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## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news.

## QR, BA expand joint business

BRITISH Airways and Qatar Airways overnight announced the addition of 42 countries to their shared network, completing the latest phase in their wide-ranging partnership.

Said to now be the world's largest joint airline business, the total number of destinations served by the two carriers is now 185 in over 60 countries, with the additions including Italy, the Maldives, Norway, Sweden and Singapore.

"Customers will now benefit from even greater choices in prices and schedules, with options for direct flights as well as connections via hubs in London and Doha," the carriers said.

The pact also sees customers able to link their Qatar Airways Privilege Club and BA Executive Club accounts to transfer Avios loyalty points between the two, and combine balances to claim rewards offered by each carrier.

## Canada axes rules

ALL COVID-19 border measures for visitors to Canada will be lifted on 01 Oct, with proof of vaccination, testing and the submission of public health information via the ArriveCAN app or website no longer needed.

The changes apply to arrivals by both air and sea, with officials saying the lifting is facilitated by high vaccination rates, new COVID-19 treatments, rapid tests and lower hospitalisation rates.

## New events peak body

AUSTRALIA'S business events sector is set for a shake-up, with a formal review signalling the need for a "fully resourced peak industry association".

The Business Events Council of Australia (BECA) commissioned the project in response to the challenges of the pandemic, and to ensure its future sustainability.

"The aim of this review was to create a better resourced organisation to deliver the research, advocacy and training essential to the growth of the industry," according to a statement from BECA today.

"The proposed new organisation will be able to deliver more value for all members of the business events industry and champion inclusivity for the various segments of business events - including large and small operators across the sector's supply chain."

Consultancy firm ODIN360 has delivered an interim report advising on the best operating model, with the initial phase involving extensive consultation with a plethora of existing industry bodies including the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB), the Exhibition & Events Association

## Samoa drops tests

PRE-DEPARTURE tests are no longer required for visitors to Samoa, with the move coming almost two months after Samoa reopened its borders on 01 Aug.

COVID-19 cases are trending downward and over 92% of the target population in the destination are fully vaccinated.

of Australia (EAAA), Meetings and Events Australia (MEA), the Professional Conference Organisers Association (PCOA) and the Australian Convention Centres Group (ACCG).

The consultants have also engaged with large, medium and small operators in each state and territory, according to BECA Independent Chair Leo Jago.

"The global pandemic challenged Australia's business events industry, and now is the right time to look at what the sector needs as a whole to strive for growth across the next decade and beyond, with a focus on research, advocacy and professional development," Jago said, with BECA appointing a Project Development Group to work with ODIN360 to further develop the future model.

Any industry participants involved with business events are being urged to complete a survey to provide further feedback, with the final report to be presented to the BECA board by the end of the year.

**CLICK HERE** to provide feedback.

## Royal entertainers

ROYAL Caribbean has launched a recruitment campaign for over 1,400 musicians, entertainers and production teams over the next year, with opportunities right across the 26-strong fleet featuring 800 music sets and 142 production shows - more in today's *Cruise Weekly* and see [royalcaribbeanentertainment.com](http://royalcaribbeanentertainment.com).

## Hayya card needed

TRAVELLERS heading to the FIFA World Cup in Qatar will be required to purchase a Hayya card in order to enter the country between 10 Nov and 23 Dec.

The permit, also required for children, will be needed to cross Qatar's borders, attend any FIFA experience, and access free tournament transport.

To register for a Hayya account, travellers must apply for a Hayya card **HERE**, where users will need to provide details of a valid match ticket, accommodation, passport and home address, with a smartphone required to access the digital card which costs QAR100 or about A\$42.

For more details, see **HERE**.

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## Window Seat

**ONE** of eastern Canada's most popular Instagram-worthy tourist attractions is no more, after Tropical Storm Fiona smashed the coastline of Prince Edward Island.

The iconic Teacup Rock

(pictured right) was a landmark at Thunder Cove Beach, featuring



in thousands of selfies and landscape shots.

Sadly after a 12-hour battering during the storm the rock is no more, with just a remnant of the plinth on which it stood



surviving the onslaught, according to Instagram user @dina.pugliese.

## SETO member offer

**CATO'S** Student Educational Travel Organisation (SETO) is currently offering applicants looking to join its Associate Membership category cheaper rates until 30 Oct.

The group will take new members for just \$325 plus GST under the promotion, creating accounts valid until 31 Mar 2023, and offer valuable networking opportunities for companies interested in growing the lucrative marriage between education and travel.

Benefits of joining include access to key decision-makers, an official listing on SETO website, event sponsorship opportunities, networking, priority invitations to SETO events, webinars, and exposure via SETO to international organisation members such as the Student Youth Travel Association - SYTA.

SETO has added 20 tour operator members since Feb. For more info, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Major Regent opportunity

**NEW** marketing resources set to be launched in the coming months by Regent Seven Seas Cruises will be able to be tailored for individual travel agency groups or brands, with the cruise line set to share the results of exclusive research to help travel sellers maximise their returns from the luxury sector.

The company's Chief Sales & Marketing Officer, Andrea DeMarco, is in Australia this week and told **TD** the unique approach involves a significant commitment to the trade.

"We want to do everything that we can to invest in our industry partners and help them grow their business," she said.

DeMarco noted that Australian cruisers with Regent spend more than other international markets and also have a longer booking curve, with the "truly all-inclusive" nature of the product also meaning higher commissions

on the full cruise holiday.

With a background in financial markets, DeMarco played a key role in the public listing of Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings in 2013 and more recently the group's capital raisings during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

Having shifted to a different type of selling, she's confident about the strong future of the luxury segment, despite gathering economic headwinds.

"Coming from Wall Street, if you look back at 2008 in the financial crisis, luxury fared the best...it was much more insulated than contemporary brands," she said.

Other fundamentals around the luxury segment include a strong desire for longer trips, destination immersion and as seen in the wider industry, a willingness to trade up to more expensive travel products, with DeMarco saying it's "an unrivalled opportunity" - more in **CW** today.

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## World Tourism Day!

**TODAY** marks the 42nd World Tourism Day and this year highlights the theme ‘Rethinking Tourism’, which, according to the United Nations, is intended to mark a significant shift towards tourism being recognised as “a crucial pillar for development”.

In paying homage to the day, Australia’s Tourism Minister Don Farrell said he was “committed to doing everything I can to help Australia’s \$166 billion tourism industry return to the economic powerhouse we know it to be”.

“Tourism is not only a huge employer and a large export earner, it also promotes our unique cultural...destinations.”

## Air NZ headwinds

**THE** first week of flying directly to New York from Auckland for Air NZ has been hit by plenty of challenges, with “extreme” weather patterns causing the carrier to lighten flight loads to avoid a stopover in Fiji.

Headwinds caused by severe weather patterns led the airline to request 20 volunteers miss their return flight over the weekend in exchange for NZ\$2,591 & paid hotel stays.

“The forecast weather is outside of the usual forecasting and more extreme than our 12 months of modelling and other data stretching back much further,” a spokesperson for Air NZ said.

## Staywell expands in Oz

**STAYWELL** Holdings has revealed plans to focus its expansion efforts on the Aussie market, confirming the local debut of three new brands over the next two years.

Part of the international conglomerate Seibu Holdings, StayWell Holdings is preparing to introduce the Park Proxi and Park Regis by Prince brands to market within the next 24 months.

Park Proxi allows hotel owners to co-create and customise their desired hotel by minimising hotel design mandates, while Park Regis by Price offers an upscale and premium hotel experience.

The hotel management group will also bring global brand The Prince Akatoki, a Japanese-inspired offering aimed at high-end travellers, to Sydney by 2025 and Melbourne by 2026, as part of the brand’s objective to establish itself in key gateway cities globally.

In addition to the three new-to-market brands, Staywell Holdings has begun upgrading its existing properties in Sydney, Melbourne, Launceston, and Pokolbin, with future refurbishments planned for its Blue Mountains and Townsville hotels next year.

The expansion of Staywell’s Australian portfolio will result in the management group overseeing five hotel brands and chains, while supporting its strategic goal to deliver 250 hotels in the next decade.

The expansion of both Staywell and Prince Hotels & Resorts will take place across the regions of Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Europe and the US.

Staywell Holdings’ existing domestic offerings, including the Park Regis and Leisure Inn brands, have seen strong growth through the pandemic and will “continue to form a core component” of the company’s Aussie portfolio.



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## AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



**LAST** Fri I had the pleasure of joining Collette for their industry update at Sydney's Park Hyatt.

It was great to join many, to hear about the updated product offering especially in light of an opening border to Japan.

I was also able to catch up with Christian Leibl-Cote who was over from the USA, James Hewlett and newly appointed Head of Sales, David Farrar following a five stop Australian tour.

What I took away from this catch up was that like many in the sector, there have been substantial lessons learnt from the impacts of COVID.

What is going to be key to improving our current performance is booking flexibility.

This step will help rebuild consumer confidence and encourage travellers to book their next holiday in 2023, not 2024.

While flexibility will assist in improving confidence to book, the external factors, including record high airfares and international border restrictions in our major Asian markets will continue to soften demand.

Encouragingly today we see

Canada remove restrictions, yesterday it was Thailand, joining Japan and other Indo-Pacific nations such as Fiji and Indonesia.

We now need all countries to fast track the removal of COVID restrictions and end the mixed approach to COVID border management.

Collette also provided me with an opportunity to speak to the trade audience in attendance about the activities of AFTA.

I provided an update on our efforts to improve the sector's overall appeal as an employer and the improvements to terms and conditions requirements of ATAS.

With ATAS now fully functional, we continue to see first-hand the need for businesses to ensure their T&Cs are up to date.

We are still seeing a steady flow of feedback about cancellations of flights and use of credits from COVID.

While many of these issues are related to the ongoing disruption of air travel domestically and internationally, ATAS businesses must ensure compliance with the new Code of Conduct.

These changes are being explained with our latest webinar series. If you have missed one, please let the team know and we will be able to send you the recordings.

## AAT Kings 23/24

**AAT** Kings and Inspiring Journeys have announced their 2023-2024 season, including three new South Australian tours.

The program focuses again on the places, stories and tastes of Australia, from the landscapes on the journey, along with food and drink which immerses guests into the destination, as well as stories from locals.

The new South Australia tours include the four-day Outback Explorer, a five-day Adelaide to Kangaroo Island tour and a week-long Eyre Peninsula trip.

## NT expedites jobs

**THE** Northern Territory Government will implement a new online application platform to speed up the Designated Area Migration Agreement's (DAMA) process, supporting Territory businesses experiencing critical skill shortages.

NT DAMA is an employer-sponsored visa program that allows Territory employers to sponsor international workers for positions they have been unable to fill with local workers, with applications able to be lodged with MigrationNT from today.

## Roll out the green carpet



**VISIT** Greater Palm Springs hosted the premiere for *Don't Worry Darling* in Sydney on 21 Sep, alongside NBC Universal.

The new film, a psychological thriller directed by Hollywood actress Olivia Wilde, was filmed across the backdrop of Greater Palm Springs, featuring locations like The Kaufmann Desert House, Palm Springs Visitor Centre, La Quinta Resort & Club, and more.

At Event Cinemas on George Street, VIP travel trade guests and travel media got a first glimpse at the long-awaited film, which will show in cinemas from 06 Oct.

The cinema was transformed to

reflect the film's utopian themes, featuring AstroTurf's "green carpet" and cacti.

**Pictured:** Claire Bradley, Tourism Development Account Manager and Adelle Glance-Wilson, PR Account Manager.

## Star accepts report

**STAR** Entertainment has accepted the findings of a review into its operations, which found it unsuitable to hold a license for a Sydney casino.

Star chairman Ben Heap has asked the NSW Independent Casino Commission (NICC) to allow it to keep operating under strict supervision.

"We intend to do whatever is necessary, in consultation with NICC, to restore the Star Sydney to suitability," he stated.

The company will undertake a Remediation Plan, which includes changes to leadership.

## Fiji recruits sustainability chief

**TOURISM** Fiji has welcomed Sunishma Singh to its first-ever dedicated sustainability role, which will focus on facilitating the transition towards sustainable tourism.

Singh will be responsible for developing internal programs ensuring that Tourism Fiji events are free of single-use plastics, minimise waste, and utilise Fiji produce and talent.

She will also ensure the Tourism Fiji team are trained and have a good understanding of sustainable tourism.

Singh's previous work experience includes Resilience Officer for the United Nations Settlements Program.



## Regent Seven Seas retail therapy



**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises this morning formally debuted its special lounge at Sydney's David Jones flagship store (TD 23 Sep), with a special breakfast event to showcase the luxury cruise line's partnership with the upmarket retailer.

The activation also includes in-store video screens and the famous CBD windows which highlight Regent itineraries and destinations to the department store's clientele.

It's the first ever cruise line partnership for DJs, with Regent Vice President for Australia and NZ, Lisa Pile driving the relationship which also includes co-marketing campaigns by both organisations.

"It's about thinking out of the box to find new customers," said Steve Odell, Regent SVP APAC.

The Regent team noted that pre-pandemic Europe had been a strong seller, but with rapid recovery in the luxury segment "we're now seeing a much broader range of destinations that travellers are looking to," with the current top-selling itinerary in Australia being a

## AA Mexico route

**AMERICAN** Airlines will add a new route between the USA and Mexico next month, with the debut of daily Embraer E175 flights between Phoenix Arizona and Monterrey.



voyage from Dubai to Athens via the Suez Canal.

Other trends are towards closer to home itineraries, with some travellers favouring one-stop fly-cruise holidays to Asia, and a strong surge in interest for Japan.

**Pictured** above in the pop-up lounge are Lisa Pile, Regent's VP and GM Australia and NZ; Andrea DeMarco, Regent Chief Sales and Marketing Officer; Sarah McKay, David Jones Event Sponsorship Marketing Specialist; and Steve Odell, Regent SVP and MD Asia Pacific, while **inset** is Andrea DeMarco with Matthew Vince, Regent Asia Pacific Director of Marketing.

## Hyatt Japan brand

**HYATT** Corporation has announced the creation of a new brand in Japan in partnership with local operator Kiraku.

The Atona brand will be a 50/50 joint venture, with 30 to 50-room properties in locations accessible by high speed train offering onsen-style hot spring facilities, targeting domestic guests and the international wellness market.

## Pax still coming up short

**AUSTRALIA'S** total international air passenger numbers in Jul fell well short of pre-pandemic levels, with the country lagging behind by around 1.7 million travellers, new figures from the Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics have shown.

While the numbers continue to show a strong improvement on a month-on-month basis, Jul's 2.06 million figure exposes the gap between the 3.736 million passengers received in Jul 2019.

The total available air seats tells part of the latent recovery story, with Jul's 2.45 million seats down

by 46.8% when compared to Jul 2019, despite an ever-improving utilisation number, which stood at 85.5% for Jul this year, ahead of the Jul 2019 result of 82.5%.

Australian airlines accounted for 32.1% of total passenger carriage in Jul, with Qantas snaring the largest share of the market at any carrier with 17.1% of the traffic, followed by Singapore Airlines (12.8%), Jetstar (12.7%), Air New Zealand (9.6%) & Emirates (8.5%).

Low-cost carriers accounted for 7.4% of the market for the month, down on the 15.4% recorded in Jul 2019, with Cebu Pacific Air, Indonesia AirAsia, Jetstar, Jetstar Asia & Scoot Tigerair comprising most flights.

## EK's S Africa push

**EMIRATES** has announced expanded flight schedules across South Africa, including three daily flights to Johannesburg from 01 Mar 2023.

The airline will also implement double daily services to Cape Town from 01 Feb, and add two extra flights to Durban, which will make it a daily operation from 01 Dec 2022.

The additional services follow a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed earlier this year between Emirates and the South African Tourism Board.

## Thai emergency lifts

**AUTHORITIES** in Thailand have announced the reclassification of COVID-19 as a "communicable disease under surveillance" effective from 01 Oct, meaning the end of the country's nationwide Emergency Decree.

Effective this Sat, international travellers to Thailand will no longer be required to show proof of vaccination or negative COVID-19 test results, while arrivals from visa exempt countries can stay for 45 days.



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## South Korea masks

**THE** South Korean Government has fully lifted outdoor mask mandates following a significant reduction in COVID-19 cases over the last two months.

Until now, masks were required at outdoor gatherings involving over 50 people; but masks will remain for indoor environments.

## Skal party kicks goals



**THE** Skal Club of Melbourne held its Grand Final Luncheon on Thu at the MCG in Victoria, and according to those who attended it was "an absolute blast"!

"It is always a special day in our club's calendar," Club President Tara Strickland enthused, "but

having Robbie Williams and Delta perform right in front of us, giving us all a sneak preview of what was to come on Sat, capped off the most spectacular day."

**Pictured:** Michael Berdon, Financial Planning Association of Australia; Aida Osta, Visit USA; Skal Club President Tara Strickland; and CEO Travica Rob Cecconi.

## Marriott foursome

**MARRIOTT** International has appointed four new General Managers across its Sydney and Melbourne portfolio, including Bennath Evea, who will head up Courtyard by Marriott North Ryde.

Sudhir Yadav will take charge of AC by Marriott Melbourne Southbank; Scott MacDonald at Four Points by Sheraton Sydney, Central Park; and Michelle Scott, at Moxy Sydney Airport Hotel.

## \$1,000 discount

**PASSENGERS** who join an Aranui Cruise long voyage in the first half of 2023 can save \$1,000 for bookings made by 09 Dec.

The discount applies to all voyages departing Papeete, including two Discovery cruises to Pitcairn and the Cook Islands - **CLICK HERE** for bookings.

## Doubts over claim

**DESPITE** Bali's Agriculture and Food Security office claiming the island has been free of foot-and-mouth disease for almost two months, the ABC claims to have seen video of cattle clearly still infected with the condition.

Officials in Denpasar have claimed that more than 60 cattle were slaughtered in the first week of Sep because of FMD, with local sources also alleging the Indonesian Government is pushing a policy of not talking about the issue until it fades from public view.

The outbreak of FMD in Indonesia has prompted some senior political figures to call for a ban on travel to places like Bali until it is brought under control.

## Shangri-La inclusions

**SHANGRI-LA** Hotels & Resorts has announced a range of family deals at its Southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands properties ahead of the Christmas holidays.

One of several deals on offer is the Shangri-La Rasa Sentosa Singapore Family Adventure from \$498 per night, which includes daily breakfast, sea sports activities, access to HydroDash aqua park, the Nestopia play area, and MegaBounce, a super trampoline.

Bookings must be made before 30 Dec - **CLICK HERE** for details.

## MONEY

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

**AU\$1 = US\$0.650**

**THE** British pound has hit a record low, in what is mooted as a "big warning" for Australia and our local currency.

The pound's slump to US\$1.08 marked a catastrophic day for the British currency, as Australia's new Treasurer Jim Chalmers proposes to deliver similar tax cuts to those seen in the United Kingdom.

*Wholesale rates this morning.*

US	\$0.650
UK	£0.615
NZ	\$1.137
Euro	€0.675
Japan	¥93.45
Thailand	฿24.60
China	¥4.654
South Africa	11.69
Canada	\$0.885
Crude oil	US\$84.06

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