



MTA RENEE MCLENNAN

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features six pages of news including our **Luxury** feature page plus full pages from:

- The Travel Junction
- Entire Travel Group

## Eclipse-ing her trials

**SCENIC** Luxury Cruises & Tours has announced the successful completion of *Scenic Eclipse II's* sea trials this week.

The cutting-edge luxury vessel has now returned to the 3. Maj shipyard in Rijeka for her final fit out in advance of her inaugural sailing on 13 Apr.

The highly-anticipated 114-suite yacht was put through her paces over two weekend sessions last month - more luxury news on **p4**.



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## Major AFTA reform plan

**THE** new draft Constitution of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (**TD** breaking news) is a key step in building a "more inclusive Association for the future," according to AFTA CEO Dean Long.

The document is the outcome of an independent review commissioned by the AFTA Board, which has unanimously backed the significant changes proposed.

These include a new voting structure which moves away from the former arrangements based on physical locations, with votes (and membership fees on a sliding scale) instead allocated based on TTV.

The Constitution also enshrines key AFTA objectives and deliverables, giving an overview of the industry as well as why the Federation exists and who it does and doesn't represent.

"The work on ensuring AFTA's structures and framework are market- and member-fit formally began in early 2022, but I have been on the agenda for some time," Long said.

"AFTA built upon what we

achieved during COVID but also learned what we needed to improve," he added.

Long noted that the pandemic showed that overall AFTA was fit for purpose, but "needed to evolve how we communicated and operate outside of a crisis".

"We also needed to review the key documents that govern who AFTA is and what we do, as some in our membership did not have an equal voice in their Association," he added.

As part of a commitment to transparency and inclusivity, AFTA is now consulting with the entire industry including both those within and outside the Federation's membership.

Long also noted the incorporation of industry feedback about the Australian Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS), which now recognises the different business models covered by the program including travel agents, tour operators, wholesalers and consolidators.

AFTA is now seeking feedback on the draft Constitution via a survey which is accessible **HERE**.



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## ETG celebrates 50

**ENTIRE** Travel Group (ETG) is celebrating more than 50 years of operation by discounting the full range of its holiday packages on its website for this month.

Travel advisors can also receive a \$50 gift voucher for every holiday package booked during Mar, while every reservation will also earn an entry into the draw for a chance to win a \$5,000 holiday package.

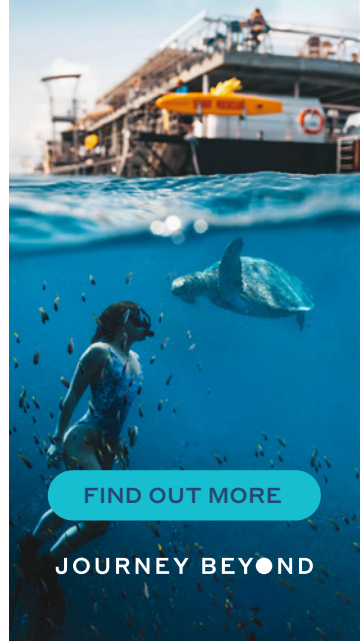
ETG is the home of iconic travel groups including CIT Holidays, French Travel Connection, Tahiti Travel Connection, Canada & Alaska Specialist Holidays, and many more legacy brands which have been incorporated into the company's specialist teams.

For further more information on Entire Travel Group's birthday promotion, see **page eight**.



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## Harrison flies into China

**TOURISM** Australia's (TA) Managing Director Phillipa Harrison has arrived in China today as part of a renewed push to revive the country's former number one visitor market.

Harrison will visit Guangzhou, Beijing and Shanghai to meet with strategic partners as part of the trip, including major airlines Air China and China Southern Airlines, preceding the launch of TA's Don't Go Small, Go Australia campaign later this month.

The initial campaign in China is considered a tactical one for Australia to capture both the VFR market and pent-up demand for an Australian holiday, a push that will be followed by the activation of the Come and Say G'day campaign, timed to launch mid-year once aviation capacity between the two countries has returned to a more significant number of flights.

"With Chinese travellers starting

to return to Australia, now is the right time to visit our number one tourism market and meet with our long-standing partners," Harrison said, adding the meetings and campaign activity will be "crucial as we build up to the launch of a major campaign in China in the middle of the year".

The staged approach in China by TA is deliberate, echoing the same delivery tactics used when Australia reopened its borders to the world in Feb 2022.

Pre-COVID, China was Australia's leading visitor market, welcoming 1.4 million visitors a year and contributing \$12.4 billion in visitor spend.

A strong aviation environment had also been key to the growth of the China market for Australian tourism through to 2019, with an average of 158 flights per week operating, totalling 2.2 million seats per year, with current capacity only 23% of 2019 levels.

## ETIAS delayed to '24

THE EU's proposed ETIAS e-visa system has been postponed again, with the launch moved to 2024 at the earliest.

Designed to be a simple visitor-friendly system that will save travellers time, ETIAS had originally been planned to launch back in 2016 (TD 17 Nov 2016).

When it eventually goes live, Australian travellers to Europe will pay an application fee of €7, in addition to supplying a health and criminal self-assessment and travel details.

The delay is believed to be driven by potential border issues.

## TTJ GB comm offer

**EARN** up to 15% commission on selected accommodation bookings in Great Britain with The Travel Junction (TTJ), with agents also being offered a chance to win a London City Break trip featuring three nights at Radisson Blu Edwardian Hotel - see **page 7**.



## Window Seat

**CHATGPT** is already making its mark in the travel sector, with a British motorist successfully using the AI platform to challenge a fine levied at London Gatwick Airport.

After receiving a £100 "final notice" penalty for driving through a drop-off area last year, Brighton-based Shaun Bosley turned to ChatGPT to write a response.

ChatGPT's letter referenced the "undue stress and hardship" caused by the financial notice and added that the "debt collection process has been premature".

The fine was amended to just £15, with the car park operator saying the decision would have been the same whether or not AI had been used to create the appeal.



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## Judy visits Vanuatu

TRAVEL has been disrupted and some flights grounded as Tropical Cyclone Judy bears down on north Vanuatu today, a storm which is expected to intensify as it passes through central Vanuatu later today and tomorrow, with strong winds and rain predicted.

## Jetstar ticked for c'share

QANTAS has been granted permission for its budget subsidiary Jetstar Airways to codeshare with Fiji Airways on services to Singapore.

The Flying Kangaroo applied to the International Air Services Commission (IASC) early last month (TD 03 Feb) requesting approval for the move, at the time providing a confidential codeshare agreement to the Commission as part of the application process.

Meanwhile Qantas has also given the green light by the IASC for capacity to five markets in Asia and the Pacific region.

The carrier has been approved for 204 seats of capacity per week on the Cook Islands route, 696 seats per week on the Fiji route, 100 seats per week in each direction on the New Caledonia route, and 152 seats per week in each direction to the Philippines.

Qantas was also granted 14,468 seats per week for the exercise of third and fourth freedom rights on the Indonesia route, as well as 2,148 seats for the exercise of beyond traffic rights with 12 frequencies per week, seven of which may be used beyond Indonesia from Denpasar.

## FC/Intrepid comp

FLIGHT Centre and Intrepid Travel have teamed up to give travellers the chance to win one of 20 Intrepid global tours for two, as well as return flights from their closest departure point.

To be in the running, travellers can register [HERE](#).

## G Change Makers

G ADVENTURES is bringing back Change Makers, its popular agent incentive program, after a three-year pause due to COVID-19.

Thirteen 'makers of change' will be selected from each of G Adventures' major markets, including Australia and New Zealand, to attend the Change Makers Summit, which will run from 22-28 Sep in a yet-to-be-announced destination.

G Adventures revealed that agents can expect "plenty of surprises" during the summit.

Advisors will also receive one entry per traveller booked from now until 30 Jun - for details, log into Sherpa [HERE](#).

## Nesuto Docklands

DAIWA Living Nesuto has debuted its Nesuto brand in Victoria today, with the opening of Nesuto Docklands in Melbourne.

The \$100m apartment hotel offers 211 studio, one- and two-bedroom rooms across 13 floors with views across Melbourne's port, bay and city.

The rooms feature a full kitchen, internal laundry, spacious living and dining areas, unlimited wi-fi and Google Chromecast TV, while guests will also have access to a modern gymnasium.

## 10% off until 21 Mar

EURAIL is offering 10% off its First and Second class Passes across all traveller categories (including Adult, Youth, Senior and Child), covering over 30,000 destinations across Europe.

The sale ends 21 Mar - [CLICK HERE](#) for more information.



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### Lufthansa First class

**LUFTHANSA** has unveiled its new First Class Suite Plus concept, which will be available in 2024 on its fleet of Airbus A350s, which will each have three of the suites.

Initially flagged last year, the new concept is part of the German airline's new long-haul product "Lufthansa Allegris" (TD 17 Oct 2022).

The concept is a separate double cabin with ceiling-high walls, a fully closable door, a large table, and two wide seats that can be configured into a double bed.

Passengers on board the First class suites will have control of a heating/cooling system for the nearly one-metre-wide seats, access to wireless charging stations, personal wardrobes, gourmet menus and more.

### Maldives wellness

**KAGI** Maldives Spa Island, situated in North Male Atoll, is offering a new Say When Wellness program, a five-day package including wellness options and culinary experiences.

Each day at the 50-villa boutique resort includes five experiences from the wellness menu, with guests able to pick two ocean experiences and three wellness experiences, while also enjoying a complimentary cocktail, three-course dinners, and lunches.

To find out more, [CLICK HERE](#).

## TM ENJOYS LUXURY GROWTH SPIKE

**TRAVELMANAGERS** has attributed its recent success in the luxury segment to its partnership with Signature Travel Network, which kicked off early last year (TD 03 Feb 2022).

The home-based travel network returned to profitability this year (TD 10 Feb), achieving nine consecutive months of record-breaking sales for TravelManagers' personal travel managers (PTMs) in 2022 (TD 13 Dec 2022).

TravelManagers' Executive General Manager, Michael Gazal, said having access to Signature's global, curated portfolio of luxury travel products played an important role in the company's post-pandemic recovery.

"Many PTMs have increased their sales in luxury travel, with a growth in clients who prefer to focus on value rather than price," Gazal (pictured) noted.

"Our ability to meet this demand is thanks to the access to luxury product which our relationship with Signature provides."

The luxury travel partnership has meant PTMs have been able to offer clients a variety of value-adds, such as free meals, resort credits, room upgrades and late checkouts, while PTMs benefit from Signature's training and marketing support.

"This includes support from a variety of tourism board partners, many of which are not represented or active in the Australian marketplace, such as Tenerife Tourism, Bermuda Tourism Authority, and Ecuador Tourism Board," Gazal said.

"This means that PTMs have access to extensive assistance in destination research and specialist marketing, which wouldn't otherwise be available from these high-value



destinations."

With the recently announced addition of 139 preferred suppliers, including 115 new hotels, Gazal expects even stronger growth in the luxury sector for 2023.

### Fairmont Banff unveils luxury suite upgrade

**THE** Fairmont Banff Springs in Canada's Banff National Park has completed a two-year, CAD\$35 million renovation of its suites and guest rooms to offer an even higher standard of luxury.

Guests staying in the Fairmont Gold suite now have access to a private concierge team, spacious lounge with daily breakfast, evening canapes, a full-service bar, plus snacks and

beverages throughout the day.

The Crown Suite now features a second bedroom and an upgraded master bedroom, plus a spacious entertaining area, a dry bar, two modern bathrooms, and an intimate living room and fireplace.

Additionally, some of the one- and two-bedroom Signature Suites have been renovated to offer upgraded amenities, including an in-room dry bar.

### Sanctuary Cove Pier

**SOUTHEAST** Queensland's luxury destination, Sanctuary Cove, has launched its new \$3.5m Pier C development to cater to growing demand for superyacht berths, bringing the marina's berthing capabilities up to 39 in total.

Coinciding with the launch, former *Below Deck* TV Presenter Francesca Rubi has been named as the Sanctuary Cove Marina Ambassador.

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## Time to "get serious" Sydney

**INTERNATIONAL** visitors to Sydney are being let down by a distinct lack of visitor information services on arrival, according to Business Sydney Executive Director Paul Nicolaou.

Part of a plan to resolve the issue, Nicolaou argues, is to urgently reinstate a visitor information centre in the heart of The Rocks, as well as add a new location at Sydney Airport.

"It is good to see that the number of international visitors is increasing steadily but we need to get serious about the services we provide to visitors," he said.

"A full-service centre is needed in The Rocks, a mecca for international tourists including the city's cruise visitors arriving at the Overseas Passenger Terminal, with another located at Sydney Airport's international terminal.

"It is not a good picture currently with problems such as street signage pointing to a visitor information centre in The Rocks that no longer exists."

President of the Institute of Australian Tour Guides, Ann Lorenz, echoed Nicolaou's sentiment, stating her members are seeking to give visitors the

### Great NZ deals

**GREAT** Journeys New Zealand (GINZ) has announced an earlybird prize freeze on all newly released tour dates from Sep 2023 through Apr 2024.

For example, the offer can be applied to the 15-day Classic New Zealand Highlights Tour, which takes travellers on a breathtaking journey between Auckland and Queenstown.

Agents can also take advantage of a 15% discount on any Classic & Signature Tours departing Auckland on 10 and 29 Mar - ideal for clients looking for a last-minute New Zealand getaway.

Both offers are available until the end of Mar - for further information on the deals and tours, [CLICK HERE](#).

"best Aussie experience" on offer.

"Professional visitor services can help with smooth transitions from airports and seaports to city hotels, attractions and restaurants," she said.

Lorenz pointed to major visitor "black spots", specifically poor coach access to the Sydney Opera House, insufficient parking time outside city hotels, ineffective transport services and facilities at White Bay Cruise Terminal, as well as a need for allowance for visitor access to the Sydney Modern Art Gallery.

### Big Red partnership

**BIG** Red Group has appointed tourism brochure distributor, brochuresDM, as a Local Agent master distributor in Victoria.

The partnership will provide Big Red Group's 'Local Agent' platform with access to brochuresDM's 250+ brochure board locations in popular visitor sites throughout Victoria, including hotels, information centres and caravan parks.

This will enable travellers to easily book experiences through the hotel concierge, reception of tour desk at over 40 locations across the state.

### Agency selections

**TRAVEL** Texas has selected Sydney-based GTI Tourism as its public relations and marketing agency in the Australian and New Zealand markets.

GTI Tourism will oversee the destination management company's media relations, social media, consumer promotions, creative services and travel trade relations, with the aim of promoting Texas and its attractions to the ANZ region.

The appointment signals the US state's re-entry into the local market after marketing activity was paused in 2020 during Australia and New Zealand's international border closures.

## AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



**I REALLY** hope you have enjoyed hearing from the senior leaders at AFTA over the last couple of weeks.

This will continue

throughout the year, as Nina and Richard provide their takes on what is happening at AFTA and around the sector.

I am excited that we are now only two weeks away from the Women in Travel Summit, occurring in Sydney on 13 Mar.

Yesterday we released our speaker line up, providing additional details about the core purpose of the Summit and the creation of the inaugural *Travel Workforce Report*.

This report will capture what attendees and our panellists unpack at the summit and identify the areas where travel get it right, as well as the areas where we can all work together to drive improvement.

This will be a critical document that will help drive our advocacy and approach in Canberra and

around the country.

In another milestone for AFTA, we will be commencing public consultation on a new AFTA Constitution.

This project has been under way for over 12 months, as the AFTA board looked to learn from the COVID experience and to ensure our founding document is fit for purpose.

This is a new chapter for AFTA and our opportunity to set ourselves up for the future.

While change can be complex, I do ask that as many people as possible engage with this process.

This is a draft document, and we want to provide the Sector an opportunity to provide feedback.

We know everyone who is in the travel sector has an opinion on AFTA as an organisation, and many have been forthcoming with their feedback in the last 18 months.

These learnings have been incorporated into the proposed constitution, which most importantly, recognises all ATAS businesses.

You can read more about these proposed changes and I invite everyone to provide feedback and be part of the future of AFTA.

## Talking up Aussie trips in NZ



**TOURISM** Australia (TA) and the Signature Experiences Collective held an event recently to update New Zealand agents in Auckland.

TA said that it "was great to be able to share the stories behind each of Australia's collectives", with the marketing body thanking the participants for being such a warm and welcome audience.

The gathering engaged multiple organisations from Australia for

the update, including Wildlife Journeys, Cultural Attractions of Australia, Discover Aboriginal Experiences, Great Golf Courses of Australia, Great Fishing Adventures of Australia, Great Walks of Australia, Luxury Lodges of Australia, Ultimate Winery Experiences Australia.

**Pictured:** Aussie tourism brands providing reasons to Kiwi agents to sell holidays to Australia.

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## Showing pride in the sky



**MORE** than 1,000 people joined Virgin Australia's Pride Flight services last Fri ahead of Sydney WorldPride 2023 - one of the world's largest LGBTQIA+ events.

The airline launched its maiden Pride Flight services from Brisbane and Melbourne, and the first-ever Pride Flight from San Francisco, operated by United Airlines in partnership with Virgin Australia.

The flights consisted entirely of Virgin Australia LGBTQIA+ pilots, crew and allies, as well as an array of special guests, including famous TV personalities and drag performers.

"Pride Flight is going from strength to strength and it's so important that as a leader in diversity and inclusion, we all continue to spread pride in the communities in which we live, work and fly," Virgin Australia Group CEO Jayne Hrdlicka said.

The Aussie carrier donated \$30 from the sale of each ticket the Minus18 LGBTQIA+ youth charity, while United Airlines will donate US\$25,000 to The Trevor Foundation.

**MEANWHILE** over the pond, the VisitBritain team celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Sydney

Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras on Sat by participating in the British High Commission float.

The float entry featured 60 staff, family and friends from Australia, including the High Commission in Canberra, British Consulate Generals in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane and the British Council, who performed a choreographed dance.

The float (**pictured below**) coincided with the relaunch of the UK's new international campaign 'GREAT Love' at Sydney WorldPride 2023, showcasing "the warm welcome of a modern UK through LGBTQIA+ storytellers".

### COMMERCIAL MANAGER - ANZ

VisitBritain ANZ is seeking a Sydney based full time Commercial Manager who understands the tourism industry and Australia travel distribution landscape to drive growth in incremental visitation and visitor spend to Great Britain.

For an information pack and to apply for the role, please contact [luke.skarbek@visitbritain.org](mailto:luke.skarbek@visitbritain.org)



## Vietnam signs landmark Autograph

**AUTOGRAPH** Collection is reaching new heights in Vietnam with Vinpearl Landmark 81, Autograph Collection.

Situated on the upper floors of Vietnam's highest skyscraper, Landmark 81, the hotel has become the inaugural Autograph Collection location in the country.

Situated on the west bank of the Saigon River, the hotel spans the 47th to 71st floors of the building.

## Club Med stoked

**SURFING** NSW has partnered with Club Med, with the collaboration to see "exciting opportunities" for Surfing NSW members, as well as Club Med activations at select competitions, including the Grommet State Titles and the Tradies Surfmasters.

Surfing NSW Chief Executive Officer Luke Madden provided an on-brand description of "stoked", at his organisation's partnership with Club Med.

## ACCOMMODATION

**WELCOME** to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to [accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au).



Opening this month, **Dorsett Melbourne** is set to revolutionise stays in Melbourne. Situated on 615 Little Lonsdale Street at the southern end of the CBD, the urban retreat offers 316 guest rooms over eight levels featuring an indoor heated pool with

day-bed area, spa, sauna, steam room, wellness room, and a gymnasium with Techno-Gym equipment. Guests can also enjoy a range of hospitality at the All Day Dining, Jin Bar, and the Lobby Lounge.



**Laneways by Ovolo** has collaborated with interior designer Neale Whitaker for its eponymous Neale Whitaker Suite. Formerly known as suite 303, Whitaker has stamped his style on his favourite room in the hotel, working alongside Australian interior

design studio Luchetti Krelle. Whitaker has added to their 80s, Memphis-inspired decor by incorporating some of his favourite pieces, a collection of original art, limited-edition objects, and soft furnishings.



**Regent Hong Kong** is set to reopen in Jun with the re-imagined effort by Chi Wing Lo. The harbourview hotel is comprised of 497 rooms, inclusive of 85 suites. The relaxing tone is exhibited by the reflections of the waterfront on the mirrored sliding doors adjacent to the vast window which gazes

through the famous Victorian Harbour. There are also various dining destinations on offer such as The Steak House, Harbourside, and Lobby Lounge available for guests.

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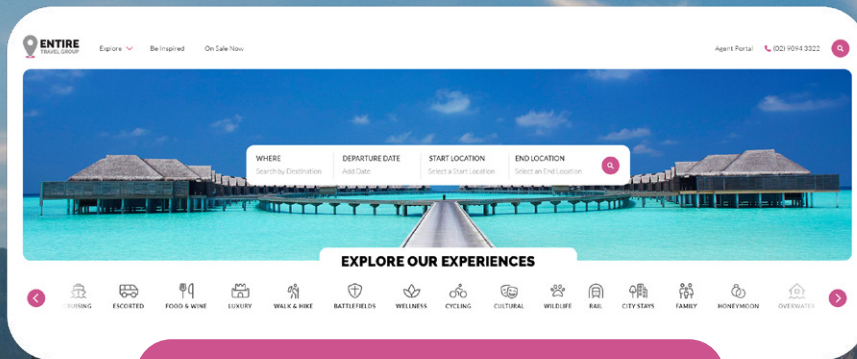


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