

Travel Daily

First with the news

Tuesday 30th May 2023

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news, plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- MSC Cruises

Experience Euribia

MSC Cruises is inviting travellers to "cruise the blue in a green way" on board its sustainable new ship, *MSC Euribia*, which launches in Jun - see the **back page** for more information.

Grants open to AFTA, too

EXCLUSIVE

MEMBERS of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) are now able to access funds under the recently announced \$9 million Reviving International Tourism Grant (RITG) program (**TD 18 May**), after the Federation "clarified" the eligibility criteria for the funding.

Previously announced as only available to members of ATEC and CATO, AFTA has now emailed members about the opportunity after identifying individual businesses which may be eligible.

Austrade is now accepting applications in two streams - one offering up to \$15,000 to ATEC inbound tour operator members, and \$10,000 to AFTA and CATO members who are travel wholesalers/outbound

travel operators for attendance at international trade shows; and a further \$2,000 for "digital uplift" activities such as making websites and marketing material more accessible to international users.

Applications are open on a first come first served basis, with AFTA also noting that it has been "able to ensure that any information provided as part of an application will not be shared with any association, and will be solely assessed by Austrade".

AFTA members are being urged to contact the Federation confirming they wish to be considered for the grant with a deadline of 12pm this Fri 02 Jun - at which point AFTA will provide further info on how to apply.

Full details are on the Austrade website at austrade.gov.au.

Affinity for Silversea

SILVERSEA is introducing its new Groups Program, which offers competitive benefits for agents and their clients when they book six suites or more for a group travelling on the same voyage.

The bespoke Affinity group program is ideal for travellers who are planning their next family holiday, business retreat, or club get-together.

For more information on the program, see **page eight**.

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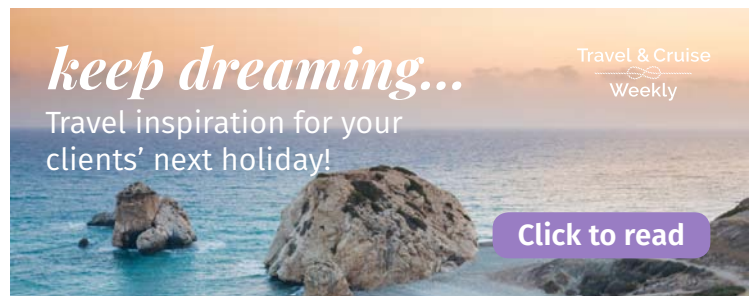
Mykonos Island, Greece

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Qantas high-speed wi-fi with a catch

INTERNATIONAL Qantas flights operated by select A330-200 and Boeing 737 aircraft will offer free high-speed wi-fi from today, but only when flying above the mainland of Australia.

The complimentary service is being offered to passengers on nine routes for now, part of a longer-term plan to make the carrier's entire international fleet wi-fi-enabled by the end of 2025.

Routes included in the initial launch are: Sydney to Singapore, Denpasar, Jakarta and Manila; Melbourne to Singapore and Denpasar; Brisbane to Singapore and Port Moresby; as well as Perth to Singapore.

The aim is for fast wi-fi to be as reliable as domestic services.

QF to revamp services

QANTAS has revealed a raft of enhanced customer service changes to its business are coming before the end of the year (**TD** breaking news), including an overhaul of its Qantas app, changes to boarding processes from Oct, and a "significantly expanded" range of Frequent Flyer redemptions.

Flagged changes to the app will include more ways for the carrier to incentivise direct Qantas.com bookings, as well as live baggage updates, greater loyalty integration, disruption alerts, and faster check-in options.

Qantas also revealed plans to grow its loyalty base by about 3% a year by diversifying its redemption offering with smaller, more attainable rewards for more frequent engagement, while the airline will also look to grow new members by offering rewards when travellers book directly.

Improved onboarding processes

via the app will also make it easier for Qantas to link customers with loyalty partners when they join the program.

Qantas Business Rewards, which now claims engagement from 20% of Australia's small and medium companies, will also see investment to deliver "end-to-end business travel and travel management capabilities".

Meanwhile Qantas has heralded its new A220, B787 and A320 aircraft as changing what the business can offer in the way of new routes and comfortable cabins, while large investments will continue to upgrade its global lounge network, smart airport technology, and F&B products in the air and on the ground.

CEO Alan Joyce said Qantas is now a "structurally different business" than it was before COVID, and new tech is central to its growth plans - more on Qantas on **p4** and **p6**.

Island resort listed

REEFVIEW House on Hicks Island resort, located off the coast of far North Queensland, has hit the market, with the tropical real estate only asking buyers to fork out \$1 million for the purchase.

Holiday Inn Dandenong recruits

IHG Hotels & Resorts has appointed a team to oversee its newest Australian property, Holiday Inn Dandenong, which opens in Melbourne tomorrow.

Schott Schaefer will lead the team as GM, while Sam Wolfgram takes on the Hotel Services Manager role; also joining is Scott Bissi as BDM, while award-winning chef Atish Chaudhari will head up the hotel's restaurant and bar Dandelion Lounge & Eatery.

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♦ **Expert tip:** Check fare conditions against pricing. Often it is only a small difference between a *Semi Flexible* and *Flexible* fare, providing you and your clients greater security and peace of mind.

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VA joins forces with LE

VIRGIN Australia's Velocity Frequent Flyer loyalty program has announced a new multi-year partnership with Luxury Escapes to provide Aussie travellers with more rewards and better value.

Under the new deal, which goes live on 16 Jul, Velocity's 11 million plus members, and Luxury Escapes' 3 million Aussie customers, will be able to earn and redeem Velocity points on thousands of Luxury Escapes packages, hotels, cruises, tours, and experiences.

Members will also be able to offset the cost of their next Luxury Escapes holiday by using their Velocity points to pay for part or all of their booking, and redeem benefits such as complimentary lounge access, priority boarding, and preferential seating.

Luxury Escapes co-founder and Chief Executive Officer Adam Schwab told *Travel Daily* his company values the fact a

business of Virgin's scale wanted to partner with it.

"[VA] is a fun, young airline, and our experience working with them so far has been that they're willing to try stuff, they're super engaged," he said.

Schwab added the partnership will target Qantas Airways' Frequent Flyers through Virgin's 'Switcheroo' status match, which can then be spent with LE.

"If you're a Luxury Escapes member and you've got Gold status with Qantas, Virgin will match that status," he said.

"It's a fantastic opportunity for Luxury Escapes members."

The partnership comes after Qantas last year acquired a majority stake in TripADeal, another online travel agent (*TD* 24 May 2022).

Luxury Escapes and Qantas were themselves in a similar partnership which lasted for just over four years (*TD* 01 Feb 2018).

G'day Group 24/25

REGIONAL accommodation provider G'Day Group has opened up 2024/25 travel bookings across its 34 contracted properties around Australia.

The upcoming season features new contracted properties in Broome and Far North Queensland, as well as better deals and more experiences across the portfolio, including the recent launch of Light-Towers at Discovery Resorts - Kings Canyon.

F1 fan packages

DISCOVER Qatar has released its Formula 1 Ultimate Fan Experience Package, offering exclusive privileges, prime viewing locations, access to the team garages, pit lanes, and the start and finish line at the F1 Qatar Airways Qatar Grand Prix 2023, which takes place in Doha between 06-08 Oct.

A limited number of tickets are available **HERE**.



Window Seat

MOST people get a taxi or an Uber to the airport these days, but one particular man did it somewhat differently in an attempt to catch a flight from Williamson County Regional Airport in Southern Illinois.

The offender allegedly stole a backhoe from a work site and drove it about 16km to the airport, where he simply left it in the parking lot.

CCTV video footage showed him walking to the terminal carrying a guitar case, before boarding a flight to Portland, Oregon.

The owner of the excavation equipment arrived at the airport shortly thereafter and claimed the vehicle, with the miscreant arrested a few days later in Nevada for possession of a stolen vehicle.



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[Join Avis Budget Group.](#)

Sunrise to drive QF EBIT

THE introduction of QF's new Airbus A350 ultra-long haul fleet is being forecast to drive an additional \$400 million in annual profit once all 12 of the aircraft are in operation.

The 'Project Sunrise' aircraft will allow non-stop flights from Australia's east coast to ports such as London and New York, with CEO Alan Joyce saying they will drive long-term structural advantages to the business.

During an investor update today Joyce also highlighted the strong contribution of QF's 787-9 non-stops from Perth to Europe, noting that previously the double daily London A380 route via Dubai and more recently Singapore had been loss-making.

The PER-LHR route is the carrier's best performing service in terms of customer satisfaction in Economy class, while the point-to-point routes enabled by the 787-9 also provide improved

earnings on Melbourne-Dallas, Sydney-Johannesburg and Auckland-New York, he said.

QF also flagged the same strategy could be applied to potential new opportunities such as non-stop flights from Australia to Seattle, Paris and Chicago.

The carrier is also targeting strong earnings growth from its loyalty business, with a 2030 vision for it to contribute up to \$1 billion to underlying profit.

Jetstar will also play a key role in maintaining the company's performance, with the presentation highlighting a range of initiatives including FareCredit, which allows customers to cancel non-refundable fares and receive a voucher; new methods to select bundles which have improved conversion rates; and a newly released dynamic seat map which allows differential pricing across the cabin.

More from QF on [page six](#).



A GROUP of Aussie travel professionals recently had the opportunity to participate in a Savenio famil to Mykonos and Santorini courtesy of Craig Farrell and Lea Segquier's La Collection.

The lucky visitors stayed at the newest of 11 properties in the collection - O by Myconian Collection - at Ornos Beach.

Pictured: MD David Brandon (centre) joined by Kelly Campbell, Lara Bale, Eirini Hatzellis, Liam Jarman, and Belinda Ferguson on a walking tour of Mykonos Town with local guide Amaryllis.

Cutting travel back

TRAVEL has taken a hit in the budgets of cash-strapped Aussies, according to a new study from Tracksuit, which revealed that 42% of Australian consumers are cutting back on travel spending.

Of those, 26% have stopped spending on travel altogether, with those aged 18-34 found most likely to tighten the purse strings.

Queenslanders were shown to be the most frugal, with 68% of the state's consumers cutting back in all spending categories.



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Tahiti attracts more Aussies

THE number of air tickets booked by Australian travellers to Tahiti has jumped by more than 200% for the first quarter of 2023, when compared with the same period in 2022.

The strong showing for outbound travel to the French Polynesian islands was noted in new figures released by Tahiti Tourism this morning, with overall tourist numbers for the first quarter of the year standing at 78,000, representing a 63% year-on-year increase.

It's a delicate balancing act for the tropical destination, which is looking to rebuild its tourism sector while at the same time making strides to ensure it does so sustainably, last year releasing a tourism development strategy to cap the number of tourists



allowed to visit at any one time (**TD** 21 Dec 2022).

The plan encourages a "slower tourist mindset" and visitation outside the peak times.

New hotels opening this year includes the Cook's Bay Hotel & Suites, Moorea, the Moorea Beach Hotel and the Apatoa Beach & Garden Village, Raiatea.

Travel agents can educate themselves via the Tahiti Specialist Program **HERE**.

Crocodile attacks Qld resort guest

A 51-YEAR old man had to be prised from the jaws of a crocodile as he was snorkelling off Haggerstone Island Resort in Far North Queensland.

The Aussie tourist survived the deadly encounter but suffered injuries in the brutal attack, with the man transported to Cairns Hospital for further treatment.

The incident took place 28km off the coast of the high-end exclusive island resort.

Quest expands Amadeus deal

QUEST Apartment Hotels has added to its partnership with Amadeus to include business intelligence services, gaining access to more robust insights.

The hotel company will implement Amadeus' Agency360+ technology across its 160 locations in Australia, as well as Fiji, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, allowing the business to better identify top travel advisors and bookers.

Flying theme park



FINALLY, a theme park that caters to the whims of the most strident aviation enthusiasts.

Located at Chubu Centrai International Airport in Japan, the new Flight of Dreams attraction boasts a prototype of the first Boeing 787 Dreamliner (**pictured**), with travellers able to access the theme park via a connecting pedestrian bridge from the passenger terminal.

Visitors to the site can learn about the history of flight, jump inside two flight simulators, and have their photo taken while sitting in the cockpit of the massive replica jet.

Simulators will set travellers back about A\$12 for a five-minute flight in the cockpit, while 30 -minute sessions are also on offer for around A\$130.

The theme park also has a children's play area with rides.



LATAM Airlines recently hosted a South America Roadshow in Melbourne and Sydney, with more than 100 agents attending in each city.

The events were run in partnership with South America's top tour operators, including Adventure World, Bunnik Tours, Chimu, G Adventures and more, alongside regional tourism bodies such as Peru Tourism and South America Tourism Office.

LATAM Airlines Country Manager - Oceania, Chris Ellis, said the roadshow "showcased the undeniable attraction of the rich culture, flavours and diverse

landscapes of South America".

"We're thrilled to meet this demand head-on by expanding our services," he enthused.

The carrier will commence direct flights to Santiago from Melbourne three times a week from Sep, Ellis confirmed, on top of the daily services already operating from Sydney via Auckland to Santiago (**TD** 03 Apr).

Pictured: The LATAM Airlines team - Shalina Sabar, Chris Ellis, and Daniela Yopez.

SIA, Garuda deal

SINGAPORE Airlines and Garuda Indonesia have announced plans to enter into a joint venture (JV) to increase passenger capacity between the two countries.

The proposed joint venture will seek to allow the flag carriers to align schedules, and explore new initiatives, such as joint fare products, and line up their corporate programs.

Emilia-Romagna back

VISITORS can now return to Italy's Emilia-Romagna region, which was smashed with record flooding in early May.

Thanks to a prompt clean-up operation immediately following the floods, which saw the region hit with six months' worth of rain fall in just 36 hours, airports and motorways into and around the area are now re-open.

Historical monuments and cultural sites across Emilia-Romagna are now welcoming visitors after temporary closures, with beaches and bathing hotspots also accessible again.

Saluting Ian Garritt

THE industry is mourning the loss of Ian Garritt (**pictured**), former co-owner of Venture Holidays, after the beloved travel stalwart passed away peacefully at his home in Chiang Mai yesterday at the age of 71.

Garritt began his career in Britain, where he worked for wholesalers in the early 1970s, before moving to Adelaide and joining the Kings Travel team.

He then founded Lloyd Travel for five years with Guy Lloyd of Llyod Aviatio, before returning to Venture Holidays (SA/NT) in the late 1980s, when he became a part owner of the business.

Garritt enjoyed his retirement living in northern Thailand with his wife and countless rescue dogs, and he is survived by his three children.





Flight Centre tackles bullying

FLIGHT Centre Business Travel has announced social change and anti-bullying advocate Project Rockit as the recipient of its 2023 Corporate Travel Grant.

The \$30,000 grant will help support Project Rockit in its bid to positively impact young people via its school-based programs.

"We're a youth-driven, youth-led organisation and everything we do translates into impact on the ground and this grant is going to result in some really awesome programs for communities that would otherwise miss out," Project Rockit's co-founder and CEO Lucy Thomas enthused.

Four runners-up won a share of \$10,000 in Virgin Australia travel credit and two Velocity Gold memberships each, plus a share of \$10,000 in Flight Centre Business Travel credit.

Green power for FRA

GLOBAL airport operator Fraport has expanded its investment in green wind energy, with the signing of a new wind farm to provide energy for Germany's Frankfurt Airport.

The five-year wind farm contract will help lower Fraport's carbon emissions at Frankfurt Airport to 50,000 metric tonnes by 2030.

QF'S MEGA \$400M CLIMATE FUND

QANTAS has announced the launch of a \$400 million Climate Fund as part of its newly updated long-term strategy, which outlines the carrier's plans through to 2030 across key categories, including sustainability.

The new Climate Fund, which is the largest of its type for any airline, includes an additional \$110 million investment on top of the \$290m already committed.

The fund aims to drive the production of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF), create high integrity offsets that deliver dividends for nature and carbon removal tech, as well as efficiency and waste reduction targets.

The huge cash pool will also be used to advocate the Australian Government to introduce a SAF blending mandate to help kickstart local production.

"All of the extra activity we have



planned has to be underpinned by a focus on sustainability, particularly decarbonisation," Qantas Group Chief Executive Officer Alan Joyce affirmed.

"We're determined to be a leader in this space and that's supported by the new commitments we've made today, as well as calling for more action industry-wide in the form of a sustainable aviation fuel mandate," he added.

Qantas has announced Wheatbelt Connect as the first Climate Fund project, committing an initial \$5m to the native reforestation and carbon farming initiative, which includes a study to investigate the conversion of native Mallee biomass into renewable fuels.

The airline will also use the fund to develop an alternative to single-use plastics to help meet efficiency and waste targets.

Accor declares major war on plastic

ACCOR is targeting a significant reduction in plastic use across its Aussie properties, including the Sofitel, Novotel, Ibis and Mercure brands, the accommodation group's CEO Sarah Derry has revealed.

The hotel giant has already replaced 43 single-use plastic items, including individual toiletries such as little plastic bottles of shampoo and body lotion as well as plastic water

bottles, with eco-friendly alternatives in more than 80% of its properties.

"In 2023 and beyond, we are committed to taking these actions further into the removal of single use plastics from back of house operations, micro plastics in laundries and by finding an appropriate long term solution to replace plastic water bottles," Derry told *City Beat* during a recent visit to Brisbane.

Clean up Everest

SAGARMATHA Next, an experience centre at the foot of Mount Everest, has released a new film to educate visitors on the impact of tourism and the importance of keeping the region waste-free.

With 80,000 visitors annually, 200 tonnes of solid waste is generated in Sagarmatha National Park each year - see the film [HERE](#).

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WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.654

WHILE the Aussie dollar dropped by 1% against the US dollar earlier last week, the lowest since 10 Nov 2022, our currency performed better this week, gaining 0.2%.

Meanwhile, the Australian share market is predicted to be adversely impacted by low movement on global markets, caused in part by anxiety around the ongoing US debt ceiling talks in the United States.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.654
UK	£0.529
NZ	\$1.080
Euro	€0.611
Japan	¥91.86
Thailand	฿22.71
China	¥4.626
South Africa	12.87
Canada	\$0.889
Crude oil	US\$76.95

India brokers deal

PRIME Minister Anthony Albanese has signed a new agreement with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi this week, boosting Indian student and business travel between Australia and India.

The migration deal includes new options for visa applicants to extend or apply for visas to enhance labour mobility for students, graduates, academics & short-stay arrivals, as well as a pilot program for uni grads and early-career professionals in India to come to Australia on a two-year visa without sponsorship.

Hilton Saudi deal

HILTON and the Saudi Tourism Authority have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which will see the two entities work together to attract visitors from important markets.

The partnership also highlights Hilton's ongoing expansion in Saudi Arabia, where it currently operates 16 hotels, with another whopping 51 in the pipeline.

Virgin Galactic close to pax services

VIRGIN Galactic has successfully completed its fifth test flight to suborbital space, putting it on track to begin commercial operations next month.

The Unity 25 mission, which lifted off from New Mexico last week, marks Virgin Galactic's first trip to space in almost two years (*TD* 12 Jul 2021).

President of Spaceline Missions and Safety at Virgin Galactic, Mike Moses, said the carrier aims to fly around once a month aboard space jets *Eve* and *Unity* once commercial operations begin.

Virgin Galactic is also building a fleet of new "Delta-class" space planes slated to be ready in 2026, boasting the capability of flying paying customers to suborbital space every day (*TD* 18 Jul 2022).

Novotel in Nara

ACCOR has signed a management agreement with Kokyo Asset Management Group to operate the upcoming Novotel Nara in Japan from Q3 of 2024.

The 264-room property, billed as being ideal for a bleisure market, offers an all-day restaurant, four event spaces, a wellness area and a rooftop lounge.

Zig Zag back on track



ZIG Zag Railway near Lithgow in the NSW Blue Mountains officially reopened over the weekend after being closed for over a decade, with all services selling out.

The Blue Mountains tourist attraction (**pictured**) has overcome many barriers in order to resume operations, including accreditation issues, bushfires, storm damage, and vandalism.

"It's been 10-plus years of blood, sweat and tears so this weekend's reopening brings overwhelming relief and will

be very emotional for all those involved," Zig Zag Railway Acting Chief Executive Officer Daniel Zolfel said.

The iconic railway previously attracted up to 80,000 visitors a year, NSW Minister for Lands and Property Steve Kamper said.

"The NSW Government investment to support the volunteers to get it back on the tracks will be great for tourism, business and jobs in the Lithgow and Blue Mountains regions," he enthused.

AI in travel: threat or superpower?



travelBulletin

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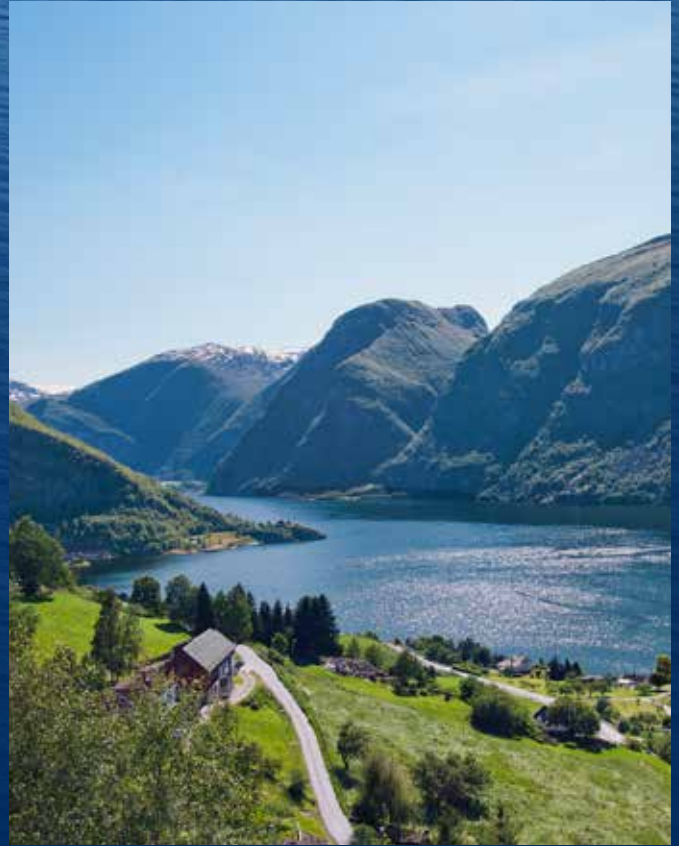
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MSC EURIBIA: CRUISING THE BLUE IN A GREEN WAY

Get your clients to **cruise the blue in a green** and gorgeous new way in **June 2023** with the launch of **MSC Euribia**.

Designed with **sustainability as the prime objective**, MSC Euribia is powered by LNG, the most sustainable marine fuel currently available at scale, and features **cutting-edge onboard systems** for water treatment, waste management and energy efficiency.

The ship is also empowered with striking new features. Not only do the decks boast numerous **original works of art**, for the first time the **hull itself is a visual masterpiece**, created by German artist Alex Flämig.

MSC Euribia will set sail in **Northern Europe** departing from Kiel on Saturdays and will offer 7-night cruises to the Fjords.

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