



### Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including our Corporate Update.

### USA sale promotion

**QANTAS** today launched a five-day "USA Red Tail Sale" offering special fares in all classes on flights from Australia to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Dallas Fort Worth and New York for travel 24 Apr-15 Jun, 11 Jul-14 Sep and 09 Oct-28 Nov.

## Feb travel still down 14%

**TRAVEL** to and from Australia is continuing to recover from its COVID-19 depths, but still remains significantly below levels recorded during the pre-pandemic boom year of 2019.

Figures released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed the trend, with short-term residents sitting at 639,580 during Feb, 14.3% lower than the same month four years ago.

However it was a significant improvement on the same time in 2022, when borders were still slowly reopening and just over 115,000 Feb trips were recorded.

This year, NZ was the most popular destination visited by Aussies in Feb with 97,140 trips accounting for 15% of the total, followed by Indonesia with 72,800 and then India at 70,540.

Japan was in fourth place, outpacing the USA, Thailand, Vietnam and the Philippines, with Singapore and Malaysia rounding out the top 10 for the month.

Visitor arrivals are also continuing to slowly recover, but the Feb figures indicate a long

way to go with 600,710 incoming trips, which was 35.2% lower than the pre-COVID level in 2019.

New Zealand was the largest source country with 78,650 trips, but only just pipped the UK in second place with 72,110 and then the USA at 69,560.

China, which was far and away Australia's largest source of international visitors in Feb 2019, came in fourth spot with 40,430 - just a fifth of the numbers from this key market four years ago.

India, South Korea, Japan, Singapore, Canada and Germany filled out the rest of the top 10 in terms of visitor arrivals in Feb.

The international student market is also continuing to recover, with 142,580 arrivals into Australia during Feb, which while welcome is still 22.5% lower than pre-COVID levels.

### AC to fly YVR-DXB

**AIR** Canada overnight announced a new non-stop route from Vancouver to Dubai.

The service is scheduled to debut on 28 Oct, initially operating four times per week.

It will complement Air Canada's existing daily service between Toronto and Dubai, with officials in British Columbia hailing the move as a key connection for trade, travel and tourism.

Air Canada will continue its existing codeshare and frequent flyer partnership with Emirates on the route, offering onward connection to destinations across the Middle East, Indian subcontinent and East Africa.

The flights will be operated using AC's 787 Dreamliner fleet.

### QF rocks more flights

**QANTAS** will increase flights between Cairns and Ayers Rock Airport (Uluru) from three times a week to daily from 31 Mar next year, adding more than 37,000 seats per year on the route.

"With the Great Barrier Reef and Uluru high on visitors' bucket lists, this route (operated using a Embraer E190 aircraft) is a key link for international visitors' multi-stop itineraries," Domestic and Int'l CEO Andrew David said.



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### Glading to join FCTG Independent

**NIKKI** Glading has been appointed as the new General Manager - Independent Luxury Collection within Flight Centre Travel Group's Luxury and Independent division.

Glading was most recently at Virtuoso Australia and NZ as Account Director of Partner Relations (*TD* 16 Sep 2022), prior to which she was the local Head of Sales for Seabourn and Holland America Line.



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## SYD marks first 50

SYDNEY Airport has this week welcomed the 50th airline to its tarmac with the touching down of Vietjet's inaugural service from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam - the first time the hub has ever had 50 carriers operating at one time.

Australia's largest aviation hub has now seen six new airlines debut over the last 12 months, with existing carriers also continuing to return and help beef up air capacity.

In 2019, there were 48 airlines flying regular passenger services operating through Sydney, with this dropping dramatically to around 20 airlines in Apr 2020 as the Aussie border slammed shut.

Sydney Airport now has four airlines flying to the growing market of Vietnam - for more on Vietjet's local plans, [see right](#).

## Vietjet eyes further Aussie flights



VJETJET has confirmed it is currently mulling expansion plans to more Australian cities such as Perth and Adelaide.

Speaking on the sidelines of the carrier's inaugural flight to Sydney, Vice President Do Xuan Quang told *Travel Daily* that Australia plays an important role in the carrier's business strategy, and the airline is monitoring demand to potentially fly more services to the country.

The airline's goal is to go daily on its newly launched Sydney and Melbourne routes by the end of the year, Quang also revealed, adding the latest launch in Sydney could set in motion a launch to Perth and Adelaide.

"We are happy, but we need to increase the frequency to daily flights by the end of this year," he said, adding "we are studying the market situation now, so when the market feedback is good and positive, we can fly".

Vietjet celebrated its launch in Australia yesterday, with the arrival of its inaugural flight to Sydney, after the airline earlier in the month commenced flights from Melbourne to Ho Chi Minh

City (*TD* 11 Apr).

The arrival of the inaugural Ho Chi Minh City-Sydney flight marked the beginning of Vietjet's six weekly return flights to Vietnam, with Brisbane services to commence from Jun.

**Pictured** are Sydney Airport Chief Executive Officer Geoff Culbert with Quang and Viet influencer Duong Pham.

**MEANWHILE** Vietnam Airlines has revealed plans to launch a new service between Hanoi and Melbourne from Jun, operating twice a week.

## FJ confirms CBR

FIJI Airways has confirmed plans to introduce a new service between Canberra and Nadi from Jul, following speculation about the route reported earlier this week (*TD* 12 Apr).

Canberra flights will operate twice weekly between Jul and late Sep, moving to three times a week after that.

The carrier's CEO, Andre Viljoen, confirmed the new service has been made possible due to two A350s being added to the carrier's fleet (*TD* 06 Apr), a move the airline was tight-lipped about when contacted by *Travel Daily* last week.

"Australia continues to be our major source market for tourism, not only do we need to be able to cater for the growing number of tourists visiting Fiji, but also position ourselves to ensure that Fiji Airways is their airline of choice," Viljoen said.

## Oceania automates

OCEANIA Cruises has enhanced its rewards program with an automated incentive system for travel advisors in Australia and New Zealand.

The new system allows trade partners to earn and claim rewards points when making verified Oceania Cruises bookings.

For every stateroom booked, agents will earn between five to 30 points (with one point equal to AU/NZ\$1), which can be accumulated and redeemed for Amazon & Coles Group gift codes.

Travel advisors who join Oceania Rewards will also earn \$15 when they register **HERE**.

There is a special launch offer, with a Grand Voyage booking earning double points, an Around the World Official Sector booking earning 3x points, and more.

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## Rex takes equity in Dovetail

REX Airlines has opted to purchase some skin in the game of its planned conversion to zero emissions jets, this morning announcing a 20% acquisition in Dovetail Electric Aviation.

The Australian start-up is leading the way when it comes to converting turbine-powered aircraft to electric propulsion, with Rex last year revealing a pilot scheme to convert one of its planes to test how a fleet-wide conversion would work at scale (**TD 22 Jul 2022**).

Rex's minority purchase will see the carrier appoint one of its Board members to sit on the Board of Dovetail, formalising the strategic partnership formed between the two companies in 2022 and allowing the regional carrier to have more of a say in the development of the pioneering conversion technology.

The news is the latest chapter



of ascendancy for Dovetail, which also recently received a \$3 million grant from the Federal Government's Cooperative Research Centres Projects program to accelerate the development of electric propulsion systems for aircraft used on routes operated by Rex and other regional airlines.

The tech company also attracted the attention of many aviation observers after successfully completing initial ground tests involving a small-scale Electric Propulsion System to spin a three blade propeller for the first time.

Dovetail plans to open conversion centres in Australia, Europe and Singapore.

## MEL breaks record

MELBOURNE Airport reached almost 88% of pre-COVID volumes in Mar, with more than 2.7 million travellers passing through the aviation hub's gates.

The latest figures represent the best monthly performance for MEL in the post-pandemic era, with the number of international travellers climbing to 721,496, amounting to 80% of the 895,162 figure recorded in Mar 2019.

Overseas travellers were also up a whopping 251% on last year's numbers, which only saw 205,711 travellers pass through Melbourne's biggest airport.

The positive result has been helped by increased capacity and returns by various airlines, including the resumption of the Tokyo route by Qantas (**TD 27 Mar**) and newly added flights by Bonza (**TD 23 Feb**), as well as the return of Cebu Pacific services to Manila, Vietjet launching flights from Melbourne to Ho Chi Minh, & EK's third daily flight to Dubai.

## Instant Cancun

WHOLESALE Instant Travel has added the Grand Oasis Cancun in Mexico to its preferred contracts portfolio.

"This new addition provides our agents with another outstanding option in Mexico...offering a full range of entertaining activities for both adult and kids," Instant Travel CEO Darryl Ismail said.

The all-inclusive resort features large pools and multiple eateries.

## Quark cool incentive

QUARK Expeditions has announced several incentives for 2024/25, which is set to be the brand's most helicopter-focused Antarctic season ever.

Travellers can enjoy 25% off select Antarctic voyages, plus an extra 10% off when paying in full at time of booking, as well as US\$1,000 flight credit on top of trip costs on all Antarctic 2024/25 departures, and \$250 shipboard credit on all departures.

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## QR in the fast lane

**QATAR** Airways and its tour arm, Qatar Airways Holidays, have partnered to launch exclusive travel packages for the upcoming Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2023.

There are nine flexible F1 Travel Packages to choose from which offer fans unique experiences including pit lane walks, guided track tours, and special events with select F1 drivers.

The Qatar Grand Prix package, offers fans the added experience of attending the Geneva Int'l Motor Show, which takes place in Qatar from 05-14 Oct.

Prices start at US\$1,110 - **CLICK HERE** for more information.

## Philippines change

**ALL** travellers to and from the Philippines will be required to register through the E-Travel portal from tomorrow.

Arrivals need to register 72 hours prior to arrival - see **HERE**.

## FBI Travel gets endorsed

**LUXURY** travel company FBI Travel has become Australia's first 'endorsed agency' after it was named as a member of the Forbes Travel Guide (FTG), in recognition of its leadership within the industry.

FTG is the only independent global rating system for luxury hotels, restaurants, spas and ocean cruises, assigning a Five-Star, Four-Star or Recommended rating based on its independent inspection process.

The guide helps travellers find luxury experiences based on evaluations by anonymous professional inspectors.

"FTG acknowledges FBI Travel's commitment to world-class service, which complements FTG's own principles," FTG Senior Vice President of Travel Industry Outreach Richard Lebowitz said.

"Through its endorsed relationship with FTG, FBI Travel completed a range of dedicated

training, communications and engagement across its advisor network that distinguishes FTG Star Ratings as a trusted source of hotels vetted for service and facility excellence."

FBI Travel Director Danny Engelman acknowledged the honour, saying, "we are thrilled to be the first Forbes Travel Guide agency in Australia, and we see this prestigious recognition as a validation of our commitment to providing exceptional luxury travel experience to our clients".

## EY marketing crash

**ETIHAD** Airways has found itself in hot water with the UK's Advertising Standards Agency, which accused the airline of exaggerating the impact of sustainability claims made in two advertisements, citing a need for greater evidence if the commercials are to be aired.



## Window Seat

**AN INDIAN** farmer is on a mission to have a large crane released from a zoo in Kanpur, with his push already attracting 4,000 signatures from concerned citizens.

Mohammad Arif rescued the bird when it was little, nursing it back to health before developing a very close rapport, which saw the bird refuse to leave his property.

However, local authorities later captured the bird, relocating his feathered friend to a zoo four hours away.

"The moment they release the bird, it will come back to me," Arif confidently declared.



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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Accom savings a priority

**THE** majority of corporate travel managers across Australia expect corporate travel volumes to overtake pre-pandemic levels this year, according to the latest *Cvent Travel Manager Report*.

Three-quarters of respondents in Australia said they are anticipating corporate travel volumes at their organisation to increase in 2023 relative to 2019.

Although around 80% stated their travel budgets will increase this year, travel managers are also becoming increasingly focused on cost savings, with almost half (46%) more frequently asking whether trips are truly necessary, and evaluating cost versus value.

### BA Avios flights

**BRITISH** Airways has announced it will operate its first Avios-Only flights later this year, on which all seats will be exclusively available to Executive Club Members as Reward Seats.

The first rewards flight will be the inaugural service from London Gatwick to Egypt's Sharm El Sheikh on 03 Nov, followed by four flights from London Heathrow to Geneva in Feb and Mar 2024, with more routes to be announced throughout 2023.

Return flights to Sharm El Sheikh start from 27,500 Avios points per person while Club Europe (Business class) fares start from 48,500 Avios points, with an option to use a Companion Voucher for additional savings.

Accommodation budgets are the first to be placed on the chopping block, as travel managers proactively seek ways to save on hotel bookings to help offset the rising cost of travel.

The research from Cvent also revealed that travel managers are increasingly comparing hotels on a shifting set of priorities, including rate flexibility and sustainability, with around 80% saying they were becoming more interested in dual and dynamic rates when booking a hotel.

"The results in this report illustrate that because corporate travel momentum has continued to grow and needs have evolved, hotels must understand their buyers' decision-making processes, preferences and budget expectations to attract them to their properties," Cvent Vice President International Sales Graham Pope said.

### Biz travel unsafe?

**THERE** has been an increase in safety concerns among business travellers, including in Australia, with a new survey by World Travel Protection and Opinion revealing that since COVID-19, 84% now felt less confident about heading overseas for work.

The study showed that business travellers will refuse assignments if they believe the destination is unsafe, and 90% said they were worried about being stranded overseas if things went awry.

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### Cathay dips wing to agents



**CATHAY** Pacific treated its valued trade partners to a delicious breakfast yesterday morning at the newly refurbished Royce Hotel in Melbourne.

The event was co-hosted by Kate Dalton, Cathay Pacific Trade Sales Manager, Victoria

& Tasmania; Rui Martins, Royce Business Development Manager and Nick McLennan, Royce General Manager.

One of the attendees, Platinum Travel Group's CEO, Andy Buerckner, left the event with a particularly big smile on his face after winning an amazing trip to Hong Kong with Cathay Pacific.

### Europa in the Med

**MSC** Cruises' first LNG-powered ship, *MSC World Europa*, has arrived in Europe to begin her first summer season in the Mediterranean.

The vessel, which recently wrapped up her maiden season in the Arabian Gulf, will operate seven-night itineraries calling at the Italian ports of Genoa, Naples and Messina, as well as Valletta in Malta, Barcelona in Spain and Marseille in France.

*MSC World Europa* is one of the world's most environmentally advanced cruise ships in terms of CO2 emissions per passenger.

### Saudi Arabia makes big tourism splash

**SAUDI** Arabia's Ministry of Investment has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Haichang Ocean Park, Asia's largest ocean park operator, to develop the Kingdom's first large-scale ocean park.

The agreement will also see Haichang develop various forms of location-based entertainment venues across Saudi Arabia's cities, including a zoo, safari park and family entertainment centre.

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## TRAVEL SPECIALS



**WELCOME** to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to [specials@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:specials@traveldaily.com.au)

**Marriott Bonvoy** is offering members 20% off exclusive stays at hotels and resorts participating in the Marriott Bonvoy program. The promo is valid for stays between 14 Apr to 07 May in Asia Pacific (excluding Greater China). Book by Sun **HERE**, or on the Marriott Bonvoy App.

Travellers can enjoy 10% discounts when doing two walking routes via Europe with **On Foot Holidays'** latest offer. New routes have been added in Umbria with four-, five-, and eight-night trips available to explore medieval hill towns and experience how to make pasta from scratch. The eight-night journey starts from £1,140ppts (approx AU\$2,103), **CLICK HERE** for more details.

Everything is included with **Cruise Traveller's** new exotic, 18-night Indian Ocean Indulgence package. The deal includes a private return transfer to airport, flights & accommodations, and more. Priced from \$19,600ppts, the deal includes an extra spending credit of US\$250 to use on board. Call Cruise Traveller on 1800 507 777 by 19 May.

Hop on a select **Viking** river cruise and save up to \$4,600 per couple on a 17-day voyage from Vienna to Burcharest or a 10-day adventure from Libson to Porto. Call Viking on 138 747.

## Explora I sea trials

**THE** final preparations of Explora Journeys' *Explora I's* maiden voyage in Jul will take place soon after she successfully passed the sea trials phase.

There will be a naming ceremony in Civitavecchia, Italy for the vessel before she casts off from Southampton on 17 Jul on a 15-night voyage of the Norwegian fjords and the Arctic Circle through to Copenhagen.

CEO of Explora Journeys, Michael Ungerer, was ecstatic *Explora I* had passed her trials without a hitch, emphasising the ship will strive to provide a sailing experience like no other.

The MSC-owned brand aims to be a "transformative luxury ocean travel experience".

## QR gets far tastier

**QATAR** Airways has launched new onboard dining menus for its Australian flights, featuring fresh local ingredients from sustainable suppliers across the country.

The new menus have been rolled out in phases across the airline's Australian network for both Business and Economy class passengers, along with an updated wine menu featuring two Australian wines and one wine from New Zealand.

Business menu highlights include NSW beef tenderloin with potato fondant, Hunter Valley chicken breast stuffed with tomato and ricotta, braised Victorian lamb shank with coconut rendang sauce, and Tasmanian smoked salmon with English muffin.

## Dining in Virtuoso style



**VIRTUOSO** members were recently treated to an exclusive series of dinners hosted by The Travel Corporation (TTC) family of brands, which includes Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, Adventure World, Luxury Gold and Lindblad Expeditions.

The events celebrated the successful partnership between TTC and Virtuoso advisors, providing key industry updates relevant to the luxury sector, and formally welcoming Adventure World into the network.

Advisors on the Gold Coast enjoyed a five-course menu during an exclusive take-over of Palette Restaurant in Surfers Paradise's HOTA gallery, while Sydney agents were surprised with a special performance by a magician at Chiswick Restaurant.

Melbourne advisors were hosted in the private dining room at Cutler & Co, a Michelin-starred restaurant renowned for its seasonal contemporary dishes.

"We have loved connecting with agency owners and frontline advisors within the Virtuoso network, to celebrate our partnership and share the passion we all have for the incredible experiences that we offer," Adventure World Managing Director Neil Rodgers said.

**Pictured:** Virtuoso advisors ready to tuck into their meals at Sydney's Chiswick Restaurant.

## Beach it in Brissy!

**THE** Royal Caribbean Beach Club is coming to Brisbane for one day only tomorrow.

Brisbane's inner-city Streets Beach will be transformed into a Royal Caribbean Beach Club, where participants will have a chance to win a family cruise holiday worth up to \$3,999.

The free event will also showcase one of the largest cruise ship sand sculptures in the world and a fun photo wall.

Got a confidential tip? Contact **Travel Daily** via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click **HERE**

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### EDITORIAL

**Editor in Chief and Publisher** – Bruce Piper

**Associate Publisher** – Anna Piper

**Senior Associate Editor** – Adam Bishop,

**Associate Editor** – Myles Stedman

**Contributors** – Janie Medbury, Anna Piper,

Jenny Piper, Matthew Wai

[info@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:info@traveldaily.com.au)

### ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan & Nicki Harford

[advertising@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:advertising@traveldaily.com.au)

### BUSINESS MANAGER

Jenny Piper

[accounts@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accounts@traveldaily.com.au)

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd  
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia  
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia  
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760)

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