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## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today features five pages of the latest travel industry news, plus a full page from **Rail Online**.

## NCL beefs up sales

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line (NCL) has expanded its sales team with three new sales appointments.

Reporting to NCL's Senior Sales Manager Angela Middleton, the new appointments include Business Development Manager Lara Anderson (Victoria & Tasmania), Business Development Specialists Sheena Smith (Victoria) and Samantha Morgan (New South Wales, Western Australia, ACT).

More details on the recruits in today's edition of *Cruise Weekly*.

## Agents scoot on incentive

**RAIL** Online has announced its first major trade incentive, giving travel agents the chance to win an eco-friendly scooter as well as multiple cash vouchers.

The agent who achieves the highest total value of sales through Rail Online between 22 May and 30 Jun will score a Xiaomi e-Scooter worth \$1,000.

Additionally, four other top-performing agents will win cash vouchers from \$50 up to \$300.

Rail Online General Manager Australia and New Zealand Kirsty Blows said an e-scooter is the ideal prize to celebrate the company's environmental credentials.

"Rail travel's low-emissions are driving sales - not to mention investment by rail operators and governments in new networks, carriages and infrastructure - so it's only fitting that we build our first major incentive around a sustainable prize," she said.

"And, of course, an e-scooter, like international rail, is fun."

The 600-watt scooter can travel up to 30km in a single trip, and its in-built gyroscope sensor, 10-inch tubeless tyres and dual-braking system make for an extremely smooth ride.

## Massive staff bonus

**FOLLOWING** its biggest profit ever (*TD* 17 May), Singapore Airlines is pumping some of that back to staff, revealing eligible workers will be paid eight months worth of salary as a bonus.

The carrier's record profit of US\$1.63 billion has gone a long way toward reversing all of the financial damage caused by the pandemic, with Singapore Airlines stating bonuses will be paid to select employees in recognition of their "dedication, hard work, and sacrifices which enabled the airline to be successful and set a strong foundation".

While Singapore Airlines has performed very well, they are not alone, with many big airlines posting large profits this year.



Pictured: GM Kirsty Blows.

All bookings through the rail specialist's online platform will count towards the incentive, including sales of Eurail passes, Eurostar journeys, as well as tickets on Amtrak, VIA Rail and rail networks across the United Kingdom and France.

More details on the **back page**.

## Blue Mts sell-off

**THE** Hydro Majestic at Medlow Bath, Lillianfels and Echoes at Katoomba, and Parklands at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains have all been sold to Melbourne-based Salter Brothers for an undisclosed sum.

The major hotel sale also included The Convent in the Hunter Valley, with all properties previously owned by husband and wife Nguyen and George Saad through their company Escarpment Group.

The pair have forked out big money on refurbishments over the last 10 years, including a cool \$30 million on the iconic Hydro Majestic in 2014.

Nguyen Saad told the *Blue Mountains Gazette* that Salter Brothers would be a good fit for the property portfolio given their investment focus on Aussie assets, the same group who bought the Spicers Retreat brand in Dec last year (*TD* 21 Dec 2022).

## Free Emirates wi-fi

**ALL** Emirates passengers travelling on flights in every class can now access "some form" of free wi-fi connectivity when they sign up to Emirates Skywards.

Skywards members, whether Blue, Silver, Gold, or Platinum tier, across any class can use free app messaging, while First class pax have unlimited free internet if they are Skywards members.

The latest change has resulted in an additional 30,000 Economy class passengers connecting to complimentary wi-fi every week alone, and follows a considerable US\$300 million investment in internet quality from the carrier.

In Mar, EK revealed it delivered 55% more data per customer session compared to early 2022, despite the number of sessions increasing by 68%.

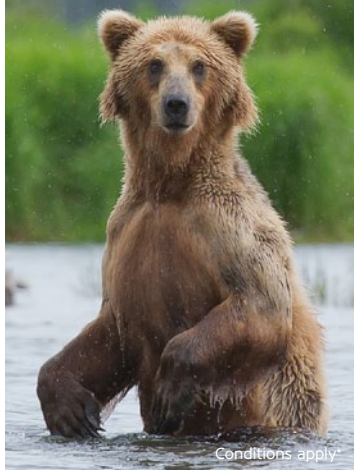
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## Abu Dhabi famils

DCT Abu Dhabi is offering travel agents in Australia and New Zealand the chance to participate in its new 2023 land-only Self Famil Program.

Participants will be able to explore desert dunes, UNESCO World Heritage sites, architectural landmarks, museums and galleries, theme parks and a range of retail outlets.

Thanks to a partnership with Etihad Airways, there will also be a prize pack of Experience Abu Dhabi and Etihad Airways merchandise up for grabs each month, which includes tickets to Louvre Abu Dhabi, tote bags and First class pillows.

Agents who wish to embark on the famil must complete the Abu Dhabi Specialists Program [HERE](#), and then fill out the application form [HERE](#) - for more info, contact [cpotts@dctabudhabi.ae](mailto:cpotts@dctabudhabi.ae).

## QF training facility

QANTAS is set to bolster its workforce with a new flight training centre in Sydney, which will have the capacity to train up to 4,500 Qantas and Jetstar pilots and cabin crew every year.

Construction kicked off last Fri on the new multi-million-dollar facility, which will open early 2024 in St Peters near SYD.

The centre will house eight full motion simulators, including for the Airbus A350, along with cabin mock-ups with emergency procedures equipment, and classroom and training facilities.

Senior Qantas and Jetstar training captains will train pilots from the two carriers while global training provider CAE will maintain all simulators and training equipment, as well as manage the centre's day-to-day operations.

The Qantas Group expects to create more than 8,500 skilled jobs in Australian aviation over the next decade, including 1,600 new positions for pilots and 4,500 new roles for cabin crew.

## Sno'n'Ski is 30 and thriving



SNO'N'SKI Holidays has celebrated its 30th anniversary with a series of birthday celebrations last week.

The team toasted the milestone last Thu night at a Brisbane event, attended by many international resort representatives, while the party continued on Fri night, with 150 agents joining in on the very cool celebrations.

Sno'n'Ski Holidays Managing Director Daniel Walker said the company was "thrilled" to reach the significant milestone.

"Our commitment to providing exceptional winter getaways has remained unwavering throughout the years, and we are proud to have created countless

memorable experiences for our valued clients," Walker said.

"This anniversary is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team and the trust and loyalty of our agents & customers," he added.

Owned and operated by the Walker family, Sno'n'Ski Holidays has been curating winter vacations since its launch in 1992.

Some of the team pictured getting ready to party: Chris Aspen, Jono, Nate, Hamish, Celina, Ben, Inta, Seb, Sam, Mason, Amanda and Tamara.

## SYD back to 84%

SYDNEY Airport recorded a total of 3,090,000 travellers in Apr 2023, signalling a recovery of 83.9% of pre-pandemic levels.

Domestic pax traffic was up 1.2% year-on-year in Apr, representing an 85.9% recovery rate compared to Apr 2019.

International pax numbers more than doubled from Apr 2022, and recovered 80.6% on pre-pandemic Apr 2019 traffic, aided by a huge surge in China pax.

Sydney Airport reported a 53.8% recovery rate in Chinese pax numbers on pre-pandemic Apr 2019, which was a notable increase from the 39.6% recovery rate in Mar 2023.

## Service NSW update

THE NSW Government has confirmed the COVID-19 digital vaccination certificate, still needed to board cruise ships, was quietly removed from the Service NSW app on 30 Mar 2023 in line with other states and territories.

"The COVID-19 digital vaccination certificate is a Federal document and customers can continue to access their certificate through the Express Plus Medicare app or print a paper certificate at home from their MyGov account," a spokesperson for Service NSW told *Travel Daily*.

"All customer records relating to COVID vaccination status held by Service NSW have been deleted, and Vaccination info will continue to be held by the Australian Immunisation Register."

## Win big with Pelikin

PELIKIN has launched a new incentive to encourage agents to get more customers signed up to its travel money card product.

The top-selling agency will win \$1,000 worth of vouchers, while any agency that has at least five customers sign up for Pelikin will go into a weekly draw to score a \$100 gift card.

Pelikin is also reminding agents that it is still running its cashback promotion, where any clients travelling can receive 2% cashback on all money spent overseas on common travel spending items such as food, drinks and transport.

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## New era for the Hunter

**THE** former Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley has officially rebranded today under new managers EVT Limited, with the new Rydges Resort Hunter Valley promising to deliver a “new era” of entertainment and events for the Hunter region.

Hotel owner, Jerry Schwartz, said the arrival of the new branding under new managers would attract a raft of new leisure and business travellers to the popular wine region.

“The Hunter Valley should be one of Australia’s most preferred tourism destinations and we believe that EVT and Rydges can build on its current popularity and elevate it even further,” Schwartz said.

“The resort is pivotal to the Hunter Valley’s recalibration away from its former mining background to a new era based on tourism, there are so many attractions and activities available



at the hotel and throughout the surrounding region, which makes it ideal for couples, families, groups, conferences and incentives,” he added.

The next 12 months will see EVT roll out a range of initiatives, including an electric train to transport guests around the property (launching next week), a Hunter Valley Art, Wine and Food Hop tour every Sat, the expansion of existing kids and family facilities, new equestrian facilities, and the introduction of self-guided walking trails.

Plans for glamping facilities are also being explored at the 417-room property, which boasts 15 conference rooms offering a total capacity for 1,600 guests.

## New Jabiru retreat

**EXPERIENCE** Co’s Wild Bush Luxury has opened new accommodation in the Top End at the Bamurru Plains safari lodge.

The new Jabiru Retreat extends dual bungalows in a private oasis setting located on the Mary River wetlands.

The “lux camp within a camp” experience connects the two safari-style bungalows via a raised walkway leading to an exclusive-use plunge pool.

Alongside this is an al fresco lounge and dining space overlooking lush plains and abundant wildlife.

The retreat accommodates four adults, as well as an additional two children upon request, in swag bed sleeping.



## Designer incentive

**DESIGNER** Journeys has launched a new Triple Treat Travel Agent Incentive, which gives agents the chance to earn a \$50 gift card when they submit a new enquiry, plus a bonus \$150 gift card if that enquiry converts into a booking.

To be eligible, agents will need to submit a qualified enquiry via Designer Journeys’ agent portal between 16 May and 15 Jun, while the booking must be made by 30 Jun - for more details, [CLICK HERE](#).

## Disney scraps plans

**DISNEY** has scrapped plans for a new US\$1 billion Florida campus, amid a fight with the state’s Governor Ron DeSantis.

The plan would have seen a new campus built in Central Florida, with 2,000 employees in digital technology, finance, and product development relocated from Southern California.

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## Rex lashes Whyalla

**THE** fallout between Rex Airlines and South Australia's Whyalla City Council (**TD** 19 May) has raged on this week, with the Aussie carrier accusing the council of being "deliberately deceptive" about who should shield the burden for security screening costs.

Rex contends that security costs at the region's airport were only introduced when larger Qantas planes started flying the route, in contrast to the local Mayor, Clare McLaughlin, who said regardless of individual carriers' requirements, the Whyalla Airport is now a screened hub to meet Federal aviation conditions, so all airlines must pay a fee.

## Rod gets the nod

**PROUD** Tasmanian Rod Cuthbert has recently joined the state's tourism board.

He brings with him extensive commercial success to the role, having founded travel experience marketplace Viator, before that serving as the Executive Chair of journey planner Rome2rio.

Cuthbert also serves on the board of tour platform VELTRA and transfer marketplace Jayride, of which he is the Chair.

"Rod will bring extensive commercial, travel industry and travel tech experience, knowledge and insights to the board," Tourism Tasmania said.

## Luxury rebound continues

**LUXURY** travel demand is "soaring" according to new insights from Virtuoso, which revealed a 91% uptick in bookings for 2023 compared to 2019, and 62% higher than 2022.

The encouraging insights were shared by Virtuoso Executive Vice President David Kolner to an audience of around 350 travel executives from 30 countries at the network's 2023 Symposium in Montreal, Quebec, Canada this week (**TD** 15 May).

Kolner also revealed that booking windows have shrunk to 64 days in advance, as opposed to 85 days in 2019 and 109 days at the beginning of 2021.

The network's preferred hotels

are also experiencing a boom in demand, with bookings 193% higher than 2019 and 77% up from 2022, according to Virtuoso sales data.

Hotel average daily rates (ADRs) continue to recover, with summer 2023 rates reaching nearly US\$1,700 per night, representing a 16% increase from 2022 and 69% higher than 2019.

Meanwhile cruise is also proving to be a promising segment for the network, with total Virtuoso bookings gaining 55% on 2019.

Luxury cruising is up 79% on pre-pandemic levels, outperformed only by expedition cruising (up 83%) and river cruising (up by 128%).

Virtuoso revealed at the event that it is expecting a continued strong growth trajectory this year, with Kolner also citing new data which shows the network's target market of high-value travellers is forecast to expand by 34%, exceeding 62 million worldwide over the next five years.

## Air NZ Apr recovery

**AIR** New Zealand's Apr figures continue to more closely resemble their pre-COVID-19 counterparts, with revenue passenger kilometres and available seat kilometres both jumping close to 150%.

The airline's RPK was up 149% and its ASK was up 141% on the prior corresponding period, with both metrics now down just 16% and 12.3% respectively versus their pre-COVID periods.

There was also a steep increase in passengers carried for Apr, which was up 51% to 1.251 million, from 832,000.

## Travel apps boom

**ALMOST** 17 million Australians used a travel website or app during the Easter and Apr school holidays, according to new data from Ipsos iris.

The report revealed that women were more likely to use travel sites and apps than men, while people aged between 25 and 39 were the largest group engaging with online travel content.

However, the over-55s cohort spent 33% more time per month using travel sites and apps compared to under-55s.

Uber was the number one travel site used in Apr, with an audience rise of 7.8% compared to Mar, followed by Qantas Airways, TripAdvisor, Booking.com, Virgin Australia, and Airbnb, which saw a huge 80.7% increase in the average minutes spent per person.

Rounding out the top group of online brands were Jetstar, news.com.au - travel, and Expedia.



## Window Seat

**VISITORS** to the Austrian village of Hallstatt are no longer able to take photos at one of its most picturesque spots, after authorities erected a wooden barrier (**pictured**) in an effort to obstruct the spectacular Alpine view.

Hallstatt's sparking lake, snow-covered roofs and soaring mountains are reminiscent to the backdrop of Disney's *Frozen* animated movies, attracting over one million selfie-hunters in 2019.

The hamlet's 750 residents are fed up with a renewed influx this year as tourism in Europe booms, with the local mayor, Alexander Scheutz, saying his administration took the radical action of blocking the view because he believes "the only thing that would help is if the photo point is no longer a photo point".



## NCL launch tenders

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Lines (NCL) has launched three new cruise tenders to service its sailings in the Caribbean, transporting up to 354 passengers at a time to the cruise line's private island resort.

The trio of vessels, built by Singapore's Penguin Shipyard International, have been designed with accessibility at the forefront, featuring two wheelchair-accessible spaces on the main deck, one wheelchair accessible bathroom, and a wheelchair lift to access to the upper deck.

The upper deck offers guests 188 covered seats, while the main deck can seat 164 passengers in air-conditioned comfort.

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## BROCHURES

WELCOME to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. 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).



**Virtuoso - The Magazine Australia/New Zealand**  
The Magazine Australia/New Zealand by Virtuoso puts the readers in a 'Euro state of mind', including a specially curated guide to Italy, providing travelling tips and calling out must-visit sites. The issue also extends its insider advice from Italy to a pintxo-hopping (bar hopping) tour of San Sebastian as an excellent guide for those keen on taking a European vacation. The winter edition of the issue also gathers the latest industry news regarding cruises and hotels, as well as insider tips from travel industry experts, updates on sustainable tourism development, and much more.



**Visit Idaho - Official Idaho Travel Guide**  
The new Official Idaho Travel Guide showcases the 'Gem State's' many stories, maps and resources to enjoy the state's outdoor activities, history, culture, and food & beverages scene. Whether you are looking for a day trip rafting on a river or wanting to relax in a mountain hot spring, the specially produced travel guide is a perfect companion to any person planning their next getaway in the state. Highlights also include a "Call of the Open Road" section, highlighting four Idaho scenic byways for motorcycle road trips.

## Brisbane Marriott marks 25



**BRISBANE** Marriott is celebrating its 25th birthday with a series of week-long events, including a choir performance of *We are Australia* and *Happy Birthday*.

The hotel also hosted celebratory lunches, dinners and a special 25-year cocktail created by Michael Mendoza, who has worked at the property since it opened in 1998.

Brisbane Marriott General Manager, Kelvin Ramm, Director Sales & Marketing Georgina Otter

and Marketing Manager Kseniia Kuznetsova also gathered last week at the General Manager's lunch to cut a giant birthday cake.

Guests will be able to partake in the celebrations too, with a 25-year high tea rolling out over the next four weeks.

**Pictured:** The entire Brisbane Marriott team gather for a photo in front of the hotel to mark the special occasion.

## Heritage Sojourn

**EXPEDITION** cruise company Heritage Expeditions has added a new priced-to-entice voyage on board its 140-guest flagship, *Heritage Adventure* to explore Vanuatu and New Caledonia, as well as various ANZ destinations.

The new 10-day South Pacific Sojourn will depart on 07 Nov, priced from \$4,895pp including pre- and post-cruise transfers, one-night hotel stay in a twin share room, and much more.

Travellers can also score 50% off the experiences when travelling back-to-back on selected tours.

## BAC appoints CFO

**WARREN** Briggs has been named the new CFO of Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC), taking over from David Malek.

Briggs has been acting in the role since Feb and was a key member in his previous position of Head of Finance and Treasury to reform the business following the pandemic and travel shutdown.

"It's an incredible privilege to be appointed as CFO...as we sustainably grow to serve the South East's rising population and Qld's global popularity," he said.

## The life of Wagner

**LIMELIGHT** Arts Travel is offering a new four-night itinerary that navigates the life of Wagner, including his career in Germany, before an extended stay in Berlin to attend *Wagner The Ring Cycle* in Mar 2024.

Limelight's editor Clive Paget will be guiding the tour with his extensive knowledge in the music scene, which includes trips to Munich and Dresden.

Register to receive the complete itinerary **HERE**.

## Travel warnings

**SMARTTRAVLLER** has advised Australian travellers to Ecuador to exercise a high degree of caution in the country due to high levels of crime and protests.

Travellers are advised to monitor media and follow local govt instruction, as well as watch for any increased activity from the Cotopaxi volcano.

**MEANWHILE**, DFAT is warning Aussies that the Emilia-Romagna region in northern Italy is enduring severe floods and landslides, advising to follow instructions from authorities.





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