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USA gives thanks

VISIT USA has expressed gratitude towards its Australia Committee and members for their efforts throughout 2023.

The organisation is advising agents to 'save the date' for a series of upcoming events in Feb 2024, including Melbourne on 19 Feb, Brisbane on 20 Feb, and Sydney on 21 Feb.

See **page 11** for more information, and **page 12** for a full list of the DMO's members.

Dates revealed for NTIA '24

EXCLUSIVE

WITH many in the travel industry still basking in the glow of their triumphant National Travel Industry Award (NTIAs) wins, the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has revealed the event next year will be held on Sat 26 Oct.

Given the amazing attendance and response to the NTIAs last weekend, ATIA CEO Dean Long said it was incumbent on the industry body to ensure 2024 is even "bigger and better".

"Mark your calendars for another unforgettable celebration of the travel industry's achievements at our 2024 NTIAs on 26 Oct 2024 with the pre-events happening Fri 25 Oct," Long declared.

While a host location is yet to be named, Long confirmed the lucky city would be revealed "soon", hinting that 2024 is going to see

ATIA "out and about all around Australia".

The 2023 event at Crown Melbourne was a resounding success with over 1,300 travel professionals gathering for the highly anticipated ceremony.

Singapore Airlines was the major sponsor, while the joyous afterparty was sponsored by Viking - to read a full wrap of the event, see **HERE**, and for all of the winners, check it out **HERE**. **AB**

Win a trip to Canada

ENTIRE Travel Group is giving agents the chance to win a holiday to Canada worth \$13,000, including two return Economy airfares with Air Canada and two GoldLeaf seats on Rocky Mountaineer - see **p10** for details.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features nine pages of the latest news including **Business Events**

News, plus full pages from:

- **Entire Travel Group**
- **Visit USA**

Bon Voyage comp

TRAVEL Daily is giving readers the chance to win one of 10 tickets to our upcoming Bon Voyage event in Sydney.

Email comps@traveldaily.com.au and tell us what you're celebrating from 2023 in 25 words or less to win.

Win \$1k for WA

AGENTS could win a \$1,000 WA travel voucher when they register for BKB Holidays and Tourism WA's upcoming webinar **HERE**, which takes place on 28 Nov.

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Apps open for Destination Australia

TOURISM Australia is now inviting registrations for its annual 'Destination Australia' conference next year, which takes place on 13 Mar at the International Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney.

The event will focus on 'The next chapter for sustainable growth', with well-known Aussie TV presenter Karl Stefanovic to guide the proceedings as emcee while industry leaders and topic experts take to the stage.

Registration costs \$195 for physical attendance or \$60 for virtual attendance - register by 01 Mar **HERE**.

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US-Canada border closed amid explosion

A CAR that exploded on the Rainbow Bridge between the US and Canada has closed four border crossings.

The FBI is currently investigating the cause of the incident which killed the car's two passengers.



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Jayride faces restructure

AUSTRALIAN airport shuttle and private transfer company Jayride has conceded that it finds itself in a "challenging position" and needs to sharpen its business model and reduce overheads.

In an address to shareholders this morning, Chairman Rod Cuthbert (pictured) said that while the business had been building booking volumes through online partnerships, the deals have so far delivered "unattractive margins".

Cuthbert also admitted its market strategies in Europe and the United States had not created the sales momentum the company had forecasted.

As a result, Jayride will now undergo a wide-ranging strategic and operational review which will examine its core strategy, operating structure, and the value proposition it currently offers to travellers around the world.

"Jayride's approach to date has been overly broad, encompassing



B2B, B2C and B2BC2 offerings - seeking the largest addressable market rather than a directed approach which targets markets we have a confidence in developing," Cuthbert reasoned.

The candid admission from the Chair follows a recent call by former CEO Rod Bishop to transition to an MD role to make way for new blood who can "lead the company through the next phase of growth".

Jayride also flagged its receptiveness to being acquired or making its own purchase. AB

SAA cuts Malawi

SOUTH African Airways (SAA) will suspend services to Malawi (Lilongwe and Blantyre) from 30 Nov due to what it labelled "recent economic challenges" endured by neighbouring Malawi.

Foreign currency shortages was listed as the primary reason.



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MH Side Trip looks ahead

AUSTRALIA continues to be one of the top feeders for Malaysia Airlines' Bonus Side Trip, Chief Commercial Officer Dersensih Aresandiran (pictured) confirmed to *Travel Daily*, as the carrier attempts to broaden the popular program.

Introduced just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bonus Side Trip has been selling well for 12 months now (*TD* 21 Sep 2022), particularly out of long-haul markets such as Australia, as well as the United Kingdom.

"[The Bonus Side Trip] is generally well subscribed in the long-haul markets...we're seeing a much better pick up as the market opens up...there's a lot more demand," Aresandiran said.

As one of the only Asian carriers which offers such a program, Malaysia is looking to expand the Bonus Side Trip by working with other ground partners, he added. "We're working closely with



partners like Tourism Malaysia, for example, to see how we could get the ground operations of hotels in there as well, just beyond flights...that's something that we are trying to work on now," he explained.

"From the value proposition of a product, the offer is far more significant than for someone who's stopping over from another gateway within Asia." *MS*

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Hong Kong is giving travellers chills

FAMILIES will soon have a really, really cool reason to visit Hong Kong, with the Chinese territory set to unveil the world's first themed land dedicated to the movie franchise *Frozen*.

Slated to open to the public from 20 Nov at Hong Kong Disneyland, the new attraction will bring the world of Arendelle to life through Elsa's Ice Palace and the clock tower where Anna famously belted out the song *Love is An Open Door*.

Visitors will also be able to interact with the various *Frozen* cast members, who will walk around the park to greet guests.



Qantas waives fee

QANTAS has announced it is waiving the \$89.50 fee to join the Qantas Business Rewards Program for new members looking to join before 08 Dec.

The offer coincides with the carrier relaunching the platform, reported on by *Travel Daily* last week (*TD* 17 Nov), with the update adding a range of streamlined services for Australian SME businesses.

Rail, all in one click

RAIL Europe has announced the launch of its Multi-Providers feature, hailed as a major leap forward for its B2B platform by enabling agents & RailAPI partners to book tix with different providers under a single journey.

Using the new tool, advisors can add multiple legs of a trip with one click, tailoring journeys to their clients' needs without having to add each segment of a journey separately to the cart.

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Guscic is on board

WEBJET chief John Guscic has become the latest heavy-hitter to throw his weight behind proposals for the government to strengthen the consumer protections around air travellers.

“Philosophically, I’m usually against more regulation, but there are exceptions and I think this is one of them,” he told *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

Guscic also indicated that air travellers were particularly vulnerable and were being affected in ways that people booking hotel accommodation, for example, are not.

“I think Australian travel consumers and the industry would be better off if there were greater protections around bookings and being able to fulfil them,” he observed.



Travellers tossing cover

ONE in six travellers are jettisoning travel insurance altogether in a bid to save money and afford trips, a new report from Finder has found.

The research involving more than 1,000 people also found that close to half of travellers had “altered” their travel insurance cover to cut down on costs, while roughly one in five respondents said they took the “cheapest possible” insurance option.

Perhaps highlighting the cost-of-living crisis more than any other data point was the fact that 8% of travellers also admitted to lying on their application to hack down their premium fees.

Travel insurance expert at Finder, Angus Kidman (**pictured**), said that while the appetite to travel was clearly still high, it is a concern that consumers are cutting corners in areas that might impact their welfare.

“Skimping on travel insurance is a really dangerous trend, people should never cut corners with



travel insurance - it could come with serious consequences,” Kidman claimed.

“An overseas emergency can trash your finances if you don’t have adequate cover, so the bottom line is if you can’t afford insurance you shouldn’t be travelling in the first place.”

Kidman also cautioned against travellers who are currently deceiving insurance companies to trim their travel costs.

“Lying on your travel insurance application is a form of insurance fraud and can have lifelong consequences,” he warned.

“If it’s detected, you won’t be covered and you may be refused cover in the future”. *AB*



Window Seat

WHAT does it look like when an icon meets an icon?

It must be at least close to when a marvel like 103-year-old Ngan Chun Kam (**pictured**) steps aboard an entrenched carrier that she can boast being born before it ever took flight.

The centurion, who goes by the moniker of “Mamma” (when you’re over 100 you can call yourself what you like), recently took a flight home from Sydney to Hong Kong with Qantas, causing all cabin crew on board to erupt in applause.

Qantas was founded in Nov 1920, while Mamma was born in Jan of the same year.



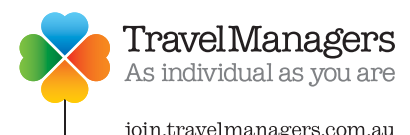
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ROYAL Caribbean is offering travel advisors triple the rewards for Black Friday via its Club Royal Rewards loyalty program.

For one week only, agents can claim up to \$75 for every new, eligible booking deposited between 21-28 Nov using the code 'BLACKFRI'.



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Tripadvisor blunder

TRIPADVISOR has been forced to apologise after posting Facebook ads promoting hotel stays in war-torn Gaza.

The online travel review site reportedly invited users to book a stay at the Al Mathaf Hotel in Gaza City, leading to management issuing a statement indicating "we understand the distress this has caused and have taken steps to stop this happening again".

Federal Government advisories continue to warn Australians not to travel to Gaza because of security concerns and the "volatile security situation".

Marina gets a refurb

THREE new dining options will soon be on offer aboard Oceania Cruises' 1,250-passenger ship *Marina*, with the line flagging the additions in a refurbishment taking place in May 2024.

The trio of new dining options will include Aquamar Kitchen, an expanded poolside ice-cream parlour, and the new casual al fresco venue, Italian trattoria.

Marina's private suites and public spaces will also be refreshed as part of the renovation, with the new features to be debuted on 18 May.



PTMs leave NZ in their wake



A LUCKY group of personal travel managers (PTMs) from TravelManagers recently had the chance to discover some of the lesser-known parts of New Zealand's South Island on a recent family trip.

Hosted by Destination Kaikoura, Visit Hurunui, Christchurch Airport and Tourism New Zealand, the agents visited the Hurunui and Kaikoura regions, where they experienced incredible world-class wineries, therapeutic hot

springs, animal encounters, and dining experiences.

The group enjoyed many memorable moments, including an authentic South Island farming experience, which included a hands-on guided farm tour and a adrenaline-filled jet-boat ride on the Hurunui River. JM

Pictured enjoying a dolphin swim experience: Debbie Bean, Maria San Pascual, Julia Hunt from Tourism Studio, Teresa Reyes and Helen Rolton.

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NCL relaxes with VIPs before NTIAs

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has once again rolled out the red carpet for key partners at its Annual VIP Retreat in the lead up to the NTIA Awards last week.

Guests were hosted to a two-night stay at the magnificent Intercontinental Sorrento on the Mornington Peninsula and indulged in a range of experiences including a wine-tasting lunch at Jackalope Winery, spa treatments, golf and a visit to the Portsea Hotel.

After two days of pampering, trade partners were then transferred to Melbourne where they enjoyed further hospitality at the NCL Sponsored Glam Club followed by the NTIA Awards event at the Crown Towers Melbourne.



JEFF Leckey, House of Travel Group; Damian Borg & Michelle Wiederman, NCL; Victoria Courtney, Flight Centre Travel Group NZ; Sarah Hunter, Go Holidays/Helloworld NZ; Michelle Ashcroft, Phil Hoffmann Travel; Joe Araullo, House Of Travel Australia; Steve Brady, Helloworld; Noriye Oto, Arrivia/Our Vacation Centre; Rochelle Clarke, eCruising; Josh Duncan, Flight Centre; Ange Middleton, NCL; Jason Krimmel, NCL Miami; Caroline Hitchen, Cruise HQ/Flight Centre; Jacinta Baker, Tahlia Shaw & Ben Angell, NCL; Rachel Kingswell, Travel Associates AU/NZ; Michael Middleton, Ignite Travel Group; Jean Summers-Reeves, Clean Cruising; Michelle Julius-Baty, Ignite Travel Group; and Astrid Richardson, Flight Centre Travel Group Independent.



NCL at Partners Retreat: Tahlia Shaw, Michelle Wiederman and Ange Middleton.



SAM Morgan, Megan Porter and Jacinta Baker, NCL at NTIA.



STEVE Brady from Helloworld with NCL's Jacinta Baker and Damian Borg.



THE NCL team celebrating each other at the NTIA Awards.



MICHELLE Ashcroft, Phil Hoffmann Travel with Astrid Richardson from Flight Centre Travel Group Independent.



BEN Angell, NCL; Jean Summers-Reeves, Clean Cruising; and Michael Middleton, Ignite Holiday Group.



SOME of the NCL team at the NTIA Awards: Tahlia Shaw, Erica Tremko, Michelle Wiederman, Leanne Fonagy, and Jacinta Baker.



ROCHELLE Clarke, eCruising; Ange Middleton, NCL; and Noriye Oto, Arrivia/Our Vacation Centre.



RACHEL Kingswell, Travel Associates AU/NZ; Victoria Courtney, Flight Centre NZ; Ben Angell, Caroline Hitchen Cruise HQ/Flight Centre; and Michelle Julius-Baty, Ignite Travel Group.



DAMIAN Borg, NCL; Josh Duncan, Flight Centre Travel Group; and Ryan Thomas, Ignite Travel Group.

Industry gets set for NTIA success

TOURIST boards, airlines, cruise companies, government organisations and travel and tourism industry leaders from around the world were among attendees at last weekend's sensational National Travel Industry Awards in Melbourne.

Dressed to the nines, attendees made the most of the abundant networking opportunities available to reinforce partnerships, catch up after a busy year, and perhaps even start new conversations about the future.

The *Travel Daily* team conducted video interviews with all of the winners, with several included in a gala NTIA wrap-up of the industry night of nights from our sister publication *travelBulletin* - see travelbulletin.com.au - while lots more photos from the event are now available for viewing online by **CLICKING HERE**, and all of the winners can be viewed by **CLICKING HERE**.



CHRIS Watson, Discover Travel Group with Viking's Lee Siefken.



NORHAN Youssef from Qantas with Clean Cruising's Jean Summers.

QANTAS Head of International Cam Wallace with ATIA CEO Dean Long.



TOURISM Australia Director Annabel Dolphin from Helloworld Mackay with colleague Georgia Walk.



ANDREA Robinson from Walt Disney Parks & Resorts with Glen Mintrim, UK-based Wendy Wu Tours CEO.



RICHARD Styles from Visit Qatar with wife Grainne.



CARYN Young, Adventure World NZ with Travel Associates chief Rachel Kingswell.



THE HotelBeds team.



VISIT Switzerland's Sonia Holt and new Market Manager ANZ Sandra Babey.



DISCOVER Qatar's Angus Tandy flew in for the NTIAs and is pictured with Andrea Morgan, Adventure World.



BCEC shuffles leadership team

BRISBANE Convention & Exhibition Centre (BCEC) has announced changes to its Executive Team.

Director of Sales Alison Gardiner will step into the expanded role of Director of Sales, Strategy & Partnerships as part of BCEC's Growth Strategy.

Additionally, Director of Events & Customer Services Shaun Mitchell will take on extra responsibility, becoming 2IC to General Manager Kym Guesdon.

The changes will help ensure the events hub is well positioned to maximise opportunities of Brisbane's status as an Olympic host city, in the lead-up to the 2032 games.

MEA NAMES THREE NEW DIRECTORS

MEETINGS & Events Australia (MEA) announced three new Board Directors at its Annual General Meeting on 21 Nov.

Craig Watson, Benjamin Ferry and Oliver Sheer (pictured left to right) were elected to fill vacancies left by retiring Directors Michael Firman, Paul Davison and Mike Schrafft.

The new appointees come from diverse backgrounds - Sheer is the Managing Director of Sydney-based event management company Be Challenged; Ferry is the Director of Commercial, Premium & Essentials, Australasia & Pacific at IHG Hotels & Resorts; and Watson leads Sydney Prop Specialists as General Manager.

The network said the leaders "represent an industry sub-segment that is not otherwise represented on the MEA Board", reflecting its aim to stand for "the



full breadth of the Australian events industry".

The trio will govern the organisation through until the 2024 AGM alongside existing Directors Jess Glass (University of Qld), Megan Peters (Lateral Event Management), Vanessa Green (Cliftons Events Solutions), Emma McDowell (Saxton Speakers Bureau), Thomas Staunton (SoldOut Events) and Alicia Thomas (Royal ICC).

The AGM also saw Vanessa Green elected as Chair, while

Megan Peters will remain Deputy Chair, Craig Watson was nominated as Treasurer, and MEA CEO Peter McDonald was reappointed as Secretary.

Green said she was excited to welcome the new directors, saying "their diverse backgrounds and expertise in various sectors of the events industry bring a fresh perspective to our Board".

"The MEA Board for 2024 is well-equipped to represent and support our unique and diverse membership." JM

BEIA's new Chair

FORMER international cricketer and previous CEO of the Tourism Industry Association in New Zealand, Martin Snedden, has been named as the new Independent Chair of Business Events Industry Aotearoa (BEIA).

Snedden said he is thrilled to take on the new challenge, saying "I look forward to gaining many new insights, and to sharing my experience with this engaged and passionate industry".

He takes over from Steve Armitage, who is now CEO of Hospitality New Zealand.

BE Sydney makes a big social impact

BUSINESS Events Sydney (BESydney) has welcomed a new Social Impact Specialist to its team to spearhead its Social Impact Strategy.

Tina Demetriou will draw on her experience with event sustainability and community stakeholder strategy and engagement to provide expert guidance to BESydney.

She will work with the client engagement team and global clients to develop shared



impact intentions and action plans to improve realisation and management.

The announcement comes as BESydney hosts a week of Social Impact workshops with key industry partners and staff.

ABEA invites say

THE Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) is preparing a submission to the Commonwealth Government COVID-19 Response Inquiry on behalf of the industry.

Members of ABEA can contribute to the submission by completing a survey about how the pandemic affected their business.

Members can complete the survey [HERE](#) before 29 Nov.

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The **Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC)** has appointed a new member to its national board. **Robert Taylor**, the CEO of the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council, has joined six existing members at the table, representing a breadth of supplier, buyer and partner member businesses. Taylor brings extensive knowledge in all things Aboriginal tourism.

Bringing a wealth of culinary experience across various luxury hotel and fine dining venues, **Steven Hartert** has joined **The Porter House Hotel Sydney** as its Executive Chef. Hartert has over two decades of experience within the industry and most recently occupied the same role at Pullman Quay Grand Sydney Harbour for more than four years. He has also worked at Pier One Sydney Harbour, Autograph Collection.

Coral Expeditions has appointed **Gaby Percy** as its Sales Manager Australia & New Zealand. Previously the travel company's Sales Executive, the promotion will see Percy lead the sales force through the trans-Tasman region, while overseeing key partners relations and driving strategic initiatives to help elevate Coral Expeditions' prominence in the market.

Oliver Philpot has taken on the role of Group Executive Commercial and Partnership at **Tourism and Events Queensland**. Philpot boasts a lengthy resume within the industry, including lead management roles in global strategic marketing, aviation, business development, and more. He was most recently the SVP and Head of Aviation Marketing and Partnerships at Brisbane Airport Corporation.

The UK's **Focus Travel Partnership** has appointed two new members to its board, announced at its partners conference in Belfast this week. **James Parkhouse**, former CEO of Agiito, has been named as the non-Executive Director of the board, while the former Director of Sales at United Airlines, **Bob Schumacher**, will become the non-Executive Chair on 01 Jan 2024, taking over the role from the retiring Adrian Parkes.

The former Chair of Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, **Lisa Gay**, has become the new Chair of **Victorian Funds Management Corporation (VFMC)**. Gay was also previously the Deputy Chair of the Indigenous Land Corporation and has been the Acting Chair of VFMC following the retirement of James Mackenzie in Aug. She was appointed by the Treasurer of Victoria, Tim Pallas.

The global technology company **HCLTech** has announced the appointment of **Sonia Eland** as Executive Vice President and Country Manager for Australia and New Zealand. Her resume includes a two-year stint at lastminute.com.au as the travel agency's Chief Marketing Officer; she has also held senior-level roles at major banks, including HSBC, Westpac and more.

The Star sets the bar high



THE Star Brisbane has announced three new dining venues ahead of the opening of its new all-day Sky Deck (render pictured) in 2024, which will be situated on top of the 100-metre-tall building with breathtaking views that overlook the city.

The new dining destination will feature The Star's latest signature restaurant Aloria, which will serve up dry-aged beef and Qld's world-class seafood, as well as Babblers, a relaxed dining experience that will plate up shareable crowd-pleasers and Aussie craft beer and wines.

Visitors will also be able to soak in the stunning sights of Brisbane in the open-air bar Cicada Blu, which is perfect for pre- and post-dinner rendezvous.

"We have gone above and beyond to consider every detail of each venue and how the trio seamlessly integrate to serve up unforgettable moments in the sky," General Manager F&B Dustin Osuch explained.

The striking new sky-high playground will be available to the public all year-round, with venue bookings expected to open early next year. *MW*



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*Excludes taxes, departs SYD or BNE.



The Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre

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THANK YOU VISIT USA COMMITTEE & MEMBERS



Visit USA Australia would like to sincerely thank its 2023 Committee and its Members.

The Visit USA Australia Committee are all volunteers who give their time and expertise to help drive the Organisation and deliver value for our Members. **We thank you.**

To our Members, both here in Australia and in the US, we are thankful for your incredible teams and partners who support Visit USA through direct participation, the provision of sponsorships and the sense of community you help to create.

Thank you for investing in the Australian travel industry which allows Visit USA to support agents in selling the USA. 2024 is shaping up to be even more successful and we encourage agents to save these dates:

Melbourne: 19 February Brisbane: 20 February Sydney: 21 February

Happy Thanksgiving



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David Clark, Tauck
Belinda Harvy, Discover The World
James Hewlett, Visit USA
Jessica Evans, Santa Monica Travel & Tourism
Tony Soden, Rocky Mountaineer
Richard Carrick, United Airlines
David McMahon, Travel South
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Expedia TAAP
Explore Fairbanks
Explore Minnesota
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Go City
Grapevine, Texas
Great American West
Great Wolf Lodge Anaheim
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Visit Salt Lake
Visit San Antonio
Visit Savannah
Visit Seattle, Port of Seattle &
The State of Washington Tourism
Visit West Hollywood
Viva Holidays
W Hollywood
Waikiki Beach Marriott Resort
Wailea Beach Resort Maui
Warner Bros Studio Tour Hollywood
Wynn Las Vegas and Encore
Yosemite Madera County
Yosemite Mariposa