

## Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including our **Luxury** feature page.

## Taking off for Bali

**VIRGIN** Australia (VA) has launched flights between Gold Coast and Bali for the first time, with the service to operate daily during holiday periods and four times a week year-round.

To celebrate the new service, first revealed in Jun last year (TD 14 Jun 2022), VA has a sale on return fares, which are priced as low as \$419 until midnight 03 Apr.

**MEANWHILE**, Air New Zealand has resumed direct services to Bali, with the seasonal service to run thrice weekly from now until 27 Oct, increasing to five-times weekly over the winter holiday period between 26 Jun-30 Jul.

## Australia top Qatar market

**AUSTRALIAN** travellers now comprise almost the largest market for the Discover Qatar stopover program (TD 24 Mar 2022), after concerted efforts to educate the travel trade on the activities and accommodation on offer under the scheme.

Discover Qatar, Visit Qatar and Qatar Airways hosted key industry partners at an event in Sydney earlier this week, with Steve Reynolds, Discover Qatar Senior Vice President, telling TD the support of the Australian travel trade had been significant.

The recent football World Cup had also played a role, with Reynolds saying "people are a lot more comfortable with the destination".

"We've seen Australia grow from basically zero traffic from

a stopover perspective to go to almost the number one country for the stopovers in the program globally," he said.

Richard Styles, who represents Visit Qatar in Australia, added to the enthusiasm, noting that "every month the number has almost doubled...it's been a really good collaboration between Qatar Tourism, Qatar Airways and Discover Qatar".

Qatar Airways Country Manager Justin Kestel said capacity was set to expand, with the carrier returning its A350 fleet to service from next month - which will in turn add additional frequencies across the network.

"That's when our double dailies and triple dailies from Doha start, which then really ties into that 48 hour or 36-hour stopover option."

Qatar will also have a strong presence in Melbourne this week during the Formula 1 Grand Prix, with a number of activations associated with the organisations' global sponsorship of the F1, which is overseen by Reynolds.

The Discover Qatar stopover program offers four-star packages from just \$19 - [discoverqatar.qa](https://discoverqatar.qa).

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## Window Seat

**DESTINATION** marketers seeking a new angle should look to the example of Argentina, which is apparently experiencing a boom in so-called "birth tourism".

However rather than welcoming the influx, it's understood that immigration authorities are cracking down on the trend, which has seen over 10,000 pregnant Russian women travelling to Buenos Aires to have their babies.

An investigation has been launched into what officials describe as "a lucrative business that promises Argentinian passports for the Russian parents".

Russian citizens don't require visas to enter Argentina, with the trend booming since the onset of the Ukrainian war.

## Luxe sees rise of the physical

**LUXURY** travellers are seeking a greater sense of physical connection on trips in a bid to compensate for an increasingly alienating digital world, a new report published by Luxury Gold has suggested.

"We used to boast about the places we've been to and different country stamps in our passports, now it's all digital and people are looking for new, physical ways to connect with their holiday memories," Luxury Gold MD Toni Ambler said.

"It's no surprise that we're seeking more and more of the physical, so we can feel passport moments again."

For Gen Z travellers embarking on luxury trips, the report suggested adventures are now less about experience-driven priorities and more about taking items home as a status symbol, with "on-stay merching" now gaining traction.

Meanwhile, tours are tipped to be in stronger demand over the next year as luxury travellers crave more human interaction and expert advice.

"People are looking for human service for humans and by humans, who understand unique needs more than a bot or an algorithm ever could," the report noted, adding that travel agents will also be in greater demand as personalised trips become even more popular.

Luxury hotels are also injecting greater investment in onsite cocktail bars in order to make them experiences unto themselves, catering to a growing trend for guests seeking "hedonistic desires", taking the form of on-premise nightclubs.

The report cited Pinterest polling, which showed "rave-related" searches have skyrocketed - more luxury travel news on **page four**.

## Resilient Lady in Oz

**VIRGIN** Voyages looks likely to deploy its *Resilient Lady* vessel for a follow-up Australian season in 2024/25, with port schedules showing the ship is set to sail locally from 24 Dec through to 25 Apr.

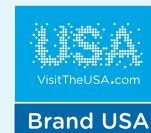
*Resilient* will make her way Down Under for her first season over the upcoming 2023/24 summer - more info in **CW**.

## VietJet promo tix

**VIETJET** has launched two million promotional tickets starting from \$200 to all routes across Vietnam and Australia, and throughout the Asia Pacific, available until 04 Apr.

The carrier also announced a 50% discount on SkyBoss/SkyBoss Business tickets, which start from \$1,020, until 05 May.

Both offers apply for travel until 12 Dec, for bookings made via the VietJet website **HERE** or via the mobile app.



## The Brand USA MegaFam is BACK!

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## Aussies hitting the road

**THE** number of caravan and camping trips taken last year in Australia have now overtaken 2019 levels, according to a new report compiled by the Caravan Industry Association of Australia.

The industry recorded 15.1 million trips and 60.1 million visitor nights in 2022 - the first time it has surpassed 15 million trips and 60 million nights.

The Caravan Industry Association of Australia CEO, Stuart Lamont, believes these figures "not only reflect Australians' enduring passion for caravanning, but also demonstrates the industry's collaborative efforts in providing diverse products and services".

The positive trend has emerged despite a "challenging operating environment" throughout 2022, including inflationary pressures, labour shortages, and supply chain disruptions, which led to increased average selling prices.

According to the association's *Business Conditions Report*, the industry's six-month outlook is promising, with rising cost of living resulting in reduced

household spending, spurring Aussies to explore their own backyard instead of forking out for an overseas holiday.

"Current economic conditions are acting as protective factors for the industry with tightening household spending limiting international travel, a trend that is expected to see domestic travel remain strong," Lamont said.

The caravan & camping industry is braced for further uncertainty however, with Lamont citing increased competition from short-haul international markets and cruise holidays.

### TA MD update

**TOURISM** Australia MD Phillipa Harrison will update the industry during a webinar update on 31 Mar, where she will be also be joined by Michael Londregan from Virtuoso Travel, Vacayit's Lisa McEwan and Nicole Mitchell, TA's Executive Officer Discover Aboriginal Experiences.

The session will take place at 11am (AEDT) - register [HERE](#).

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## A taste of Singapore with Nelly



**THE** Singapore Tourism Board last night offered a number of its trade partners 'A Taste of Singapore' at NEL restaurant in Sydney, as part of a tie-up with chef Nelly Robinson (**TD 21** Mar).

The culinary master was on hand to showcase and explain his innovative style to diners, and how he conceived his menu of reimagined Singaporean dishes through a recent trip to the destination.

The main course of Hainanese chicken rice was preceded by

tandoori cobia, laksa, and "cereal fish", all with their own twist.

To start, diners enjoyed a macadamia 'tau huay' bean curd, 'otak' fish cake, and Singapore chili crab, while dessert included bubble tea and an intricate 'Gardens by the Bay' arrangement.

Robinson is collaborating with the STB to promote Singapore's flourishing f&b scene through a multi-channel campaign.

**Pictured:** The Singapore Tourism Board team with Chef Robinson.

### Emporium appoints

**EMPORIUM** Hotel South Bank in Brisbane has appointed Morgan Benner to the role of Director of Sales and Marketing.

She brings with her 20 years of experience in the hospitality sector, including her most recent stint as Director of Sales - Groups with Accor Hotels.

"Morgan's strong interpersonal skills and relationships make her ideally suited to the role as Emporium Hotel South Bank positions itself as a leading privately owned Australian luxury boutique hotel in the lead up to the 2032 Olympic Games to be staged in the river city," Emporium Hotel South Bank GM Julie Manega said.

### Air NZ ups wages

**AIR** New Zealand has increased its entry wage to NZ\$30 per hour in a bid to entice around 400 new workers to join its Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch airport teams.

The carrier has also begun rolling out pay rises of between 9.5% and 26% to all its airport workers over a 13-month period.

Air NZ said it also provides its employees with opportunities to gain more skills and access further pay increases.

"We're looking to attract diverse, talented people who will not only help our business grow, but also have a deep desire to help us do what we do best," Chief People Officer Nikki Dines said.



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### Cap Karoso opens

**INDONESIA'S** newest luxury resort, Cap Karoso, has opened on the island of Sumba, welcoming its first guests late last week.

The property's Aussie representative, Craig Farrell, told *Travel Daily* it is a "modern day paradise", where guests can enjoy activities such as stand-up paddleboarding, kayaking and snorkelling in the unspoilt Karoso Lagoon.

The resort is accessible via a 50-minute transfer from Tambolaka Airport, and is within 20 minutes of local villages and unspoilt beaches.

### Porto on the run

**GUESTS** staying at the five-star Regent Porto Montenegro can now maintain their fitness regime in the privacy of their own room with a brand-new Fitness & Wellness package, costing €770 per person.

The (A\$1,246) package includes three nights in a Premium Room Sea View with use of Technogym exercise equipment, as well as two treatments at Regent Spa, including a muscle-soothing massage.

Guests will also enjoy daily breakfast and complimentary airport transfers.

## LUXURY KEY FOR FCTG DIVERSIFICATION

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group's Luxury and Independent Division is now the company's fastest growing operation, enabling it to access a previously untapped global \$840 billion market.

Speaking at the FCTG Independent conference in Singapore last Sat, the division's global chief Danielle Galloway (**pictured**) laid out the journey so far, including a 2018 report from consultants McKinsey & Company which found the average booking value in the premium segment was much higher than that of Flight Centre's traditional stores.

"The opportunity for FCTG became crystal clear," she noted, with post-pandemic performance also confirming a quicker than expected rebound in luxury.

"This sentiment was supported by land and air suppliers showing an increased level of interest in businesses that could execute



a well thought-out strategy to capture the segment," she said.

The overarching strategy has seen significant investment both in the Travel Associates brand as well as the wider Independent division, which is currently recruiting for a GM of its Luxury Independent Collection.

Key features of the Travel Associates offering include differentiated product which is "not googleable", along with product benefits that add value to the client experience.

There is strict discipline around products, with the brand only offering balcony & above cruise cabins, no entry-level rooms and five star & above accommodation.

Offerings are always curated for individual clients, and there's a strong focus on advisor-endorsed and strong selling destinations.

Luxury memberships are also key for Travel Associates, with Virtuoso complemented by various groups such as Belmond's Bellini club for some offices, Rocco Forte Knights, Jumeirah Passport to Luxury, IHG Luxury & Lifestyle, Accor STEP and more.

The project has created a "future-fit business," Galloway noted, with much higher values per file, 90% repeat clients, \$24k monthly average commission per consultant and Travel Associates achieving 100% of its financial performance with just 55% of its pre-pandemic staff.

### Club Med relaunches luxury yacht *Club Med 2*

**CLUB** Med is setting sail with its revamped luxury yacht, unveiling its renovated *Club Med 2* alongside a collection of new itineraries.

The modernised, five-masted ship has been made public following its renovation by architectural firm Sophie Jacqmin, which has given *Club Med 2* a light, contemporary, and chic look.

The ship's 184 staterooms,

as well as her furniture, floors, fabrics, and fittings have all been renovated, as have her bars, Le Saint-Barth and Le Cannes, and her restaurant, Le Monte Carlo.

*Club Med 2* will offer trips to destinations including the Grenadines, St. Barts, the Virgin Islands, Campania, Sicily, Occitania, and the French Riviera, with an agent incentive also available - more in **CW**.

### Orange juices luxury

**BASALT** has opened in the NSW regional destination of Orange, offering guests the choice of three luxury studio suites with panoramic views.

The self-serviced studios feature a king-sized bed, large concrete bathtub, kitchenette with complimentary mini-bar, continental breakfasts, local art, thoughtful amenities, and an in-room iPad loaded with a range of local guides.

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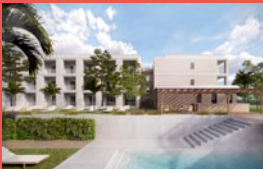


## ACCOMMODATION

**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).



**The Georgian**, an oceanfront hotel is set to welcome guests again on 03 Apr after a refurb. The resort in Santa Monica offers 84 rebranded guest rooms, all sprinkled with the hotel's Art Deco heritage. The resort also boasts Gallery, an art display showcasing contemporary artworks as well as hosting exhibitions from historical and cultural institutions. The resort also features a 24-hour gym, private dining space, a library and an onsite restaurant.



**Anantara Vilamoura Algarve Resort** in Portugal has unveiled a series of luxurious renovations and new concepts, which include 30 new Swim Up Family rooms & suites adjacent to a 30-metre-length pool. Alternatively for adults, 20 new Signature

Suites have been added, each overlooking the golf range or the pool, as well as 80m<sup>2</sup> of luxurious living space with perks such as a butler service, complimentary mini bar, VIP spaces, and more.



A multi-million dollar transformation in the **Swissotel Sydney** has seen the unveiling of Arches, the grand lobby bar, and a new pool deck inspired by the European summers to suit the city's climate. The Arches brings an-old-school charm and boast an 8m-long

Calacatta marble bar. It also offers a variety of dining styles with menu designed by award-winning chef, John Giovanni Pugallio, as well as refreshing cocktails available by the poolside.

## A grape day for Bonza!



**YESTERDAY** was a great day to fly with Bonza, as Australia's newest carrier kickstarted its Sunshine Coast to Newcastle service, connecting travellers to the Hunter Valley region.

Lucky customers on the debut flight were treated to local produce and wine on arrival at Newcastle Airport, as local producers took over the terminal.

"We're raising a glass today to Bonza's first-ever flight into NSW, with customers going interstate to see loved ones and enjoy a well-earned break filled with art, culture, beaches, wine and food," Bonza CEO Tim Jordan, who joined

customers on the flight, said.

"This is our eighth route to launch and so far the feedback has been really positive."

The low-cost airline will offer four weekly flights between Newcastle and its home base on the Sunshine Coast.

Newcastle Airport CEO Peter Cock said this milestone flight marked the beginning of a new era in regional air travel.

"The introduction of this route has cut out the middle man," Sunshine Coast Airport CEO, Andrew Brodie, added.

## MSC Reef protection

A **NEW** partnership between the MSC Foundation and the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) will aim to conserve and restore threatened coral life.

Over a third of the *IUCN Red List of Threatened Species* face extinction, MSC stated, with the partnership aiming to initiate a thorough global assessment to identify the most threatened coral species and conduct actionable restoration plans.

## Disruption software

**SABRE** Corporation has signed a new agreement with Plan3 to improve circumstances for airlines impacted by disruption.

Plan3 will utilise the Passenger Service System through APIs and web services to identify irregular operations, enabling Sabre to deliver quick responses to disruptions for its air partners.

The Plan3 partnership aims to enhance customer satisfaction for carriers and maximise efficiencies and reduce costs.

## Euribia entertains

**GUESTS** sailing on board MSC Cruises' newest ship *MSC Euribia*, which is set to debut this Jun, will enjoy a new round-the-clock live entertainment offering.

The ship will offer a seven-day program of stage shows and the line's newest entertainment concept, Big Band at Sea, a 19-piece, in-house group of globally acclaimed musicians, while the Carousel Lounge venue will sport a brand-new layout.

## Rialto in fast lane

**THE** Australian Formula One Grand Prix is just around the corner and InterContinental Melbourne The Rialto is celebrating the occasion with an installation of its very own Insta-worthy Grand Prix race track in the hotel's foyer.

F1 fans can also savour a cocktail named the Black Flag in the hotel's Bluestone Wine Bar or enjoy a meal at the award-winning Alluvial Restaurant.

**CLICK HERE** for details and accommodation enquiries.