

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, plus a full page from **Collette**.

Turner a rebel author

AN "OUTRAGEOUS, warts-and-all" account of the Flight Centre Travel Group is slated to launch in Nov, announced founder Graham 'Skroo' Turner on LinkedIn today.
The Rebel Instinct shares FCTG's many ups and downs, including the kidnap and ransom of its first "fibreglass captain" to its "most spectacular screw-ups". **JHM**

CX axes Cairns, again

CATHAY Pacific has confirmed it will not resume thrice-weekly seasonal Cairns-Hong Kong services for the 2026-27 summer, citing commercial factors rather than poor demand as the reason.
The Hong Kong-based carrier commenced flying the service in 2024 (**TD** 17 Dec 2024), five years after shuttering the route prior to the pandemic (**TD** 30 Apr 2019).

Aussie travellers wanting to visit Hong Kong from Cairns must now transit via other gateways like Brisbane, Sydney or Melbourne.

Cairns MP Michael Healy expressed deep concern about the axing, stating that money from the \$75 million Connecting Queensland Fund should have been used to retain the route.

"We have seen Virgin pull out of Japan, Jetstar pull out of New Zealand, and now we are seeing Cathay pull out of Hong Kong [in the past two years]," he said. **AB**

Act now on the Maldives

THE Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ) has urged its members who sell travel services in the Maldives to take swift action and prepare for a new tourism tax being implemented soon (**TD** 25 Sep).

In a communication circulated this morning, TAANZ said the 17% tourism GST would be introduced on inbound products sold by overseas businesses.

"If you contract, package or sell Maldives tourism product, accommodation, meals, transport, or activities - including agency services - you may need to register," TAANZ said.

GST registration needs to be completed by 30 Sep for the 01 Oct commencement date.

ATIA CEO Dean Long told *Travel Daily* that while the Maldives is a niche destination for Australians, the body remains concerned the Maldivian Govt's decision to tax services that are not delivered in the Maldives is a "dramatic

overextension of its powers that hasn't been thought through."

"We have expressed our concerns at the ramifications with the Maldivian authorities, and will continue to work through official channels including via the Australian Government.

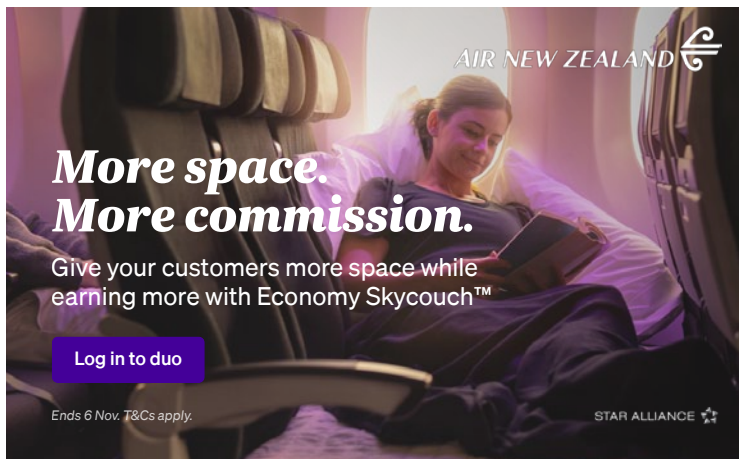
"But fundamentally, we believe this is a bad decision."

Register for the tax **HERE**. **AB**

Bangkok under water

BANGKOK has been declared a disaster zone after floods swept through the Thai capital last week, with Governor Chadchart Sittipunt stating the crisis "poses a risk to people's lives".

The country's tourism authority has advised travellers to allow an extra two to three hours for their air travel plans, while Smartraveller has urged Aussies to check weather updates, follow local advice, and avoid flooded or damaged areas. **AB**



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Monday 28th Sep 2026

Allianz adds more flexibility

ALLIANZ Partners has unveiled a new digital travel insurance platform designed to give banks and loyalty programs greater flexibility in the way they provide cover to travellers.

The Metaportal platform allows customers to activate and manage travel insurance online, while also giving them the option to add cover and benefits based on their individual travel needs.

Optional extras include cruise, snow sports and adventure cover, as well as higher cancellation limits, longer trip durations and reduced excesses.

For financial and loyalty partners, the platform provides a configurable framework allowing different levels of cover and benefits to be offered across customer segments.

Allianz Partners Australia executive head of travel Damien Arthur said the platform was designed to move away from



the one-size-fits-all approach traditionally associated with travel insurance attached to financial products.

"Today's travellers want cover that reflects how, where and why they travel," Arthur said.

The launch comes as Australian financial institutions reassess customer benefits amid regulatory changes affecting interchange revenue and card payment economics.

Allianz said the platform can be integrated into partners' existing digital environments and operated within their own branded channels.

The company added the platform would allow it to scale and introduce new products and services in future. **AB**

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Vietjet signs Starlink

VIETJET has become the latest carrier to sign up to deploy Starlink's onboard wi-fi as a complimentary service, with the tech to initially be made available on 120 Vietjet aircraft, including its A321s, B737s and A330s.

SpaceX's high-speed internet services will also look to be rolled out across the airline's future fleet, however, no installation date has been revealed. **AB**

Airline hops on buy

PACIFIC tourism operator Island Hopper Vacations has been fully acquired by former part-owner Air Rarotonga for an undisclosed sum, with managing director Robert Skews to remain in his role for at least the next two years.

Operations will continue as normal after the purchase, with the company also planning an expanded range of outer island experiences in 2027, including operations in Atiu & Manihiki. **AB**

Ama debuts CCO

THE strategic changes at AmaWaterways' head office are continuing, with long-time Tauck senior executive Steve Spivak taking on the newly created role of chief commercial officer.

Spivak is well known to the Australian market, having led multiple visits to promote the Tauck brand Down Under, until it withdrew a physical presence last year (**TD** 10 Dec 2025).

Reflecting on its debut CCO, AmaWaterways CEO Catherine Powell said Spivak's extensive experience across the luxury travel and hospitality industries made him an ideal recruit.

AmaWaterways is currently in a major growth phase, adding a significant volume of hardware on the European rivers and undergoing fleetwide refurbishments, fuelled by funding from L Catterton, which is strategically aligned with LVMH.

The line is looking to pass 50 ships by '32 (**TD** 21 Apr 2026). **AB**

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Monday 28th Sep 2026

Sabre names local director

SABRE has promoted Fiona Richards (**pictured**) to regional director South Pacific, underscoring its focus on local customer success, innovation and strategic partnerships.

Richards, who has been with Sabre for more than 20 years, will lead the company's engagement with customers and partners across Australia and the South Pacific, helping travel businesses navigate an increasingly complex distribution and tech landscape.

She will focus on helping customers identify where technology can deliver meaningful business value, maximise the return on their tech investments, and create better experiences for travellers.

Her appointment reflects Sabre's continued focus on helping customers unlock growth opportunities, adapt to evolving retailing and distribution models, and make informed technology



investment decisions in a rapidly changing market.

"Fiona brings extensive industry experience, deep customer relationships and a strong track record of commercial success," said vice president agency sales & airline distribution Brett Thorstad.

"Her appointment reflects our commitment to developing exceptional talent from within the organisation.

"As the industry continues to evolve, Fiona's leadership will help ensure our customers are well positioned to adapt, grow and succeed." *MS*

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THAI confirms refurb

THAI Airways CEO Chai Eamsiri has confirmed the carrier will overhaul its wide-body fleet to standardise the in-flight experience and make aircraft deployment more seamless.

The Asian airline plans to replace its dedicated first-class cabins - available on three aircraft - with a premium business class product on its wide-body fleet.

The new business class cabins will feature an open-space layout without a footwell tunnel, providing spatial comfort similar to first class, Eamsiri said.

Retrofitted aircraft featuring the new layout will enter service in the middle of next year, and follow growth plans revealed earlier this month (**TD** 04 Sep). *AB*



Window seat

IT'S official - Minge Lane in Upton upon Severn in Worcestershire is one of the rudest place names in the UK.

It joins an illustrious list of other destinations: Sluts Hole Lane, Norfolk; Sandy Balls, New Forest, Shitterton, Dorset; Fanny Avenue, Derbyshire; Cocks, Cornwall; and Wetwang in Yorkshire.

Tourists find Minge Lane so hilarious, the council has secured its road signs with concrete to stop travellers from stealing them.



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Red Centre extended

TOURISM Central Australia and NT Now have extended their free flights to the Red Centre offer following huge demand.

The deal has been extended by a further six months for travel through to 30 Jun, with bookings open now until 30 Nov unless sold out prior (**TD** 07 Sep).

This gives travellers more time to take advantage of the offer across the Red Centre's peak travel period, which takes in major events including FabALICE, Parrtjima, the Finke Desert Race, and many more.

Tourism Central Australia has received more than 15,000 applications since the launch of the fly free offer and the Red Centre Drive vouchers.

Under the offer, Aussies can score up to \$750 towards an inbound flight to Alice Springs when booking an eligible Red Centre holiday package.

For more information and packages, **CLICK HERE**. *MS*

Canada to make impact

DESTINATION Canada has launched the Together for Impact Virtual Summit 2026 to encourage purpose-led industry conversations and help Australian agents learn more about the destination's regions and experiences so they can grow sales responsibly.

Developed in collaboration with Australia's Strategic Advisory Group and supported by Destination Canada Australia, the 90-min online event will take place on 05 Nov at 10am AEST.

Built around the theme 'From Promise to Purpose to Practice', the summit will offer live and exclusive on-demand content, such as panel discussions around sustainable tourism and practical resources to support client conversations and planning.

Live attendees will also have the chance to earn a spot on a Canadian famil in 2027.

"The summit will provide an



opportunity to explore how a regenerative approach to travel can translate into stronger client conversations, new product ideas, higher-value bookings and more opportunities to sell Canada," said Strategic Advisory Group member Tim Holden, Flight Centre's global partnership leader and emcee for the event.

Non-signatories of the Destination Canada Pledge will also hear about the initiative's benefits, such as taking a regenerative approach to tourism in the country in order to support economic growth and local communities - register **HERE**. *JHM*

New season closer

FINCANTIERI and Four Seasons Yachts have completed an important milestone for the upcoming *Four Seasons II*, laying the keel for the ship which will debut in 2028.

The second vessel will have fewer suites at 79 to cater for the introduction of residential suites with large accommodations. *AB*

Kudos to Travelogix

UK-BASED Travelogix has partnered with Australian company Kudos Travel Technology to deliver greater value to travel management companies around the world.

The agreement will support coordinated customer engagement, deeper technology integration and shared market development, while the firms remain independent.

This marks the third recent Australian contract for Travelogix (**TD** 19 Aug 2026). *JM*

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Bhaya gets the tick

BHAYA Cruises and its boutique luxury ship *Bhaya Soul* has become the first cruise experience in Southeast Asia to join Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

Now a year into its operation, *Bhaya Soul* offers wellness-focused sailings in Vietnam's Ha Long Bay and Lan Ha Bay. *JB*

Int'l econ fares are lower

INTERNATIONAL economy airfares are 7% lower than they were in 2023, despite broader inflation rising 11%, according to Flight Centre Corporate's annual Airfare Inflation Index.

The analysis of average booked fares from Jan-Jun 2026 found international economy prices dropped from \$989 to \$915 one-way, while domestic economy fares rose 10% and business class increased 4% to \$4,747.

FCM Travel and Corporate Traveller global COO Melissa Elf said airfare growth has remained contained since COVID, even though there have been short-term pricing fluctuations.

It is noteworthy, Elf said, as airlines continue to operate in a high-cost environment, particularly with jet fuel prices surging more than 40% this year.

"Oftentimes, after a period of disruption, we will see carriers reduce prices again to encourage



travellers back on board because at the end of the day, they need passengers on their aircraft.

"What we are seeing now compared to three to five years ago is a more mature market balancing demand, competition, airline capacity and operating costs," she added.

For businesses, the key to travel budgeting lies in understanding market dynamics, such as travelling ahead and avoiding peak periods. *JHM/ZH*

Savings and beyond

SEABOURN has launched its Explore Beyond Event, offering up to US\$2,000 in shipboard credit on new bookings made before 16 Nov 2026.

Travellers can access the deal on selected sailings across the Caribbean, Mediterranean, the Arctic and Antarctica. *JB*

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Amex lounge closures

THE American Express Centurion Lounges in Sydney and Melbourne will both close for a number of weeks over the next month for refurbishments.

Sydney's Centurion Lounge will close on 06 Oct and reopen on 20 Oct, while Melbourne's lounge will close on 06 Oct and reopen on 21 Oct.

Some American Express cardholders may have access to lounges during the closure. *MS*

Record hotel deal

DARLING Harbour's Novotel and ibis hotels have sold for a combined \$390 million, marking Sydney's largest hotel transaction by sale price in four years.

Wentworth Capital, Hong Kong-based Sun Hung Kai & Co and Mulpha Australia acquired the properties from Pearl Hotels, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority.

The portfolio comprises the 525-room Novotel Sydney and the 256-room ibis Sydney both in Darling Harbour.

Both properties will continue to be managed by Accor under long-term agreements. *ZH*

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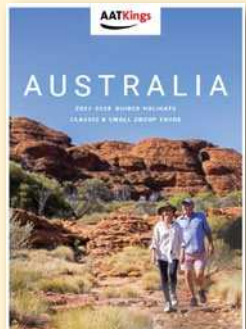
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Globus: 2027 Canada, USA & South America
Globus family of brands (GFOB) has released its range of 2027 trips. The line-up features trips across the Americas under the Globus brand. In Canada, guests can enjoy stays at Fairmont resorts, take train rides with Rocky Mountaineer, cruise the Inside Passage with Holland America Line, as well as receive exclusive offers on Air Canada. In the United States, travellers have options between exploring America's great parks, delving into the music heritage of the South, and exploring New England in the northern autumn. Travellers can either see the entirety of South America or opt for smaller trips an to Ecuador, the Galapagos or Peru. Read more [HERE](#).



AAT Kings: Australia 2027/28
AAT Kings has launched its new brochure for 2027 and 2028. Its Australia brochure provides readers insights into both its classic and small-group tours, ranging from the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Tasmania, South East & South Australia and Queensland. Highlights of this season's Make Travel Matter experiences include visiting the Wanmarra Community at the Karrke Aboriginal Centre, learning about the traditional owners of Nitmiluk Gorge, visiting a wildlife sanctuary in Tasmania and exploring the Milky Way at the Dark Sky Sanctuary. To read the full brochure, click [HERE](#).



Gondwana Ecotours: Costa Rica
This brochure acts as a detailed guide for Gondwana Ecotours' seven-night 'Costa Rica: Secluded Wildlife Adventure', departing 20 Aug 2027. Across the seven days, guests will travel up and down the country visiting the capital San Jose, as well as notable places such as Finca Rossa Bianca, La Fortuna and Drake Bay.

Each accommodation is an eco-friendly wilderness lodge, many of which are close to or within national parks. The program also features details for the pre-trip extension to Tortuguero National Park, lasting four nights. To see more on this journey, click [HERE](#).

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Cruise a great choice



AGENTS from Travellers Choice (TC) came together at Cruise360 Australasia, with 21 of its members in attendance at the two-day event.

With a delegate from every mainland state, the major cruise event allowed the team to stay up-to-date with preferred suppliers as well as the chance to connect with fellow agents and industry partners.

"Whether it is ocean, river or expedition voyages, the depth of cruise product now available to Australian travellers is extraordinary," said TC's general manager sales Nicola Strudwick. "As a result, the maxim that

'there is a cruise for every customer' has never been more accurate, while the importance of staying up-to-date with new vessels, itineraries and destinations has never been more crucial," she added.

The trip to Cruise360 Australasia comes on the eve of TC's 2026 conference in Perth in late Nov.

Across the three-day event, delegates will hear from keynote speakers, partake in breakout sessions and make the most of a preferred supplier exhibition, featuring several cruise lines. *JB*

Storm rocks ships

A NOR'EASTER storm is affecting cruise itineraries off the coast of mid-Atlantic US states.

Royal's *Vision of the Seas* experienced delays in reaching her final port of Baltimore late last week.

Meanwhile, *Carnival Venezia* has reduced her overnight stay in Bermuda to a day trip.

The storm impacts are expected to continue today. *JB*

Royce gets hacked

BOUTIQUE Melbourne property The Royce Hotel recently had its reservations system hacked, compromising customer information such as names, phone numbers, email addresses and booking details.

The hotel has reassured affected guests that no passwords, payment or passport information was involved.

It continues to advise guests to watch out for suspicious-looking emails and messages and to report anything strange. *JB*

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