

Travel Daily on location in the Antarctic Peninsula

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Aurora Expeditions aboard the *Greg Mortimer* in South America.

AFTER five days of travelling south from Punta Arenas near the far southern tip of South America, Aurora Expeditions' *Greg Mortimer* has finally arrived in Antarctica.

This morning, guests landed on Cuverville Island, where they encountered penguin colonies as far as the eye can see.

Cruisers will finally make landfall on continental Antarctica this afternoon, where a second shore excursion for the day will see them undertake an expedition in Neko Harbour - a prime spot for bird-, seal-, and whale-watching.

Industry rises up in action

TODAY travel industry suppliers, agents, tour operators and other stakeholders are gathering at the offices of their local politicians, putting a human face on the impact that ongoing Government cruise and travel restrictions are having on their lives.

The National Day of Action was initiated just before Christmas (*TD* 23 Dec 2020) and has already garnered significant support and mainstream media coverage.

Organiser Belle Goldie from itravel Penrith in NSW, along with a team of state-based coordinators, are working to amplify the messages already being pushed in Canberra by AFTA, CLIA and CATO, with Goldie today urging supporters to ensure a consistent push.

AFTA this morning confirmed more details of its proposed Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package, which includes a "much needed cash injection

of \$130 million to meet business overheads," along with a further \$100 million to retain and re-engage travel professionals.

AFTA CEO Dean Long said the budget submission also includes the immediate distribution of the \$60 million which had already been approved for travel sector support but which is so far unspent from previous grant programs.

The campaign featured in the *Daily Telegraph* yesterday as well as on *News.com.au* and *Studio 10* this morning, with media across the country expected to cover some of the MP gatherings.

More on the Day of Action on **page five** of today's *Travel Daily*.

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today has six pages of all the latest news plus a full page from **Entire Travel Group**.

New TAANZ CEO

THE Travel Agents Association of New Zealand (TAANZ) has a new CEO, with the organisation today announcing the appointment of Greg Hamilton to the role vacant since Andrew Olsen left in a restructure (*TD* 08 Sep 2020).

Hamilton is a former Flight Centre staffer who for the last 12 years has been GM of New Zealand's National Party.

Action-packed sesh

THE Travel Community Hub is preparing to host key organisers of the National Travel Day of Action during a special webinar this Thu at 11am AEDT.

Ittravel Penrith's Belle Goldie and Clean Cruising's Dan Russell will chat about what's next and how they plan to work alongside groups like AFTA, CLIA and CATO in the coming months.

The webinar is open to everyone to attend - **CLICK HERE** to register.



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Window Seat

DO WE finally have the proof that robots have become sentient beings?

It may be too early to tell but what we do know so far is that a robot vacuum cleaner has reportedly made a break for freedom during his/her/its shift at the Orchard Park Travelodge in Cambridge in England, later located seeking sanctuary in a nearby hedge the next day.

There are two working theories developed by experts so far, the first of which is that the robot cleaner escapee became the first of the artificially intelligent machines to understand that a life of drudgery to humans is not as appealing as unencumbered freedom on the streets.

Concerns over the future of AI technology continues to worry some of the world's smartest minds, including Tesla founder Elon Musk, who has previously listed smart machines as the single greatest threat to human existence if we don't put major checks and balances on the technology - so perhaps this rogue robot hotel cleaner is the first sign of trouble to come?

Another popular, but somewhat less exciting theory is that the robot's sensors didn't pick up the lip of the front door and it accidentally wandered outside and got lost - boring!

Travel icon gone too soon



THE travel sector is mourning the passing of Australian travel icon Greg Ashmore, who sadly passed away after a battle with Motor Neurone Disease.

Ashmore (**pictured**) was the driving force behind the founding of the Travel Associates concept in Australia in 1998, and in 2015, was inducted into Flight Centre Travel Group's Hall of Fame - a prestigious accolade that only 20 people have ever received.

Expressing his grief at the news this week, one of Flight Centre's founders Geoff Harris told **TD** he knew Ashmore back when he was a "skinny 19-year-old", first employing him in 1992 and remaining very close ever since.

Ashmore progressed from successfully managing Flight Centre stores to founding the Travel Associates concept and earning himself icon status.

"Greg's vision became his life's work, finishing last year because of his illness at Travel Associates Surrey Hills, an international brand that has grown to over 120

stores before COVID," Harris said.

"He was a forward-thinker with an innovative mind who pioneered a great business model," he added.

In summarising her own reflections on Ashmore, FCs Global COO Melanie Waters-Ryan said he was hugely self-reliant & never looked to others to solve his problems - "he just got in there & made it work," she said.

With the stewardship of the Travel Associates brand now in the capable hands of GM FCTG Premium Brands Danielle Galloway, she recalls learning great lessons from Ashmore when she took the role in 2018.

"He had a few simple rules including great client service, 'if your clients experience great service, they will trust you implicitly and will always be happy to refer you to others - but you have to have the confidence to ask for it,'" he would say.

Ashmore leaves behind his husband Shannon and three children Oliver, Lily and Harry.

Leave the Ukraine!

DFAT is advising Aussies not to travel to the Ukraine as tensions on its Russian border continue to rise and many analysts speculate a military conflict is imminent.

DFAT said flights could be suspended at short notice and that Aussies should leave now if it is safe to do so.

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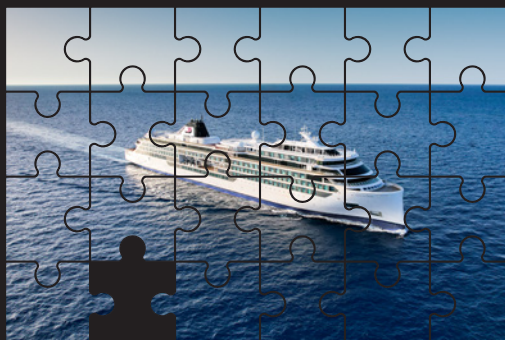
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Domestic down 72% in Nov

DESPITE some tentative green shoots of recovery in Nov - now dashed by the Omicron variant of COVID-19 - Australia's domestic aviation market was still less than a third of pre-pandemic levels in Nov 2021, according to the latest figures from the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics (BITRE).

Scoot to resume Gold Coast

THE relaxation of quarantine requirements for international arrivals into Qld has seen Scoot confirm it will resume three weekly Singapore-Gold Coast flights from 14 Feb.

Scoot will be the first carrier to resume international services at OOL, with CEO Campbell Wilson saying the flights will "allow us to better support pent-up demand for a myriad of business and leisure travel needs".

A new report confirms the number of revenue passengers was 71.2% lower than in Nov 2019, with 1.81 million carried on Australian domestic flights - up on the 1.39 million 12 months prior but a shadow of the 5.49 million total for Nov 2019.

The industry-wide load factor also weakened to just 57.4%, with the heaviest loads recorded on Ballina-Melbourne at 78.4%.

By contrast Cairns-Sydney recorded loads of just 8.8%.

The busiest route for Nov 2021 was Melbourne-Sydney with 241,300 passengers, followed by Brisbane-Cairns with 87,900 and then Ballina-Sydney with 58,200.

Brisbane was Australia's busiest domestic airport, with just over half a million passenger movements, followed by Sydney with 410,000 and then Melbourne with 335,000.

The full report is available for download at bitre.gov.au.

Recovered cases now on the SIN list

REVISED Singapore border measures confirm that recently-recovered travellers who are not fully vaccinated, as well as travellers who are diagnosed or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 "may be permitted to depart for Singapore under selected circumstances".

Prevailing border measures will be exempted for those who can show a PCR or professionally-administered RAT result, or a discharge memo which confirms recovery from COVID-19 issued by a relevant state authority or a licensed medical professional.

In addition, all travellers to Singapore are now only required to undergo self-administered RATs from day 2 to day 7 if they need to leave their accommodation.

Pax transiting via SIN to other ports must comply with the entry requirements of the destination country - info at moh.gov.sg.

Ormina confidence

ORMINA Tours is offering a reduced risk-free deposit of \$150pp to secure bookings on small group journeys for a limited time, with travellers able to cancel up to 90 days prior to departure for any reason and receive future travel credit.

The offer applies to all Ormina Small Group Journeys, with a max of 10 passengers and guaranteed departures with just two, as well as privately curated itineraries.

More at orminatours.com.

Jetstar discounts

JETSTAR last night launched a sale campaign offering more than 600,000 low fares across 83 domestic and international routes.

The "Seize the Holiday Sale" includes Melbourne Avalon to Sydney from \$29, Brisbane to Uluru from \$79 and Cairns to Tokyo from \$199, with offers on sale until 11.59pm AEDT this Fri 28 Jan unless sold out prior.

Tuesday 25th January 2022

QR spat worsens

A **BATTLE** between Qatar Airways and Airbus over the safety of the carrier's A350 aircraft has deteriorated, with the aviation manufacturer cancelling a US\$6 billion contract for 50 A321neo passenger jets.

QR told **TD** that Airbus' decision to abandon an order for an entirely separate contract was "a matter of considerable regret and frustration", but that it intends to robustly defend its position in future legal proceedings.

QR had previously complained to Airbus that the paint on its recently delivered Airbus A350s was cracking and peeling, exposing copper meshing used to insulate aircraft against lightning strikes, and was therefore a safety issue for its crew and pax.

On 20 Jan, QR commenced legal proceedings against Airbus in the High Court of England, asking for US\$600m in compensation for having to ground 21 of its jets.

Bellissimo touring

AUSSIERS can now eat their way through Italy this year on new tours to the country's central regions with Hedonistic Hiking.

Prices start from \$4,765pp and include gastronomy experiences in Parma, Tuscany and Piedmont.

Club Med bites back

CLUB Med's General Manager of the Pacific, Michelle Davies, has lambasted the Western Australian Government's decision to delay its border reopening indefinitely, labelling the decision "deeply frustrating".

Davies was particularly regretful about the extra pressure it will add to travel agents in the state.

"Western Australia's border delays are suppressing our travel agent's valuable potential...we're focusing our efforts on how we can support our travel partners and agents nationally, including those in WA," she said.

AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



TODAY marks another push by the grass roots of the Australian travel sector to remind Government of the need

for more support and to remove the government-imposed barriers to our recovery.

As has been the hallmark of the travel sector during the pandemic it has been the collaboration and coordination of many people who have already delivered a significant support package and now the Government must step up again.

The National Day of Travel Action will take to the streets, mobilising delegations to the members of parliament at a state and federal level.

Using the resources of the National mobilisation campaign,

our message is united and clear: the Federal Government must provide the \$230 million for AFTA's Travel Sector Skills Retention & Recovery Package.

The package is a two-phased approach focusing on travel businesses which need an urgent cash injection of \$130m to continue to meet their overheads and a second \$100m to support the retention & re-engagement of travel professional later in 2022.

These details were provided to the Federal Government in Nov last year and are enforced in our pre-budget submission, which is a critical policy step in achieving a positive outcome.

The National Day of Travel Action is an important step in our sector fight for support, but all members of the sector must continue their efforts to engage with members of Parliament post this event if we are to receive this support.

New Saudia route

THE first ever service between Uganda and Saudi Arabia will commence operation on 02 Feb, with SkyTeam member Saudia operating twice weekly A330s between Riyadh and Entebbe.

GOL fleet financing

BRAZILIAN carrier GOL has announced a successful US\$600 million financing round which will see it lease new Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft for delivery starting this month, with a 6% interest rate.



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APT earlybird deals

APT has released its most popular Canada and Alaska trips for 2023 earlier than anticipated, with earlybird discounts of up to \$3,500 per couple on offer when bookings are made before 29 Apr.

Highlights include the 22-day Rockies Odyssey and Alaska Cruise returning roundtrip from Vancouver, as well as the 16-day Rockies Icons and Alaska Cruise which travels from Calgary to Vancouver and features a luxurious stay in Banff.

Agents can access a brochure for the early releases **HERE**.

TIME to act today

APPLICATIONS for Travel Industry Mentor Experience's (TIME) first intake for the year must be received by Fri 28 Jan, with the professional education course kicking off on 16 Feb.

Payment plans of \$250 a month for six months is also on offer - **CLICK HERE** to find out more.

Intrepid ups choice

INTREPID Travel has revealed it is providing its staff the option of working through Australia Day tomorrow and taking a day-in-lieu instead, reflecting a growing polarisation over the date of the holiday and its significance for the country's Indigenous population.

The operator has stressed there will be no judgement made on those who choose to take 26 Jan off, however it claims the overwhelming majority of its staff have elected to take their day off on an alternative date.

AIA price freeze

AUCKLAND Airport has announced a 12-month freeze on resetting any airline fees in response to continued uncertainty in the aviation sector.

The airport said prices for 2023 would remain at 2022 levels, and that prices for the 2024 period would be determined following further airline consultation.

You betcha I'll see Fletcher



THE travel sector's National Travel Day of Action was in full swing in Sydney's Upper North Shore today, with concerned members of the industry turning up to the Member for Bradfield Paul Fletcher's office to put their case forward for more support and to secure less travel restrictions.

It was just one site of many around the country, with the big push seeing travel workers and business owners converge on MPs and political leaders to express the dire situation still facing tens of thousands of people in the travel sector.

High on the agenda is the lifting of travel and cruise bans, which have been crippling travel

demand, as well as the urgent introduction of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents' (AFTA) Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package.

Pictured doing their bit for the cause are Hardy Schneider from Cruise Express and General Manager of Cruise Control Australia Group Brad Armstrong.

Tests to be canned

TRAVELLERS arriving in England or Scotland from overseas will soon no longer have to take COVID tests if they are fully vaccinated, local health authorities have confirmed.

The changes will come into effect on 11 Feb.

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Travel Daily



MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.712

THE Australian dollar was down against most of the majors this week as the US share market continues to take a battering over the last couple of days.

The American market has recently lost significant value, driven largely by anxiety regarding potential rate hikes from the US Federal Reserve, with the Dow Jones falling by 1.3% & Nasdaq dropping 2.8%.

Australia's currency has seen its value drop as a knock-on effect by 0.7% on the greenback, 1% on the Euro and 1.1% on the Japanese yen, with its short-term future value predicted to hinge on the results of Australian inflation figures due to be released tomorrow.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.712
UK	£0.528
NZ	\$1.066
Euro	€0.630
Japan	¥81.16
Thailand	฿23.56
China	¥4.514
South Africa	10.926
Canada	\$0.902
Crude oil	US\$87.82

Seen it at the movies



PUZZLE

ELY Cathedral in England has played film host to a number of movies including *The King's Speech*, *The Other Boleyn Girl* and *Elizabeth: The Golden Age*.

For a number of these movies it has played the role of Westminster Abbey, as it did in

a very famous Netflix 10-part television series where it was the scene of a royal wedding and coronation.

Stars of the show have included Olivia Colman and Helena Bonham Carter.

Can you name the series?

Answer: The Crown

Fairmont in Hanoi

THE 241-room Fairmont Hanoi in Vietnam is slated to open in 2024 and will be constructed in a central location of the city only a 10-minute walk from Hoan Kiem Lake and the Old Quarter.

The hotel will offer guests six dining and bar venues to choose from including a rooftop restaurant, as well as two indoor and outdoor swimming pools, a large gym area, a wellness spa and bathhouse, and a 1,000m² grand ballroom area.

Accor will mark its debut of the Fairmont brand in Vietnam when the property opens its doors.

EK's veggie allure

EMIRATES has indicated that vegan meals have been the most requested special meal aboard its jets this month, serving close to 10% more plant-based meals than a typical period.

The uptick in requests is partly due to Veganuary, a global movement that encourages people to take on a vegan diet in Jan each year.

EK's vegan food options span more than 170 dishes and are designed by a team of respected chefs and nutritionists, with the airline serving more than 113,000 vegan meals so far in 2021.

TRAVELPORT

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