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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, plus a front cover wrap from **CVFR Consolidation Services**, and full pages from:

- Abercrombie & Kent
- Qatar Airways

## Time for travel to Ascend

### EXCLUSIVE

A **NEW** travel representation company has launched to the local market, spearheaded by well-known travel identities Julie Primmer and Lynda Wallace.

Ascend Travel Group is offering a curated and personalised approach to representation for both suppliers and agencies, "bringing real value and productivity gains for all parties". "Our aim is to partner with leading travel brands and bring their visions to life, leveraging our decades of experience, industry knowledge and network of contacts to deliver results," Primmer enthused.

Boasting more than 40 years of experience between them, Primmer and Wallace are seeking new ways of engagement that will unlock a higher level of benefits for suppliers and agencies.

"It's a whole new landscape which requires a new approach to drive growth and success for clients and for agents," Primmer observed.

Wallace added that recent and rapid industry changes in consumer behaviour also means

companies must be prepared to adapt and make gains.

"Ascend will be focused on addressing these changing needs whilst offering a tailored and innovative approach for our clients and our travel industry partners," she noted.

Primmer cofounded Ascend after a close-to 10 year stint at Helloworld, while Wallace was also in the national sales office of Helloworld before spending six months as Development Director at Choice Hotels.

More details on Ascend [HERE](#).

## Qatar ups the value

**QATAR** Airways is highlighting limited-time offers to Italy, France, Germany and more, starting from \$1,809pp return in Economy - see the **back page**.

## Virtuoso's Treasure

**SOPHIE** Treasure has been named as Virtuoso's new Account Director, Partner Relations for Australia and New Zealand.

Treasure joins Virtuoso after five years in industry relations and event management roles at Tourism Australia as well as a decade as Head of Operations at Exhibitions & Trade Fairs.

Her appointment comes alongside the elevation of Zoe Dean to be Virtuoso's Marketing Director ANZ, as well as Bhavini Aggarwal who is now Senior Manager, Partner Relations - more appointments on **page 6**.

## Why not CVFR!

**CVFR** Consolidation Services is inviting independent travel agencies to consider its stability, national presence and 24x7 local ticket centre support - see the **cover page** for details.

## Branson Virgin visit

**VIRGIN** Voyages founder Sir Richard Branson has confirmed he will be in Australia later this year for the inaugural local voyage of *Resilient Lady*.

Speaking via video link at an event in Sydney yesterday, Branson said he was looking forward to the line's debut.

"Australia has always held a really special place in the heart of Virgin, and I can't wait for you to meet the beautiful *Resilient Lady* in Dec...I have a feeling you're going to love everything about her, and most of all I'm looking forward to seeing you all on board," he enthused.

All attendees at the special event were offered a free cruise aboard the vessel - more in today's issue of **Cruise Weekly**.

## HLO clarification

**HELLOWORLD** Travel Limited has noted that the \$70 million payment for its acquisition of Express Travel Group (**TD** breaking news yesterday) equates to a FY23 ETG EBITDA multiple of approximately seven times.

HLO will not be consolidating ETG's earnings into its 2022/23 financial results, a spokesperson for the company told **TD**.

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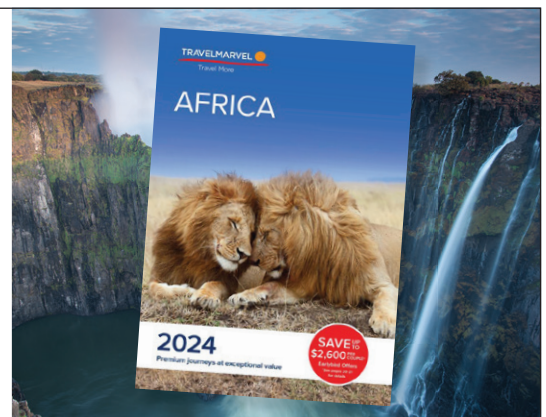
More details on **page seven**.



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## Captain salutes CLIA

**CAPTAIN** Cook Cruises Fiji has become a regional member of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA), gaining access to travel agent training events, including the upcoming Cruise360 Australasia conference - more details in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

## Crystal ramps up in region

**CRYSTAL** Cruises is establishing a new dedicated Melbourne-based call centre to assist trade partners, as part of big plans for the reborn line to boost its presence in the region.

Speaking on board the first voyage of *Crystal Serenity* since the Crystal business assets were acquired by A&K Travel Group last year (*TD* 23 Jun 2022), VP of Sales APAC, Tony Archbold, also confirmed an expansion of his regional sales team.

"Just last week, I got the approval to employ a few more sales staff, so I'm busy writing position descriptions at the moment," he said, with roles including a new Key Account person in Australia who will probably be Sydney-based, as well as someone in Asia.

A sales support staff member will also be recruited, he said, with activity over the upcoming season expected to include lots of events such as ship inspections and famils when *Crystal Symphony* visits Australia.

The expanded resources follow the recent announcement of the new One A&K structure, which sees Archbold now report to Abercrombie & Kent MD Australia, Deb Fox, and the expansion of responsibilities for the group's local Marketing Manager, Michelle Mickan, to also incorporate Crystal.

Archbold also confirmed he will shortly relocate to Melbourne and will be based in an expanded

A&K office in the Vic capital.

Crystal's Director of Brand Marketing, Nisha Patel, also confirmed the development of a new travel agent portal including an online booking engine, which is hoped to launch before Dec.

Other projects under way include the relaunch of Crystal's groups program, she added.

More from Crystal Cruises in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

## Travel disruptions

**HIGH** winds and heavy rain in Taiwan today and tomorrow are expected to impact travel as Typhoon Doksuri makes landfall, while in Italy travel disruptions are also expected as several wildfires, including on the island of Sicily, continue to rage.

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## Touring should be simple

**TOUR** Guides Australia is calling on the Victorian Government to streamline future licensing requirements for nature-based tour operators and lower the financial burden on smaller players in the space.

The formal submission was made as part of a state government review of licensing and fees policies, which have not been reviewed for 15 years, with Tour Guides Australia President Leanne Saward (**pictured**) stating that the current framework is too complicated and expensive.

“The current policy requires separate licences from the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Parks Victoria and many other delegated land managers, so we are recommending a single licence over all public land tenures one organisation administers,” she said.

The industry body is also



advocating for a “sliding scale” for annual fees based on business turnover, with lower annual costs required for small businesses.

Tour Guides Australia said it fully supports the stated aims of the government to support high-quality nature-based tourism that is respectful of Traditional Owners and more sustainable, but would like to see fairer policies in place.

The review had been scheduled to take place in early 2020, but was paused due to bushfires and the pandemic, with the government conducting surveys with stakeholders to create a more efficient touring system.

## Winter in Interlaken

**INTERLAKEN** Tourism has announced a partnership with global destination management specialist Kuoni Tumlare to promote visitation to the Swiss holiday region during winter, with the aim of making Interlaken a “year-round” tourist attraction.

The collaboration will see travellers around the world enticed with customisable packages to the resort town, including winter sports and a variety of exciting activities.

## CX adds PER flights

**CATHAY** Pacific will significantly boost capacity between Perth and Hong Kong from 06 Dec, increasing frequencies from three to five flights a week, and upgrading services to a larger Boeing 777-300ER aircraft.

The additional resources will see the airline provide an extra 61,152 seats on the route in response to stronger demand.

**Travel Daily ON LOCATION**

**DUBROVNIK**

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of *Crystal Cruises*, with *Crystal Serenity* now en route to Naples, Italy.

**AFTER** departing Italy we have crossed the Adriatic to Croatia for a brief visit to Dubrovnik.

Arriving in the afternoon, guests were invited to tender ashore for two optional included shore excursions: a tour of the city made even more famous by *Game of Thrones*, or an adventurous jaunt into the countryside of Konavle for an unexpectedly long bike ride.

Crystal Chairman and co-owner Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio has also now joined the cruise, sparking speculation a major announcement may be in the offing later in the week.

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## Window Seat

**HAVE** you ever wondered if the Colonel's 11 secret herbs and spices would taste better at 12,000 feet?

Well, a group of passengers on board a British Airways flight this week scored the privilege of participating in this wonderful culinary experiment, albeit through an unplanned meal shortage.

The airline was reportedly forced to hand out a single piece of KFC chicken to each pax aboard a 12-hour flight from the Caribbean to London because of a technical issue with the catering carts.

Rather than having their feathers ruffled, the plucky BA's cabin crew cackled into action by purchasing several buckets of KFC chicken, with social media lighting up with many, many fowl jokes.

## QF regional funding

**MORE** than 30 regional community groups are set to receive a share of \$2 million in the form of flights, cash and marketing support from Qantas' Regional Grants program.

Among the winners were Australia's Wildlife Ark in NSW, which will build new eco-tourism accommodation, as well as the FABalce Festival in the NT, which is set to encourage more interstate travellers by promoting a more inclusive event.

See the full list of the successful applicants **HERE**, while applications for the 2024 grants program will open on 28 Feb.

## Rex pilot deal ticked

**REX** Airlines and National Jet Express (NJE) Enterprise Agreements have been ratified by Fair Work, following a successful vote in Jun which saw 75% of pilots support the proposal.

Rex and NJE are now working to finalise remaining agreements.

## Railbookers chief in town



**FRANK** Marini, Global CEO of Railbookers Group, is in Australia this week on a whirlwind trip to meet with key trade partners, clients and other stakeholders.

Marini told **Travel Daily** it was an exciting time for the business, which is currently experiencing "triple digit growth" amid strong demand for carbon-friendly travel in destinations like France, which is proving particularly popular.

Railbookers offers more than 6,000 flexible rail package itineraries across the globe including trips in Europe, North America, Asia, Africa and Australia - as well as giving travel advisors the ability to tailor trips to exact client requirements.

It's now almost five years since Marini established the Railbookers office in Australia (**TD** 02 Oct 2018), with a portfolio of dynamically created trips ideal for

FIT traveller clients, with multiple departure options and complete customisability in terms of hotels, sightseeing and trains.

Marini confirmed that Australia is now the company's second largest market outside of the USA, with an exceptionally strong post-pandemic rebound.

Current booking trends are seeing strong Europe demand about 90 days prior to departure.

Railbookers pays commission on all parts of each holiday along with a current \$100 Visa gift card incentive for bookings departing in 2023, available in conjunction with a limited-time Flash Sale offering savings of up to \$500.

A full Railbookers Travel Advisor Toolkit is available with additional maps and information for the trade by **CLICKING HERE**.

Marini is **pictured** right with Railbookers BDM Craig Owens.

## The Chat

with  
Jenny

Travel Daily



A Conversation with  
Nicola Veltman

1000 Mile Travel Group



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## GEELONG GEARS UP FOR EVENTS

EXCLUSIVE

**VICTORIA** is poised to enhance its national and global appeal as a business events destination, with construction to begin shortly on a new convention centre in the state's regional hub of Geelong.

Plenary Conventions, which develops and maintains the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), has been announced as the preferred bidder for the \$260 million project, with proposed designs also unveiled this week (**pictured**), revealing a 1,000-seat venue, two large exhibition spaces, meeting rooms, conference facilities and flexible event spaces.

Speaking to **Travel Daily**, MCEC chief Natalie O'Brien described the upcoming Geelong centre as a "really great opportunity" to draw international visitors to Victoria's largest regional city, at a time when the sector is bouncing back

from the pandemic.

The Geelong Convention and Exhibition Centre is in good hands with Plenary Conventions, with O'Brien saying "the consortium is made up of a whole number of providers who were best in their field and...here at MCEC we know that plenary has a proven track record".

The new centre, which is being built on a prime waterfront site, will offer "really great accessibility and transport options", according to O'Brien, who pointed out its close proximity to Avalon Airport, the Port Phillip ferries terminal and the train station.

The MCEC chief expects the centre to attract business events from around the state and nationally, as well as smaller international events, across a



range of categories, from music and theatre to sporting and community events.

O'Brien said the Geelong venue will share similar values with the MCEC, with the new centre to adhere to principles of sustainability, work with local suppliers, foster a diverse workforce, and ensure that "local cultural heritage will be a big part of the [centre's] storytelling".

The precinct is also set to include food and beverage venues, a large public plaza and a 200-key Crowne Plaza hotel, with the opening date slated for early 2026.

### Cvent Events+

**CVENT** has unveiled its new Cvent Events+ solution, which aims to help event organisers improve audience engagement and generate interest for future events.

Showcased at Cvent CONNECT in Las Vegas this week, Events+ works seamlessly with Cvent Registration, Cvent Attendee Hub, and Cvent Webinar to offer a fully branded, on-demand video library, and allows logged-in guests to see who from their prior event connections are planning to attend upcoming events.

Cvent also announced the global launch of its powerful Cvent Webinar platform, which enables event planners to build a webinar "in just minutes", and offers easy-to-use production tools and multiple presentation types.

### Arinex updates

**ARINEX** has teamed up with Joyn, it's long-term partner, to form The Arinex Group, citing "ambitious plans" to create unique in-person event experiences.

**MEANWHILE**, Arinex is helping host the 45th Annual Int'l Conference of the IEEE Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society, which sees more than 2,000 experts gather in Sydney this week.

### Net Zero Events

**MORE** than 30 major meetings and events organisations from around the globe are now financial contributors to Net Zero Carbon Events (NZCE).

The European Major Exhibition Centres Association is the latest to join the initiative, which is open to all event businesses with four contribution tiers available - **CLICK HERE** to find out more.

### Vivid invites EOI

**VIVID** Sydney is inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) for its 2024 event program, which focuses on the theme of 'Humanity', in categories of Light, Music, Ideas & Food.

The creative sector, including event companies, is encouraged to apply to be part of the globally recognised festival, which will take place in 2024 from 24 May to 15 Jun - **CLICK HERE**.

### NZ news round-up

**THE** business events sector in Christchurch, New Zealand is set to be boosted on the global stage, following the appointment of Te Pae Christchurch General Manager Ross Steele to the International Association of Convention Centres (AIPC) board.

**MEANWHILE**, Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA) has opened up registrations for its inaugural Business Events Week (**TD** 06 Jul), which kicks off in Marlborough on 18 Sep - **CLICK HERE** to register.

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[appointments@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:appointments@traveldaily.com.au)

Continuing her journey at **Virtuoso Travel**, **Zoe Dean** has been promoted to be the travel operator's Marketing Director, Australia and New Zealand. Dean is a travel and tourism marketing specialist with over 10 years of experience in the industry, including a stint at Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection as its head of marketing prior to joining Virtuoso.

**Gareth Coakley** has become the new National Key Account Manager for Australia at **Hurtigruten Group**. Coakley was Journey Beyond's business development manager for four years before joining Hurtigruten and was instrumental in the company's sales, operations and tourism products. He brings extensive experience spanning various segments of the industry to his new role.

In a bid to boost sales growth and expand **FCTG Independents'** client base in the Victorian market, **Anthony Flores** has joined the company as its new Melbourne-based Business Development Partner. Flores has extensive experience across both the retail and supplier sectors, previously filling several senior positions at leading travel companies over the past 20 years.

**MSC Cruises** has announced the appointment of **Brigita Devries** as its Senior Sales Manager, Australia & New Zealand. Based in MSC's Sydney office, Devries will work to boost the cruise line's commitment to trade partners across the region. Devries has immense experience in the cruise sector, previously holding various leadership, sales and marketing roles for Swan Hellenic, Crystal Cruises, and NCL.

Global travel communication agency **Slojour Studio** has recruited travel professional **Chaldee Gammo** to the newly created role of Conscious Curator. She will work closely with Australian travel agents across services including in-person sales meetings, digital advertisement and immersive training sessions on the company's products, infusing meditation and energy healing into her approach.

**Jason Marino** has been appointed as Chief Financial Officer at **Marriott Vacations Worldwide**, effective 30 Sep. Succeeding Anthony Terry who is stepping down as the organisation's CFO, Marino will also become the new Executive Vice President. The industry veteran has spent nearly 10 years at the company and is currently serving as Senior Vice President, Strategy, FP&A and Operation Finance - Vacation Ownership.

The new Executive Director in Technology and Operations at **1000 Mile Travel Group** is **Jamie Espino**. Based in the travel group's North American office, Espino departs Morgan Stanley where she was the global travel technology & innovation director. Espino's experience in the industry spans over three decades, bringing a wealth of knowledge and experience to her new role.

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## The sun rises on Wintjiri Wiru



**THE** Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia team appeared on television screens around the nation yesterday morning to showcase its spectacular new drone and light experience, **Wintjiri Wiru**.

Channel Seven *Sunrise* presenter Sam Mac trekked to the Northern Territory to experience the cultural storytelling event, which began lighting up Uluru in May (**TD** 12 May).

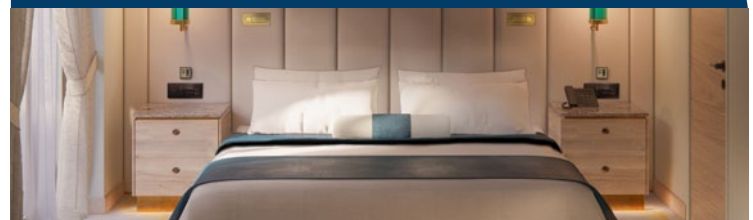
To view the full *Sunrise* segment about the Top End light show [CLICK HERE](#).

## Taste closer to home

**AIR** New Zealand has revamped its onboard menu to include more native ingredients and suppliers, available at this stage to Business Premier cabins and long-haul flights departing NZ.

New items on the list include superfood salad with horopito dusted New Zealand salmon, creamy kawakawa mushrooms on rye toast with sauteed spinach and grilled tomatoes, smoked moki on kawakawa blini, as well as grass-fed lamb rump.

## Travel Daily On Board: Crystal Serenity



### Sapphire Verandah Suite

*Crystal Serenity* now features many more of these spacious staterooms after its recent makeover, which has reduced capacity by about 24%. Sapphire Verandah Suites feature separate living and sleeping areas, with a huge bathroom and walk-in wardrobe. In fact the ship's configuration has shifted from just 35 large suites (47<sup>2</sup> m-plus) to more than 150, reflecting ongoing demand from the high-end sector seeking more space and comfort aboard.



# Abercrombie & Kent

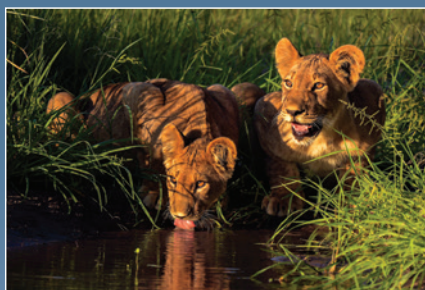
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