Travel Daily First with the news

Friday 20th Oct 2023



Today's issue of TD

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

- Taiwan/Eva Airways Training Platform
- Aurora Expeditions

Aurora recruiting

AURORA Expeditions is seeking to fill several key cruise career opportunities including a new General Manager Operations role, an Expedition Team Recruitment Manager and an Education and Enrichment Manager.

For more details see the last page of today's Travel Daily.

FCTG organic growth focus

FLIGHT Centre says it's well-placed to capitalise on opportunities during travel's post-COVID recovery, but is primarily focusing on organic growth as cash-flow patterns return to normal seasonal activity.

In an investor presentation today, FCTG noted it had about \$1.4 billion in cash and investments as at 30 Jun, with a capital allocation framework to maximise shareholder returns, having paid a fully-franked 18c per share dividend yesterday.

The company will also consider merger and acquisition opportunities to fast-track

growth in key sectors, such as last year's Scott Dunn luxury deal, the presentation notes, but management is firmly focused on creating shareholder value.

Flight Centre is "playing the long game - pursuing strategies that will deliver sustainable longerterm growth", but is also targeting a significant short-term profit margin rebound to 2% for FY25.

Key success factors cited include FCTG's people and culture, its famous brands and wide range of quality products and services.

The presentation reiterated expectations of further recovery, with the transformed business already tracking at or near pre-COVID TTV levels in Australia. BP

Upskill on Taiwan

AGENTS can make the most of growing demand for travel to Taiwan by undertaking the new Discover Beauty of Taiwan training platform - see page seven.

ATAC conference kicks off in Canberra

TRAVEL agents from across the country have gathered in the ACT today for the Australian Travel Agents Cooperative (ATAC) "Future Focus" conference at the National Press Club, with Senator Bridget McKenzie, Shadow Transport Minister, opening proceedings.

McKenzie chaired the recent Senate inquiry which focused on the need for a more competitive, affordable and reliable aviation sector in Australia.

Other speakers today will include ATIA CEO Dean Long as well as several ATAC preferred partners and a keynote on navigating AI in the travel sector.

CLIA MD Joel Katz will present tomorrow along with a panel discussion including top cruise sellers Justine Sealey from Ramsgate Travel, Cruise Express' Meg Hill and Neil Kirby from Travel Masters, while a welcome dinner tonight will be hosted at the National Portrait Gallery.









Around Formosa Taiwan Tour

10 days Taipei to Elephant Mountain from only \$2,699*



MUTours

EK returns Aussies

EMIRATES' special repatriation flight landed in Sydney this morning, returning home Australians who were impacted by the conflict in Israel (TD 17 Oct).

The flight was organised in collaboration with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade (DFAT), other Australian govt contacts, and Qantas.

"We are prepared to stage more special humanitarian flights, and also to accommodate pax on our other scheduled services to Australia or other points in Southeast Asia, working with our partner Qantas to connect Australians to their final destination city," EK Division VP for Australasia Barry Brown said.

The carrier said it will continue to closely monitor the situation.

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SYD recovery accelerating

OUTBOUND travel by Australians departing Sydney Airport last month reached 99% of pre-pandemic levels, according to new figures released today.

A total of 3.37 million travellers passed through the gateway, and while inbound recovery continues to lag, the overall figure represented a 92.3% recovery compared to Sep 2019 numbers.

Domestic traffic is sitting at 91.7% of pre-COVID levels with 2.1 million passengers passing through the T2 and T3 terminals, with outgoing CEO Geoff Culbert saying "we are now within touching distance of prepandemic passenger traffic".

The China recovery continued to gain momentum, with Chinese visitor arrivals sitting at 78% of Sep 2019 figures, while several source markets soared above

Uganda attack

THE UK Foreign Office has advised against "all but essential travel" to Uganda's Queen Elizabeth National Park after a British tourist was shot dead in a suspected terrorist attack along with another guest and a guide.

BA back to AUH

BRITISH Airways has scheduled the return of non-stop flights between London Heathrow and Abu Dhabi from 20 Apr 2024, having suspended services on the UAE route in Jul 2022.

pre-COVID figures such as South Korea, up 48%, and Vietnam which increased 33% compared to four years ago.

Culbert noted seat supply is still lagging well behind 2019 market levels, slowing recovery in key markets such as the Middle East, North America and Hong Kong.

Similarly constraints on domestic traffic are reflected in a slower recovery of aviation within Australia, the SYD CEO noted. BP

Silversea 2025/26

SILVERSEA Cruises will operate its newest ships in Australia and NZ in the 2025/26 season, with a newly released program including 17 local voyages aboard Silver Nova and Silver Moon.

Itineraries include Silversea's first ever circumnavigation of Australia aboard Silver Nova out of Melbourne in Oct next year, visiting 23 destinations with seven overnights and four late departures.

A Grand South Pacific Expedition will also cruise from Fremantle to Valparaiso taking in Raja Ampat, Rabaul, Vanuatu, the Cook Islands, Tonga and Easter Island.

Overall Silversea has released more than 150 new sailings departing Sep 2025-Apr 2026, with CEO Barbara Muckermann hailing the brand's "destination leadership" with multiple maiden calls included in the program more at silversea.com.

Aussies put on alert

SMARTRAVELLER has issued an advisory for Australian travellers which warns that demonstrations and unrest are taking place in countries worldwide, as a result of the situation in Israel.

Lebanon is one such destination affected, with Aussies warned not to visit the MIddle Eastern country due to the volatile security situation, which may deteriorate further.

DFAT is advising Australians who are currently in Lebanon to depart as soon as they can, as the country's airports may pause operations with little notice.

Overall, Aussies are being told to keep an eye on current events in their destination, and stay clear of demonstrations - read the DFAT update **HERE**.







Bintan Island boost

CLUB Med will boost its ferry services to and from Bintan Island, making travel to the popular Indonesian destination more accessible and convenient for Aussie travellers

The new initiative, organised in partnership with Bintan Resort Ferries, will reduce the need for overnight stays when transferring to the island.

Agents can now offer clients two extra return ferry options for departures from 01 Dec between Singapore and Bintan Island, with the schedule designed to align with Singapore Airlines flights from Australia.

The new and enhanced ferry service complements the existing schedule, allowing travellers to reach Bintan Island in under an hour from Singapore.

See the updated schedule **HERE**, and for more information or to make a booking, CLICK **HERE** to access the Club Med Travel Agents Portal.

Cairns eco tours

TRAVELLERS visiting Cairns can now embark on educational experiences led by Quicksilver Group's Reef Biosearch team at Green Island Resort and Pro Dive Cairns liveaboard trips.

Guests on Green Island can learn from marine biologists about wildlife, sustainability, and conservation by joining the new eco tour, which includes a selfguided walk and a glass bottom boat tour - find out more HERE.

Additionally, Pro Dive Cairns is now offering marine biologist Reef Talk presentations before its Great Barrier Reef dive trips, helping visitors to deepen their understanding of the reef's ecology and conservation efforts more info HERE.

MEANWHILE, Wildlife Habitat Port Douglas has announced the reopening of its newly transformed Lumholtz's Tree Kangaroo exhibit, where visitors can observe Quinton, the adorable tree kangaroo.





ANTO appoints new Oz rep

THE Austrian National Tourist Office (ANTO) has appointed Lilly Freudmayer (pictured) as its new Market Representative Australia & Southeast Asia.

Freudmaver, who boasts broad international experience in the tourism industry, has been with the DMO since the beginning of 2020, during which time she has worked in different markets including GCC, Israel, and Southeast Asia.

She will replace Kathrina Denk, who departs after nearly seven years as Market Representative Australia for ANTO in order to move back to Austria.

Head of Market Asia Pacific Emanuel Lehner-Telic said, "it has been an absolute pleasure working with Kathrina and I am proud of the successes we have achieved especially after this difficult time for the industry".

He also revealed ANTO will close its Sydney office, with Freudmayer

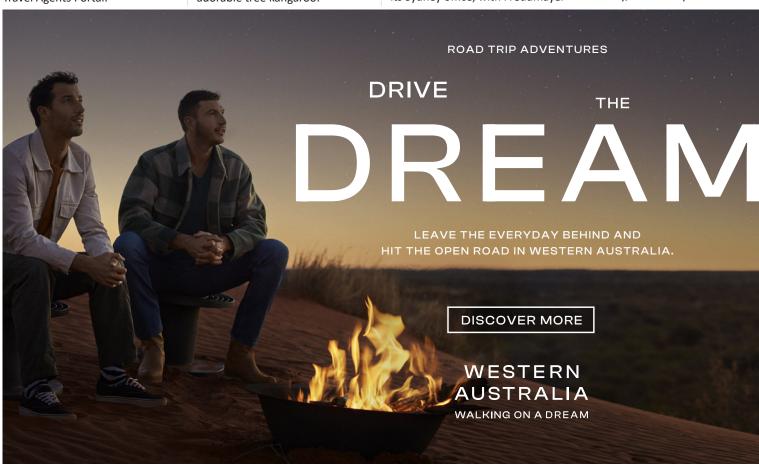


to make regular visits Down Under to maintain relationships with the local travel trade.

"ANTO will remain committed to the Australian market after making a fantastic recovery," he assured, highlighting that Australia is its best-performing market within the Asia-Pacific region so far this year.

Aussie traveller overnight visits between Jan-Aug were on par with the equivalent pre-pandemic 2019 period, with some regions like Innsbruck seeing an uptick.

"I look forward to getting to know the Australian market, share my knowledge and keep our strong partnerships with the industry," Freudmayer shared. JM









Window Seat

WHILE Disneyland is supposedly the happiest place on earth, this wasn't the case for a group of adults who were visiting the California theme park this week.

While you might expect the occasional dummy spit from the little ones on a family day out, it's not every day that you see a bunch of grown-ups throwing a tantrum.

Footage has gone viral showing at least five men and women engaged in a brawl near Disneyland's Mad Hatter's Tea Party ride, in close proximity to several children.

The brawlers were seen shoving, punching, kicking and wresting one another, and nearly knocking over a pram in the process.

It's unsure what prompted the shocking outburst, which hasn't resulted in any arrests so far, and is still under investigation by local police.

The incident comes after the theme park was forced to issue a reminder to guests last year not to fight with each other, following a bizarre uptick in scuffles.

There is now a courtesy section on Disneyland's website which informs guests that inappropriate behaviour can result in them being turfed out - well, we should hope so!

Swiss train shakedown



RAIL Europe invited a select group of 24 travel advisors to a special update on Switzerland's transportation system yesterday at the QT Hotel in Canberra.

The agents had the opportunity to meet the new Director of Switzerland Tourism, Sandra Babey (*TD* 28 Jun), as well as hearing all the latest about the Swiss Travel Pass and its benefits, being one of Rail Europe's highest selling passes.

General Manager of APAC Richard Leonard and Key Account Manager Grant Robertson were also on hand to make sure advisors were familiar with Rail Europe's intuitive booking platform, round-the-clock support, regular incentives, and the ongoing educational programs to equip them with the latest information and selling tools.

Attendees were also informed of the upcoming Swiss Travel System webinar focusing on the country's panoramic trains, which

will take place on 24 Oct and will offer top selling agents the chance to win a spot on a luxury famil to experience some of Switzerland's top rail journeys in early 2024.

Travel agents who haven't done so already can sign up to Rail Europe's monthly webinars and closed Facebook group **HERE** to access exclusive incentives and offers. *JM*

Pictured: Grant Robertson, Key Account Manager Rail Europe; Richard Leonard, GM of APAC Rail Europe; Sandra Babey, Director Switzerland Tourism ANZ; and Antonio Khattar, Account Manager Switzerland Tourism.

VisitBritain revamp

VISITBRITAIN has refreshed its industry website, which now boasts a new look, user-friendly navigation and updated content, video and images, as well as resources for the travel trade - check it out HERE.

CHC cloud update

CHRISTCHURCH Airport is partnering with Amadeus to upgrade its passenger service infrastructure to Common Use technology which is shared by multiple airlines.

The new system offers a simpler check-in process, more flexibility for seasonal operations and the ability to connect with passengers at locations away from the airport such as the Te Pae Convention Centre or Lyttleton Port.

The cloud-based platform will also enable a transition to more self-service kiosks and bag drops, and see the 80 existing workstations decommissioned, to be replaced by "super-efficient thin client devices".

The Amadeus Cloud Use Service (ACUS) will help facilitate an "upcoming very busy summer season", the airport noted.

AF shakes on Sabre

AIR France-KLM has extended its agreement with Sabre Corporation, which will see New Distribution Capability (NDC) enriched offers rolled out to Sabre-connected travel agencies in a phased approach next year.

The airline's Chief Commercial Officer, Angus Clarke, said he was pleased to announce the renewed partnership, which will "support travel agent partners to provide the Air France-KLM enriched and attractive NDC offer, giving travellers a wider range of options to enhance their journey, from start to finish".



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CORPORATE UPDATE

CTM "off to a great start"

CORPORATE Travel

Management yesterday revealed gradual improvement in travel activity by large clients in North America, Europe and Australia/NZ as it reported strong results for the three months to 30 Jun.

The company's total revenue for the period was \$188 million, up 36% on the prior corresponding period, with a hefty 157% increase in underlying EBITDA to \$56.6 million, the report stated.

The presentation cited about \$350 million in new client wins during the period, "including verbal wins" which CTM said was on track with forecasts, while a range of automation and AI projects are well under way and

Citi, Navan pact

CITIBANK has announced the launch of a new jointly branded travel and expense platform for Citi Commercial Bank cardholders, as part of a strategic agreement with Navan (formerly known as TripActions).

Citi supports over 25,000 global commercial card programs and seven million cardholders worldwide, transacting US\$42 billion annually in the US alone.

The Navan Connect platform links cards directly to expense management, with transactions on enrolled cards automatically checked against company policy, categorised and reconciled.

The system can work with any enrolled Mastercard or Visa card.

are "expected to have positive productivity impact for many years" into the future.

The investor presentation highlighted CTM's diverse global portfolio, with a client base of about 5,700 businesses expected to make more than 17 million transactions this financial year.

Every CTM region is expected to surpass \$2 billion in annual TTV, with the Australian-headquartered company now generating about 80% of its revenues offshore. *BP*

AA new biz program

AMERICAN Airlines this week introduced AAdvantage Business, a new corporate loyalty program allowing business travellers to earn additional loyalty points and boost their personal status.

"AAdvantage Business offers a faster pathway to a more rewarding experience for companies and travellers alike," AA Senior VP of Partnerships & Retailing Scott Laurence said.

"We want to reward both the companies doing business with us and the traveller who's actually flying in the airplane seat."

Available to businesses with at least five employees, for every US\$1 spent on eligible trips companies earn 1 AAdvantage mile to redeem on travel.

Eligible individual travellers also earn one bonus Loyalty Point per dollar that counts towards their accrual for AAdvantage status.

Which guest on Season ONE has visited 122 countries? Catch up on episodes to find out. CLICK HERE to listen

Hilton's Marble Bar takes the cake



CHERISHED Sydney watering hole, the Marble Bar at Hilton Sydney, this week celebrated its 130th anniversary, with the milestone commemorated with a party hosting the winners of a competition who shared their fondest memories of nights out at the iconic venue on Instagram.

Marble Bar was established way back in 1893, initially billed as an "attractive meeting place for sportsmen", and also famed in the 1990s as somewhere that was out of radio range for pagers and early analog mobile phones!

The historic venue is serving

1000MTG partners with Virtuoso in UK

1000 Mile Travel Group has expanded its Virtuoso partnership to the UK alongside existing agreements for North America and Australia, with the company saying it's a "significant milestone for us as we continue to revolutionise the travel industry and provide exceptional service".

Swan Lager from WA until the end of the year, because it was the first beer to ever be poured on tap at Marble Bar, and there's also a refreshed cocktail menu.

The celebration was marked by Hilton Sydney GM Hayden Hughes who said "Marble Bar's enduring legacy has all the hallmarks of becoming one of the world's most iconic hotel bars".

He's **pictured** with the special Marble Bar celebratory cake alongside F&B Operations Manager James Heggie. *BP*

BA loyalty rejig

BRITISH Airways clients will now earn Avios loyalty points based on the cost of their ticket, with the program's revamp announced in Jul becoming effective from this week.

The "more consistent and transparent system" sees Avios earnings based on tier status, with the change also applying to BA flights marketed by Iberia and American Airlines.

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Star Clippers is now offering savings of up to 20% when travellers book selected itineraries under its Triple Scoop Delight deal by 31 Jan 2024. The package includes free cabin upgrades and up to EU\$150 of spending credit per couple to indulge in some of the onboard amenities. The Amalfi Coast & Sicily tour starts from \$2,970 per person aboard Royal Clipper, the Corsica, Sardinia & Elba itinerary is priced from \$2,840pp aboard Star Flyer, and the Riviera Chic & Corsica voyage aboard Star Flyer is also priced at \$2,840pp. CLICK HERE for details.

Pay as low as \$45 on one-way fares across half-a-million domestic fares and from \$425 for one-way international flights with Virgin Australia's latest sale. The offer includes popular routes between Sydney and Gold Coast, Melbourne and Sydney, and more. Sydney to Ballina Byron will set travellers back only \$45, which the airline claims is "less than the cost of a taxi". Book **HERE** before 23 Oct for travels between 16 Jan 2024 and 29 Aug 2024.

Cruise Traveller's latest offer is specially curated for Aussie travellers, with savings of up to \$7,420 for couples available in its 12-night Kingdom of the Kimberley package. The all-inclusive cruise tour includes flights to Broome and back from Darwin at the end of the voyage, with an additional two-night hotel stay in Broome pre-cruise. Priced from 13,345ppts, couples can stay in the Deluxe Balcony stateroom, whereas solo travellers can take advantage of substantial savings of up to \$16,020. Call on 1800 507 777 to book before 30 Nov.

Aussies can enjoy one-way fares between Sydney and Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne and Kuala Lumpur from \$339 as part of AirAsia's new super sale. Complementing the massive sale, AirAsia is also offering up to 50% off for flight and hotel combos, as well as 50% off on some hotel bookings worldwide. Valid until 25 Oct, the offer is for travel between 04 Mar 2024 and 12 Feb 2025 - book HERE.

To celebrate the cruise line's 1893 Ambassadors Members Month, **Hurtigruten** is offering its loyalty members up to 10% off on all current in market offers, when they book before 31 Oct for departures before 31 Dec 2024. The discount is only valid when you book via the cruise line's contact centre, call 1300 158 903 to learn more.

Score up to 25% off on selected Lindblad Expeditions-National Geographic itineraries in 2024. The Circumnavigation of Iceland tour, aboard the NG Explorer, has reduced its price to \$10,480 per person, while the Wild Iceland Escape, aboard the same vessel, is now priced at \$5,805pp. The tour operator is also offering 15% off on further expeditions across the Arctic - CLICK HERE to find out more.

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Agents discover Irish charm



TOURISM Ireland recently hosted this group of Australian and New Zealand travel agents on a famil trip to the Emerald Isle, in partnership with Failte Ireland and Tourism Northern Ireland.

The agents were able to discover the destination's tourism offerings first-hand, after completing Tourism Ireland's online training program.

The whirlwind itinerary included visits to Windmill Lane, the Guinness Storehouse, Kildare Village, the Rock of Cashel, and the Cliffs of Moher.

The group also enjoyed a walking tour of Galway, a cruise on Lough Corrib, a falconry display at Ashford Castle, Florence Court, and a boat tour on Lough Erne.

Other highlights included a trip to the OM Dark Sky Park & Observatory and the Titanic Belfast Museum, a sheepdog experience at Glenshane Country Farm, a Game of Thrones Studio

Tour and a walking tour of the county town of Armagh.

"Our aim is that when they return home, the travel agents will be even more enthusiastic about the destination, helping to secure a greater share of their business for Ireland in 2024 and beyond," Tourism Ireland Manager Australia and NZ Sofia Hansson said. JM

Pictured: Aoife Costello, Tourism Ireland; Lolo Trendell, Trendell & Turner Travel Associates; Kathy Thomaidis, MTA Travel Moonee Ponds; Jodi van de Wydeven, NZ Travel Brokers; Gina Biggins, Failte Ireland; Amy Strong, Helloworld Strathpine; Ellen Goodwin, Flight Centre Baulkham Hills; Genine McHugh, MTA Travel Bendigo; Terry Tarraran, Worldstar Travel; Mary Treacy, Local Travel Guide; Rhonda Paice, Williamstown Travel; Deborah Bartolo, MTA Travel Berkshire Park; and John Carew, Local Driver.

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General Manager Operations

The General Manager Operations is responsible for strategically leading, managing and overseeing the 4 key streams of the Operations Department. This role will work effectively cross-functionally, drive strategies and projects, communicate effectively with multiple stakeholders, and implement continual improvement approaches. Overseeing the functional leads to meet their objectives with the goal of ensuring Aurora's operations pre-, during and post-voyage meet customer expectations is key to the success of this role.

Reporting to the Vice President Operations, the role of General Manager Operations has a shared responsibility for integrating Aurora's culture, ethos, and sustainability strategies across all functions of Ground Operations, Expedition Team Management, Operations and Field Operations and Activities.

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Expedition Team Recruitment Manger

The position of Expedition Team Recruitment Manager reports directly to the General Manager Operations and is responsible for applying due diligence and robust recruitment and people management practices to the sourcing, allocation and management of Aurora's Expedition Team members and activity guides.

To ensure the Aurora culture is embedded into our expeditions, the Expedition Management Team engages skilled and culturally fit expedition team members who form high-performing, cohesive, passenger-focused teams. The Expedition Management Team seek explorers, adventurers and experts who are passionate about sustainability and educating passengers on the importance of protecting the remote destinations we visit. The aim is to make Aurora Expeditions the employer of choice for high-quality expedition team members and activity guides.

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Education and Enrichment Manger

The Education & Enrichment Manager is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the onboard Education & Enrichment Program strategy and framework. Aurora's Enrichment Program is core to our passenger experience and includes educational lecture programs, an enrichment specialist program, a participative Citizen Science Program, and onboard Entertainment offerings.

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