



Be quick for tickets

THE organisers of this year's Christmas Traveleague event in Melbourne have advised that there are now less than 100 seats remaining for the famous annual industry celebration.

The lunch event will take place at Crown on Wed 14 Dec, with tickets priced at \$170 each - to book [CLICK HERE](#).

New QR chief

JUSTIN Kestel is returning to Melbourne as the new Australia/New Zealand Regional Manager for Qatar Airways, continuing his decade-long tenure with the carrier, which saw him most recently based in Bangkok as Regional Manager Indochina.

Kestel will be joined by Ken Anon Lau as QR's new Manager Digital and Marketing Southwest Pacific and North Asia.

Lau was most recently Manager Loyalty Marketing in QR's Doha head office.

End of an Austrian era

EXCLUSIVE

ASTRID Gruchmann-Licht, the leader of the Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) in Australia for more than three decades, will finish up her Sydney-based role at the end of Nov.

Gruchmann-Licht told *Travel Daily* she was departing the organisation for personal reasons, adding that Austria will remain committed to the Australian market with a local presence, although "there will be changes to the current market office".

Her tenure has seen a significant increase in awareness of Austria as a destination, supported between 1998 and 2007 by direct Lauda Air/Austrian Airlines flights between Sydney and Vienna.

Gruchmann-Licht has maintained Austria's profile in the market by hosting many travel agents and media on Austrian famils, conducting scores of

creative activations, supporting key wholesalers, tour operators and river cruise companies, and helping organise multiple international Austrian Destination Summit events in Vienna.

She's not going quietly, with ANTO set to launch a major new initiative to reach the Australian travel trade later this week.

Gruchmann-Licht will be farewellled next month during an event in Sydney which will also provide an update on the new structure for ANTO in Australia.

Rex gets FIRB tick

THE Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) has issued a No Objection Notification with regard to Rex Airlines' intention to acquire 100% of FIFO operator National Jet Express (*TD* 15 Jul).

Having already received ACCC clearance, Rex now expects the transaction to settle on 30 Sep.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including a photo page from **Atout France**.

TRAVLR Concrete Playground platform

DIGITAL city guide Concrete Playground is now offering bookable trips and experiences in Australia and NZ via a new platform powered by AFTA/ATAS member TRAVLR.

Targeting Gen Z and Millennial travellers, the new CP Trips offering will include a range of itineraries including flights, accommodation and experiences, offering flexible travel arrangements and a dedicated customer service channel.

The new e-commerce platform will offer curated packages including one limited-capacity "hero experience" per quarter, with the launch focusing on the Spring City Festival in Auckland.

GET IN THE SPIRIT

NCL'S
WALK FOR WELLNESS
1 - 31 OCTOBER 2022

Join the NCL team for a walking challenge like no other in October.

For this year's challenge we're promoting health and wellbeing within the travel industry, while also celebrating the all-new Norwegian Spirit's inaugural Australia & New Zealand season.

Get active and track your steps alongside your travel industry friends as we journey around an interactive map of Norwegian Spirit's voyage to New Zealand from Hawai'i. There'll be fun weekly challenges and \$16,000 worth of prizes up for grabs too — our highest value prize pool to date!

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Michael Hay returns

EXCLUSIVE

DRIVEAWAY Holidays founder and former CATO Chairman Michael Hay (**TD** 06 Apr 2010) has returned to the industry as Sales and Marketing Manager for Destination Artisans.

Hay, who retired six years ago, told **TD** he had been approached several times to rejoin the industry, but "the fit was never right until now".

Destination Artisans is a Sydney and Paris-based DMC specialising in customised itineraries for independent travellers to France and Belgium, as well as selected small group tours, with the business established in 2016 by Norma Keshishian.

Hay said he had been impressed with the company's product range, suppliers and access to numerous unique products, along with Keshishian's "unequalled knowledge of France".

See [destinationartisans.com](https://www.destinationartisans.com).

Batik Air expands in PER

BATIK Air, the Malaysia/ Indonesian carrier which earlier this year rebranded from its former name of Malindo Air, has announced a significant expansion of operations in Perth, including the launch of flights to Bali and an increase in non-stops to Kuala Lumpur to 14 weekly.

The PER-DPS services debuted late last week with initial four weekly frequencies, increasing to daily next month.

Batik Air's promotional flights to Bali lead in at \$454 return, while KUL services start at \$579 return including 20kg of baggage.

Business class services are also available on selected departures.

Current schedules provide good connections onward to resort destinations in Malaysia such as Langkawi and Penang, as well as to popular international destinations including Phuket, Bangkok and ports in India.

Batik Air's Bali services also link to a wide range of Indonesian destinations, with Chandran Rama Muthy, Strategy Director of Batik Air's parent company Lion Air Group, saying "we are ramping up our capacity, which will allow us to capture the significant pent-up demand for travel after the prolonged period of hibernation".

"The new schedules will provide connectivity and help stimulate tourism, business and trade growth between Australia and Malaysia & Indonesia," he said.

More CI flights

TAIWAN-BASED China Airlines has announced new flights from Taipei to Cebu and Chiang Mai, with connections to and from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

Cebu kicks off on 01 Dec, while CI's Chiang Mai operations will debut on 20 Jan 2023.

QF improvement

QANTAS this morning issued an update on its operational performance so far this month, saying flight delays, cancellations and mishandled bag rates have all fallen over the last two weeks.

On-time performance was 71%, while a reduced schedule saw cancellations cut to just 2%, down from 7.5% in Jun.

The carrier said performance would be tested in the coming weeks due to school holidays, long weekends and football finals all driving high levels of demand.

Customers are being urged to arrive at the airport at least 90 minutes ahead of departure for domestic flights, and three hours early for international.

IASC VA Fiji tick

THE International Air Services Commission (IASC) has issued determinations renewing the allocation of 1,620 weekly seats to Virgin Australia on the Fiji route.



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INDEPENDENT HOLIDAY PACKAGE EXPERTS



G'day to Narooma

G'DAY Group Chief Investment Officer Amanda Baldwin said the company was attracted to the growth potential of its latest acquisition in Narooma on New South Wales' south coast.

Located just off the Princes Highway, five minutes south of the main township of Narooma, the 10-hectare beachfront camping & cottages Narooma offers nearly 300 tourist sites and unabated access to the picturesque Handkerchief Beach.

AA's Aussie return

AMERICAN Airlines has scheduled the resumption of its trans-Pacific flights between Los Angeles and Sydney, with GDS screens indicating the services will resume from 26 Oct.

AA has also loaded a new direct route between Auckland and Dallas Fort Worth from 28 Oct, with both services to utilise Boeing 787-9 aircraft.

Docklands project unveiled

TFE Hotels has partnered with Capital Alliance to introduce a mixed-use development at Melbourne Docklands, housing the first purpose-built Collection by TFE Hotels and A by Adina properties in Melbourne.

Slated for opening in 2026, the \$340 million project will also feature the largest rooftop infinity pool in Australia and a 1,000-capacity event conference centre, located on a skybridge that connects the two accommodation towers.

The 200-key Collection Hotel, which is yet to be named, joins several other Collection by TFE Hotels properties, including The Calile in Brisbane, Auckland's The Hotel Britomart and the new Surry Hills property currently under development (TD 28 Jun).

The adjacent A by Adina hotel will offer 105 rooms, marking the brand's debut in Victoria following the opening of flagship



hotels in Sydney and Canberra in 2021 (TD 30 Apr 2021).

Designed by SJB, the dual-tower project is expected to become an "architectural landmark" on the Melbourne skyline, according to the architecture firm's Founding Director Michael Bialek.

The design "maximises daylight and those all-important city skyline and uninterrupted water views", Bialek said.

The hotel site is located on 28-38 Pearl River Road, Docklands and will also feature a day spa, retail shopping, and restaurant offerings.

Pictured: A render of the giant rooftop infinity pool.

Biometric ambition

STAR Alliance is seeking to have at least 50% of its carriers using biometric technology by 2025.

The world's largest global airline alliance is hoping the uptake of biometrics will see an increase in contactless travel and a reduction in airport congestion, an issue which has plagued the industry in recent months.

Star Alliance also hopes the four European airports in its biometrics program will add additional touch points.

EK adds incentive

EMIRATES is offering Australian passengers a free ticket to one of Dubai's most iconic landmarks, the Museum of the Future.

Those planning to travel to Dubai between 22 Sep and 08 Dec will be granted a complimentary ticket to the museum when using the code "MFUTURE", with the promo valid to book until 02 Oct.

Position Vacant


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Window Seat

IT'S fair to say this is a flight most of us would hope to have an aisle row all to ourselves for.

A chartered Boeing 747 recently landed in India carrying eight wild cheetahs on board as part of a project to reintroduce the impressive big cats after a close to 70-year period of formal extinction in the country.

The precious cargo was flown from Windhoek, Namibia across the Indian Ocean on an 11-hour journey, while another 12 cheetahs will also fly in from South Africa next month.

Fittingly, the plane had an Amur tiger painted on its face, a visual reminder for workers on the tarmac to ensure they don't lose the cats' baggage and make them too angry.



AA scales down SFO

AMERICAN Airlines has revealed that it will soon close its San Francisco flight attendant base as part of a wider plan to scale down operations at the hub.

The decision will come into effect from Jan 2023, with AA not expecting to cut back on flights, nor pursue growth opportunities.

Air NZ touches down at JFK



AIR New Zealand broke new ground over the weekend, touching down at John F. Kennedy International Airport to mark its first non-stop service between Auckland and The Big Apple.

Shoring up plans to go ahead with the delayed debut of the route in Mar, the 17-and-a-half hour flight was first announced by the Kiwi carrier not long before the pandemic struck (TD 23 Oct 2019), which put the brakes on its ambitious North American expansion strategy.

"By adding greater access to the east coast of the US, we're connecting our North American customers to the possibilities of 20 destinations within New Zealand as well as the Pacific and Australia, all within easy reach," CEO Greg Foran said.

Air New Zealand now serves seven US and Canadian destinations, including Chicago, Honolulu, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver and now New York City.

Pictured: The first AKL/JFK crew.

Recovery funding

A CASH pool jointly funded by the Qld and Federal Governments is offering grants between \$20,000 and \$150,000 for eligible tourism businesses impacted by natural disasters.

Weather events listed to gain access to the \$5m recovery fund include flooding across all parts of the state & Tropical Cyclone Seth.

The Qld Govt will also invest \$2m to help diversify visitor experiences in areas susceptible to natural disasters.

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Soiree French Flair by Sofitel & Atout France

PARIS Region Tourism recently launched the Rugby World Cup France 2023 and celebrated one year to go. 350 guests gathered at the Sofitel Wentworth to attend the Parisian Soiree, including opinion leaders, French luxury brands and celebrities. Welcomed with Mumm Champagne, guests were entertained with the French Marseillaise sung by the Wallabies.

From 08 Sep to 28 Oct 2023, France will host the 2023 Rugby World Cup, with the opening match and the final to be played at the Stade de France.

France expects 250,000 bed nights from Australia - for more information, head to France.fr.

FORMER rugby union player John Eales with Claire Kaletka-Neil, Atout France Digital Marketing and Events Manager and LA Giltinis player Matt Giteau.



ATOUT France Director Patrick Benhamou with NSW Parliament's Natalie Ward.



TWO well-known Australian personalities, presenter Catriona Rowntree and journalist Peter FitzSimons.



TV & radio presenter Melissa Doyle with Channel 9's Nick McArdle.



CELEBRITY chef Guillaume Brahimi and Sarah Derry, Accor Hotels.



CHRISTOPHE Decloux, Paris Region Tourism and Francois Delahaye, Dorchester Collection.



CHRISTIAN Blondeau, France at Leisure with Lisa Pile, Regent Seven Seas Cruises.



BEN Slack, World Rugby and Barry Brown, Emirates.



Typhoon hits flights

HUNDREDS of domestic flights in and out of southern Japan have been cancelled amid warnings of a “super typhoon”, with millions of people in Kagoshima, Kumamoto and Miyazaki in the southern Kyushu region placed under evacuation orders.

Typhoon Nanmado, which has the potential to be the most destructive storm to hit Japan in decades, made landfall late Sun local time and is expected to reach Tokyo on Tue and pass over Japan’s main island of Honshu before moving out to sea by Wed.

IHG hacked “for fun”

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group (IHG) was the subject of a cyber attack last week (**TD** 08 Sep), causing widespread disruption to its booking channels and other applications.

IHG said customer-facing systems are now returning to normal, but services “may remain intermittent”.

The hackers from Vietnam reportedly captured and deleted the hotelier’s customer data “for fun”, after they initially failed in their attempt to leverage a ransom for the client info.

Crown cooks up a coup



NEW Crown Resorts CEO Ciaran Carruthers has welcomed internationally acclaimed Chef Nobu Matsuhisa to Nobu Sydney for his first visit Down Under in five years.

The Japanese celebrity chef and restaurateur will work closely with teams in his three Australian restaurants, which Crown exclusively houses in its Melbourne, Perth and Sydney properties, reviewing produce, techniques, and menus.

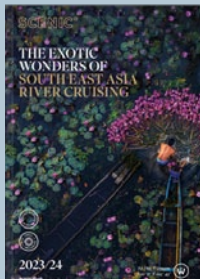
He will also train and mentor Nobu teams and host sold-out private events for the public.

Crown Resorts has a 20% stake in the Nobu business, with the restaurants earning a myriad of global accolades since hitting Australian shores 15 years ago.

Pictured: Pingping Poh, Chef de Cuisine at Nobu Perth; Herve Courtot, Corporate Chef at Nobu Hospitality; Nobuyuki Matsuhisa, Chef at Nobu; Rinet Burnett, Chef de Cuisine at Nobu Melbourne; Harold Hurtada, Chef de Cuisine at Nobu Sydney.

BROCHURES

WELCOME to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to brochures@traveldaily.com.au.



Scenic - The Exotic Wonders of South East Asia
Scenic has unveiled its new brochure showcasing the brand's 2023/24 South East Asia river cruises and land journeys. Nine new experiences feature among the pages, including a tour of Cao Dai Temple in Tan Chau for guests on a Mekong River cruise, and high tea at Raffles Hotel Le Roy for all guests in Phnom Penh. The brochure highlights the 18-day Highlights of Cambodia, Vietnam & Luxury Mekong itinerary, which includes a seven-night cruise, allowing guests to sail into Ha Long Bay, explore Cambodia's capital city, and discover the majestic Angkor temples.



Boating Guide to Queensland by Fiona Harper
New Holland Publishers has released the 'Boating Guide to Queensland: Short Stays and Long Weekends', written by Australian travel and boating writer, Fiona Harper. The guide includes inspiration, ideas and planning tips for boating adventures in Queensland, organised into six themed sections: short breaks, coastal hopping, marinas and harbours, islands, nature getaways and gourmet getaways. The book recommends restaurants and cafes where you can park your boat, rules and regulations around coastal waters, what sea and bird life you will encounter, and more.

Schiphol CEO goes

THE CEO of Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, Dick Benschop, said he will step down from the role as the airport continues to struggle with major flight disruptions (**TD** 15 Aug).

Benschop, who will remain at his post until a successor is found, said he is giving AMS the “space to make a new start”, adding he did not want the criticism that has been directed at him to “become an obstacle for Schiphol”.

MEANWHILE, the Netherlands airport has announced a further reduction in pax capacity until at least the end of Oct.

Russian tourist tick

THE Australian Government has rejected calls from Ukraine's ambassador to Australia, Vasily Myroshnychenko, to stop issuing tourist visas to Russian travellers. “Russian people are accountable for this war...so they have to bear the responsibility,” the ambassador said.

Acting Prime Minister Richard Marles responded on Sun, stating “this is not something we are considering at the moment”.

“We have a range of sanctions in place and the focus of our sanctions is on the Russian government, those who are perpetrating what has happened in relation to Ukraine, not focused on the Russian people themselves,” he added.