

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including our **Business Events News**, plus full pages from:

- Collette
- Bunnik Tours

Take on Collette

COLLETTE'S new Small Group Exploration Tours are now on sale for 2027 and 2028.

See more on **page seven**.

Save with Bunnik

SAVE up to \$2,000 on select 2027 and 2028 Asia itineraries with Bunnik Tours.

More details on the **back page**.

NTIA tix sell out

TICKETS to the 2026 National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs) have officially sold out, the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has revealed.

The sell-out caps off a record year for the awards, with more than 21,000 votes received across 39 categories.

"The NTIA is our night of nights and this year it's bigger and better than ever," ATIA CEO Dean Long said.

"Selling out tells you exactly where the industry is at: people want to be in the room to back their colleagues and celebrate a year of hard work."

The NTIAs will be held on Sat 10 Oct at the Palladium at Crown Melbourne. **ZH**

Royal lands Sandals deal

ROYAL Caribbean Group is set to acquire a 50% stake in Sandals and Beaches Resorts for approximately US\$3 billion (A\$4.3b), forming a joint venture in the all-inclusive resort sector.

The partnership will combine Sandals' and Beaches' Caribbean resort portfolio with Royal Caribbean Group's cruise, private destination and river cruise arms of its business.

Royal Caribbean chair and CEO Jason Liberty said the partnership "will strengthen and grow one of the most admired resort portfolios in the world".

"The Stewart family has created powerful and beloved brands, and we are honoured to build on that legacy," he said.

"Together, we see tremendous opportunity to expand the reach of Sandals and Beaches Resorts and continue turning the vacation of a lifetime into another vacation



of a lifetime."

The companies said the partnership will accelerate resort expansion, broaden distribution and make it easier for travellers to discover experiences across both portfolios.

An equity research report published by analysts from Truist Securities said connected loyalty programs could provide mutual incentives for both customer bases to explore the combined vacation platform.

Sandals' Caribbean real estate may also eventually support beach clubs for cruise passengers, although resort expansion remains the immediate priority.

The deal is expected to close in early '27 subject to approval. **ZH**

JQ extends Cairns

JETSTAR will extend its Sunshine Coast to Cairns service - the only direct route between the airports - through to Oct 2027.

The seasonal service was set to end in Mar next year, but will now run through until Oct following steady demand across both directions.

Flights will pause for a short break over Feb and early Mar, before returning three times a week from 30 Mar 2027.

Fares start from \$94 one-way. **ZH**

Travelmarvel sale

TRAVELMARVEL has launched its 'Big Rail Sale', offering savings on a range of 2027 trips across Europe's famous railways, as well as Canada, Asia, NZ and Australia.

Available from 24 Sep-06 Oct, itineraries include 'Imperial China' and 'Scotland by Rail'.

Travelmarvel general manager product and operations Sarah Latimore said: "Rail continues to resonate among travellers." **ZH**

ACA's new committee

THE Australian Cruise Association has confirmed its new board of management, bringing together representatives from cruise and tourism sectors.

Brendan Connell has been re-elected as chair while Andrew McKinnon has joined the board as deputy chair.

"The ACA Board is a strong reflection of the diversity of our membership across ports, destinations, service providers and cruise operators," ACA CEO Jill Abel said.

The board will remain focused on barriers to growth and competitiveness to capture future cruise opportunities. **ZH**

More coverage

AUSSIETRAVELCOVER (ATC) has launched its updated travel insurance product delivering upgrades across international and domestic cover.

The new products include financial default protection with International Top Plus, an expanded list of automatically covered medical conditions, COVID-19 cover integration, more flexible multi-journey options, and increased choice for domestic cancellation cover.

ATC national sales and operations manager Amanda Belcastro also noted that the company will continue to absorb credit card fees after the 01 Oct RBA change comes into effect.

"It's something we've always done," she said. **ZH**



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Cruise and rail in focus



ENTIRE Travel Group hosted an exclusive industry evening in Melbourne last night, showcasing its luxury cruise and rail options.

Hosted at Elara Melbourne, the event welcomed 120 travel professionals, giving them the opportunity to connect with key brands such as Star Clippers, Rocky Mountaineer and Switzerland Tourism.

Attendees joined the Entire team along with its partners for cocktails and canapes overlooking the city, followed by a three-course dinner, while guests heard product and destination updates from partners.

The evening also featured a draw with prizes including a Durban Safari Journey for two aboard Rovos Rail and a three-day trip aboard Canyon Spirit.

Overall, the event was designed to go beyond traditional product training, allowing advisors to hear stories behind the brands. *JB*

Pictured: (back) John Saporito, Rovos Rail; James Bird, Rocky Mountaineer; Megan Bardsley, Golden Eagle; Greg McCallum, Entire Travel Group; (front) Brad McDonnell, Entire Travel Group; Ray Lane, VIA Rail; Sandra Babey, Switzerland Tourism; and Roger Condon, Star Clippers.

Girls hit the road

AROUND one in seven Australian women have plans to book a campervan or take a camping trip this summer, a recent survey from Webjet found.

This is in contrast to just over one in 10 planning to book an all-inclusive resort or cruise, as cost-of-living pressures impact Aussies' holidays, said the report.

Booking data from Motorhome Republic revealed that Hobart, Perth, Sydney, Launceston, Adelaide are the top campervan destinations this summer. *JB*

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VIEW DEAL

Dunn reels in the teens

SCOTT Dunn is seeing strong demand for its new Teens-First Adventures collection, with South Africa, Italy and Thailand emerging as early standouts among Australian families.

The UK luxury travel operator launched the collection after surveying more than 100 teenagers and parents and finding that young travellers increasingly want to learn and experience destinations (*TD* 16 Sep 2026).

"South Africa, Italy and Thailand are standing out since we launched," Scott Dunn global product director Simon Lynch told *Travel Daily*.

"They offer such variety that I can see why families with teens are going for them."

Scotland is also performing strongly thanks to *Harry Potter* and *James Bond* experiences.

The collection was designed to give teenagers greater influence without reducing the luxury



elements expected by parents.

"We haven't compromised on where you stay, how you travel or all the other regular Scott Dunn inclusions that make a trip so special," Lynch continued.

Instead, itineraries have been adapted around teenagers' preferred pace and interests.

"Think DJ lessons in Ibiza, behind the scenes at Paris Fashion Week or taking part in a turtle rescue project in Costa Rica - the experiences are all elevated, luxurious and considered."

Itineraries also include an Adventure Architect, a "generally younger or young at heart" guide who is focused on showing families how people actually live in a destination. *ZH*

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Events get a W

W BRISBANE now has three new meeting spaces on level six, catering for a total of 136 guests.

Offering views of the Brisbane River, the spaces are designed for executive meetings, small-scale conferences and private dining.

More event news on **p5. JB**

NSW tops outdoor ranks

SYDNEY'S Northern Beaches has been named Australia's best region for outdoor adventure, with the NSW capital taking the top three places in a new national ranking.

The research by sports equipment retailer Net World Sports assessed all 88 Australian SA4 regions across seven measures, including hiking and running trails, mountain biking,



paths and tracks, protected areas, suitable outdoor days, park-run events and rock-climbing.

The Northern Beaches topped the index with a score of 77.26 out of 100, recording 450.7km of hiking and running trails and 177.89km of mountain biking trails per 1,000km².

Sydney-Sutherland ranked second with 71.04, followed by North Sydney and Hornsby.

The three regions were also the only areas where 100% of residents live within 10km of a national park or protected area.

Hobart was the highest-ranked region outside Sydney, placing fourth with 63.85, while also recording the highest share of suitable outdoor days at 68.2%.

Adelaide-South topped mountain biking trail density, while Tasmania's South East topped rock climbing with 83.1 locations per 100,000 residents.

The SA4 (Statistical Area Level 4) is a regional area used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics for analysing population, employment and other demographic data. **ZH**

SYD facing strikes

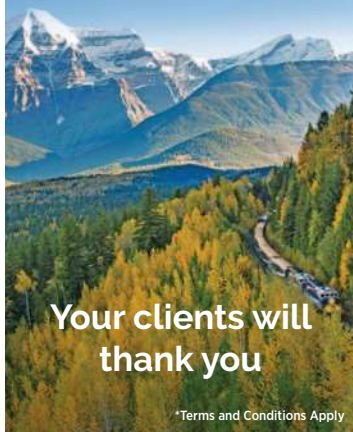
PASSENGERS at Sydney Airport (SYD) should expect delays today as both Qantas employees and security staff go on strike.

While the security work stoppage took place between 7.30am-9.30am, Qantas workers will strike for a full 24 hours. **JB**

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Rates on the rise

HOTEL rates worldwide are predicted to increase next year, according to American Express Global Business Travel's (Amex GBT) Hotel Monitor 2027.

Projected increases stem from surging airfares and ever-changing supply-demand dynamics, especially in the Asia-Pacific region.

In Australia, rates are expected to jump as a result of the Men's Rugby World Cup in Oct 2027, with Sydney forecast to see a 3.5-5% increase.

Despite being predicted to be the world's fastest-growing economy in 2027, hotel rates in India could still jump as high as 5%, with rates in Bengaluru tipped to increase 5-5.5%.

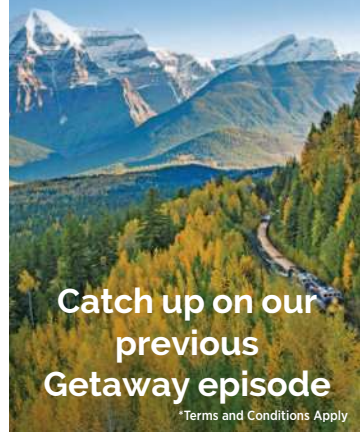
In contrast, Singapore's rates are expected to grow 0.8-1.6%, despite its huge pipeline of meetings and events.

China will also see flat to modest rate growth, as supply continues to outpace demand. **JB**

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Window Seat

FAT Bear Week is back - and it is once again time to put some very serious thought into which Alaskan bear has eaten the most salmon.

The annual competition kicked off this week at Katmai National Park in Alaska, with 16 brown bears going head-to-head in a single-elimination tournament to determine who has done the best job of packing it on ahead of winter.

Running until 29 Sep, Fat Bear Week allows the public to vote for their favourite contender, with this year's field including defending champion Chunk, aka Bear 32, who tipped the scales at an estimated 90kg last year.

While it sounds like the world's strangest beauty contest, there is a serious purpose behind all the blubber: bears can lose around a third of their body weight during hibernation, making a summer spent demolishing salmon something of a survival strategy.



Hunter dials up the luxury



CLAYFIELDS Hunter Valley has opened in Pokolbin in NSW's Lower Hunter Valley, set within a 30-acre estate on the Around Hermitage Trail.

The newly-branded estate combines a luxury, adults-only getaway with an on-site apiary for honey production.

Guests will have the option between two bespoke villas: The Lakeview King Villa and the pet-friendly Valley View King Villa.

Both villas are one bedroom and feature almost 150m² of indoor-outdoor living space, complemented by private Jacuzzis, freestanding spa baths, fireplaces and breakfast hampers.

During their stay, guests can take part in a private guided honey tasting experience, visiting the beehives scattered around the estate and learn about the mechanics behind small-batch seasonal beekeeping, as well as

sample unique seasonal harvests.

Behind the rebrand was proprietor Stanford Deveraux and beekeeper Mike Wilkens, buying the Pokolbin property out of their passion for sustainable land stewardship and boutique hospitality in the country.

"We didn't just want to build another place to sleep in the Hunter Valley; we wanted to create an authentic, grounded experience that reflects the true soul of this region," Deveraux explained.

"Pokolbin is our home, and Clayfields is a labour of love.

"We designed these villas for guests who need to completely slow down, disconnect from the noise, and reconnect with nature without sacrificing an ounce of luxury," he added.

Bookings for accommodation and private honey experiences are now open. *JB*

Air NZ is prepared

AIR New Zealand is preparing to fly more than 850,000 travellers across its network during the upcoming school holiday period.

Between 24 Sep and 11 Oct, more than 520,000 customers are expected to travel domestically, while almost 330,000 will travel internationally.

More than 170,000 customers are set to fly to and from Australia, with Sydney taking the top spot, followed by Brisbane and Melbourne.

The airline has added 23% more seats than last year on its AKL-SYD route, 10% more on AKL-ZQN and 12% more on AKL-BNE.

"Behind the scenes, thousands of our people will be working across the network to keep everything moving, and we're looking forward to getting everyone where they needed to be," Air NZ COO - ground and inflight, Kate Boyer, said.

The school holidays will also see the return of the carrier's *Kia Ora Kids* magazine as well as the *Plane Spotters Guide*. *ZH*

Game, set, Marriott

MARRIOTT International has unveiled its Marriott Bonvoy Moments for the 2027 Australian Open, with a record 250 experiences on offer for members of its loyalty program.

Highlights include on-court tennis clinics, day session tickets at Rod Laver Arena, as well as exclusive meet-and-greets with tennis legends. *JB*

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AUSTRALIA RISKS LOSING OUT ON EVENTS

EXCLUSIVE

AUSTRALIAN Business Events Association CEO Melissa Brown has expressed intentions to get business events numbers back to pre-pandemic levels through increased federal investment into the Bid Fund.

Speaking with *Travel Daily*, Brown (**pictured**) said that if the government does not act, the country will lose major international events to global competitors, missing out on strong economic growth.

"The Bid Fund, which is supported by Trade and Tourism (Tourism Australia)...delivers over a 50-to-one return - not many investments deliver that sort of return," Brown said.

"It's important for the government, but it's a really great investment for us to be getting more and more events coming



into Australia from overseas.

"If we don't invest further into that, we will lose that business to more competitive countries like Singapore and Canada and New Zealand," she added.

Brown identified one of the key ways to achieve the necessary funding as working with government departments outside Trade and Tourism, further highlighting the immense importance of business events across the country.

"We have an exercise to get

out and ensure that those other portfolios are aware of what business events does, and to get their endorsement on a government-wide business event strategy," Brown explained.

"The main part at this stage was having some meetings with other departments to really elevate the understanding of business events and what we do.

"Sometimes it's beneficial to [make sure] that you're aligned with other parties so that you've got a stronger voice as a group."

ABEA is looking to work more closely with Minister for Industry and Innovation Tim Ayres as well as the health department, due to the large number of health- and medicine-related events being held in Australia.

The Association is also keen to collaborate with the treasury, with a view to accessing greater

financial resources.

Additionally, Brown said that establishing a dedicated national business events strategy in the THRIVE 2030 framework (**TD** 12 Feb 2026) is pivotal in getting these various government departments on board with ABEA's vision.

"We are asking for a review of some of the components and that we have a dedicated business event strategy for Australia, which we don't have at the moment," she said.

"We want to be ambitious and then be able to work back with the government on how we get to those numbers."

These talking points, in addition to the discourse surrounding Working Holiday Maker Visas (**TD** 01 Sep 2026), were the focal points of ABEA's visit to Canberra last week (**TD** 17 Sep 2026). *JB*

ETA Group announces the launch of events specialist brand

ASIAN DMC ETA Group has launched Bwnd Events, a specialist brand focused on curating and delivering high-quality events in Asia.

Announced at ETA Group's Annual Partner Gathering at Capella Bangkok last week, the new division was built based on feedback from clients and industry partners.

The launch comes off the back of the DMC's role in the Flight Centre Global Gathering 2026,



which saw it deliver 32 events and activations in the senior leaders and sponsors program.

Bwnd Events' chief executive officer El Kwang said: "The successful delivery of 32 events and activations [at the gathering] gave us the

confidence that there is a clear need for a high-touch agency like Bwnd, particularly across our immediate key markets of Australia and Singapore."

Bwnd will work with clients from concept development through to onsite execution. *JB*

Pictured: Pete Make-Arun, Bwnd Events chief operating officer; Max Boontawee Jantasuan, Events Travel Asia founder and executive chairman; and El Kwang.

Trivandi merges

GLOBAL event strategy and delivery firm Trivandi has merged with Australian company SoldOut Events to create a locally-led major events team.

The move will give the SoldOut Events team direct access to a global network of expertise and an international project pipeline, strengthening its ability to support clients across the full event lifecycle. *JB*

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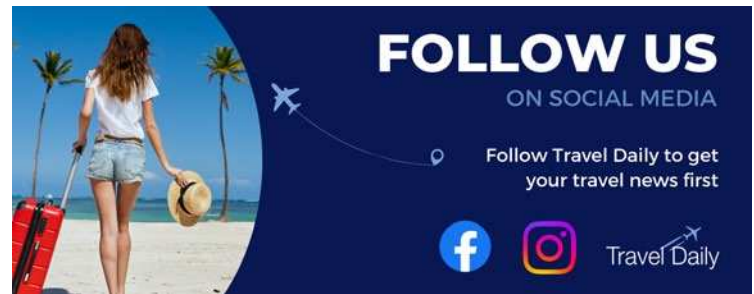
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AmaWaterways has appointed **Steve Spivak** as its new chief commercial officer. He brings nearly three decades of travel and hospitality experience and joins from Tauck, where he was vice president of global sales and customer experience. Prior to that, he was vice president of global sales at Loews Hotels.

Sarah Latimore has been promoted by the **APT Travel Group** to the role of general manager, product & operations international. She has been with the company for more than 20 years, with head of product - Europe being her most recent role.

Pacific Trade Invest Australia has appointed **Ben Urquhart** as senior North Pacific tourism advisor. His new role will see him support tourism operators across the Pacific nations. He previously led the Vanuatu Tourism Office in the Australian market, alongside delivering a range of Austrade-funded programs for Tourism Central Australia.

Llewellyn Wyeth is joining **Ennismore** as vice president, operations for the Pacific. He joins from Accor, where he was area manager for South Australia. Prior to that, he held several general manager roles across a range of Accor properties, including Pullman hotels in Adelaide and Albert Park, as well as Novotel Melbourne St Kilda.

Jean-Francois Bessiron will lead **Rail Europe** as president, supported by Dau-Khoi Nguyen, who has joined the company as chief operating officer. Meanwhile, **Bjorn Bender** has stepped down as CEO and executive chairman after serving at Rail Europe for four years. He led the team through a significant transformation after the company was acquired by Hivest Capital and Bpifrance in 2022.

The Ritz-Carlton Yacht Collection has expanded its APAC reservations team with four appointments. **Wanda Ferrand** has joined as reservations manager and **Amelia Lake** has taken on the role of experience ambassador, while **Abbey Anderson** and **Ellie Sayer** have both come on board as professional voyage associates. Ferrand, Lake and Sayer will be based in Sydney, while Anderson will be based on the Gold Coast.

Cressida Sergeant has been appointed by **Traveltek** as its new CEO, effective 01 Oct. She has spent eight years at the company, currently serving as its chief operating officer. Before Traveltek, she carried out a two-year stint at Expedia in the role of senior director business development EMEA.

David Galt has stepped into the newly created role of chief commercial officer at **Consolidated Travel**. The appointment comes six months after leaving his role as CEO of Webjet OTA. He was with Webjet Group for almost 19 years, holding various titles including CEO, Australia and New Zealand; GM, marketing; and marketing manager.

Kids take flight with CX



CATHAY Pacific (CX) welcomed 14 neurodivergent school children to Sydney Airport for Aviation Explorers Day on Tue, giving them a chance to step into the cockpit of one of its aircraft.

Across the four-hour excursion, students learned about the inner workings of SYD and toured the on-site fire station, as well as CX's passenger and cargo operations.

There were also opportunities to try out CX's Aria Suite business class and make announcements on the PA system.

The event was part of CX's long-running 'I Can Fly' program, run in conjunction with SYD and Autism Spectrum Australia.

Newly appointed Cathay Pacific area head for Oceania, Richard Jones, expressed how heartwarming it was to see the excitement from the students and teachers on the day.

"Cathay's 'I Can Fly' program is a wonderful community engagement initiative that allows us to give young people a better understanding - and hopefully spark a lifelong love - of the world of aviation and travel by providing

a look behind the scenes of our operations and meeting our team members," Jones said.

"This is the first time the program has come to Sydney, and it was special to be supporting a local organisation [Autism Spectrum Australia].

"Seeing the pure joy that the visit created makes me feel immensely proud to be part of Cathay and hope that it has been an experience that participants will remember fondly for a long time," he added.

Now in its 23rd year, the 'I Can Fly' program is being rolled out in Sydney, Manila, Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, with new cities to be announced in 2027. *JB*

Full-steam Sydney

AUSTRALIA'S iconic steam train, Locomotive 3801, is set to return to Central Station on the Oct long weekend for the annual Transport Heritage Expo.

The event has recorded its strongest-ever pre-sale result, with more than 15,000 visitors expected across three days. *JM*

NEW Small Group Explorations TOURS



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Celtic Traditions: England, Scotland & Ireland | 13 Days

Discover the spectacular mountain vistas of England's Lake District.



Sardinia & Corsica: Islands of Italy & France | 14 Days

Wander through ancient history exploring Sardinia's Nuraghe stone ruins.



Gems of Tuscany: Florence, Pienza & the Mediterranean | 11 Days

Discover the traditions and ways of the butteri cowboys of Maremma.



Treasures of the Mekong | 12 Days

Glide through a bustling early morning at Cai Rang Floating Market by boat.



Italy Uncovered | 12 Days

Explore the art, culture, and authentic local experiences that define Italy.



Iconic Iceland: Chasing the Northern Lights | 7 Days

Submerge yourself in the colours of the horizon at Reykjavik's sky lagoon.



Northwest Uncovered: Sun Valley & Yellowstone | 10 Days

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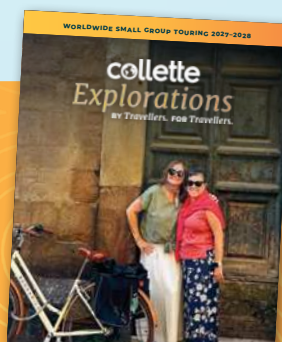
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