

## Aussies jump at NZ

**NEW** figures released by Tourism New Zealand show that Australian travellers to the country have recovered strongly to 74% of pre-COVID visitor arrivals in Oct, as well as a close-to 100% return in Australian travel spending for the month.

More broadly, New Zealand's visitor economy has enjoyed a 57% pre-pandemic bounce-back in terms of total visitor numbers in Oct, fuelled by increasing airline routes and higher global travel confidence.

"Preferences for New Zealand from those actively considering visiting is also at an all-time high of 43.8%," Tourism New Zealand noted, adding that the strong active 'consider numbers' are giving the tourism body a highly motivated pool of people to reach through campaign activity and convert into bookings.

## Rex commits to regional Queensland

**A NEW** four-year partnership has been announced between Rex Airlines and the Murweh Shire Council in central Queensland to further support flights in and out of Charleville.

The agreement will see the partnership reach new heights, with registered residents to have access to less-restrictive fares, priced at only \$179 one way from Charleville to Brisbane and \$358 for return trips.

"The partnership has gone from strength to strength since Rex took over flying the Queensland Government Regulated Central 1 route in Jan," Rex Chairman John Sharp said.

Fares will go on sale next year.

## Primmer leaving Helloworld

**THE** departure of Julie Primmer from Helloworld (**TD** breaking news) marks the end of an era, with Primmer having led the group's retail networks for more than a decade (**TD** 18 Apr 2011), after earlier roles with Harvey World Travel and as GM Sales at Jetset Travelworld.

Primmer will leave the company at the end of Feb, with HLO CEO Andrew Burnes yesterday afternoon advising members of the appointment of Renee Nightingale - the co-owner of three Helloworld Travel offices in Albury, Wodonga and Wangaratta.

Burnes said Nightingale had accepted the position as Head of Branded & Associate Networks in Australia, adding that she would retain ownership of her retail travel outlets which will now be run by senior managers.

He also confirmed the previously announced appointment of Andre Moten as Group GM of Helloworld Business Travel and Magellan Travel (**TD** 18 Oct), replacing Lisa Harrison and

## Freeze the price!

**ACCOMMODATION** aggregator Agoda has announced a new collaboration agreement with "travel fintech" firm Hopper Cloud, which will allow guests to put a hold on prices before they make a booking.

The "Price Freeze" feature enables customers to pay a marginal deposit to lock in a quote for up to 14 days.

Price Freeze is currently being rolled out and is expected to be available on all Agoda platforms in early 2023.

David Padman who have both left the business (**TD** 26 Sep).

"Renee and Andre bring an enormous amount of experience and capability across a range of travel distribution businesses," the Helloworld CEO said.

Burnes also thanked Primmer, Padman and Harrison for their long-term commitment to the company and for helping to steer franchisees through the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Each of these individuals worked extremely hard to develop our networks over many years and they made a huge effort in very challenging circumstances during COVID.

"Together with the Board, I cannot thank them enough for those efforts and we wish them well in their future endeavours."

## Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features six pages of news.

## Eurail's winter sale

**EURAIL** has announced a global pass sale, with 10% off the product until 05 Jan.

The sale applies to all First and Second class passes, and comes without any travel restrictions.

Passes available range from three days through to three months, connecting travellers to more than 30,000 destinations in more than 30 countries.

"We're thrilled to announce our latest promotion and hope it encourages Australians to book ahead and enjoy some welcome savings on their 2023 travel plans," Business & Growth Manager Yi Ding said.



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## Our success is tailor-made

**TRAVELLERS** Choice has announced the addition of Tailor Made Travel Mt Gambier to its network this week, said to be one of South Australia's most respected independent outlets.

Leah Mullen, who has managed the agency by herself since the start of this year, said the decision to choose Travellers Choice was easy after she starting conducting research a few months ago.

"After...speaking to other travel agents, locally and around Australia, it became clear that Travellers Choice was the only group that ticked all of those boxes," Mullen said.

The decision to join was pushed over the line after she attended the National Travel Industry Awards in Sydney, a night that saw her business named a finalist in the People's Choice Award.

"Travellers Choice were the only people who made an effort to find me and pass on their



congratulations, even though I wasn't a member - that was the final tick," she added.

Mullen has managed the Mt Gambier store since 2001, and in 2013 acquired the business with a partner, before deciding to go solo earlier this year.

Tailor Made Travel was formerly an Associate Member of Helloworld Travel Limited.

**Pictured:** Travellers Choice BDMs Tim Bolton and Graham Smith flank new agency recruit Leah Mullen.

## MGM completes sale

MGM Resorts International has formally closed the sale of the operations of The Mirage Hotel & Casino to Hard Rock International for US\$1.07 billion.

Under the terms of the sale agreement, MGM Resorts will retain The Mirage name and brand, licensing it to Hard Rock royalty-free for a maximum period of three years, while it continues to finalise plans to rebrand the property.

## WA Hilton delayed

**HILTON'S** highly-anticipated 112-room Hilton Garden Inn Busselton has been delayed until the fourth quarter of next year, **Travel Daily** can confirm.

The hotel is being constructed in partnership with Pacifica Ausglobal Busselton, and was scheduled to open this year (**TD** 02 Nov 2020), but is now expected to be delayed to late next year for undisclosed reasons.



## Window Seat

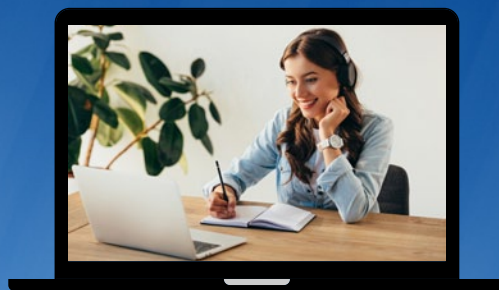
**IT'S** that time of the year again when we all get to find out what the most popular in-flight feature was on board Qantas flights in 2022, and the top billing spots might not be what many would expect.

While *Top Gun: Maverick* was the most viewed blockbuster film, there was just as much interest from passengers for the meditation album *Mindfulness by Miracle Tones & Solfeggio Healing Frequencies MT*.

Two more disparate in-flight experiences there could not be, with the growing wellness travel category clearly having an impact on flyers, marking the first time a meditation album has topped the charts, clocking 1.7 million hours of listening over the year.

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## Spend up despite falls

**WHILE** the number of domestic trips by Aussies have dropped away in the 12 months to Sep 2022, new figures from Tourism Research Australia has shown that travel spend continues to buck the trend.

The latest National Visitor Survey showed that travel spend increased by 11% to \$87.5 billion for the 12-month period, with travellers forking out even more cash on average over the Sep quarter, which was up by \$7 billion to \$27.8 billion.

Fuelling the higher rates of spend have been increases across major travel categories such as accommodation, dining, and airfares, which were up 52%, 33% and 19%, respectively.

Increased spending on holidays also contributed to the quarter's strong performance, with the segment increasing by 57% (\$5.9 billion) when compared to the Sep quarter 2019.

Despite the strong spending figures, domestic travel numbers continue to track downwards for the year to Sep, with overnight

trips decreasing by 12% on the previous period to 101.6 million, while the total number of nights spent on trips also declined by 8% to 376.9 million.

On a state and territory basis, the biggest falls in overnight trips was experienced by Victoria, which saw numbers plummet by 18%, followed by NSW (-16%), and South Australia (-15%).

On a positive note however, the dipping 12-month performance did begin to slow down in the final quarter of the year, with overnight trips only down by 2%, while the total number of nights was on parity with the previous corresponding quarter.

The best performing regions for the period were the Whitsundays (+43%), the Clare Valley (+26%), and NT's Katherine (+25%).

## NT Indigenous tourism recipients

**THE** Government of the NT this week announced the recipients of Round 4 of the Aboriginal Tourism Grant Program, which has seen 10 organisations across the territory receive funding for the development of their products.

Arltunga Bush Pub & Eco Retreat, Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation, Gong-Dal Aboriginal Corporation, Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Larrakia Nation, Seven Emu Station, Standley Chasm, Tarntipi Bush Camp, and Watjan Tours have all received a grant of between \$30,000 to \$100,000 to help boost or develop their existing tourism product range.

Also receiving a grant is Kurt Tipungwuti, who will develop new Aboriginal cultural tours in Ranku in the Tiwi Islands.

"We know the authentic Aboriginal cultural experience brings tourists to the Territory and we want to keep boosting our product," Northern Territory's Minister for Tourism Nicole Manison said.

## 25 years was a piece of cake



**AFRICA** Safari Co this week celebrated 25 years of operation with a gathering of the operator's crack team and plenty of cake.

CEO Susie Potter said it was a "lovely feeling" to be able to assemble her loyal team to mark the milestone moment of continuing operations for a quarter of a century.

"Many things have changed in the travel industry over the last 25 years but one thing has never changed and that is our love for the African continent," she said.

"It's been a tough few years but we are back trading strong with agents who are once again putting trust in our products."

## SYD int'l still sluggish

**JUST** over 2.9 million passengers passed through Sydney Airport during the month of Nov, down just above 20% on the corresponding period in 2019.

The biggest falls were noted in international traffic, still down 28.4% on pre-COVID at 970,000 passengers, while domestic passengers totalled 1.996 million, a 16% drop when compared to Nov 2019.

Sydney Airport Chief Executive Officer Geoff Culbert said more air seat capacity was needed if Sydney is to increase its overseas visitor numbers and boost Australia's crucial tourism market.

## Invivo finally jets off

**NEW** Zealand's "winery airline" Invivo Air will debut on 31 Jan.

The inaugural flight will travel from Auckland to Queenstown after being initially flagged in Mar this year, transporting 34 pax on board a chartered Saab A340.

Passengers will be encouraged to enjoy a wine in-flight with an eight-step-tasting, led by founders Tim Lightbourne and Rob Cameron.

Tickets sold out quickly after Invivo launched sales, costing NZ\$1,149 per person.

The trip will not just involve the flight; guests will also have the opportunity to meet with Invivo grape growers in the region, and upon arrival, travellers will visit Legends Terrace Vineyard, one of Invivo's oldest vineyards, before tastings and a four-course dinner.

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## COVID still a headache

**COVID-19** is still the biggest concern for travellers planning trips around the globe, according to the latest insights from World Travel Protection (WTP), a global organisation specialising in travel risk management and emergency assistance.

Despite many countries dropping COVID-related public health measures, WTP Regional Chief Medical Officer Americas, Joel Lockwood, stressed that travellers need to be aware of the limited health resources in some tourist destinations.

The recent surge in other respiratory pathogens like influenza and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), has put a further strain on already stretched hospitals and healthcare systems, which are still recovering after two years of the pandemic.

To mitigate the risk of catching COVID and other respiratory viruses, Lockwood has urged

travellers to continue taking simple measures like mask wearing, social distancing and hand sanitisation.

He also emphasised the importance of taking out travel insurance that covers emergency medical transportation, expenses for medical emergencies, evacuation in case of illness or injury while travelling, and existing medical conditions.

“Be sure to read the fine print of the policy to find out about pandemic-related exclusions or restrictions as some insurance policies may not cover medical expenses related to COVID-19 or other communicable diseases,” Lockwood said.

Additionally, employees who are required to travel for work should request travel risk management from their employers, with companies recommended to follow the latest guidelines from public health officials.

## Kiribati recruits eco specialists



**THE** Tourism Authority of Kiribati (TAK) has appointed a pair of expert sustainability data specialists to help steer the small Pacific island nation's tourism and sustainability strategy.

Mark Lound has been brought in from Tourism Australia where he helped manage the statistical operations of the tourism body, while Carl Obst joins TAK with previous experience as the lead author of the United Nation's System of Environmental-

Economic Accounting (SEEA).

TAK will use their expertise to help gain a better understanding of tourism's benefits and costs beyond the traditional measure of visitor arrivals and tourism contribution to national gross domestic product per capita.

Additional factors to be examined will include the environmental preservation and social wellbeing across Kiribati communities in the face of growing tourism numbers.

## Sanford Travel gets festive!



**SANFORD** Travel recently gathered at Vibe Hotel Darling Harbour for its annual Christmas party and conference.

The Sydney-based travel agency thanked its supplier partners, who sponsored the event and joined the team for product updates and celebrations.

**Pictured** from back: Ella Fulton, Corporate Travel Consultant;

Georgie Byrt, Managing Director; Cassie Jinks, Leisure Travel Consultant; Suza Kvackovski, Conference & Incentives Manager; Kerby Hasler, Client Relationship Manager; Sarah Hackett, Corporate Travel Manager; Romina Guajardo, Corporate Travel Manager; Emma Dalton, Corporate Travel Manager; Helena Jamieson, Accounts Manager & Linda Brettell, Director.

## AF disruptions?

**AIR** France may be hit by strikes over the next fortnight, potentially disrupting the travel plans of many Aussies.

Two of the airline's cabin crew unions are filing for action from today through 02 Jan, covering the peak holiday period.

Air France said it is hoping to maintain all flights and avoid any delays throughout the walkouts.

## TGA relaxes rules

**TRAVELLERS** entering Australia will no longer need approval from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to bring injectable medicines containing material of human or animal origin into the country.

The change to TGA regulations removes important barriers for travellers who require lifesaving medicine passing through the international border, with the relaxing of the protocols meaning people can now bring up to a three-months' supply of medicine into the country.

Prior to the latest change, travellers with injectable treatments of human or animal origin (other than insulin) were required to contact an Australian GP prior to their arrival, who would then need to apply to the TGA to get permission for the traveller to bring the treatment across the border.

## Uber mulls kids rides

**UBER** is reportedly considering the launch of a parent-free transport service for children, a report that follows hot on the heels of the ride-sharing company introducing children's car seats in Australia for the first time.

The option to book a children's car seat appeared on the Uber app in Melbourne earlier this week, with the travel company planning to expand the program to 500 cars in Melbourne before rolling out the family service across the country.

Rides with children's seats are already available in major US cities like New York and Orlando in the US, as well as Belgium.

## More turbulence!

**ONLY** days after a Hawaiian Airlines flight suffered severe turbulence injuring 36 passengers (**TD** 20 Dec), five people have been hurt on a United Airlines flight travelling from Rio de Janeiro to Houston this week.

“Upon arrival, two passengers and three crew members were met by medical personnel and taken to a local hospital with minor injuries,” United Airlines said in a statement.

“We're grateful to our crew for their efforts to ensure the safety of our employees and pax.”



## BE Connected

**DESTINATION** Gold Coast has launched BE Connected Gold Coast as the latest phase of its plan to attract more delegates and enhance the region's visitor economy.

The revitalised business events ambassador program will include eight leaders who are contributing to the social, cultural and economic achievements of the city.

So far, three ambassadors have come on board: Griffith University Council's Deputy Chancellor Rebecca Frizelle; Gold Coast Australian of the Year Dr Hal Rice; and Australian doctor, lawyer, and disability advocate, Dr Dinesh Palipana, with Gold Coast Mayor Tom Tate as Patron.

The ambassadors will work with Destination Gold Coast to expand the program and promote the city as an ideal business events destination.

## MCEC CONTRIBUTES \$383M TO VIC

**IN A** strong sign that business events have well and truly returned, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) contributed over \$383 million to the Victorian economy in the last financial year.

MCEC hosted 349 events and welcomed 1.6 million visitors between 01 Jul 2021 and 31 Jun 2022, with event numbers, delegate attendance and economic impact for the year all continuing on an upward trend after the venue (**pictured**) fully reopened to events in late 2021.

Major conferences hosted by the venue included the Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME), the national NAIDOC Awards, Oz Comic Con, Melbourne Art Fair and the Good Friday Appeal's annual Kids Day Out, which attracted more than 80,000 visitors and helped raise a record \$22 million for the Royal Children's Hospital.

The venue also doubled



down on its commitment to sustainability, with the launch of a new five-year strategy and commitment to achieve net zero carbon emission by 2030, as well as donating 6,000kg of food through OzHarvest.

"We can be confident these results are a sign of things to come, as we maintain momentum toward our future return to the record-breaking revenue and impact we had in the year prior to COVID-19," MCEC Chief Executive Peter King said.

To see MCEC's full Annual Report 21-22, **CLICK HERE**.

**MEANWHILE**, the Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB), in partnership with the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has secured a major global business event, the 14th World Chambers Congress (WCC).

The event will be hosted at the MCEC in Sep 2025, and is expected to fill more than 2,250 hotel room nights in the city and contribute around \$3.9 million to Melbourne's economy.

## BEA heads to Barcelona for IBTM World



**BUSINESS** Events Australia joined the Australia stand at IBTM World in Barcelona from 29 Nov to 01 Dec, alongside six industry partners who represented a range of destinations, venues and accommodation.

During the three-day event, the Australian industry partners collectively held 150 appointments on the stand,

resulting in more than 14 business leads for Australia.

The stand featured Tourism Australia's new business events brand campaign, with films showcasing why there's nothing like Australia for business events.

There was also a large-scale kangaroo picture, presenting the perfect selfie opportunity for delegates to share on their social channels.

## NZ's big year

**IT'S** been a big year for New Zealand's business events industry, with Te Pae Christchurch Convention Centre contributing close to \$45 million to the local economy in its first seven months of operation.

Despite its delayed opening due to COVID-19, the venue has exceeded all expectations, hosting 180 events this year and bringing more than 60,000 people into the city.

**MEANWHILE**, Business Events Wellington has recently secured three international conferences in collaboration with Te Herenga Waka - Victoria University of Wellington, including OzCHI in 2023 and the 15th Linguistic Landscapes Workshop in 2024.

## MEA scholarships

**MEETINGS** and Events Australia (MEA) has partnered with the NSW Govt to offer seven scholarships for aspiring event managers, who will be supported to undertake the Diploma of Event Management.

"These are the skills that our future event managers need to be successful and to empower the delivery of outstanding events in Sydney and regional NSW," MEA CEO Peter McDonald said.

Scholarship applications close 22 Jan 2023 - **CLICK HERE** for more information.

**MEANWHILE**, MEA has announced that The Star Gold Coast & Burleigh Pavilion will be two of the venues involved in its Evolve 2023 Conference in Jun - registrations open next year.



## APPOINTMENTS

**WELCOME** to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

**Aman** has announced the appointment of **Olivier Lordonnois** as its new Managing Director of Aman New York. Lordonnois has over 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, including leadership positions at several high-end hotels.

**Sally Barts** has assumed the newly-created role of Chief Talent and Culture Officer at **Choice Hotels International**. Barts will be tasked with expanding the company's talent programs and HR strategies, as well as guiding its delivery, equity and belonging initiatives.

**QuintEvents** has announced the promotion of President/COO **Brian Ruede** to CEO, while the current CEO, **Brian Learst**, will move to the role of Executive Chairman in Jan 2023. Learst founded Quint in 2002 and led the company for over 20 years.

**Air New Zealand's** Communications Manager **Elle Holdich** has been promoted to Acting Head of Communications. Holdich joined the airline in May 2021, and has around eight years' experience in various communications roles, including a stint at Crown Resorts.

**Erina Pindar** has been announced as the new Chief Operating Officer and Managing Partner at **SmartFlyer**, a New York-headquartered luxury travel agency. Pindar has held various roles at SmartFlyer over the last 13 years, including most recently as Managing Director.

## Air NZ improves

**AIR** New Zealand has upgraded its half-yearly earnings guidance for the 2023 financial year to be in the range of NZ\$295-\$325 million, up from the NZ\$200-\$275 million predicted in Sep.

The new range is based on forward sales expectations, and assumes an average jet fuel price of around US\$127 a barrel for the six months to 31 Dec 2022, and 75% of pre-COVID capacity levels across the entire network in Dec.

The airline carried 1,248 passengers throughout the month of Nov - just 9% below the pre-pandemic 2019 level for the same period, while the revenue pax kilometres for Nov were around 25% below 2019 levels.

## Events incentive

**VISITORS** travelling to the new Allianz Stadium (**TD 01 Sep**) and Sydney Cricket Ground, which are located next door to each other in Moore Park, will now be able to enjoy free public transport, which will be included with all event tickets.

Announced yesterday by the NSW Minister for Enterprise, Investment and Trade, Sport, Science, Innovation & Technology, Alister Henskens, the new initiative will help provide sports and entertainment fans with greater access to Sydney's world-class stadiums, which are home to beloved sports teams like the Sydney Roosters, NSW Waratahs and Sydney Swans.

## TA puts the pedal to the metal



**A LUCKY** group of Travel Associate representatives were hosted by Dorchester Collection & Etihad Airways on an incentive trip to Abu Dhabi and Paris at the beginning of the month.

The first leg of the trip was Abu Dhabi, where the group took in some of the city's most iconic locations, including Ferrari World, Louvre Abu Dhabi and Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque.

The group then jetted off to the City of Light, Paris, where they had the opportunity to stay at both of the luxury Dorchester Collection's Palace Hotels, Hotel Plaza Athenee & Le Meurice.

During their week in the French capital, the group enjoyed a tour of the city on vintage sidecars, fondue in the brand-new Plaza Athenee Chalet located in the heart of the hotel, a visit to the Dior Gallery, discovering Picasso's Montmartre, and dining at the Chef's Table at Le Meurice.

**Pictured** at Ferrari World in Abu Dhabi: Philippa Enright, Davis & James Travel Associates; Pintip Suthayakhom, Reis & James Travel Associates; Melissa

Madigan, Jones & Turner Travel Associates; Stephanie Shanahan, O'Sullivan & Turner Travel Associates; Nathan Dare, Dare & Turner Travel Associates; Parris Bohun, Etihad; Parris Fotias, Dorchester Collection.

## Accor inks Thai hotel

**ACCOR** has introduced the Grand Mercure Bangkok Atrium to its network, after recently signing a management agreement for the Thailand property.

Located on New Petchaburi Road in downtown Bangkok, the hotel is easily accessible via road and rail, and is close by to Sukhumvit Road, the city's commercial and retail district.

The 568 rooms and suites offer panoramic city views and premium amenities, as well as leisure facilities including a swimming pool and sundeck, fitness centre, spa, and a Japanese teppanyaki restaurant.

Currently named the Avani Atrium Bangkok, it will be refurbished and rebranded, marking the fourth Grand Mercure in Thailand.