



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, including our Corporate Update page.

Bathgate voyages

ANNA Bathgate has become the new Director PR and Corporate Communications at Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, sailing across from Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, where she was previously the PR Manager for Asia Pacific since Jun 2021.

JNTO new local head

JAPAN National Tourism Organization (JNTO) has appointed Naoki Kitazawa to replace Yoko Tanaka as the new Executive Director, Australia.

Kitazawa joins the Sydney office from Seoul where he led the team for two years, with local objectives to include spotlighting regional areas and events like the Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai.

A&K's big Aussie ambition

EXCLUSIVE

ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) is expecting its recently appointed Managing Director for Australasia, Debra Fox, to lead the local market to become A&K's third biggest source of business, according to the organisation's global CEO, Cristina Levis.

Speaking with TD aboard Crystal Serenity in Europe, Levis admitted the Australian A&K business had languished in recent years.

"We really believe in the Australian market...we want Australia to become definitely our third market after the US and the UK," Levis said, displacing Europe.

As well as taking on A&K, Fox has been named Executive Vice President of Trade Sales APAC for Crystal Cruises, and is now significantly boosting the local Crystal team (TD yesterday).

"We are spending a lot of money investing in Australia, particularly in people who are our

most important assets," she said.

Levis, who was also formerly CEO of Silversea Expeditions, said the acquisition of Crystal Cruises by A&K Travel Group had been a key strategy - despite each business having a slightly different customer base.

Analysis undertaken by the company has found that people who travel on high end cruise lines tend to book up to five other non-cruise trips each year.

"So if we are able to convert even one of these other trips into an A&K safari, for instance, you just can't imagine what that does to our bottom line," Levis said.

However with just two vessels in the current Crystal fleet, she also suggested that speculation the company wants to grow the line's capacity was not inaccurate.

"Only a fool would believe that we could survive with Crystal with just two ships," she said.

More in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

Play your cards right

THE Travel Corporation (TTC) has launched its Full House Seasonal Sales agent incentive, offering advisors the chance of scoring a spot on an exclusive famil to Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Six Aussie spots are up for grabs on the adventure which departs in Oct, and to win agents need to book and deposit any TTC tour until 25 Aug, for travel up until 30 Apr 2024, with sellers then invited to play a card game to try and turn over a winning card.

One passenger booking earns five points for Sep and Oct trips, while one pax booking will accrue one point for trips departing all other months until Apr 2024.

Light plane collision

EMERGENCY services have reportedly rushed to an airfield at Caboolture in Qld where two light planes collided in mid-air at about 10.30am this morning - no causal details are known at this stage.

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Qantas lets it snow

QANTAS has welcomed another Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner to its fleet, with the 'Snowy River' jet arriving in Melbourne this week after flying in from Seattle.

The aircraft has commenced operating from Melbourne to Perth and onwards to London, adding valuable capacity to Qantas' international network. "The arrival of a new aircraft is always an exciting time for our teams across Qantas...and there's a lot more to come as the biggest fleet renewal program in our history continues to ramp up," Qantas International and Freight CEO Cam Wallace said.

TTC eyes 2030 date

THE Travel Corporation's (TTC) second annual Impact Report shows the company has replaced its goal of carbon neutrality by 2030 with a more ambitious target of net zero by 2050.

Other highlights include achieving the goal of at least one Make Travel Matter Experience on 62% of the TTC brands' trips, spanning from preserving culture and heritage to supporting endangered wildlife.

All brands have also surpassed the key sustainability goal of reducing printed brochures by 64% from 2019, against a target of 50% by 2025.

TA invests heavily in Asia

E X C L U S I V E

SINGAPORE, Malaysia and Indonesia are being viewed by Tourism Australia as key source markets as the country looks to rebuild its visitor economy back to 2019 levels.

Speaking with *Travel Daily* this week, Tourism Australia revealed it recently hosted its Australia Marketplace South East Asia event in Singapore, which the tourism body said was an important opportunity for the Australian tourism industry to strengthen relationships with travel agents and tourism operators across the region.

"With travel representatives such as key qualified travel agencies and tour operators from markets like Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia in attendance, the

business created at this event will play an important role in our recovery," a spokesperson for Tourism Australia said.

"The latest visitor numbers show in the month of May 2023, arrivals to Australia from Singapore were back to about 95% of 2019 levels, and research shows that this is a market with very high repeat visitation once the target audience of high yielding travellers discover first-hand all of the experiences that Australia has to offer.

"We also know that Australia's food and wine culture, aquatic and coastal attractions, and nature and wildlife experiences, are all key drivers for residents in Asia when choosing a holiday destination to travel to within the Australasian region."

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Authentic safari tour

BENCH Africa has launched a new fully escorted Africa tour called Discover East Africa, which is designed to provide a more authentic safari experience.

The 16-day safari through Kenya and Tanzania will boast a maximum guest capacity of 12 travellers and feature visits to the Serengeti and Masai Mara, the Great Rift Valley Lakes, and the Ngorongoro Crater.

For more details, see [HERE](#).

Bhutan inks Virtuoso

BHUTAN'S Department of Tourism has been accepted into Virtuoso's portfolio of luxury travel partners, connecting the destination to a network of more than 20,000 advisors and partners from around the world.

The small Asian nation has previously expressed its intention to create more luxury and sustainable tourism experiences, especially across its resorts.

Aussies plan for longer

NEW research from Expedia suggests a large cohort of Australians are undecided about their destination choice when planning overseas trips.

More than half of Aussies (56%) in the OTA's *Path to Purchase* study indicated they did not have a specific destination in mind when they first started planning a trip, opening the door for travel sellers to offer expert recommendations.

Value-for-money product and easy-to-use websites when planning and booking travel were also looked upon as valuable elements of the transaction process (57% and 50% respectively), while half also stated they were loyalty program members primarily to take advantage of discount promos.

Social media looks to be playing an increasing role in transactions, the study also showed, with 54% of Aussies using digital

platforms as their "main source of inspiration", building a strong case for brands having influencers in their marketing mix.

Australian travellers were also shown to be bigger planners than most consumers around the world, booking trips three months prior to the start of holidays, significantly longer than the global average, which is only around 45 days.

Globally, travellers spend an average of 303 minutes, or almost five hours, across a 45-day period consuming travel content before they press ahead with bookings.

This equates to around 140 pages of travel content in 45 days, with a steadier consumption at the beginning of the planning cycle before culminating in a rapid read of 25 pages on the day of purchasing.

The research also showed 80% of travellers visit an OTA at some point before making a purchase.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



NAPLES, ITALY

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of *Crystal Cruises*, with *Crystal Serenity* on her first post-COVID cruise.

DOCKING at Naples this morning saw *Crystal Serenity* guests offered a range of tours curated by sister company A&K, including a city tour and authentic pizza experience.

Some passengers have also taken the opportunity to do their own thing, with the city centre just a short stroll from where *Serenity* is docked.

Tonight a special experience will take place in a famed local castle, ahead of a day at sea tomorrow before visiting Livorno and then Marseille, from whence the new *Serenity* embarks on her first revenue cruise.

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Window Seat

IT'S been a boozy week at Qantas' Sydney headquarters, with the Flying Kangaroo conducting a 40-hour wine tasting session appropriately dubbed 'Qantas Wine Week'.

The bibulous event sees a group of sommeliers (AKA wine-tasting experts) gather to select the 500 wines worthy of being featured on Qantas' flights and in Qantas lounges later in the year.

While being tasked with sampling 1,400 wines in the space of five days may sound like a pretty good deal, celebrity chef Neil Perry, who is Qantas' Creative Director of Food, Beverage & Service, insists it is "really hard work".

Fellow sommelier, Sebastian Crowther, agreed, saying "your palate gets tired and you get mentally tired because you've got to concentrate for each individual wine".

Each day the sommeliers do a blind taste test of a different wine variety, independently giving each wine a score out of 10 before comparing notes to determine which make the cut.

Tipsiness is kept under control, however, with the sommeliers spitting all the wine out into a spittoon - so we guess they aren't technically drinking on the job after all!

Accor spent \$300m

SINCE the start of 2022, Accor has revealed a total investment of more than \$300 million in hotel renovations and refurbishments in the Asia Pacific region.

Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, and French Polynesia have seen the most refurbishment funding, with the aim of ensuring its 400 hotels and resorts in the Pacific "remain at the forefront of the industry".

Among the notable projects completed recently was the refurbishment of Manly Pacific - MGallery, Peppers Waymouth Adelaide, and a multi-million dollar transformation of the five-star Swissotel Sydney.

Slot audit needed

SYDNEY Airport Chief Executive Geoff Culbert has called for a forensic audit to take place to determine whether major airlines are guilty of slot hoarding, a practice the airport's chief has previously accused Virgin Australia & Qantas of in Sydney.

The big carriers can keep slots at Sydney Airport so long as they use them 80% of the time, however, some have accused the bigger players of deliberately cancelling flights on the busiest routes in a bid to keep competitors out of Australia's largest airport.

Airlines impacted by the limited slot availability include new domestic player Bonza, which has expressed a strong interest in launching routes from Sydney, & int'l players like Qatar Airways.

SYD-Mel widens gap

AUSTRALIA'S busiest domestic air route got even busier in May, with new BITRE figures for the month showing Sydney-Melbourne grew by 7.2% year-on-year to 626,000 passengers.

While the well-subscribed route didn't show the fastest rate of growth for the month, it is still easily reigning supreme in terms of passenger numbers, delivering 270,000 more travellers than the next busiest route, which was the Brisbane-Sydney route with 356,000 travellers.

Among the biggest increases noted in May for routes in the top 60 were two operating to and from Canberra Airport, with people flying between Adelaide and Canberra up 33.6% on 2022 to 17,800 passengers, as well as Canberra-Gold Coast, which rose by 34% to 13,500 flyers.

Routes that leaked the most travellers for the month included Darwin-Melbourne, which was down 30.7% from 33,500 to 23,200 passengers, as well as Brisbane-Launceston, which fell significantly by 37% from 14,400 to just 9,000 travellers.

Overall, the report showed that 4.63 million passengers were carried on regular domestic flights in May, representing a 6.2% gain on May 2022, while the

figures were even brighter for the 12 months to May 2023, which was up a whopping 95.9% on the 12 months to May 2022, with 55.22 million passengers.

May also saw a mild bump in much-needed flight capacity compared to 2022, with available seat kilometres increasing 3 percentage points to 7.11 billion.

In May there were also 2.02 million domestic passenger movements through regional airports, compared to just 1.94 million in May 2022, an increase of around 4%.

Out of the top 50 regional airports, the strongest increase was recorded at Port Macquarie Airport, up 38.8%, while the largest decrease was recorded at Hamilton Island Airport, down 18.1%.

Kiwi cocktails take off

IN PARTNERSHIP with New Zealand drinks creator East Imperial, Air New Zealand will offer new seasonal cocktails to pax in Business Premier cabins on the carrier's New York and Chicago routes.

The first batch of drinks are gin-based cocktails, however, alcohol-free mocktail options are also available upon request.

The Chat

with Jenny



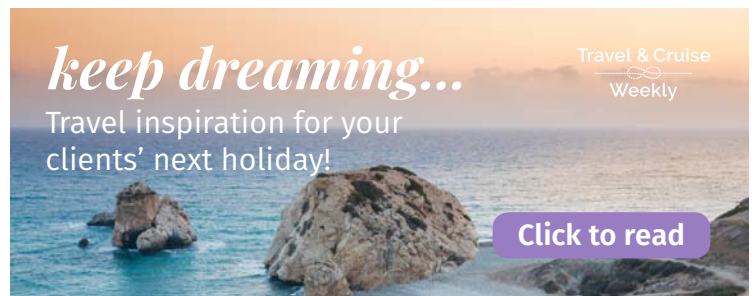
A Conversation with Nicola Veltman
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SYD → SFO

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Orbit rings in 29 years

SYDNEY-BASED travel expert, Orbit World Travel, is marking 29 years of “triumphs, tears and teamwork” this week, at the same time signalling an exciting brand refresh.

Having recently opened new offices, expanded its service team, welcomed new clients and rolled out new technology, the Orbit World Travel team certainly has plenty to celebrate.

The company revealed it is in the process of revamping its brand, under the values of ‘Outstanding, Resourceful, Brave, Integrity and Teamwork’, and said to “watch this space, we’ve only just started”.

The Sydney-based agency was established in 1994 under the name World Travel Professionals, after Lisa Story bought what was then a Westpac Travel office in Sydney’s Double Bay.

World Travel Professionals rebranded to Orbit World Travel



in 2016, becoming the largest privately owned corporate travel company in Australasia.

Commenting on Orbit’s beginnings, Story, who is also the company’s Director, explained “we identified an opportunity in the market for high-quality, travel agency service”.

“We went about creating innovative solutions for corporate travellers, seamless journeys for luxury leisure enthusiasts, and we took away the complexities for group and event travel arrangers.”

The Orbit team are **pictured**: Melanie Smith, Jo Whereat, Jess Clarke, Stacey Arnold, Amanda Barratt, and Alison Johnston.

Crystal crew meets captain



CRYSTAL Cruises executive chairman, Manfredi Lefebvre d’Ovidio, joined the lucky guests aboard *Crystal Serenity* this week, providing an opportunity for the Crystal and A&K team to catch up with the company’s co-owner.

TD spotted them in Lefbvre’s eponymous restaurant, Osteria d’Ovidio, where Lefebvre is **pictured** with A&K Travel Group CEO Cristina Levis and some of the Aussie contingent on board, A&K MD Australasia Debra Fox;

A&K and Crystal Marketing Manager, Michelle Mickan; and Crystal Cruises VP of Sales, Tony Archbold.

Bali naughty hotline

BALI has launched a new phone service for concerned local residents to call in the latest bid to stamp out what local authorities perceive to be a rise in unruly tourist behaviour.

Bali Becik Task Force Director General of Immigration, Silmy Karim, told local media on the island this week, “we invite the people of Bali to report foreigners who violate [rules] via the hotline number 08 139 9679 966 because community participation is certainly very much needed in supervising and taking action against unruly tourists”.

Win a case of Mel

VIRGIN Australia and Visit Victoria have partnered with July Luggage to offer travellers the chance of winning limited edition travel bags & a trip to Melbourne - for more information about how to win prizes - **CLICK HERE**.



Travel Daily

On Board: *Crystal Serenity* Kids club

Children are welcome on board *Crystal Serenity*, which offers a range of facilities to keep younger guests occupied and entertained. The Fantasia club offers programs from childrens aged three to twelve, while the adjoining Waves area features a chill crib with beanbags, video games and evening activities for any teenagers who happen to be on board with their families.

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*For registration and eligibility, visit trade.northernterritory.com



CORPORATE UPDATE

Parsons takes over WA/SA



EXCLUSIVE

FLIGHT Centre's corporate FCM Travel brand has appointed Grant Parsons (**pictured**) to be its new General Manager for Western Australia and South Australia.

The appointment, which is effective 31 Jul, will see Parsons bring plenty of Flight Centre experience to his new position, having formerly held roles across the business including Escape Travel, Flight Centre Business Travel, and Infinity Holidays.

Upon accepting the role, Parsons reiterated the importance of the corporate travel markets in Western Australia and South Australia, adding he was excited to lead the states' teams that already have a proven track record of success.

"After many years with FCTG, I'm truly passionate about our business and the role we play in the customer experience and how I can support the operational team to drive productivity and create a high-performance team culture," Parsons said.

"My leadership philosophy is to empower people to realise their individual and team goals by providing the support and disciplined structure necessary for people to thrive.

"The industry continues to grow considerably in the Perth and Adelaide markets and I look forward to assisting customers to optimise their travel program and successfully onboard our newer customers into the FCM family."

Parsons has been with Flight Centre since 2006, having made the sea change from the fast food retail sector prior to joining.

Win a NY trip at btTB

THE btTB Awards taking place at next month's 23rd annual btTB Business Travel Conference in Sydney (**TD** 14 Jul) will recognise excellence in buyer-supplier relationships.

The winning buying organisation will receive a free Business class trip with United Airlines to attend the Skift Global Forum in New York in Sep, open to travel suppliers of all types.

As an added incentive, winners of the award will also be publicised by conference organiser PASA to Australia's largest network of procurement managers and travel buyers.

To be held at the Randwick Racecourse on 15-16 Aug, the btTB Awards is offering **TD** subscribers \$100 discounts on tix - **CLICK HERE** to register now.



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DL opens second JFK lounge



DELTA Air Lines has opened up a second lounge at the JFK Airport in New York, bringing its total capacity at the Big Apple hub up to more than 800 guests.

Located at Terminal 4 and offering sweeping views of the airfield, the new Delta Sky Club takes up almost 1,300m², with the ability to seat 250 guests.

The Club includes a covered Sky Deck, a signature 360-degree premium bar, a cosy fireside lounge, and a tucked-away nook inspired by the elegance and privacy of a classic speakeasy.

Guests at the new lounge will be able to savour Jewish deli staples like brisket hash sandwich, vegetarian latkes and labneh parfait, and unique beverages like a vegan iced latte "slushie".

"This new Club is beautifully designed and packed with special details that reflect the magic of New York City," Delta Sky Club MD Claude Roussel said.

Tech a huge factor

THREE in five (59%) travel sellers consider technology the most important factor when choosing a travel management company (TMC), according to a new study from the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) and FCM.

However, technology is also considered by 42% of respondents as one of the top pain points of their primary TMC, according to *The Evolution of Travel Program Technology* report.

The study also revealed a growing interest in AI-enabled chat, with seven in 10 travel managers expressing interest in using chatbots to answer traveller questions or help them make bookings, while 87% are interested in using AI to enhance reporting, as well as for data cleansing (82%), personalisation of search results (78%), and auditing of expense reports (62%).

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An all-inclusive package from the Maldives to Australia is available with **Cruise Traveller's** latest promotion. Priced from \$36,100pp, equivalent to a saving of \$10,300, travellers can book the flight, cruise and stay package in a Vista Suite with ocean views. Other benefits include a US\$300 per twin suite spending credit for bookings made by 31 Aug. Call Cruise Traveller on 1800 507 777 for more.

Elvis Presley aficionados can rejoice as **Pullman Sydney Hyde Park** has released an *Elvis: A Musical Revolution* Accommodation package to the big show. Guests will receive two A Reserve tickets to the musical performance, as well as a breakfast for two and more. The offer is eligible for stays from 02 Aug to 10 Sep and is priced from \$529 per night. Learn more info [HERE](#).

Available on cruises through Mar 2024, **Virgin Voyages** is offering savings of up to 30% off, as well as up to US\$600 in spending credit on drinks on selected itineraries when booking by 30 Sep. Itineraries included in the offer are the five-night Aussie Mermaid from \$1,288pp, and the five-night Melbourne to Hobart return sailing from \$1,107pp, plus many more. View all the eligible itineraries [HERE](#).

Cheval Collection is offering an enhanced commission rate of 15% across the brand's selected UK properties for stays between 01 Oct to 31 Mar 2024. Any new bookings made for Cheval The Edinburgh Grand, Cheval Old Town Chambers and Cheval Abbey Strand Apartments will be eligible for the raised rate. [CLICK HERE](#) to reserve.

Get set, to jet with **Virgin Australia's** latest offering of up to half a million Economy sale fares from as low as \$49. Velocity Frequent Flyer Points and Status Credits are applicable on select flights between 11 Oct and 14 Mar 2024 to destinations including Fiji, Bali, Gold Coast, Perth and Melbourne. Book your cheaper flights [HERE](#).

Qatar Airways is offering significant savings on selected return flights in its Economy and Business classes. Travellers can fly from Sydney to Rome aboard Economy class from \$1,809 return, as well as return from Sydney to Istanbul from \$1,839. Business class rates begin from \$6,969 from Perth to Frankfurt. Valid until 31 Jul, get in touch [HERE](#).

LE makes retail foray permanent



LUXURY Escapes opened its first permanent retail travel store in Melbourne's Chadstone shopping centre yesterday, attracting over 150 shoppers (pictured) who queued up from 10am prior to its anticipated opening.

Following the immense success of the pop-up retail space, which was opened in Nov (*TD* 22 Nov 2022), the luxury online travel platform is eager to provide "the inspiration, expertise and guidance you need in booking your next dream holiday", with its now permanent residency of the Luxury Escapes Retail Travel store

in the prime location of Vic.

Customers can experience "face-to-face personalised advice, travel information and recommendations" to plan their ultimate getaways - [CLICK HERE](#) to book an appointment.

Turkish tragic incident

A **TURKISH** Airlines flight en route from Istanbul to Marrakesh was forced to make an emergency landing in Algeria after a passenger committed suicide while on board the plane.

Crew on flight TK619 suspected something was not right after a passenger went to the bathroom and failed to return for a long period of time, and after breaking the door down found a traveller unconscious and began administering first aid.

The airline has extended its "deepest condolences" to the family of passengers following the incident, with Algerian authorities confirming they have launched an investigation into the incident.

Thredbo tragedy

A **73-YEAR-OLD** man has passed away after colliding into a pole on the edge of the ski run at Thredbo alpine resort yesterday.

"Officers from Monaro Police District have established a crime scene and will conduct enquiries," a police statement advised.

A coroners report is also being conducted for the investigation.

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