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CRUISING 9 ITINERARIES FROM SYDNEY & AUCKLAND THIS SUMMER

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages and a cover wrap from Norwegian Cruise Lines.

Bruce gets banned

A DECISION by G Adventures to cancel all tours in Russia and refuse to accept Russian nationals from booking its products has seen founder Bruce Poon Tip banned from entering Russia.

The move to prohibit Russian residents and agencies from making bookings was made in protest about the invasion of Ukraine, with Poon Tip today welcoming the sanction.

"The fact I am now being personally sanctioned in return underpins my commitment to fighting the good fight, though it continues to devastate me that the Russian tourism industry and local communities are the ones impacted by these reciprocal bans when it comes to accessing the benefits of tourism," he said.

"If I have to be sanctioned to get this message across I'll wear it as a badge of honour."

Now it's personal for fans

THE same company that owns the Qudos Bank Arena in Sydney has today announced the acquisition of a majority stake in travel start-up Fan+, a specialist operator organising personalised travel experiences for fans with sports stars and clubs.

Ticketing and technology company TEG purchased 51% equity in the business for an undisclosed sum, heralding a new chapter for Fan+ which is backed by prominent Australian travel identities including Dr Jerry Schwartz and Helloworld Travel CEO Andrew Burnes.

TEG said its decision to buy the fast-growing start-up was driven by what it observes as "the next evolution [of its] live entertainment model", which will include increasing the demand for personalised travel experiences by leveraging its existing portfolio of live events.

The purchase will precipitate an integration of Fan+ with TEG's ticketing arm Ticketek next year, offering sports fans the option of

adding personalised experiences to their transactions, such as backstage tours, seats at pre-show sound checks, attending a production's opening night launch party, or even tossing the coin at a customer's favourite team's sporting match.

"At TEG, we believe nothing beats the live experience and to be able to personalise that live experience with a FAN+ moment is the perfect extension of our offering," CEO Geoff Jones said.

Other investors in Fan+ already include Seven West Media CEO James Warburton, three-time Olympian and Hoyts CEO Damian Keogh, Founder of Pacific Equity Partners Rickard Gardell, and Australian Olympic Committee Director Craig Carracher.

Get into the Spirit!

IT'S time to get into the spirit, with Norwegian Cruise Line's *Norwegian Spirit* making her debut Down Under.

To celebrate, the cruise line is running an exclusive, today-only incentive - for more information, head to the **cover page**.

QF extends NT prog

QANTAS Airways has extended its resident fares program for Alice Springs, with those who live in the town now able to access discounted fares to Adelaide, in addition to Darwin.

Return flights to the South Australian capital will cost less for Alice Springs residents from today, with discounts leading in at 20%, with the maximum fare payable to be \$400 per sector (\$800 return).

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Tahiti caps tourist numbers

TAHITI has released a new tourism development strategy this morning that will seek to cap the number of tourists allowed to visit the tropical destination.

The *Fari'ira'a Manihini 2027* strategy document is seeking to make Tahiti a more inclusive and sustainable travel destination, stating the ambition to limit visitors to a ratio of one inhabitant to one visitor at any one time, effectively capping the tourism rate at 280,000 people in line with the latest census data.

"The Islands of Tahiti should remain a slow tourism destination - a little corner of paradise with exceptional service focusing on experiences, culture and encounters with the local population," Tahiti Tourisme CEO Jean-Marc Mocellin said.

The report indicated a preference for travellers to take longer stays and be spread

Baking up a storm

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) has chosen 11 winners for its popular Gingerbread house-making competition.

Jeff Dimand, Susan Gowlett, Patricia Greene, Karen Hale, Elyse Hebblewhite, Tracy King, Vanessa McGrath, Kezza O'Neal, Rodney Pattison, Tracy Solomon, and Chantelle Stewart all scored themselves a \$50 voucher for their sweet creations.

For pics of the impressive baking, see tomorrow's **CW**.

across more of the island chain, easing the environmental and infrastructure pressure on popular areas such as Moorea and Bora Bora.

Beyond capping the number of visitors, the strategy contains 95 actions and 40 sub-actions covering expanded wi-fi networks, as well as more eco-tourism parks and hiking trails.

The latest plan arrives after a record number of visitors to Tahiti in 2019 (236,000), and if the strategy is deemed successful, the limit will be reviewed in 2027.

Tahiti also placed a ban on cruise ships carrying more than 3,500 passengers from the start of this year, citing larger vessels placing too much stress on its maritime infrastructure and environment (**TD** 24 Sep 2021).

Sail like an Egyptian

VIKING has released its 2025 Egypt river cruise dates, boasting 120 new departures and a range of newly-created pre- and post-cruise extensions.

Viking Osiris, which launched in Aug, is the cruise line's newest purpose-built ship for the Nile, joining *Viking Ra*, which launched in 2018.

The program also provides cruisers with an early opportunity to secure preferred departure dates and stateroom categories, with next year completely sold out, and limited staterooms available for the 2024 season.

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Santa jumps in the deep end



P&O Cruises recently celebrated a key milestone of Christmas cruises, with this year marking 90 years since its inaugural festive cruise from Sydney in 1932.

The Yuletide celebration continued this month, with the cruise line's three ships collectively hosting over 8,300 guests this Christmas, having set sail this week from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The vessels are adorned with 700 metres of garlands and 46 Christmas trees, along with decorations adorning the atriums, bars, theatres and restaurants, while snow machines and carollers complete the festivities.

The jolly itineraries this year include Carols by Candlelight, Christmas Variety Shows, Christmas Cookie Clubs, Guess that Christmas Tune Trivia, Merry Movie Nights and Christmas

services, with the man in red also due to make a special appearance on Christmas Eve.

Pictured: The P&O crew getting into the Christmas spirit.

WA air trial takes off

TRIAL services connecting Esperance and Kalgoorlie-Boulder Airports have commenced this week, with pilot operations being conducted in partnership with regional airline Legendaire.

The testing phase allows travellers to liaise with the airline about what date and time they would like to depart, in the process providing each location with market research about demand, frequencies and timings.

Trials conclude at the end of Jan 2023 before a permanent schedule is launched, with one-way flights priced from \$349.

Do you want a chance to win 1 of 3 seats on Jetstar & KTO's famil to Seoul?

The famil will be running from 05/02/2023 to 08/02/2023, with flights on Jetstar, plus transfers, accommodation and tours in Seoul included.

To find out how you can enter for a chance to win as well as the terms and conditions, click here!

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Jetstar



Donna is the winner

HURTIGRUTEN has announced the winners of its latest trade incentive, with TripADeal's Donna Elliot coming out on top of the pack, picking herself up an Arctic Superior Cabin on either The Svalbard Express or The North Cape Express itineraries.

In second place was Adventure World's Rowena Dickson, and in third was Flight Centre Southgate's Gitte Foran, who each won a Polar Outside cabin.

2025 marks tourism revival

THE holiday arrivals segment in Australia is expected to have its strongest rebound growth over the next four years, the latest report from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) suggests.

Leisure tourism recovery is forecast to gather speed in 2023 and 2024 as aviation access increases, with 2025 earmarked as the year when leisure visits finally match pre-COVID demand.

Around 4.5 million holiday visitors are expected in 2025 and, by 2027, that number is tipped to grow to roughly 5.5 million.

Visits to see family and friends have been the quickest tourism segment to recover in 2022, with the surge of activity forecast to continue into 2023 before flattening out later next year.

VFR arrivals are anticipated to exceed pre-pandemic levels by as early as 2024, and by 2027, 3.3 million visitors are flagged to arrive in the country.

Meanwhile, the recovery of travellers coming to Australia for educational purposes has been significantly hampered by the ongoing prohibition on outbound travel by China, which before the pandemic struck, comprised 44% of all total student visitors.

Helping to soften the blow from the Chinese vacuum has been a boost in Indian student arrivals so far in 2022, which was our second largest market in 2019, and has now recovered faster than most on the back of solid air lift between the two countries.

Student tourism levels will likely hit 2019 volumes by 2026.



Window Seat

ANY fans of the American version of *The Office* will have to tip one of Dwight's Amish bonnets to the comedy stylings of Tourism WA, which this week released a satirical version of the show.

In a short video, members of the Tourism WA team literally take what is great about the state's tourism industry to extremes by dressing up for various travel activities.

From wine-tasting, catching some surf at the beach, snorkelling and diving tours, to high-adrenaline adventure activities - they are all on show in this cheeky spoof - watch the fruits of their labour **HERE**.



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The Master of Wine

BRITISH Airways has appointed a 'Master of Wine' (MW) to enhance its drinks offerings for guests both on the ground and in the air.

In the newly-created role, Tim Jackson MW will be responsible for selecting and tasting potential new wines, curating menu descriptions, developing the airline's drinks strategy and sourcing wines from around the world.

Jackson has already introduced new Sauvignon Blanc and Pinot Noir wines in the airline's premium cabins, as well as a special Bordeaux selection for the festive season.

From Jan 2023, British Airways will also showcase premium wines from different destinations across its network, starting with Cape Town in South Africa.

SALTER BROTHERS ADDS SOME SPICE

SALTER Brothers, an Australian-owned global fund manager, has announced the acquisition of the Spicers Retreat brand, including six properties in Queensland and NSW (**TD** breaking news).

The acquired portfolio includes Spicers Clovelly Estate, Spicers Tamarind Retreat and Spicers Peak Lodge in Queensland, Spicers Guesthouse and Spicers Vineyards Estate in the Hunter Valley and Spicers Sangoma Retreat in the Blue Mountains.

There are a total of 127 rooms throughout the portfolio, with all of the award-winning freehold retreats located within a two-hour drive of Sydney or Brisbane.

The Private Collection by Spicers business - a range of Australia-based holiday homes - is also included in the purchase, which is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2023.

The Spicers brand was founded

by Jude Turner in 2002, and also operates Queensland's Scenic Rim Trail and an Australia-based range of holiday homes, Private Collection by Spicers.

Salter Brothers Managing Director, Paul Salter, described the purchase as a "great fit for our strategy to acquire unrepeatable assets in amazing locations, targeting the luxury retreat market, which continues to grow globally".

He highlighted the timely purchase of the brand, with desire among Australian travellers for short domestic breaks, as well as trips to regional areas, pushing domestic occupancy rates above pre-pandemic levels.

"We are proud to continue Jude Turner's vision for personalised 'relaxed luxury' experiences," Salter added.

"Salter Brothers also shares Spicers' passion for the



environment and will continue their vision to become Australia's most sustainable organisation."

Spicers Retreats founder Jude Turner noted the business "has been a labour of love for me, and everyone involved, for over 20 years", adding she was "pleased to see it going into the hands of someone equally passionate about Aussies experiential stays".

Pictured: Jude Turner with Paul Salter.

Luxury trends for '23

INTERNATIONAL luxury hotel bookings for 2023 are set to surpass the all-time high of pre-pandemic 2019, the latest insights from Virtuoso have revealed.

The global travel agency network said it continues to see a rise in international hotel bookings from the Australian and New Zealand market, with those bookings being made further in advance - around 11 months on average for 2023, up 25% from nine months in 2022.

Prices also show no sign of abating, with Australian luxury travellers willing to pay up to 44% more for travel compared to 2019.

The US continues to be a favourite destination among Aussies, with bookings outstripping 2019 levels in 2022 by 60%.

Matthew Upchurch's Lifetime Achievement



VIRTUOSO Chairman and CEO Matthew Upchurch was honoured with a Lifetime Achievement Award at the *Travel Weekly US Readers' Choice Awards*, which was held at New York's Museum of Natural History last Wed.

Four Seasons Yachts CEO Larry Pimentel introduced Upchurch during the ceremony, describing him as "a luxury leader and passionate

innovator", and a "travel advisor champion".

Upchurch has followed in the footsteps of his late father, Jesse Upchurch, who also won the award in 2008, making them the first father-son duo to be honoured in this way.

Pictured: Upchurch with fellow Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Anne Scully, who is a Virtuoso advisor with Embark Beyond, US.

More Greek luxury

LA COLLECTION, the Sydney and Melbourne-based representatives specialising in luxury hotels and resorts, has expanded its collection with three Marriott Bonvoy Luxury Collection properties in Greece.

Two of the new additions, Mystique Hotel and Vedema Resort, are located on Santorini, one of the Cyclades islands in the Aegean Sea, while Cosme Hotel Paros is situated in the village of Naoussa.

La Collection Director of Sales Craig Farrell touted the properties as "ideal additions" to the company's expanding Greek portfolio.

La Collection grew its Italian portfolio earlier this year as well, with two new additions, including Borgo Santandrea in Amalfi (**TD** 05 Oct).



ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



Anantara Veli Maldives Resort has reopened after nine months of renovations, with the addition of new Beach Pool Villas and a new Villa Host service for all guests. The on-site restaurants have been transformed, while the spa now has a hammam and resident nutritionist, holistic therapist, personal trainer and yoga and lifestyle coach. Guests can also take advantage of an expanded selection of water-based experiences, including snorkelling.



A luxurious beach resort on Phuket's northwest coast, **Dusit Thani Laguna Phuket**, has announced the opening of Benjarong, a restaurant that serves authentic Thai cuisine. The venue is set in an elegant teak house surrounded by gardens and overlooking a lagoon, and serves dishes using locally sourced seasonal ingredients via a collaboration with farmers and producers in different parts of Thailand.



Sandals Resorts International has recently unveiled two of its newly enhanced Caribbean resorts, **Beaches Negril** and **Sandals Halcyon Beach** in St Lucia. There are now six all-new Firesky Reserve Villas and six Eventide Penthouse Collection suites at Jamaica's Beaches Negril property. Sandals Halcyon Beach has also had major additions, including 20 new Joli Beachfront Suites, and five new Koko Rondoal Villas.

Ski lodge purchased

GLOBAL adventure travel marketplace Heli has announced the purchase of the Great Canadian Heli-Skiing and Heather Mountain Lodge, which is located between Golden and Revelstoke in Canada's British Columbia.

Heli founders Andy Culp and Brock Strasbourger said they would change "very little" about the lodge, which is considered the gateway to Canada's Glacier National Park, and confirmed the existing team will stay on.

El Al adds 787

EL AL Israel Airlines is reportedly preparing to add another 787 Dreamliner to its all-Boeing fleet, which currently includes three 787-8s and 12 of the larger 787-9 variant.

The Israeli flag carrier expects to receive the aircraft in the second quarter of 2024, after it made an offer to purchase the 787-9 from an undisclosed airline.

The carrier also hinted it might add an additional aircraft order to address capacity needs.

Aussie agents say kon'nichiwa



REPRESENTATIVES from six travel agencies in Australia and NZ were recently hosted by Tourism Oita and the Fukuoka Prefecture Tourism Association on a famil on Japan's Kyushu island.

The seven-day itinerary kicked off in Oita Prefecture, where the group enjoyed dressing up in kimonos before exploring the historic castle town of Kitsuki and watching a fire ceremony at the remote Monjusen-ji Temple on the Kunisaki Peninsula.

Other highlights included a stay at the recently opened ANA Intercontinental Resort and Spa, Beppu trip to the green tea fields in the Yame Central Tea Garden; a visit to the Hoshino Team Museum in Hoshino Village; and a cruise on the Yanagawa River.

The group **pictured** dressed up in traditional kimonos in Oita Prefecture: Rebecca George, SLC Representation/Oita Prefecture; Adam Burke, Scenic Luxury Cruises and Tours; Honi Gibson, Bunnik Tours; Paul Dymond, Wendy Wu Tours; Maddison

Done, Travel Associates; Brendon Cooper, Inspiring Vacations; Kate Cuthbertson, GTI Tourism/Fukuoka Prefecture; Lawrence Sattrukalsinghe, Japan Airlines; and Haleigh O'Brien, Globus family of brands.

NT to charge fees

FROM next year, tourists will have to spend more money to visit the Northern Territory, after the NT Govt announced a new pay-to-visit scheme at popular swimming spots and parks.

Interstate and international visitors will have to pay a \$25 fee at 50 of the 85 NT Government-managed parks and reserves across the Territory, including Nitmiluk National Park, the Devils Marbles Conservation Reserve (Karlukarluk), and more.

Visitors will also still be required to pay camping and walking fees in addition to the new 'Parks Pass', which can be purchased online as a day pass, two-week pass and an open pass.