



MSC on the future

AGENTS can join MSC Cruises for the first of a series of webinars in 2022, with the first session detailing how the line navigated in a pandemic and how the business plans to rebuild.

The webinar takes place 16 Feb at 4pm AEDT with prizes also on offer to be won - register [HERE](#).

Rail operator makes debut

EXCLUSIVE

A TRIO of former Rail Europe Australasia executives have combined to launch a company called Rail Online, a new operator which allows travel agents to search, compare and book European rail passes.

Founded by James Dunne, Lachlan McCallum and Kew Muthalif, the company aims to make the rail purchase process as seamless as possible, with advisors able to access all prices in Aussie dollars, circumnavigate booking fees, self-manage itinerary changes or refunds, and gain access to the most competitive rates.

Backed by major rail software company SilverRail and debuting with a launch commission rate of 7% on Eurail Passes, Rail Online also offers the option of buying point-to-point tickets across the United Kingdom, with a view to rolling out additional

rail networks across continental Europe and North America in the coming months.

CEO James Dunne believes the global travel sector is about to experience a surge in demand for international rail travel.

"Demand for rail is being driven by the roll-out of new high-speed networks that make train journeys even more efficient, elegant and environmentally sustainable," Dunne said.

"Thanks to the advent of rail e-tickets, Australian travel agents can now access an unprecedented array of cheap online fares," he added.

Dunne was formerly the CEO Australasia for Rail Europe until Dec 2016 and has also held senior roles at Singapore Airlines and Austrian Airlines.

Agents can register for Rail Online by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Cracks in open plan

AUSTRALIA'S soon-to-open international border is facing its first challenge, with Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews today suggesting tourists will need to be triple-vaxxed to enter its major event & venues, a stance at odds with the Federal Govt which only mandated two doses for entry.

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BRISBANE
MARCH 16, 2022 | 6-9 PM
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AAT Kings webinar

AAT Kings has joined Tourism NT for a series of webinars.

The sessions will cover key Northern Territory updates, NT travel insights & trends, the latest research from Tourism Australia, and new deals and promotions.

There are three webinars to choose from, the next session takes place 10 Feb at 10.30am AEDT, followed by 11 Feb at 1pm AEDT and 14 Feb at 3pm AEDT - register to attend [HERE](#).

Oz loses Sapphire

AS A result of Princess Cruises recently deploying *Sapphire Princess* on the West Coast of the United States, the ship's Australian cruises from 28 Aug to 29 Oct have been cancelled.

Guests booked on these cancelled voyages can transfer to an equivalent voyage, or receive a future cruise credit or refund.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has seven pages of the latest news.

NT Campaign Seminar

Join us & Tourism NT for a **SPECIAL EVENT**

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Thu 10 Feb	10.30am AEDT
Fri 11 Feb	1pm AEDT
Mon 14 Feb	3pm AEDT

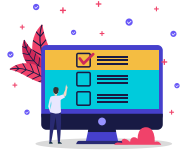
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WA urged to join

IN WELCOMING Australia's decision to open its borders to tourists from 21 Feb (**TD** 08 Feb), CATO Managing Director Brett Jardine also called on the Western Australian Government to join the rest of the country in resuming business as usual. "CATO urges the WA government to support these federal measures and re-open the WA border ASAP to avoid further angst amongst local tourism businesses in WA," he said. Jardine also told **TD** that the border decision would be of particular benefit to struggling operators in the Northern Territory and North Qld between May and Sep, while other areas will more likely see an upturn from around Oct.

Sailing through to recognition



AYERS Rock Resort's five-star hotel, Sails in the Desert, has taken out the award for Best Superior Accommodation at the AHA Awards in Hobart this week. Parent company Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia secured its place in the running for the gong following a trio of successes at the NT Hospitality Awards in May last year for Best Tourism Initiative, Best Superior Accommodation and Apprentice/Trainee of the Year.

In his acceptance speech, CEO of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia Matthew Cameron-Smith (**pictured**) heaped praise on his team's efforts under very trying circumstances over the last 12 months. "We are proud of this recognition of the team at Ayers Rock Resort who, despite the recent challenges of the past two years, have gone above and beyond to consistently deliver a great guest experience," he said.

Bonza's budgies

BONZA has followed through with its threat to manufacture matching swimming togs for the soon-to-debut airline (**TD** 08 Dec 2021), appointing Total Image Group to create the swimming apparel, along with the rest of its employee uniforms.

The bespoke Bonza Budgies (**pictured**) "will be coming to a flight near you", the airline said today, with further details to be unveiled closer to the carrier's official launch in mid-2022.

"Uniforms are not just something our Bonza Legends will wear on the job, they're a key part of communicating what Bonza is all about and demonstrating we're different to what Australians have seen before," the airline said.



Sell your way to Utah

VISIT Utah is inviting travel advisors to sell their way to the state on a famil, which includes round-trip airfares with Delta Air Lines, six nights' accommodation, meals, and a Rocky Mountaineer Rockies to Red Rocks journey. There will be six spaces available for advisors to win on the fully inclusive famil trip, taking place from 27 May to 03 Jun. Agents earn one point each for every Rocky Mountaineer passenger booked on the Rockies to the Red Rocks, every Delta Air Lines return ticket to the United States, and every Utah land arrangement made. In addition, advisors must also have completed Rocky's TRACKS training program (**HERE**) as well as Delta's educational module, accessible **HERE**.

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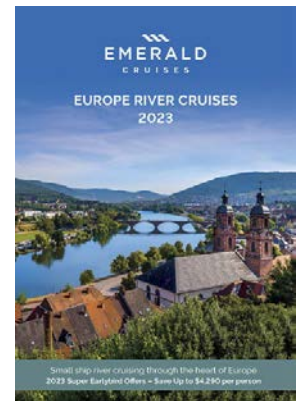


New River Cruises that link up with Mediterranean Yacht Cruising

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UK damage in vain

INEFFECTIVE travel restrictions imposed by the UK Government to combat Omicron caused an estimated £7b loss to its economy, due to the massive drop in business for the country's travel sector, WTC has stated.



Crooked joins Virtuoso

CROOKED Compass has joined Virtuoso's Regional Preferred Partner Program across the Asia-Pacific, a move that founder Lisa Pagotto has described as a "watershed" moment for the experiential tour operator.

"This partnership is a clear indication that travel advisors and their clients are seeking out a more sustainable and immersive style of travel post-pandemic, which is something we are really excited about," she said.

"To be welcomed because of our unique approach to travel, our exclusive experiences, our VIP services and our high level of expertise, means the world to us," Pagotto added.

Virtuoso Partnerships Director Australia & New Zealand Evan Pierce added that Crooked Compass joining was an exciting moment for its luxury network.

"Crooked Compass' innovative approach to providing authentic

travel experiences is a perfect fit for Virtuoso," he said.

"We are looking forward to working with Lisa as we get our clients travelling again and living their best travel lives."

Virtuoso's network of agencies specialises in luxury and experiential travel, and currently boasts over 20,000 advisors and 2,000 travel suppliers.

SYD jumps hurdle

THE NSW Supreme Court has given the green light for the proposed \$23.6 billion sale of Sydney Airport (**TD** 08 Nov 2021), paving the way for its exit from the ASX at market close today.

The court decision was the final step in approving the takeover of Australia's largest airport by a consortium led by the New York-based Global Infrastructure Partners and the super-fund backed IFM Investors.

Tehan woos India

AUSTRALIA'S Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Dan Tehan has announced plans to travel to India to promote Australia as a premium destination for Indian students and tourists.

While also negotiating a free trade agreement, further travel and tourism opportunities will be high on the agenda, Tehan said.

Marina Bay upgrade

MARINA Bay Sands in Singapore has unveiled plans to undertake a major refurbishment plan, spanning rooms, suites and new food and beverage offerings.

The significant US\$1 billion reinvestment will encompass extensive upgrading of all accommodation in Towers 1 and 2 of the Hotel, with renovation works to be completed in phases over 2022 and 2023.

More accommodation updates on **page seven**.



Window Seat

WITH travel finally getting back on its feet, why not start your next overseas journey with a destination renowned for being the most welcoming to tourists?

Booking.com recently compiled a list of the most hospitable places for travellers on earth, based on user reviews of factors like hotel staff, cleanliness and local residents.

Topping the list was Gorenjska in Slovenia, followed by Taitung County in Taiwan, Burgenland in Austria and Seychelles.

A list was also compiled of welcoming Aussie towns, with Maleny in Qld taking top spot.

Interestingly, Denmark in WA landed in fifth spot, a town most Aussies have less chance of travelling to in the next few months than Europe's Denmark.



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Mat is back in '22!

MAT McLachlan Battlefield Tours' first tourist group in almost two years has departed on its Bombing of Darwin tour.

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the bombing, the five-day expedition will see 30 passengers come from New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and South Australia to uncover Northern Australia's Pacific War history, visiting key sites around Darwin - more details [HERE](#).

Ottawa warning

SMARTTRAVELLER is advising Australian travellers to Ottawa to avoid ongoing protests against pandemic restrictions in the city.

Canada's Government has declared a state of emergency, with significant travel disruptions afflicted in downtown Ottawa.

Police have cordoned off most streets, and businesses remain closed due to the unpredictability of the situation.

Mix business & pleasure

GOLD Coast-based Global Work & Travel has introduced a new product to the market designed to help support the rapidly growing remote work movement.

The company's new Remote Working travel packages offer working travellers access to co-working spaces and fast wi-fi so that they can work during the day and enjoy the culture and attractions of an overseas destination at night.

The pilot product will see travellers head to Costa Rica over four weeks in Apr and May, and a second group departing in Sep, with Global Work & Travel flagging plans to roll out additional destinations throughout 2022.

Global Work & Travel CEO Jurgen Himmelmann said the new range of travel options was a natural progression for the company as it follows an increasing demand for remote

working among the workforce.

"Thanks mainly to the COVID-19 crisis, remote working has become a way of life for many people and it has become the 'new normal' for an increasingly growing segment of the working community," he said.

"The beauty of this new travel experience is that you get to do your normal week's work...but at the end of the day, swap your... suburban home for an overseas destination," - more details [HERE](#).

Air tickets thrown in

UNIWORLD has launched a new promo with Qatar Airways which offers included airfares on all new European river cruise bookings in 2022 (exc Christmas Markets), with the option to access Qsuite upgrades available from \$4,650 per person.

The deal expires 15 Mar - call 1300 780 231 for more details.

LATAM safety vid

LATAM Airlines' new safety video celebrates Latin America's beauty and its people, taking travellers on a tour of the region's favourite places.

More than sixty of LATAM's employees participated in the production, which includes visits to Cartagena, Cuzco, the Galapagos Islands, Pipa, and San Pedro de Atacama.

Extraordinary trips

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line is inviting passengers to make travel more mindful with its Extraordinary Journeys in 2022 and 2023, a collection which includes more than 100 sailings visiting every continent.

Extraordinary Journeys takes travellers to explore Iceland's landscapes, fishing villages and cities; to spotting whales and glaciers in Greenland; uncovering ancient history and treasures in the Middle East and much more.



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Queen Anne joins family

CUNARD Line has announced *Queen Anne* will be the name of its newest ship scheduled to join the fleet in early 2024, marking the first time in 25 years the line will have four ships at sea.

Anne will feature reimagined Cunard signature spaces, new guest experiences within dining, culture and entertainment, and an updated livery, with outgoing President Simon Palethorpe saying he is “absolutely delighted” to welcome the ship to the fleet to join *Queen Mary 2*, *Queen Victoria* and *Queen Elizabeth*.

“This marks a very special moment in Cunard’s 182-year history and showcases Cunard’s exciting global plans for the future, allowing even more guests around the world to set sail with Cunard,” Palethorpe said.

“With design inspired by the past and set for the future, *Queen Anne* is the perfect way for our

customers to rediscover the joy of exploration and travel again.”

Soliciting the help of an historian, *Anne* was chosen among several naming options.

She is named after the Queen of England from 1702 to 1714, who oversaw the *Acts of Union 1707*, which joined together England and Scotland.

Valiant joins fleet

VIRGIN Voyages has taken delivery of its second vessel, with *Valiant Lady* joining *Scarlet Lady* in the new cruise player’s fleet.

The ship will offer cruise passengers 1,330 rooms, with 86% having a balcony and more than 90% boasting ocean views.

Valiant Lady will offer itineraries featuring longer port stays and overnights in select European islands and cities, initially sailing the UK coast before homeporting in Barcelona.

New Caledonia pivot

NEW Caledonia’s tourism agency has undergone a major restructure as the French territory looks to take a more unified approach to rebooting its visitor economy in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Renamed Tourism New Caledonia, the organisation will increase resources to promote the destination internationally, coordinate a new tourism & cruise strategy, facilitate more overseas investment, and capture a greater amount of global tourism statistical trends.

The reboot will be based on three pillars, remobilising, restoring and reconnecting.

“We can now move on to the most critical task, recreating the conditions required to attract foreign tourists and offer them a quality welcome that reflects all the authenticity and diversity of New Caledonia,” a spokesperson for the New Caledonian Government said.

SkyWorlds opens

GENTING SkyWorlds Theme Park (pictured) has opened in Malaysia after multiple delays.

Lee Thiam Kit, Genting Malaysia Head of Business Operations & Strategies, said SkyWorlds’ opening would support the country’s tourism sector, as well as “put Malaysia and Pahang on the world tourism map”.

Built across 10.5 hectares of land at an elevation of 1,829 metres above sea level, SkyWorlds offers nine different districts, mixing original ideas with movie-themed rides and attractions.



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Frontier's new Spirit

AMERICAN ultra-low-cost carriers Frontier Airlines and Spirit Airlines are set to merge, with the combined company to "drive competition and expand services to underserved small- and mid-sized cities across the country".

The combined fleet will be the youngest, most fuel-efficient, and greenest in the United States, and will add approximately 10,000 aviation jobs by 2026.

The airline is also expected to offer more than 1,000 daily flights.

Boeing SAF deal

BOEING has bought two million gallons (8 million litres) of sustainable aviation fuel for its commercial operations, the largest such purchase to date.

EPIC Fuels will supply the blend, which will be made from inedible agricultural waste, and will be used for production, test, Dreamlifter and delivery flights.

Winter is coming, again!



HBO megahit *Game of Thrones* has been a major tourism draw for Northern Ireland over the last 10 years, as a large portion of the show was shot in the country, which in turn has generated renewed tourism interest.

Now the European nation has called in some major star power to launch its new *Game of Thrones* Studio Tour, taking fans of the show closer to the Seven Kingdoms than ever before.

Isaac Hempstead Wright (Bran Stark), Kristian Nairn (Hodor), and

Nathalie Emmanuel (Missandei) were all on hand for the grand opening over the weekend, which is located at one of the original filming locations at Linen Mill Studios in Banbridge.

The treats inside include opportunities to step inside the iconic Great Hall at Winterfell where Jon Snow was proclaimed the "King in the North," and see Daenerys Targaryen's imposing Dragonstone throne.

Pictured: Emmanuel and Wright walk down memory lane.

Bringing the Top End's history to life

THE NT Government has allocated several grants to help bring its history to life, including to historian Bev Phelts who plans to create a tourism history brochure about Parap.

Parap is an inner suburb of Darwin with a rich history, including being the staging point for the event known as the Darwin Rebellion on 17 Dec 1918.

The Darwin Aviation Museum also received a funding grant.

Have a hard copy

AUSTRALIANS travelling to Italy are being encouraged by DFAT to carry a hard copy of their Australian vaccination certificate in lieu of having access to the country's Super Green Pass.

Until at least 31 Mar, the Super Green Pass will be required to access most venues and businesses and most forms of public transport.

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Azamara's new HQ

AZAMARA will soon debut its new headquarters in the heart of Miami, coinciding with shoreside team members being welcomed back next week.

Located in the vibrant Coconut Grove neighbourhood, the new office is designed to evoke the environment of the surrounding district, and will also place a focus on the team's wellbeing by introducing new hybrid work conditions and a more flexible PTO policy for all employees.

Australia misses out

GREECE'S Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority last week released an updated aviation directive, with select inbound international travellers no longer subject to additional restrictions, such as testing for the fully vaccinated.

European Union and Schengen countries, as well as 33 other states not including Australia, will be subject to the looser restrictions, however Australians must still present a 72-hour negative COVID test.

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.



The Ambassador Seoul - A Pullman Hotel has reopened after a top-to-bottom renovation. Seoul's historic hotel, where heritage meets style, is back with a new design, after the comprehensive 18-month renovation. Located in the heart of the city, The Ambassador Seoul offers panoramic views of the iconic landmark N Seoul Tower, and boasts easy access to Seoul City Hall, Gangnam, and many more popular tourist markets.



Soneva Fushi's Flying Sauces restaurant has teamed up with chef Julien Royer from Michelin-starred Odette for a 10-week residency. Taking place from now until 15 Apr, it will showcase Odette's focus on the finest seasonal produce and native

Maldivian ingredients in the only fine dining zipline experience in the world, where the multi-course menu is enjoyed from an open treetop kitchen 12 metres above the ground.



Shangri-La Al Husn Resort & Spa has reopened its wooden carved doors with the first branded Luban Spa in Oman. The Spa of Frankincense will offer guests a myriad of precious Omani treatment rituals for the body and mind, infused with warm Arabian

hospitality and centred around the namesake's aromatic resin. The resort is conveniently located just 20 minutes drive from bustling downtown Muscat.

THE century-old tradition of sitting on the carriage sill of the Puffing Billy railway has returned, with the famous Melbourne attraction laying down the tracks for the kids to take part again.

Available for children aged between four and 13 under adult supervision, the attraction's CEO Peter Abbott said the time-honoured tradition would delight visitors taking a ride on the locomotive through the tranquil Victorian countryside.

"It's been a labour of love for our team, partners, and supporters, and we are absolutely delighted to be able to offer the iconic sitting on the sills experience," Abbott said.

"Nothing beats the ride through the towering forests, around bends, over bridges and streams, waving at passers-by, all the while sitting on the carriage sill as Puffing Billy steams gently along the tracks," he added.

The ability for children to hang their legs over the side of the rail was banned in 2018 following a non-fatal collision with a minibus in 2018.

Managed by the Emerald Tourist Railway Board, the open-air steam train aims to preserve Victoria's railway history

and provide an unforgettable experience for tourists.

The ride attracted around 500,000 visitors annually prior to the pandemic and was supported by the recently opened state-of-the-art \$24.8 million Lakeside Visitor Centre.

"There's no other railway experience like sitting on an open-side carriage sill as Puffing Billy winds through the Dandenong Ranges," Victoria's Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Martin Pakula said.

Pimping pampering

PARK Hyatt Melbourne has introduced a new spa treatment selection at its Park Club Health & Day Spa area.

In line with new partnerships signed with skincare companies ASPAR and Linda Meredith, the hotel's wellness facility will now offer guests and day visitors more customised treatment packages for both women and men.

Treatments are on offer Mon to Sun between 10am and 7pm, with all products used being animal and environmentally friendly, with no artificial fragrances.

CLICK HERE for more details.