

Today's issue of TD

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

- Entire Travel Group
- CVFR Group

Sights of the Swiss

SWISS Travel by the Entire Travel Group is the one-stop-shop to book trips to Switzerland.

Agents can also receive a \$100 gift card for each booking deposited before 30 Sep.

See more details on **page nine**.



Viking's new Flights on Us campaign is here

For a limited time, your clients will enjoy included economy airfares valued at up to \$2,800 per person when they book a Viking river, ocean or expedition voyage. It's the first time they've extended this offer across all three products.

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Click here for details on Viking's new campaign.



Go beyond the competition

THE ACCC will deliver a briefing on airfares, airline choice and competition at the Australian Travel Industry Association's (ATIA) Beyond Borders Travel Summit next month.

ACCC executive director, airports and aviation, David Cranston and director, competition exemptions branch Anthony Hilton will address developments across the domestic & int'l aviation markets before a fireside discussion with ATIA chief Dean Long.

The aviation session will be a key focus in 2026, with Long stating that competition in the sector affects the price of almost every itinerary sold by Australian travel businesses.

"Aviation competition affects the price of almost every itinerary our members sell, and this is a

chance to hear the regulator's thinking firsthand," Long said.

The summit will bring together leaders from aviation, hotels, touring, retail and government relations to examine the trends and challenges expected to shape the industry in 2027.

"The rest of the day is built the same way, addressing the issues members tell us they need to know to make the most of their business in 2027," Long said.

An industry leaders panel will explore traveller expectations, distribution, technology, talent and product, while another will examine touring's role in the broader travel industry.

Canberra's priorities, emerging hotel capacity and accommodation value are also on the agenda. **ZH**

Shenzhen to SYD

FOLLOWING its introduction of services to Melbourne last year (**TD** 11 Aug 2025) Shenzhen Airlines has confirmed it will link Sydney Airport with Shenzhen from 14 Dec.

The new service will operate four times a week using A333 aircraft, adding 130,000 seats annually between the two cities.

Chinese nationals are SYD's second-largest international traveller group, with volumes up 13.9% year-on-year. **AB**

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Thursday 10th Sep 2026

The case for WSI to India

EXCLUSIVE

NSW Premier Chris Minns' bid to lure Indian airlines to Western Sydney International (WSI) (**TD** 02 Sep 2026) may hinge on whether the new airport can unlock more direct India-Sydney demand and capture passengers currently connecting via overseas hubs.

While the announcement of upcoming Fiji Airways flights marked the latest success story for the new airport (**TD** 09 Sep 2026), Indian carriers could represent a significantly bigger opportunity as WSI launches passenger flights next month.

Adjunct senior lecturer at the Research Centre for Integrated Transport Innovations at UNSW, Tay Koo, told **TD** there were several factors that could make WSI attractive to Indian carriers.

"WSI's attractions include its 24-hour operating model and possibly a more convenient location for the Indian diaspora," Koo explained.

However, the advantage would also depend on door-to-door journey times, rather than airport location alone, he noted.

A direct India-WSI service could generate a mix of new demand and passengers who would otherwise use Sydney Airport.

Many travellers currently transit through hubs such as Singapore and Malaysia, with a direct service potentially reducing total travel time and connection risks.

"This convenience may be particularly valuable for time-



sensitive travellers, including corporate and premium passengers," Koo said.

However, he also warned that passenger demand alone would not automatically translate into a strong airline business case, with carriers needing to weigh the revenue and strategic value of a new service against competing opportunities for scarce aircraft.

Meanwhile, former AAA CEO Simon Westaway said he felt "very positive" about WSI's initial growth prospects.

"I think Western Sydney is setting up well for its inaugural activities from a commercial perspective," Westaway told **Travel Daily**.

"I think that airport is going to transition nicely and provide a second gateway in Sydney.

"India is an immense travel market for Australia, we both jointly love cricket," he joked.

"It has obviously got a huge and rising middle class, [there's] a huge diaspora of Indians here in Australia, there's a lot of linkage.

"I think it's positive that our elected leaders are engaging with such an important market." ZH

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Polishing the crown

CUNARD has announced a refurbishment of *Queen Mary 2*, entering dry dock in Mar 2027.

The renovation will see 31 new staterooms, including 16 Cunard Princess Grill Suites and 15 Britannia Suites.

Grill Suites will have updated interiors, furnishings and newly-designed bathrooms.

New outdoor deck spaces and relaxation zones will also be added, as well as redesigned kennels for guests' pets.

The vessel's Mareel Wellness & Beauty will also be refreshed, in addition to a new lineup of luxury stores, providing a boutique shopping experience. *JB*

The lucky roadshow

TOURISM Ireland has revealed it will be hosting its roadshow of Australia and New Zealand this Nov, visiting Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney and Perth.

In conjunction with its 'Ireland Goes Beyond' campaign, the event will travel with nine Irish delegates, highlighting the depth and diversity of the country and providing agents up-to-date product knowledge. *JB*

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Aussies embrace European rail journeys

AUSTRALIAN demand for European rail journeys is on the rise, with Travelmarvel citing a 10% year-on-year growth in sales.

"It is a mode of travel that lets guests slow down and see landscapes other transport can't reach," APT Travel Group CEO David Cox told *Travel Daily*.

According to Cox, a growing number of these passengers are experienced river cruise passengers, with rail being the "natural next step".

The low water levels in some European rivers have also "worked in rail's favour", he said.

"What we are really seeing is travellers who are determined to see Europe regardless, and rail has become an option for those wanting a guaranteed, uninterrupted experience alongside their cruise," Cox said.

Demand for rail journeys in Switzerland in particular has surged, as the number of Aussies



travelling by train in the country rose by 17% in 2025, according to Switzerland Tourism.

Catering to this interest, Travelmarvel has launched several new itineraries including 'Alpine Discovery by Rail', which includes travelling on the Glacier Express and Bernina Express, and 'Switzerland By Rail', featuring four panoramic train journeys through the region.

Another new trip is 'Scandinavia by Rail', which can be combined with the 'European Gems' river cruise, as well as 'Scotland by Rail', which takes guests on the

Jacobite steam train in Mallaig, the route made famous by the *Harry Potter* films.

Earlier this year, Travelmarvel brought its rail product in-house, giving the business full control over the guest experience from booking through to the journey.

"That means we can build every tour around what Travelmarvel guests want: value, ease and happiness," Cox said.

One of the key selling points of Travelmarvel's rail offering is its portage service, which transfers guests' luggage between hotels and trains, he added.

Meanwhile, despite the Middle East conflict, it is "business as usual" at Travelmarvel, with "strong" forward bookings for rail cruising and rail touring.

"Australians want to travel, full stop," Cox said.

"They're resilient, they're informed, and they are not putting their plans on hold." *JHM*

Tim Oakes departs

INSIDE Travel has announced that its Australian managing director Tim Oakes will depart the business after nearly 11 years, including nearly five at its helm.

Joining as the founding member of the Australian operation, Oakes has been pivotal in turning a new-to-market brand into a business generating more than \$29 million in annual turnover.

"I have decided that the time is right to begin the next chapter of my career," Oakes said.

"It has been an incredible privilege to work alongside talented colleagues...I am immensely proud of what we have achieved together."

Nicole Newport will serve as interim MD from Mon. ZH



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Westaway pops up

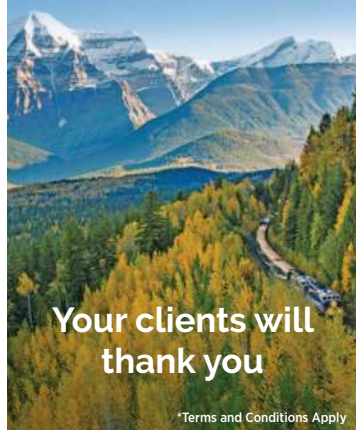
FORMER Australian Airports Association chief executive officer Simon Westaway is working part-time as a spokesperson for the Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisor Panel (BYTAP).

He recently spoke exclusively with **TD** about proposed visa challenges (**TD** 09 Sep 2026). ZH

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Value of GSAs are evolving

EXCLUSIVE

THE Australian travel trade is critical to airlines and travel brands despite the rise of direct distribution and AI, according to Aviareps Australia GM Lindsay White, who told **Travel Daily** the best representation deals are increasingly about far more than traditional GSA sales.

"GSA is a nice terminology," White said, "but I like to think of it as more of a global representation business."

There is still on-the-road sales representation which will remain part of any GSA relationship, but White said representation now means much more, including field sales, trade shows and exhibitions, account



management, PR, marketing, bespoke projects and more, pointing to a recent Maldives Roadshow hosted by Aviareps (**TD** 15 July 2026).

"Brands may not want true representation, but they want us to represent them on an Australian roadshow," he said.

"These can be a kind of one-off, you're in the market, then back out again...if you do that and deliver that right, then it does have a repeat effect."

As Australia charges toward the opening of its 14th international airport in WSI, White said that establishing brand awareness is key to any prospective airline.

"You can be a well-known brand or a well-known airline, but if you are coming into a new market, you have got to establish that brand as quickly as possible."

White added that it takes focus to achieve this, and also a good team to spread the word.

"Ultimately you have to have a good product and a resilient product...and one thing I have believed all of my career in the airline industry is that you have to be trade-friendly, there is no doubt about it." ZH

Hyatt takes the skies

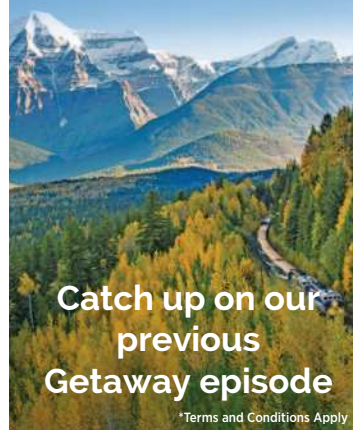
HYATT has collaborated with Delta Air Lines to combine incentives and benefits of their respective loyalty programs.

Elite Delta SkyMiles members can use points at Hyatt properties, while World of Hyatt members can access value for Delta flights and in-flight services.

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Window Seat

ON THE eve of the Los Angeles Rams and the San Francisco 49ers playing a historic NFL opening game at the MCG, Qantas has played a key role in getting both teams into our own backyard.

The Rams touched down in Melbourne yesterday, while the 49ers arrived last week.

Both teams flew from LAX on a Qantas A380, each with four pilots, 22 cabin crew and one travelling charter manager, along with over 20,000 tonnes of football equipment between them.

Players and coaching staff were treated to a protein-packed menu, including steak sandwiches with extra steak, double portions of cheeseburgers and an array of sides to pick from.

Regular flyers also received special NFL-themed pyjamas at the boarding gates on select flights (pictured).



LTC names top achievers

THE Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) has crowned its inaugural Pinnacle of Luxury Awards winners, with almost 30 stand-out travel advisors, businesses, and partners unveiled at a celebration on Makepeace Island.

Finalists and partners gathered for the awards presentation, which saw Ross Quigly of Luxury Cruise Escapes emerged as the night's star individual performer, taking home three awards on the evening: LTC Advisor Product Award, Galeries de Luxe Advisor of the Year, and the Pinnacle of Cruise award.

Meanwhile, Luxury Cruise Escapes, Flat Beds Tour + Cruise, and Bicton Travel were each

recognised across both business categories (LTC Business Product Award and Galeries de Luxe Business of the Year) in their respective tiers.

"We wanted Pinnacles to feel every bit as exceptional as the achievements we were celebrating," LTC general manager Nikki Glading said.

"These are the members and advisors setting the standard for luxury travel across Australia and NZ, and they deserve to be celebrated at the highest level."

Flight Centre Travel Group luxury & independent managing director Danielle Galloway said the winners were exemplars of the entire travel industry.

"What stands out isn't just the results, it's the standard they set for everyone around them - that's what luxury does: it leads, and the rest of the business follows."

See p7 for the glitz & glamour.

EU Google change

GOOGLE has rolled out changes to its European search results to satisfy EU antitrust regulators, but warned the measures will reduce service quality and increase costs for businesses.

The updates give greater prominence to price comparison sites, including Booking.com and Expedia, while reducing visibility for businesses that rely on direct website links, phone numbers and addresses.

Google described the changes as the biggest reduction in search quality in its 29-year history and follows a €460 million fine imposed on the tech company in Jul for reportedly favouring its own services in search results. ZH

Three voyages to win

CRUISE Traveller has launched a new agent incentive program, with trips to Europe, Japan and Canada up for grabs.

To be in the running, advisors must book a client on a sailing with either Mitsui Ocean Cruises (before 30 Nov), Adventure Canada (before 28 Feb 2027) or VIVA Cruises (before 28 Feb 2027) through Cruise Traveller.

The more bookings made, the more chance there is to win one of the three draws. JB

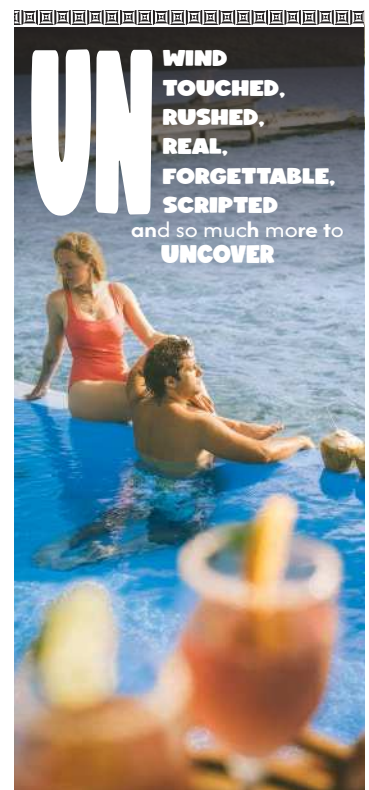
WSI parks its prices

WESTERN Sydney International has unveiled its launch carpark prices ahead of passenger services commencing.

Long-stay parking starts at \$15 a day and premium from \$49.

WSI will also offer travellers three hours of free parking until 26 Oct. ZH

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Oceania slims down

OCEANIA Cruises has announced an industry-first voyage by launching an entirely gluten-free sailing.

The 12-night round-trip voyage aboard *Oceania Vista* will depart from Southampton on 31 May 2028, exploring historic cities in England, Ireland and Scotland.

Maureen Basye, founder of the voyage organiser Celiac Cruise, said the bespoke cruise would eliminate the need for travellers to continuously remind chefs of their dietary requirements.

"By addressing those concerns... guests can focus fully on their vacation," Basye said. *JB*

See girls on film

EXPLORE Worldwide has partnered with the Women's Adventure Film Tour for the tenth year in a row, taking guests to view short films showcasing inspiring stories of women pushing the boundaries of adventure travel.

Films include *Journey Across Queen Maud Land on a Bike*, which follows cyclist Dr Kate Leeming taking on one of the most challenging landscapes in the world, as well as *Limitless Above the Clouds*, following mountaineer Allie Pepper as she becomes the first Aussie to climb all 14 8km peaks in the world without supplemental oxygen.

Screenings for the Women's Adventure Film Tour started on 08 Sep and will continue to 15 Oct - see the film list [HERE](#). *JB*

Becoming VA's poster boy

VIRGIN Australia (VA) has partnered with content agency Suddenly to launch its new Travel Media Network, allowing brands to advertise across VA's flights, lounges and digital platforms.

Announced at NewsCorp's

Royal's hero float

ROYAL Caribbean has celebrated the float-out of *Hero of the Seas* ahead of her Miami debut in Aug 2027.

The float out took place at the Meyer Turku, which has been the building place of three previous Icon ships for Royal Caribbean.

Hero of the Seas will now move into the outfitting phase after more than 90 million gallons of water were used to float the ship from its dry dock.

The next Icon Class vessel will feature eight neighbourhoods, nine pools and 28 dining venues, including the New Orleans Parish Supper Club and The Hideaway adults-only pool and Crown's Edge, a part-skywalk, part-zipline experience set above the ocean.

Hero will sail seven-night Eastern and Western Caribbean itineraries from Miami, with every cruise visiting Perfect Day at CocoCay in The Bahamas. *ZH*



Beyond '27 Travel session yesterday, the new incentive will allow brands to reach almost 21 million customers annually, including over 300,000 monthly visitors to VA's lounges across the country 3 million monthly visitors on its website and app.

VA's chief marketing and sustainability officer, Libby Minogue, believes the partnership will provide a prime opportunity for brands to connect with customers that matter most.

"Virgin Australia has a unique relationship with millions of Australians, and our Travel Media Network will give brands new ways to be part of the customer journey in relevant and engaging environments," Minogue said.

Importantly, it is about creating value on both sides by giving brands access to our audiences in new ways, while enhancing the experiences we create for our customers and guests.

"Suddenly's deep understanding of content, audience and commercial outcomes made them the right partner to take this proposition to market," Minogue added.

Brands can also take part in VA's experiential opportunities, such as pop-up activations and sampling hubs in its lounges, as well as integration into landmark cultural moments such as milestone and celebratory flights.

In-flight wi-fi sponsorships and targeted emails are planned for the near-future. *JB*

Norseman's fortune

A **PRIZE** pool of \$25,000 has been confirmed for the upcoming Nordic Roadshow 2026, with limited places remaining across its Brisbane, Adelaide and Melbourne sessions.

A \$5,000 travel voucher for 50 Degrees North will be presented at each session, with one registered guest taking home the top prize.

The roadshow begins in Brisbane on 13 Oct, followed by Adelaide and Melbourne. *JB*

It will cost us \$3b

THE Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC) believes proposed changes to the Working Holiday Visa (WHM) program would put more than 20,000 jobs at risk and could cost the Australian economy more than \$3 billion.

ATIC CEO Erin McLeod also questioned the way in which longer stay tourists on WHM visas are currently counted as migrants even though their documentation shows they are not permanent.

"Backpackers are tourists, not migrants, they are big spenders in our communities and help fill critical, seasonal labour shortages," McLeod said.

"They are often the backbone of local regional economies.

"We are asking the Federal Government to exclude tourists from net overseas migration figures and retain the regional travel, visitor spending and economic contribution generated by long-stay visitors." *ZH*



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THE ERRORS OF ENTERTAINMENT

EXCLUSIVE

EVENT entertainment production company, Series of Events Australia (SOEA), has identified the five common failures that event planners and conference organisers encounter while staging entertainment.

Roof-based entertainment must always be the priority, as every other aspect of an event needs to accommodate for the acrobatics and aerial spectacles involved.

SOEA also noted the number of planners who book venues without testing that they are suitable for what they need.

Everything from ceiling height, stage depth, emergency exits and seating capacity play a big role in how an event will run.

Thirdly, too many organisers are under the impression that entertainment is an isolated run-sheet slot, with SOEA noting that



an events team needs to execute a performance depending on the current situation, rather than the given timeframe.

In addition, if an event utilises separate suppliers, they all need to collaborate to ensure their individual roles do not clash with each other.

The final failure SOEA identified was that too many organisers plan for the performance rather than the recovery, emphasising that a strategy should be put in place to cater for potential errors during the event or performance,

without forcing the client to intervene.

Speaking with *Travel Daily*, SOEA director Sam Gosper said the key advice that he would give event planners opting for an entertainment segment is to not “stress too much” about budgets.

“By blocking out necessary roles that can manage scale, [it can mean] there’s a big event and no stage manager - that’s a bad sign,” Gosper said.

“So, anything in terms of the managerial aspect, making sure that there’s budget allocated to that, not just what you want to have happen at the big scale event from the entertainment to the emcee.

“When you’ve got too many moving cogs and no one’s there to sort of lubricate those cogs and make sure things are working in tandem, something will break.” JB

Brisbane pops up

THE 2026 edition of Brisbane Pop-Up was its largest on record, bringing together 327 business events professionals and 80 Brisbane-based exhibitors.

Held on 03 Sep at Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre, the event connected local businesses, venues and suppliers with event organisers, creating the path to drive business event offerings in Brisbane.

Some of the businesses which participated included Emporium Hotel, The Tivoli Group, Moreton Hire and Ghanem Group.

Brisbane’s business events sector was worth \$17.8 billion in 2025, with conference delegates spending 57% more than leisure travellers. JB

Views of Geelong

BANYUL Geelong Convention and Event Centre has launched a new 360° virtual tour, allowing event organisers, clients and visitors to explore the venue from anywhere in the world.

The tour takes users through the centre’s event spaces, meeting rooms, exhibition areas, and waterfront surroundings.

It is now available to access via its website [HERE](#). JB

Adelaide launches Riverbank Hive

MORE than 250,000 European honey bees have taken residence at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), with Riverbank Hive, a new rooftop apiary, supporting urban biodiversity while producing honey for its catering needs.

Located on the rooftop of the convention centre’s Central Building, Riverbank Hive comprises six beehives, expected to produce 50-60kg of



honey per year.

The honey features in its menu include grilled haloumi, soy & honey-glazed chicken thigh and Hokkien noodles, goat curd tartlet, honey-glazed butternut pumpkin and honey-layered cake.

MCEC goes green

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has launched its Sustainability & Impact Strategy for 2026-30.

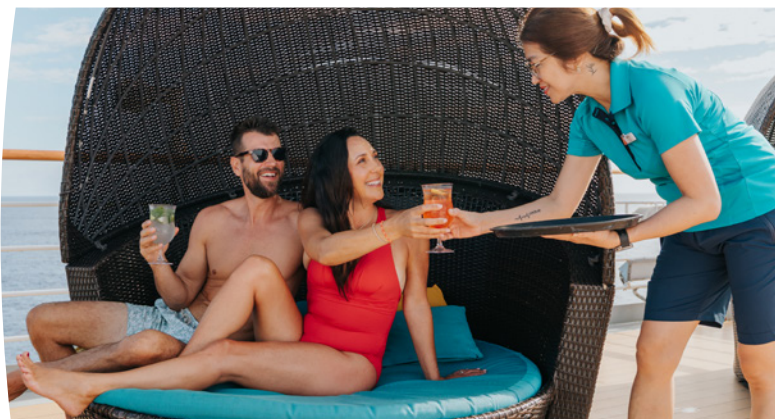
Anchored by the three core priorities of environmental responsibility, social impact and economic prosperity, the report lists a range of targets including net zero by 2045, at least \$2.5 million in annual community investment, and arresting the gender pay gap.



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John O'Sullivan has been named chair of the **Tourism and Events Queensland** board. He brings 30 years of experience across travel, tourism, media, sport and entertainment to the role, and currently serves as CEO of Experience Co. O'Sullivan also holds a part-time director role at Tourism Tropical North Queensland.

Sunshine Coast Airport has named **Tony Edmondstone** as its new CEO, effective 2027. He most recently served as CEO of Airport Development Group, holding the position since 2020. Most of his experience has been gained in the energy industry, where he held senior executive roles at Power and Water Corporation and Venice Energy. Edmondstone's appointment follows the departure of Chris Mills at the end of this year.

The Walshe Group has appointed **Russell Williss** as sales & marketing manager for Air Niugini in New Zealand. He returns to the company following a 10-year tenure as director, New Zealand for Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines. Before that, he was The Walshe Group's sales manager NZ for Hawaiian. Williss also served as corporate sales manager for Qantas for 18 years.

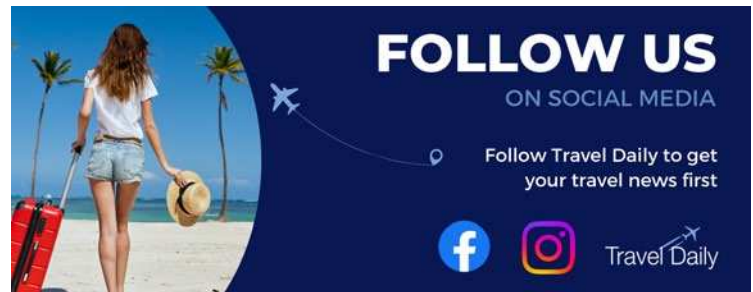
SriLankan Airlines has named **Vipul Misra** as its new CEO. He has been with the carrier since 2024, previously serving as head of engineering. Misra has held several leadership roles at Asian carriers, including Air India, SpiceJet, Vistara, IndiGo and Kingfisher Airlines.

Madison Wells has started a new position as key account manager - cruise touring at **Wendy Wu Tours**. She has worked with the operator since Apr 2025, previously holding the role of cruise touring executive. Wells has also worked as a business travel consultant at Diversity Travel and a customer service representative at HSBC.

Destination NSW's Daliah Von Harten has stepped into the role of business development & marketing manager, UK & Europe. She has been with the key tourism marketing body since 2017, moving on from the role of regional manager, UK & Europe. Von Harten's career has also seen her work with Tourism Australia as both a partnership & event executive and a trade projects executive.

Long-time Luxury Escapes executive **Alex Griffiths** has joined **Travel + Leisure Co.** in the role of senior director, commercial strategy and member value. He has spent the last 12 years with Luxury Escapes, holding positions such as head of marketplace, senior manager - marketplace and senior partnerships & contracting manager.

Four Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita has welcomed **Gregory Viaud** as its new general manager. He brings over two decades of international luxury hospitality experience, joining from Four Seasons Hotel Rabat Kasr Al Bahr where he was opening GM. He also spent eight years across Four Seasons resorts in Bora Bora, Bali and Maui.



Collins celebrates 30



SOFITEL Melbourne on Collins has celebrated its 30th anniversary by recognising 30 of its longest-serving staff.

Known within the hotel's team as 'Heartists', the recognised long-serving members include senior accounts manager Debbie Tay and guest relations manager Terrence Murphy, whose combined service totals 71 years.

"What stays with me most after all of these years are the people," Murphy said.

"You welcome someone for the first time and then they come back for an anniversary, a birthday or another special occasion, and before you know it, you have known them for 20 or even 30 years.

"You see their children grow up and return with families of their own - that is what makes working here so special."

Since its 1996 opening, Sofitel Melbourne on Collins has welcomed notable figures as guests, including Queen Mary of Denmark, Kylie Minogue, the late Luciano Pavarotti, Julie Andrews and Baz Luhrmann.

The property has also been a haven for the arts, hosting

cultural events such as the Victorian Opera, the Behind the Curtain exhibition, and the Birrarangga Film Festival.

Moving forward, the hotel has committed to continuing to evolve as Melbourne evolves, along with a commitment to supporting its arts scene. *JB*

Pictured: General manager Stephen Leroy with VP operations for the Pacific David Fraser.

Lind Palawan debut

THE Lind Hotels will open a new villa-led property in the Philippines called The Lind Coron in Palawan in early 2027.

Its debut property on the island, The Lind Coron, will feature 91 rooms and villas, including a selection of private villas with their own dipping pools.

Two dining concepts will include Yim, serving modern Thai cuisine, and Crust, offering Mediterranean flavours.

The Lind Coron will also be home to a dedicated dive centre, led by local professional divers.

Nearby activities include diving to explore World War II shipwrecks and lagoons. *JB*



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