



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news, including a photo page from **Omniche**, our **Corporate Update** page plus full pages from:

- **Infinity Holidays**
- **Abercrombie & Kent**

The HOT new team

THE new wholesale cruise team led by Jeff Leckey (**TD** 28 Sep) at House of Travel (HOT) has appointed three new members to spearhead its sales charge.

These include Matt Nicholl who joins as Group Manager, Pauline McLennan, who will create fly/cruise packages, and Jacqui Kennedy, from HOT's res team.

Win a Galapagos trip

WORLD Expeditions Travel Group has launched a new travel agent incentive offering the chance to win a luxury cruise experience for two in the Galapagos Islands.

The prize, valued at more than \$20,000, is open to all travel agents to win, which will be determined by who is the top seller of selected World Expeditions brands such as World Expeditions, Australian Cycle Tours, Australian Walking Holidays, Tasmanian Expeditions and UTracks.

The incentive period will run until 30 Jun 2024 and progress can be monitored via the monthly leader board **HERE**.

Air NZ extends credits

FOLLOWING the lead of Qantas and Virgin Australia, Air New Zealand has become the latest carrier to extend the expiry date for credits issued due to the impacts of COVID-19.

All customers who have a COVID credit issued prior to Oct 2022 now have until 31 Jan 2026 to book travel, which must be taken by 31 Dec 2026, representing a total six-year period in which its customers can action the historical credits.

The Kiwi carrier admitted that

Q'town bomb threat

QUEENSTOWN Airport was evacuated this morning following a bomb threat.

The situation has now been resolved, with a spokesperson telling **TD** the alert has been lifted and the airport is now operating as per usual.

The Kiwi hub is no stranger to bomb threats, having been forced to evacuate travellers in 2016 after a bomb threat note was found on a Qantas plane.

Work with Infinity

WORK with the reborn Infinity Holidays brand and experience the range of benefits on offer.

These include taking the complexity out for the travel trade, 24/7 support, and a team of sales experts ready to assist with any enquiries you may have - see **page seven** for details.



it has more than NZ\$200 million worth of credits still outstanding from the pandemic period, accounting for roughly 85% of the issued value used.

"Given that amount, we believe this extension is the right thing to do to give customers more time," Air New Zealand Chief Financial Officer Richard Thomson said.

Thomson added the latest move was the sixth time Air New Zealand had extended the expiry date for COVID credits, stating it was an "unusual step" in the unique circumstances created by the pandemic.

"Customers can use their credit for any flight on the network, can part pay using credit and cash, use it to purchase excess baggage or seat select," he added. **AB**

All aboard Botswana

THE Africa Safari Co is reminding agents that it has two spots still remaining on its upcoming fam to Botswana.

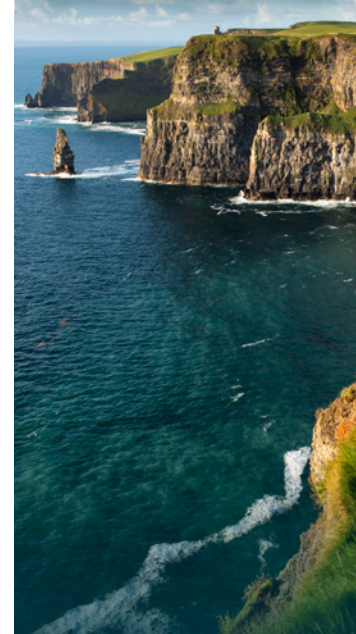
Departing on 30 Oct, the discounted African adventure will cost \$2,995ppts (excluding air fares), representing around \$5,000 worth of savings on the retail price - email Susie Potter **HERE** to log your interest.

A&K seeks talent

A&K is recruiting for several positions across its teams, including travel specialist, sales support and cruise roles.

Head to the **back page** to see the available positions and for info on how to apply.

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Window Seat

SOMETIMES waiting for a flight that has been delayed can feel like you've passed away, but a recent blunder by Qantas' freight division has, quite literally, left a crypt of coffins laying on the tarmac.

Dead bodies were among a raft of unusual cargo that was unable to be collected from airports following a catastrophic system failure, which also included perishable food.

A letter sent by Qantas' cargo division to customers confirmed a switch over to a new integrated cloud-based management system "did not go as planned", and was identified as the root cause of the issue.

"All human remains and other critical freight has been managed according to industry standards," Qantas was keen to stress to its customers.



APT sets sail in Egypt

APT has announced the launch of its 2024/25 Egypt, Jordan, and Israel itineraries, headlined by a new seven-night luxury cruise along the Nile River.

The cruise is a major component of a longer 26-day Epic Egypt, Jordan and Israel trip from Cairo to Tel Aviv, which is APT's flagship itinerary in the region.

New trips also include the 12-day Egypt Discovery priced from \$10,995ppts - full details [HERE](#).

Double legal trouble

THE Qld Government has formally filed an application in the Land Court to start forfeiture proceedings against Fortune Island Holding Company, the lessee of the once-thriving tourist destination of Double Island.

The latest development follows claims by the government that the island was allowed to sink into disrepair (**TD** 18 May).

"As a government we are committed to the responsible development of our island resorts for the jobs and business opportunities they create in regional Queensland," Resources Minister Scott Stewart said.

Compass points to agents

MOTORCYCLE and 4WD adventure tour company Compass Expeditions has launched a new travel agent portal designed to simplify the company's large and diverse range of itineraries.

The company's chief Ben Willox said the upgrade to its trade platform was crucial to better engage with sellers and make life simpler to promote its often quite intricate list of products.

"We understand that travel agents play a pivotal role in shaping remarkable travel experiences for their clients and...we recognise that agents require seamless access to the information their clients expect," Willox observed.

"Our newly introduced agent portal is designed to streamline the process and remove some of those complexities," he added.

The revamp allows agents to more seamlessly create and manage bookings for all Compass Expeditions in the one place, and follows a recent expansion by the adventure tour operator into the

small-group 4WD tour space just over two months ago (**TD** 24 Jul).

Ingrid Berthelsen, Evolution Travel Collective's MD and representative for Compass, said the new development was testament to how the business is taking important steps to further support agents as they promote their new 4WD tour range.

"The introduction of this booking and management system showcases Compass' unwavering dedication to...providing agents with the essential tools they need to book these unique small-group 4WD and motorcycle tours." **AB**

Kiwi kids tour company purchased

UK-BASED tour operator Inspiresport, specialising in school and sports club-related travel, has expanded into the Australia and NZ market with the purchase of Kiwi-based Tour Time Group.

The acquiree operates a similar business model to its new British owner, organising school sports, music and special interest tours.

"Inspiresport has been reviewing opportunities for international expansion over a number of months," Managing Director Steve Butchart said.

"Our primary focus will be on the creation of outbound tours from New Zealand and Australia into the UK and Europe and generating increased demand for our pro club training experiences across football, rugby, and hockey," he added.

Brent Imrie will remain as Managing Director for Tour Time Group under the terms of the acquisition deal.

New Google bot can plan holidays

A **GOOGLE** executive is hailing the skills of its newly updated generative artificial intelligence virtual assistant to plan holidays and trips for users.

Vice President of chatbot Bard, Sissie Hsiao, told *Reuters* the new version will have access to a mobile phone's camera and microphone, and lets users input pictures or audio into the large language model to help answer questions, such as how to organise holiday itineraries.

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A Star is born for Royal

ROYAL Caribbean International has revealed its next Icon Class ship will debut in 2025 and be called *Star of the Seas* (render pictured inset below).

Following the construction of the soon-to-launch *Icon of the Seas*, the latest vessel will seek to capitalise on the booming booking demand already garnered by the first ship, which in Oct last year set the line's single largest booking day record and highest volume booking week in the brand's history.

"The idea of combining the best of every type of vacation into one ultimate adventure has created more excitement than ever anticipated, and *Star of the*

Seas will be the next bold answer to the record-breaking consumer demand we've seen for nearly a year," CEO of Royal Caribbean International Michael Bayley said.

Few details have been released at this stage, but the line said fans can sign up **HERE** for updates. **AB**

Win Intrepid tours

FLIGHT Centre has partnered with Intrepid Travel to offer travellers the chance to win 20 Intrepid tours for two as part of a global comp that includes return flights to the value of \$2,000.

Comp ends 30 Nov - more **HERE**.

VV appoints Michelle

VIRGIN Voyages has appointed Michelle Bentubo to be its new Chief Operating Officer, joining an exclusive band of women who directly oversee all operations of a cruise line including marine and technical functions.

Bentubo will oversee every touchpoint of the brand's end-to-end operations in her new remit, a "critical position" Virgin Voyages says as it expands to more than 100 ports of call across more than 45 global itineraries.

"Not only am I excited to work with her as she takes our smooth operations functions to the next level, but I couldn't think of a better leadership mentor for all our crew, especially our future women leaders," newly installed CEO Nirmal Saverimuttu said.



Sabre signs LATAM

LATAM Airlines Group has inked a new deal with Sabre to supply connected agencies with long-term access to LATAM's traditional and NDC content through the Sabre GDS.

The two companies are currently working together on the integration of NDC by LATAM content in the Sabre GDS, which is planned to be implemented in the first half of 2024, with a specific launch date to be revealed at a later time.

We will double our business



THE incredible growth of G'Day Group shows no signs of slowing down, with CEO Grant Wilckens sharing his expansion strategy for the operator at a lunch for valued industry partners yesterday.

G'Day Group is a leader in Australia's regional tourism sector, with over 300 properties across the group's brands, which include Discovery, G'Day Parks, Wikicamps, G'Day Rewards, and El Questro in Western Australia.

"There is a huge amount of growth happening and we've got ambitions to double the business again in the next five years", Wilckens shared, highlighting that the G'Day Parks brand alone has doubled its digital growth revenue in the past 12 months.

Part of the growth strategy includes a focus on investing in generative AI, further strategic acquisitions, as well as a bolstered leadership team.

The growing executive team now includes Lahnee White as Chief Marketing Officer, along with travel industry stalwart David Hassan as Chief Technology Officer (**TD** 30 Jun).

Pictured: Lahnee White, Grant Wilckens and David Hassan. **AP**

Put Abu Dhabi in the diary, folks

ABU Dhabi has unveiled its biggest-ever events calendar, with more than 150 back-to-back events set to take place over the next six months.

Visitors and locals can enjoy a varied line-up of activities and experiences, including Abu Dhabi Grand Prix concerts, NBA and UFC events, cultural festivals, interactive family shows, culinary and book festivals, and more - see what's on **HERE**.

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Exploring the majestic Norfolk Island

OMNICHE Holidays recently hosted six agents on a five-day famil to Norfolk Island. They explored the dramatic scenery, learned about the island's history, mingled with the friendly locals and immersed themselves in all the experiences available.

National BDM Jasmine Van Den Brink took the group on a combination of self-drive and escorted tours all over the island, with the famil hitting the road the moment they arrived at Governor's Lodge and headed straight to famous Emily Bay.

The days were filled with dinners and cocktails at Bailey's restaurant, a visit to Castaway Brewery, enjoying a sound & light show, and a History In the Making Tour.

Further highlights included learning the local language, experiencing a 'Progressive Dinner', an Island Life Tour, an Island fish fry, poetry at Wonderland by Night, exploring natural wonders of Norfolk and finishing the final day by dressing up as jailbirds for a special 'Night as a Convict' dinner.

The robust itinerary ensured that the agents were able to immerse themselves in the best Norfolk Island has to offer, leaving them with a new perspective on why this island is so popular to a broad number of travellers.



JULIE Fathers, RACQ Robina; Tina Maas, Helloworld Buderim; Anne Lane, MTA; Petrina Frankham, MTA; Georgina Cooper, RACQ Chermside; Jasmin Van Den Brink, Omniche; and Hemmy Timotius, Flight Centre Carindale.



ENJOYING the lovely weather the destination had to offer!



JASMIN sharing her strong spirit on the famil tour.



TREE climbing was also on the fun-filled itinerary.



THE group off on an adventurous excursion.



DRESSING up as convicts for dinner.

TAKING a quick snap before departing.



DINING at Bailey's!



CORPORATE UPDATE

Sydney knocked off perch

BRISBANE has overtaken Sydney as the most popular destination for international small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) travelling to Australia, new statistics from Corporate Traveller have revealed.

The data showed more than 24% of bookings for business travellers heading Down Under were for the Sunshine State for the first nine months of this year, representing a huge year-on-year jump of over 95%, and a 3.8% margin over Sydney.

It represented a significant shift from last year, which saw business travellers favour Sydney 4% more than Brisbane between Jan and Sep 2022.

Global MD for Flight Centre's

Corporate Traveller, Tom Walley, believes Brisbane's increasing appeal in light of the upcoming Olympic Games in 2032 and investments in the Queen's Wharf development are spiking interest.

"Ever since the Commonwealth Games visited the Gold Coast, investment in Brisbane has taken off exponentially, with more and more major domestic and international businesses choosing to move their operations and HQs to the Sunshine State capital," Walley said.

He added the rise of the 'bleisure' traveller, "who clearly want to take advantage of what Qld has to offer", is also contributing to the charm among SME corporate travellers. *JM*

Hotel price hike

CORPORATE travellers can expect to spend up to 6.8% more on hotel stays in Australia next year, according to new research from American Express Global Business Travel.

The Hotel Monitor 2024, which looked at price trends in 80 major cities around the world, found that hotel rates in Brisbane will see the sharpest rise (+6.8%), followed by Adelaide (+6.4%), Perth (+6.1%), Melbourne (+5.2%) and Sydney (+4.9%).

These increases are fairly modest compared to other places in the world like Chicago, expected to rise 12.6%, and Paris, which could see an 11% increase.

Goki turns Corporate Keys

CORPORATE accommodation solutions provider Corporate Keys has partnered with Sydney-based hospitality access provider Goki to offer a contactless check-in solution to its guests.

Using Goki's mobile app and NFC (Near Field Communication) technology, guests will be able to bypass traditional front desk check-ins by using a unique 4-digit code sent to them on the morning of their arrival.

As well as reducing physical contact and wait times, the new tech-savvy solution also reduces the administrative burden on hotel staff.

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Travel Daily

Sheltering in Utah's beauty



FIVE travel trade reps from key Australian and Canadian tour operators recently returned from a week-long famil in Southern Utah, hosted by the Utah Office of Tourism.

The group, which included Aussie staff from Scenic, Travel Associates and Ignite, were shown around the US state in the hope of inspiring more Utah itineraries to be created as part of the brands' 2024 programs.

Highlights of the whistle-stop tour included a trip on Rocky Mountaineer's new Rockies to the Red Rocks rail journey from Denver to Moab, a journey to Monument Valley, as well as explorations of all Utah's 'Mighty five' National Parks.

All Australian travel trade representatives were also invited to complete the Utah Specialist Academy - see more information at www.visitutahspecialistacademy.com.

Pictured: Heather McGilvary, Utah Office of Tourism; Kate Wienburg, Utah Office of Tourism; Leanne Haus, West World Tours (Canada); Isaure Patat, CAA Quebec (Canada); Barbara Lischka, Scenic; Ruth Bullock, Travel Associates; and Michelle Julius Baty, Ignite. *AB*

Don't visit us yet!

HUNDREDS of West Maui residents are pleading with Governor Josh Green to delay the reopening of the region to tourists, claiming the grieving and recovery period is still too raw to welcome visitors.

A large group of residents delivered their pointed message to Green during a recent council meeting, with the Governor previously stating he planned to reopen the area to tourists on the two-month anniversary of the deadly fires that struck Maui.

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Cruise Traveller is offering savings of up to \$11,540 per couple and \$17,410 for solo travellers with an additional bonus credit up for grabs on its all-inclusive New Guinea package. The 16-night voyage will visit the island's remote and rarely visited destinations, including traditional villages. Priced from \$13,710ppts, the itinerary includes \$400 flight credit per person. Call 1800 507 777 to learn more.

Travellers can enjoy savings of up to \$2,600 per couple and free cabin upgrades when they book **APT's** 14-day 'Douro Delights with Madrid and Lisbon' by 30 Nov. Explore the sprawling vineyards and native farms on the Douro Valley and sail through the Douro River from \$9,695ppts, which includes a total of 29 meals and a variety of onboard beverages. Call APT on 1300 278 278 to book.

The New Caledonia Spring Sale is currently on with **Aircalin**, where travellers can score return flight tickets to Noumea from \$579. Fly direct to Noumea from Sydney from \$579 return; Brisbane from \$599 return; and Melbourne from \$649 return. The sale ends 22 Oct, and is valid for travel for certain periods through to 31 Jul 2024. Email chris.thistlethwaite@aircalin.com.au for more.

ADGE Hotel + Residences at Surry Hills is offering a new B&B package with **Soul Deli** from \$249 per night. Guests who book overnight accommodation at one of ADGE's guestrooms can savour a complimentary breakfast of hotcakes or eggs and bacon with coffee and tea the next morning at Soul Deli. **CLICK HERE** for more information.

Up to 40% savings are up for grabs for guests staying at least four nights at the **Outrigger Maldives Maafushivaru Resort**. The offer also includes daily buffet breakfast and dinner at Cuisine Gallery, up to US\$100 of resort credit for food, beverages or spa, a one-time sunset cruise excursion, and more. Available to book until 15 Nov for stays before 31 Dec 2024. Use promo code "WELCOME" to book **HERE**.

To celebrate its passenger service system upgrade, **Bamboo Airways** is offering a discount of up to 15% on all ticket fares. Use promo code "BAMBOO15D" for domestic flights and "BAMBOO15I" for international flights on the airline's website and mobile app to receive the discount on the base fare. The offer ends 15 Oct - **CLICK HERE** for more.

French Polynesian cruise line **Aranui** is offering 50% off for the second guest in a twin share room, as well as no single supplement on its Pitcairn and Austral Islands voyages in 2024. Valid until 31 Dec, savings of \$6,067 are available for solo travellers on the 11-day roundtrip voyage from Papeete to Pitcairn. The itinerary is priced from \$8,503 per person with savings of up to \$3,967 - see www.aranui.com.



Qld operators bridge cultures



TO STRENGTHEN relationships and opportunities for Indigenous Australians across the state's tourism and hospitality sectors, the Independent Indigenous Tourism Operators of Queensland (IITOO) and Howard Smith Wharves (HSW) have formed a new strategic partnership.

The two groups recently enjoyed an intimate event (**pictured**) to celebrate the launch of their partnership, which included a performance by Shanice Martin and a smoke ceremony, followed by addresses from Director and Founding Member of IITOO, Madonna Thomson.

The event, which focused on the theme 'Bridging Cultures: Queensland's Tourism and Hospitality Opportunity' attracted government, corporate and cultural leaders, including IITOO patron Uncle Eddie Ruska.

IITOO was established as an advocate for the Indigenous voice in the tourism industry.

Thomson reiterated the partnership will bring shared "information, trust and knowledge that complements our social responsibilities...while supporting empowerment of Indigenous Cultural Practitioners".

HSW CEO Luke Fraser said the pact is the result of the "professional relationship that we have built over the past few years", and will help the riverfront precinct to further promote cultural awareness. *MW*

QR expands Saudi

QATAR Airways has expanded its services in Saudi Arabia, flagging the launch of two new gateways in AlUla and Tabuk, as well as the reopening of Yanbu.

Operations to AlUla will commence on 29 Oct, while flights from the UAE to Yanbu will take off on 06 Dec, coinciding with a tourism development boom in Saudi Arabia.

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