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# Travel Daily First with the news

Wednesday 1st Nov 2023



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MTA Sandra di Benedetto

### Today's issue of TD

**Travel Daily** today features seven pages of the latest news including our **Luxury** feature page, plus a front cover from Silversea, a special update from The Hotel Connection and a full page from APT.

### Legendary cruising

**DISCOVER** all of the myths and treasures of ultra luxury cruising with Silversea in 2025-26.

Travellers on board the line's ships will discover the true destinations behind the myths, while also enjoying the most transformative and personalised way to travel at sea.

Destinations on offer include the frozen allure of Antarctica. and here at home in Australia, to name just a few - see front page.

# Direct MEL-Mumbai debut

AIR India will commence nonstop flights between Mumbai and Melbourne for the first time from 15 Dec on the back of a sharp rise in demand for air routes between Australia and India over the last 12 months.

The airline is set to operate three flights a week initially, with a view to increasing frequency "as demand grows".

The Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner flights will supplement Air India's existing and well subscribed Melbourne and Delhi services.

Testament to the rising demand are figures released by Melbourne Airport that show in the last financial year Melbourne welcomed more Indian visitors than any other Australian city, recording 433,000 Indian residents flying in and out of



Victoria's largest gateway.

"Melbourne is home to Australia's largest Indian population and shares significant cultural ties, which makes it the obvious gateway for travellers from the subcontinent wanting to explore Victoria," MEL Chief of Aviation Jim Parashos said.

An ABS report released yesterday also showed that Indian-born Australian residents have been the fastest growing group over the last decade. AB

### You bet you Pitcairn

**PITCAIRN** Islands Tourism is hosting a trade webinar on 14 Nov to offer details on a 2024 shipping update, how best to sell the destination, and an overview of its trade microsite.

East coast attendees can register for the 9.30am session HERE while WA-based agents can join a later global webinar at 3.30pm local time HERE.











### How's the Serenity

APT is introducing its brandnew custom-built river vessel, Mekong Serenity, to the market.

The ship boasts sophisticated facilities, delectable dining experiences & first class services. See page eight for full details.

### Ooh la la Paris luxury

**EXPERIENCE** Paris with the Chevalier family which boasts four amazing boutique hotels, all with exquisite sophistication in a range of charming Parisian locations and a unique story to tell - see page 10 for info.

#### VJ discounts millions

VIETJET has launched an 11-day sales promotion offering one million discounted tickets across its network to celebrate its recent expansion to Siem Reap, Jakarta, and Shanghai.

All-inclusive one-way tickets start from as low as \$165pp.

### China Eastern touches down in BNE

**CHINA** Eastern Airlines became the first Chinese airline to return to Queensland after 1,359 days this morning, with the carrier kicking off operations of its nonstop services between Shanghai and Brisbane (TD 14 Sep).

Starting at three times weekly before going to daily from 08 Dec, China Eastern is set to contribute around 181,000 inbound international seats to the state in addition to \$314 million in value to the Queensland economy.

"We know Chinese visitors love Queensland's great lifestyle and world-class holiday experiences and will be crucial to our plan to build an \$11 billion international visitor economy by the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games," **Qld Tourism Minister Stirling** Hinchliffe said.

The return is the 26th int'l route landed by the Qld Attracting Aviation Investment Fund.



# All MH classes get free wi-fi

MALAYSIA Airlines is offering free wi-fi across all cabin classes on selected widebody aircraft from today, adding to previous efforts from the carrier to enhance the value of its internet connectivity on flights.

The airline has been offering loyalty and Business class passengers complimentary wi-fi since 01 July this year (TD 14 Jun), but now Economy class customers will be offered the same privilege on 20 aircraft.

Narrowbody planes will also offer free wi-fi across all cabins as part of a future rollout which will be carried out in phases.

With the new enhanced internet offering, passengers flying with MH will no longer be required to subscribe to the airline's pay-peruse wi-fi option, instead travellers will simply connect devices to the 'MHconnect' network.

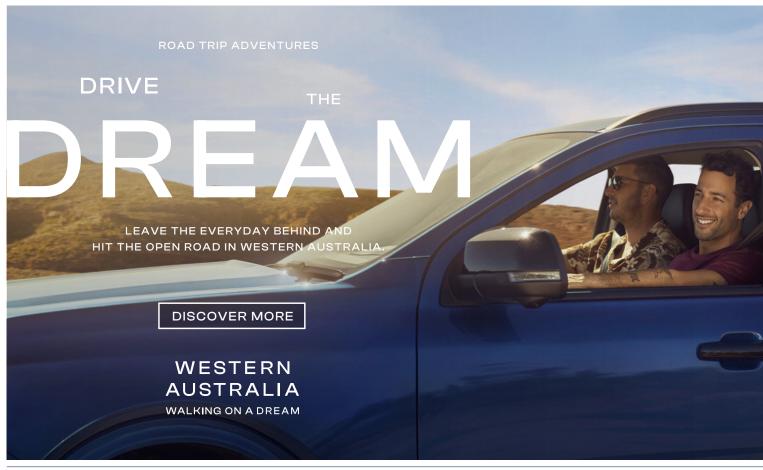
The change also heralds the end of data capping on board the



carrier's flights, albeit on selected services initially, with passengers now having access to unlimited data usage.

"We remain dedicated to ensuring that every aspect of our service is designed to make our customers' journey as seamless, hassle-free and enjoyable as possible, and will continue to invest in initiatives that will greatly benefit their experience on board," the carrier said.

Meanwhile families travelling with MH are also set to benefit from a new service offering, with children aged three to eight on selected long-haul flights able to receive a reusable Pilot Parker lunchbox set, until stocks last. AB







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### Save 10% with FJ

**AUSSIE** travellers can save up to 10% on tickets to a range of destinations with Fiji Airways when booking before 17 Nov.

Economy flights to Fiji, Samoa, Tonga, Hong Kong and Tokyo from now until Sep 2024 have been discounted as part of the carrier's latest sales promotion.



# Agents toast top of the south



EIGHT personal travel managers (PTMs) decided to extend their stay in New Zealand's South Island following Travel Managers' annual National Conference in Christchurch in Sep.

Hosted by the Kaikoura and Nelson Tasman Regional Tourism Organisations, along with Tourism New Zealand, the four-day famil allowed the PTMs to experience a range of local experiences.

Highlights included sea kayaking in Abel Tasman National Park, sampling fresh seafood in the Marlborough Sounds, and the 'Wings Over Whales' flightseeing experience over Kaikoura.

Pictured enjoying a glass of sparkling at the Gravity Winery, Cellar Door & Art Gallery are Cathy Moir, Sue Wright, Georgia Thomas, Heather Taylor, Simone Fraser, Kerry Cleasby, Claire Crosby, Rose Febo & Lana Kanchek.

# Zimbabwe budget carrier flies into Oz

**AIRLINEPROS** has been appointed the GSA for low-cost African carrier fastjet Zimbabwe in the Australian market.

The local team will be charged with lifting the profile of the carrier with Australian travellers, and promoting its growing network and value proposition.

Fastjet Zimbabwe currently operates between three destinations in its home country, Harare, Victoria Falls and Bulawayo, as well as linking with Johannesburg and Kruger Nelspruit Mpumalanga in South Africa and Maun in Botswana.

AirlinePros will also represent the airline in 11 other countries, including an existing arrangement to promote the brand in the United States.

### **EY debuts Terminal A**

**ETIHAD** Airways operated its first commercial flight from Abu Dhabi International's new Terminal A yesterday, with the Middle Eastern carrier set to transition all flights at the UAE hub between 09 and 14 Nov.

Terminal A is capable of handling 45 million pax annually.







## Still juice left in NCL wellness

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's (NCL) fourth annual Walk for Wellness initiative is seeing participants take off their wellworn shoes, with the major philanthropic push wrapping up yesterday.

During the final challenge in week four, members of the travel sector were asked to snap a photo of something that had entertained them on one of their walks, or to create their own entertainment and capture it.

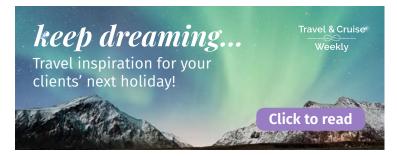
We couldn't help but marvel at the scary attention to detail captured by Anna Powell from Pursers Travel Group (pictured) on one of her many walks, which we may never know was her or someone else underneath the excellent Beetlejuice outfit.

However first prize was awarded to Jess Chambers from TravelManagers, who walked away with a House of Marley eco-friendly bluetooth speaker



for a snap of her daughter using the family dogs as her 'sled dogs' to get her up the hill in speedy fashion after one of the walks.

"What a month, I've loved this challenge so much & I got myself a smart watch, started tracking my steps and got out of the house every day," Chambers enthused.



#### White Island verdict

THE long-running criminal proceedings following the White Island disaster in Dec 2019 has drawn to a close this week with a guilty verdict handed down to the owners of the volcanic island.

Whakaari Management, owned by the Buttle brothers, were found guilty in an Auckland court for failing in its duty-of-care to minimise the risk to tourists.

Judge Evangelos Thomas said the company, which licenced operators to run tours on the island, had not engaged in enough consultation with geological scientists to monitor any potential eruptions.

Sentencing will take place in Feb - more details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.



#### **VA selects Sabre**

**VIRGIN** Australia has selected Sabre Corporation to power its future NDC connection.

The Aussie carrier said it will be using Sabre's NDC IT capabilities and GDS to create and distribute innovative offers and richer customised content for agents.

"It was vital to us that we chose the right, future-focused technology partner to enable us to create tailored, customised offers in real time, and position those offers in the right distribution channels at the right time, to the right travellers," VA Chief Commercial Officer Dave Emerson said.

"Investing in our distribution and retailing capability is crucial to enable a modern airline retailing strategy that's fit for purpose for today, tomorrow and for the longer term," he added.

The move follows VA choosing Sabre to provide two new solutions from the tech company's retail suite.

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### FCTG hits the big red sales button

**FLIGHT** Centre has launched its Big Red Sale offering significant savings on a range of flights, holidays, cruises and tours.

Running for the whole month of Nov, the promotion is being heralded as offering travellers some of the biggest savings the company has ever been able to draw together at the same time.

Highlights include a \$2,800 bonus value per couple for sevennight stays at the 5-star Siyam World Maldives.

### **FAA** investigates

**THE** Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has launched an investigation into a near-collision between two planes at Portland International Airport in Oregon.

An Alaska Airlines plane coming into land came within a frightening 76 metres of a SkyWest Airlines plane which was taking off at the same time.

A recent investigation by The New York Times (TD 22 Aug) found that near misses were becoming increasingly common in the United States as air traffic control staff shortage impact the aviation sector.



# **Embrace AI or perish: Watts**

ARTIFICIAL intelligence will soon be able to respond to client emails, write policy documents and market tourism businesses better than humans can. CEO of US-based Magpie Travel Christian Watts believes.

Speaking at the ATEC Meeting Place held in Adelaide today, Watts, who runs the first Hop On Hop Off sightseeing service in San Francisco, told attendees that tourism businesses need to embrace AI now or be left behind.

"The good thing is everyone has the same access to these Large Language Models, so there are few barriers to entry," Watts said.

"It's what everyone must do now to be competitive because it is delivering massive efficiency and you can be sure your competitor is using it too."

Watts also pointed to the "huge potential" of AI to streamline the complexities of the booking process and increasing internal business productivity.

"The visitor doesn't want to know about all the layers of interactions their booking had to go through to get to the final

### Philippines deep dive

THE Philippines is developing more dive spots for tourists at places such as Romblon, Marinduque, Batanes, Siguijor and Leyte, in a bid to increase the interest in dive tourism in the Asian country, an historically strong attraction for travellers.



experience - the many middle layers of tourism - and if we can simplify these processes, we can find cost benefits for businesses and travellers," he reasoned.

"Generative AI is hugely accessible and is available to everybody to use, helping to simplify what has become a very complicated tourism booking process with many levels".

Watts also contends that "the final delivery" of tourism product will be the last thing to be swallowed up by AI, meaning "humans will continue to need to be where we want them to be".

Pictured: Watts remaining more relaxed than most about AI.

### KE buys A321neos

KOREAN Air has placed an order for 20 extra A321neos as part of its ongoing fleet modernisation plans.

Planes will be configured in a single-aisle, two-class layout of 182 seats - eight in Prestige Class and 174 in Economy.

The carrier has already taken delivery of eight out of its initial order of 30 A321neos, with the bulk of the jets being deployed on short- and medium-haul routes in China and Japan.



# **Window** Seat

BAD weather has been blamed for causing a Buddha Air flight carrying 69 passengers to land in the wrong city.

The private flight in Nepal was intending to land at Janakpur from Kathmandu's Tribhuvan International Airport, but somehow wrongly touched down 250 kilometres away in Pokhara instead.

According to an official from the carrier, poor weather and storms precipitated a change in flight numbers between two services, but apparently the ground staff and the flight attendants failed to brief the misguided flight's captain and co-pilot, leading to the rather embarrassing blunder.

"There was a miscommunication between the ground staff and the pilots," the official said, adding "the flying pilots also did not look at the passengers' manifest."

While thankfully this story had a happy ending with pax transferred on to a correct flight later that day, there are clearly some mystery flights travellers wouldn't mind avoiding.





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luxury@traveldaily.com.au Wednesday 1st Nov 2023

### Luxe lodges at Bells

**BELLS** at Killcare, located on the NSW Central Coast in Bouddi National Park, has announced the addition of four new lodges, which it says will "introduce a new era of luxury nature escapes".

The new digs will feature two king bedrooms with an ensuite bathroom including a rain-shower, free-standing bath, and heated flooring, as well as a fully equipped contemporary kitchen, an open-plan dining and living area, and a private veranda overlooking Palm Beach and the Hawkesbury River.

Guests will also enjoy a heated private pool and day bed, a BBQ & alfresco dining area, a well-stocked bar and larder, and a cosy fireplace.

The new lodges are available to book now, for stays from 01 Feburary 2024 - more info HERE.

### River to Bay package

W BRISBANE has launched a new Moreton Bay Island day trip package, which allows travellers to "experience both sides of the Sunshine State".

Available until the end of summer, the offer includes a two-night suite stay, breakfast, valet parking, and a private tour to Moreton Bay Islands.

More information about the package can be found **HERE**.

# CAPELLA OPENS LUXE SPA TO VISITORS

**CAPELLA** Sydney has opened its new luxurious Auriga Spa to the public today, offering a range of beauty and relaxation treatments to Sydneysiders and visitors to the harbour city.

The spa and its wellness facilities were previously only accessible to guests staying at the five-star hotel, which is located in the city's CBD.

The sixth-floor retreat features spa treatment rooms, steam and sauna facilities, experiential showers and an ice fountain, all of which are available to day guests up to 30 minutes prior to an Auriga Spa appointment.

The spa's treatment menu includes signature massages, masks and body wraps, LED light therapy and more, and uses a custom-made range of skincare products by Byron Bay brand Synthesis Organics.



"We are delighted to open up Auriga Spa to the public and welcome day guests to discover Capella Sydney's sophisticated wellness services and facilities," Capella Sydney Spa Manager Dianne April Dayagbil said.

The venue has been consistently busy between Fri-Sun since it opened in Mar, Dayagbil pointed out, which means the general public will likely need to take advantage of mid-week appointments.

Auriga Spa's 20-metre heated swimming pool and Technogymequipped fitness centre will remain accessible only to inhouse guests of the hotel, Capella Sydney has confirmed. *JM* 

### Record bookings for Small Luxury Hotels

ITALY is becoming an increasingly popular choice among luxury-seeking travellers, according to Small Luxury Hotels of the World (SLH), which has announced a record year of bookings for its Italian hotel portfolio.

The collection features 77 independently-owned hotels throughout the European country, including three new openings in 2023: La Roqqa in

Porto Ercole, Cape of Senses in Torri del Benaco, and Furore on the Amalfi Coast.

"Reservations for the region this year have surpassed projections, showing a remarkable 65% increase in revenue YoY," Chief Operating Officer Richard Hyde shared.

"Our guests continue to be fascinated by Italy and the wide choice of reimagined historical properties in our portfolio."

#### Marriott Vietnam

MARRIOTT International is set to open three new luxury resorts in Vietnam, including the country's third JW Marriott Hotel, which will open in Trang An in 2028.

The other two signings mark the debut of the hotel giant's Ritz-Carlton Reserve and The Luxury Collection brands on Hon Thom Island in Phu Quoc, slated to open in 2028 and 2029, respectively.

### **Travel & Cruise**



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# ACCOMMODATION

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The only five-star questhouse in Northern NSW, 28 Degrees Byron Bay, is set to receive a new section, expanding its room capacities from seven to 12 rooms in Dec. The new rooms boast luxury features such as a balcony bath and heated plunge pools.

The adult-only resort is located on Marvell Street in the heart of the coastal town, and is a short walk from the destination's renowned beaches, including Main Beach.



Plantation Island Resort in Fiji has unveiled an array of new developments and activities to enhance the guest experience. High-energy travellers can enjoy a sunrise kayaking tour, sunset sailing tour, and a drua canoe cruise, while guests who prefer

to take a more laidback approach can head to the recently opened Brigham Bar to enjoy a feed and live music between Wed and Sat from 4-6pm and from 9pm till late.



Guests can now book stays at Hotel Lucine in Texas, which will open on 10 Nov as a new boutique hotel, formerly known as the Treasure Isle Motel. The 61-room property, which is situated on the coastline overlooking the Gulf of Mexico, will boast

the largest beachfront rooftop bar in Galveston, as well as a multipurpose event space and a 56-seat restaurant The Fancy, which will serve "American fine-ish dining".



Hyatt Regency Indian Wells Resort & Spa will undergo extensive renovations during the country's upcoming spring break in 2024, transforming its public areas and dining spaces. The 530-key property will welcome guests with new aesthetics in the

1,000m² lobby, bar and restaurant areas, with the revamp to transform the shared spaces into a "desert-chic" environment.



The 14-key Cove Huntingdon House has opened, offering three one-bedroom and 11 two-bedroom apartments in the heart of London. The contemporary property is ideal for travellers intended for longer stays of 90 days or more. Boasting modern

designs and luxurious comforts, each apartment includes bespoke tables for both working and dining, and a sofa bed for additional guests.



## VSC brings sunshine to Melb



**VISIT** Sunshine Coast (VSC) brought its Sunshine Soiree to Melbourne last Fri, which attracted more than 50 of the city's event professionals.

The roadshow highlighted the region's wide range of offerings, including accommodation and venue options, incentive experiences, and local products, while also giving away a smorgasbord of prizes.

Attendees were able to connect face-to-face with around a dozen Sunshine Coast suppliers, which included the likes of Australia Zoo, Creative Tours and Events,

### **New Western Front**

**MAT** McLachlan Battlefield Tours has launched a new Western Front Walking Tour, departing Paris on 25 Sep 2024.

The nine-day itinerary will follow the footsteps of the Anzacs in 10 significant battles, providing guests with a thorough understanding of the tactics and experiences of the soldiers who fought during the First World War.

The new tour is priced from \$4,899 per person, twin share learn more HERE.

Evoke Experiences, Kingfisher Bay Resort, and Tourism Noosa.

Making the day event more special. Aussie chef and TV presenter Paul West was there to entertain guests and showcase some of the Sunshine Coast's exceptional local produce.

The event was a "resounding success", according to VSC Head of Business Events Ali Thompson, who said she was "blown away by the response in Melbourne", which turned out to be the DMO's largest Soiree. JM

### **Better Botanic access**

**MALENY** Botanic Gardens & Bird World, a popular tourist attraction on the Sunshine Coast, has upgraded its existing buggy fleet with two new customdesigned wheelchair accessible buggies, making the venue safer and more accessible.

The additions, which were made possible via \$25,000 funding from the Palaszczuk Government's Accessible Tourism Infrastructure Grants, mean visitors in wheelchairs can now explore the attraction's 23 acres of gardens, lakes, waterfalls and birdlife.

# Travel Daily

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LUXURY TRAVEL

# MEKONG SERENITY

Introducing APT's brand-new, state-of-the-art custom-built river ship, the Mekong Serenity.

The Mekong's newest and most luxurious ship, boasting sophisticated facilities, delectable dining experiences, first-class service and much more. With elegant and spacious suites, all featuring indoor and outdoor balconies, quests will discover Vietnam and Cambodia in absolute luxury.









#### Serenity on a Bustling River

With just 44 suites for a maximum of 88 guests, the Mekong Serenity's intimate size means every traveller's voyage is highly personalised. Showcasing sophisticated style with a nod to colonial times, this is a ship beyond compare.

#### **All Balcony Suites**

All suite categories boasts a private outdoor balcony plus indoor panoramic balcony so guests can relax and enjoy the ever-changing scenery. Find ultimate comfort with the must-haves including, personal climate control, flat screen TV, wi-fi and mini bar fridge plus twice-daily servicing included.

#### **Floating Five-star Retreat**

From a first-class spa and fitness centre to the Sun Deck lounge. From the pool bar to the cafe, there is no shortage of services and facilities to ensure guests get the very most out of their luxury Vietnam and Cambodia holiday.

#### **All-Inclusive Dining**

APT's chefs craft exceptional menus featuring locally-inspired cuisine. With many all-inclusive dining options, guests will always have the luxury of choice. International house wine, local beer, local spirits and soft drinks are included at all times onboard the cruise.



#### APT Vietnam & Cambodia 2024/25 on sale now.

APT's Vietnam & Cambodia 2024/25 brochure is now available to view online. Look out for printed brochures available to order through TIFS soon.







# **Experience Paris with Chevalier**

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#### Le Pavillon de la Reine & Spa

Discover Le Pavillon de la Reine & Spa in the heart of the Marais discreetly hidden on the Place des Vosges, the oldest square in Paris. Now part of Virtuoso & Signature, with 56 individually decorated rooms and suites and Restaurant Anne awarded one Michelin Star, this former palace is surrounded by a stunning courtyard garden.

Find out more **HERE**.

Les Parisiens.

#### **Pavillon Des Lettres**

Moving to the right bank of the city, facing the presidential palace close to the Champs Elysee we have the

stylish Pavillon Des Lettres. With 26 bedrooms each dedicated to a letter of the alphabet, paying homage to writers throughout history from Baudelaire to Shakespeare. Three rooms can be booked with views of the Eiffel Tower, plus ask about our interconnecting room options.

Read more **HERE**.

#### Hotel du Petit Moulin

Lastly, why not stay in a former bakery in Paris dating back to the 1600's where Victor Hugo bought his baguettes! Hotel du Petit Moulin, also in the Marais, has just 17 bedrooms all designed by Christian Lacroix, ideal for those with an adventurous and playful spirit - more **HERE**.



Find out more **HERE**.

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