

INTRODUCING



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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of all the latest travel industry news plus a full page from TD Events.

AirAsia X to SYD

MALAYSIAN low-cost, long haul carrier AirAsia X has announced the resumption of flights between Sydney and Kuala Lumpur effective from 14 Feb.

The move follows the completion of a US\$8.1 billion restructuring process, with the carrier saying it will be prioritising full redemptions for pax who were impacted by cancellations.

Initially flights will operate once a week, with fares leading in at \$399 one way, or \$1,299 in the Premium Flatbed cabin.

Protests force ACT mission delay

ANTI-VACCINATION protests outside Federal Parliament House in Canberra have forced the deferral of plans for a travel industry rally in the ACT next week (TD yesterday).

Organisers from the Aussie Travel Action Group said they will advise members of a new date when the climate is right, and in the meantime will continue focusing on securing meetings with MPs in support of discussions by peak bodies including AFTA, CATO and CLIA.

Dan Russell from Clean Cruising is urging everyone to join the fight in an opinion piece on P4.

Entire saves agent comm

EXCLUSIVE

ENTIRE Travel Group says it's setting a "new industry benchmark" today as it unveils a Peace of Mind booking plan giving customers a full refund for COVID-related cancellations, while at the same time ensuring travel agents get full commission.

The offering is now included on hundreds of exclusive Entire holiday packages across the group's expanded range, which now features 28 destinations.

Agents can book 24x7 through the revamped Entire Travel Group website, with Sales & Marketing Director, Greg McCallum, saying "this is a ground-breaking solution that overcomes two of the major issues currently facing our industry - consumer confidence and travel agents' financial security".

He said agents can book Entire

C360 deferred again

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has announced yet another postponement of its highly anticipated Cruise360 conference, which was to have taken place in early Mar at Sydney's Hyatt Regency Hotel.

CLIA cited ongoing uncertainty around interstate and trans-Tasman travel, with the event to be rescheduled to a time when it can be held with greater confidence and maximum attendance - more details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

packages with full confidence, knowing neither they, nor their clients, will be out of pocket if COVID intervenes, with refunds available if a pax has a "personal encounter with COVID and it interrupts their travel plans".

The plan also covers a "meaningful change in a pre-existing medical condition" which elevates their risk from COVID, in the 14 days prior to travel.

McCallum said the new Peace of Mind plan, along with Entire Travel Group's innovative booking platform and wide range of packages, made it the "ultimate solution for travel agents to book with confidence in 2022."

See entiretravel.com.au.

A by Adina promo

TFE Hotels has launched a new "high-end marketing campaign" that positions its A by Adina brand as a premium offering through a TVC shot in the "sky lobby" at A by Adina in Sydney.

TFE Director of Marketing, Katia Giurtalis, said "this premium apartment hotel brand marks the evolution of our much-loved Adina Master brand," with guests increasingly searching for experiences rather than just transactional stays.

Rather than showcasing the product itself, the campaign aims to convey the "feeling of lightness and escapism when you leave the hectic world behind and arrive at A by Adina" - check it out at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Visit
*Sunshine
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TRADE MANAGER

(Maternity Leave Cover)

FULL-TIME (Minimum 9 month position)

CLOSING DATE: Friday, 11 February 2022

Visit Sunshine Coast (VSC) is seeking an experienced Trade Manager to take on an exciting role overseeing industry and trade ready programs. The position will lead VSC's engagement with the travel trade and implementing strategies to improve distribution across the Sunshine Coast with its industry partners.

We are looking for candidates with 5+ years of experience in a similar role with proven experience in trade development/account management roles.

View the position description or for any questions please email andrew.fairbairn@visitsunshinecoast.com

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Window Seat

WELL here's a unique travel innovation that isn't simply full of hot air - inflatable seating on long-haul flights.

While airlines are yet to formally subscribe to the idea, at least one Aussie mum flying from Los Angeles recently carried out some important consumer product testing on the product, with her son testing out The Flyaway bed on board the flight (**pictured**).

"I highly recommend! Comes with a hand pump to inflate on the plane," Misty Kingma boasted on TikTok.

The kids air bed is designed to stop toys from rolling onto the floor and can be packed away in carry-on luggage as it weighs a mere 1.3kg, with the product retailing for around \$220.

Kingma added that her son Lennox slept for 7.5 hours on the makeshift Business class sleeping quarters, also enjoying "a cosy place to play" while he was awake.

Airlines frown on such devices however, labelling them a hazard - way to let the air out!



AFTA details budget plan

AUSTRALIAN Federation of Travel Agents CEO Dean Long is in Canberra today pressing the claims for further industry support in the form of a \$190m package under the Federation's formal pre-budget submission.

Long told **TD** that he hopes to meet with PM Scott Morrison today at the National Press Club to put forward the plan in person, which includes a Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package comprising \$66 million in yet-to-be-allocated support from the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program (CTSP), along with \$124 million in new funding.

AFTA is also calling for eligibility criteria to include previously excluded businesses and for the implementation of an improved verification process for applicants who were not verified or eligible for round two of the CTSP.

Further requests include the creation of a Travel Industry JobStarter Package to offer payments of \$10,000 per new

or reengaged employee by a travel business, as well as the establishment of a working group to analyse strategic markets to determine if there is a mutual demand for travel to Australia and Australians to specific markets.

AFTA said it would like to see this data maintained annually using new funding, while the travel and tourism sectors should also be well represented on the working group across key verticals such as transport, distribution and trade associations.

Finally, AFTA is also asking for the Tourism Labour Force Survey to be reinstated, an important tool it argues will help better inform future government policy in travel and tourism by providing an accurate up-to-date picture.

Bali to open 04 Feb

VACCINATED travellers from Australia will be able to holiday in the popular Indonesian island of Bali from 04 Feb, after local government authorities agreed to lift travel restrictions.

However the positive news was tempered by confirmation that quarantine arrangements will remain in place for now, although it has been reduced from seven days to five and can be completed in one of five different hotels or six live-on-board ships with Clean Health Safety Environment certifications from the Tourism Ministry.

The Indonesian Govt is yet to decide on whether it will also be rebooting its visa-on-arrival program, with extra requirements such as COVID insurance to be addressed in a statement soon.

Gschwind on board

TOURISM Whitsundays has appointed Queensland Tourism Industry Council CEO Daniel Gschwind to sit on its board.

The industry body's Chair Julie Telford endorsed Gschwind's invite, stating he would "provide invaluable knowledge and support to further assist the growth of The Whitsundays tourism industry".

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*For registration and eligibility, visit trade.northernterritory.com

Register now





Work & play the Aussie way

IN A much needed boost for Australia's battered tourism sector, the Federal Government is launching a marketing offensive overseas to lure more working holiday makers Down Under.

The \$7 million Work and Play the Aussie Way campaign will target some of the country's largest source markets, including United Kingdom, Europe, Japan and South Korea, providing prospective travellers with "a glimpse of the adventures that await them while working and travelling Australia".

The marketing push will also trumpet the financial advantages of a trip to Australia by taking up the government's Visa Application Charge refund scheme offer announced only last month (**TD** 20 Jan).

As well as injecting important tourism revenue into the local economy, Australia's Tourism Minister Dan Tehan also

underscored the importance working holiday makers will play in plugging the skills gap that is currently crippling sectors such as hospitality and tourism.

"More working holiday makers in Australia in the immediate term will help to ease some of the current workforce pressures that are being felt by businesses in tourism, hospitality and other sectors," Tehan said.

"Working holiday makers largely spend what they earn in Australia, which is why in 2019 they contributed \$3.2 billion to our visitor economy, representing 7% of total visitor spend.

"These young travellers generally stay longer, spend more and visit two or more destinations around the country as they combine work & travel."

The campaign is running alongside a \$3 million campaign by Austrade to attract more international students.

Morocco opening

MOROCCO has announced it will be removing its travel ban on international tourists from 07 Feb, restrictions that have been in place since 29 Nov 2021.

The Moroccan Government has released very little information with regard to travel requirements such as vaccination statuses and COVID testing, but did state it would make more announcements on 07 Feb.

TTC appoints agency

THE Travel Corporation (TTC) has appointed Resolution Digital to be its new media agency, which will be charged with handling the operator's media strategy and planning.

An emphasis will be placed on marketing to travellers and areas where there is a large pent-up demand for travel, with the contract to cover TTC's key brands including Contiki, Trafalgar, Costsaver and AAT Kings.

Drawing a Hartline

TOURISM ticketing and technology company Smartvisit Group has appointed Charlie Hartline to be its Chief Commercial Officer.

Hartline brings with him 15 years of experience working in capital markets overseas, and will work closely with CEO Ryan Rieveley to develop commercial strategies to deliver better short- and long-term sales results in a rebounding tourism economy.

Smartvisit Group operates across six continents under its Smartvisit Solutions, iVenture Card and CityXplora brands.

Japan cuts the time

JAPAN has taken steps to reduce the quarantine period for international arrivals, cutting the isolation time to seven days.

Aussie travellers will need to quarantine at a designated facility for three days and spend the remaining four self-isolating.

AUSSIE SPECIALIST

Premier Program

Apply to become a Premier Aussie Specialist and be rewarded with:

- Invitations to exclusive industry workshops and training events
- Recognition by Tourism Australia with a prioritised agent profile on Australia.com
- The opportunity to apply for up to AUD\$500 in marketing funds

FIND MORE
INFORMATION AND
APPLY **HERE NOW**

Applications close Friday, 4 February 2022

Terms and Conditions apply



**AUSSIE
SPECIALIST
PROGRAM**

Taking control of our own destiny

OPINION

Dan Russell is General Manager & Director of Brisbane-based Clean Cruising. Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au.



JUST weeks ago, after two years of being battered by the pandemic and the response to it, the travel community dared to take charge of its destiny.

It was no longer prepared to wait for federal and state governments to permit them to trade without restriction. No other sector of the economy is subject to the whim of the government in the same way.

Travel agents fanned out across the country visiting the offices of federal and state MPs calling for the lifting of travel and cruise bans and support for the Australian Federation of Travel Agents' industry-saving strategy.

For those of us whose businesses depend entirely or in part on cruising, we also demanded that the cruise ban should be lifted on 17 Feb, if not before.

Now that Prime Minister Scott Morrison has stated he wants Australia to open up to international tourists by Easter, there is no reason, health or otherwise, to further extend the ban on international cruise ships.

Public health advice is important and we salute our nation's public health officials who have done everything they can to keep us safe from COVID. However, it is now time for our political leaders to get the balance right between managing COVID and keeping all sectors of the economy alive.

Queensland for example should be chomping at the bit to be the first state to allow the phased resumption of domestic cruising, especially when Brisbane has a

state-of-the-art cruise terminal that has never seen a cruise ship.

Instead, Queensland and NSW are just eyeing each other warily to see which government, if any, will make the first move. They may be beaten by Singapore which has plans to attract tens of thousands of Australian cruisers across our winter.

The broader cruising industry around the world is back in business except here in Australia. Six million people have already cruised. Hundreds of cruise ships are sailing again — but not in Australia, where our fully

“
The question for health officials and politicians alike is, if not now, then when?
”

vaccinated rate is higher than 74 of the 86 countries that ships operate in.

The industry has also confirmed through experience that its health protocols work. Fair-minded people have worked out they're more likely to get COVID at a big sporting match, at a shopping mall or on a plane than on a cruise ship. And if there is COVID on board it is managed well under strict new protocols. The question for health and politicians alike is, if not now then when?

Seeing what is happening overseas but not here meant frustration boiled over for travel agents whose businesses have been smashed over the past two years. These are the last people you could ever expect to see landing on the doorsteps of parliamentarians and making the nightly news.

It certainly shook some political trees. In NSW, the Minister for

Tourism Stuart Ayres said he could see no reason for the cruise ban to be continued. His Qld counterpart Stirling Hinchcliffe made similar positive noises.

Combined with the Prime Minister's comments about international tourists returning, the travel community dared to hope that these are more than mere straws in the wind.

We've already experienced the abject disappointment of a false dawn thanks to the unwelcome arrival of the omicron variant, with which the politicians say we must now learn to live.

The reopening of the international border allowing Australians to travel sent a wave of excitement for many travel agents who believed it was the long-awaited light at the end of the tunnel. It wasn't of course.

However, the disappointment helped spur travel agents and the many other businesses that depend on cruising and open borders to speak out and from this outpouring of feeling was born the Australian Travel Action Group (ATAG).

If there is, as we dare to hope, some momentum towards international travel — incoming and outgoing — on the horizon and a likely lifting of the cruise ban, we want to keep it rolling.

ATAG's next advocacy plan was going to be a "Mission to Canberra" on Wednesday 09 Feb during the first week of parliamentary sittings for 2022. It is incredible to think that these plans have since been stymied by a group who have no real prospect of travelling beyond our coastline due to the stance they've taken.

Instead, the focus will continue with briefing MPs so they are fully aware of the ongoing and extraordinarily difficult trading environment the sector faces when we simply are not able to freely trade. The next few weeks are vital.

UK to overhaul flight delay compo

AUTHORITIES in Great Britain have proposed new rules which would see passengers given a partial refund of fares after a one-hour delay.

The UK Department for Transport said the move would be an improvement to the current EU-based regulations which give passengers £220 or more after a delay of three hours or longer.

The changes would make more people eligible for compensation in the event of delays, but the payments would be lower under the new regime, which will now be the subject of a consultation period with airlines and other industry stakeholders.

MSC out of the Red

MSC Cruises has announced a three-month extension of its current season in the Arabian Gulf, with *MSC Bellissima* to finish her planned Red Sea itineraries and then take over from *MSC Virtuosa* in the Gulf from 02 Apr.

Virtuosa has been successfully sailing in the region since Nov, and will take a Grand Voyage to homeport in Southampton, UK for the northern summer.

Bellissima will continue the successful Gulf season which has proven particularly attractive to MSC guests, with extended stays in port and two Dubai overnights.

Sleep in New York?

IT MAY be located in the city that never sleeps, but Park Hyatt New York is bucking that branding with the launch of its new Bryte Restorative Sleep Suite.

The residential-style one-bedroom accommodation has been developed in partnership with bedmaker Bryte, featuring the company's Restorative Bed which claims to help guests fight jet lag by dynamically adjusting to relieve pressure points and control the climate through various sleep stages - hyatt.com.

Scheme snubs agents

THE NSW Government has excluded travel agents from its newly unveiled accommodation family voucher schemes.

Part of the government's \$2.8 billion COVID-19 Economic Recovery Strategy, the Parents NSW and Stay NSW voucher promotions see residents able to redeem \$250 and \$50 off the cost of accommodation at registered providers respectively, however, bookings through third parties such as travel agents are ineligible to participate in the stimulus

initiative, the NSW Govt stated.

Eligible travellers are able to redeem \$250 worth of Parents NSW vouchers and \$50 from Stay NSW vouchers when they book at registered Stay NSW accommodation providers, with NSW Premier Dominic Perrottet claiming the schemes would be a "big win" for the hard hit tourism and accommodation sectors.

"The voucher programs will have a multiplier effect on the economy – and this will encourage families to spend a night or a weekend exploring Sydney or a regional town, while also spending on sightseeing and other activities," he said.

To take part in the two programs, businesses need to register once through Service NSW and once approved, accommodation providers can download the Service NSW for Business app to commence scanning vouchers.

The Accommodation Association welcomed news of the voucher schemes, thanking the NSW government for listening to the concerns of the industry, but qualified the praise by calling on the Federal Government to match the state govt's efforts.

"Ongoing staffing issues and a lack of consumer confidence in travel means the Accommodation Association is calling on the Federal Government to acknowledge that they too must do their part to support the businesses that support so much of our country; from staff and their families to regional destinations, hospitality businesses to suppliers & drivers," AA CEO Richard Munro said.



THERE are three different faces that make up this picture.

They are a mixture of famous celebrities and travel names.

Can you figure out who the

eyes, nose and mouth in this picture belong to?

And don't worry if you can't guess them all, two out of three ain't bad!

Answer: Eyes - Emma Davie, Scenic Luxury Cruises & Tours, Nose - Princess Diana, Mouth - Bono

MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.706

THINGS were looking a little brighter in the last week for the Australian dollar, which was higher in all major markets overnight as another big rebound in US shares boosted the local currency.

The AUDUSD rebounded from 18-month lows to gain 1.2% yesterday, while the AUDGBP increased by 0.8% and the AUDJPY moved up 1%.

Gains were also made against the NZD, up 0.6%

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.706
UK	£0.525
NZ	\$1.074
Euro	€0.629
Japan	¥81.49
Thailand	฿23.51
China	¥4.496
South Africa	10.875
Canada	\$0.898
Crude oil	US\$90.03

Dark skies over WA

THE Western Australian Government has renewed its commitment to the value of the state's astrotourism sector, pledging to protect its night skies from light and dust pollution.

Australia's largest state said it was well placed to deliver an increasing volume of stargazing tourism offerings such as desert tours, traditional Aboriginal cultural experiences, nature-based camping, festivals, photography and education-based experiences, and will take steps to ensure it continues to be a viable tourism revenue source.

"We now have a plan to protect this extraordinary natural asset through sustainable planning measures, while enabling exciting astrotourism opportunities that will boost local economies and jobs," WA Planning Minister Rita Saffioti said.

Guten tag to voco

IHG Hotels & Resorts has opened its first voco property in Germany, with voco Dusseldorf Seestern located in the Lorick district of the city.

Its position is within walking distance to the Rhine river and only a short drive from the airport and the city's main shopping and business districts.

Amenities at the 160-room hotel include a fully equipped fitness area, a steam room, and the all-day dining eatery Restaurant & Bar 38, serving up a diverse range of organic dishes.

Luxembourg rejects

AUSTRALIAN travellers are no longer able to enter Luxembourg for non-essential reasons, with the country's government taking a harder line on the spread of the Omicron variant this week.