



## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of news, including our **Corporate Update** and an **RSSC** photo page, plus a back full page from **A&K**.

## Tourism Fiji CMO

**SRISHTI** Narayan has been revealed as the new Chief Marketing Officer for Tourism Fiji, replacing the outgoing Emma Campbell in the role.

Narayan was selected this week following a competitive selection process, and has previously worked with the tourism body as its head of global marketing for the last seven months.

## WWT back in China

**WENDY** Wu Tours (WWT) has confirmed it is on the precipice of formally relaunching its China touring program after spending the last week in the country visiting Shanghai, Beijing, Xian, Changsha and Zhangjiajie.

Founder Wendy Wu and key members of the executive team have been on the ground to ensure all measures are in place for the return, including facilities, hotels, and attractions.

"The uptake on bookings since China reopened has been incredibly optimistic, having seen a spike of almost 60% in bookings during Mar and Apr...this clearly shows that demand is there and our agent friends are behind us all the way," Wu said.

More on WWT China trips **HERE**.

## Inspiring wins AFR gong

**INSPIRING** Vacations has today been named the best place to work in retail, hospitality, tourism & entertainment in Australia, taking out the winning spot in the annual *Australian Financial Review* Best Places to Work List.

Co-founder and MD Paul Ryan noted that after the strictures of the last few years, Inspiring Vacations now employs more people than it did before the pandemic, while client enquiry has returned to 2019 levels.

The *Financial Review* noted that amid workforce pressures across the recovering industry, Inspiring Vacations is a standout, with employee engagement sitting at 83% and progressive workplace policies playing a key role.

Ryan told the *AFR* attracting and retaining "the very best people" is a key part of Inspiring Vacations' business strategy, with key drawcards including flexible working arrangements and free overseas trips for the team.

The company allows staff to work from home three days per week on flexible hours, as well as the opportunity to work overseas for four weeks each year.

Those who work remotely must ensure they have suitable connectivity, and be available for important meetings regardless of which timezone they are in, with almost 100 Inspiring Vacations staff having made the most of the opportunity in the last six months.

Inspiring Vacations maintains

a strong company culture via weekly business updates and monthly in-person strategy days for all Australian employees.

The company was previously 49% owned by APT parent firm Australian Pacific Holdings, with Ryan and his fellow Inspiring Vacations founders James Cathie and Brendon Cooper taking 100% control of the business about six months after the pandemic took hold (*TD* 25 Nov 2020).

The *AFR* BOSS Best Places to Work List is compiled by behavioural science consultancy Inventium, with results based on a staff survey, as well as a written submission relating to policies and programs at each company.

Other travel and tourism players in the top 10 included Saxton Speakers Bureau and Cliftons Event Solutions, along with Luxury Escapes, which came in ninth position on the list.

## Wings of luxury in 24

**EXPERIENCE** the very best of luxury with Abercrombie & Kent and travel by private plane in small groups all over the world.

Curated flight itineraries in 2024 include explorations of Africa, Alaska, Europe, South America, India and the Middle East - see the **back page** for more details.

## Eclipse on the screen

**WARNER** Bros. Discovery is preparing to launch a new docu-series that will showcase an exclusive behind-the-scenes look at life on board the world's first discovery yacht, Scenic's ultra-luxury *Scenic Eclipse*.

*Maritime Masters: Expedition Antarctica* will premiere in Australia on Sun 14 May on Foxtel's Discovery Channel, before airing internationally in 20 languages from mid-May.

To see the teaser video, **CLICK HERE**, and for more information on the vessel's new celebrity life, read today's *Cruise Weekly*.

## Emirates Premium Economy takes off

**EMIRATES'** new Premium Economy cabin is now available to guests travelling between Melbourne and Dubai on daily EK406 and EK407 services.

Melbourne is now the fifth city on Emirates' network to offer Premium Economy alongside Sydney, as well as Auckland, Christchurch, and London, as part of the carrier's multi-million dollar retrofit program (*TD* 11 Aug 2022), which will see a total of 126 aircraft fitted out with the luxurious new cabins.

Premium Economy seats from Sydney have averaged an over 90% load factor since launching on 01 Aug 2022, with the airline anticipating similar demand on its Melbourne routes.

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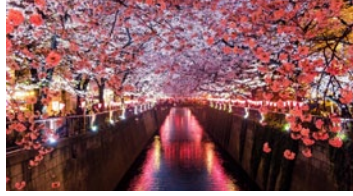
## Oz shows love for Japan

**AUSTRALIANS** are returning to Japan in full force, with new data from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) revealing the number of Aussies visiting the country has outpaced pre-pandemic levels for the first time.

Despite overall visitor numbers to the country still sitting 34% lower in Mar 2023 compared to Mar 2019, Aussie travellers have moved against the grain, with visitation from Down Under spiking by 2.3%.

"Australians have a great affection for Japan as a destination and we know this sentiment has held firm throughout the pandemic, despite border closures," JNTO Sydney Office Executive Director Yoko Tanaka said.

"The Australian visitation numbers we have seen for Mar are reflective of this pent-up demand for travel to Japan and we're excited to see so many



Australians putting their long-awaited travel plans into action."

The Mar figures released by JNTO also show that Australia is one of only five key markets in the world to have seen a rise in pre-pandemic visitor numbers, joining the US, Canada, Mexico, and the Middle East.

The promising trend has emerged just five months after Japan reopened its borders to international arrivals in Oct 2022.

With all remaining border control measures to be scrapped on 08 May (**TD 06 Apr**) and more direct flights between the countries expected to come online soon, Tanaka expects the recovery to continue full steam ahead.

## Korea Sparkling Tour

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## Trees for TreadRight

**THE** Travel Corporation (TTC) has announced Trees for Life as the newest project partner for its philanthropic arm, the TreadRight Foundation, to coincide with Earth Day.

Trees for the Life is a Scottish nature-based solutions charity that aims to restore Scotland's Caledonian Forest and its unique wildlife via its Wild Pine project.

Thanks to the new partnership, travellers can now join Highland Explorer Tours and Trafalgar with a visit to Trees For Life's Dundreggan Rewilding Centre in the Scottish Highlands - a 10,000-acre flagship estate that has been rewilding since 2008 - as a 'Make Travel Matter' experience.



## Rare Japan cruises

**PONANT** has enhanced its Japanese expedition program with three itineraries never offered before.

Starting in Mar 2024, the new cruises sail around Kyushu's islands between Kagoshima and Fukuoka, and in the Seto Inland Sea from Kagoshima to Kobe.

*Le Jacques-Cartier* and *Le Soleal* will be among the first luxury vessels to explore some of Japan's less trodden south islands, home to green-topped volcanoes & white beaches.

On the seven-night Kyushu's Secret Islands and Ancestral Heritage and the eight-night Japan, natural archipelago, and secular heritage guests can discover a former Christian refuge in the island region of Amakusa, with access to UNESCO sites such as Sakitsu's historic church.

Other stops include Onomichi, home to temples and shrines, and Moji, evoking the traditional Meiji era.

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*Queensland*  
AUSTRALIA



## Things looking up for YHA Australia

YHA Australia has revealed an optimistic outlook for the remainder of 2023, after more than doubling its revenue in 2022 to \$37.9 million, up from \$18.8 million in 2021, the company's *Integrated Report 2022* shows.

The not-for-profit accommodation network's overnight guest levels have also begun to return to pre-pandemic volumes, the report revealed, with its locations in Adelaide, Fremantle and Hobart exceeding previous performance measures.

YHA Australia noted that it will focus on expanding its tourism offering to include more holistic "quality, affordable and flexible co-living environments for longer-term stays".

## Cruise caps could help

EXCLUSIVE

SPAIN Tourism Board believes limiting daily cruise arrivals to Barcelona "would ultimately offer tourists an enhanced and more authentic visitor experience by minimising crowds and reducing waiting times across the city".

Speaking with *Travel Daily* this week, Director of Spain Tourism Board for Southeast Asia, Australia & New Zealand, Monica Sanchez, said Spain's largest city is currently considering long-term, sustainable tourism that considers local, economic and environmental factors.

"Barcelona is not the first European city to look at solutions to ensure the city retains its character and desirability whilst also aiming to strike a positive balance when it comes to considering cruise tourism and the environmental impact; Venice, Amsterdam, Bruges, Dubronik and Santorini are just a few that have reviewed cruise activity at their ports," she said.

Sanchez also suggested that Aussie travel agents would

benefit from advising their clients to avoid cruise holidays to Spain that only involve day visits, in turn encouraging more bookings to incorporate a few days either side of sailings so that travellers can appreciate the full tourism value that Spain has to offer.

Of the 436,000 Australians who visited Spain in 2019, around 15,000 arrived by ship, Sanchez confirmed, with the majority of Aussies staying on average four to seven nights in Spain.

"There are a range of cruises and tours on offer in Spain and it's a great opportunity for travel agents to upsell a land extension for customers that are especially keen on cruising," she added.

Barcelona's Deputy Mayor Sanz last week blasted cruise pax to Barcelona as not offering any real economic benefit to the city.

## Bonza goes bananas

BONZA is linking the home of two Aussie icons, the Big Banana and the Big Pineapple, with the launch of its first flight from the Sunshine Coast to Coffs Harbour.

Marking the 12th destination to launch from Bonza's home base on the Sunshine Coast, the new service will fly two times a week, providing more than 38,000 seats annually between the two cities.

Fares start from \$49 per person one way, with some celebratory fares also available from \$29.

## Royal sustainability

ROYAL Caribbean Group has provided an update on sustainability efforts across its three brands, Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Silversea Cruises, via its 15th annual *Seasustainability Report*.

The cruise company has set a short-term target to reduce its carbon footprint by double digits by 2025, propelling it further towards its goal of net zero emissions by 2050.

The report also outlined a new partnership agreement with Maersk McKinney Moller Center for Zero Carbon Shipping to develop zero carbon technologies and solutions for the maritime industry, and also highlighted the completion of the first renewable diesel pilot in the US on Royal's *Navigator of the Seas*.



## Window Seat

A SCOTTISH ultra-marathon runner who was recently called out for cheating by jumping in a car for part of the race has stunningly blamed her 'error of judgement' on the effects of jetlag.

Joasia Zakrzewski, who now lives in Australia, is facing disciplinary action from a UK athletics body for travelling four kilometres in a car during the GB Ultras Manchester to Liverpool race in England.

But perhaps more embarrassingly, the sneaky escapade did not land her in first place, finishing third instead, with the runner conceding after accepting trophies and medals that what she did was wrong.

Despite the admission, Zakrzewski still believes jetlag played a role in her cheating.

## Innstant adds Bali

FRESH from adding the Grand Oasis Cancun in Mexico to its preferred contracts portfolio (*TD* 14 Apr), travel wholesaler Innstant Travel has now added The Hanging Gardens of Bali Hotel to its basket of clients.

The luxury Indonesian hotel offers guests villas with private pools, spacious suites, hidden villas, and spa services.



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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### No lounging around for biz

**THIS** week has seen a number of new business lounges opening at airports around the world, including Qatar Airways' new Al Mourjan Business Lounge at Hamad International Airport.

Named 'The Garden', QR's new lounge accommodates up to 707 passengers, offering 24 quiet spaces and seven spa treatment rooms, and a fitness studio.

Meanwhile Delta Sky Club customers travelling through Minneapolis-Saint Paul International Airport can also now enjoy a new nature-inspired space on the upper level of the recently expanded G concourse.

The lounge can seat more than

450 customers, and features an all-weather Sky Deck, two premium bars, a full buffet, and three soundproof work booths.

Across the pond, travellers passing through England's Bristol Airport will soon be able to relax at two new executive lounges, including the Escape Lounge and 1903 Lounge.

Both lounges are scheduled to open between Jun and Aug.

### HLO watchful on sale

**HELLOWORLD** is reportedly holding on to a small amount of Corporate Travel Management (CTM) stock after selling a 1.5% stake earlier this month after the equity came out of escrow.

The company indicated it will wait for a decision on government travel contracts before deciding whether it would divest the entire interest.

In Dec 2021, Helloworld sold its corporate travel and entertainment business to CTM for \$175m (**TD** 15 Dec 2021).

### CWT extends deal

**EMBRAER** has extended its agreement with CWT for corporate travel management services, including the myCWT platform and price optimisation solution, through 2025.

Embraer said CWT has "the right technology and expertise" to help it manage costs and look after its employees while they travel.

### Jakarta's biz boost

**QANTAS** Domestic and International CEO Andrew David believes the new Qantas service between Melbourne and Jakarta (**TD** 17 Apr) will be a key support to growing business links between the two countries.

"Jakarta is becoming an increasingly important destination for our corporate travellers and these direct flights offer more choice and make it even easier for them to do business with one of Australia's closest neighbours," he said.

"We continue to see really strong demand for travel to and from Melbourne, so we're pleased to be expanding our int'l network with another new route out of Victoria," he added.

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### Rail Europe on the right track



**AFTER** the pandemic derailed European travel for Australians, independent train ticket retailer Rail Europe is now on the right track to reclaim the volume of bookings it enjoyed in 2019.

The company expects to reach 70% of Aussie 2019 sales by the end of 2023, according to a presentation held at Sydney's Fullerton Hotel last night.

"With our combined B2B and B2C, we will be 70% of 2019," GM Richard Leonard confirmed, adding "we're hopeful and confident that...with our enriched product roadmap and further stimulation, that we will get back to beyond 2019 figures."

From 2010 through 2019, the average YoY growth was 10%, with sales reaching in excess of €30 million in 2019.

Globally, sales have recovered to 80% of 2019 figures, with even stronger results in top markets such as the United States.

"Because travel to Europe is very cheap for Americans, we are at 120%," President and CEO

Bjorn Bender said.

Australia is soon expected to regain its position as the company's third largest market.

"Australia was for 15 years one of the top three markets for Rail Europe, and we are convinced that this will be back for the end of '23," Bender added.

The top destinations for Australian train travellers include the UK, France, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Spain, while London and Paris remain the top selling cities.

As part of its push to drive growth, Rail Europe rebranded last month with a new look (**TD** 14 Mar), inspired to better reflect its quality of customer care.

The company has also heavily invested in digital technology to shift towards more flexible and personalised travel, and is continuously adding new journeys and products.

**Pictured** yesterday getting the company back on track was President and CEO Bjorn Bender with GM Richard Leonard.

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# Regent rolls out the red carpet

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) once again pulled out all stops to reward some of its highest achieving trade partners yesterday, inviting them to celebrate its annual "24 Hours of Luxury" incentive at the stunning new Capella Hotel in Sydney's reborn Sandstone Precinct. The property, located inside the completely gutted heritage former Department of Education building, shows an incredible attention to detail, with soaring ceilings, contemporary rooms, elegant dining options and fabulous artworks - and Regent's guests made the most of it as they enjoyed spa treatments, flights, limousine and water taxi transfers and a night at the Australian Ballet's performance of the famed *Don Quixote*.

Lisa Pile, RSSC VP of Sales & GM Asia Pacific, said "our valued travel partners are fundamental to the success of Regent Seven Seas Cruises and we cannot thank them enough for the continued support they have shown us this year and beyond, delivering our best WAVE season yet".

"Our '24 Hours of Luxury' incentive is just one way to reward our friends in the industry, and we enjoyed having quality time to reconnect with them during this well-deserved staycation."

**Pictured** during a VIP experience at one of the ballet's intermissions are, from left: Matthew Henry, Australian Ballet; Karalee Watson of Chrisakis & Turner Travel Associates; Trish Park from Savenio; Jess Eldridge, Flight Centre Eltham; Adam Percy, RSSC; Susan Mallinson, Cove Travel; Matthew Vince, RSSC; Hamid Jafari, Phil Hoffmann Travel; RSSC Vice President Lisa Pile; Garry McLaughlin, First Class Escapes; Alicia Phillips, MTA Mobile Travel Agents; and Scott Graham, RSSC.



**KARALEE** Watson from Chrisakis & Turner Travel Associates in West Lakes SA is all smiles with Jess Eldridge of Flight Centre Eltham, Vic.



**MATTHEW** Vince, RSSC Director of Marketing & Strategy APAC; Lisa Pile, RSSC VP of Sales and GM Asia Pacific; and RSSC Team Leader Adam Percy.



**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises' Scott Graham with top achiever Alicia Phillips from MTA Mobile Travel Agents.

**LISA** Pile adorns the stunning Capella Sydney foyer.



**KATHRYN** McInnes, Flight Centre Mornington Peninsula with RSSC VP Lisa Pile and Ignite Travel Group Cruise Product Manager, Tara Ko'cass.



## 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)

New deluxe camping packages are on offer from **Overland Adventures**, which include up to 10% off when booked by 30 June, with discounted prices starting from \$833ppts for a three-night experience in Broken Hill. The price also includes tickets for the sold-out Mundi Mundi Bash Festival. Call 0493 388 453 to book.

Time is running out to save 15% on select 2023 expeditions from **Adventure Canada**, such as the Greenland and Arctic Canada: High Arctic Explorer from US\$8,995 (AU\$13,414), and the Newfoundland Circumnavigation tour from US\$5,995 (AU\$8,940). Learn more [HERE](#).

**Delta Air Lines'** The Sale Fare is set to end today, offering discounted airfares for travel between 01 May and 31 Jul. Deals include return flights from Lax to Sydney priced from US\$880 (A\$1,308). Further T&Cs apply, contact DL Agency Service Centre on 1800 316 830.

**Discovery Kings Canyon** has launched an Experience Package for two that includes a guided Kings Canyon rim walk valued at \$144, Light-Towers premium sunset experience valued at \$170, and complimentary breakfasts valued at \$156. The offer is valid until 31 May and is said to be selling-out fast. [CLICK HERE](#) to book now.

## AS scraps kiosks

**OVER** the next three years, Alaska Airlines has announced it will transition to a fully self-serviced check-in process that will see pax able to action all pre-boarding checks on their phones.

The decision has been made as part of a US\$2.5 billion tech upgrade plan, which will see five airports in the US make the transition initially, including LAX, SFO, PDX, ANC and SEA.

In place of self check-in kiosks, Alaska Airlines will install iPad tablets where passengers can pay for and tag their luggage, with the carrier stating the goal is to get its customers through the lobby and to security in less than five minutes with the help of its new intuitive app.

## Giant AirAsia X sale

**TICKETS** for AirAsia X flights from Auckland, Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Gold Coast to KL are on sale now from \$139.

Sale ends 23 Apr and is valid for travel from 24 Apr to 30 Nov.

## Flanders experiences

**VISITFLANDERS** is launching an 18-month series of new exhibitions and experiences showcasing the 'Landscapes' of Flanders Fields in France.

Highlights include the new Peace Bridge, a permanent memorial opening on 29 Apr; an augmented reality experience at Hooglede; Vleteren Walk time-travel viewing boxes, and more.

For further info, [CLICK HERE](#).



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## Agents enjoy a piece of Pakistan



**TRAVELMANAGERS'** Kathy Millett, Melanie Harrop and Camilla Manson were recently hosted by Crooked Compass founder Lisa Pagotto on a fam to northern Pakistan.

Alongside three other Australian travel agents, the personal travel managers (PTMs) enjoyed plenty of first time experiences, including a surprise polo match in Gilgit organised by the group's guide in his home village.

The group also explored the remote and rugged Kalash Valley, where agents were able to purchase hand-sewn bags, head-dresses and belts from the ethnic minority Kalash people.

Other highlights included a trip to the Ram Mandir temple in Saidpur and the Shahi Mosque in the town of Chitral, a venture into the Fairy Meadows National Park, and a visit to the Nanga Parbat mountain viewpoint.

"It was one of the most challenging, exhilarating and eye-opening fams I have ever been

lucky enough to experience," Kathy Millett gushed.

"The people were so friendly, the food amazing and the scenery enormous: every day was totally unique."

**Pictured:** PTMs Camilla Manson and Kathy Millett outside the Shahi Mosque.

## More Potts Point hotel dramas

**PROPERTY** developer Central Elements is continuing to face tough resistance from the Potts Point community in Sydney for a new boutique hotel plan in the area, even after promising to include a Parisian cabaret in its conversion plan for the old Metro-Minerva theatre.

Local community groups have questioned the need for more bars and venues, doubling down on their stance that the NSW government should buy the site and turn it into a theatre, rather than be a mixed hotel project.

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