

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest news, including a photo page from **AAT Kings**, plus a full page from **Luxury Escapes**.

Earn a luxury tour

AGENTS can earn themselves a complimentary Luxury Escapes tour upon booking 10 clients - learn more on **page six**.

TIME scholarships

TIME is marking more than a decade of partnership with the Association of Travel Management Companies (ATMC) which has sponsored the mentorship program since 2015.

Two new scholarships are available exclusively to ATMC members, with applications for the first intake in Oct 2026 closing on 25 Sep.

"We are incredibly grateful for ATMC's ongoing partnership," TIME chair Penny Spencer said. *ZH*

Helloworld buys up CCE

HELLOWORLD Travel (HLO) has entered into a binding agreement to acquire 100% of Crown Currency Exchange (CCE) for \$135 million, further expanding the group's retail footprint (*TD* breaking news).

CCE operates 68 stores across Australia and recorded underlying EBITDA of \$22 million in FY26, with the acquisition price representing an implied multiple of 6.1 times EBITDA.

CCE, which employs over 200 people, has continued to expand under CEO Emily Palermo since it was last acquired in 2019.

Palermo will remain in the role while Greg Woolley will continue as chairman.

HLO CEO and managing director Andrew Burnes said the acquisition was highly complementary to the group's existing retail agency businesses.

"We are delighted to be adding CCE to our operations and look



forward to working with our great network of agents to expand CCE's operations around the country," he said.

Burnes, along with HLO group GM - transactions & integration David Hall and CFO Mike Smith, will later join the CCE board.

The acquisition will be funded through a loan facility from NAB, a vendor share placement and a vendor loan facility.

HLO's view is that the acquisition does not require shareholder approval under ASX Listing Rule 11.1, although it has sought confirmation from the ASX.

Completion is expected to take place at the end of Oct 2026. *ZH*

Rail EU reshuffle

RAIL Europe has reshuffled its leadership following its acquisition by Omio Group (*TD* 17 Jul 2026), with CEO and executive chairman Bjorn Bender stepping down from the business after four years.

Bender led Rail Europe through its transformation into an independent business following its 2022 acquisition by Hivest Capital and Bpifrance.

Jean-Francois Bessiron will take over as president while retaining his role as chief B2B officer of Omio Group.

He will oversee the integration of Rail Europe into Omio, with the business continuing to operate under its existing brand across B2B and consumer channels.

Bessiron will be supported by Dau-Khoi Nguyen, who returns as COO after previously serving as CEO.

Omio completed its acquisition of the business in late Jul 2026 after a CSE consultation process in France. *ZH*

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Monday 21st Sep 2026

SYD store takes off

SYDNEY Airport and Heinemann Australia have today opened the country's first dedicated international arrivals store located within a baggage reclaim hall, giving passengers a final chance to shop between clearing immigration and collecting their bags.

Offering a range of liquor and fragrances, the store comes in response to customer insights, and reflects the way passengers transit through the precinct. *JHM*

VA defends AFL capacity

EXCLUSIVE

VIRGIN Australia has defended its AFL Grand Final flight capacity after AFL TV host Tony Jones criticised airlines over reported \$2,000 return fares for fans travelling to Melbourne.

Jones, speaking on *Footy on Nine* on the weekend, called for the AFL to intervene and also questioned Qantas' pricing.

"I think it's disgraceful," Jones said of the AFL's airline partner.

Virgin said it added almost 4,000 seats between Perth and Melbourne immediately after

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Starlux appoints rep

STARLUX Airlines has selected CVFR Travel Group's Airline Rep Services as its GSA for New Zealand (**TD** breaking news), as the carrier prepares to make its debut in the ANZ market.

Airline Rep Services will support Starlux Airlines' launch and ongoing development, with flights set to take off between Taipei and Sydney, continuing onward to Auckland, in 2027.

The agency will also assist the carrier's team in Australia. *JM*

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Let's Chat

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Cruise360 wraps up

CRUISE Lines International Association's (CLIA) Cruise360 wrapped up for the year last week, following two days of insight and inspiration across the local and international cruise industry.

During the event, cruise leaders took a deep dive into growth opportunities across segments such as luxury, expedition, river cruising and responsible travel.

Sessions also considered how agents can use new tools such as AI without losing the human judgement, trust and personal service that are key to offering exceptional travel advice.

Meanwhile, global insights came from a panel of visiting cruise execs, including Windstar's Helen Beck, Swan Hellenic's Mario Bounas, Sam Seward of Quark Expeditions, David Siewers of Azamara Cruises & Jason Krimmel from Norwegian Cruise Line.

Next year's Cruise360 will take place on 01-02 Sep at the Royal International Convention Centre in Brisbane. *JHM*



Fri night's Preliminary Final to help Dockers fans attend next weekend's decider.

The airline said fans moved quickly to book the additional capacity, with many services now nearing capacity.

"As flights fill up, the lowest-priced fares sell first, meaning some services now only have higher-priced fares available," a Virgin spokesperson told **TD**.

The carrier has also added more than 1,000 seats between BNE-MEL for Lions fans.

Qantas and Jetstar have added seven Brisbane-Melbourne flights and a Sydney-Melbourne service, adding around 1,160 seats, with one-way fares starting from \$234 on Jetstar and \$375 on Qantas.

Qantas has also added 13 Perth-Melbourne flights, adding around 2,300 seats, with fares starting from \$766 one-way.

The Qantas Group said this was on top of more than 8,000 seats already added for WA fans during the finals series.

Virgin said it will continue reviewing demand and capacity, with 110,000 direct seats to and from Melbourne scheduled next week in total.

Virgin's response comes after Jones questioned whether the AFL should weigh in on affordable flights to the Grand Final. *ZH*

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HKG on the rise

HONG Kong International Airport (HKG) retained healthy passenger numbers in Aug, with 5.86 million passengers using terminals, representing a 3.5% YoY increase.

In addition, HKG saw 34,995 flight movements, signifying a 0.5% YoY jump.

HKG's busiest day during the month was 01 Aug, which was also the highest daily passenger traffic for the airport's summer travel peak this year.

Across the first eight months of 2026, passenger volume at the airport grew by 10.1% YoY to 44.3 million, while volume grew by 11.4% YoY on a 12-month rolling basis to 65 million.

HKG's aircraft movements increased by 3.5% YoY to 269,000 and 4.5% YoY to 403,850 during the first eight months of this year and on the 12-month rolling period respectively.

Its top inbound pax included mainland China and South Korea, with ME pax still in decline. *JB*

SIA takes top gong

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) has been named World's Best Airline at the 2026 Skytrax World Airline Awards in London, taking the crown from Qatar Airways (QR).

QR and Cathay Pacific rounded out the top three with Qantas finishing two places higher than last year at 12th.

QF was also recognised with Best Airline and Best Airline Staff Service in Australia/Pacific. *JB*

Premium travel trend hits Oz

EXCLUSIVE

TRIP.COM'S recent finding that Millennials and Gen X are fuelling demand for premium travel (**TD** 07 Sep 2026) appears to be reflected in the Australian market, with luxury operators reporting a similar trend.

Luxury Escapes told **Travel Daily** that Millennials and Gen X spend more on holiday travel each year than older generations, averaging \$16,240 and \$12,675 respectively.

They also take more trips, with Millennials going on an average of 2.8 holidays per year while Gen X takes 2.3, spending approximately \$5,760 and \$5,433 per trip respectively.

By comparison, Baby Boomers take 2.1 trips per year and spend an average of \$10,902 annually.

AKTG has also seen increased demand from both Millennials and Gen X travellers in Australia.

Agri event crops up

THE Agri & Aqua Tourism Playbook has launched ahead of the 2026 Agri & Aqua Tourism summit on 20-21 Oct (**TD** 17 Aug 2026), providing a framework for farmers to run tourism businesses on their properties.

Within the playbook are comprehensive guides on stimulating agritourism, farm stays, food tourism, visitor experience and hosting events.

It comes as Aussie farmers look for new revenue streams amid current market pressures. *JB*



"These travellers are increasingly prioritising meaningful, experience-led journeys, with a growing appetite for bespoke itineraries, exclusive access and once-in-a-lifetime experiences," a spokesperson for the brand told **TD**. *JM*

ATIA insurance win

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has welcomed the government's decision to extend the exemption allowing travel businesses to sell travel insurance at the time of booking.

The exemption, first secured by ATIA in 2021, was due to expire on 05 Oct 2026, but has now been extended to 05 Oct 2031 (**TD** 25 Aug 2026).

ATIA CEO Dean Long said the extension provides important certainty for travel businesses and travellers.

"This is what advocacy looks like," he said.

The industry body put forward a strong, evidence-based case to the Federal Government, and said it has responded with a commonsense solution.

"Booking is when travellers understand their destination, their itinerary and their risk." *ZH*

Japan in a new way

THE Discover Regional Japan Webinar will take place tomorrow at 12pm AEST, providing a detailed rundown of the Oita, Ehime and Fukuoka prefectures.

Attendees will hear destination and product updates from all three regions - register for the session **HERE**. *JB*

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Monday 21st Sep 2026

That's a wrap for AAT Kings A-LISTERS ON LOCATION 2026

AAT Kings recently rewarded 17 of its top-performing travel advisors from across the globe with its exclusive **A-LISTERS ON LOCATION Top Achievers Tour**, a six-day, five-night incentive showcasing the Top End and Kimberley.

Hosted by AAT Kings' Michael Woods and Adrian Piotto, the educational journey began in Darwin with a cocktail reception and awards presentation celebrating the programme's highest performers.

Delivered in partnership with Tourism and Events Northern Territory, Tourism Western Australia and local industry partners, agents enjoyed an unforgettable adventure through some of the NT's and WA's most spectacular landscapes, experiencing the rich culture, unique wildlife and breathtaking scenery that define these iconic destinations.

Highlights included a scenic flight over Kakadu National Park, a Yellow Waters cruise, the Katherine Outback Experience, an Ord River cruise, a flight over the World Heritage-listed Purnululu National Park in WA, and a farewell dinner at the award-winning Gourmet Camp Oven Experience.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive, with advisors valuing the opportunity not only to network with industry peers but gain stronger product knowledge and fresh inspiration to drive future bookings.



REACHING the remote WA border en route to the Kimberley.



ANOTHER stunning sunset experience waiting to happen in the Kimberley.



LEARNING Indigenous weaving skills at Warradjan Cultural Centre Kakadu.



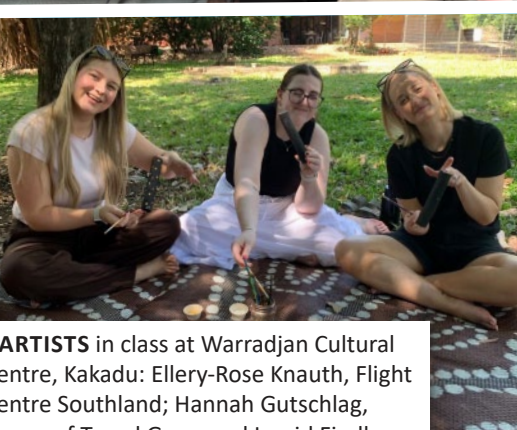
DINNER under the stars at the Katherine Outback Experience.



A-LISTERS take to the air over Kakadu National Park.



DANNY Hooper from House of Travel Johnsonville prepares for takeoff to Kakadu National Park.



ARTISTS in class at Warradjan Cultural Centre, Kakadu: Ellery-Rose Knauth, Flight Centre Southland; Hannah Gutschlag, House of Travel Gore; and Ingrid Findlay, Flight Centre Greensborough.



A SUBLIME farewell dinner at Gourmet Camp Oven Experience Kununurra.



AAT Kings driver guide Jess gets the A-Listers set for an Ord River cruise.

BROCHURES

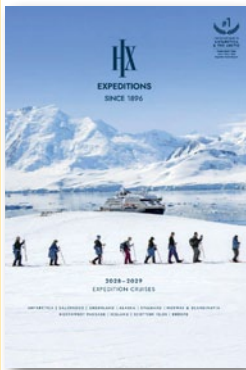
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THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by **HX Expeditions**.



HX Expeditions 2028/29

HX has dropped its new brochure for the 2028/29 season, featuring an array of new destinations, more in-depth itineraries and the introduction of one-week expeditions. In Antarctica, guests can explore the continent as well as South Georgia Island on a new 19-day expedition aboard *MS Roald Amundsen*, with travel across Nov and Dec. Up north, guests can explore Greenland in eight days, with all West Greenland departures including complimentary London-Nuuk flights. HX will also travel to the Baltic Sea and the Gulf of Bothnia for the first time. Read it [HERE](#).



The ANZCRO New Zealand Book 2026–2027

ANZCRO has released the newest edition of its flagship brochure, designed to help Aussie travel agents to better sell New Zealand to their clients. Highlighting the brochure is the debut of a section dedicated to showcasing New Zealand's cycle trails and self-guided cycling holidays, providing a new way to experience the country's spectacular landscapes. In addition, the brochure has expanded coverage of Heritage Expeditions' small-ship voyages to the country's subantarctic islands, along with a range of itineraries with Sir Edmund Hilary Tours. See the full brochure [HERE](#).



Sun Island Tours: Croatia, Slovenia and the Balkans brochure

The next edition in Sun Island Tours' brochure series takes guests across the Adriatic with cruising and land tours in Croatia, Slovenia and Southeast Europe. Guests can combine countries with itineraries such as the 13-day 'Slovenia & Dalmatia' tour, beginning in Ljubljana and taking travellers to Lake Bled, followed by Zagreb, Plitvice, Split, Hvar, Korcula and finishing in Dubrovnik.



Additionally, travellers can also make the most of the Balkans, including Bosnia, Serbia and Albania. See it [HERE](#).

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Walking for good



THIS year's edition of Intrepid Travel's annual Blue Dragon Marathon Walk has raised over \$350,000, supporting efforts to end human trafficking.

Now in its ninth consecutive year, the event has become the Intrepid Foundation's flagship annual charity event, attracting participants from across the globe, with over 15 companies taking part including Flight Centre Travel Group, CT Partners, Australian Travel Agents Cooperative, Platinum Travel and APT Touring.

The funds raised will go to the Blue Dragon's Children's Foundation, which provides rescue care, shelter and legal advocacy for those affected by human trafficking, and works with local communities on preventative measures.

Biheng Zhang, GM of the Intrepid Foundation, expressed her gratitude towards everyone who got involved.

"While the enormity of the human trafficking issue can feel daunting, the Blue Dragon Walk shows how collective action can

create real impact and help build safer, more secure futures for people in Vietnam and beyond," Zhang said.

As the organisation works towards its goal of \$500,000, it is calling on people to donate to the Blue Dragon's Children's Foundation [HERE](#). *JB*

Keys to cuisine

THE 2026 Global Michelin Keys Selection has honoured 22 hotels across Australia, bringing the total to 54 with the accolade.

Promoted to three Michelin Keys is Tasmania's Saffire Freycinet, offering 20 timber-lined suites in the state's east coast bushland, as well as Southern Ocean Lodge on Kangaroo Island, with 25 sea-facing rooms.

Debuting with two Michelin Keys is Sequoia Lodge in Adelaide Hills' Piccadilly Valley, offering 14 private suites with moon windows and hot pools.

New one-key additions include Ardour Milton Park, Blackbird Byron Bay and InterContinental Sydney Coogee Beach. *JB*

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Editorial Director - Damian Francis
Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller

ADVERTISING & MARKETING

Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan
Business Development Manager - Kara Stanley
advertising@traveldaily.com.au

GENERAL MANAGER & PUBLISHER
Matthew Vince

ACCOUNTS

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61) 2 8007 6760

info@traveldaily.com.au



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