUS and Brew:33, in addition to seven MICE spaces, an outdoor pool, wellness studio and gym. *JB*



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Levy needed for transition

EXCLUSIVE

AVIATION industry advisor Simon Westaway believes a green levy on airfares to cover the cost of ramping up the use of sustainable aviation fuel in Australia is one of the only effective mechanisms to make the transition a reality.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* in the wake of reports that Qantas and Virgin Australia are seeking to impose a green impost on Aussie travellers (*TD* 29 Sep 2026), the former Australian Airports Association chief said there was a moral imperative on behalf of

the industry to seek out ways to lower its carbon footprint.

"Australian aviation does have obligations to pursue more sustainable pathways as a future facing, internationally renowned sector," Westaway said.

And while he said that all entities in the aviation sector are currently playing their role, the balance between speed-to-market versus necessity needs "far more questioning".

Westaway noted that such levies need to be weighted against the high costs already being paid by travellers.

"The grinding reality is that rising costs are now right across Australia's aviation ecosystem.

"Air travel is not like purchasing milk and bread - there is a ceiling and nobody can and should presume future accretive or notional growth in both int'l and domestic air travel in Australia just a given," he added. *AB*

Aussie tourism win

AUSTRALIA has ranked fourth in the World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (TTDI), highlighting a country's ability to grow tourism without negatively impacting the natural environment.

Recording a score of 5.18, Australia ranked two places higher than last year's TTDI.

Japan finished on top with a score of 5.27, with the US (5.23) and last year's number one Spain (5.22) rounding out the top three.

Across the list, the Asia-Pacific was the fastest-growing region, showing an average TTDI score rise of 3.6% between '24 & '26.

From the key pillars used to rank countries, price competitiveness was the worst-performing over the past three years, with the global average sitting at 3.1%. *JB*

VA's horror weekend

THE Fremantle Dockers weren't the only ones to crumble over the weekend, as Virgin Australia (VA) faced a series of cancellations due to poor weather, affecting 30,000 passengers nationwide.

VA cancelled 16 flights on Sat and a further 34 on Sun, further exacerbated by an average delay time of 44 minutes.

Sat was also plagued by poor weather in Melbourne, creating operational difficulties. *JB*

New Cal now on sale

AIRCALIN has launched a new promotion offering return flights from Sydney or Brisbane to Noumea from \$599.

The discounted fares will be available to book until 16 Oct, for travel dates between Oct 2026 and Aug 2027. *JM*

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CORPORATE UPDATE

Surcharge opens offshore

EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING on from his comments a fortnight ago (*TD* 18 Sep 2026), Complex Travel Group director Mark Trim believes RBA changes to credit card surcharges will open the door to offshore agencies at the detriment of Australian-based agencies.

Speaking with *TD*, Trim (*pictured*) explained that these agencies are not bound to the same laws as Australian-based agents and will continue to add card fees to their prices.

"There are many offshore agencies that distribute into Australia via metasearch engines [Google Flights/Skyscanner] and



we'd assume these companies will continue their race to the bottom on lead in price," explained Trim.

"This will likely have a negative impact on Australian-based agencies based on consumer perception of the lead-in levels relative to a conversation around booking fees."

While Trim admitted that many offshore agencies are legitimate players in the space, there are a few that set out to target vulnerable customers.

"The rise of AI agents could lead to an increasing number of customers being directed to more businesses offshore - hopefully something that consumers don't adopt at scale," he said.

"Whether it's SimplyBusinessClass.com, IOnlyFlyFirstClass, Above9 Travel or a raft of other fly-by-night companies, these agencies are onselling reward seats to Australian consumers with claims of 20%-60% of the cost of premium airfares," he added.

Additionally, Trim said one of the best methods for local agencies to combat this concern is through emphasising ATIA accreditation, citing that customers are willing to pay more to keep their money onshore. *JB*

WWT biz upgrades

WENDY Wu Tours (WWT) is offering travellers on select Japan departures a one-way business class upgrade from \$499pp when flying with Singapore Airlines.

Available until 29 Oct, the upgrade can be applied to flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide on valid Japan departures between Mar and Aug 2027.

The offer is available on eight itineraries across the Classic Highlights, Hidden Gems and Regional Discoveries categories, with prices starting from \$12,590pp twin share (before business class upgrade).

Additionally, travellers can add a Singapore stopover from \$370pp twin share. *JB*



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Normandy on show



ATOUT France has recently hosted a series of exclusive dinners around Australia's eastern states commemorating Normandy and its local connection.

The last of the three dinners was hosted last night in Sydney, bringing together a range of regional stakeholders, such as Rail Europe, Ponant, AmaWaterways and Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours (MMBT).

Trade and media attendees gathered at classic French restaurant Hubert to hear a range of product updates from the tourism operators and listen to special messages from local Norman partners, such as the Caen la Mer Tourist Office and the Memorial de Caen World War II history museum. *MS*

Pictured are Clelie Collas and Sophie Almin from Atout France; Grant Robertson, Rail Europe; Julie Golding, Ponant; Angela Smith, AmaWaterways; and Jess Stebnicki, MMBT.

Speakers Occupied

THE speaker lineup for the 2026 Maximum Occupancy Australia conference has been revealed, bringing together key industry figures to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the accommodation industry in 2027.

Opening the conference will be Melbourne Lord Mayor Nicholas Reece, followed by Jacqueline Choo from STR, who will provide an accommodation outlook.

Luxury Escapes CEO Adam Schwab and VTIC CEO Lisa Patroni will also discuss the changing sources of hotel demand.

Other key speakers include Paul Constantinou, co-founder and non-executive chairman, extended STAY Australasia; Dougall Hollis, general manager, Accommodation Australia (Victoria); and Sarah Derry, chief people officer, The Star Entertainment Group.

The conference will take place



Friday 2nd Oct 2026

SPECIALS

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specials@traveldaily.com.au

Aldi Holidays has launched over 50 deals this Oct, including a luxury trip to Bali from \$1,899pp, a five-star rail tour of China from \$1,499pp and a six-day holiday in Hawaii from \$2,599pp. For further details and bookings, call 1300 369 664.

With **Blue Lagoon Cruises'** Double Deal, travellers get up to 20% off standard Hibiscus Cabin fares plus a complimentary upgrade to an Orchid Cabin when booking a three-, four- or seven-night cruise. This is available for trips booked and deposited before 31 Oct. For bookings, contact +679 9924469.

Adventure World has dropped a range of offers for travellers who book before 31 Oct. Travellers can enjoy either a complimentary night in Vancouver, a two-category cabin upgrade on select 'Epic Alaska & British Columbia' departures aboard *Greg Mortimer*, or savings of up to \$800 per couple on select Rocky Mountaineer departures. For further enquiries, call 1300 363 055.

Holland America Line is giving Aussie travellers the opportunity to secure select 2027 Alaska and Europe cruises with a deposit of only \$99 per person. The deal is available until 02 Nov and is valid on select sailings departing between Apr and Sep 2027. Call 1300 987 322 to book.

Singapore Airlines is offering savings of 25% on return economy fares on flights to Singapore departing from Sydney Kingsford Smith Airport and returning to Western Sydney International Airport. As a result, return fares will cost under \$800. This offer is available until 05 Oct, with travel available through to 31 Dec. Call 02 7209 4388 to find out more.

Batik Air is offering a free connecting flight when booking a trip to Kuala Lumpur from either Sydney or Melbourne. Connections are available for Penang, Langkawi, Johor Bahru, Sibul, Bintulu, Singapore and Phuket. This offer can be booked until 10 Oct and is valid on travel through to 30 Mar 2027. To book, call 02 9158 8599.

The Alva Hotel Brisbane has launched its Bluey's World Family Package. From \$427, the offer includes overnight accommodation for three, two morning session tickets to Bluey's World, a plush toy, valet parking and \$50 credit for the minibar. Call 1800 221 335 to book.

Until 07 Oct, **Expedia OneKey** members will be able to save up to 30% on selected accommodation. Additionally, OneKey members who book a flight before 05 Oct will receive \$45 in OneKeyCash, which must be spent within 30 days. Contact 1300 397 334.

Andaz Gold Coast has announced its opening offer, with total savings of up to 25%. As part of the offer, guests can get 20% off, with room rates and complimentary breakfast from \$359 per night. World of Hyatt members can receive an additional 5% off eligible rates. For more information, call 07 5639 1234.

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AW serves up fresh inspo



ADVENTURE World has launched The Quarterly Collection, a resource created for its travel advisor partners.

The editions include travel ideas and practical selling insights shaped by seasonality, as well as new products and glossy imagery.

"We are excited to launch this initiative and are confident it will be genuinely useful for our travel advisor partners, something they can keep close at hand and come back to throughout the quarter," head of sales Elsa McLean said.

"Beautiful imagery can spark a conversation, but we wanted to

go further by giving advisors a reason to have that conversation now: why an experience is timely, which clients it might suit, and how Adventure World can help turn that initial inspiration into a truly memorable journey."

Agents can check out the digital edition **HERE**, or request a hard copy from their Adventure World national accounts manager. *JM*

Brightline dimmed

FLORIDA'S Brightline service has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection, following reports of mounting debts of more than US\$5.5 million.

The privately-owned rail service, which runs between Miami and Orlando, will not have its operations impacted by the bankruptcy at this stage, with the company stating it remained committed to a new station at Cocoa Beach and upgrades to its Miami, Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach stations.

Brightline West, which connects Los Angeles and San Bernardino County, is not included in the bankruptcy filing. *JB*

It's hectic in Hobart

HOBART Airport is expected to welcome 131,000 passengers during the school holidays, as families gear up for trips away.

Today is tipped to be the busiest day of holidays, with almost 9,000 projected through the terminals.

More than half of total passenger traffic during this period will be on the HBA-MEL route, with a handful of passengers making the trip to other destinations. *JB*

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