

ATIA renews tie-up

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has renewed its decades-long strategic partnership with Gow-Gates Insurance Brokers.

The business will continue to engage with ATIA members and the wider travel industry, sharing its specialist knowledge. *ZH*

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VA revamps biz offering

VIRGIN Australia has rebranded its corporate travel offering for businesses spending more than \$500,000 a year across the airline's domestic and international network.

Under the new name of Virgin Australia Corporate Travel, the segment will offer larger businesses tailored discounts, dedicated support and Velocity traveller perks, including lounge access for eligible pax, in exchange for contracted corporate travel spend with the airline, as well as its international airline partners and VA Regional Airlines in WA.

The announcement comes as businesses look to clamp down on spending amid rising costs.

"VA has been supporting businesses with corporate travel for more than two decades, and the launch of Virgin Australia Corporate Travel underpins what we are offering in the market,"

US flight chaos

THOUSANDS of flights across the US have been grounded after a backup fibre cable in New Jersey was cut, causing a mass telecom outage.

At one point, the outages disrupted all three NYC international gateways - JFK, LaGuardia and Newark - along with Philadelphia and Boston.

The disruptions came as 130 world leaders were arriving in New York for the United Nations General Assembly. *JB*



GM sales Darren McDermott said.

"The new name is just the first step in a broader focus on growing our corporate travel proposition and strengthening our share of the market."

The rebranded offering completes VA's business product portfolio following the launch of Business Flyer in Apr 2022 for small-to-medium-sized businesses who spend up to \$500,000 a year on flights. *JM*

Viva in Australia

EUROPEAN river cruise operator Viva Cruises has launched in Australia, appointing Cruise Traveller (CT) as its local representative, and offering free cabin upgrades on select bookings made before 11 Oct.

CT MD Joe O'Sullivan said Viva Cruises, which has a fleet of nine premium ships, offers a "relaxed and friendly service" and "extremely competitive pricing" for Australians. *ZH*

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news, including our **Sustainability feature**, plus a special feature from **Tourism Solomons**.

Surf the Solomons

THE Solomon Islands is calling on surfers to visit its rich network of archipelagos and enjoy its world-class waves.

From smaller crowds to immersive local experiences, great food and an island lifestyle, expert Richard Skewes can help with it all - more on **page seven**.



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Drifting to Melb

DRIFTER is set to transform its Melbourne footprint into its largest property yet, with the 118-room Little Drifter on Franklin Street to become a 775-bed hybrid hotel-hostel in the second half of 2027.

The expansion will add new food and beverage, wellness, co-working and cultural spaces, including the Rambler Public Bar and Social Club, with music, DJs, karaoke and pizza among the venue's programming highlights.

The Melbourne project will follow planned openings in Wellington in Q4 2026 and Auckland in Q2 2027.

The Australian-founded brand now has 11 properties and around 3,500 beds across ANZ. **ZH**



Borg: Modern luxury with Signature

LUXURY travellers are increasingly looking for freedom to shape their holidays rather than simply adding more inclusions, according to newly minted Signature Travel Network ANZ GM Damian Borg (pictured).

Borg said the evolution of luxury was now well-established, with personalisation, flexibility and the ability to choose how a trip unfolds becoming central to the modern proposition.

"Luxury used to mean all inclusive in its original essence, but right now I think it's about optional inclusions and flexibility in experience rather than having everything bundled in," he said.

For advisors, that means luxury should give clients access to high-end environments and exclusive benefits without dictating how they spend their time.

"People who have the means to afford luxury don't necessarily want an excursion every time



they're in port or be hosted everywhere they're travelling," Borg told **Travel Daily**.

"They want that option to do their own thing and experience their own holidays and create their own memories."

Borg said the changing definition also meant luxury was no longer necessarily tied to traditional product categories, with the destination itself increasingly playing a key role.

"There are operators out there who are operating in a luxury destination and winning those luxury clients just because of the

destination...and personalisation is a big part of that," he said.

The approach is also shaping Signature's priorities as it builds its presence in the ANZ market.

Borg said his immediate focus was ensuring existing members were making the most of Signature's programs, while also developing the network's local cruise proposition and adding members selectively.

"[I'm] here to make sure our current members are maximising their opportunities and they see true value in our partnerships," Borg continued, also hinting at a localised commercial model for cruise, including target-based incentives, slated for early 2027.

Signature's offering includes over 1,400 hotels and 100 destination specialists, which Borg said were key to building tailored itineraries around a client, rather than selling a packaged luxury product. **ZH**

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Window Seat

THERE are avgeeks, and then there are the 750 people who signed up within 24 hours to spend their weekend on the LAX tarmac.

Cranky Dorkfest 2026 once again proved that aviation enthusiasm knows few bounds, with LAWA opening up the airfield to a capacity crowd of self-confessed aerospace nerds on Sat.

Fans had the chance to tour aircraft operated by American, Delta, Southwest and United, meet crews, photograph departures and, for the first time, board buses for guided tours of the LAX airfield.

"Seeing more than 750 people come out and actually get onto the ramp at LAX is an incredible evolution," Cranky Dorkfest founder Brett Snyder commented.

The event first took place in 2011 as a low-key gathering of aviation photographers, bloggers, burgers and plenty of aircraft chat.



Aussies bend not break

AUSSIERS are adapting rather than abandoning travel, according to a new Booking.com report, with 89% happy to adjust their plans when disruptions occur.

Booking.com's *Travel Happiness Index* found 26% would rather postpone their trip than cancel, while a similar number (25%) would choose a comparable destination, and a further 13% would change the timing or duration of their trip.

The recently released report also found price is influencing when people choose to travel, not just where, as the Iran war sends airfares and the cost of a holiday skyrocketing.

Around two-thirds (65%) said they will choose their dates or destinations based on travel deals, while 38% cited better value as a reason for choosing

alternative accommodation.

Interestingly, 27% of respondents cited authenticity and local immersion for holiday homes, apartments, and unique stays as important in their booking process.

Digital tools and AI are becoming part of destination discovery, the report also found, as 78% said they make planning and booking easier.

Meanwhile, over two-thirds of respondents said search engines, booking platforms, and AI tools make it easier to compare options, while 64% said digital tools inspire them to discover new destinations.

Nearly three-quarters said that the anticipation of travel helps them cope with daily life. *MS*

Dujuan hits Japan

HUNDREDS of flights have been cancelled across Japan, while millions were forced to evacuate their homes as Typhoon Dujan reached Tokyo.

Two people have already been confirmed dead, following landslides in the Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures near the capital city.

Japan Airlines cancelled 135 flights, while All Nippon Airways canned 140.

As of this morning, Dujan has passed Japan's coastline and headed out to sea. *JB*

Scenic's India play

SCENIC has announced it will expand its river cruise presence in India, with the line to offer sailings on the Brahmaputra River and introduce two ultra-luxury river ships to the country by the 2029/30 sailing season.

The proposed expansion comes off the back of a partnership between Scenic and Assam Bengal Navigation, which has operated river cruises on the Brahmaputra and Ganges for over two decades.

The new offerings will complement Scenic's inaugural 2027/28 Hooghly River program in West Bengal. *JB*

A Magic move

MAGIC Tours International, the Australian-owned travel group behind Europe Holidays, World Holidays and the TravelRez booking platform, has announced it will absorb credit card fees on all agent bookings from 1 Oct.

The decision will help take pressure off travel businesses, which will no longer be able to pass card costs onto clients (**TD** 31 Mar 2026).

For bookings made through the group's office, its websites, or TravelRez FIT platform, agents will be sent a secure payment link to forward to their client.

Magic Tours International will then absorb the card fee, and the advisor's full commission plus any markup will be transferred directly to their agency's nominated bank account.

"Australian agents shouldn't have to choose between staying compliant and staying profitable," MD Chip Popescu said.

"This is about backing the agents who back us - rather than leave our partners to absorb the hit, we're absorbing it for them."

Intrepid is up to par

INTREPID Travel is now certified under B Lab's new global standards for B Corp Certification, becoming one of the first travel companies to meet the criteria.

The new standards introduce mandatory performance requirements across B Lab's seven Impact Topics, ensuring a more transparent framework. *JB*

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Irwin hops aboard QF



QANTAS has recruited Robert Irwin to be the face of its 'Australia in the Sky' campaign, which aims to entice international travellers to fly Down Under.

"Robert Irwin is one of Australia's most loved personalities and there is no one better placed to showcase our country to the world," Qantas Group chief brand and corporate affairs officer Danielle Keighery said.

The wildlife conservationist appears in the hero film onboard a Qantas aircraft before drifting off to sleep and dreaming of being back at Australia Zoo.

It also features Irwin and a Qantas cabin crew member explaining to the world that "nah yeah" means yes and "yeah nah" means no.

Among those featured in the campaign is Brisbane-based Qantas cabin crew member Dan Jameson, who years earlier had bonded with Irwin on a flight over

their shared love of wildlife.

Irwin had drawn a crocodile on Jameson's arm, which he later had permanently tattooed.

Now live across North America, the UK and Asia, the campaign highlights a joint program with Tourism Australia that gives customers access to discounted economy and business fares when they book an international Qantas flight to Australia.

The cheaper flights are available across more than 45 domestic destinations when booked in the same itinerary as the international flight.

"Getting to join forces with our national carrier to show the world just how much Australia has to offer is something that means a great deal to me," Irwin enthused.

Qantas will also support the 2026 Steve Irwin Gala in Brisbane, Australia, which raises funds for global conservation through Wildlife Warriors. *JM*



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ATIA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



AUSTRALIA'S relationship with the Pacific is built on people, connection and shared opportunity.

That is why ATIA's growing engagement with Fiji matters.

Last week I met with Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Tourism and Civil Aviation, Hon. Viliame Gavoka, Tourism Fiji CEO Pares Pant, TAG Chair Damend Gounder and industry leaders, alongside TAANZ CEO Julie White.

ATIA has also accepted an invitation to join Fiji's Tourism Action Group as an observer, giving Australia's travel trade a direct voice in discussions shaping Fiji tourism.

The immediate focus has been Fiji's new 5% Tourism Services Tax.

While ATIA's preference is always for fewer tourism specific taxes, Fiji's approach is important.

The tax is temporary, targeted and its revenue is being directed to supporting Fiji Airways and

maintaining vital international connectivity during a period of higher fuel costs.

Just as importantly, the Fiji Government listened when industry raised concerns about retrospective application.

Existing bookings are now protected, with the tax applying only to new bookings.

That is a practical example of government and industry working through the real world consequences of policy.

This matters as we see a broader global trend toward taxing tourism more heavily.

The Maldives, for example, now applies a 17% tourism GST and has extended that regime to offshore travel sellers from Oct which will have a direct impact on how trade advises clients.

Tourism already generates substantial economic activity, jobs and tax revenue.

Governments should focus on growing that demand rather than treating travellers and travel businesses as an easy source of additional taxation.

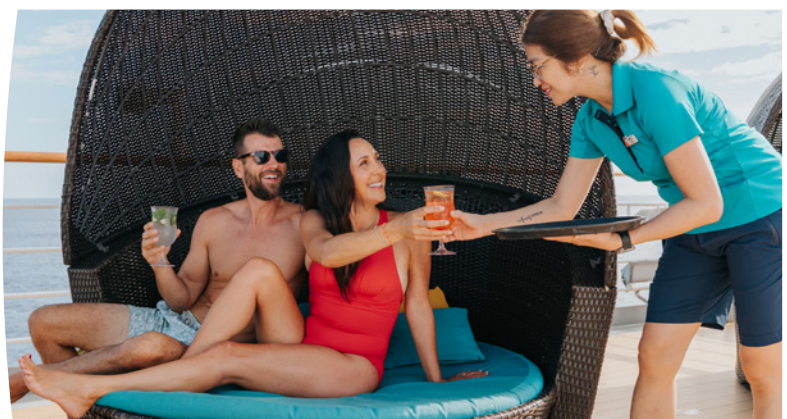
Grand embarkation

SILVERSEA departed Lisbon on Sat for its 'Grand Voyage Mediterranean 2026' - a 50-day journey aboard *Silver Spirit*.

The vessel is set to visit 40 destinations across 12 countries.

EK backs Kenya

EMIRATES has partnered with the Kenya Tourism Board (KTB) to strengthen the growth of inbound tourism to Kenya, with the carrier to promote the destination in key regions across its network. *JM*





CRUISING'S CLEANER FUTURE REVEALED

MULTI-FUEL-CAPABLE ships and the use of onshore power supply have increased in recent years, according to new data from Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

The number of CLIA-member ships that can switch from conventional fuels to zero- and near-zero emission fuels both in port and at sea has increased from one in 2018 to 30 ships today, stated the organisation's newly-released annual *Environmental Technologies and Practices* report.

By year-end 2026, 31 CLIA member ships will have these vessels in service and 56 by the end of 2030.

Meanwhile, the number of CLIA-member cruise line ships with the ability to connect to onshore power has more than tripled since 2018 to 193 ships today.



In addition, 47 ships are planned to be retrofitted with shoreside electricity systems, while 39 newbuilds are set to include the technology.

It is predicted that by 2039, close to 279 ships will have onshore power supply capability.

"Year after year, the data show cruise lines continuing to invest in the technologies, fuels, and operational capabilities that are

making the global cruise fleet more efficient and positioning it for the future," said Bud Darr, president and CEO of CLIA.

"The progress reflected in this report is the result of sustained investment and innovation by the world's cruise lines - from more efficient ships and fuel-flexible engines to onshore power capability and advanced environmental systems." *JHM*

Better choices

TRAVEL agents play a major role in guiding clients towards making more sustainable choices, according to Aurora Expeditions' head of sustainability, Sasha Buch.

"There's just so much power in how you book your holidays, where you're going, when you're going, and choosing operators that will guide you in the most responsible way," she said during a session on responsible tourism at Cruise360 last week.

While some may question the role of sustainability in cruising, Buch said agents should acknowledge the industry's challenges while highlighting the progress being made.

She pointed to Aurora Expeditions' trial of microplastic filters and its support for citizen science initiatives, including Happy Whale and eBird surveys.

"People get really excited and like to get engaged because they're actually contributing to the education around these wildlife populations," Buch said. *JHM*



Hawaiian voices

HAWAII Tourism Oceania and Adventure.com have released a campaign celebrating the community, conservation and culture of the region.

Created in conjunction with Good & Plenty agency, the campaign is rolling out between now and Oct and focuses on three Hawaiians passionate about their community & environment.

Radisson closes the sustainability gap

RADISSON Hotel Group (RHG) has launched a guide to help associations and professional conference organisers meet sustainability goals.

Developed in partnership with Global Destination Sustainability-Movement, the new roadmap features practical tools, destination data, and measurable frameworks.

Its launch follows new findings that reveal less than

34% of associations have embedded sustainability into their operations, despite 66% considering it 'highly important'.

"The industry does not have a sustainability awareness problem; it has an implementation challenge," Inge Huijbrechts, chief sustainability and security officer at RHG, said.

"This guide is designed to move the conversation from ambition to action." *JM*

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.71

THE AUD/USD has seen a slight downturn and is now trading around the low 0.7100s after failing to maintain recent gains.

A key reason behind the change of pace was a prediction that the US Federal Reserve will reduce money supply and increase interest rates, as geopolitical tensions create more demand for safe-haven assets.

The RBA is also remaining hawkish as the inflation rate is still above the target range.

In the medium-term, the markets are leaning towards the Aussie dollar making gains over the USD, as long as the 200-day Simple Moving Average of the AUD/USD stays above 0.7015.

Global markets should also keep an eye out for the summit between US President Donald Trump and President of The People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping, as global trade and tariffs are expected to lead the talking points.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.71
UK	£0.53
NZ	\$1.24
Euro	€0.62
Japan	¥112
Thailand	฿23.66
China	¥4.76
Jetfuel	US\$194.90/bbl
Canada	\$0.99
Bitcoin	฿0.00000823

Sydney on the moon

'LUNA: A Journey to the Moon' has opened at Sydney Showground's Fever Pavilion, a virtual-reality experience emulating the Apollo 11 mission.

The experience covers all facets of the journey, including astronaut training on Earth, travelling aboard the Saturn V rocket and standing on the moon.

Guests will be guided by Selene, an AI assistant who will help on mission challenges, provide real-life NASA communications and recount personal stories behind those who played a part in the first trip to the moon.

The new adventure at Sydney Olympic Park is one of the many VR experiences that Fever Pavilion has hosted, following on from the likes of 'Titanic: A Voyage Through Time', 'Horizon of Khufu' and 'Life Chronicles'. *JB*

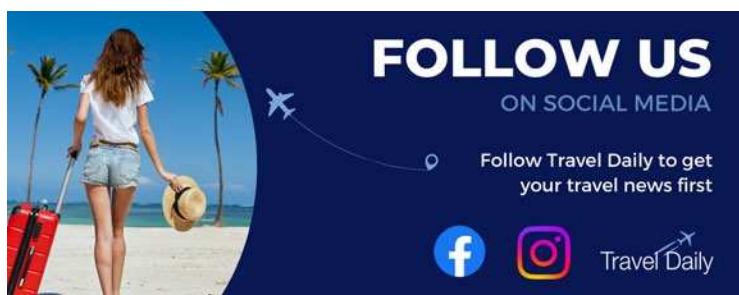


Celestial shores up

CELESTIAL has unveiled its shore excursion program for its winter Eastern and Western Mediterranean deployments, with 190 experiences now available to book.

Excursions range from a visit to an olive oil mill and lunch in Andalusia, a hands-on cheese workshop in El Bosque and a trip to a family-run citrus orchard dating back to 1870 in Carcaixent.

Half-day, full-day and two-day options are all available. *JB*



EK rallies for a good cause



EMIRATES (EK), in partnership with the Australian Tennis Foundation (ATF), hosted the second edition of its Force for Good tennis program in Adelaide, bringing together 250 primary school students at the Tea Tree Gully Tennis Club yesterday.

The four-week program saw years 3 and 4 students build confidence, health and social connection, offering rotational tennis activities, youth wellbeing workshops and appearances from EK cabin crew and mascots.

Former US Open doubles champion Sandon Stolle also joined the students on court, sharing his skills and knowledge.

The event was one of 14 programs delivered across Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide as part of EK's Force for Good Initiative.

Now in its second year, the partnership with ATF aims to use the sport as a means to empower disadvantaged young people, including those from multicultural and low-socioeconomic

communities, as well as neurodivergent children and those who have faced trauma.

The initiative reached over 2,000 children in its first year (*TD* 23 Sep 2025). *JB*

Travelmarvel is solo

TRAVELMARVEL is joining APT in launching dedicated solo departures, with the announcement of two 'European Gems' sailings in 2027.

Departing on 07 Jun 2027 and 21 Oct 2027 respectively, the 15-day itinerary between Budapest and Amsterdam takes guests across the Danube, Main and Rhine rivers.

While guests will enjoy a private cabin, there will also be plenty of opportunities to connect with like-minded solo travellers through shared sightseeing, dining and onboard experiences.

Pricing for the itinerary starts from \$16,995pp for the 07 Jun departure and \$14,295 for the 21 Oct departure. *JB*



Surfing the Solomon Islands – the stuff of Saltwater Dreams

THE ONE thing every surfer craves in these days of ever-more crowded lineups is empty, perfect waves and one of the few places on the planet that can actually guarantee just that is the Solomon Islands.

From November to April this vast 992-island archipelago offers flawless waves peeling over countless coral reefs. With board rider numbers limited by location and infrastructure, these peaks offer the kind of uncrowded sessions that for any surfer worth his wax are the stuff of saltwater dreams.

The destination's two best-known surf regions are Gizo in the Western Province and Santa Isabel, but there are still dozens of secret spots throughout this 992-island archipelago, the locations

of which are closely guarded by a handful of 'in the know' hard travelling board riders.

The best places to stay for those 'not in the know' board riders are the dedicated resorts and surfing camps found in the Western province, home to two of the country's best known waves – Paelonge, a speedy right-hander, and Titianas, a goofy footer's paradise.

Santa Isabel and Makira-Ulawa, home to Nafinua Surf Retreat which opened in March, also offer world-class surfing.

Without doubt, the jewel in the surfing crown is Papatura Island Retreat and Vavaghio Guest House, two of the best set-ups to be found anywhere in the South Pacific.

With board riders numbers limited to

14 at Papatura and eight at Vavaghio, and with some 20 breaks on hand, surfers are guaranteed an uncrowded surf, a rare commodity in these days of ever-more crowded waves in an ever more crowded world.

NEED HELP?

Speak to the expert - Tourism Solomons' Trade Manager Australia/New Zealand, Richard Skewes is the go to point for all travel industry related enquiries:

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