

McEvoy joins Board of OACIS

OACIS Off Airport Check In Solutions has announced the appointment of former Tourism Australia CEO Andrew McEvoy as a member of its Board.

McEvoy has just returned from the Middle East, where he was MD of Tourism for Saudi Arabia's massive NEOM project.

OACIS CEO Matt Lee, said "as a long time supporter of OACIS, Andrew will be a fantastic addition to our Board, bringing his considerable experience and expertise".

McEvoy said "in a world where technology has made most things easier, travel has become incredibly complex and airports more congested".

"The off-airport solution provided by OACIS is better for everyone, and I am excited to work with the team to see it adopted globally," he said.

"Grounded" screens

LAST night's 30 minute screening of the new Flight Centre Travel Group *Grounded* documentary brought to life the tragic impacts of the pandemic and the overall sector's near death experience from COVID-19.

Featuring full and frank interviews with the senior FCTG leadership team, the program included emotional tributes to Flight Centre staff, as well as the gut-wrenching decisions required to help save the business.

The show was produced in collaboration with In Three Production, which is led by FCTG's former Head of Creative and Content, Luke Wheatley, who left the business in Oct 2020.

AY QR codeshare

FINNAIR is expanding its South East Asian cooperation with fellow oneworld carrier Qatar Airways, with the AY code added to QR flights from Doha to Denpasar, Jakarta and Phuket this week.

Wendy Wu ready for China

EXCLUSIVE

WENDY Wu Tours is gearing up for one of the busiest times in its history, as it prepares to restart tours to China after three years.

The recent reopening announcement led to one of the busiest periods for China enquiries since 2019, with Wendy Wu Tours now hoping to resume operations in Sep as soon as the country's government gives the green light.

China will reopen its borders to international visitors from 08 Jan, marking a significant milestone for Asia's tourism recovery, with

Etihad ups BKK

ETIHAD Airways has announced it will double the frequency of its service to Bangkok from 26 Mar.

Citing high demand, the carrier will fly the Abu Dhabi - Bangkok route twice a day, providing a total of 14 weekly nonstop flights to Bangkok Airport.

MEANWHILE EY has also announced the creation of a new organisational division focused on revenue, which will be headed up by newly appointed Chief Revenue Officer, Arik De.

De has been EY's VP of Revenue & Commerce since Apr last year, with the new division said to "deliver state-of-the-art revenue management capabilities, broaden our airline partnerships and enhance our network to better serve our guests and our home of Abu Dhabi," according to Etihad CEO Antonioaldo Neves.

Spain travel update

ALL COVID-19 travel restrictions for Spain have now been dropped, except for visitors who are travelling from China, according to a Smartraveller update today.

Some COVID-19 safety protocols remain in place, including the wearing of masks on public transport, and within health and aged-care facilities, including pharmacies.

newly appointed GM of Sales, Simon Bell (*TD* 13 Dec 2022) saying "touring in China is going to be a whole new experience".

"The country has had three years without tourism to rejuvenate and refresh and so as preparations begin to reopen the borders, China is eagerly looking forward to welcoming visitors again, with a touring experience that promises to be as fresh and captivating, as one resembling 25 years ago when we started the first group tours to China."

"Demand is strong, particularly for the autumn tours running through Sep to Nov, plus we've seen a steady spike for bookings throughout 2024 and even to 2025," he added.

In fact, Wendy Wu Tours saw a 120% rise in enquiries across its markets in Australia, New Zealand and the UK this week compared to the previous week.

Bell said Wendy Wu Tours would be the first escorted tour operator to return to China, and encouraged agents to regularly check wendywutours.com.au for reopening dates and details.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including our regular Corporate Travel feature.

Cruise testing

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has announced new health and safety protocols in light of rising COVID-19 cases in China.

From 05-31 Jan, NCL will require guests who have visited mainland China, Hong Kong or Macau - including airport transit passengers - within 10 days prior to embarkation, to submit proof of a negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 48 hours prior to their voyage.

These guests will also need to take a PCR test on embarkation port and test onboard the ship every 48 hours until at least 10 days have passed from their last time in these regions, as well as be fully vaccinated and boosted.

Guests with a Chinese, Hong Kong or Macau passport will need to follow the same protocols, unless they can prove they have not visited these regions within 10 days prior to the cruise.

Travel & Cruise Weekly

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A month-by-month guide to travel through the year, and more destination inspiration for 2023!

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Free wi-fi on Delta flights

DELTA will introduce free wi-fi across its full fleet for all domestic, international and regional flights by the end of 2024, making it the first major US airline to do so.

Starting 01 Feb, the free wi-fi will be rolled out on around 80% of its domestic fleet by the end of 2023, the carrier announced at the Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas yesterday.

“At work, at home and everywhere in between, connectivity is essential to daily life, and your journey on Delta should be no different,” Delta CEO Ed Bastian said.

“Our vision has long been to deliver an experience at 30,000 feet that feels similar to what our customers have available on the ground,” he added.

Bastian first revealed the airline’s intention to provide fast and free internet access at CES 2020 (*TD* 08 Jan 2020), and in

2021, the carrier partnered with Viasat to install enhanced in-flight internet connectivity across its fleet (*TD* 29 Apr 2021).

Currently, Delta customers pay US\$5 to access wi-fi on most domestic flights, with the option to pay \$49.95 for a monthly domestic plan and \$69.95 for a monthly international plan.

Customers will need to be a member of the SkyMiles loyalty program, which they can join for free, in order to connect to the free wi-fi once it is available.

By the end of 2023 the free service will be offered on over 700 Viasat-equipped planes, expanding to regional and international flights by Dec 2024.

The airline also revealed plans to launch a new SkyMiles-unlocked “Delta Sync” mobile platform during the US spring season, which will offer exclusive offers, access and entertainment from major brands.

SQ ups ET c’share

SINGAPORE Airlines is expanding its codeshare agreement with Ethiopian Airlines, with the SQ code now appearing on flights from New York to West Africa effective from 27 Mar 2023.

The flights include connections from New York JFK to Lome, and also from 05 Jun from JFK to Abidjan and Addis Ababa.

QF Oz Day closure

QANTAS has confirmed that its Agency Connect and Group Travel teams will observe the upcoming Australia Day national holiday on Thu 26 Jan.

Phone enquiries will not be taken on the day, with normal operations resuming on Fri 27 Jan.

“To assist you with self-servicing your customers’ requests, the Qantas Agency Connect and Qantas Group Travel sites are available 24/7 for use,” the carrier reminded agents.

NCL events division

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings overnight announced a new Experiences at Sea events division, which will be dedicated to providing “one of a kind, immersive adventures at sea for a range of passionate affinity communities”.

Formed from the combination of the in-house Sixthman charter division and the company’s Charters, Meetings and Incentives operation, the new business will serve clients across the Norwegian, Oceania and Regent Seven Seas Cruises brands.

Experiences at Sea is collaborating with Infinity Sports & Events to offer a series of customised cruise holiday packages ranging from one to 10 nights for the upcoming 2023 Rugby World Cup games between 08 Sep and 16 Oct aboard *Norwegian Epic*, while a series of back-to-back full ship charters will also take place this year aboard *Norwegian Pearl*.

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Window Seat

THE much-welcomed reopening of Hong Kong to international visitation has also brought good news for the destination's rodent aficionados.

Authorities have confirmed the easing of restrictions will also include the relaxation of a year-long ban on the importation of hamsters.

The embargo on the fluffy pets followed an outbreak of COVID-19 infections at a pet shop about 12 months ago, which resulted in the cull of about 2,000 animals due to suspicion that the cases could have been the result of hamster-to-human transmission of the virus.

The city's Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department told the *BBC* that - just like humans - any of the rodents entering Hong Kong will continue to be tested for the virus.

BRITISH hotel chain Travelodge has revealed some of the most unusual items left behind by guests in 2022, including a 1.5m-tall gingerbread man and a football-themed wedding cake.

More prosaic items in the lost and found collection included a significant rise in smart watches, indicating that "we are a nation striving for a healthy lifestyle", according to spokesperson Shakila Ahmed.

Hotel managers had to deal with several animals left behind including a pair of Japanese chin puppies named JLo and Ben, two donkeys which were in transit to a new location, and even a seagull.

There was also an oil painting of Queen Elizabeth II, Segway electric scooters and a ceremonial Chinese Dragon.

Big plans for tiny cabins



HEYSCAPE Tiny Cabins, an eco-friendly accommodation provider based in Western Australia, is rapidly expanding its presence throughout the state.

The up-and-coming operator has grown its portfolio to 13 cabins across five WA locations to date, including Busselton, Narrogin, Toodyay, Serpentine, and Chittering.

Created with the aim to "bridge the gap between quality and comfort with being in nature", the cabins are built with sustainability in mind, and operate off the grid using solar power and composting toilets.

Heyscape offer a selection of cabin types, including classic, family and dog-friendly cabins; accessible cabins which are more spacious and feature a ramp

Airlines push back

US AVIATION trade group Airlines for America has lodged a formal complaint with the country's Department for Transportation about charges being levied by the Government of the Bahamas.

Alleging "unjustifiable, unreasonably discriminatory, anticompetitive & unreasonable" behaviour, the carriers say the fee regime violates the Air Transport Agreement currently in place between the countries.

At issue are "astronomical" air navigation charges which the organisation says far outweigh the cost of providing the services.

entry; as well as luxe cabins which offer a fully-stocked wine fridge and a bathtub.

The company also introduced a "work cabin" category in Nov, which offers a secluded yet fully connected and equipped accommodation option for remote workers.

Heyscape, which built its first cabin in 2019, has several new locations in the pipeline for this year, including Yallingup and Esperance.

To learn more, [CLICK HERE](#).

Pilots blast single cockpit plans

THE European Aviation Safety Agency is among regulators which have been asked to consider plans which would allow airlines to operate flights with just one pilot in the cockpit at a time.

First reported in *The Australian*, the proposals could allow long-haul flights to only have two pilots on board, one of whom would be at the controls during the high altitude cruise phase.

The report cites "extensive work" done by Cathay Pacific in collaboration with Airbus, aiming to certify its A350s for reduced crew and single pilot operations and during flight phases where minimal intervention is required.

Pilots have slammed the proposals, citing a range of incidents including cases of pilot incapacitation which "confirm the folly of this cost-saving ploy".

Wadis up in Jordan

HEAVY flooding in Jordan has seen several major highways closed, according to a Smartraveller update from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade issued yesterday.

Australian travellers in Jordan are urged to monitor weather conditions before commencing road travel, as well as avoid flood waters and follow the advice of local authorities.

Jetblue London rejig

JETBLUE is rearranging its flights between London and New York, adding a second daily service between JFK and London Heathrow but at the same time eliminating one of its daily flights to London Gatwick.

The change follows the acquisition of an additional LHR landing and departure slot.

Disney spectaculars

A NEW nighttime spectacular called "World of Color - One" will debut at Disney's California Adventure Park on 27 Jan, with the theme park also operating a complimentary virtual queue for guests to gain access to the viewing areas.

The show features 18 musical compositions including an original song called *Start a Wave*.

Meanwhile in neighbouring Disneyland a new "Wondrous Journeys" presentation will also debut on the same day, with both innovations part of the Disney100 celebration.

Tourist shooting

AUTHORITIES in Jamaica are investigating the shooting death of a British tourist, who suffered multiple gunshot wounds after being chased by a gunman beside a resort pool in St James.

Another man has been taken into custody in connection with the murder, with local reports claiming the alleged assailant was deported from the UK in 2013.

CORPORATE UPDATE

New Amex GBT President

CORPORATE travel giant American Express Global Business Travel today announced the promotion of Andrew Crawley, the company’s Chief Commercial Officer, to become President effective immediately.

Crawley (pictured) will continue to report to Paul Abbott, Amex GBT CEO in his new role, which comes almost three years since he joined the TMC in Apr 2020. Crawley was formerly CEO



of the loyalty division of International Airlines Group, after a long career with British Airways including roles as the carrier’s Chief Commercial Officer and as Chairman of BA Holidays.

Other recent senior executive changes at American Express GBT include the departure of Chief Revenue Officer, Michael Qualantone, who is retiring after a 34-year career with the company.

His role is transitioning to Rajiv Ahluwalia, who becomes Executive Vice President also reporting to Crawley.

GBTA earlybirds

REGISTRATION is now open for the 2023 Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) Convention, scheduled to take place 13-15 Aug in Dallas, Texas.

Pricing is available for buyers, suppliers, students, exhibitors and virtual participation, with early bird rates only available until 17 Jan.

Room blocks for groups can also be requested until 27 Jan.

For more information see convention.gbta.org.

Virtual card option

GLOBAL digital payment platform, Sunrate, has expanded its online travel offering by partnering with Visa to launch virtual corporate cards.

The new product provides the company’s travel stakeholders with another secure and seamless option when making payments to their partners, such as airlines and hotels.

“The launch of Visa virtual corporate cards is a monumental step for Sunrate as we cement our leadership as a one-stop B2B payment partner, especially for the travel industry,” the company’s Head of Card Business, Shawn Qin, said.

In 2021, Sunrate became a principal member of the Visa network, and in Nov last year, it also entered into a strategic partnership with Agoda, which saw it integrate its online travel solution with the global digital travel platform.



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Ultimate guide out

INDIAN-BASED integrated travel, expense and payments platform Happay has released a new ebook which claims to “draw an executable roadmap to the transformation of a travel manager into a Chief Journey Officer”.

Titled *The Ultimate Corporate Travel Management Guide*, the publication includes research and findings based on interactions with over 6,500 customers.

Happay said that with four out of five travel decision makers saying that the benefits of in-person meetings and events outweigh the convenience of virtual participation, it is vital to have a “great travel leader and the right technology to create an extraordinary corporate travel program”.

The guide is available as a free download by **CLICKING HERE**.

Spanish collection

NEW laws in Spain which mandate the collection of traveller data by accommodation and car rental providers have been criticised by industry players.

A new platform launched on 02 Jan for the information to be submitted to the Government, with a five month “adaptation period” to allow users to become familiar with the system and identify any issues.

Almost 40 data points must be collected for each traveller, creating significant privacy issues, critics say.

Counsellors cites corporate boom

BRITISH home-based travel agency network Travel Counsellors says business travel is “well and truly back on the agenda”, with the group’s members undertaking record corporate transactions over the last couple of months of 2022.

Corporate sales for Nov and Dec were up more than 50% on pre-pandemic levels in 2019, with Travel Counsellors outperforming in all markets as it focuses on new SME client acquisition.

The group closed its Australian operations during the COVID-19 pandemic (TD 11 Dec 2020), with Express Travel Group collaborating to smooth the transition for the local Travel Counsellors network as it exited after 13 years.

Expense automation

SOFTWARE as a Service (SaaS) support platform Productiv has announced a collaboration with SAP Concur, allowing programmatic integration of expense and invoice data into the Productiv SaaS Intelligence Platform.

The system uses machine learning to automatically identify SaaS suppliers and map unstructured expense and payments data to appropriate vendors, resellers and apps.

The pact aims to help managers understand spend behaviour, assisting with “alignment on purchase and renewal decisions”.

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Grab my Bag

A NEW baggage transfer solution has launched in the USA, promising to fully handle the baggage claim process including lost luggage issues, delivering items to travellers within four hours from arrival.

Dubbed Grab My Bag, the service is priced from US\$35, promising transparency and accountability with personalised tracking, as well as direct access to a live call centre and a "GRABber" dedicated to delivering their bag directly, with "no detours or fast food drive-thru stops" - for more details, see grabmybag.com.

Qatar health holiday

ZULAL Wellness Resort by Chiva-Som has kicked off 2023 with the launch of a New You Retreat "to help guests restore balance and reaffirm goals for a happier, healthier year".

The Qatar wellness destination has made the retreat available in three- and five-night durations until 31 Mar 2023, with the program including accommodation and three wellness cuisine meals per day as well as a personal wellness consultation, daily activities and personalised herbal supplements.

Rates start at around A\$1,961 - reservations@zulal.com.

Frida's Sydney Festival flair



DESTINATION NSW CEO Steve Cox yesterday visited the new exhibition by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo which just opened as part of the 2023 Sydney Festival.

The show is described as "a spectacular immersive biography" showcasing a multi-sensory experience ranging from collections of historical photographs, original films, 360-degree projections and a virtuality platform which transports visitors inside Kahlo's most famous works.

It's on until early Mar at The

Cutaway venue at Sydney's Barangaroo, with guests on Fri and Sat evenings also treated to live dance performers, spicy margaritas and tacos.

Cox is **pictured** at the exhibition with the festival's Executive Director, Chris Tooher and Festival Director Olivia Ansell.

TRAVEL SPECIALS

WELCOME to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to specials@traveldaily.com.au

Cruise Traveller has launched a new, all-inclusive 'Ski and Sea Alaska 2024' package, which begins with a flight from Sydney, Brisbane or Melbourne to Calgary in the Rocky Mountains for a week-long winter adventure. Savings of \$1,680 per couple are available for bookings made by 31 Mar, and those who book before 05 Feb will only pay a \$200 deposit instead of \$750. Call 1800 507 777 for more information.

Cruisers can save up to 50% on all voyages with **Norwegian Cruise Line** thanks to the brand's New Year's Sale, including the seven-day Caribbean: Harvest Caye, Cozumel & Roatan voyage for \$1,597, originally priced at \$2,894pp. The savings can be combined with NCL's Free at Sea offer, and the limited-time-only \$149 Reduced Deposits offer. The sale ends 16 Jan - go to ncl.com/au for more details.

Guests who book a three-night stay this month at **Bells at Killcare**, a boutique hotel on Sydney's Central Coast, will receive a complimentary \$400 Bells gift voucher, or a \$600 voucher for a four-night stay. The voucher has a three-year expiry date, and can be used at any time during your stay, for your next visit, or given as a gift. Visit bellsatkillcare.com.au and add 'SUMMER ESCAPE' to the booking note.

Quark Expeditions has launched an Escape Sale with polar voyages reduced by up to 45%, including the Greenland Adventure: Explore by Land, Sea and Air itinerary. For details, go to quarkexpeditions.com.

MSC milestone

MSC Cruises is claiming an industry first, with the simultaneous departure overnight of two ships on world cruise itineraries.

More than 5,000 guests are on board *MSC Magnifica* and *MSC Poesia* as they set forth from Genoa, Italy.

The ships will initially sail together, parting ways at the edge of the Mediterranean on two distinct itineraries - 119 days on *Magnifica* and 117 on *Poesia*.

Special events include celebrity chefs, an enrichment program and more - see msccruises.com.

Hilton Santa Marta

HILTON has opened the 261-room Hilton Santa Marta, its second hotel in Colombia's oldest Hispanic city.

The property overlooks the Caribbean Sea, and features five unique dining experiences, flexible meeting and event spaces, plus a spa, several pools and a beauty salon.

Got a confidential tip? Contact *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#)