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EXCLUSIVE

JOURNEY Beyond has this morning unveiled "a new style of travel" on offer aboard The Ghan and Great Southern rail services from next year, formally debuting its new Gold Premium category.

Sitting between the Gold and Platinum categories, travellers opting for the new middle-ground luxury ticket can choose between a Gold Premium Twin cabin (pictured) or a Gold Premium Suite, with the former providing guests with high-quality linen, a comfortable lounge that converts to a sleeper, an en-suite bathroom, as well as a few special yet-to-be-detailed "surprises to delight guests throughout the journey".

Meanwhile, the Gold Premium Suite boasts all of the amenities as the Twin, but with added cabin space, a large double bed, plus a fold-down upper berth and lounge area.



Both cabin types include exclusive access to the Gold Premium Lounge, the social hub on board featuring comfortable leather seating and a chance to sip on premium spirits, all included in the ticket price.

Gold Premium will also have access to premium dining services, including breakfasts, two-course regionally inspired lunches and four-course dinners, as well as all-inclusive off train experiences and preferences on tour selections, priority luggage check-in on departure, and a 75kg checked luggage allowance.

Prices for the Gold Premium Twin cabin lead in from \$3,495pp and \$4,875pp for Gold Premium Suites - more details [HERE](#).

Rex flies in back-up

IN A bid to boost its chances of landing a lucrative Federal Government contract to service the Australian Antarctic Division, Regional Express (Rex) has inked a new exclusive teaming agreement with Heli Resources.

The deal will see Rex answer the tender's call to provide up to four twin-engine helicopters capable of both land and sea operations, with Rex serving as the prime contractor under the agreement.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, and a full page from **Norwegian Cruise Line**.

More speakers sail in

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has announced several more speakers who will grace the stage at next month's anticipated Cruise360 event.

Azamara Chief Sales Officer International Patrice Willoughby, Seabourn Cruise Line Vice President & General Manager of Expeditions Robin West, Celestyal Cruises Chief Commercial Officer Lee Haslett, and Qatar Tourism Global Head of Cruise Development Craig Upshall will all be joining this year's conference in Brisbane, exploring a variety of important themes, including the best ways to unlock emerging opportunities in destinations around the world - read more in today's **Cruise Weekly**.

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Winter is coming...

MSC Cruises has opened sales for its northern winter 2024/25 season sailing, featuring a variety of itineraries across the Mediterranean, the Caribbean, North America, the Red Sea and Northern Europe.

More details in today's **CW**.

Bonus cruise nights

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises Fiji is offering travel agents the chance to earn bonus cruise nights for themselves when they book clients on select South Pacific and Fiji itineraries.

Wholesale and retail advisors who book pax on either three-, four-, seven-, eleven- or fourteen-night voyages will score one free night per passenger, as well as one night for a travel companion.

The cruise line said it will honour *MV Reef Endeavour* bonus nights for travel to 31 Mar 2024 and *MS Caledonian Sky* cruises through to 31 Mar 2025.

Call 02 9126 8160 for more info.

Bicton reflects on 25 years



WA-BASED independent travel agency Bicton Travel is celebrating 25 years of operations today, with Managing Director Carole Smethurst reflecting fondly on the company's rise from a two-person business to a major player in the travel sector.

"Over the years, it has been so rewarding to see the business go from strength to strength and one that continues to be recognised as a leader in our industry," Smethurst enthused.

"Of course, we wouldn't be here without our exceptional team

(pictured) and the continuous support of our clients, who put their trust in us to deliver their fantastic holidays year after year," she added.

The agency is also widely recognised as one of the premier cruise travel experts in Australia, with Smethurst perceiving early on there were healthy sales opportunities for what has proven to be a rapid rise in the cruise appetites of Aussies.

For her efforts and service to the cruise industry, in 2016 she was inducted into the CLIA Hall of Fame, and in the same year, was also named godmother of the luxury APT ship, the 158-passenger *AmaStella*.

EY adds Boston

ETIHAD will add four weekly flights from Abu Dhabi to Boston from 31 Mar next year, becoming the fourth US city on its network, and joining Chicago, New York and Washington.

EY also offer connections to cities throughout North America in partnership with JetBlue.



Window Seat

ARE you ready to hear about an exciting theme park attraction that can never be accused of being bland?

Well, look no further humble readers and step right up and taste the majesty of the upcoming \$10 million gravy-themed roller coaster, which is preparing to douse itself on tourists visiting Holiday World in Indiana from May 2024.

Called Good Gravy (of course it is), the ride is shaped like a giant gravy boat, which flies through a station and onto cranberry-coloured tracks, hitting a maximum speed of 60km per hour before narrowly avoiding giant kitchen utensils, such as a massive whisk and rolling pin.

"We're making a meal out of this Thanksgiving-themed coaster," jibed theme park owner Lauren Crosby.

"This coaster is guaranteed to be the 'graviest' coaster anyone has ever seen, and the queue will take you back in time to Thanksgiving dinner."

Given how scary the ride sounds, gravy may well be pouring out of other places too we suspect.



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Rediscover adds big trio

FOLLOWING its recent acquisition of Unique Cruises last month (**TD** 05 Jul), the Swish Group-owned Rediscover Travel has appointed three new directors to further bolster its growth plans in the market.

Part of a push to ensure the company is recognised as a “wholesaler by agents, for agents”, Rediscover Travel has teamed up with Andrew Minto (Home & Afar Travel), Lauren Howard (How We Travel) and Narelle Cook (Next Travels) to both bring deeper insights and equity to the company, with a view to becoming a more effective operation for travel advisors across the country.

The trio of new directors will join recently recruited General Manager Walter Nand, who took up the role when his Unique Cruises business was sold in Jul. “From the outset, I wanted the company to be travel agent

focused,” founder Chris Watson said, adding “what better way than to collaborate with other successful, like-minded professionals.”

The beefed up Rediscover Travel team now plans to highlight gaps in the market and areas of frustration experienced by individual businesses, with the company committed to researching the challenges and finding solutions for the agency/ advisor community.

“All four [directors] will continue to work within their individual, retail travel agency businesses while providing invaluable insights and experience to Rediscover Travel,” Watson said.

New Director Andrew Minto said he joined Rediscover so he could help “shake up” the industry, which needs to have more players helping other “agents just like us”.

Contact Rediscover Travel **HERE**.

Melbourne #1 again

NEW research from Roy Morgan shows Melbourne has recaptured top spot as the preferred holiday destination among Aussies, with 2.79 million people aged 14 and over expressing a preference to stay at least one night in the Victorian capital.

It was a major return to the winners circle for Melbourne, which had been on the nose with Aussie travellers during the pandemic years, which saw austere lockdowns discourage leisure visitation.

Almost 2.3 million of those seeking a future trip to Melbourne are based in interstate locations - a higher source market number than any other Aussie capital - while a further 500,000 Victorians also said they would like to spend at least one night in their capital in the next two years.

Overall, 14.6 million Australians (68%) would like to spend at least one night in the next two years at a domestic holiday destination.

Perth storm chaos

A SEVERE storm last night caused dozens of flights trying to land at Perth Airport to enter prolonged holding patterns, causing delays on the tarmac.

Issues in the air lasted for 45mins until 8pm (GMT+8).

EK's premium win

CLOSE to 160,000 passengers opted to trade up to Emirates' Premium Economy services over the last 12 months, new figures released by the Middle Eastern carrier has revealed.

Already available on routes from Sydney and Melbourne, the new premium addition will look to roll out to Mumbai and Bengaluru in India by Dec, bringing the total premium network to 13 cities.

Since Aug last year, the airline has operated around 4,500 Premium Economy flights, clocking up 36 million kilometres and serving 200,000 meals.

See the full summary **HERE**.

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Ovolo shakes up Oz

OVOLO Hotels has appointed Alexander Barnett to a newly created Marketing and Communications Director Australia role, as part of a revamped regional structure.

Other appointments Down Under include Kate Tulloch as the Group Digital Marketing Manager; Daisy Slade as Marketing & Communications Manager in Vic; and Taylor Knight as Marketing Communications Executive in NSW.

Calculate my bags

SKYTEAM has launched a Carry-On Calculator, allowing travellers connecting between its member airlines to quickly compare the hand baggage allowance of every airline in their schedule.

Using the new tool, travellers can enter their class of travel and the airline they are flying with to reveal the carry-on allowance for every flight - more details [HERE](#).

Airbnb's big win in Qld

IN A major win for short-term accommodation platforms like Airbnb and Stayz, a Queensland Government review has found that any restrictions of trade on the sector would only have a "limited impact on rental affordability".

Handing down its findings of a short-term accommodation review late yesterday, the government said that despite Airbnb and Stayz attracting the ire of many residents in Qld tourist towns for driving up the price of

rent, a lack of housing supply was the primary driver of price rises.

"It is no surprise that the review revealed short-term rentals are most prevalent in high tourism coastal areas like Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Brisbane, Noosa, Douglas, Whitsundays, Cairns, Moreton Bay, and Townsville," the state's Deputy Premier Steven Miles said.

"But the review found no clear alignment between the suburbs with the highest rent increases and the percentage of dwellings devoted to short-term rental, instead, dwelling stocks emerged as the significant contributor to explaining rental prices."

The Queensland Government said the next step was to consult with the Short Term Residential Accommodation Industry Reference Group and LGAQ on the findings, examining the prospect of implementing a short-term rental registration system.

QF launches SA sale

QANTAS is offering agencies participating in its agent channel reduced one-way Economy fares to South Australia for travel between 16 Oct and 27 Jun 2024, with some blackout periods.

The sale ends 11.59pm AEST on 06 Aug, unless sold out first - for more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Tour guide courses

TOUR Guides Australia has launched a new three-day course covering overland trips, cruise ship shore excursions, site experiences & more - info [HERE](#).

Qantas misogyny

AUSTRALIAN and International Pilots Association President Anthony Lucas has labelled derisive comments made by a handful of Qantas pilots online about the carrier's female staff as "deplorable", noting however the "abhorrent" commentary was not indicative of most male pilots.

"It is important to note a handful of forum comments are not remotely representative of the broader group," he said.

The critical posts from several pilots were sparked by the announcement of a Qantas pilot scholarship for 50 female students, with comments suggesting women now have an advantage over men.

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NSW funds events for old and young

THE NSW State Government has opened up two new event funding grants - one aimed at seniors and the other at the state's youth.

The \$200,000 NSW Seniors Festival Grants Program will offer grants of up to \$10,000 to help organisations host engaging activities for people aged 60 and over, with the goal of helping them stay active and connected within their communities.

Additionally, the state government's Holiday Break program allows regional councils and eligible not-for-profit organisations to apply for funding to deliver events and activities for young people during the upcoming spring school holidays.

EverNow WA fest

WESTERN Australia's major events calendar is set to be boosted, after the state government announced a new homegrown event, EverNow.

The festival will celebrate WA's unique nature and Indigenous culture, with three standout features: Song Circle, Fire Gardens and Boorna Waanginy: The Trees Speak.

EverNow will consist of a series of free events held across the Supreme Court Gardens, Perth's Government House Gardens and Kings Park from 04-09 Oct.

GET TO KNOW MCEC IN DETAIL

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has launched a new website, offering improved accessibility and 360-degree virtual tours of its spaces.

The refreshed platform aims to provide a holistic, seamless and engaging experience, thanks to its more intuitive design, along with the ability to be easily navigated on smartphones and tablets, as well as accessibility devices such as screen readers.

The crowning feature of the new website is the virtual tour offering, which allows users to explore the centre's facilities and spaces from anywhere around Australia and the world, which is especially handy given that 20% of MCEC website users are based overseas.

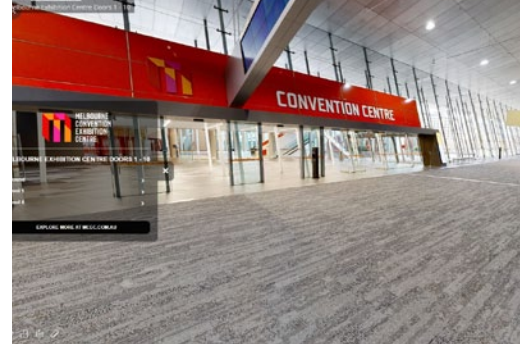
Supported by Tourism Australia's Business Events Advance Program, more spaces will be added to

the virtual tour feature over the coming months, until all 35 of MCEC's room types are showcased.

"The website is the first touchpoint for our customers and our visitors, and we wanted it to reflect the exceptional experiences they receive inside our venue," MCEC Head of Marketing Liz Kozmevski explained.

"We are thrilled to launch this new user-friendly platform that not only aligns with our brand, but also provides valuable resources to our customers, helping to deliver a seamless event experience."

In addition to the virtual tours, the website also features an



abundance of information and resources to assist organisers in planning their next event.

"When you book an event at MCEC, you're not just booking a room, you're booking a whole experience, from the layout and technical requirements to the food and wine served to delegates, to accommodation and incredible add-on experiences around Melbourne," Kozmevski said.

See the new website **HERE**.

Alice lights it up

FOLLOWING its successful return in Apr, which generated \$9.2m in total expenditure, Partjima - A Festival of Light is set to illuminate Alice Springs again next year from 12-21 Apr.

The 2024 event will be hosted by a new, yet-to-be-named events partner, under a fresh theme, highlighting the importance of interconnectedness in Aboriginal cultures.

Elevating events

ELEVATE Communications has reopened its major events arm of the business after it was paused during COVID, now under the new leadership of Gina Shaw, who was recently appointed as Events Manager.

Shaw has more than 15 years' experience in the conferencing and events industry, and has successfully delivered hundreds of events nationally and overseas.

ABEA gathers

THE newly formed Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) has recently completed a series of national roadshow events, which it said garnered "overwhelming support and interest from every corner of the industry".

ABEA is now encouraging members to participate in its online Sector Pillar and Special Interest Group Meetings - register **HERE**.



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APPOINTMENTS

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Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) has welcomed a new board member, with **Angela Middleton** joining this week. Middleton, who is also currently the Senior Manager Aus/NZ at Norwegian Cruise Line, was previously a mentee in 2013, and was also a member of the TIME Committee from 2015 to 2018 and a mentor in 2016 and 2020.

The new Executive Director at **Japanese National Tourism Organisation's (JNTO)** has been named as **Noaki Kitazawa**, replacing Yoko Tanaka, who moves on to head up JNTO's Los Angeles office. Kitazawa will be based in Sydney after spending time at the organisation's Seoul office, where he will steer the Sydney team to drive up visitor numbers to Japan and attract attention for upcoming events, including Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai.

FCM has appointed industry veteran, **Grant Parsons**, as the company's Regional General Manager for WA and SA. The well-regarded executive has spent more than 16 years with Flight Centre Travel Group and was the group's team leader for the past 10 months. Bringing experience from across many sectors of the travel industry, Parsons is eager to drive productivity and improve the key state markets.

The **Business Events Sydney (BESydney)** Board will welcome **Judith Crompton** as Independent Director and Incoming Chair of the Finance, Risk and Audit Committee from 01 Sep, replacing Marlene Kanaga, who has stepped down. **Deborah Zimmer**, who has been appointed as a Member Director to the Board from 16 Jun, will have her appointment ratified by other members at the 2023 AGM in Oct.

Bringing close to 30 years in customer experience in the global operations sector, **Teresa Igancio** has become **Silversea Cruises'** AVP in Global Guest Services. Based in the cruise line's Miami office, Igancio will play a pivotal role to develop, implement and lead global operational strategies across all of the company's contact centres. Igancio was most recently Visa's vice president of consumer support.

After a year-long stint with Corporate Travel Management as its general manager, **Rohan Moss** has returned to **Helloworld Travel** as its Group General Manager in Consolidation. The experienced managerial specialist has had various general manager roles throughout his career, including an eight-year span at The AOT Group and a 15-year run as Jetset Travelworld Group's general manager in wholesale prior to that.

Robert Taylor has been appointed the latest member to join the **Ecotourism Australia Board of Directors**. The seasoned figure has nearly 40 years of experience in the hospitality and tourism industry, and is currently the CEO of the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council. Taylor will continue expanding the tourism sector across various aspects of sustainability and cultural engagement.

Connect with your clients and ramp up your social media content

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3K spreads love in the sky



JETSTAR Asia (3K) has rolled out a series of special products for its passengers on board, designed and packed by individuals with special needs who have graduated from My Inspiring Journey (MIJ) Hub's Work Readiness Adult Program.

In a bid to raise awareness and funds to support the non-profit organisation, the six-month partnership with MIJ will allow 3K's passengers to purchase a classic Peek-a-Box from the onboard menu for A\$11.40 from now until 30 Oct, which includes children's favourite snacks, iced gems, and a fun-shaped crayon and a colouring sheet.

Meanwhile between 01 Nov and

31 Jan, a My D-I-Y Cookie Jar will be available for A\$16, which will include sea salt choc cookies, as well as a set of stickers designed by the students of MIJ Hub.

3K CEO Barathan Pasupathi enthused that while passengers can enjoy a range of delicious treats through the initiative, the airline is also creating a platform for the graduates to showcase their vocational skills.

"At Jetstar Asia, we are committed to making a positive contribution," he added.

A SG\$2 contribution will be donated back to MIJ for every special item purchased.

The 3K team is pictured holding the many goodies on offer.

The Chat

with Jenny



A Conversation with **Jodie Hart**

of Oceania Cruises & Regent Seven Seas Cruises

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