

ANA SYD boost

ALL Nippon Airways has confirmed an increase to its flights between Sydney and Tokyo Haneda, with an additional three weekly services to operate from Fri 22 Jan.

The new flights will operate each Fri, Sat and Sun, departing SYD at 12.30pm and arriving in Tokyo at 8.05pm, with ANA Country Manager, Brett Walsh, noting that the carrier includes all ski equipment as part of check-in luggage at no extra cost.

MEANWHILE there's speculation that ANA may also be looking at relaunching non-stop flights from Japan to Perth, with a number of new codeshare routes in partnership with Virgin Australia gradually filed last month.

Effective from 26 Mar 2023 ANA will codeshare on VA services from Perth to Brisbane, Kalgoorlie, Newman, Port Hedland and Melbourne, as well as the existing SYD-PER codeshare.

China flight demand surge

THE easing of China's formerly strict COVID-19 policies has seen a boom in outbound flight bookings, according to data from major Chinese OTA Trip.com.

Authorities in the country have scaled down a range of measures, including elimination of QR code check-ins and requirements for testing - although inbound travellers to China will still be subject to centralised quarantine at their point of entry.

New QF QDP guide

QANTAS has released a new Qantas Distribution Platform (QDP) Capability Listing Tool, detailing more than 80 functions available via the system and comparing them to traditional EDIFACT offerings.

Agents need to speak with their technology partner to find when individual capabilities will be available - more details [HERE](#).

Passport processing will resume for Chinese citizens, and mainland residents are also once again being allowed to visit Hong Kong for tourism and business effective from 08 Jan.

Trip.com said after the changes were announced it recorded a "staggering 254% increase in mainland China's outbound flight bookings compared to a day earlier," with the most popular destinations being Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan and Thailand.

Bookings for long-haul flights to the US, UK and Australia also grew, the company said.

Inbound bookings also rocketed, with Australia, Germany, Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong topping the list as major source markets.

Australia has joined a number of key destinations imposing pre-departure testing requirements for arrivals from China, Hong Kong & Macau - see [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including our [Sustainability page](#).

Exploring in Sydney

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Explorer* arrived into Sydney Harbour on Thu, on her first call to Australia during the vessel's maiden voyage Down Under.

Dubbed "the most luxurious ship ever built", *Explorer's* first season in Asia Pacific is seeing her cruise through Australia, Asia, and New Zealand, for a summer of regional voyages.

To celebrate *Explorer's* arrival in Australia, a number of trade partners were invited aboard the ship for a tour and lunch, which also farewelled Senior Vice President & MD Asia Pacific Steve Odell on his penultimate day on the job (see [page three](#)).

For more details, see today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.



EXPLORER SALE



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VIEW OFFERS



Window Seat

SYDNEY was the third most expensive city in the world in which to spend New Year's Eve, according to a report from accommodation website cheapohotels.org, which is part of travel giant Booking.com.

The site compared hotel rates across 50 major cities globally, taking into account the cheapest available double room for a three-night stay from 30 Dec until 02 Jan.

Only centrally-located hotels rated at least three stars and with generally positive guest reviews were taken into account, with New York City emerging at the top of the rankings with a nightly rate of US\$312 for the least expensive rooms available.

Miami came in second spot with a rate of US\$297, just ahead of Sydney's lowest rate for the period of US\$295.

London was the most expensive European city for New Year's Eve celebrations with a US\$275 per night rate, while the most expensive destination in Asia was Tokyo, costing US\$232 per night - more than three times the cost a year ago when Japan was still heavily impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

Scoot Oz shuffle

SCOOT Airlines will increase its non-stop Perth-Singapore flights from 10 to 12 weekly, effective 26 Mar 2023 - but at the same time reduce Melbourne-Singapore flights from 12 to 10 per week, according to GDS screens.

The move is part of a wide-ranging network update which also sees the Singapore Airlines low-cost long-haul offshoot boost capacity to Japan via Taipei, as well as adding more Singapore-Hong Kong and rejigging aircraft types on some Indian routes.

Hong Kong lifts restrictions

VISITORS to Hong Kong are no longer required to take mandatory PCR COVID-19 tests on arrival or be quarantined, while authorities there have also lifted the Vaccine Pass requirement which restricted access to specified premises.

The changes became effective on 29 Nov, with Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) Chairman, Dr Pang Yiu-kai, saying the moves mark a "key milestone for tourism revival and the full reopening of the tourism doors of Hong Kong".

"Visitors can now fully enjoy Hong Kong's diverse offerings once they arrive in town...we believe this will attract visitors to Hong Kong from around the world," he said.

Pang said HKTB would now step up its promotional activity "to uphold Hong Kong's status as a world-class travel destination".

While restrictions upon arrival

have been eased, inbound travellers to Hong Kong are still required to present negative tests taken prior to departure.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has reissued its Smartraveller advice for Hong Kong, noting that the new testing requirement applies regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status, and includes Australian citizens.

The Smartraveller update also notes that dual citizenship is no longer recognised in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region following the application of the Nationality Law of the People's Republic of China.

United Airlines this morning reacted to the Hong Kong easings by announcing it would resume SFO-HKG services on 03 Mar.

WHM extension

WORKING Holiday Makers (WHMs) visiting Australia can continue to work with any one employer for the duration of their visa without requesting permission, with the relaxation of the pre-pandemic six-month work limitation now extended through until 30 Jun this year.

The change means that from 01 Jul 2023 onwards, WHMs may also work for any employer for up to an additional six months, even if they worked for that same employer before 01 Jul 2023.

The Department of Home Affairs confirmed that the update applies to anyone in Australia who either holds any kind of WHM visa, regardless of when they arrive, or holds a Bridging Visa with the six month limitation imposed.

MEANWHILE Immigration Minister Andrew Giles has confirmed that WHM visas are now being approved in less than 24 hours, with the Department hiring over 400 extra staff to clear the backlog.

Cruising pirouette!



AZAMARA Cruises' *Azamara Quest* (pictured) undertook a unique manoeuvre in front of the Sydney Opera House when she arrived in the harbour last week.

It's believed to be the first time any ship has ever done this type of "circle work", with a time lapse video of the pirouette now online at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Hawaii spend up

HAWAII has reported an increased visitor spend for Nov 2022, up 13.7% compared to Nov 2019, despite a 9.1% decrease in visitor arrivals.

Total visitor spend for the month was A\$2.24 billion - a strong sign of recovery for the state's economy, fuelled largely by visitors from the US West and US East.

NRMA, Manly ferry

NRMA Expeditions, the tourism division of NRMA, has been awarded a 15-year contract to operate the Manly Fast Ferry service, which will see the 20-minute trip from Manly to Circular Quay continue until 2037.

The new contract will deliver more peak services and a new environmentally friendly fleet, including the introduction of a hybrid-hydrogen ferry in the coming years, as well as explore the potential for electric ferries.

Opal gates will be installed for Manly Fast Ferry services by the end of 2023, providing commuters with the option to pay for trips using an Opal card or any credit card.

"The NRMA today welcomes this announcement and we are pleased that this long-standing partnership with the NSW Government will continue to deliver for Sydney and in particular Northern Beaches residents," NRMA Expeditions CEO Rachel Wiseman said.

"We know the residents of Manly and the Northern Beaches place a lot of value in this service and we also understand how important it is to opening up the Northern Beaches to tourists."

Elevate Sydney

THE NSW Government today opened Elevate Sydney, an activation on the normally busy Cahill Expressway above Circular Quay which has been closed for five days over the holiday period.

Elevate Sydney features a 127m-long bar, a nightly 600-drone SkyShow and a daily roster of performances by more than 120 leading musical artists.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said the festival will "remind the world why the Harbour City is Asia Pacific's best major events destination".

Patrons at the "Long Bar" will be treated to NSW cuisine while they take in the views from the unique vantage point - elevatesydney.com.



Lennox Head boon

A NEW glamping precinct at the Reflections holiday park at Lennox Head on the far northern NSW coast is said to provide a significant boost to the local economy.

The upgrade will cost almost \$500,000, and will see the installation of six luxury tent retreats in a lush bushland setting.

NSW Minister for Lands & Water Kevin Anderson said the new development will enable visitors to enjoy the nearby Lake Ainsworth and Lennox Head Beach, along with nearby restaurants and shops.

Last year, the State Government provided Reflections with a \$28 million loan to improve facilities at the location.

"Reflections Lennox Head truly is one of nature's holiday parks," Reflections Chief Executive Officer Nick Baker enthused.

"It welcomes more than 77,208 visitors each year, contributing almost \$3 million to the region's economy," he said.

Foodini expands

VACATIONERS travelling with dietary needs are rejoicing, with the launch of the Foodini application in four more major Australian holiday destinations.

More than 2,000 restaurants across Brisbane, the Gold Coast, the Sunshine Coast, and Byron Bay have been onboarded to the platform using Accredited Practising Dietitians, who review the ingredients on each Foodini eatery's menu.

The app enables diners to build a profile and match menus specific to their dietary needs, giving travellers the confidence to dine out safely while on holiday.

Foodini caters to more than 50 different diets, including all mandatory allergens, such as coeliac disease, lactose-intolerance, veganism, pescatarianism, and more.

The app successfully launched in Sydney and Melbourne last year.

CASA probes crash

THE Civil Aviation Safety Authority has launched an investigation into the tragic collision of two helicopters at Sea World on the Gold Coast yesterday, which killed three passengers and one of the pilots.

WN back to normal

SOUTHWEST Airlines has vowed to resume normal service after what is being described as a "flight cancellations meltdown" in the United States over the new year period.

WN cancelled more than 16,000 flights in the week leading up to New Year's Eve, impacting around 1 million holiday travellers.

Passengers are being asked to submit compensation claims on Southwest's website, with the airline saying it will honour reasonable requests for reimbursement, including meals, hotel bookings, and alternative transportation.

The US Department of Transportation is also investigating Southwest, with Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg assigning resources to follow up every complaint.

Some reports speculate WN was particularly impacted by the storms due to limitations in its crew scheduling platform and the huge scale of US winter storms.

27 dead in fire

THE death toll from a fire in a Cambodian casino hotel fire has risen to 27, as the search for bodies in the wreckage of Grand Diamond City in Poipet came to an end.

Seventeen of the dead are from Thailand, with one each from Nepal, Malaysia, and China.

Six bodies are yet to be identified, officials said.

The Grand Diamond City complex near the Thai border had 500 employees, and about 1,000 customers on Wed, according to a report from the Cambodian state.

Over and out for Odell



REGENT Seven Seas Cruises' (RSSC) Sydney-based trade partners were invited aboard *Seven Seas Explorer* for a ship tour and lunch last week, which also served as a farewell for outgoing Senior Vice President & Managing Director Asia Pacific Steve Odell (TD 16 Dec).

Attendees dined at the art-deco Chartreuse restaurant, where they sampled a variety of dishes from *Explorer's* range of onboard eateries, and toasted Odell, who last month announced his retirement from his RSSC post.

He paid tribute to his colleagues joining him for the occasion, particularly new General Manager Asia Pacific Lisa Pile, who has now stepped into Odell's role as RSSC's most senior executive in the region.

"We're delighted to be welcoming the most luxurious ship ever built into our own backyard with some truly incredible, close to home sailings," Odell said.

"*Seven Seas Explorer* delivers a level of luxury never seen before in this region, and we can't wait to share her with local travellers."

"From her all-balcony, all-suite accommodation, sublime cuisine and lavish interiors, to one of the highest space-to-guest and staff-to-guest ratios at sea, ensuring impeccable service, together

with a crew delivering exemplary service on board, sailing on *Seven Seas Explorer* is an experience our guests will treasure forever."

Pictured are Director of Marketing Asia Pacific Matthew Vince, Pile, Odell, and Public Relations Manager Asia Pacific Jodi Hart.

Thailand booster

TOURISTS to Thailand may soon be offered free COVID-19 booster shots, with Tourism and Sports Minister Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn revealing that he will put forth the request to the Public Health Ministry at a meeting later this week to discuss the return of Chinese tourists.

"The proposal of free booster shots is based on the principle that we must take good care of foreign tourists since Thailand is ranked among the top five countries with the best public health system," Ratchakitprakarn said.

"It will be like a promotion to draw more foreign tourists to visit Thailand," he added, clarifying that the shots should be provided to tourists from all countries, not just Chinese tourists.

With each tourist spending an average of 40,000 baht in Thailand per trip, the cost of the booster shots would be covered from the 7% VAT value, he said.



New in the Zoo



AUSTRALIA Zoo's Crocodile Hunter Lodge has unveiled four new one-bedroom cabins to offer guests an overnight experience surrounded by wilderness and wildlife.

The one-bedroom Red Kangaroo cabins offer a view of the bushland and features a wrap-around deck, kitchen, stone bathtub and heated floors, as well as copies of Bindi Irwin's book, *Creating a Conservation Legacy* and Robert Irwin's photography book, *Robert Irwin's Australia*. Guests will receive unlimited entry to Australia Zoo, a complimentary breakfast and a welcome gift pack, as well as a tour of the Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital.

Nest boxes are positioned around the cabins to offer natural homes for microbats, owls, kookaburras, possums and parrots, while the lodge itself is built from recycled timbers and surrounded by over 3,000 native trees and shrubs, including endangered species of eucalyptus.

FIJI COMMITS TO SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

FIJI has strengthened its commitment to improving regional sustainable tourism, after recently signing the Pacific Leader's Sustainable Tourism Commitment in Suva.

Fiji is the 14th Pacific Tourism Organisation (SPTO) member to sign the pledge, joining the Islands of Tahiti, Federated States of Micronesia, Samoa, Kiribati, New Caledonia, Niue, Vanuatu, Timor Leste, Tokelau, Solomon Islands, and Tonga, Cook Islands and American Samoa.

The commitment supports improved planning, development

and management of sustainable tourism by adopting the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Policy Framework, which puts the sector and communities on the road to sustainable recovery by 2030.

"Fiji's signing of the Statement of Commitment is a testament to our collective vision that by 2030, we are empowered by and benefiting from tourism that is resilient, prosperous and inclusive," Fiji's Commerce, Trade, Tourism and Transport Minister Faiyaz Koya said.

"As a region, we are highly vulnerable...and our vulnerability

calls for greater collaboration and commitment that paves the way for transformative change," he added.

SPTO CEO Chris Cocker believes Fiji "has an important leadership role to play" in supporting sustainable tourism initiatives, as one of the region's most popular destinations.

As well as Fiji, the Cook Islands and American Samoa are the latest SPTO members to become signatories, at the Pacific Sustainable Tourism Leadership Summit in the Cook Islands in Nov (*TD* 11 Nov 2022).

Ultimate Safaris

ULTIMATE Safaris, a Namibia conservation travel company, has set a new record-breaking level of investment into communal conservancies in the country.

The operator's new luxury Onduli Ridge attracted occupancy of over 60% in its first year, based on a model that is low-volume and low environmental impact.

Since the lodge's opening in Jul 2021, Ultimate Safaris has invested nearly A\$200,000 in conservation, including the reintroduction of giraffe, building Rhino Ranger accommodation, supporting conservation-based salaries and investing in local water infrastructure.

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Weekly

keep dreaming...

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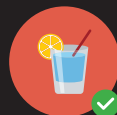
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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.680

IT HAS been a promising start to the new year for the Aussie dollar, which has rapidly risen from a two-and-a-half year low of US61.7 cents in Oct to its current position of US68 cents.

Economists predict the AUD will reach US70 cents by the Jun quarter and hold through to the end of the year.

Meanwhile, the US dollar has weakened against major currencies including the AUD.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.680
UK	£0.565
NZ	\$1.075
Euro	€0.638
Japan	¥88.95
Thailand	฿23.49
China	¥4.699
South Africa	11.574
Canada	\$0.923
Crude oil	US\$80.26

Amex SFO lounge

AMERICAN Express has reopened its freshly renovated Centurion Lounge at the San Francisco International Airport (SFO), which has now nearly doubled in size.

Located in Terminal 3 on the mezzanine level, the lounge now features more seating, additional restrooms, two wine bars and cafe areas, private phone rooms, and several private workspaces.

The new bar offers specialty wine flights highlighting four regional wines curated by Centurion Lounge Wine Director Anthony Giglio.

The lounge will also offer a new seasonal menu from San Francisco's Liholiho Yacht Club Executive Chef Ravi Kapur.

Orion back on track

VIKING'S *Viking Orion* has now returned to her planned itinerary, following the exterior cleaning of a small amount of marine growth from the ship's hull.

Orion arrived in Melbourne yesterday and was admitted to port - the first time she had been allowed to dock since leaving Wellington on Boxing Day.

The ship unfortunately missed several ports on her current itinerary, including Christchurch, Dunedin, and Hobart, to undergo the routine cleaning procedure.

Viking said it is working directly with guests on compensation for the impact to their voyage.

It is the second such recent occurrence, after Princess Cruises' *Coral Princess* missed two NZ calls late last month in order to be cleaned of biofouling, while Regent Seven Seas' *Explorer* is also believed to be impacted.

Jetstar adds more neos



JETSTAR welcomed two new Airbus A321neo LR (New Engine Option Long Range) planes (pictured) on Christmas day, bringing its fleet of the aircraft type up to a total of four.

The two planes flew in formation from the Airbus factory in Hamburg and stopped in Bengaluru and Perth before arriving in Melbourne.

The aircraft are already flying, last week carrying customers on some of Jetstar's most popular routes, including flights to Brisbane, the Gold Coast and Bali. From Jun this year, the longer-

range planes will also operate non-stop flights from Sydney to Rarotonga, the carrier's most recently announced international route (*TD* 01 Dec 2022).

The new aircraft feature wider seats, larger overhead storage bins, inflight USB charging and burn up to 20% less fuel to reduce emissions, as well as being 50% quieter than similar size Airbus A320/A321s.

Jetstar is expecting further deliveries which will grow its neo fleet to 18 before the second half of 2024.

Croft awarded OBE

JOSS Croft, CEO of British tourism trade organisation UKinbound, has received an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2023 New Year Honours List.

Croft said he was "delighted but also humbled" by the news, adding, "both my team and the board at UKinbound have worked tirelessly to support me over the last two years".

BA adds Florence

BRITISH Airways (BA) is set to launch a new daily flight to Florence for the Northern Hemisphere 2023 summer season.

Beginning 26 Apr, the service will operate from London Heathrow using an A320neo aircraft.

Florence will be the 11th Italian city served by BA, and joins other new routes this summer, including services from London Gatwick to Aruba and Guyana.

WA Tourism in NY

TOURISM WA was part of New York's iconic New Year's Eve celebrations, showcasing its global tourism brand, Walking on a Dream, in Times Square.

Spectacular 3D animations featuring the brand's floating whale shark could be seen on four prominent billboards as well as in the 42nd Street subway station, with the campaign running from 26 Dec-01 Jan.

Tourism WA also partnered with New York-based Aussie coffee outlet Bluestone Lane to distribute free Walking on a Dream-branded flat whites.