

## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news and a full page from Viking.

## Crystal to honour deposits, comm

A&K Travel Group, the new owners of the Crystal Cruises brand and its two ocean-going ships, have announced an "Exceptional Initiative" for guests who lost deposits and travel agents who lost commissions in the Genting Hong Kong collapse.

Eligible former guests who hold a verified claim in the Crystal Cruises LLC insolvency case will be able to apply for a credit to use towards future *Crystal Serenity* or *Crystal Symphony* voyages, which will both return to sailing later this year after a significant makeover.

Existing deposits will go towards five future bookings - for more information see today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

## Independent key for FCTG

THE stellar performance of Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) Independent has seen it grow to now be the company's fourth largest division, according to Head of Leisure, James Kavanagh.

Speaking to delegates at the FCTG Independent conference in Singapore on Sat, Kavanagh highlighted the evolution of the group from a heavily bricks-and-mortar store and employee-based leisure business to a "thriving multi-channel business with a diverse range of highly scalable, complementary, independent and luxury offerings".

Combined, the FCTG Luxury and Independent operation headed up globally by Dani Galloway is now contributing close to 40% of leisure sales, with the independent component already at almost 15% "and by 2025 we expect that to be a lot bigger," Kavanagh predicted.

"We will continue to invest in

the future of this segment for you, and for our industry more broadly," he told the attendees.

"In the last year, we've invested over 67% more in our cost base than the previous year - so while others may have pulled back in this space, we've continued to invest and we'll continue to do this," Kavanagh added.

The growth includes a burgeoning global structure with dedicated experts focusing on technology, product and more.

"We're not just investing in Australia - this is a global strategy where we're in multiple countries around the world, where a group capability will be available for all."

Kavanagh highlighted the acquisition of TP Connects which is "really challenging the future of air distribution" as well as other platform enhancements and investments in privacy, sustainability and security.

More from FCTG on p5 and p6.

## Saudi relaxation

THE Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade has lowered the travel advice level for Australians visiting Saudi Arabia.

An updated Smartraveller bulletin details the revision from "Reconsider your need to travel" to the updated level which is "Exercise a high degree of caution due to threat of terrorism and missile and drone attacks".

Higher warning levels apply in some areas of the country.

## Offloaded ep is up

THE latest edition of Richard Taylor and Ann-Catherine Jones' *Offloaded* podcast is now live, featuring an in-depth discussion with Platinum Travel Group CEO Andy Buerckner about his experience during the pandemic and rebuilding the business from a blank canvas.

Available on all podcast platforms, it's also online at [podcast.travelcommunityhub.com](http://podcast.travelcommunityhub.com).

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## Window Seat

IT'S official - peanut butter is definitely a liquid, meaning large containers cannot be brought onto planes.

The US Transportation Security Administration has made a formal declaration on social media, formally stating that in carry-on, only peanut butter containers holding up to 100ml are acceptable.

"You may not be nuts about it, but TSA considers your PB a liquid," according to a post on Twitter which highlighted the agency's definition of liquids as "something with no definite shape that takes the shape of its container".

The same issue apparently applies to cheese dip, salsa and other spreads, with the rules having massive impacts on carry-on snacking.

## Scalpers hit with \$2,000 fines

THE WA Government has imposed instant \$2,000 penalties on five individuals who are the first to face action under the state's new ticket scalping laws.

Infringement notices have been issued in relation to the recent UFC 284 event in Perth, with further cases still under investigation.

Officials cited ticket markups of up to 430% of the original price - exceeding the 10% threshold allowed under the legislation.

The fines were issued to scalpers located in WA, NSW and Qld, with the Government citing one case where a Western Australian woman was selling tickets with an original price of \$1,073 for a whopping \$4,800 via an online marketplace.

The new laws were introduced in Sep 2021 but until now only warnings have been issued as part of a transition period.

## New BNE medical base

BRISBANE Airport will shortly call tenders for the establishment of a new Aeromedical Base, after a green light for the project from the Federal Government.

The \$72 million hub will connect Queenslanders to major hospitals and life-saving medical treatment, offering a dedicated patient transfer facility and a short stay bay, including 12 patient beds allowing for overnight stays prior to transfer.

Featuring state-of-the-art hangars for aeroplanes, helicopters, administration and a medical base for regional patients and donor transfers, the new medical gateway is expected to assist around 5,000 Queensland patients every year.

"Brisbane Airport plays an essential role in the 24/7 connection of Queensland to urgent medical care," BAC Executive General Manager of Commercial, Martin Ryan, said.

"The Aeromedical Base will bring all providers together into one innovative world-class hub, with a transfer facility providing patients on the move with the very best clinical care possible."

The 14,470m<sup>2</sup> facility will be positioned between Brisbane Airport's two runways to provide fast access for the Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS), LifeFlight and Queensland Health, with construction expected to finish in 2024.

## JAL orders 737s

JAPAN Airlines (JAL) has announced an order for 21 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft, as part of a narrowbody fleet renewal plan.

Scheduled for delivery from 2026, the new planes will reduce carbon emissions by 15% compared to the current 737-800 operation, with increased range and operational flexibility.



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## Qantas resumes MEL-HND

**THE** Flying Kangaroo has taken off again between Melbourne and Tokyo, with Qantas Airways yesterday resuming direct flights between the two cities for the first time in more than three years.

The new service is the first non-stop flight between Melbourne and Haneda Airport by any airline, saving passengers nearly two hours of travel to downtown Tokyo when compared with Narita International, which the flight operated to before the pandemic.

The year-round service will operate four days per week with an Airbus A330, and add to QF's existing flights from Sydney and Brisbane to Tokyo.

Qantas Group's Jetstar Airways also flies from the Gold Coast and Cairns to Tokyo, and from Cairns to Osaka.

Together, these flights offer customers more than 420,000

seats between Australia and Japan annually.

Qantas Domestic & International Chief Executive Officer Andrew David said the flights will support the resurgence of tourism and trade links between Australia and Japan, which have been growing rapidly since borders reopened.

"We've seen the demand for our Tokyo flights bounce back very strongly, and our research shows that it is one of the top tourist destinations that Australians plan on visiting in the next 12 months," he said.

"Our customers in Victoria have been looking forward to the return of this route, with the flights launching in time for travellers to enjoy the cherry blossom season in Japan.

"Corporate travellers can also now save time on their airport commute by flying into or out of Haneda."

## A Bonza milestone

**BONZA** has reached its 100,000 app bookings milestone, as the airline launches its Sunshine Coast to Cairns route.

The carrier has now sold six figures worth of seats since going on sale in late Jan (**TD 27 Jan**).

The milestone comes as Bonza launches its new route from Sunshine Coast to Cairns today, one of six new services to be set in motion this week, with the airline's Melbourne base to also be ushered in on Thu.

The Sunshine Coast to Cairns flights operate five times per week, while on Wed, Bonza will introduce two flights per week between Cairns and Mackay, and on Fri, a twice weekly service between Cairns and Rockhampton will kick off.

Newcastle will also join Bonza's network this week, Chief Executive Tim Jordan revealed, as he travelled with customers on the inaugural MCY-CNS flight.

## Tassie ad agency

**TOURISM** Tasmania has announced the appointment of Red Havas as its global communications agency.

Led by an Australian-based team, Red Havas will be responsible for the delivery of the global PR strategy and coordination across key markets.

Working closely with Tourism Tasmania, Red Havas is charged with driving visitation by encouraging international markets to experience the freedom, excitement, and unique curiosity of the state by building awareness of its brand.

## New ANA biz fares

**ALL** Nippon Airways (ANA) has released an updated fare sheet which details the introduction of new 'P' business class advance purchase fares.

The cheaper tickets are available as either non-refundable, or refundable with a fee

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## Minor into China

**MINOR** Hotels has announced the mainland China debut of its Oaks Hotels & Resorts brand, with the opening of the new Oaks Chengdu at Cultural Heritage Park.

It's part of a complex featuring a Minor Tivoli hotel, offering a combined 398 rooms ranging from deluxe rooms through to suites and serviced apartments located close to a range of attractions including the Giant Panda Breeding Research Base, traditional tea houses, and more.

## EK plane training

**EMIRATES** has announced the expansion of the fleet at its Emirates Flight Training Academy, with the addition of three new twin-engine DA42-VI aircraft.

Provided by Austrian manufacturer Diamond Aircraft Industries, the growth also includes a new flight simulator, with the DA42-VI being the latest version of Diamond's light piston plane which is the first certified general aviation aircraft to offer a modern technology airframe, avionics and power plants.

At list prices the overall deal is worth €4 million, with VP of the Academy, Captain Abdulla Al Hammadi, saying the new fleet will help cadets gain more flying experience while progressing from single engine to jet aircraft.

## Indonesia update

**THE** Smartraveller advice for Indonesia has been reviewed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and no longer advises "reconsider your need to travel" to the Poso Regency area of Central Sulawesi.

The overall level of advice for Indonesia is still "exercise a high degree of caution".

## AAT Kings returns

**AAT** Kings has announced the return of three former staffers to the business "further down their career path" after they had all pursued other endeavours in recent years.

The appointments include Jody Grossfeldt as GM of Operations & Experiences; Ben Allen as AAT Kings Group Sales Manager ITO/OTA; and John Gornall as the NT General Manager for the brand.

## AFTA Board meets in Melbourne



**AUSTRALIAN** Federation of Travel Agents Directors got together in Melbourne last week for their final Board Meeting of the organisation's financial year, which runs from 01 Apr-31 Mar.

The gathering included discussions on the AFTA Constitution update, as well as ongoing advocacy on behalf of the entire travel sector.

A strong improvement in AFTA's financial position was noted, as a result of continued membership renewals as well as the addition of new businesses to the ranks.

CEO Dean Long also reported "overwhelming positive feedback" in relation to the proposed constitutional changes, in particular the new voting structures and objectives.

"This important project will be completed over the next month, with a full vote of the members to occur as part of this year's Annual General Meeting," he said.

Also on the agenda was discussions of the Australian Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) Complaint Management system, which saw a total of 227 complaints lodged between 01 Dec 2022 and 28 Feb this year.

About two-thirds of those

related to refunds, with the majority referred back to the businesses involved because complainants had failed to formally raise their issues.

Long also briefed the Board on key insights and next steps resulting from the recent Women in Travel Summit in Sydney (**TD** 13 Mar), which will form the basis of AFTA's inaugural white paper on the travel workforce.

The recent appointment of the seven National Travel Industry Awards (NTIA) Custodians was also discussed, along with the ongoing preparations for NTIA in Melbourne on 18 Nov.

The AFTA AGM is scheduled to take place on 21 Jun in Sydney.

**Pictured** around the board table are, from left: Shelley Beasley, Webjet; David Smith, Flight Centre; Christian Hunter, Travellers Choice; David Greenland, Reed & Mackay; Laura Ruffles, Corporate Travel Management; Dennis Alysandratos, Consolidated Travel; AFTA CEO Dean Long; Tom Manwaring, Express Travel Group; and Helloworld's Cinzia Burnes, with Graham Turner from Flight Centre and MTA Travel's Roy Merricks joining virtually.

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## Singapore smiles for FCTG



ONE of the social events during last weekend's FCTG Independent conference in Singapore took place at Empress, a stylish venue adjacent to the Lion City's Ancient Civilisations museum.

Street food snacks, flowing drinks and conviviality set the scene for the conference which as well as welcoming travel agents from across Australia, also saw the attendance of the fast-growing FCTG Independent global leadership team.

That included regional heads: Anita Emilio, earlier this month

### EK returns to CHC

EMIRATES today recommenced its operations between Sydney and Christchurch, as an extension of its third daily Dubai-Sydney EK412/413 A380 service.

The carrier noted it's the only airline to offer an A380 trans-Tasman experience including the First Class Onboard Shower Spa.

EK has also today reintroduced services from Melbourne to Singapore as EK404/405 with onward connections to Dubai.

Emirates Divisional VP Australasia, Barry Brown, said "we take tremendous pride in offering Australians better travel options, so are pleased that today we are returning to two in-demand destinations".

named GVP and GM for Flight Centre Travel Group Independent and Luxury division in Canada; Christina Pedroni from the USA; Chantal Gouws from South Africa; and Jason Buckley, GM Independent Models for NZ.

A large Aussie contingent also included recently appointed divisional GM Nick Queale, Director of Global Operations Astrid Richardson and many more.

**Pictured** on opening night: Allie Sparr, Global Head of Brand & Marketing; Roland Kautzky, Travel Associates @ Home; Chantal Gouws, GM Independent Brands FCTG South Africa; Danielle Galloway, FCTG Global MD Luxury & Independent Brands; and Sue Graham, FCTG Global Head of Product - Independent.

### Linkd wins NY state

NEW York State Tourism today announced the appointment of Linkd Tourism as its new representation agency for Australia and New Zealand.

The contract covers travel trade sales, marketing and public relations, aiming to encourage Aussie and Kiwi travellers to spend more time exploring the state's 11 travel regions.

The Australia/NZ account for New York State was previously held by GTI Tourism.

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## Tech empowerment focus

WENDIE Lee, recently appointed as Flight Centre Travel Group Independent & Luxury's Chief Product Officer, laid out a clear vision for the group's technology pathway at last weekend's FCTG Independent conference in Singapore.

"My goal is to deliver tools that you like to use, that are easy to add to your toolkit, that are simple to learn so you can increase productivity and business performance, and of course deliver amazing experiences for your customers," she told conference delegates.

Lee was Chief Information Officer Leisure for FCTG prior to the pandemic, but over the last few years shifted to a role in financial services and is clearly glad to be back in travel.

"I really believe in the vision of Independent, and I can see the shift more and more to [members] as a successful business model," she said.

"Our mission is to empower

the best agents by delivering comprehensive, market-leading product offerings...we are deeply committed to providing you with the tools you need to be the most productive, successful agency you can," Lee added.

One of the recent tools to roll out to the group is Home, a single sign-on portal offering one-click access to a host of suppliers which has now been adopted by over 1,000 users globally.

Community is also key, with the vision to have agents support each other and continue to add additional options.

"We also recognise that as entrepreneurs, you might have also tools that aren't ours that you use, or that complement the ones we have, which is very cool.

"I understand that it's about using the right tool at the right time in your business... we're building an ecosystem of connected systems with the goal of making it easy to find your way through it," Lee added.

The TP Connects platform also forms part of the roadmap for FCTG Independent, with members set to gain access to additional content via the NDC-enabled system which will ultimately roll out right across the Flight Centre business.

### Interislander sailing

ALL passengers booked to sail during the Easter period will be able to cross the Cook Strait between New Zealand's North and South Islands, despite the recent gearbox issue with *Kaitaki*, one of the Interislander ferries.

Interislander has contacted around 8,200 impacted pax in recent days, with increased sailings on other ferries and other measures taken to reduce disruption.

### QR Vanuatu tick

QATAR Airways is now permitted to code share on Virgin Australia services to Vanuatu, under a revised determination issued today by the International Air Services Commission.

The update also removes conditions that previously allowed the capacity to be used by Etihad Airways and Tiger.

### SIA goes 24 hours

SINGAPORE Airlines' Sales Operation Hotline has today been extended to operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Under the change, phone support will now be provided outside standard operating hours (8.30am-5pm local time) on 1300 507 656 for bookings departing within three calendar days with matters that travel agents are unable to self-service such as rebooking/reissuance due to medical/compassionate reasons, extension of TTLs, name corrections, cancellation of group seats and inability to reissue NDC tickets due to system limitations.

# FCTG Independent taking off

Monday 27th Mar 2023



**LAST** weekend's Flight Centre Travel Group Independent conference in Singapore saw delegates informed, updated, educated and entertained over three days at the Parkroyal on Beach Road hotel.

The gala dinner took place at the Hotel Fort Canning, complete with awards and a fabulous musical quiz courtesy of entertainers Song Division.

Lots more pics online at [facebook.com/traveldaily](https://facebook.com/traveldaily).



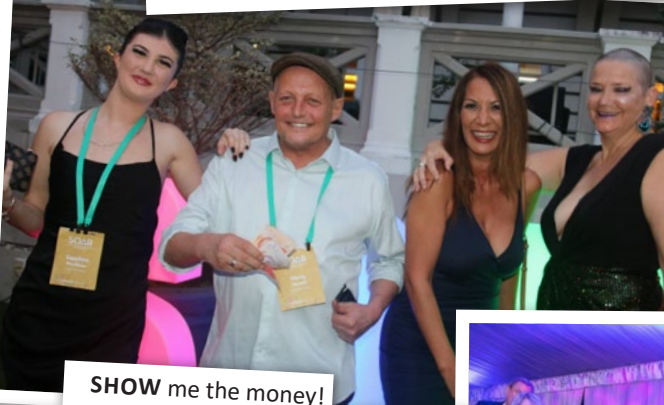
**NICK** Sutherland and Ross Fastuca from Locomote with Danielle Galloway, Flight Centre Travel Group Global Head of Premium and Independent Brands.



**TRAVEL** Central's Nongnuch and Rodney Pattison.



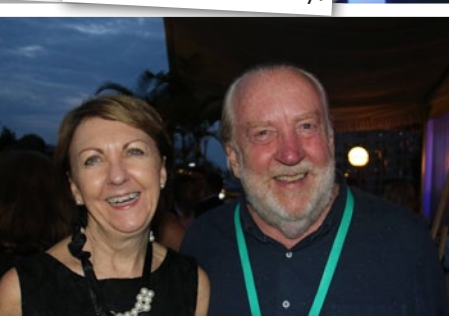
**TOMAS** Malmberg, TTC Tour Brands with Link Travel Group GM Scott Darlow.



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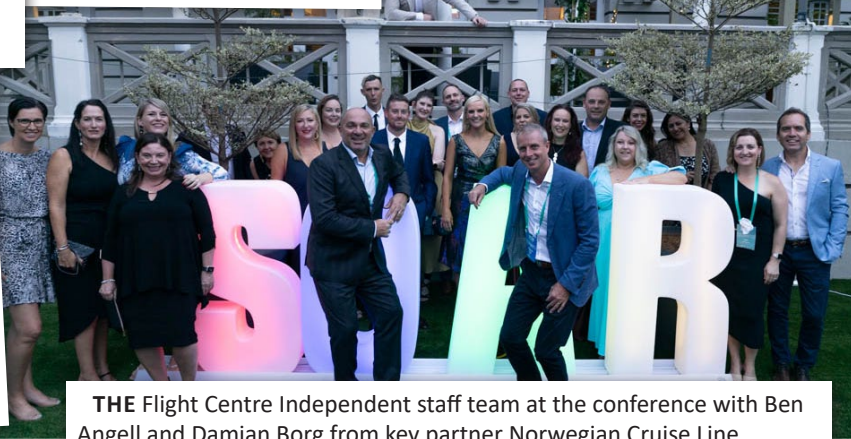
**JANIS** McDonald from Air Canada with Angus Mackay from P&O Cruises.



**GLOBAL** product chief Sue Graham with Stu Udy from Expedia TAAP.



**THE** hotly contested gala dinner air guitar competition.



**THE** Flight Centre Independent staff team at the conference with Ben Angell and Damian Borg from key partner Norwegian Cruise Line.

### BROCHURES

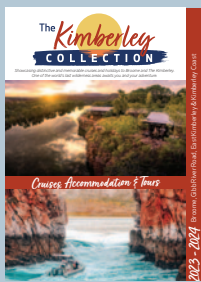
THIS week's Brochures of the Week is brought to you by **BKB Holidays**. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to [brochures@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:brochures@traveldaily.com.au).



**BKB Holidays - Bali & Singapore 2023/24**  
BKB Holidays has launched its new 2023/24 brochure featuring a variety of popular hotels, resorts and tours in Bali and Singapore. The much anticipated brochure is a major milestone, being the inaugural edition for both destinations, which were added to the BKB Holidays product range last year. Some of the locations showcased in the brochure include Quincy Hotel Singapore, Oasia Resort Sentosa, Alaya Resort Ubud, and more.



**Murray River Paddlesteamers - PS Emmylou 24/25**  
Murray River Paddlesteamers has released a new brochure with exciting shore experiences and savings onboard the deluxe, 16-guest riverboat *PS Emmylou* for the 2024/25 season. Guest can choose between three-, four-, and seven-night cruises traversing between Echuca and Torrumbury Weir on the Murray River between Apr 2024 and Mar 2025. Book before 31 Jul 2023 to score 10% off with savings worth up to \$1,008 per couple.



**The Kimberley Collection - 2023/24**  
The Kimberley Collection and The Territory Collection have added new packages to inspire travellers to visit the region. The new brochure depicts the most inspiring itineraries for the upcoming travel season, including a seven-night self-drive package covering the West Kimberley region and the Darwin Escape package, which visits popular destinations such as Kakadu and Litchfield, and the Kununurra Highlight package.



**ANZRO - Warm Up in Australia**  
ANZCRO has released a new e-brochure encouraging travellers to discover some of Queensland's best-kept secrets, showcasing 11 fully customisable holiday packages. The Warm Up In Australia Tropical Holiday Collection features destinations ranging from Heron Island in the Southern Great Barrier Reef, to Thala Nature Reserve, a deluxe eco-resort located on a private headland between Cairns and Port Douglas, the iconic Nudey Beach, and many more.



A SMALL group of Travel Associates enjoyed a getaway to Bali's Central Highlands earlier this month.

The agents were the first from Australia to experience Buahan, a Banyan Tree Escape, a unique 'no walls, no doors' resort that opened in Jun 2022, which offers panoramic views of rugged mountain peaks, the Ayung River and the rainforest.

During their time at the resort, the group were treated to spa treatments, daily yoga, a trek to the resort's private waterfall and cocktails made using locally grown, natural ingredients.

Highlights of the famil included

a visit to a Hindu temple in open top vintage 1970s VW jeeps, meeting the locals of the Buahan Kaja Village and an open-air gourmet camp-side lunch of local Balinese dishes.

**Pictured** in traditional Balinese dress: Belinda Moore, Travel Associates Cottesloe; Melissa Madigan, Travel Associates Paddington; Victoria Hobbs, Banyan Tree; Paul Egan, Egan & Turner Travel Associates Edge Hill; and Jess Sonter, Travel Associates Marketing Brisbane.

### Rediscover Tokyo

**TOKYO** Tourism is inviting agents across Australia and New Zealand to tune in to a 30-minute live Tokyo update tomorrow.

There are two session times available (8.30am or 12pm AEDT), with three prizes up for grabs valued at a total of \$1,000 - **CLICK HERE** to register for the 'Rediscover Tokyo' webinar.

### LHR strike action

**SECURITY** officers at London Heathrow Airport Terminal 5 are planning to take industrial action over the upcoming Easter holiday period due to pay demands.

Airport officials have assured travellers that contingency plans are in place which will "keep the airport open and operational".

### EY global sale

**ETIHAD** Airways has launched a global sale, which is live until Fri.

Travellers can fly between 01 May and 15 Jun to select Etihad destinations, including Mumbai, Beirut, Amsterdam, and more.

Fares start at \$1,179 in Economy and \$7,949 in Business.

With the relaunch of Etihad Stopovers, travellers can also choose to explore Abu Dhabi on their way to their final destination, and benefit from 40% discounted prices at premium four-star and five-star hotels, or from a one or two-nights complimentary stay - **CLICK HERE** to find out more.



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\*When booking airfares through Viking standard airline deposits and non-refundable conditions apply. Deposits are refundable in the form of a future cruise voucher up until 120 days before departure or final payment. After final payment has been made standard cancellation fees apply.