

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily features six pages, including our **Corporate Update**, plus full pages from:

- Royal Brunei Airlines
- Entire Travel Group

Maldives on point

LUXURY Escapes has released 200 economy seats on its direct Melbourne-Male service for one Societe point plus \$100 in taxes and surcharges, with the offer applying to the final flight of 2026 on 03 Nov - more info [HERE](#). ZH

Win biz to London

EARN exclusive rewards on Royal Brunei's London fares by entering the draw to win business class tickets - see [page seven](#).

Winter in Canada

EXPERIENCE Canada's winter wonderland with Entire Travel. Find tailored packages, expert advice and more on [page eight](#).

WHM cuts spark fury

A **FEDERAL** Government decision to slash the number of Working Holiday Makers (WHM) in Australia has been labelled "an extraordinary slap in the face" for the tourism and travel sector by Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) CEO Margo Osmond.

Announced yesterday by Federal Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke, the model will see WHM visa numbers cut by close to 40,000 places annually as part of efforts to reduce net migration.

The overhaul of the backpacker system will also see a ballot model introduced to limit the number of visitors who can stay in Australia beyond one year.

Eligibility for a second-year stay will be capped at 45,000 places, while for the third year, the ballot will be restricted to just 5,000 spots with a six-month regional work requirement to qualify.

Responding to the reforms, Osmond said the tourism sector

felt "blindsided", adding the move will also make it harder to attract visitors and workers.

"This is not a minor adjustment; the government has taken tens of thousands of potential visitors and workers out of the pipeline."

Osmond added that a decision to set a three-month processing timeframe could effectively lock in the slowdown that has already impacted tourism businesses.

Meanwhile, the NSW Tourism Association claimed the ballot system had "pulled the rug out" from under regional NSW.

More than \$165m in visitor spending is at risk under the changes, the body said, adding the incentive for backpackers to work in regional tourism businesses had diminished.

Backpackers could do the 88 days of work and still miss out under the ballot system, with the damage potentially starting in the first year, the body said. AB

Galt accepts new gig

AFTER a six-month break, former Webjet OTA CEO David Galt has accepted the newly created role of chief commercial officer at Consolidated Travel (**TD** breaking news).

Commencing early next month, Consolidated Travel managing director Dennis Alysandratos said he was "absolutely delighted" to welcome Galt to the team.

"Dave has an outstanding record of delivering strong and profitable growth and his ability to build trusted and positive relationships with our airline partners, customers and industry stakeholders will make him a very valuable addition," he said.

Galt exited his leadership role at Webjet OTA in late Mar after 18 years with the brand (**TD** 27 Feb).



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New Sydney swans

SWAN Hellenic has opened its first office in the Southern Hemisphere in Sydney's Rose Bay, as the cruise line reports triple-digit growth in the ANZ market.

The new office caters for a local team of five, led by regional director Beth Stolyar and sales director Kirsty Fruin.

Swan Hellenic has also expanded its APAC program to include 10 cultural expeditions with two in NZ and an expanded set of explorations in Japan.

The line said it was committed to the ANZ trade with a rich education and famil program as well as a portal slated to launch before the end of the year. ZH

Boundy joins the Journey

JOURNEY Beyond has recruited marketing heavyweight Jo Boundy to be its new managing director, resorts & lodges, effective 09 Nov (TD breaking news yesterday).

The former chief marketing officer for blue chip brands such as Qantas and the Commonwealth Bank will be charged with expanding Journey Beyond's property division at a time of rapid growth.

"Jo's deep commercial and customer experience expertise, combined with her proven track record of driving growth and leading high-performing teams, make her exceptionally

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well placed to strengthen our portfolio, grow demand across our destinations, elevate our guest and employee experiences, and deliver long-term value across the division," CEO Chris Tallent enthused.

Boundy's portfolio includes Ayers Rock Resort, Sal Salis, Monarto Safari Resort, Outback Spirit Lodges, to name just a few.

Reflecting on her new position, Boundy said she was excited to further strengthen Journey Beyond's iconic properties, create exceptional guest experiences, and continue building demand for unique destinations.

The latest recruitment follows the appointment of one-time Carnival Australia chief Jennifer Vandekreeke as its MD, experiences & attractions (TD 04 Aug 2026), following on from a major restructure plan revealed exclusively by **Travel Daily** back in May (TD 07 May 2026).

That development saw Voyages Tourism Australia CEO Matt Cameron-Smith transition to CCO for Journey Beyond and David Donald promoted to managing director - rail & touring.

In Jul, the company also appointed Roland Ah Chee as its debut GM, first nations engagement and partnerships. AB

Air NZ backs Hobart

AIR New Zealand has confirmed it will return its direct Hobart-Auckland service for a sixth season in Oct 2026, with more flights, increased seat capacity, and an extended flying season, giving Tasmanians greater choice when travelling to New Zealand and beyond. ZH

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RBA changes bad for business, worse for consumers

EXCLUSIVE

THE upcoming changes to credit card surcharging mandated by the RBA will not only have an adverse impact on travel businesses, but also consumers, Complex Travel Group director Mark Trim believes.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* this week, Trim said he had few doubts that Aussie businesses across the board will look to pass on the cost to customers rather than absorbing the surcharges.

"Undoubtedly every travel intermediary is impacted by the RBA changes in a negative way, and with less transparency and reduced credit card benefits, you can also assert that this change is also bad for consumers," he said.

"It is likely that consumers may end up paying more across the economy while businesses use this change to increase their general prices by greater than the card processing changes."

Trim said the combination of high transaction costs and low margins makes the transition period especially tricky to navigate for businesses in the travel and tourism sector.

"In the agency world, I am sure every business will have looked at their pricing and remuneration models and how those are impacted by having to absorb 1-1.5% in card transaction costs and reframed that as any other overhead such as rent, wages or insurance premiums," Trim said.

From the outside it would appear the TMCs have the simplest transition, with fewer conversations needed and established fee-for-service models that can be more easily tweaked to cover higher costs.



"In the retail world, we expect agencies to implement booking fees if they haven't already, or increase those - we don't believe there will be

a single agency that will simply accept such a large hit to profit without some sort of adjustment to their pricing."

Trim added the fee structure will be implemented in one of two ways, either as a percentage of the booking and handling fee or through a flat fee model.

However, given the friction caused by a need to recalculate percentage fees, Trim expects that flat fees will become the dominant model, alongside discounts for cheaper payment methods, which are already fast becoming part

of the conversation between consultants and consumers.

"Of course if agents can avoid passing on any discounts, that is potentially a method to increase margin to recoup ongoing cost increases," he explained

"Ultimately a flat fee model rewards those with the highest transaction costs - American Express card users for example - and penalises those using cheaper debit cards or similar.

"Given many Visa and MasterCard programs are reducing their included benefits, we expect a significant swing to AMEX from premium leisure, SME and corporate travellers."

Trim also urged agencies to place more pressure on suppliers to pass on savings made through lower-cost settlement methods, arguing that 0.5-0.75% of additional margin should be returned when settling via no or low cost payment methods. *AB*

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CLIA hits member record

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has reached a record level of membership in Australasia, with almost 7,000 travel advisors across Australia and New Zealand.

Speaking at Cruise360 in Sydney yesterday, CLIA's chairman in Australasia and Carnival SVP and country manager, Peter Little (pictured), told attendees that the number was "a testament to the continuing relevance of professional, knowledgeable travel advisors".

"You remain the most important part of our industry's distribution chain, and the level of investment that cruise lines place in CLIA events is a direct reflection of that importance."

He added that the association's growing membership puts more weight behind the industry's advocacy efforts.

"That's a voice that should be taken seriously, and so we've stepped up our activity in this region to make sure it's heard."

"At a time when cruise passenger numbers are breaking records at the global level...we deserve to share in that success in ways that reflect the hard work and dedication we put in."

Other events like CLIA LIVE also saw record attendances this year, Little said, while the annual CLIA awards drew the highest-ever number of nominations.

Additionally, initiatives like the CLIA Masters Program were consistently fully subscribed



and the association's training programs continued to see high completion rates. *JM*

Banking on NAB

EXPEDIA Group B2B has partnered with National Australia Bank (NAB) to power the newly launched NAB Travel booking experience, marking its first arrangement of this kind with an Australian bank.

NAB Travel brings Expedia Group's travel technology, accommodation and travel inventory and customer support capabilities to NAB customers through its banking platform.

The partnership expands Expedia Group B2B's distribution network in Australia, with the companies claiming that travellers are increasingly looking beyond traditional travel providers to book trips.

"Australians haven't stopped wanting to travel, but they are making more considered choices about where and how they book," NAB's Sweta Mehra said.

Expedia Group's 2025 *Traveller Value Index* found nearly three-quarters of Australians would book travel through a non-travel loyalty program, so long as they could earn points. *ZH*

Quark lunches with LTC



QUARK Expeditions has seen a 22% rise in its Australian bookings, the line's president Sam Seward revealed at this week's Luxury Travel Collection (LTC) Leaders Who Lunch.

Hosted at Soho, Jones Bay Wharf in Sydney, the exclusive event coincided with Seward's attendance at Cruise360, which took place today and yesterday.

"Demand has caught up with and overtaken capacity," Seward told guests, revealing Quark's Australian business is now tracking ahead of last year, with travellers booking earlier, selecting more premium cabins and choosing longer itineraries.

"We are growing really, really successfully here in Australia...for that, we have to thank you guys."

"It's really down to the support we get from our trade partners," Seward added.

Quark has responded to the uplift in bookings by launching its 2028/29 season six months earlier than usual, he explained.

Seward also offered more details on the line's newbuild

partnership with APT Travel.

Pictured: LTC global MD Danielle Galloway; Seward; and Nicole Grant, Destination HQ. *JM*

Aqua entertains

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has unveiled the entertainment lineup for *Norwegian Aqua*, which is set to launch in May 2027 (*TD* 16 Jan 2026).

The vessel will debut *Whitney: A Celebration of Whitney Houston*, a new original production developed in partnership with The Estate of Whitney E. Houston and Primary Wave Music.

Featuring live vocals, a live band and visuals, the 45-minute immersive performance will include iconic hits such as *I Will Always Love You* and *I Wanna Dance with Somebody*.

Guests can also enjoy a new illusion spectacle, the return of NCL's adults-only nightlife experience, a poolside celebration featuring live percussion and Latin dance hits, and more. *JM*

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CORPORATE UPDATE

EY global lounge refresh

ETIHAD Airways is set to revamp its global lounge offering, with the transformation of its London Heathrow Lounge in summer 2027 marking the start of the airline's wider rollout.

The refresh will form part of Etihad's broader investment in a more consistent premium experience across the airport, lounge and aircraft journey.

The new lounges will feature dedicated Business and First spaces, as well as private suites for The Residence guests.

The Beyond Borders design language, first introduced across Etihad's new aircraft interiors, will bring shared design and hospitality elements into lounges while allowing each location to retain its own character.

"The thinking behind Beyond



Borders is that our guests should increasingly recognise the same Etihad identity wherever they are in their journey," Etihad chief revenue and commercial officer Arik De said.

"London is the beginning...as we expand our lounge network, we have an opportunity to create a more consistent premium experience on the ground while continuing to bring the warmth and character of Abu Dhabi to our guests around the world," De continued.

The program forms part of Etihad's US\$20b (AU\$28b) investment in new aircraft and customer experience. *ZH*

The best of United

UNITED Airlines' most premium aircraft, the Boeing 787-9, will begin daily Houston-Sydney services from 24 Oct 2026.

Featuring new elevated interiors, the aircraft includes 99 premium seats, including new United Polaris Studio suites with privacy doors, while the Premium Plus and Economy cabins have also been upgraded. *ZH*



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WA marks big milestone



WESTERN Australia recorded its highest-ever number of overnight visitors in FY26, welcoming 11 million people to the state.

The figure was 300,000 higher than the annual target, while visitor spending reached \$19.2 billion, exceeding its target by a healthy \$800 million.

WA also recorded an 8.7% share of the international market, welcoming a record one million overseas visitors and becoming the first state in Australia to return to pre-COVID international visitationw levels.

The UK was WA's largest source market, with more than 163,000 visitors, followed by China (70,000) and India (50,000).

WA also generated \$2.80 in visitor spending for every \$1 invested by the govt in events.

The state's Premier and Tourism Minister Roger Cook attributed the growth to the operators who make the state so welcoming.

"Importantly, regional WA and our state's 'seven cities' are benefitting from the sector's growth, with \$6 billion spent by visitors in regional destinations

where tourism is a vital sector.

"These record results show WA's tourism industry is strong, but there is still an enormous opportunity ahead, particularly in emerging markets such as India and Vietnam, where we are seeking to convert opportunities into more visitors, stronger aviation links and new investment to grow our visitor economy," Cook added. *JB*

Gen Z is AI-sceptical

GEN Z travellers are the least likely to use AI to plan a holiday, with only 38% strongly agreeing that the tech is integral to how they travel, compared with 55.% of Gen X, 52.7% of Millennials, and 45.5% of Baby Boomers.

The new data from Squaremouth also found that Gen Z respondents were the most sceptical towards AI, with 31% strongly disagreeing that it is key to their travel experience.

The younger gen is bucking the broader trend, with 44% of all respondents saying they trust AI as much as traditional sources. *JM*



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Unforgettable Croatia has launched a sale on 2027 small ship Croatian cruises, with savings of up to \$391pp when booked before 30 Sep. Travellers can make the most of seven-night cruises aboard *MV Aretis*, *My Wish* and *Memories*, sailing across Split, Sibenik and Dubrovnik. To book, call +612 3805 9846.

The APT Travel Group has launched APT's 'Best of Canada & Alaska Sale' and Travelmarvel's 'Explore Canada & Alaska Sale'. Across both brands, guests can save up to \$2,600 per couple on itineraries such as APT's 'Rockies Odyssey and Alaska Cruise' and Travelmarvel's 'Reflections of the Rockies and Alaska Cruise.' Contact your APT or Travelmarvel expert for more information.

Cunard has unveiled 'The Europe Event', with savings of up to 25% and a reduced deposit of 5% on a selection of 2027 and 2028 voyages. The offer is available on departures across the Mediterranean, Norwegian Fjords, British Isles and Northern Europe. To make the most of this sale before 30 Nov, call 13 24 41.

Wendy Wu Tours has launched its 'Spring Travel Sale', providing savings of up to \$3,500pp on select 2027 and 2028 group tours, plus an additional city stopover from \$259pp. In addition, travellers can unlock additional savings of \$100pp when joining the Loyalty Club. This sale is available on tours across Asia, Europe, Africa, South America and Antarctica. For more details, contact 02 9224 8888.

With **Hurtigruten's** 'Norway, Your Way' campaign, travellers can save on Original and Signature Voyages, as well as Cruise+Tour Packages. Book a select Original Voyage before 31 Oct to save up to 50% on a second guest. Those who book 'The North Cape Line' or 'The Svalbard Line' trips before 31 Oct will receive two complimentary shore excursions, valued at \$926. Guests can also receive \$500pp onboard credit when booking a select Cruise+Tour Package. Agents can contact Hurtigruten's local Coastal Specialists on 1300 145 329.

There is still time to make the most of **Albatross Tours'** 'Europe Summer 2027 Earlybird' offer, ending 30 Sep. Clients can save \$350pp per tour on all spring and summer 2027 departures. Travellers can also save \$750 as a Sapphire Member and \$550 as a Club Member. Call 1300 135 015.

Before 30 Sep, **Collette** is offering savings of up to \$1,500 per couple on guided tours across Africa, Asia, South America, South Pacific and the Middle East. Travellers can also save up to \$1,000 per couple on trips to North America, Central America and Europe. Call 1300 792 196 and be sure to quote the code 'HELLO2027'.

Pullman Sydney Olympic Park has a new package offering a two-night stay in an executive room, breakfast, executive lounge access, welcome drink, valet parking and a \$100 DFO voucher. Call 02 8762 1700.

Ponant feeds charity

PONANT Explorations has celebrated a year since partnering with OzHarvest, delivering 27,581 meals and providing education to over 10,000 students in some of the most remote communities in the Northern Territory.

The cruise line has played its role through supporting weekly pop-up markets in Jabiru and charter flights carrying produce to the Marlkwawo Homeland in West Arnhem Land.

Ponant also provided funding for OzHarvest's Feast Program, aimed at providing lessons on hands-on food waste and sustainability in classrooms.

In addition to financial support, 49 Ponant team members took part in the Cooking for a Cause program, preparing 392 meals for people in need at OzHarvest's main market in Sydney. *JB*

Pictured: Deb Corbett, Ponant Explorations Asia Pacific CEO with Ronni Kahn, OzHarvest founder & visionary in residence.



A Wonderful deal

FORTH & Wonder is offering agents a \$300 Visa gift card for every luxury Africa booking confirmed with the company.

This promotion will run until the end of the year.

In the meantime, Australian agents can contact Forth & Wonder for destination training and assistance. *JB*

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Window Seat

YELLOWSTONE National Park set a new record this year - but not a particularly glamorous one.

The park's geology team has removed a record amount of trash from its hydrothermal areas so far in 2026, including more than 20,100 pieces of paper and plastic trash, 5,600 rocks and sticks, and 280 hats.

There were some interesting finds among the rubbish, including five AirPods, three Delta Flight Pins, an inhaler, three golf tees and a single Uno card, as well as six Yellowstone pressed pennies, a two-inch copy of *The Vampire Diaries*, and four Pokemon cards and figurines.

Naturally, the team also recovered some "gross" items, including six Invisalign retainers, 15 fake nails, floss picks, and "one lump of glittery pink children's slime stuck to a handful of geyserite sinter pieces".

"Foreign material of any kind can damage or permanently alter a hydrothermal feature, whether from clogging its water supply, blocking or diverting its runoff channel or polluting it with chemicals and sediment," a park spokesperson explained.



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