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EXCLUSIVE

THE itravel network is in the unique position of being in better shape today than before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, according to MD Steve Labroski.

Speaking to **TD** on the sidelines of the group's conference in Western Sydney on the weekend, Labroski confirmed that "we are stronger in volume and sales and in everything that we're doing", adding that the company's home-based business had enjoyed record sales for every subsequent month since Feb last year.

But while Labroski hailed the record trend in sales volumes, he was quick to caution that even the strong COVID bounceback comes at a price, with agent burnout at the top of the list of negative outcomes itravel is now seeking to avoid.

"We've lost close to 60-65% of the industry who have disappeared, that's a hell of a lot of people who were previously selling travel, throw into the equation that we have 100% of consumer coming at us, how does that work for the agent?"

"If we don't get mind and body right, and we don't know where we're heading and we just keep taking on all that extra work, eventually burnout gets you - this is probably the biggest nightmare that the industry is not looking at," Labroski claimed.

Just one of the ways itravel is addressing the problem of agent burnout is the theme of its latest

conference: 'World to Wellness; Mind, Body and Business', with agents treated to yoga sessions, as well as health chats from former AFL player Mark Bunn and entrepreneur Lucy Bloom.

The gathering, held at the Crowne Plaza Hawkesbury Valley in Windsor, also saw supplier speed-dating opportunities, social media training, social parties, and a moving speech delivered by Canberra-based Maria Slater about how to chase the "dream job", whose Maria Slater Travel business joined itravel's network in Oct last year (**TD** 04 Oct 2022).

See **page four** for more news.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news including a cover page from **Journey Beyond**, plus a photo page from **itravel** and an opinion piece from **Edith Cowan University**.

G goes back to Peru

G ADVENTURES has announced it is rebooting all trip styles in Peru from 01 Mar after a period of suspension following violent protests in the country.

Small itinerary adjustments in areas such as Puno will be made while the tour operator continues to monitor the situation.



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Window Seat

AN AUSSIE tourist in Bali inadvertently spent more in one night out on wine than he did on his entire holiday.

The traveller from Kalgoorlie in WA was at a restaurant in Bali celebrating a birthday with friends when he decided to splurge on a fancy bottle of wine, which came with a "\$170++" price tag.

"Definitely a bit more than I would even pay in Australia but it was a birthday celebration right?", the Aussie reasoned, recounting in his story that A\$170 wasn't too bad, so I said to the waiter, we will have that bottle please.

"The waiter paused and said, 'are you sure sir?'"

Insulted by the waiter's assumption that he couldn't afford a \$170 bottle of wine, the tourist doubled down on his decision.

It was only the next day when he checked his bank account that he realised the \$170 bottle of wine was, in fact, \$1,700!

As it turns out, the wine list was using currency in the hundred of thousands of Indonesian Rupiah.



Entire offers live itineraries

ENTIRE Travel Group has announced the introduction of a new dynamic itinerary and documentation system for tailor-made holiday packages.

The innovation goes live today, giving travel advisors access to full-colour day-by-day itineraries featuring their own agency logo and downloadable in PDF format.

The itinerary and docs are also able to be viewed via desktop, mobile devices or using an app, allowing changes to be made dynamically in real time.

The company has also eliminated the \$100 "pre-commitment payment" which was introduced in early 2021 as the industry was starting to emerge from the pandemic.

"Like all travel companies we were then operating with limited resources and needed to ensure we maintained our service levels," Sales & Marketing Director, Greg McCallum said.

"Since then we have steadily rebuilt, most recently by adding

Celestyal purchases

CELESTYAL Cruises has confirmed the purchase of a 1,260-guest ship, originally built as *Ryndam* for Holland America Line, and more recently operating for P&O Australia.

Celestyal Journey will undergo a multi-million dollar refurbishment and technical maintenance overhaul before joining the fleet and setting sail.

seven new full-time members to our Canada, Islands and Europe sales teams," he added.

"At the same time we've been delighted to see that our travel agent partners, as part of their own efforts to optimise efficiency, have adopted a firmer approach to qualifying leads.

"As a result we are confident that a pre-commitment charge is no longer necessary and want to thank our trade partners for supporting us throughout this transition period," he said.

Entire's new itinerary and docs solution is now live at entiretravel.com.au.

NSW on the road

DESTINATION NSW has unveiled a series of new roadmaps designed to grow the state's regional visitor economy through to 2030.

The Destination Management Plans (DMPs) were developed by the seven Destination Networks, which include the North Coast, Country and Outback NSW, Riverina Murray, Sydney Surrounds North, Sydney Surrounds South, Central West and Southern NSW.

The roadmaps highlight the unique strengths of each region and lay out targets for govt and industry collaboration to boost visitation in alignment with the NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030, which aims to deliver \$65b in visitor expenditure annually.

Vale Ed Smith

THE travel industry is mourning the sudden death last week of Ed Smith, founder of Canada & Alaska Specialist Holidays.

Smith's extensive industry career had also previously seen him in senior roles at Trafalgar Tours, as a Director and part-owner of Adventure World, VP of Sales & Marketing for Cunard Line and GM of talPacific Holidays.

He sold Canada & Alaska Specialist Holidays to CIT Holidays about five years ago (TD 07 Nov 2017), with the business subsequently becoming part of Entire Travel Group when it merged with CIT (TD 23 Apr 2018).

Smith was aged 78, with his funeral scheduled for 12.30pm on 10 Mar at The Coast Chapel in Sydney's Little Bay.

Poesia maiden call

MSC Cruises' *MSC Poesia* made her maiden call to Sydney yesterday, as part of her 119-day world cruise from Genoa, Italy.

To mark the occasion, MSC Cruises held events throughout the day to welcome visitors and invite travel agents on board to see the ship's offerings.

The 3,000-capacity ship will also make her maiden call in Brisbane on Wed and Cairns on Fri.

"Having a ship in port provides a great opportunity for our trade partners and media to experience our Mediterranean hospitality," MSC Cruises Commercial Director Australia & NZ, Lisa Teiotu, said.

For more, see today's *CW*.

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Alliance acquires 30 E190s

ALLIANCE Aviation has agreed to purchase 30 additional Embraer E190 aircraft from Dublin-based AerCap, which is currently leasing the planes out to an unnamed airline based in the United States.

Starting from Sep, the aircraft will be purchased one at a time over a two-year period through a mix of debt and cash generated from the ongoing operation of Alliance's existing Fokker and Embraer 70 fleet.

The additions, which will be deployed across all the company's operations, will bring Alliance's total fleet size up to 100, with 37 Fokker 100/70 and 63 Embraer E190 aircraft.

"This acquisition will provide Alliance with increased capacity, access to major componentry, including engines and enhanced operational capability," Alliance Managing Director Scott McMillan explained.

Alliance plans to gradually increase services as each aircraft is acquired and certified after major maintenance checks in Rockhampton, where they will be refurbished and receive Australian certification.

The total cost of the fleet remains undetermined, with Alliance expecting the cost of each aircraft to differ significantly depending on the maintenance status of the airframe and the two fitted engines in the week before each delivery.

Alliance added that it intends to disassemble some of the planes for a period of time in order to keep the engines and other components as spare parts in a bid to better support the rest of the Embraer fleet.

The news follows a recent announcement from Alliance that it will be increasing the number of wet lease E190 aircraft to Qantas from 18 to 30.

Qld flood protection

A NUMBER of tourism operators across Queensland will receive between \$20,000 to \$150,000 in government support to help operators better prepare for extreme weather events.

Launched by the Queensland Government in Sep last year, the \$5 million Building Resilient Tourism Infrastructure Fund aims to help tourism businesses 'build back better' from extreme weather events in 2021 and 2022.

The 32 new initiatives include flood impact mitigation at Riverlife, Australia Zoo, Bouli Hotel, Criterion Hotel Dalby, Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary, Lady Elliot Island Eco-Resort and Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary.

"By helping these tourism businesses become more resilient we can lessen inconvenience to holidaymakers and the destructiveness of natural disasters on visitor economies," Qld Tourism Minister Stirling Hinchliffe said.

Boeing stoppage

BOEING has paused deliveries of 787 Dreamliners in order to address new concerns identified by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The news comes just six months after Boeing was granted approval to recommence deliveries of the widebody jet after a 15-month pause (**TD** 01 Aug 2022).

Boeing said it will carry out the required analysis and documentation surrounding the newly discovered issue, which it described as "an analysis error by our supplier related to the 787 forward pressure bulkhead".

"The FAA is working with Boeing to determine any actions that might be required for recently delivered airplanes," Boeing said, adding its production and delivery outlook for the year is not expected to change.

The 787 Dreamliners have not been grounded and Boeing will continue assembly of the planes during the pause.

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Brand USA gets busy in Australia



THE upcoming Brand USA mega-famil (**TD** 22 Feb) is just one of a host of trade initiatives that the organisation is kicking off to reignite the Australian market.

As well as working with Hawaiian Airlines on the mega-famil, Brand USA Senior VP of Integrated Marketing, Staci Mellman, has also confirmed a partnership with Qantas for its Best of America Day, which will see about 150 travel consultants participate in training to boost their knowledge of the QF offering and at the same time promote North America as a destination of choice.

The US marketing agency will also continue its activity to support and upskill Aussie agents, including two incentives encouraging advisors to earn destination and product badges, as well as a Lunch and Learn series which will offer face-to-face training opportunities.

Hawaiian Airlines is the airline partner for the Brand USA mega-famil in Jun this year which

will see 50 travel advisors from Australia and New Zealand head to the USA for five nights, splitting into groups to explore itineraries focusing on sports and the great outdoors, before reconvening in Hawaii for a grand finale.

Mellman, who is **pictured** above right with Tori Goddard from Brand USA's local representative, Gate 7, told **Travel Daily** that airline capacity was key to expectations of recovery, with Australia-US airlift now scheduled to return to 100% of pre-COVID levels by the end of 2023.

"That means now is the perfect time to reconnect and engage with tour industry partners to inspire travel and get Australians back into the USA," she said.

Prior to joining Brand USA in Nov last year, Mellman was a senior executive at Visit Florida for almost 12 years, and has a close connection with Australia having completed an MBA at the University of NSW in 2010.

Globus appoints

ALLISON Neech has been appointed to the newly created role of Campaign and Partnership Manager at the Globus Family of Brands in Australia and NZ.

Neech was most recently Marketing Manager at Emirates One & Only Wolgan Valley Resort, with previous industry roles at Carnival Cruise Line and Small Luxury Hotels of the World.

EU-Japan air deal

THE Council of the European Union has signed a new aviation agreement with Japan, giving all EU-based airlines access to routes between the EU and Japan.

The pact supersedes 13 existing bilateral agreements between individual EU member states and Japan, some of which contained provisions that infringed EU law.

The Council said the changes would "create a level playing field for EU carriers".

HQ by itravel to return

EXCLUSIVE

ITRAVEL has confirmed exclusively to **Travel Daily** that it is preparing to dust off and relaunch its internal wholesale product, HQ by itravel, in a bid to free up more time for its travel advisors to sell more product.

The service was hibernated due to the ongoing impacts of COVID when it launched in early 2020 (**TD** 10 Feb 2020), at the time aggregating all of the group's key partners in one central location, starting with hotel inventory.

"We have brought it back to life and we are now just finalising a few more details, but it is virtually live as we speak," MD Steve Labroski confirmed.

"Within two weeks we'll start retesting it again and it's part of the plan to look at opportunities to centralise processes and make it easier for our agents to sell - the more efficient they are, the more money we hope that they'll be able to make and the more time they will have to sit down and smell the roses," he added.

Ittravel plans to go live with 800,000 hotels, with that figure

expected to grow to more than a million in only a matter of weeks, followed by day tours, transfers and other aspects of travel.

"We'll be bringing in enough APIs that will put us in a position to have the best price and product in the market instantly," Labroski enthused.

"We've also got a few other things in the pipeline that we're working on but this launch is about trying to control our business better, and making it easier for our network to sell."

The news was revealed at itravel's 2023 conference in Sydney, where Labroski also stated that agents are poised to recoup even more business from travellers, who, because of the decimation of travel sellers, had been forced to deal directly with suppliers and wholesalers.

"Where suppliers were doing 7-8% direct pre-COVID, they are now doing 15-30%, but that is starting to turn and as agents return and suppliers' staff learn how to deal with agents better, efficiency will improve and agents will claw back that business."

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itravel preaches Mind, Body & Business



THE wellness vibes were well and truly on full display at itravel's 2023 conference in western Sydney over the weekend, with yoga, face masks, inspirational chats and plenty of green pastures just some of the ways attendees were made to feel nice and relaxed.

The independent travel agency network gathered at the Crowne Plaza Hawkesbury Valley in Windsor for the event, with avoiding future travel advisor burnout the order of the day, according to MD Steve Labroski.

The conference culminated in a jubilant cocktail party where attendees could let their hair down and prepare mentally for a big year of travel ahead.



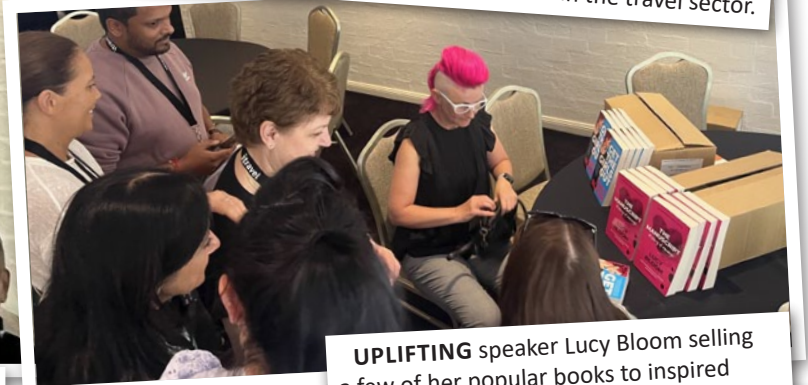
INTREPID Travel's Roberta Abbondanza indulges in one of the many wellness goodies laid on for suppliers and agents at the event.



NEW iTravel recruit Maria Slater motivates attendees about how to make the best life choices in the travel sector.

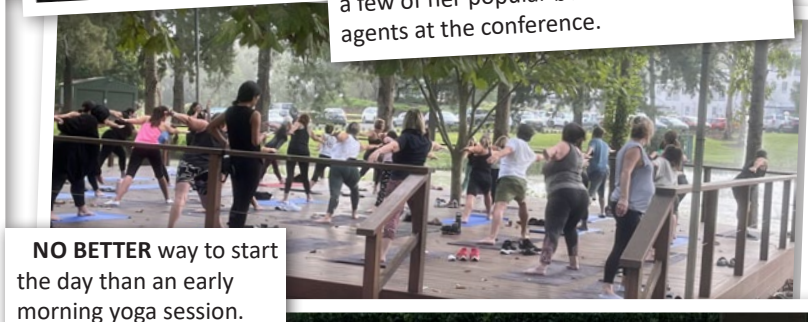


ITRAVEL MD Steve Labroski clearly taking heed of the wisdom of motivational speaker Mark Bunn.



UPLIFTING speaker Lucy Bloom selling a few of her popular books to inspired agents at the conference.

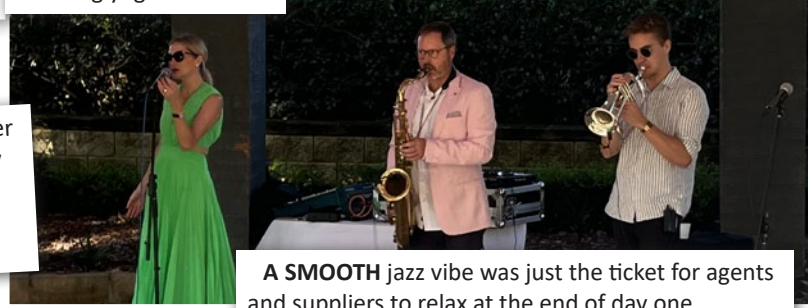
WE'RE all friends here: Celebrity Cruises and Princess Cruises reps talk shop before speed-dating sessions kick off.



NO BETTER way to start the day than an early morning yoga session.



JUST a slither of the healthy food options served up to attendees.



A SMOOTH jazz vibe was just the ticket for agents and suppliers to relax at the end of day one.



Senior citizens ripe for digital push

OPINION

TODAY'S opinion editorial has been supplied exclusively by Dr Xuequn (Alex) Wang and Dr Jun Wen from Edith Cowan University.

Got an opinion to share? Let us know in up to 400 words via email to feedback@traveldaily.com.au.

POPULATION aging continues to accelerate, and the proportion of elderly people (those over age 60) is expected to nearly double over the ensuing decades: from 12% in 2015 to 22% in 2050.

These changes are impactful for the tourism industry, as more and more travellers are elderly. Senior tourists are predicted to drive economic growth and to improve elderly people's quality of life and mental health.

Quality of life reflects people's overall life satisfaction, and leisure activities such as travel can improve elderly individuals' physical and psychological well-being. Indeed, leisure travel is a key part of elderly people's lives and can increase their life quality. Travel and tourism have even been proposed to help people cope with health-related issues such as dementia.

At the same time, travel can create additional concerns for the elderly as they encounter novel scenarios during trips.

Information technology (IT) is one way to enhance elderly individuals' travel experiences.

Although the elderly may not use IT as often as younger generations, they are turning to IT tools more than ever before. With IT having become ubiquitous in everyday life, elderly people have gradually become more amenable to using such technology to stay connected to friends and family and to improve life quality. IT can play important roles before, during, and after travel.

In the pre-travel stage, mobile

apps can help the elderly map out trip activities. Various travel apps have been developed in China to facilitate senior tourism.

These apps include accessibility options, such as the opportunity to change font size and colour, to streamline booking for the elderly and other groups in need. Personalised trip activities are also being designed to suit elderly tourists.

Another development receiving attention is virtual reality (VR). Prior to a trip, prospective tourists (including the elderly) can use VR to explore destination

“ Although the elderly may not use IT as often as younger generations, they are now turning to IT tool more than they ever have before. ”

sites and plan an itinerary accordingly. Virtual reality can also be used to improve elderly individuals' quality of life if they cannot travel due to health issues. Essentially, the elderly can use VR to have experiences they could not otherwise access, such as visiting another country or touring a national park. This immersion can enhance mental health by promoting relaxation.

During trips, smart wearables can track elderly individuals' health status, such as through blood pressure and heart rate readings. These data can help people manage chronic health conditions and monitor risk factors related to illnesses such as dementia. Wearables include real-time, objective measures that can help detect pre-symptomatic changes.

These devices are also equipped

with functionalities such as fall detection, enabling healthcare professionals to react quickly if such incidents occur. A personal emergency response system can be configured as well so that the elderly can obtain immediate assistance if needed. Wearables can send users daily reminders about food and medications, and tailored interventions can be developed via adaptive algorithms to fit users' needs and preferences. Mobile data can be further integrated with individuals' electronic health records while travelling in order to promote information exchange and effective treatments.

Digital interpretations can also be helpful.

China encouraged tourist attractions to implement these types of interpretations due to COVID-19, and the innovation has since become available in many places. Tailored interpretations are especially useful for people with hearing impairments. For example, the elderly can listen to recorded instructions or guidance as many times as they wish.

IT such as mobile apps can help the elderly socialise during and after trips.

While travelling, these tourists can use social media platforms such as Facebook and WeChat to stay in touch with friends. They can subsequently share their trip experiences via social media upon returning home. Doing so may spark further interaction around travel.

Of course, these benefits do not come without costs. Sharing more personal data may subject the elderly to privacy and security issues.

Therefore, when designing technologies such as mobile apps, strict guidelines must be followed to protect users' privacy.

Rail Europe reminder

TRAVEL advisors are being reminded that they can offer 10% discounts on Eurail Passes to clients heading to Europe between 01-21 Mar.

This saving applies to most passes except for Germany and Scandinavia Pass products, as well as certain France Passes - for further details, [CLICK HERE](#).

Book Royal and earn a \$50 gift card

TRAVEL agents who book a local Royal Caribbean 2023-2024 sailing through Creative Cruising will earn themselves a \$50 e-gift card for all cruise bookings made and deposited between 01 Feb and 31 Mar.

Discounts are also on offer for bookings on *Quantum of the Seas*' Australia to Oahu 17-day Last Minute voyage departing 12 Apr, as well as *Ovation of the Seas*' Australia to Oahu 18-night Last Minute sailing - for more details call 1300 362 599.

QR partners with F1

QATAR Airways has confirmed a new global sponsorship deal with Formula 1 through until 2027.

The pact will also see QR as the title sponsor of races in Italy, Hungary and Qatar this year, while Discover Qatar will offer tickets and packages to the Formula 1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix from 06-08 Oct.

IAG Air Europa buy

INTERNATIONAL Airlines Group (IAG) has confirmed plans to acquire 100% of Spanish carrier Air Europa.

IAG, which also owns British Airways and Iberia, currently holds 20% of Air Europa and will purchase the rest within 18 months, subject to regulatory approval.

The company said the move would enable its Madrid base to "compete on an equal footing with other European hubs".

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BROCHURES

THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by ANZCRO. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to brochures@traveldaily.com.au.



Swan Hellenic - African Coast Cruises 2023

This new program from Swan Hellenic showcases 10 Africa itineraries ranging from seven to 13 nights departing Mar-Nov this year. Voyages include the Safaris of the Southwest Coast aboard *SH Vega* which kicks off in Cape Town before heading to the Atlantic coastline of Namibia and then onward to wildlife-rich Angola. Guests will enjoy spotting flamingos, pelicans, whales and dolphins - for more details call 1300 722 499.

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Ormina Tours - Puglia Travel Guide

In response to a huge increase in travel agent enquiry, Ormina Tours has now produced a new Sales Guide for Italy's popular Puglia region. The tool aims to help advisors better understand the must-see sights, activities and the variety of accommodation types on offer.

A free Ormina Tours educational webinar will also showcase Puglia on Thu 16 Mar 2023 at 4.30pm AEDT. Register to attend [HERE](#), and [CLICK HERE](#) to download the new sales guide.

Pioneers add coach

OUTBACK Pioneers has expanded its guest capacity by adding a new Volvo B8R Euro 6 coach to its fleet, with the new vehicle featuring a customised Irlizar body.

The tour operator based in Longreach, Qld acquired the coach in to provide more services and flexibility transferring guests to Nogo Station and on the Winton day tour.

Richard Kinnon, founder and Director of the company, said "we always do what it takes to give our guests the best experience and for us that meant the safety and comfort of the Volvo-Irlizar coach...when in the outback, you need vehicles you can rely on".

Disability webinar

DISABILITY Travel specialists Supported Travel eXperiences (STX) and Club Mates Travel recently participated in a webinar to talk about how to use NDIS funding to achieve better travel & holidays goals.

Both organisations are NDIS registered travel agencies with the aim of assisting people with disabilities to travel the world.

In this webinar, Yann from STX and Peter from Club Mates Travel had talked about some of the complexities of travelling with a disability before illustrating how travel can be a great way for people with disabilities to achieve their NDIS goals.

View the webinar [HERE](#).

Barry snares NYC trip!



NYC & Company held a one-of-a-kind drag trivia last Fri at the Winery in Surry hills to showcase everything about New York City, with participating travel agents earning an opportunity to win a grand prize of an all expenses paid trip to the Big Apple.

The presentations were held by NYC partners, Arthouse Hotel - Empire State Building, Gray Line CitySightseeing New York, Hotel Beacon, Hudson Yards, New York

Hilton Midtown, Rockefeller Centre and SUMMIT One Vanderbilt.

The lucky winner, Barry Warner (**pictured**, second from the left), from Planetdwellers Travel showing all smiles as he receives the grand prize from the organisers.

Abu Dhabi slam dunk

THE Department of Culture and Tourism - Abu Dhabi has partnered with its biggest star to date (quite literally), with former NBA star Shaquille O'Neal leaping on board as a brand ambassador.

The campaign called Shaq Dreams of Abu Dhabi features three videos of the sports star dreaming up the perfect holiday in the UAE destination, with videos focusing on foodie appeal, family-friendly activities, relaxation attractions, entertainment and nightlife.

View the campaign [HERE](#).

Transit hub at NIA

THE latest construction phase of the Noida International Airport in India is close to complete.

Projected to be the country's largest airport, Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) is receiving interest from multiple airlines such as Indigo, Air Asia, Air India and Vistara, with the hub reportedly to focus on routes linking India and Asia-Pacific countries.

The airport will feature two runways and have a capacity for around 70 million people per year, with the opening date predicted to be Sep 2024.

NIA) is located 7km north of Jewar Town in Gautam Buddh Nagar district of Uttar Pradesh.