

# TABS ON TRAVEL TODAY

Incorporating Tabs on Travel

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Issue 5237



 Fly for business WLG-CHC 8:10am / CHC-WLG 6:15pm weekdays

**Jetstar** 

## AKTG: A Showcase & A Relaunch

Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group officially relaunched the Cox & Kings brand in New Zealand last night, at a time when its vp sales Susan Haberle says its group investment in this market has never been higher.

AKTG acquired Cox & Kings at the end of 2019, and since then has been heavily focused on getting things right before bringing it back down under. There has been a complete rebrand, Haberle says, adding that Cox & Kings is very much aligned with the Kiwi market.

This sentiment is echoed by Cox & Kings' director of product George Colvin-Slee. "It's not just about doing the tick box top destinations, it's about really getting under the skin of a destination," he says.

The product is pitched as ideal for repeat travellers. "It's not necessarily for first time international travellers, it's looking for people who want that great depth," he adds.

There are tours available to more than 100 countries including unusual options such as Tunisia and Pakistan. Colvin-Slee adds that

there are more itineraries coming to destinations such West Africa and Algeria; and where possible he says clients will stay in historic and cultural properties.

Some 75% of its travellers add on a tailor made extension to their tour, which Colvin-Slee says is a great upsell opportunity. In addition, 25% of Cox & Kings guests are solo travellers, and in 2027 the brand will launch solo departures to cater to the growing demand.

### ... Support

The group's reservation team in Melbourne has upskilled on Cox & Kings to support Kiwi agents, while AKTG's sales director Anoushka Kudav will spend the coming weeks in New Zealand meeting with Kiwi trade partners as well. "We wanted to make sure we had support and that we could execute a really successful relaunch," says Haberle. AKTG has also appointed Australia-based Sara Puglia as a dedicated sales director for Cox & Kings. Haberle says she will host a series of webinars for the Kiwi retail trade, and will visit in person multiple times a year alongside Kudav. Agents can reach out to the duo [HERE](#).

A digital Cox & Kings brochure is [HERE](#), and advisor guides [HERE](#).

See launch incentives, and pic from last night's trade launch on page 4.

### EU Airline Changes?

The EU is making it easier for families to fly together, as it looks to introduce new rules that will mean airlines will no longer be able to charge parents for booking seats next to their children. It is one part of a wider reform of passenger rights.

According to widespread reports the new rules, undergoing provisional approval this week, will include a ban on fees for parents selecting seats next to their children aged under 14 years, as well as a ban on airlines charging fees for rectifying spelling mistakes in bookings.

While there were discussions surrounding changes in compensation, it has been confirmed that the current system will remain, offering passengers between EUR250 and EUR600 for delayed and cancelled flights (around \$495 and \$1190).

### QF's New Routes

Yesterday, Qantas resumed flights between Auckland and the Gold Coast, and launched a new service between Auckland and Apia, as the carrier continues to expand its presence in the Kiwi market.

"Launching two new international routes from Auckland is an exciting step for Qantas in New Zealand, giving travellers even more choice as we kick off our 48-hour sale..." QF rgm New Zealand Mikey Gulliver said yesterday. "The [AKL-OOL] service brings a premium option to one of the most popular holiday destinations for Kiwis, with Qantas the only airline offering business class on the route."

At the same time the new AKL-APW flights make it easier for Kiwis access Samoa year-round. The QF fares include meals, beverages, 30kg checked baggage, inflight wifi and entertainment. *See pg 6 for more.*



### 7 Pages This Issue

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- House of Travel.....p5

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**MEETINGS 2026 Opens**

MEETINGS will return to the New Zealand International Convention Centre for the next three years. The announcement was made at the opening of MEETINGS 2026 which has 750 people in attendance. BEIA board chair Martin Snedden says the decision establishes continuity.

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**Middle East Travel Gets The Okay**

Australia is giving travellers the okay to travel to the United Arab Emirates and Qatar.

It has updated its advice on Smartraveller today, dropping the warning level from Do Not Travel to Reconsider Your Need To Travel. It says the security situation in Qatar and the UAE remains unpredictable, that there remains a risk of military action, and that airspace may open or close at short notice.

This 'reconsider' advice also applies to Bahrain, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The Australian Government does point out that Level 3 remains a high threshold, and it adds that this also means 'reconsider your need to transit'.

"If you need to transit these locations, stay as short a time as possible and eliminate unnecessary activities."

The move follows intense lobbying from organisations including the Australian Travel Industry Association, which was demanding a staged, proportionate response that moves airport transit to

Level 3 (Reconsider) recognising that a 90-minute airside transit carries a fundamentally different risk profile to an extended holiday in-country.

**... At Home**

Close to home, SafeTravel advises against travel to almost all countries in the Middle East with its strongest Level 4.

A spokesperson for the agency says travel advice balances a range of factors, including the security environment and safety risks to Kiwis.

"Attacks in Kuwait, Bahrain, and in the UAE, alongside the ongoing hostilities around the Strait of Hormuz, are examples of the risk and concern we see."

The advisory level for all Gulf states is being kept under regular review, the spokesperson says, acknowledging that the UAE and Qatar are major transit points for New Zealanders, and that its travel advice has significant implications for travellers, including with respect to travel insurance coverage.

**NCL Exec Departs**

While NCL Holdings is keeping mum on the rumoured restructure of its Australasian operation, after nearly nine years at Norwegian Cruise Line, Damian Borg has announced via *LinkedIn* that he has finished with the cruise line.

While the reason for the departure not has not been confirmed, Borg says in the post that it has been a privilege representing one of the world's most recognised cruise brands and leading trade strategy across the APAC region, working alongside exceptional colleagues, partners and industry friends.

"I leave immensely proud of what we achieved together, strengthening partnerships, expanding our footprint across Asia Pacific and helping more travellers discover the transformative power of travel."

Borg, who is highly respected in the Kiwi trade for his dedication to the travel agent distribution, and appreciating the nuances of the Kiwi market has also thanked everyone he worked with at the cruise line.

He says he is now he's embracing the next stage of his professional journey with 'curiosity, optimism, and an open mind'. NCL declined to comment on the matter.

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## Port of LA Levels Up Cruise Powerhouse



**Big things are on the horizon at the Port of Los Angeles—and it's all about giving travel advisors more to sell.**

Plans are underway for a brand-new Outer Harbor cruise terminal, alongside a major transformation of the existing World Cruise Centre,

### Anime Expo Downtown LA

The largest anime convention in North America, AX will be held over July 4th weekend at the Los Angeles Convention Center in Downtown LA. Each year, the four-day AX welcomes more than 100,000 fans to celebrate Japanese pop culture and experience the Masquerade, Anime Music Video Contest, concerts, and the epic fashion show, plus late-night programming, electronic gaming, and open-mic karaoke. More [HERE](#).

designed to meet booming cruise demand and welcome the next generation of mega-ships.

With the first phase set to launch in 2030, this four-year redevelopment will significantly boost capacity and elevate the guest experience—cementing Los Angeles as the West Coast's premier cruise gateway. And the momentum is already building, with cruise lines expanding their offerings, including five new West Coast itineraries from Virgin Voyages. View video [HERE](#).

### ... Pro Tip

Pre- and post-cruise itineraries can be easily built into a Los Angeles stay, with convenient access to neighbourhoods across the city for extended visits and multi-day programming. Explore a suggested itinerary [HERE](#).

## WB Superman Opens



The new Warner Bros Studios attraction is now open. Step into the action with Superman Experience: Defenders Unite, an electrifying new attraction at Warner Bros Studio Tour Hollywood! Dive into Superman's universe with heart-pounding, first-person gameplay, jaw-dropping 3D video and sound, and mind-blowing real-life sets brought to life with cutting-edge audio-animatronics. This is your chance to suit up, join Superman, and defend Metropolis in an adventure that makes you the hero! Plus, explore interactive sets and props, snap unforgettable photos, and enjoy delicious, themed food and exclusive merch—all inspired by the highly anticipated DC Studios 2025 blockbuster, Superman. More info [HERE](#).

## Hollywood Bowl Nights

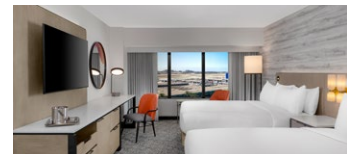


The Hollywood Bowl, a legendary Los Angeles destination for unforgettable live music under the stars, now redefines the concert experience. With Supper in Your Seats, evenings transform into a gourmet affair. Exclusively available with premium Terrace and Garden tickets, this experience offers plush table seating, spectacular views, and seamless in-seat service, making every moment extraordinary. See [HERE](#).

## Hilton \$50Million Reno



Hilton Los Angeles Airport has completed a \$50 million renovation. The hotel, less than a mile from LAX and close to top LA attractions such as SoFi Stadium and The Intuit Dome, now features updated guestrooms with two queen beds,



renovated bathrooms, mini-refrigerators, new in-room technology, and improved ADA accessibility. There are 55,000 square feet of meeting space and multiple dining options. The redesign makes Hilton LAX ideal for stop-over travellers as well as those attending major events in Los Angeles. Click [HERE](#).

### ... Pro Tip

Be sure to let your clients know that the Hilton LAX operates a free airport shuttle from all LAX terminals for hotel guests.

## Nonstop flights from Auckland to Los Angeles and Beyond with Delta

Returning October 26, fly Delta nonstop to Los Angeles and connect to 50+ destinations. As LAX's largest global carrier\*, Delta offers over 160 peak-day departures for seamless onward travel.

*\*Delta is the largest global carrier at LAX by seats and departures.*

## Train & Win!

Complete the Los Angeles Training Module on the CATO Training Academy before 30 June for a chance to win one of five \$100 NZD e-gift cards. Click [HERE](#) to start your training.

To enter, email a screenshot of your completed module to [oceania@latourism.org](mailto:oceania@latourism.org)



## NONSTOP: AUCKLAND TO LOS ANGELES

AKL-LAX service returns October 26.

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### Fire Shuts NZ Lounge

The fire at Wellington Airport has led to the closure of Air New Zealand's Wellington Domestic Lounge until further notice due to the damage.

To make up for this, NZ says its Regional Lounge is operating with a reduced food offering and other temporary arrangements to manage high demand, this includes offering takeaway coffee when the lounge reaches capacity.

Those eligible for lounge access will be kept updated via the NZ app and SMS, while Koru Silver members with lounge eVouchers will receive notifications advising that lounge access is currently unavailable.

Further updates will be provided as more information becomes available, keep up to date [HERE](#).

### NZ Agency Closure

Air New Zealand's Agency Sales team will be available again from 1700 today with the phone lines opening for 30 minutes to assist agents with any urgent queries.

## Cox & Kings Kiwi Debut & Incentives



**Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group hosted its showcase last night, offering Kiwi agents an overview on Crystal Cruises and Abercrombie & Kent as well as the relaunch of Cox & Kings in New Zealand—and a host of trade incentives.**

For the first 100 bookings by 31 Jul, agents will receive a \$100 gift card as 'a thank you for being part of our launch'. E-mail [HERE](#) to redeem. Plus for every booking made by 31 Oct, agents will earn a place in the draw to win a spot on a hosted Cox & Kings faml in the first quarter of 2027. And to celebrate the Cox & Kings relaunch, every booking by 31 Oct counts as an entry into a draw to win a \$10,000 Cox and Kings travel voucher, to be spent on personal travel. "We feel those three different initiatives will hope-



fully help get advisors on board, they will be blown away when they see the product," says Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group's vp of sales Susan Haberl, who adds that New Zealand is a core market for the company. "We really feel that this brand is really going to take off, and we're really excited, and already the initial response has been incredibly strong." See more [HERE](#). *Pictures: 1. Cherryl Brown from Cruise World won Jacquart champagne and Crystal Grace coffee table book with Cox & Kings' George Colvin-Slee on (left) and AKTG's Anoushka Kudav and Susan Haberle (right). 2. Cox & Kings' George Colvin-Slee, AKTG's Anoushka Kudav, Zanna Athfield from Flight Centre Eastridge who won five additional entries into the incentive prize draw, and AKTG's Susan Haberle.*

## News & Product

### Bare Luxury Soneva



Soneva has announced the evolution of its founding vision Barefoot Luxury to Bare Luxury, and a new *Just What Matters* tagline.

The move includes an updated Soneva logo and Soluna monogram derived from Latin Solis and Lunae, and will influence villa design, restaurant concepts, menus and more.

Neil Gallagher, chief executive officer of Soneva, says the company's spirit is more relevant than when it originated.

"Fast consumption, constant stimulation, the growth of AI and the pressure we all feel to optimise every hour has made the case for something quieter and more human."

"Bare Luxury is Soneva returning to its original instinct: that the most remarkable thing we can offer our guest is not more, but truer."

## EMERALD<sup>o</sup> CRUISES & TOURS

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## Kelly-Ann Thomas on the best decision she ever made



What does it really take to lead a successful House of Travel store? We asked Owner Operator Kelly-Ann Thomas to share her journey, from travel consultant to retail leader, and why taking the next step in her career was one of the best decisions she ever made.

**Could I actually do this?"**  
**The question every House of Travel Retail Manager or Owner Operator once asked...**

Kelly-Ann Thomas loves chasing a travel booking. On any given day she's on the retail floor at House of Travel Lower Hutt chatting to customers, selling holidays, or mentoring her team. When she was weighing up whether to become a

Retail Manager with the intention of one day becoming an Owner Operator, the reasons not to do it felt much louder than the reasons to go for it. "Stepping up was scary, and I didn't think money was a driver for me.

But talking with the Retail Team at HoT HQ gave me confidence to move forward. Then I hit my first Retail Manager KPI and the bonus was earmarked for my wedding. That set the fire in me. The hard work and the reward are worth it." She also worried the higher you go the more corporate it gets. "No one is too good to sell, and if you're not working alongside your team you're missing the best part of the job." What spins Kelly-Ann's wheels now isn't her own numbers, it's her team's. "Week in, week out I'm watching and supporting my team to hit their targets. It becomes a team sport." That, and the way she runs her store by – personality plus, "always have a huge amount of fun", and lead by example.

**The questions aspiring consultants don't ask out loud**

If you've wondered whether you could run your own travel retail business, chances are you've also talked yourself out of it. "I can't read a P&L." "Where would I find the money?" "My staff could be older than me." "I'm not confident enough." "The timing's wrong."

**You don't do it on your own**

Here's what those fears miss, says House of Travel Retail Director Jayne Allred. Nobody gets handed the keys and left to work it out alone. "Every step of the way, you are not by yourself because this is a partnership." There's a centralised accounting team you can phone anytime, proper help learning to read a P&L, leadership courses, and a People and Culture team who draft ads, screen applicants and walk you through recruitment.

The House of Travel Business Partner Development Programme has developed more than 150 team members since 2013. "Eighty-eight percent of our retail team are women," Jayne says. "And we love the men too!"

**What do you actually need?**

"A good attitude, self-motivation and initiative, a sense of fun and a willingness to learn. Everything else can be taught as long as you've got the right attitude and a passion for travel." It doesn't start with a business plan and you don't have to already be working at HoT, start the conversation. If you've got a passion for travel and a can-do attitude, the door is open. "Do it," encourages Kelly Morrison, Retail Manager for House of Travel Gore. "If you don't take that leap now, when will you?" So, could you? Pick up the phone or send Jayne an email. Come have a chat. Dream big. [jayne@hot.co.nz](mailto:jayne@hot.co.nz)  
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**HOUSE OF TRAVEL**

**New Brands For Fiji**



Accor has signed a multi-hotel deal with Yavu Collective, a Fijian-owned investment and development group owned by BSP Life and Fiji Airways.

The 'mega' signing will see three new hotels join Accor's growing Pacific network, including the launch of two brands new to Fiji, The Sebel and Tribe.

The deal will bring a second Sofitel to Fiji, Sofitel Fiji Vatu Talei, (rendered pictured above) set to open in early 2027 on Denarau Island.

Meanwhile, the 76-key Sebel Nuku Loaloa Living will open in Wailoaloa, and the 118-room Tribe Na Tomba will open on Denarau Island, both later this year.

**Qantas Means 'Business' On Oz Auckland-Gold Coast Route**

Following a five-year pause, Qantas has officially launched services between Auckland and the Gold Coast, and introduced business class on the route.

The thrice weekly services, with its premium offering, are being welcomed by the Gold Coast tourism plant, as the destination looks to increase the profile of its high-end offering with Kiwi travellers, and travel agents.

To that end a group, of Kiwi consultants was on yesterday's 'inaugural' flight and is experiencing the Gold Coast's premium offering which has so far included a charter sunset cruise and dinner at the Star's 19 Restaurant and staying at the beachfront Mondrian Hotel in Burleigh. Queensland Airports Limited ceo Amelia Evans says QF's return on the route strengthens OOL's position as Australia's most connected airport to New Zealand.

"We are thrilled to welcome QF back to our international network, further strengthening connectivity across the Tasman and providing customers with a business class



Rebecca Slee from Qantas is with Tourism & Events Queensland's Rachel Dickey on a Sailing In Paradise sunset cruise.



Shelley Rich and Holly Cliffe both from House of Travel pictured at sunrise on Burleigh beach.

option," says Evans. "Auckland is our busiest international route, with around 330,000 people travelling between the two cities in the past year alone and flights averaging around 90% full—a clear reflection of the demand between our two regions," says the OOL boss. Experience Gold Coast CEO John Warn says the return of QF's AKL-OOL flights 'is fantastic for our city and tourism industry'. "New Zealand is our largest international market with 217,000 Kiwis choosing to visit our city last year, so expanding connectivity between our two destinations is vital to meet growing demand," he says. "With

more than 7000 of those visitors travelling here for business, the introduction of a business class option on the new QF service will be a welcome addition."

**... The Details**

The AKL-OOL service is operating on Tue, Thu and Sat by a 737 aircraft, depart Auckland at 1020 and arriving in Gold Coast at 1200. It adds 52,000 seats on the route, which has been supported by the Queensland Government and Experience Gold Coast through the Connecting Queensland Fund. See tomorrow's issue for more from the Gold Coast.

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**AA FIFA Experiences**



American Airlines is kicking off its football premium experiences in its Flagship and Admirals Club lounges at airports across the US.

AA is the official North American airline supplier of FIFA World Cup 26 in partnership with Qatar Airways, and the official airline of US Soccer.

Airports include Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, George Bush Intercontinental Airport, Los Angeles International Airport and more. Those visiting lounges during event week can enjoy menu items and cocktails inspired by competing nations, and matches will be screened. The lounges also feature comfortable seating, bars and dining options, work zones with fast wifi and spa-style restrooms.

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**Intrepid Announces Return To Jordan**



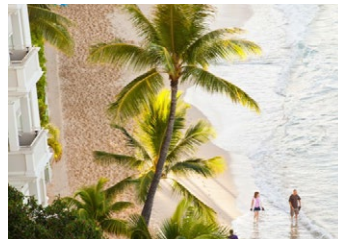
**Intrepid Travel is returning to Jordan, resuming trips in the destination this week following news of a peace deal in the Middle East, as the company's md ANZ Brett Mitchell reports strong demand from Kiwis wanting to travel to the region.**

"Jordan has long been a favourite with our travellers, and we're pleased to be welcoming travellers back and supporting our local teams and partners for whom this has been a challenging period."

Intrepid is offering a limited number of departures to Jordan in Jun and Jul, following the popularity of Egypt, which Mitchell says

has been among Intrepid's most popular destinations year to date. Intrepid will continue to closely follow official travel advice, hoping that, as conditions evolve, it will continue to reflect the situation on the ground, including for major transit hubs that play a critical role in connecting travellers with destinations around the world, he adds. "Beyond its economic impact, travel brings people together, fosters connection, empathy and understanding, especially at a time when the world needs it most." See the Egypt and Jordan trips [HERE](#).

**Moana Surfrider News**



Waikiki's iconic Moana Surfrider hotel is celebrating its 125th anniversary with a series of upgrades. These include refreshed rooms in the Tower Wing, a reimagined Banyan Wing, upgrades to the open-air lobby and the debut of Vintage 1901 wine bar. Hawaiian Tourism says the renovations honour the history of Ulukou, where the hotel is located. See more [HERE](#).

**... & On Elephants**



Intrepid Travel says it's investing in the next phase of elephant welfare reform in Thailand by doubling its donations to World Animal Protection Thailand through the Intrepid Foundation up to AUD50,000.

World Animal Protection says there are currently 2849 elephants being held across 236 tourism venues in Thailand. While elephant rides and shows have declined over the past decade, the animal welfare group says more than 1200 elephants are still used for riding experiences of with two thirds are kept in poor conditions by World Animal Protection standards.

This campaign will support World Animal Protection's goal of transitioning three elephant venues in Thailand in 2026, which will enable elephants to move and socialise naturally without forced tourist interaction.

Funds raised will also support venues like Ran-Tong Elephant Rescue Centre in Chiang Mai and build on Intrepid's long standing connection with Thailand.

**News & Product**

**Explora III Godmother**

Explora Journeys has named National Geographic educator Cristina Ozores as the Godmother of Explora III. Ozores is



also a renowned marine educator and a dive trainer. "Cristina's inspiring work and lifelong connection to the ocean make her a natural choice for this role," says Explora Journeys president Anna Nash.

Ozores has spent much of her life studying marine biology, restoring seabeds and educating younger generations. "My hope is that Explora III becomes a space where people can discover the ocean in a deeper, more meaningful way," she says.

**INDUSTRY DIARY**

**JULY**

**Qantas Roadshow**

**Queenstown:** Tue 28, QT Hotel, 1100. **Christchurch:** Wed 29, Novotel Christchurch Airport, 0730. **Wellington:** Thu 30, QT Wellington, 0730. **Auckland:** Fri 31, 0730 & 1200.

**AUGUST**

**Viva Beyond The Brochure**

**Christchurch:** Mon 31, Chateau on the Park, 1730.

**SEPTEMBER**

**Viva Beyond The Brochure**

**Wellington:** Wed 02, Dowse Art Museum, 1800. **Auckland:** Thu 03, Maritime Room, Princes Wharf, 1730.

**Treasures of the South Pacific**

**Auckland:** Mon 07, Pullman Auckland. **Tauranga:** Tue 08, Trinity Wharf. **Wellington:** Wed 09, Copthorne Hotel. **Christchurch:** Thu 10, Chateau on the Park. (Times TBC).

**Asia Now Roadshow 2026**

**Tauranga:** Tue 15, 1800. **Hamilton:** Wed 16, 1800. **Auckland:** Thu 17, 1800. **Christchurch:** Tue 22, 1800. **Wellington:** Wed 23. **Hawkes Bay:** Thu 24, 1800. (Venues TBC).

**Land, Rail, & Sea: Wendy Wu,**

**Journey Beyond, Viking**

**Invercargill:** Wed 23, The Ascot Park, 1830. **Dunedin:** Thu 24, The Distinction Hotel, 1430/1830.

**NOVEMBER**

**Australia On Tour Trade Roadshow**

**Queenstown:** Mon 23. **Christchurch:** Tue 24. **Wellington:** Wed 25. **Auckland:** Thu 26. (Times & Venues TBC).

**Tourism Ireland Roadshow**

**Auckland:** 23 Nov from 1630, Venue TBA.

**Land, Rail, & Sea: Wendy Wu,**

**Journey Beyond, Viking**

**Tauranga:** Wed 25, Bay Park Suites, 1830.

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