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### Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of news, plus a cover wrap from **Hurtigruten**, and a full page from **Princess Cruises**.

### Huge Hurti savings

**HURTIGRUTEN** Expeditions is offering its biggest savings ever, with fare reductions of up to \$7,400 as well as bonus onboard credit on its huge array of global expedition itineraries.

The limited time offer aboard "the leader in sustainable expeditions" is showcased on the cover page of today's *Travel Daily*.

### Schembri joins LE

**LEIGHTON** Schembri has returned to the travel sector, taking a new position as Partnerships & Contracting Executive at Luxury Escapes.

He was formerly Cruise Manager at Goldman Travel - more appointments on [page six](#).

## QF launches Jakarta route

**QANTAS** this morning announced the debut of a new non-stop service between Melbourne and Jakarta, with the A330 flights to kick off on 16 Apr.

Three weekly services will operate on the new route, complementing QF's existing Sydney services to the Indonesian capital to support the "growing trade and tourism links between Australia and Indonesia".

QF Domestic and International CEO, Andrew David, said the carrier was seeing strong demand for travel to and from Melbourne.

"We expect these flights to be popular with Victoria's large Indonesian expat community wanting to visit family and friends back home, as well as offering a new gateway for travellers looking to explore the region."

He noted that Indonesia is a rapidly growing economy, as well as being home to more than 270 million people.

The service is being supported by the Victorian Government and Melbourne Airport, with launch fares of \$899 return.

**MEANWHILE** Qantas also this morning launched an international sale offering fares up to 35% below normal levels.

170,000 seats are up for grabs and include Sydney-Los Angeles from \$1,299 return, Perth-Singapore from \$599 and Melbourne-Singapore from \$759.

A total of 26 destinations are on offer, with the sale running from today until next Tue 07 Feb.

### Princess shows love

**PRINCESS** Cruises has launched a new trade competition offering a major prize of a 13-night NZ cruise for two aboard *Royal Princess* in a Balcony Stateroom.

There are also a whopping 60 minor prizes up for grabs - for details see the [last page](#).

## Crystal relaunch

**CRYSTAL** Cruises has unveiled its first itineraries under the new ownership of A&K Travel Group, including an Australian deployment for *Crystal Symphony*.

Both *Symphony* and *Crystal Serenity* have also undergone a significant makeover, reducing capacity by combining some staterooms to provide even more passenger space - full details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

## LGBTQ+ webinar

**THE** Consulate General of Canada in Sydney is inviting the travel industry to join a special webinar exploring how the LGBTQ+ travel community can work together to promote LGBTQ+ travel in a manner that benefits destinations, host communities and visitors.

The session on 22 Feb at 10am AEDT will particularly focus on the youth travel market - register to take part by [CLICKING HERE](#).





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## SIA rolls out free internet

**COMPLIMENTARY** unlimited in-flight wi-fi is now being offered to all Singapore Airlines passengers travelling in Business, First and Suites classes - while those in Economy can get online for two hours for free, and three hours for Premium Economy.

To access the wi-fi, passengers must be part of the free-to-join KrisFlyer loyalty program, while top tier members of the scheme receive unlimited wi-fi no matter where they are in the aircraft.

SIA is also rolling out "new attractive and simplified wi-fi price plans", ranging from US\$3.99 for one hour, US\$8.99 for three hours and US\$15.99 for the entire flight, suitable for those who have exhausted their free allocation.

Previously premium loyalty members and those up the front enjoyed 100MB worth of complimentary in-flight wi-fi, while lower bandwidths

and shorter allocations were offered to those in other classes, optimised for text-only messaging services.

"Staying connected, even at 35,000 feet in the air, has become an essential aspect of the travel experience," said Singapore Airlines Senior VP of Customer Experience, Yeoh Phee Teik.

He added the changes were a response to customer feedback and "part of SIA's continuous investment to elevate the travel experience and maintain our leadership position".

## EK free Fairmont

**PASSENGERS** who purchase tickets to or through Dubai in First or Business Class before 13 Feb are being offered a complimentary night's stay at the Fairmont The Palm hotel, with the offer available for both direct and travel agent bookings.

## TM appoints McLean

**JULIA** McLean has been appointed to the newly created role of National Business Partnership Manager for TravelManagers, a position that will require her to manage eight business partnership managers.

"Julia has a grounding in all aspects of travel consulting, and... she fully understands what it takes to run a successful home-based business," Executive GM Michael Gazal said.

More appointments on **p6**.

## A350 dispute solved

**THE** ongoing legal spat between Airbus and Qatar Airways (**TD** 22 Dec 2021) has finally been resolved, with the two parties agreeing to "amicable" terms regarding a dispute over A350 surface degeneration issues.

The details of settlement are confidential, with the pair stating the deal is not an admission of liability by either company.

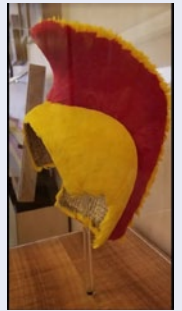


## Window Seat

**WE'VE** heard of people pinching towels and cutlery from hotels, but this is a little more extreme.

Officials from Hawaii Volcanoes National Park in the USA are searching for a man suspected of stealing a US\$30,000 cultural artwork from the lobby of the park's historic Volcano House Hotel, according to *USA Today*.

The stolen item (**pictured**) is a replica of a "mahiole", a traditional helmet worn by local chiefs, with the motive for the alleged theft unknown at this stage.



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## The NT needs govt help

**EXCLUSIVE**

A LACK of serious airline competition is one of several factors denting domestic travel volumes to the Northern Territory, a Senior Lecturer in Economics at Charles Darwin University believes.

Speaking with **TD** this week, Maneka Jayasinghe argued that the small number of airlines currently operating in the territory is spurring on carriers to charge higher air fares, which is ultimately suppressing travel demand to the Top End.

One way of combatting the problem of sluggish demand in Jayasinghe's view is for the Federal Government to step in and subsidise airfares, or even assist NT operators in discounting the price of accommodation, restaurants and tour packages.

"Once tourists arrive in Darwin, they have to incur further costs to travel within the territory,

for example, to places such as Katherine and Alice Springs," Jayasinghe said.

"High airfares, coupled with high accommodation and travel costs within the territory, may make domestic travellers more inclined to choose destinations closer to their states due to lower travel costs unless they have a strong desire to visit NT-based attractions," she added.

The economics expert also believes the Federal Government needs to take action and encourage greater investment in all weather-suitable tourism activities in and around Darwin so that travellers don't need to spend as much time travelling to remote areas within the Territory.

Meanwhile, Jayasinghe also said more needs to be done to promote the NT to Asian nations, such as stronger marketing messages focusing on different demographic cohorts.

## Inclusive scholarship

BLIND and low vision tour company Cocky Guides has teamed up with The Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) to launch a new Inclusive Tourism TIME Scholarship.

The new mentoring program will allow an individual to participate in a six-month scholarship and is open to those who either have a disability or are passionate about advancing access for people with disabilities wanting to travel.

"As a recent graduate of the TIME program, I was impressed by the mentor-mentee matching process; the program manager and committee took the time to ensure compatibility, allowing me to learn new business ways and...business strategies," Cocky Guides founder James 'Buck' McFarlane said.

Cocky Guides will fund the education for one successful applicant, with submissions needing to be received by 26 Mar - see **HERE** for more details.

## Aiden Aussie plans

BWH Hotel Group has signed two new Australian contracts for new hotels for its upscale boutique brand, Aiden.

The brand already operates one property Down Under at Darling Harbour in Sydney, which opened its doors in Dec 2021 (**TD** 20 Oct 2021), with BWH this week confirming plans to expand its footprint in Australia, including new signings in two capital cities.

BWH was unavailable for comment when contacted for more details about the new duo.

## Ponant on the pod

PONANT has launched its first podcast called *Explore to Inspire*, which promises to take listeners "live" on board its ships, featuring testimonials, experiences and soundscapes narrated by actors.

Available in French and English, the podcast is available on major listening platforms including Spotify and Apple Music.

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### Buyers sample Tahitian allure



**WHOLESALE**RS and travel buyers from Australia (pictured) attended a tourism event hosted by The Islands of Tahiti, Parau Parau Tahiti, which took place for the first time since the pandemic in Papeete, Tahiti this week.

The two-day gathering brought together international product managers and local partners to network while in the destination and also provide product managers with the opportunity to experience the many sides of The Islands of Tahiti first-hand.

Attendees were also treated to a famil trip which included staying at the recently opened Hilton Hotel Tahiti, as well as

a catamaran excursion out of Papeete and site inspections of new and existing properties.

The Aussie delegates included Hugo Tchakmak, Booking.com; Tina Heyer, Entire Travel Group; Susanne Nuttall, Flight Centre; Kylie Kemp, Qantas Hotels & Holidays; Goran Dragicevic, Paradise Discovered; Guiying Li, Tahiti Voyages; Jacqueline Constable, Omniche Holidays; Ian Lockwood, Allways Dive; Antoinette Moliterno, Expedia and Caroline Brunel, Tahiti Tourisme Australia & NZ rep.

### Philippines tourist refund incentive

**THE** Philippines Government has announced a value-added tax refund program for foreign tourists by 2024, with the aim of boosting its tourism arrivals.

The government collects a 12% VAT on goods purchased within the country - the program will allow travellers visiting from overseas to get a VAT refund on items they purchase and take out of the Philippines.

The measure is among a number of proposals aimed at strengthening the country's tourism industry, including improving airport infrastructure and operations, and promoting tourism investment.

### HK reaches for sky

**REGALA** Hotels International has introduced its new Regala Hotels brand, with the opening of Regala Skycity Hotel in Hong Kong's new SKYCITY hub, next to Hong Kong International Airport.

The hotel will offer over 1,208 guest rooms, 90 of which are suites, including themed family rooms on the third floor such as Racing Car, Frozen Castle, Pirates, Under the Sea, and more.

The property also boasts three restaurants serving international cuisine; a grand ballroom and two banquet halls.



**MANDINGALBAY** Ancient Indigenous Tours recently welcomed boutique Insight Australia Travel CEO Birgit Bourne along on its Hands on Country Eco Tour in Cairns.

Bourne is in town to welcome her guests who arrived in Cairns this week on board the cruise ship *MS Amera*, and is pictured here with tour guides Vincent Mundraby and Jamaya Kynuna, who will be hosting her group of

travellers for the first time.

Tours are staffed by the Mandingalbay Yidinji people, who are the Traditional Owners of both land and sea Country and have been living on the edge of the Great Barrier Reef amongst the Wet Tropics World Heritage rainforest for thousands of years.

### Expedia start-ups

**EXPEDIA** Group has revealed the 12 finalists for its global Accelerator initiative, which it launched last year to support startups and small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) enhance their innovation and fast-track their growth (**TD** 29 Sep 2022).

This year's program will back companies that are working to increase access for underserved travellers, including those with disabilities, as well as promoting travel equity and empowering women and LGBTQIA+ travellers.

Sociability, a mobile app that helps people who are disabled find accessible locations, has been named as one of the finalists, along with Flywallet, a digital wallet and savings account which aims to make booking travel more affordable, accessible and sustainable.

Next year, the Accelerator initiative will launch an additional program centred on co-developing new capabilities.

### New Viking ship

**VIKING** is set to welcome a new Viking Longship to its fleet in 2025, joining the cruise line's four other existing Longships, which are purpose-built to navigate France's Seine River.

Like its four sister ships, the new vessel will be able to host 168 guests in 84 staterooms, and features an Aquavit Terrace, hybrid propulsion system with batteries, and solar panels.

The yet-to-be-named ship will sail the eight-day Paris and the Heart of Normandy itinerary.

### SIXT adds 500 EVs

**SIXT** Australia is preparing to add at least 500 new electric vehicles (EV) to its fleet over the next 12 months, after signing an agreement with BYD, Australia's second-leading EV car manufacturer.

The BYD ATTO 3s, which launched last year featuring BYD's Blade Battery technology, are set to become the first BYD vehicles that will be made available for hire through SIXT from mid-2023, offering customers a more affordable price point.



## MCEC TEAMS WITH VTIC TO BOOST VIC

**MELBOURNE** Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has announced a new partnership with Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) to support the tourism & business events sector.

The two bodies will work together on leadership and development opportunities for the sector, with the goal of growing the state's events offering and attracting more visitors.

VTIC's Vision Summit 2023 will be a key element of the partnership, taking place at the MCEC on 02 Mar, and will explore changing trends in the sector as well as the industry's recovery and sustainability strategy.

"Pre-pandemic, MCEC alone contributed more than \$1 billion to the Victorian economy, and we're well on our way to that same level of impact," MCEC CEO Natalie O'Brien said.

"This partnership with VTIC ensures we can continue to



promote the role of business events and help foster talent development and leadership in the broader tourism space."

**MEANWHILE**, Melbourne's events industry is set to receive a major boost, thanks to a \$3 million grant program announced by the state's government.

The Small and Medium Events Program is designed to stimulate spending across the city and its surrounds to help aid the state's economic recovery.

Applications are open until

28 Feb, with grants of between \$5,000 and \$50,000 available for events between 01 Jun-31 Dec.

"We're backing smaller events across the city and suburbs, because more options diversifies the offering for locals and visitors alike," Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos said.

"We know events deliver massive benefits to the Victorian economy and with this new program, we're supporting more jobs and backing communities."

## NT events funding

**THE** Territory Government is preparing to launch round two of the Events Funding Program (EFP) to support community events, mass participation events, event development, major events and strategic funding.

Delivered via Northern Territory Major Events Company (NTMEC), organisers will be able to apply for up to \$100,000 in funding from 06 Feb.

Round one of the EFP supported 22 events, such as the Chariots of Thunder Sprintcar Series, resulting in a gross expenditure stimulus of \$39.8 million and more than 110,000 visitor nights.

"Our Event Funding Program plays a vital role in maintaining a vibrant events calendar," Minister for Major Events, Paul Kirby, said.

## MCEC menu

**MELBOURNE** Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has unveiled its 2023 menu, which highlights the use of locally produced native ingredients such as wattleseed, lemon myrtle, and Kakadu plum, plus a beverage menu sourced from Victoria's winemakers, breweries and distilleries - check out the menu **HERE**.

## ACCG backs the call for a united voice

**THE** Australian Convention Centre Group (ACCG) has passed a resolution to support the merger of key industry associations to form a united voice for the broader business events sector.

The ACCG is comprised of Australia's leading convention and exhibition centres, including the MCEC, ICC Sydney, and Adelaide Convention Centre.

This vote follows on from the Exhibitions and Events Association of Australia (EAAA) passing a motion in Dec to allow its board to combine with the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux (AACB) and the ACCG to create a new entity in Dec.

The AACB also almost unanimously passed the same motion yesterday (**TD** 01 Feb).

## Cairns' fresh look

**THE** Cairns Convention Centre is preparing to open its brand-new expansion this year, sporting a different look and new spaces following a refurbishment.

The 10,500m<sup>2</sup> expansion includes a large undercover forecourt with tropical plants; a larger main entry lobby on the entry levels; and a new third level with a 500-seat banquet with a big adjoining pre-function space and outside terrace.

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## APPOINTMENTS

**WELCOME** to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

**Limelight Arts Travel** has appointed **Robert Veel** as Director and tour leader for the company's collection of expert-led small group journeys exploring fine art, history and the performing arts. Veel established the cultural touring programs at the University of Sydney's Centre of Continuing Education, as well as at Academy Travel, where he was Founding Director for 17 years. This year he will lead tours to Venice, Sicily, Germany and Austria.

**Karen Saw** has been promoted to become Country Manager Malaysia for **Tourism Australia**. She's been with the organisation since 2009 and was most recently Business Development Manager in Malaysia.

**Auckland International Airport** this morning announced the departure of GM Technology and Marketing, **Jonathan Good** to take up a "new opportunity with an exciting start-up venture" at the end of Apr.

**Kathryn Daly** is taking up a new role within Flight Centre Travel Group's **Corporate Traveller** as the Head of Customer Success for Vic/Tas.

**Hawaiian Airlines** has appointed **Tom Zheng** as Vice President of Technical Operations Business Planning and Services. He will lead HA's growing portfolio of technical operations initiatives, including a new fleet of Boeing 787-9s and a dedicated freighter service for Amazon.

**Belmond** has named **Christian Boyens** as Vice President and Divisional Leader of Southern Europe, and **Iain Langridge** as his counterpart for Northern Europe, Africa and Asia Pacific under the luxury brand's new global management structure.

## Rocky Airport upgrade opens

**ROCKHAMPTON** Airport in Queensland has launched a major upgrade to its terminal and security screening infrastructure.

The improved traveller experience includes additional airline lounge facilities, with the \$35.44 million project jointly funded by Rockhampton Regional Council, the Federal Government and the Qld Govt's COVID Works for Queensland program.

Mayor Tony Williams said "this is a transformational project that will significantly boost tourism and the economy".

## VisitBritain appoints

**AUSTRALIA** has become part of the Americas region in a shake-up of the executive ranks within VisitBritain, which sees New York-based Aussie Paul Gauger become Executive VP for the Americas, Australia and NZ.

He will have responsibility for the VisitBritain teams in Sydney, Sao Paolo, Toronto, New York, Los Angeles & San Diego, reporting to the organisation's new Executive VP International, Gavin Landry.

Maria Sykes, Country Manager for Australia/NZ, will report to Gauger, saying local recovery is at "record-breaking levels".

## La Vie Hotels primed for growth



**LA VIE** Hotels & Resorts has confirmed details of its bolstered leadership team, with the company saying the "experienced bench of international hoteliers" positions the group for another year of exceptional expansion.

The company recently appointed Shankar Sreekumar as Head of South & South-East Asia; Rapeepohn Jamprapai as Group Director of Finance in South and SEA Region; and Nelsy Zreik as Group Director of Finance in Australia.

They join the team of Russell Cool, Group Director

of Operations Australia; Chris Batterham, Chief Development Officer; and Shellia Chang, Group Director of Sales & Distribution.

CEO Jerry Xu, MD Craig Bond and CFO Priscilla Tran round out the La Vie leadership, with the full squad **pictured** taking in the views of Sydney Harbour from on board a superyacht.

Xu said "our leadership team is one of the best in the industry and combines more than 60 years of international experience".

Upcoming openings for La Vie include The Motley Richmond, in partnership with Amber Property Group, while Xu also flagged further "big brand projects which will see us enter new markets and new market segments" in 2023.

## Skyscanner comp

**SKYSCANNER** has launched a promotion seeking the "Ultimate Travel Hacker" who will receive \$40,000 to travel for six months.

The successful applicant will be required to undertake challenges testing popular travel hack theories, and document their experience on social media.

Entrants can showcase their creativity by offering their best travel-hacker answers on **TikTok** (Duet) or **Instagram** (Remix).

## AA US expansion

**AMERICAN** Airlines has announced four additional US domestic routes.

The new flights include daily services from Austin to Sacramento, New York La Guardia to Des Moines, and Washington Reagan to both Baton Rouge and Cedar Rapids.

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