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## RCI double rewards

**ROYAL** Caribbean International (RCI) is reminding readers that it is now inviting travel agents to join its new loyalty program, Club Royal Rewards.

Until 28 Feb, agents who join the program will earn double cashback rewards on every new booking secured with a deposit.

The new loyalty program provides travel partners with marketing tools, exclusive offers and booking support.

See the **front cover** for details.

## Win a trip to the NT

**TRAVEL** agents who complete Tourism NT's upcoming training webinar will be in the running to win one of three trips to the Northern Territory.

Participants will be updated on new products and upcoming events, and learn more about the Kings Canyon, Alice Springs and MacDonnell Ranges.

The webinar takes place on Tue 07 Feb at 11am AEST and Wed 08 Feb at 1pm - see the **back page** for more details.

## \$100 RCI reward

**CREATIVE** Cruising is offering agents \$100 e-gift cards for all local last-minute Royal Caribbean bookings deposited by 31 Jan.

The exclusive bonus applies to a range of departures including 07 Feb, 15 Feb and 26 Feb cruises ex Brisbane leading in at just \$600 - more details on 1300 362 599.

## Bonza bookings take off

**TICKETS** to board the newest Australian airline Bonza have finally gone on sale today (**TD** breaking news).

The announcement made this morning arrives exactly a week after the challenger airline was granted its Air Operator Certificate by the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (**TD** 13 Jan).

Travellers who have already downloaded the app are being advised by Bonza to delete and reinstall the latest version to have the ability to book flights, which will formally take off from the Sunshine Coast (MCY) on 31 Jan.

"The wait is over, 2023 is the Year for Allstralia," Bonza COO Carly Povey enthused.

"Today we start making travel a possibility for the many, not the few, forget connecting flights or your bum going numb in the car, Bonza is here to take Aussies

from A to B without the C (cost and complexity)," she added.

There are 12 destinations on 15 routes available to book, including the Sunshine Coast to regional hubs such as Albury, Newcastle, Cairns, Rockhampton, Townsville and Mildura, with prices ranging from between \$49 to \$79 per person.

The most frequented route will be the MCY to Cairns service, which will fly five times a week, while MCY to Newcastle and Townsville will operate four times a week, and flights to Mackay, Avalon and Rockhampton will all fly three times weekly.

Bonza also revealed that routes from its second base at Melbourne Airport are expected to go on sale in a few weeks.

## Oceania incentive

**OCEANIA** Cruises has announced a new incentive trip to mark its 20th anniversary, giving away a free cruise to three top-selling travel agents across Australia and New Zealand.

The lucky agents will be able to sail free on any 14-day voyage before 30 Jun 2023, across seven ships sailing to the Mediterranean, South Pacific, Alaska, Asia, and the Caribbean.

The incentive is valid for the top three performing travel advisors on bookings made between 17 Jan to 01 Mar, with cruises deposited by 09 Mar.

## Fiji refreshes brand

**FIJI** is inviting the world in to "experience happiness naturally", with the country's destination marketing organisation revealing the evolution of its brand and a new logo this week.

Just over a year on from borders reopening to tourists, the new brand slogan, 'Where happiness comes naturally', pays homage to its people, natural environments, culture and experiences.

The push will see a new campaign launched, view it **HERE**.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of the latest news including a **Disney Moments** page and our **Corporate Update**, plus a cover wrap from **Royal Caribbean International** and a full page from **Tourism NT**.

## Asia the place to be

**THE** majority of Australian overseas bookings during the first couple of weeks of 2023 have been for destinations in Asia, new figures from Webjet have shown.

Booking data from the online travel brand indicate that almost 43% of all international bookings made so far this year have been for Asian holidays, with Bali leading the way as the most popular spot on the continent, capturing 34.7% of all outbound Asian bookings.

The next most popular destination was the Japanese capital of Tokyo, followed by Singapore, Phuket, Bangkok, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City.

Figures for the first three weeks of Jan also showed the average length of trips booked was two weeks, while the average booking lead time was 96 days.

## Mongolia opens

**MONGOLIA** has opened its border again, meaning Aussie travellers no longer need a visa to enter for stays of up to 30 days, DFAT has advised.

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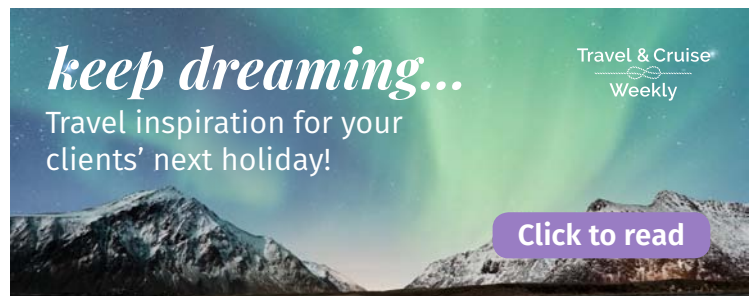
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## Durie eyes eco-luxury villas

A COMPANY co-founded by celebrity gardener and entrepreneur Jamie Durie plans to turn a private country estate in Victoria into a major luxury accommodation precinct, the *Australian Financial Review* (AFR) has reported.

Located just over an hour's drive from Melbourne, the estate comprises the iconic Stonefields garden set on 27 hectares, with Durie's luxury resort group Opulus Hotels reportedly purchasing the site for \$11 million.

The group now plans to further invest \$70 million to transform close friend Paul Bangay's former home into a celebrity-chef helmed restaurant and lobby, which will be surrounded by 50 private villas.

Guests will be able to enjoy the gardens during stays at the luxury eco-resort, which is slated to open in mid to late 2025, as well as a swimming pool and a sitting room with a fireplace.

Eco-friendliness is an important focus of the project, Durie emphasised, with planned features including air purification systems, a ban on volatile organic compounds paints, solar passive architecture and an on-site fleet of electric vehicles for guests to use on sightseeing trips.

"It's going to be contemporary Australian architecture surrounded by Australian native landscape," Durie said.

"But we will also take some design cues from some of Paul's beautiful formality."

According to Opulus co-founder, financier and hotelier Dominic Lambrinos, the estate's room rates will be somewhere in the region of \$900-\$1,100 per night.

Stonefields estate represents Opulus Hotels group's second acquisition, following its purchase of a 110-hectare site overlooking the Bass Strait in north-western Tasmania late last year.

## 45,000 jets on order

AROUND 44,500 new aircraft worth US\$2.9 trillion are expected to be delivered globally over the next two decades, according to the new *Cirium Fleet Forecast*.

The new aircraft will be required to meet predicted annual 3.6% pax traffic growth, and replace less efficient and aging models.

Asia-Pacific will account for over 40% of new deliveries, particularly China, which is forecast to have the highest annual pax traffic growth rate at over 6%.

## TA hosts Mega famil

TOURISM Australia is partnering with Business Events Sydney to host the Business Events Australia Asia Mega Famil Showcase in Apr.

The program will see planners from India, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea meet with Australian convention bureaux in Sydney over three days.

## Acacia adds nine

ACACIA Africa has announced the addition of nine countries to its portfolio of small group adventure tours.

Guests can now choose from tours visiting the nations of Lesotho, Eswatini, Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Kenya, and Zambia.

To celebrate the new additions, Acacia is offering 15% discounts on its camping tours and 10% discounts on its accommodated tours for bookings made before 28 Feb on 2023 departures.

The newly added tours include a 19-day Cape Town to Victoria Falls itinerary, which takes in the best sights of Namibia including the Fish River Canyon and Namib Desert, priced from \$3,234pp (no single supplement) - representing a saving of \$570pp.

Tour prices include all highlights, transport, camping accommodation, most meals, services of a tour leader and driver - **CLICK HERE** for more.



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## Window Seat

WITH Air New Zealand carrying more than 12 million customers last year, behind the scenes this meant that approximately 100,000 aircraft seats were in need of a thorough polish every week.

The airline's cleaning team would've been cleaning up far more cookie crumbs than crackers it seems, with the carrier revealing that almost five million cookies were consumed by its passengers in 2022, versus a crummy one million crackers.

Soft drink was the most popular way for Air New Zealand's travellers to quench their thirst last year, with the airline serving more than 350,000 litres during 2022, just beat out the 340,000 litres of juice guzzled, as well as 220,000 litres of beer.

However, it wasn't just humans flying with Air New Zealand last year, with the airline transporting more than 11,000 pets in 2022.

The cast of furry fliers included birds, guinea pigs, lizards, rabbits, reptiles, a frog, and even a turtle.



## ACCC targets influencers

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has warned that the travel sector is one of several industries where misleading social media influencer posts are rife, this morning announcing a formal online sweep of various platforms to combat the problem.

The consumer watchdog said it would examine the posts of more than 100 influencers on the basis of close to 150 tip-offs over the coming weeks, which will include platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, YouTube and Facebook, as well as livestreaming service Twitch.

"The number of tip-offs reflects

### Don't neglect regional: Creedon

THE Australian Government should prioritise rural tourism to keep visitation levels buoyed as the recovery from COVID continues, according to Allogio founder & Chief Executive Officer Will Creedon.

"It is important that a vacuum is not inadvertently formed by rediverting leisure and event travellers to our urban centres," Creedon argued.

"It is great to see the big dollars being spent by government tourism bodies on the city locations, but let's not forget about the regions," he added, highlighting that rural and regional inbound visitor numbers are lagging by 40-50%.

the community concern about the ever-increasing number of manipulative marketing techniques on social media, designed to exploit or pressure consumers into purchasing goods or services," ACCC Chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb said.

"Already we are hearing some law firms and industry bodies have informed their clients about the ACCC's sweep, and reminded them of their ad disclosure requirements," she added.

Travel was identified alongside other offending sectors such as fashion, beauty and wellness.

The latest investigation forms part of the ACCC's compliance and enforcement priorities for 2023, with the aim of identifying deceptive marketing practices across the digital economy.

### Club Med savings

CLUB Med has launched its 2024 Sand & Snow Early Bird Sale, which slashes up to 30% off prices across its all-inclusive resorts in Japan.

The sale includes the brand's newest resort, Kiroro Peak, which is now priced from \$2,586pp - representing savings of \$1,099 - and Tomamu Hokkaido, now priced from \$3,360 per adult, offering savings of \$1,435.

The sale applies to travel dates between 01 Dec 2023 - 30 Jun 2024, for bookings made by 31 May 2023 - for information on more specials, see **page six**.

### Upmarket NY stays

ACCOR'S private rental brand onefinestay has announced the launch of its New York portfolio, comprised of 16 luxury homes across the city.

The new collection will be the first of its kind in the Big Apple, simplifying the process of finding a mid-term rental in the city, and offering flexibility on extending or terminating leases as well as straightforward application processes.

The fully furnished rentals are available for stays of 30 nights or more, with add-on services like housekeeping, private chefs, and in-home spa treatments also available.

The New York collection features one- to six-bedroom high-end homes such as Jane Street, a six-bedroom, six-bathroom home split over five floors in Manhattan, also featuring a beautiful private garden terrace.

To find out more, **CLICK HERE**.

### BNE water takeoff

BRISBANE Airport Corporation (BAC) has welcomed the 35% increase in Simultaneous Opposite Direction Parallel Runway Operations (SODPROPS) noted by recent Airservices Australia figures.

The trend of 137 more hours of SODPROPS between 09 Jul and 09 Nov has seen 799 more flights redirected over the water, amounting to a much lower impact of noise pollution on the local residents.

## Connect with your clients and ramp up your social media content

Looking for ready-made social media content? *Travel & Cruise Weekly* have ready made agent toolkits featuring email signatures, images, and social media tiles to inspire your clients.

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## Sharing the Magic

WELCOME to our first Disney Magical Moments page produced in collaboration with Disney Destinations.

Disney has made its first selections regarding which agents should score a place on its amazing Disney100 mega famil to the Disneyland Resort California in Mar, with the first batch of three travel advisors sharing their 'Magical Moments' (see right), shining a light on those who have gone above and beyond in times of need for their clients.

Agents who would like to join these three legends on the highly anticipated Disney100 famil can enter via two ways, either by submitting their own Magical Moment of triumph entries [HERE](#), or through Disney's trade incentive [HERE](#).

To qualify for entry to the incentive draw, agents must book any Disneyland Resort Park ticket and flights on United Airlines to the United States.

## Agents share Magical Moments

THE first agent selected to enjoy an incredible Disney100 mega famil to the Disneyland Resort California for her 'Magical Moment' is Perth-based Flight Centre agent Kelsey Waddington (inset below), who described her satisfaction at being able to assist a client who had been involved in a terrible accident that left him paralysed from the neck down.



"His list of requirements and needs for a successful journey home to be with his family were extensive, and I spent many days, dozens of phone calls, and my own nights and weekends to ensure that his journey was smooth and successful,"

Waddington said, adding that as someone who had been kept apart from her family during the pandemic, it meant the world to be able to help someone reunite with their loved ones.

The next star agent selected was TravelManagers' Michelle Woodsford (inset right) based in Craigieburn, Victoria, who scored herself a spot on the Disney famil by helping her client Justin organise a special marriage proposal trip to Disneyland.

"Justin got down on one knee in front of the castle! The wedding was also Disney-themed and his wife Megan is now obsessed with (and secretly I know Justin loves Disney too)," Woodsford beamed.

"They now have a little boy Hudson, who is always dressed as Disney and Marvel Superheroes, I call him their 'Disney baby' and they are just getting me to cost a trip back to Disneyland to take Hudson for the first time this

Sep," she added.



Finally, the third of the lucky trio to enjoy some Disney magic is MTA Travel's Melanie Sherry, who recounted the time she paid for a special photo session at the Magic Kingdom in Orlando out of her own commissions to ensure a group celebrating four different birthday milestones would remember the holiday to the United States forever.

The Newcastle-based agent also ordered her clients a special Mickey Celebration Cake to mark all of their special occasions, stating the clients were "blown away" by the gesture.

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## CORPORATE UPDATE

### Serko upgrades forecast

**LISTED** travel technology firm Serko Limited has this week flagged an upgrade to its sales guidance for the 2023 financial year, "following stronger than expected revenue performance across its primary markets".

Serko's key product is its 2018-launched Zeno travel and expense platform, which the company says is "powered by AI that brings personalised itineraries, chatbot bookings and intelligent travel management to the industry for the first time".

An ASX update highlighted solid trading results over the traditionally seasonally low period from late Dec until mid Jan, which has given the company greater certainty over its expected overall revenue.

"Serko expects the strong start to the calendar year to continue in the current quarter," the company said, upgrading

its revenue guidance for the 12 months to 31 Mar to be in the range of NZ\$42 million to NZ\$47 million.

That's an upgrade of between 123% and 149% on the total income of NZ\$18.9 million which was recorded for the previous corresponding year.

Serko is currently working closely with Booking.com as the engine behind the OTA giant's Booking.com for Business initiative, which is powered by Zeno to offer business travellers flight and rail content alongside Booking.com's extensive accommodation inventory.

The upgraded guidance this week only related to revenue, with Serko's annual profit figures to be revealed in due course at the end of Mar when it releases its full financials for the year.

### Uber receipts API

**UBER** for Business has collaborated with expense management platform Coupa to automatically integrate trip details and receipts.

The new "receipts integration module" developed by Uber will launch with Coupa next month, and is expected to roll out to other vendors who adopt the Uber for Business Receipts API.

Coupa spokesman Raja Hammoud said the company's data showed Uber was one of the most expensed merchants of all time on the platform, with previous solutions requiring users to manually attach receipts.

### QR loyalty push

**QATAR** Airways has revamped the technology behind its Privilege Club loyalty program so that travellers receive Avios points before even taking off.

The update means points are in flyers' accounts when they arrive at Doha Airport - where they can be conveniently used on retail and culinary purchases.

### AKL tops for Aussie biz travellers

**FLIGHT** Centre Corporate has released figures for 2022 showing that Auckland was the number one international destination for its customers last year.

Singapore came in second spot, followed by London.

Corporate Traveller MD Tom Walley said the return of Auckland to the top of the list - as it was in 2019 - was an indication that the industry was returning to a sense of normality.

The resources sector was the industry which undertook the most corporate travel in 2022, the report found, displacing Government/Not for Profit from the number one spot in 2019.

Domestic business travel was, as always, dominated by the Sydney-Melbourne-Brisbane "golden triangle" which Walley said remained the "beating heart of corporate travel within Australia and the epicentre of business activity".

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### Pulling a party out of a hat



**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line Holdings' (NCL) Sydney team recently took part in all of the fun and excitement of the Chinese New Year celebrations.

In keeping with the cruise line's annual tradition, the teams enjoyed chocolate coins, rabbit-themed sweets (because this

year is indeed the year of the rabbit), and of course, no Chinese celebration would be complete without some wise predictions from a batch of deliciously crunchy fortune cookies.

**Pictured:** Norwegian Cruise Line's Sydney team putting extra bounce in their collective steps for the Year of the Rabbit.

### Aussie domestic

**FIVE** million passengers were carried on Australian domestic commercial flights during Nov 2022, compared to 5.5 million in pre-COVID Nov 2019.

A total of 49,103 domestic flights were taken for the month, a figure not too far behind the pre-COVID number for the same period, which was 52,615.

For the year ending Nov 2022 there were 48.2 million passengers carried, up 108% on the year ending Nov 2021, but 21% below 2019 levels.

Sydney was Australia's busiest domestic airport, with Melbourne - Sydney proving to be the most popular route by far for the month of Nov 2022, clocking up 628,511 passengers, followed by Brisbane - Sydney (346,035) and Brisbane - Melbourne (260,802). Regional airports saw 1.95 million domestic passenger movements for Nov 2022, a figure that still lags significantly behind pre-COVID levels, which sat at 2.11 million in 2019.

### A-Rosa premium

**EUROPEAN** river cruise company A-Rosa is introducing an upgraded premium all-inclusive fare on sailings on the Danube, Rhine, Rhone and Douro rivers.

Guests will enjoy enhanced services, entertainment, and cuisine offerings across all 13 ships from 04 Apr - for example, all Mar departures will feature a program of workshops and lectures on wellbeing, creativity and lifestyle.

### Solomons sets sails

**THE** Solomon Islands 2023 cruise season has well and truly kicked off following the arrival of *MS Paul Gauguin* on the weekend with 330 pax on board.

Seven ships are set to visit the islands over the next four months, with *Seabourn Sojourn* due to call in on 24 Feb, followed by *Heritage Adventurer* and Lindblad Expedition's *National Geographic Orion* in Mar, and three Hapag- Lloyd vessels in Apr.

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## 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](mailto:specials@traveldaily.com.au)

**Topdeck Travel** has launched a 'New Year, Real You' promotion, offering huge savings of up to \$750 per person. The provider of "feel real" group travel for Gen Zs and Millennials is offering the discount on its Get Social trips booked before 14 Feb, on departures between Feb 2023 and Mar 2024. Call 1300 886 332 for more details.

**Back-Roads Touring** has launched a 'Discover a New Local' promotion, offering a saving of up to \$400 per couple on selected departures this year. A number of the company's European departures are available with the discount on new bookings made until 02 Mar. Call 1300 100 410 for more information.

**Viking's** deal of the week is its 'France's Finest' river cruise, exploring Paris, Burgundy, and Provence. The 15-day cruise from Paris to Avignon or vice versa is on sale now as part of Viking's Explorer sale, and is priced from \$4,695pp with savings of up to \$4,600 per couple. For additional information, [vikingcruises.com.au](http://vikingcruises.com.au).

Last minute **Royal Caribbean International** sailings are available, with eight nights aboard *Quantum of the Seas* from just \$699 per person. Cruisers can also voyage aboard *Ovation of the Seas* from as little as \$1,299. The limited time offers are available to book immediately until the end of next month. For more details, visit [www.royalcaribbean.com](http://www.royalcaribbean.com).

Save up to \$3,600 per cabin aboard the Norwegian Coastal Express with **Hurtigruten's** 130th Anniversary Sale. The highest discounts are available until 05 Feb, with travellers encouraged not to miss out. Offers are available for all new bookings and suite categories on select departures in 2023 and 2024. Call 1300 322 062 for more.

## Discover Gabon

**THE** Central African state of Gabon has this week launched a new global destination marketing campaign, imploring travellers to "Discover Gabon".

The country's tourist bureau has also launched a new destination website, with the push to help promote its various tourist attractions, such as its largest population of forest elephants in the world, unique flora, and rich marine life - more info [HERE](#).

## US engine tragedy

**AN EMPLOYEE** from the Montgomery Regional Airport in the United States has died after being sucked into a plane's engine, despite multiple warnings prior to the incident.

The American Eagle jet's pilots warned staff that the engines would remain on for a period to cool down as it arrived to the gate on New Year's Eve, however, a ground crew member failed to heed the warning and was killed.

## BNE stands out for safety



**BRISBANE** Airport has unveiled a new look fleet of Airside Safety Vehicles, with striking yellow utes replacing the plain white ones which had been used at the airport for decades.

The refreshed design makes it easier to view the vehicles across the airfield, from the Air Traffic Control Tower or from aircraft, Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) Head of Airside Operations, Peter Dunlop, explained.

"We also want to differentiate ourselves from the dozens of other white service vehicles that operate across the airport.

"Our aim is to stand out and really be that powerful safety reminder right across Brisbane Airport," Dunlop added.

The new paint scheme also features large-scale numbers for easy identification, particularly when pilots asked to follow specific vehicles.

The responsibilities of Airside Safety Officers and their vehicles include conducting inspections of runways, taxiways, aprons, and the tarmac to ensure safety, and

providing "follow-me" assistance for aircraft during poor weather conditions or to pilots unfamiliar with the airport.

The updated Airside Safety Vehicles will be gradually rolled out across the BNE fleet.

**Pictured:** The new-look Brisbane Airport Airside Safety Vehicles.

## Collie tourism boost

**A NEW** campground and picnic area has officially opened at Collie's Lake Kepwari in Western Australia, completing a \$5.8 million transformation to lure tourists to the town.

The David Ugle Campground consists of 32 campsites at the northern edge of the lake, bringing the total number of campsites at Lake Kepwari to 53.

"It's exciting to see that the transformation at Lake Kepwari is now complete, these new and improved facilities will be a major drawcard for both locals and tourists," WA Environment Minister Reece Whitby said.

For more information on the revamped site, see [HERE](#).

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



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