

We are back 03 Jan

THE team at *Travel Daily* would like to wish all of our wonderful readers a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year holiday period; it has been a privilege to update all of you about the latest news breaking in the wonderful world of travel in 2022.

Just a reminder that our writers and sales team will be taking a well-earned rest as well, but we will return bigger and stronger than ever from 03 Jan for our first issue in 2023.

VA Boxing Day sale

VIRGIN Australia is gearing up to drop an 'unmissable' Boxing Day sale, with 800,000 fares discounted from Mon.

Travellers can secure fares from as low as \$55 one-way in Economy from Ballina to Sydney in the "epic" 30% off sale.

Other popular destinations include the Gold Coast, Melbourne, Cairns, Denpasar, Tokyo, and Vanuatu, for travel on selected dates from Feb to Sep.

All sale fares include Status Credits, as well as Velocity Frequent Flyer Points, which members can also use across the Velocity e-Store, Velocity Rewards Store, and at myer.com.au.

The sale ends at midnight on Thu, unless sold out prior - for more specials, head to [page 6](#).

Croatia changes

DFAT is reminding travellers that from 01 Jan 2023, Croatia will become part of the Schengen Area and will adopt the Euro as its official currency.

The change will also see land border checks between Croatia, Hungary and Slovenia removed, while maritime border checks between Croatia and other Schengen member countries will also be dropped.

Air border checks between Croatia and other Schengen member states are scheduled to be removed at the slightly later date of 26 Mar 2023.

China Airlines cuts comm

TAIWAN-BASED China Airlines has become the latest carrier to slash its travel agent commissions in Australia, revealing overnight that the rate will be reduced from 5% to just 2% from 01 Feb 2023.

The change will apply to all of the carrier's 297 tickets, both one-way and return issued in Australia, and follows closely behind a decision by Delta Air Lines last week to reduce its BSP commissions from 5% to 3% (**TD** 19 Dec), joining a throng of airlines which have moved away from an attractive commission model for the trade in Australia.

But the latest decision by China Airlines by no means suggests the

airline is backing away from the Australian market, having made several announcements in recent months about adding capacity and new routes to our shores, including expanding its number of services to Brisbane from Taipei and Auckland from 01 Jan (**TD** 01 Dec) and five weekly return flights from Sydney to Da Nang in Vietnam from 02 Jan (**TD** 06 Oct).

With China's borders still largely closed, Taiwan has looked to capitalise on the tourism opportunity, scrapping its COVID protocols back in Oct, with Australia among the first countries to be allowed back in.

A&K Galapagos fund

A&K Travel Group has invested in Galapagos luxury cruise and yacht operator Ecoventura, a move that has also seen a new joint-venture launched, headed by Santiago Dunn in his role as CEO of A&K South America.

A&K, already the owner of Crystal Cruises which it acquired earlier this year (**TD** 23 Jun), said the JV would look to expand operations in the Galapagos sustainably, with both parties now seeking to grow a portfolio of luxurious travel adventures across Latin America in partnership with local communities.

Marriott CEO exits

MARRIOTT International President Stephanie Linnartz will depart the hotel company in Feb 2023 after spending more than 25 years with the business.

Linnartz has decided to exit after being poached by athletic clothing company Under Armour.

One of the biggest feathers in her cap during her tenure at Marriott was successfully leading the company's multibillion-dollar digital transformation.

No replacement at Marriott has yet been named.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including a photo page from **NCL**.

Training relaunch

TOKYO Tourism has relaunched its online travel industry hub, enabling Aussie travel agents to stay informed and access a variety of tools, including virtual events and connectivity with Tokyo-based businesses - to register, [CLICK HERE](#).

MH codeshares with SAUDIA to Oz

MALAYSIA Airlines and SAUDIA have entered into a new codeshare agreement, which will see SAUDIA add its "SV" flight code to Malaysia Airlines flights from Kuala Lumpur to several destinations including Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.

"Travellers from the...Australian region will enjoy easy access via SAUDIA to the most prominent destinations in the Kingdom, such as Madinah and Al-Ula, to learn about their wonderful natural heritage sites," SAUDIA said.

QR codes go live

SUNLOVER Reef Cruises has this week introduced a new booking system for its tropical reef cruises in Cairns, with passengers only needing a QR code to jump on board its ships.

A new vessel has also been added to the fleet, with the 190-passenger *Fitzroy Island Sundancer* ship to make three round trips to Fitzroy Island a day.



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EXCLUSIVE

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's (NCL) *Norwegian Spirit's* inaugural Australian season is being viewed as the perfect opportunity to showcase its foundation product in Europe and Hawaii to locals, following her US\$100 million bow-to-stern revitalisation.

NCL made its return to Australian waters after three years on Wed, when *Spirit* sailed into Sydney Harbour for her debut in the region (TD 21 Dec).

President & Chief Executive Officer Harry Sommer told *Travel Daily* he believes *Spirit* will make a big splash this season.

"We're super proud of *Spirit*, after the \$100 million-plus we've spent, she is like a new ship and the closest thing we have to *Prima*, and *Prima* doesn't fit under the [Harbour Bridge] so this was the next best choice," Sommer said.

Vice President & Managing

Director APAC Ben Angell added that NCL's philosophy believes the longer a passenger travels, the more they will enjoy the experience, which underpins the brand's goal of booking locals on airplanes to experience the cruise line's overseas product.

"We're focused on taking Australians and applying them to Europe, to Hawaii, where we have got our *Pride of America* product, to Alaska and up into Asia, so that really is the focus for our sourcing out of this part of the world," Angell said.

"At the same time, with *Norwegian Spirit*, we might source 10-15% on some sailings, but really, it's a true international mix of guests on board."

"On the sailing that came into Sydney [on Wed], there were over 20 different nationalities on board, it's just a beautiful melting pot of cultures and nationalities," Angell added - see P5 for more.

Liquid ban to stay

THE Federal Government has confirmed that bans on travellers carrying on board large quantities of liquid, gels and creams will remain in place despite technological advancements.

The clarification arrives as the UK Government recently revealed it will shift away from a ban from Jun 2024 in exchange for new CT X-ray scanners, which provide airport security with 3D images.

The new tech also means that passengers in the UK will soon no longer have to place laptops, phones and tablets in trays on screening belts, while the 100ml restriction on liquids will be increased to two litres.

However, a spokesperson from the DFAT informed the SMH this morning that there are no plans at this stage to change the restrictions placed on powders, liquids, aerosols and gels on flights taking off from Australian international airports, despite the availability of CT X-ray scanners.



Window Seat

SEEING as today is the final chance for the team at *Travel Daily* to communicate with its loyal readers in 2022, it seems only fitting for us to provide some insights into the bizarre and unusual ways the New Year is brought in around the world.

If you're travelling to Spain, you might want to pack some red underwear, as the Spanish believe that wearing this colour on New Years Eve will bring you good luck for the year ahead.

In Germany, natives heat a little piece of lead in a spoon over a small flame before dropping it into cold water, the strange shape it then takes on reveals what the year will bring, while in Turkey the tradition is to have dinner while listening to traditional Turkish folk music.

Merry Christmas

To all our Travel Industry friends
From the Travel Daily team

Back on 3rd January for our first edition in 2023



Travel Daily



China scales down

CHINA has made further strides toward loosening its COVID-19 travel protocols, including scrapping the need for a negative nucleic acid test (NAT) for inter-provincial travel this week.

However, travellers are still required to present a negative NAT prior to departure, as well as quarantine at the first point of entry into the country.

Lights, camera, Eric

AUSTRALIAN actor Eric Bana will be staying (very still) at the PARKROYAL Darling Harbour in celebration of the Lights, Camera, Action package, in partnership with Madame Tussauds Sydney.

Fans are invited to meet the wax sculpture of the *Dirty John* star in the hotel's lobby while he is on a 'staycation' until the end of Jan.

Bana's 'residency' is being used to promote the package, which offers discounted tickets to Madame Tussauds - [CLICK HERE](#).

Mt Hotham Airport sold

THE airport which services the popular Victorian ski resort of Mount Hotham has been sold by owner Vail Resorts for \$6 million to an undisclosed Melbourne property investor.

Castran Real Estate handled the sale, which saw a flurry of interest from 120 parties during a three-month expression of interest period, with the unknown buyer likely to upgrade the airport and possibly develop the surplus 80 hectares of land surrounding the air strip, which was previously owned by Cobungra Station.

The airport, which boasts the mantle of being the highest altitude facility of its kind in Australia, is home to a 1,460 metre runway, an award-winning terminal building which contains seating for 80 passengers, and stands in close proximity to major tourism attractions; all-season alpine village Dinner Plain, as well as the Mt Hotham ski resort.



Opened in 2000, the air strip was originally built for around \$17.5 million and designed to take 70-seater aircraft, at the time operated by the now-defunct Ansett Airlines, but in recent times has been mainly used by charter flight companies and privately owned aircraft.

In 2019, Vail bought Hotham, along with Falls Creek, for \$174 million (**TD** 22 Feb 2019), but the airport itself was reportedly considered a non-core asset by the company, which is why Vail has moved to divest the property to free up extra funds.

Pictured: Mt Hotham Airport's terminal building.

Qatar kicking goals

QATAR Airways operated nearly 14,000 flights during the recent FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 in its role as the official partner airline of the tournament.

During the same period, the carrier's Privilege Club loyalty program was successful in welcoming more than 67,000 new members following five targeted campaigns.

"We are grateful to have been a part of this long and rewarding experience as the official airline of the journey, for every step and every mile travelled with us, we have aimed to deliver a flying experience like no other," Qatar Airways Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker said.

During the tournament the airline also hosted seven live concerts to engage travel audiences further, including performances from Jason Derulo, Enrique Iglesias, Black Eyed Peas, J Balvin, Robbie Williams, Tamer Hosny, and Akon.

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CORPORATE UPDATE

Outlook impeding recovery

A FULL recovery of the inbound business travel segment to pre-pandemic levels in Australia is expected to be slow in the face of a continued challenging economic outlook, a new report delivered this week by Tourism Research Australia (TRA) suggests.

It will not be until the end of the forecasted period in 2027 that business arrivals to Australia are once again expected to reach one million people and top pre-pandemic levels, with the demonstrated effectiveness of virtual business practices throughout the pandemic also construed as a significant headwind to full recovery.

This appears likely to be particularly damaging to domestic same-day business travel, which in Sep was only 58% of pre-pandemic levels, with TRA claiming that virtual meeting arrangements ramped up during the pandemic continue to be

Air NZ eyes loyalty

AIR New Zealand has flagged plans to increase the product and members benefit value from its Airpoints loyalty programme, in doing so “supercharging the loyalty ecosystem” for the airline.

The rewards goal was noted in Air New Zealand’s *Annual Data Book* report - view it [HERE](#).

Aussies in fast lane

AUSTRALIANS travelling for business purposes to Singapore can now benefit from new arrival lanes at Changi Airport at Terminals 1 and 2, which have been put in place for around 40 countries to use.

The new ‘fast-track lanes’ will enable arrivals to skip lengthy queues at immigration by using their automated e-passport, negating the need to undertake the manual immigration process.

Changi will look to install the same technology at Terminals 3 and 4 early next year.

used widely and therefore could result in an extended lag in the recovery of business day trips.

The rate at which business travel has returned so far in 2022 is tracking closely to broader arrival numbers of in-bound travel, with the equal rate of recovery largely attributed to prioritised resources allocated to help re-establish in-person business connections which were discarded during the pandemic.

Day trips in Australia, which surged by 21% to a record 248.3 million in 2019 on the back of a flurry of inbound business travel, are also still a long way off because of a languishing business travel demand, TRA claims, and is still down by 35% compared to pre-COVID volumes.

Lufthansa rolls out new points system

THE Lufthansa Group has overhauled its status program to offer a simpler and more transparent earning system for its loyalty passengers.

From 01 Jan 2024, long-standing frequent flyers will be eligible for the new Frequent Traveller Lifetime status in addition to the existing Senator Lifetime status, while there will also be greater rewards overall for loyalty to the Lufthansa Group airlines.

Miles & More members will be awarded points instead of status miles for their flights, with the number of points earned per flight dependant on the travel class and whether the flight is continental or intercontinental.

Miles & More award miles can be earned on both everyday purchases and when travelling, and can be redeemed for merchandise awards or services.

The new program will also make it easier for members to achieve status, which will be valid for at least one year.

CLICK HERE for further details on the new Points system.

TA scores more runs with India



TOURISM Australia recently showcased new products and experiences to more than 20 Premier Aussie Specialists from India, helping to inspire more tourists from the fast-growing source market.

Run in partnership with Visit Victoria, Destination New South Wales, Tourism & Events Queensland and the South Australian Tourism Commission, the workshops were timed to take place around the ICC T20 Men’s World Cup (**pictured**), with explorations also taking place in the Southern Highlands Region in NSW, the Grampians region in Victoria, as well as Adelaide and Kangaroo Island.

“India continues to be an important market for Australia and is well poised to be the first

inbound market to recover to 2019 levels,” Tourism Australia Country Manager India Nishant Kashikar contended.

“Our Premier Aussie Specialists are at the forefront of selling Australian tourism experiences, and initiatives like these will keep them abreast with the latest developments & new experiences that Australia has to offer.

“During the pandemic, Australia inaugurated over 100 new hotels and over 70 new tourism experiences, thereby offering an opportunity to channel India’s pent-up demand for travel into actual visitation,” he added.

Some of the Indian travel brands to take part in the showcase included Thomas Cook India, SOTC Travel Limited, All Four Seasons Travel, Pristine Vacations, and Odyssey Tours and Travels.

Most Aussies safe

THE majority of Australians who were left stranded in Peru’s most popular tourist attraction Machu Picchu have been able to source transport options to leave the area, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) has advised.

“The majority of the 171 Australians who have contacted the embassy for assistance have been able to access onward transportation options following evacuations by train from Machu Picchu and the reopening of Cusco airport,” DFAT confirmed.

Thousands of travellers, including Aussies, became stranded at the site when political protests disrupted rail services to and from the area (**TD** 16 Dec).

“We continue to provide assistance to a small number of Australians in locations that still do not have transport options,” DFAT added.

Dreamworld to pay

THE latest round of legal proceedings regarding the Thunder River Rapids tragedy at Dreamworld in 2016 (**TD** 26 Oct 2016) will see parent group Ardent Leisure pay \$2.15 million to the husband and two children of a woman who died on the ride.

Brisbane Supreme Court Justice Susan Brown approved a settlement agreement between Ardent Leisure and Matthew Low, the husband of the late Cindy Low, for both dependency and economic losses.

The initial legal claim made by law firm Clayton Utz on behalf of Mr Low was for \$2.46 million.

Ardent Leisure was fined \$3.6 million in 2020 after pleading guilty in Brisbane Magistrates Court to breaching the *Work Health and Safety Act*, and is believed to have paid out over \$5 million in compensation claims.

NCL makes its return Down Under

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has returned to Australia for the first time in three years, with *Norwegian Spirit* sailing into Sydney earlier this week carrying guests from more than 20 countries.

The momentous occasion called for a celebration on Wed night onboard the 2,018-capacity ship, which showcased her US\$100 million bow-to-stern transformation - the biggest and most expensive renovation ever undertaken by Norwegian.

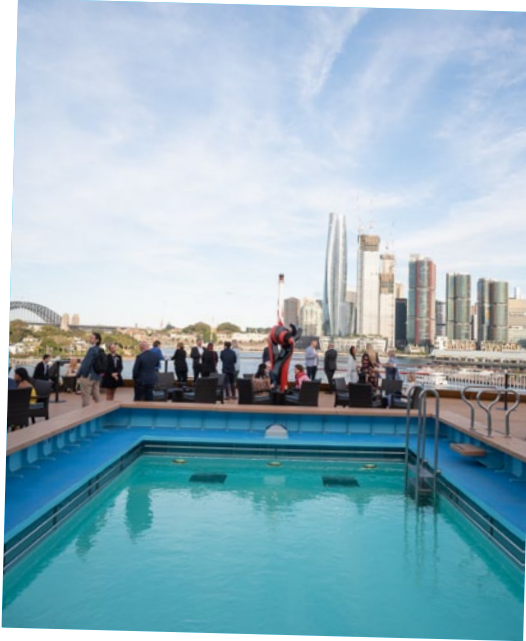
"We're super proud of *Spirit*, after this 100-plus million dollars we've spent, she is like a new ship," President & Chief Executive Officer Harry Sommer enthused.

Norwegian Spirit will offer a choice of eight open-jaw sailings between Dec and Mar from Sydney, visiting destinations such as Melbourne, Burnie, and Eden, before she makes her way back to Sydney to begin a second homeporting season from Dec 2023.

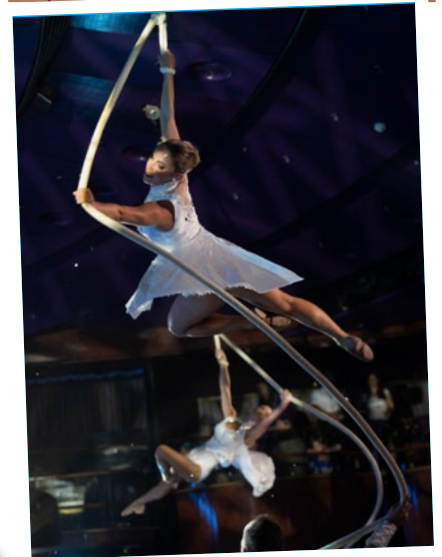
"We're thrilled to finally welcome *Norwegian Spirit* to Australia - she is well and truly worth the wait," Vice President & Managing Director APAC Ben Angell said.

"We know Australians love our contemporary, laidback style of cruising, as well as the outstanding value only an NCL cruise can offer."

For more details, see today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.



VICE President & Managing Director APAC Ben Angell with President & CEO Harry Sommer.





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TRAVEL SPECIALS

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Carnival Cruise Line is inviting guests to 'Sip 'N' Sail' with its pre-paid drinks package on offer for select sailings with a duration of seven nights or more through May 2024. The seven-day South Pacific from Brisbane journey is one of the sailings included in the offer, priced from \$775ppts. Book before 31 Jan 2023 - call 1800 073 489.

Australian and New Zealand travellers can save 10% on the cheaper hike when they book two walks with **On Foot Holidays**. Hikers can pair walks from the 34, baggage-free, self-guided walks in 11 countries across Europe, such as the inn-to-inn walks in Andalusia in southern Spain and on the Spanish-owned Canary Islands. Visit onfootholidays.co.uk.

Captain Cook Cruises Fiji is offering 30% off most adult fares on four unique itineraries throughout the Mamanucas, Yasawas and remote north island groups. The offer is available from 01 Jan 2023 for travel from 01 Apr 2023, with fares starting from \$1,162 for a three-night cruise, and the ability to score a free upgrade to an Oceanview stateroom for travel before 31 Mar 2023. For more info, see captaincookcruisesfiji.com.

Cruise Traveller has announced 'Antarctic Expedition Meets Luxury', a new all-inclusive ultra-luxury fly/cruise package for Dec 2023 that comes with US\$1,000 in bonus onboard spending money for bookings made before 29 Jan 2023. The offer includes private transfers, flights, one night's stay in Santiago, Chile before and after the cruise, and an 18-night return expedition cruise to Antarctica. The package is available from \$32,900ppts - contact 1800 507 777 to book.

Travellers to Fiji can save 30% off their accommodation when they stay at one of **Outrigger Resorts and Hotels** two Fijian properties - Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort, and Castaway Island, Fiji - plus beverage credit and all meals covered. The sale applies to stays of six nights or more, and runs from tomorrow until 31 Mar 2023 - visit outrigger.com.

Murray River Paddlesteamers has extended its 15% savings offer on its biggest-ever program of overnight cruises in 2023/24, until 15 Jan 2023. The deal includes a slashing of the solo surcharge as well as free bonuses, including two bottles of local wine to take home. Prices start from \$1,402ppts for a three-night sailing - call 03 5482 5244.

Guests can enjoy up to US\$600 in free beverages and hand-crafted cocktails when they make a new booking with **Virgin Voyages** before 31 Jan 2023, while couples can also enjoy 60% off the second guest's fare. Visit virginvoyages.com for more information or to make a booking.

Azamara is giving travellers the chance to score US\$300 onboard credit on select 2023 and 2024 sailings, for bookings made until 31 Mar 2023. For terms and conditions, head to azamaracommunity.com.

Travel the World's breezy famil



SYDNEY-BASED travel agency, Travel the World, recently hosted agents from across Australia, as well as their partners, on board Windstar's *Star Breeze*.

The group of 20 sailed from Christchurch to Auckland over six nights, enjoying stops in Wellington, Picton and Tauranga, before the cruise wrapped up on Sun 18 Dec.

The 312-capacity vessel recently

underwent a major renovation, and now features new public areas, two new dining venues and a new spa, infinity pool and fitness area.

Star Breeze kicked off her first season Down Under earlier this month, where she is offering a number of cruise itineraries across Australia and New Zealand (**TD** 01 Sep).

Pictured: The well-travelled group back on solid ground after their 'breezy' cruise.

Port Arthur appoints

MAJOR Tasmanian tourist attraction Port Arthur has seen two new appointments made to its management board this week.

Among the changes to the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority include Richard Mulvaney, who has been appointed as a Non-Executive Director to replace Peter McKay, whose tenure has expired.

Meanwhile Grant O'Brien has been reappointed as Chairman.

New Mercure Japan

ACCOR has announced the opening of its latest property in Japan, the Mercure Hida Takayama, located in the historic city of Takayama.

The property features 161 guestrooms across seven room types, a Mediterranean-inspired restaurant and bar, and three private outdoor and indoor onsens on the top floor.

Got a confidential tip? Contact *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click **HERE** 



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