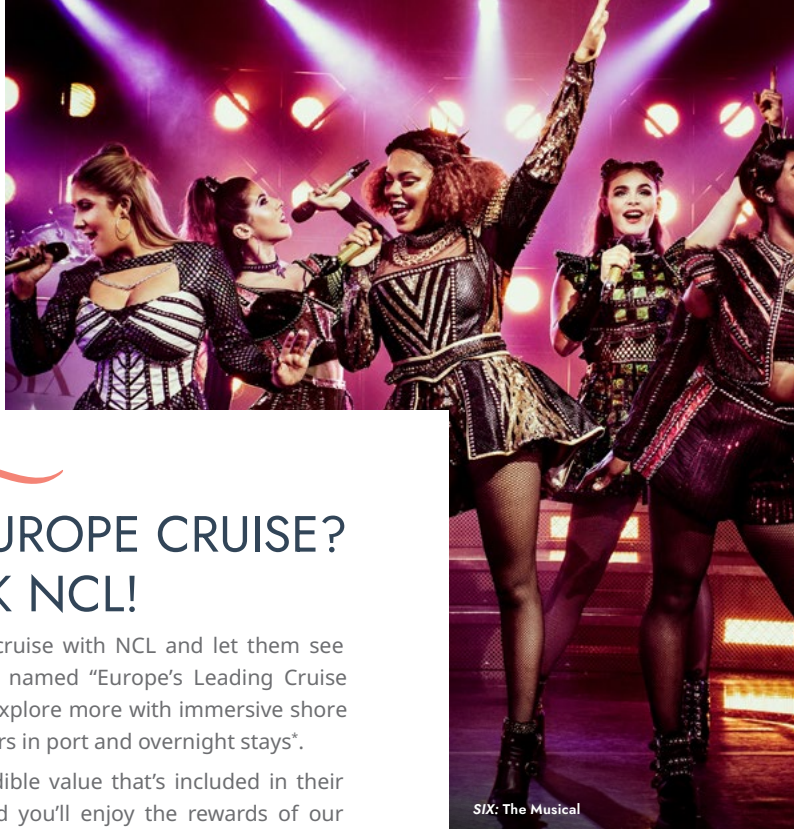




Norwegian Getaway, Dubrovnik, Croatia



SIX: The Musical

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, plus a cover page from **Norwegian Cruise Line** and a full page from **The Travel Junction**.

Aircalin savings

AIRCALIN has released its Explore New Caledonia Sale, offering fares to Aussies from either Sydney or Brisbane to Noumea from \$589 return.

The promotion from Sydney applies to travel dates: 13 Feb to 06 Apr, 24 Apr to 30 Jun, 17 Jul to 22 Sep, and 09 Oct to 30 Nov.

Meanwhile, dates for the discounted flights from Brisbane are: 16 Feb to 30 Mar, 17 Apr to 22 Jun, 10 Jul to 14 Sep, and 02 Oct to 30 Nov.

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Emerald News Corp deal

EXCLUSIVE

SCENIC Group's Emerald Cruises is the launch partner of a new travel promotional concept debuting this weekend with News Corp Australia.

Dubbed 'Escape to...', it's part of a new digital platform from News' popular *Escape* travel section, which has relaunched with a dedicated online presence.

Escape to... is an eight-part travel show hosted by celebrity presenter Merrick Watts along with reporters Tyson Marr and Lizzy Hoo, as well as members of the Escape team.

Each 16-minute episode can be watched in full on-demand, or in individual chapters, and viewers will be presented with an exclusive Hot Deal and an opportunity to win a luxury Emerald Cruises holiday worth up to \$27,720 including flights.

Scenic's Group GM of Sales & Marketing APAC, Anthony Laver, told *Travel Daily* the new format was the ideal platform to showcase Emerald Cruises' luxury yacht and river cruises to the readers of *Escape*.

"This signifies our commitment to investing with News Corp Australia in innovative digital partnerships to deliver high quality content and inspirational stories," Laver said.

Emerald Cruises Director of Sales, Marketing & Product, Angus Crichton, is enthusiastic about the prospects for the innovative format.

"Escape to... will challenge viewers' perceptions of what small-ship cruising is like," he said, with the presenters hiking and cycling through Provence, for

QDP expansion

QANTAS is now offering agents in more than 60 countries across the globe access to the Qantas Distribution Platform, with six additions last week including Chile, Ghana, Kenya, Mexico, Poland and Zambia.

example.

"And the ability to watch each episode anytime and anywhere aligns with Emerald Cruises' ethos of innovation," Crichton said.

The first episode goes live this Sun 12 Feb and features luxury yacht *Emerald Azzurra* cruising from Nice to Rome, while Emerald also showcases its river cruise credentials in the third episode of the season which will be available from 26 Feb.

The trailer for Episode 1 is live at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Scout appoints GM

EXCLUSIVE

SINGAPORE Airlines' budget carrier Scout has announced the appointment of Adam Kelly as its new General Manager for Australia, replacing Kirsty Lucas in the role who departed the business in Nov last year to take up a senior position at Destination Gold Coast (*TD* 30 Nov 2022).

Kelly brings with him a wealth of business and travel industry experience to the budget low-cost airline, including time spent as BDM at Parxl, a cross-border shipping solution developed by Singapore Airlines to leverage its global presence.

Upon accepting the role, he said he is eager to join forces with Australian travel agents and industry partners to continue the recovery of the travel industry and deliver value for customers.

"I am happy to be joining Scout and looking forward to working with agents and industry partners to deliver great travel options for our customers," Kelly said.

"With Scout's expanding international network and codeshare flights with Singapore Airlines, we look forward to exciting times ahead."

Scout currently operates key routes across Asia, Australia, and Europe, including flights from Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and the Gold Coast.

Win Disney100 fam

THE Travel Junction is giving agents the chance to be part of the Disney100 Mega-Fam.

To be in the running, book any Disneyland Park ticket and flights on United Airlines to the US, like one of TTC's exclusive Disney Anaheim packages, and register at www.disneytravelagents.com.au - see **page seven** for details.

NCL Europe offer

NOW is the perfect time to book clients on one of Norwegian Cruise Line's (NCL) Europe cruises, which include immersive shore excursions, with up to 50% off itineraries, the value-packed Free at Sea offer, and the Feb Double Points Europe incentive.

See the **front cover** for further info and seize the moment.

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WILD Awaits
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Rail Online set for growth

YESTERDAY marked exactly 12 months to the day since the formation of Rail Online, and the fledgling technology company has already established a beachhead in the UK and is planning further expansion into the USA.

Founder James Dunne and GM Kirsty Blows are on the road this week to celebrate the milestone, with the company's unique offering building on the expertise the pair developed while at Rail Europe/Rail Plus some years ago.

Rail Online's growth trajectory was significantly boosted last year when the company attracted \$2.5 million in venture capital funding, with the backing seeing the company's range of rail products across the globe now include Amtrak and Via Rail in North America plus European networks such as SNCF, TGV, Thalys, Eurostar and more.

The vision is to have offices in multiple geographies so agent

support can be provided 24/7, while Dunne also flagged a possible B2C push into the UK via the company's smartphone app.

Locally Eurail passes are proving particularly popular this year, with Dunne and Blows noting the Eurail Global Pass now encompasses 33 countries including the UK, providing outstanding value for Australians seeking to visit three or more countries.

The pair noted that the fundamentals for rail travel are very strong, with huge capital investments under way in Europe and the USA amid Government mandates to reduce short-haul flying, and the ongoing quest to lower emissions putting high speed trains squarely in focus.

Rail Online now provides live availability of its various products, with trains priced in A\$, no booking fees and discounts for advance booking - see rail.online.

Some days are just gold...



DESTINATION Gold Coast held its first trade event for 2023 in Sydney yesterday, in an all-day session of business-to-business meetings at the Hilton Hotel.

About 20 suppliers caught up one-on-one with trade clients including DMCs, inbound tour operators, wholesalers and other distributors, while the day wrapped up with casual networking drinks and canapes.

Kirsty Lucas, Destination Gold Coast International Manager, told **Travel Daily** the day provided a great opportunity to re-engage with the trade.

Pictured from left: Andy Karabouloukis, Associate Director of Sales at the Dorsett Gold

Coast; Accor's Director of Sales, Anna Case; Kathy Georgiou, GM Inbound Product for Helloworld/AOT/ATS Pacific; Goway Travel Product Manager Josh Akel; and Kirsty Lucas.

Onefinestay NYC

ACCOR'S Onefinestay brand has announced its first home rentals in New York City, with an initial tranche of 16 properties and further expansion expected over the coming months.

All of the NYC homes, currently located in Manhattan and Brooklyn, have a 30 day minimum stay requirement - for details see onefinestay.com.

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MAFS back at SKYE

SKYE Suites Sydney is being showcased on popular reality series *Married at First Sight* for the fourth year in a row.

Couples on the show will enjoy the spacious apartment's balcony, a pool, spa and gym, and kitchens with a full size fridge.

Education + travel

A COMPANY specialising in educational travel and experiential learning has partnered with Australian-based edtech company HEX to offer younger students a more tech-savvy learning experience.

WorldStrides CEO Robert Gogel said the goal of the partnership was to combine learning, work experience and travel to help students build their resumes and explore their passions.

HEX courses are offered both virtually or in-person - high school students can see info [HERE](#) and uni students can click [HERE](#).

ATEC preps for China boom

EXCLUSIVE

THE rapid return of Chinese travellers to Australia will be driven by airline capacity, which in the past months has begun to show grassroots levels of return, Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) Managing Director Peter Shelley told *Travel Daily*.

Last month saw Chinese carriers such as Beijing Capital Airlines (TD 24 Jan), China Southern Airlines (TD 13 Jan), and Air China (TD 12 Jan), all resume flying to Australia, and with plenty of remaining capacity yet to be added, Shelley believes this trend is only the beginning.

"The feeling is aviation capability will grow at a good rate, reflecting demand and driving demand in some cases," he said.

"Over the next six to 12 months, we would not say it is going to be a slow burn, it will be somewhere

in the middle and it will evolve accordingly."

As capacity from China returns, Shelley observed that one of the key challenges for the Australian tourism industry is to repair the crucial distribution channel between local operators and Chinese players.

To help tackle the challenge head on, ATEC's chief revealed to *Travel Daily* that it is upgrading its China Host program to rebuild the relevant skills base within the Australian tourism industry.

Shelley said the China Host program will allow participants to better understand the changes in the Chinese market, as well as help recruit new talent to the industry with a training and induction process.

It is hoped the upgraded China Host program will be available in the next few months, Shelley said, ahead of the Australian Tourism Exchange in late Apr.

Mat locks tours in

MAT McLachlan Battlefield Tours has guaranteed all departures of its four-day small group Western Front Explorer tours for 2023 will go ahead.

The military adventures will take place between Apr and Nov, and includes WWI historian-led trips in the footsteps of the Anzacs, central Paris pick-up and drop-off, accommodation in the heart of the battlefields, daily breakfast & some other meals, as well as all entrance fees.

"Pre-pandemic, we had a policy that our weekly Western Front Explorer tours were absolutely guaranteed to run...and this year we are thrilled to again announce that all of our Explorers are guaranteed and will run as per the scheduled departures," Mat McLachlan confirmed.

Some of the tours are timed to take place when the Rugby World Cup takes place in France in Sep and Oct - for more details about the tours, [CLICK HERE](#).

BUSINESS
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We're giving away 100,000 Qantas Points to five lucky agents.* To enter, complete the Qantas for Business course on the Qantas Learning Hub, fill in a short survey and answer a question in 25 words or less. Entries close 31 March 2023. Visit qantas.com/agencyconnect

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*To enter, Eligible Entrants must during the Promotion Period complete the 'Qantas for Business' learning course on the Qantas Learning Hub, answer a short survey, and detail in 25 words or less 'How will you use your refreshed understanding of Qantas' SME products to unlock more value for your customers when flying Qantas?' between 1 February and 31 March 2023. 5 winners will each receive 100,000 Qantas Points each. Entrants must be members of the Qantas Frequent Flyer program and provide their unique Qantas Frequent Flyer member identification number to be in the running. Visit qantas.com/agencyconnect for full T&Cs.





Window Seat

AN AUSTRALIAN OnlyFans star has taken aim at the Stradbroke Island Beach Hotel for what she labelled “rude” dress code policies.

Naomi Tibbles, 28, told her thousands of TikTok fans that she was told to “cover up” by security staff because her outfit was inappropriate for a family establishment.

“I said no, I don’t actually want to because I’m on a f***ing island and I was just at the beach,” the star fumed.

Posting images of her outfit to the social media platform, Tibbles said she was wearing a perfectly acceptable outfit of a bikini, crocheted pants, black sandals and a hat.

Recounting the incident, Tibbles said after about 15 to 20 minutes of being there, she was approached by security.

“I knew that they were talking about me cause they kept watching me and radioing to each other, I was like, ‘what the heck do they think I am’? Turns out they wanted to have a talk about what I am wearing”.



Thumbs up for ANA Biz class



ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) recently invited a group of travel agents on board its Boeing 787 Dreamliner to check out all of the new revamped Business, Premium and Economy product.

After taking the VIP tour of the cabin, The Walshe Group’s Account Manager Antonio Khattar (pictured far right) quipped that it was “safe to say we all wish we were heading off to Okinawa, Japan on board tonight’s flight”.

NZ chaos remains

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has confirmed that a state of emergency remains in place for Auckland and the Thames-Coromandel district amid ongoing & severe flooding.

The government is advising travellers to make sure they stay up-to-date with the latest advice from local authorities.

Auckland Airport is now open, and all flights have fully resumed.

The airline recently bolstered its services between Australia and Japan, announcing it will extend its Sydney daytime flights to daily frequencies from Mar.

BTG beyond 5 days

BEYOND Travel Group (BTG) has implemented a four-day working week at five days pay - a system it has been trialling since Jul 2022.

With a staggered roster of days off to allow for maximum cover in the office, CEO Michael Lavilles described the four-day week as a “win-win situation”.

Lavilles said although the move was a “risk” given that Beyond Travel is a service company, it was one “worth taking” in order to create more work-life balance among staff.

The company has increased its productivity by 20% compared to when it operated on a five-day week, despite now being in its busiest period.

Hotel values spike

ACQUISITION interest in the Australian hotel sector will continue to grow in 2023 after a strong 2022 which achieved \$3.2 billion in sales, new research from Ray White has suggested.

Offshore buyers accounted for 58.4% of last year’s sales, with smaller local groups and private investors in the smaller regional markets expected to remain active moving forward, however financing availability may be a stumbling block for some buyers.

The value of hotel assets in Australia is being fuelled by strong hotel occupancy levels and new benchmarks in average daily room rates, following several poor years during the pandemic.

Higher airfares and inflation is also suppressing overseas travel, in turn growing the value of local hotel assets which are benefiting from domestic holiday traffic.

Travel fuels imports

AUSTRALIAN imports grew by more than 1% during Dec to \$45.60 billion, with new Australian Bureau of Statistics figures attributing the rise to ongoing increased demand for travel services.

Encouragingly, the Dec numbers do not yet reflect the rebirth of the China market, which reopened its international borders in Jan, with recovery in Chinese tourism numbers to Australia expected to help drive even greater capital flows to Australia.

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Domes in Milos

DOMES Resorts & Reserves has announced its debut on the Greek island of Milos, with the opening of a luxury adults-only hotel on the island's northern coast later this year.

Domes White Coast Milos is comprised of 30 private pool suites, each with their own infinity pool, views of the Myrtoan Sea and access to three sandy beaches.

The luxury lifestyle brand also announced a line-up of hotel openings for 2023 in Greek destinations, including the peninsula of Halkidiki, Mykonos, Santorini and the Athenian Riviera, as well as across Europe.

Additionally, the group has revealed it is preparing to re-open Domes Lake Algarve, located in southern Portugal, following renovations.

Virtuoso addition

THAILAND'S Anantara Lawana Koh Samui Resort has been accepted into the Virtuoso portfolio, with the property, which is located seven minutes from Koh Samui International Airport, featuring 122 recently renovated guestrooms and luxury pool villas.

General Manager Emanuel Grosch said the Virtuoso high-touch approach was a "perfect fit with our own bespoke approach to service".

NEW LUXURY STANDARD FOR DUBAI

PROMISING "a new standard of glamour and luxury in Dubai", SH Hotels & Resorts has announced plans to construct Baccarat Hotel & Residences Dubai, a 144-room ultra-luxury (render **pictured**) mixed-use development.

A third of the rooms on offer for guests will be suites, along with 49 Baccarat-branded private residences, with the luxury project to be managed by SH Hotels & Resorts affiliated team in London, under the leadership of Robert Koren, who was recently appointed to SVP and Area Managing Director for Europe, the Middle East & Africa.

SH Hotels & Resorts founder, Barry Sternlicht, also the Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Starwood Capital Group, said the hotel will not only

exude ultra-luxury experiences for travellers, but will also take its place aesthetically as one of the most amazing-looking structures in the region.

"Our artisans will work to create a spectacular property to take its place among the most revered in the world - we are excited for this project's gleaming future," he said.

The property will consist of twin tapering towers, designed by renowned architectural firm Studio Libeskind, and be representative of local UAE themes such as the desert sand, the sea, and the sun.

The hotel is set to be located close by to the world's largest building, the Burj Khalifa, and will aim to open its doors to guests in Dubai by 2026.



Kasbah Tamadot project now back on track

AFTER a three-year pause due to COVID, construction has resumed on six new two-bedroom Riads at Kasbah Tamadot, a new luxury Moroccan retreat in the High Atlas Mountains.

The Riads will offer a new accommodation option for families and small groups, in addition to the property's existing Berber tents, rooms and suites.

Some of the groundworks were already completed in

2020, with work resuming during the retreat's annual closure period last month.

Kasbah Tamadot has confirmed there will be no visual impact and only some noise impact during construction, while extra landscaping will be added around the property to offer even more scenery and space, along with "additional surprise elements" for guests.

The Riads are expected to open by Summer 2024.

A Ritzy NY suite

THE Ritz-Carlton New York, NoMad has introduced The Ritz-Carlton Suite at the property, serving as the premier suite in the 250-room hotel.

Located on the 37th floor of the hotel, the suite boasts sweeping views over Manhattan, as well as lavish amenities, such as a private wellness room featuring a Peloton bike, distinct separate living and dining areas, & a media room.

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Floating breakfast of champions



TRAVELLERS to Far North Queensland will now be able to indulge in a 'floating breakfast' at Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort, Port Douglas.

Usually characteristic of holidays in destinations such as Bali and the Maldives, the hotel will offer the tropical experience as part of a three-night 'Float into Paradise' package, which includes accommodation in a Mirage Studio Garden View Room.

The idyllic brekky is delivered on a floating wicker tray while guests relax in one of the hotel's

saltwater lagoons.

The Insta-worthy feed consists of a continental spread of croissants with jam and butter, a tropical fruit plate with Mungalli yoghurt, and tea or coffee as well as freshly squeezed orange juice.

Guests can then take their pick of classic morning meals like breakfast burgers, coconut acai bowls, or smashed avocado, while seafood-lovers can opt for the lobster with scrambled eggs on toasted Turkish bread.

The package starts from \$690 per night - **CLICK HERE**.

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



Hyatt Centric Congress Avenue Austin has officially opened in the heart of downtown Austin, Texas. The 31-storey hotel comprises 246 guest rooms, including five suites, which are adorned with guitar-amp nightstands and vintage Paramount and State theatres show posters. The Luminaire restaurant offers full-service, all-day dining, while the Las Bis terrace bar and lounge is the ideal place to enjoy a drink with views of the city skyline.



InterContinental Hotel - Bellevue at the Avenue is a step closer to completion, after a recent topping-off ceremony. The property, which will mark the brand's debut in the Pacific Northwest, will offer 208 rooms across nine floors of a 26-storey tower. Due to open in the fourth quarter of this year, the hotel will also feature an outdoor deck and patio, a full-service spa and fitness centre, a new restaurant brand, and more than 12,000² of meeting space.



Hawaii's **Kaanapali Beach Hotel** has unveiled its freshly renovated rooms, which were designed with the island's culture at the forefront. The rooms are decorated with ocean-inspired features, such as traditional octopus lures and fishing nets, as well as unique gifts that were handcrafted by employees. The property also features a new award-winning beachfront restaurant, Huihui, where guests can enjoy modern Hawaiian cuisine.

Travel Daily On Board: Viking Orion



The Theatre

The Theatre is *Viking Orion's* main venue, dishing up live performances which aim to bring passengers closer to the culture of the destinations in which they're travelling. The space can also transform into two movie theatres, with destination-inspired classics on the bill, including *Room with A View*, *Roman Holiday*, and *Skyfall*.

Airbus seeks dream

AIRBUS has selected AI computational science company Altair SimSolid to help the aerospace manufacturer create a zero-emission passenger aircraft.

The company will assist with Airbus' ZEROe project, which aims to create the world's first hydrogen propulsion-powered commercial airline fleet and enable the exploration of a variety of configurations and hydrogen technologies that will shape future development.

Ha Long Bay cruise

AMBASSADOR Cruise will launch a new voyage on Fri, exploring Ha Long Bay in Vietnam on board the new ship, *Ambassador Day Cruise II*.

The itinerary includes a sailing of Sung Sot Cave, a buffet lunch, and the Cua Van Floating Village, while the new vessel offers guests spacious sundecks across two floors and 45 cabins, two restaurants, two bars, an entertainment area for live music, and a large open-air jacuzzi.

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