

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including our **Corporate Update** and a full page from **Tourism NT**.

Get to know the NT

BECOME an expert on the Northern Territory and go in the running to win a trip to the Red Centre by tuning into Tourism NT's upcoming webinar - see the **last page** for the details.

ACCC denies VA

VIRGIN Australia and Alliance Aviation Services have been denied re-authorization of their agreement to coordinate and jointly tender for and supply services to corporate customers, mainly for fly-in fly-out employees. The ACCC said, "the airlines have not demonstrated to us that there's sufficient public benefit to outweigh the likely detriment from their proposed coordination".

Link adds two members

EXCLUSIVE

LINK Travel Group has this morning confirmed the addition of Perth-based The Well Connected Traveller and Matt Coyle's The Melbourne Travel Project to its invitation-only ranks.

The expansion comes as Link celebrates exactly 12 months since its formation as a premium leisure and corporate travel-focused joint venture between Spencer Travel, Goldman Group and Flight Centre (**TD** 05 May 22).

Today's new members, who will both formally start with Link from 01 Jun, bring the group's total numbers to 12 including Reho Travel, Mosman Travel, Mobilise Travel, Platinum Travel Group and its Entourage Travel Group offshoot, Eden Corporate Travel and Travel Beyond Group.

Link GM Scott Darlow said the debut of the new organisation was a "watershed moment" for the Australian travel sector.

"Link has rightfully attracted much excitement amongst agents and suppliers alike," he said.

"By design, we have a unique selection of highly motivated, successful and growing agencies who are all committed to the success and future of our industry.

"We remain extremely appreciative of the interest and membership enquiries that come our way and by the relentless support we've received from the industry," Darlow added.

The Melbourne Travel Project and The Well Connected Traveller specialise in high-end luxury travel, and "will thrive by taking advantage of Link's extensive supply and innovative technology," he noted, adding "they have strong ambitions and are a perfect fit" for the group.

The Well Connected Traveller is headed by former Helloworld executive Zoran Panzich and business partner Jodie Land.

New Cunard chief

CARNIVAL UK President Sture Myrmell has announced the appointment of Katie McAlister as the new President of Cunard.

McAlister will join the iconic cruise brand in Aug this year, after two decades with European travel giant TUI where she is currently Chief Marketing Officer for the UK and Ireland.

Myrmell said McAlister's experience, strategic insight and expertise in digital transformation "will build on the current team's exceptional work to ensure that Cunard's brand and growth opportunities are maximised".

More cruise news in today's issue of **Cruise Weekly**.

Rosewood to Seoul

ROSEWOOD Hotel Group has been appointed to manage Rosewood Seoul, a newbuild ultra-luxury property situated beside Yongsan Park in the city centre set to open in 2027.

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Window Seat

AN UNFORTUNATE three-hour delay to a Delta Air Lines flight between Houston and Atlanta in the US this week has been blamed on bees.

Apparently wanting to hitch a ride, the insects briefly formed a colony on one of the Airbus A320's winglets.

A spokesperson for the carrier quipped that the bees "evidently wanted to talk shop with the winglet on one of our airplanes, no doubt to share the latest about flying conditions at the airport".

The stowaways were eventually dislodged when the aircraft pushed back, with the unfolding drama captured by waiting pax on social media.

The bees would have probably been better to buy a buzziness class ticket.

Fares on way down

AVERAGE fares to most international destinations peaked late last year, according to Flight Centre Chief Financial Officer Adam Campbell.

Speaking to investors earlier this week he said average fares still generally remain above pre-COVID levels but are starting to decline, apart from Europe.

Recent positive signs have seen some heavily reduced discount fares on offer, such as some Sydney-London prices available from below \$1,500.

Campbell noted that international air capacity is now tracking at 82% of prepandemic levels, adding that air contract structures for Flight Centre are also starting to normalise, with growth targets and tiers once again being factored into deals.

He said FCTG was proactively working with airline partners to offer the best content for customers regardless of GDS or NDC channel.

Gurney to leave oneworld

THE oneworld airline alliance overnight announced the pending departure of CEO Rob Gurney, saying he had "elected to leave the alliance's central management team".

Gurney joined oneworld six and a half years ago (*TD* 01 Sep 2016), prior to which his career included roles as Qantas Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates SVP Australasia and The Americas, and as CEO of Helloworld Travel Limited.

Akbar Al Baker, Qatar Airways CEO and the alliance's current Chairman, said "we are grateful to Rob for his leadership in navigating oneworld through the challenges of the past six years".

"Rob has played a critical role in establishing oneworld as the most preferred alliance by global travellers with a best-in-class travel experience," he said.

Gurney's tenure included the addition of Royal Air Maroc, Alaska Airlines and future

member Oman Air, as well as the launch of the oneworld Connect membership option which includes Fiji Airways.

Al Baker said Gurney had also championed oneworld's sustainability efforts, seeing member airlines commit to an alliance-wide 10% sustainable aviation fuel target by 2030.

Gurney will step down effective 01 Jul, with a search for a replacement to be led by American Airlines Chief Commercial Officer, Vasu Raja.

Thailand booze ban

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has reissued its Smartraveller advice for Thailand, noting two upcoming day-long bans on alcohol sales across the country due to general elections.

No alcohol will be sold for 24 hours from 6pm on 06 May, and again starting at 6pm on 14 May.



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Flight Centre update

FLIGHT Centre says the “renaissance of the travel agent continues”, with a presentation by CFO Adam Campbell this week noting a 280% increase in TTV for the nine months to 31 Mar.

Campbell said Mar turnover was actually above pre-COVID levels in Australia, “outpacing the recovery in outbound travel and in airline capacity”.

He said that about 40% of leisure TTV is now being captured via online, independent and luxury brands - double the pre-COVID proportion - with Travel Associates delivering strong net margins and strong top line growth in the group’s Independent division.

The integration of UK-based luxury agency Scott Dunn is progressing well, with the brand to establish an East Coast USA presence in the coming months by leveraging FLT’s existing office.

More from Flight Centre on page five of today’s **TD**.

Britain in global spotlight

THIS weekend’s Coronation of King Charles III is set to spark a royal rise in bookings, with VisitBritain’s research showing British history is driving inbound tourism.

Australian inbound arrivals in late Mar 2023 surpassed 2019 levels by 7% and early 2023 flight bookings from Australia to the UK are up 17%.

“We’ve got a fantastic opportunity to highlight our world-renowned attractions, our culture and heritage and the once-in-a-lifetime experiences that you can only have in Britain,” VisitBritain CEO Patricia Yates said.

Australia will play a key role in the celebrations, with Sam Kerr, the captain of women’s national soccer team the Matildas, to be the national flag-bearer leading Aussies into the formal ceremony on 06 May.

Visitors can see Kerr in action at Kingsmeadow Stadium or learn

about her football team, Chelsea FC, on a Stamford Bridge tour.

The Diamond Jubilee State Coach that will carry the King and the Queen Consort was built by an Australian in Sydney and will be on display at the Royal Mews.

Throughout 2023, exhibits include The Queen and her Corgis at The Wallace Collection (until 25 Jun) and Crown to Couture at Kensington Palace (05 Apr - 29 Oct).

A Crown Jewels light show will tour the UK from autumn.

VN adds MEL flights

VIETNAM Airlines will launch new direct flights between Melbourne and Hanoi twice a week from 15 Jun, providing an extra 65,000 seats per year on the route via its Airbus A350-900.

The new service brings the carrier’s total number of direct flights to Australia to 18 a week.

Royal opens 24/25

ROYAL Caribbean has opened bookings for its 2024-25 season of sailings from Australia (**TD** 20 Apr) with a range of offers including half-price deposits and up to \$400 in onboard credit for bookings confirmed by 10 May.

Traffic growth up

THE International Air Transport Association has reported strong demand growth in global aviation during Mar, with total traffic up more than 50% on the same period last year.

Globally traffic is now at 88% of Mar 2019 levels, with demand up 3.5% month-on-month.

The Asia-Pacific region comprised 22% of the total market, with an overall passenger load factor in Mar of 84.5%, a 162% capacity uplift and a whopping 283% year-on-year increase in traffic “continuing the robust momentum since the lifting of travel restrictions”.

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Travel Daily

Intrepid Foundation adds NGO partners

THE Intrepid Foundation, Intrepid Travel's not-for-profit entity, has announced 22 new non-governmental organisation (NGO) partners for the first quarter of 2023.

The additions bring the Foundation's total number of projects to 36, spanning every continent and covering issues including conservation & wildlife, gender equality, human rights, youth empowerment, and more.

Among the new partners are *Vun Art*, which provides job training and employment opportunities in Vietnam, and *Greening Australia*, which works to restore Australian ecosystems faced with complex environmental challenges.

During the first quarter of this year, the Foundation has already raised A\$308,000 for its recent Turkey and Syria Earthquake Appeal, which includes matched donations from Intrepid.

New Mekong cruise

HERITAGE Line's new vessel, *Heritage Line Anouvong*, is preparing to set sail on her maiden voyage on 27 Aug to the Upper Mekong River in Laos, the cruise line's newest destination.

Featuring 10 elegant cabins, the new vessel will offer three-, seven-, and nine-night itineraries in the Upper Mekong, with guests able to enjoy a range of activities on and off the ship, including alfresco culinary events, sunrise yoga, and a Laotian cooking class.

Scenic retail deal

THE Scenic Group has teamed up with Starboard Luxury, which is owned by LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, to launch custom shopping programs across its discovery and luxury yachts.

Thanks to the partnership, Scenic guests will be able to purchase expedition gear, skin care, exclusive local artisan items, gifts locally sourced from the region, fine jewellery, and more.

SYD's overseas data plans

SYDNEY Airport has partnered with eSIM Go to launch Tripsim, a new way for Australians to stay online overseas, avoid roaming charges and keep their same phone number.

Available for passengers flying out of any major airport across Australia, Tripsim offers data bundles for departing travellers to use in more than 150 countries.

In addition, Tripsim data plans can be used across multiple countries in the same region.

The European bundle covers 35 countries including the UK, and the Asia bundle works in 14 countries including Indonesia,

Singapore, Thailand and NZ.

Sydney Airport Executive General Manager of Commercial Mark Zaouk said, "we are always looking for ways to support our passengers in the terminals, but this is the first time we have offered a product to enhance their entire holiday experience".

"Every year millions of Australians fly out of our T1 international terminal and we're proud to deliver a new affordable product to help them stay connected while travelling overseas," he said.

Tripsim prices vary depending on the region and size of the data plan, with many of the most popular destinations costing from \$1.50 to \$3 per day.

For 10 days in New Zealand with 3GB, the cost is \$19.99; Bali for 14 days with 10GB costs \$39.99.

A 20GB bundle in Europe for 30 days is \$44.99; and for the United States, the price is \$90.

Offloaded episode

THE latest episode of the *Offloaded* podcast from The Travel Community Hub's Richard Taylor and AC Jones of Frontier Travel features a discussion with Virtuoso GM Fiona Dalton speaking on the topic "is travel advisory a 'one size fits all'?".

The episode is now available on all podcast platforms as well as at travelcommunityhub.com.

HLO NZ new role

HELLOWORLD Travel has appointed Shaun Muller as its new National Business Manager in New Zealand.

Muller has more than two decades of industry experience, with former roles as a travel agent as well as with Cathay Pacific and as QF flight crew.

Air Canada comms

MEMBERS of Air Canada's Aeroplan loyalty scheme will receive free in-flight messaging under a new arrangement with Canadian telco Bell.

The multi-year partnership will allow passengers to send and receive messages inflight, and Bell will also offer complimentary mobile SIM cards on select inbound international flights, enabling visitors to be connected when they walk off the plane.

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CORPORATE UPDATE

FCTG corporate TTV surges

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group has already recorded TTV within its corporate businesses at levels in line with its 2019 full year result, with two months of the current financial year still remaining.

The full year result for 2022/23 will be a record, according to a presentation from Chief Financial Officer Adam Campbell during an investor conference this week.

Campbell highlighted a strong pipeline of future corporate TTV as new and recent client wins are onboarded and begin to trade, with the resulting operating cost leverage starting to flow through.

Mar 2023 reflected ongoing strong demand across the business, with a \$1 billion-plus monthly contribution to TTV from both the leisure and corporate divisions for the first time ever.

The presentation noted “strong organic market share growth” with high customer retention rates and a large volume of new account wins, both in the large market (FCM) and SME (Corporate Traveller) segments.

Campbell said FCM was on track to secure new accounts with projected annual spends of about \$2 billion in the next two months.

A key success driver is the company’s investment in “proprietary, differentiated tech” Campbell said, with technology cited as the major reason why most new clients chose FCM.

95% of Corporate Traveller USA wins are now being implemented via the in-house Melon platform,

while the FCM Next Generation Service Hub model is now operating in Asia and Europe.

A significant investment in the SME market in New York City has seen the opening of a new corporate office, which will “fast-track growth in the world’s largest corporate market,” Campbell said.

Corporate Traveller’s strong recovery sees it now approaching pre-COVID monthly profitability levels, and the corporate operations are now fully staffed with about 1,000 employees added to the global workforce over the last 10 months.

Radisson joins HRS Green Stay initiative

RADISSON Hotel Group has agreed to join the Green Stay Initiative (GSI) operated by HRS, with the platform allowing clients to select hotels based on sustainability scores calculated by the corporate lodging provider.

Radisson confirmed it will begin adding its over 1,100 global properties to the GSI platform, starting with hotels in Europe in the next few months.

The hotel company has committed to reaching net zero emissions by 2050 through a range of measures including Hotel Sustainability Basics and “unique value propositions” such as 100% carbon neutral meetings.

Other GSI participants include Marriott, Accor, NH Hotel Group, Leonardo Hotels and more.

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Bonza’s Port Macquarie bonanza



THE first Bonza non-stop flight from Melbourne to Port Macquarie has been heralded as a “game-changer” for locals and the arts community.

The flight’s arrival in the NSW coastal destination was greeted by local performing artists Gordo and Lucy Gamsby (**pictured**) who run the Tortuga Festival and also perform at Port Macquarie’s Art Walk Event each Jun.

Bonza CEO Tim Jordan said the carrier is already seeing great demand from travellers in both directions of the new route.

“With fares starting from \$69 per person, the low-cost service is allowing communities to connect, including the arts and culture communities with direct access to a long list of events and festivals.”

The inaugural flight was full, with Jordan saying customers were a mix of people mostly travelling for holiday and visiting

friends and family.

Port Macquarie Hastings Council CEO Clare Allen said Bonza’s arrival will ignite great interest among the locals.

“Bonza’s arrival today from Melbourne Airport is a game-changer for our region, providing for the first time in history a direct link between the Port Macquarie Hastings area and Victoria,” she said.

The Port Macquarie route is the second to launch from Bonza’s second base at Melbourne Airport this week, following Tuesday’s introduction of Melbourne-Tamworth flights.

Bonza’s initial 27 route rollout will wrap up this month with new services between Tamworth and the Sunshine Coast (tomorrow); and flights from Melbourne to Mildura (08 May), Bundaberg (10 May), Gladstone (11 May) and Mackay (23 May).

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TRAVEL SPECIALS

WELCOME to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to specials@traveldaily.com.au

Experience what New Zealand has to offer from the South Island to the deep culture of the North between Sep and May 2024 with **Travelmarvel's** 15-day NZ getaway from \$5,695ppts. Enjoy the Iconic TranzAlpine Train across the Southern Alps, a cruise on Milford Sound and a gondola ride to Bob's Peak. Call 1300 278 278 to book by 31 May.

Savings of more than US\$10,000 per couple with zero solo supplement and free hotel stays are available for bookings made before 31 May with **Cruise Traveller's** 18-night 'Out of the Northwest Passage' from Vancouver to Kangerlussuaq. Call 1800 507 777 to reserve.

Sheraton Bali Kuta Resort is currently offering a sunset escape package for travellers that includes daily buffet breakfast for two, a one-time complimentary buffet dinner for two, 20% off on F&B, spa credit worth A\$10 for every A\$36 spent, and more. Prices start from \$239 per room per night. Learn more and book **HERE**.

Travellers can save up to 10% and a cut in the solo supplement for overnight cruises this winter on **Murray River Paddlesteamers'** 16-guest *PS Emmylou*, with guests travelling in Jul to also receive free entry to Moama Lights Festival on the river. **CLICK HERE** to book now.

Mat McLachlan '24

MAT McLachlan Battlefield Tours has launched the Mat McLachlan 2024 Signature Tour to the Western Front.

The nine-day itinerary, which was designed by Mat McLachlan and will be the only tour led by him next year, departs Paris on 16 Sep 2024.

Guests will enjoy several behind-the-scenes experiences and special inclusions, including an exclusive tour of the former Australian HQ at the Chateau of Bertangles, an exploration of the underground tunnels of Naours, and witnessing a replica Mark IV tank in action.

The tour is priced at \$6,499pp twin share - **CLICK HERE** for more details.

LHR strike alert

AROUND 1,400 security officers working at London Heathrow (LHR) Terminal 5 and in campus security have walked off the job as part of industrial action in pursuit of a pay increase.

Unions have warned of inevitable disruption and delays as a result, but LHR management said "we will not let these unnecessary strikes disrupt journeys", with management stepping in alongside hundreds of additional staff to help alleviate any major issues.

The initial strike will last three days leading into a public holiday long weekend and King Charles' coronation on Sat, followed by further stoppages scheduled for 09-10 May and 25-27 May.

Big Mango hits juicy milestone



ONE of Australia's most popular 'big things', the Big Mango at Bowen, situated at the top of the Whitsundays, is celebrating its 21st birthday later this month.

Located 5km south of Bowen on the Bruce Highway, the ripe roadside attraction, which stands at 10 metres tall, is estimated to have featured in around 1.5 million selfies!

The fruity hotspot attracts around 80,000 people a year, with more than half of those calling into the visitor information centre next door, which sells "every kind of mango product you can imagine", from frozen mango sorbet to mango figurines.

Manager of Bowen Tourism and Business Leanne Abernethy said, "while it's an object in reality, this icon is now an internationally-renowned symbol of our town and our region.

"We're a proud coastal town of many farming families who value the opportunity to share our pride

with as many visitors as possible - and the Big Mango plays a huge role in attracting these visitors from all over the world."

With a population of around 11,000 and known as 'the food bowl' of The Whitsundays, Bowen provides 10% of Australia's mango supply.

Bowen Tourism is running an online photo competition and has other birthday activities in the works to mark the milestone - **CLICK HERE** for details.

QF adds a 787-9

QANTAS has boosted its operational Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner fleet to 12, with the introduction of the aircraft designated VH-ZNL after three years in the Californian desert.

Designated "Billabong", the plane was one of three new 787s which went straight into storage in late 2020 after being manufactured for QF by Boeing.

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