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Touring Academy inks FCTG

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group (FCTG) will integrate the Council of Australian Tour Operators' (CATO) new Touring Academy into its agent training framework as the program's launch partner.

CATO's latest push to better educate travel sellers about the value of tour operators was unveiled last month (TD 04 Mar), formally launching on 22 Apr.

CATO MD, Brett Jardine, said that its new collaboration with FCTG epitomised the "power of unity" within the travel sector.

"[The Touring Academy] is aimed at elevating the overall calibre of travel consultancy

services, and FCTG's steadfast commitment highlights the pivotal role of continuous learning and expertise in shaping the future of travel," Jardine said.

FCTG MD, Andrew Stark, added the company's decision to partner with CATO is part of a natural progression to improve its overall services quality for clients.

"This alliance enables us to tap into a reservoir of additional experience, ensuring our consultants are equipped with a comprehensive skill-base to offer our customers a powerhouse of tour deals with expert service," Stark observed.

FCTG will integrate the Touring Academy, modelled on CLIA's Learning Academy, into training over the next three years. *AB*

Memories on rail

RAILBOOKERS craft personalised holidays offering unforgettable adventures across scenic rail ways worldwide.

Find out more on [page eight](#).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including our **Luxury** page, plus a product profile from **Railbookers** & full page from **Silversea Cruises**.

Quirky tourism push

THE Core Agency's Christian Finucane has penned an interesting feature reflecting on the 'horseplay' of a tourism campaign from Visit Iceland and how Australia might deploy similar marketing strategies - read the *travelBulletin* piece [HERE](#).

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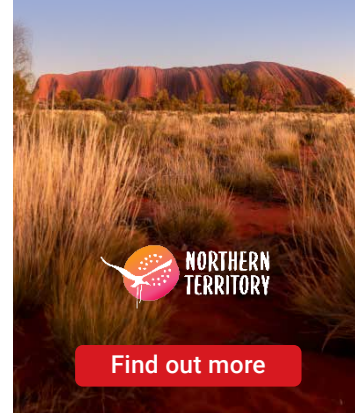
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Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

ROME

Today's issue of TD is coming to you from Rome, where today we board Princess Cruises' new 'Love Boat' *Sun Princess* ahead of its naming ceremony in Barcelona.

THOUSANDS of cruisers have enjoyed Princess Cruises' innovative Medallion since it was unveiled in 2017, but the line has recently introduced an entirely new mobile app to serve guests on board.

With the MedallionClass app now discontinued, travellers must now download the new Princess Cruises app from the iTunes or Google Play stores to support their Medallion usage.

Travellers will find any pre-existing formalities in the old app have been migrated across.

AA one-stop career shop

ACCOMMODATION Australia will soon launch a comprehensive range of career education and employment resources via a "one-stop" platform available to tourism businesses of all sizes.

The advocacy body has engaged leading technology company, Tomahawk, to develop the portal, which will address ongoing staff shortages in Australia across the sector and promote career opportunities in hospitality.

Development of the innovative career platform comes through the organisation securing a \$10m govt grant last year, following the merger of the Accommodation Association and Tourism Accommodation Australia.

Tomahawk is expected to draw inspiration for the new platform from a similar initiative, entitled 'Go With Tourism', which yielded great success in boosting New Zealand's hospitality workforce when it launched in 2019.

Accommodation Australia CEO, Michael Johnson, said he can't wait for the portal to come to life.

"The platform will allow employers, existing and prospective workers, students and international visitors to connect to education, employment and other vital career information," Johnson said.

"This will help with our two biggest challenges by boosting the hospitality, tourism and travel workforce and promoting careers in the industry for the next generations to come." ML

Force for Good '25

TRAVEL industry empowerment event 'A Force For Good' will return in 2025, organisers said.

Following a strong level of engagement this year, 2025 events featuring industry leaders are now set for Sydney (07 Mar) and Auckland (14 Mar).

CruiseHQ platform

EXCLUSIVE

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's B2B cruise wholesale division, CruiseHQ, has launched a new booking platform for agents.

Offering access to a diverse portfolio of global cruise, air, and land partners, the platform provides agencies with exclusive rates, CruiseHQ's own product collection not available anywhere else, the latest cruise promotions, and a range of incentives and wholesae commissions.

Agents can sign up now **HERE** and take advantage of special launch incentives.

More details in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

Two suite upgrades

SILVERSEA is offering travellers a two-category suite upgrade on ocean voyages along with 15% off deposits and up to US\$1,000 shipboard credit on sailings through 2026 - see **page seven**.



eRoam, gives travel agents the gift of time!

Introducing eRoam, the **NEW** revolutionary travel agent-friendly technology allowing consultants to complete bookings that once took 2 hours in just 10 minutes.

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IHG sunshine plans

IHG Hotels and Resorts will open its second Australian Holiday Inn & Suites property on the Sunshine Coast in 2028.

The 160-key property will form part of a mixed-use development in Caloundra and will feature an open lobby, rooftop restaurant, lobby cafe and meeting spaces.

Ruby the Roo paying off

AUSTRALIA'S ongoing major investments in international marketing via its 'Come and Say G'Day' campaigns are continuing to yield strong returns, with short-term visitor numbers soaring 42.8% in Feb 2024.

According to data released yesterday by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), a total of 857,950 non-Australian arrivals were welcomed over the month, up from 600,710 a year earlier.

While the results will be highly encouraging for Tourism Australia, the numbers still have some way to go before hitting pre-pandemic levels of 927,240 from Feb 2019.

The foreign arrivals figure combined with 775,630 returning Australian residents and long-term returning citizens created a total arrivals boost of 29.9% for the month - improved more so by the extra calendar day generated by the quadrennial leap year.

China firmed up its grip on top spot in terms of overseas source, accounting for 149,770 arrivals, well ahead of New Zealand in second place with 105,970, while the USA rounded out the podium.

Victoria recorded the greatest improvement in terms of where in Australia overseas arrivals were heading, up 54.1% compared to a year earlier, trailed by NSW with a 42.6% boost, while all Australian states and territories saw double digit year-on-year increases.

Australians departing on short-term holidays also performed strongly, with 708,590



movements adding up to a 25% improvement on the prior year and again eclipsing corresponding levels from 2019.

The most popular destinations for Australian residents on short-term trips were New Zealand with 105,970 departures, followed by Indonesia and Japan in third. *ML*

Not all about growth

THE Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) said it is "committed to leadership" in the area of growing Australia's visitor economy sustainably.

Speaking with **TD** in the wake of calls for a tourism tax (**TD** 10 Apr), ATEC MD, Peter Shelly, said while the tourism industry is highly beneficial to the Australian economy and makes a huge contribution to regional and rural communities, it must be tempered by sustainable goals.

"It's important to support our industry as a beneficial contributor to communities and the environment...and it requires a multi-faceted policy approach."

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CHINA AIRLINES



Jenny chats with Jill

JENNY Piper's *The Chat* podcast has gone live with a new episode this week, featuring Australian Cruise Association CEO Jill Abel. Listen to the catch up [HERE](#).

TC's big loyalty leap

TRAVELLERS Choice has achieved a Net Promotor Score (NPS) of 90 when it comes to customer loyalty, an impressive leap on the score of 65 it recorded three years ago.

Used by organisations around the world to measure performance against competitors, NPS is calculated from customer responses to the question of: 'How likely would you be to recommend us to your friends and colleagues?'

A score above 50 is considered exceptional, leading MD Christian Hunter to observe the pleasing 2024 score placed the business in a very exclusive club.

AW's authentic USA

ADVENTURE World has unveiled its new 'Authentic Custom USA' collection, which invites travellers to "go beyond the ordinary tourist trail and explore the soul of the USA".

The collection includes four itineraries ranging from 14 to 17 nights, with opportunities to get up close with magnificent wildlife, including black bear spotting in the American Rockies.

Guests can also expect to cruise alongside whales off the East coast in New England and the West Coast's Washington, Oregon or California, as well as witness Alaska's grizzly bears.

Other highlights include exploring America's national parks, experiencing Native American cultures, and more - [CLICK HERE](#).



New booking hub launches

A **NEW** travel agent booking technology hub has launched in Australia today, promising agents the ability to create itineraries and finalise bookings within minutes.

eRoam, which brings together specialist online suppliers including flights, accommodation, activities, tours, transfers, car hire and cruise, is able to generate proposals by instantly checking costs and availability.

Advisors can create client-ready invoices and itineraries with a few clicks, and when the client is ready, eRoam books and confirms all services and segments in a matter of minutes.

With affordable subscription options starting from US\$65 (A\$101) per month and no lock-in contracts, the new hub is designed to be accessible to travel businesses of all sizes.

General Manager, Paul Hole, said eRoam gives travel agents "the gift of time".

ADGE adds rooms

LA VIE Hotels & Resorts has announced the opening of a second hotel tower at ADGE Hotel & Residences, the former Cambridge hotel in Sydney's Surry Hills (**TD** 26 Jul 2023).

The new tower adds 149 guest rooms to the property, which now comprises a total 254 keys, all featuring bold new carpets, pod-style bathrooms, Smeg fridges and Nespresso machines.

Since opening last Aug, the inner-city hotel has exceeded occupancy targets, regularly selling out during key events such as the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras.

ADGE Hotel & Residences General Manager, Paul Cundy, said the launch of the second tower "means we can better cater to demand surges over busy event periods, which will only add to the colour and life that keeps this hotel buzzing".



"Instead of losing hours every day to administering quotes and bookings, the efficiencies eRoam delivers gives agents back hours in every day."

He emphasised that eRoam is not a "go-between", with agents able to retain 100% of the commercial terms and recognition with their chosen suppliers as the booking agent.

Additionally, the new eRoam Shop add-on feature offers an online e-commerce solution, allowing agencies to make sales around-the-clock.

The company said it plans to reveal more about the new feature within the coming weeks.

Travel agents can test out eRoam for free now, by booking a demo [HERE](#). *JM*

Qld's John Hancock

QUEENSLAND tourism businesses connected with key luxury trade partners today at the Signature Queensland event, organised by Tourism and Events Queensland (TEQ).

Six of the eight Signature Experiences of Australia Collectives attended the event, which aimed to put Queensland's experiences and destinations front-of-mind for inclusion in more programs and itineraries for high-end customers.

"Strong partnerships are critical in our growth of the Queensland visitor economy, and we are pleased to support Tourism Australia's Signature Experiences program by delivering this event," TEQ Chief Executive Officer, Patricia O'Callaghan, said.

The event is part of a suite of trade activities being undertaken by TEQ, with a famil program also scheduled to take place in Jun, featuring a number of Signature Queensland products from the event, and offering a first-hand experience of the state for a select group of buyers.



Window Seat

DELTA Air Lines is fast developing a reputation for being the carrier of choice for illegal stowaways.

The new dubious recognition follows a run of passengers being able to board the airline's flights without buying a ticket in recent months.

Last month a stowaway was caught flying DL from Salt Lake City to Austin, with the man caught with a snapped photo of a child's boarding pass instead of a legitimate ticket.

Making his journey harder was the fact it was a fully sold flight, meaning he had to periodically hide in the lavatory to avoid detection.

Last week, DL caught two new separate instances of stowaways, this time on a Atlanta to LA flight.

The pax were more brazen in the latest attempt, sitting in purchased seats using screen shots of phony passes.

It appears the screening processes at the gates need to be revised, just a tad.

SIA takes top spot

SINGAPORE Airlines was named 'International Airline of the Year' at the 2023 Roy Morgan Customer Satisfaction Awards, which took place in Melbourne last week.

The carrier was rated first against major international airlines serving Australia for the fourth year in a row.

"This award reflects our commitment to service excellence, and the contribution of colleagues in Australia and across the world," SIA Regional VP South West Pacific Louis Arul said.

"Australia is one of our most significant markets, and our customers' comfort, travel experience and safety remains our core focus," he added.

Rutherglen upgrade

A MAJOR renovation project at the iconic Victoria Hotel in Rutherglen is now complete, with new accommodations and event facilities upgraded at the historic regional property.

The 156-year-old hotel is now preparing to open six new boutique King Suites in the coming weeks, with a further eight hotel rooms to follow later this year.

In addition, the property now boasts an all-weather dining area for 190 patrons, a new open-air beer garden, and meeting and events facilities for the MICE market.

Post-renovation, the hotel can now cater to more than 45,000 patrons - double its previous capacity - per year.

The project was supported by the Victorian state government under its 'Experience Victoria 2033' strategy, aimed at revitalising regional tourism facilities and attracting more visitors to areas outside Melbourne.

"This charming refurbishment of the beloved Victoria Hotel in Rutherglen is encouraging more visitors to come to this beautiful part of Victoria, stay longer and spend more - it's a win-win for tourists and local jobs," said Victorian Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events, Steve Dimopoulos.

THE ROYCE JOINS VIRTUOSO'S VIP CIRCLE

HERITAGE Melbourne hotel The Royce has been admitted into Virtuoso's esteemed collection of preferred travel partners, unlocking a range of new marketing opportunities.

Admission into Virtuoso's VIP portfolio will present the hotel prominently to a global network of more than 20,000 specialist luxury agents transacting up to US\$30 billion in sales annually.

"The reputation Virtuoso member agencies have for outstanding dedication to their clients is a perfect fit with our own bespoke approach to service," said The Royce business manager, Rui Martins.

"Now that we're part of this renowned network, we look forward to offering Virtuoso advisors and their clients the



special amenities, values and experiences that surpass their expectations."

Situated on the edge of the Melbourne CBD and South Yarra, The Royce exudes an aura of the 'golden age' of travel with elegant features including a sweeping marble staircase, deluxe lobby lounge and centrepiece Showroom Bar complete with a

nine-metre long bar top.

Among the 94 accommodation categories at The Royce include 21 spacious suites and six two-storey loft suites, featuring original corning dating back to the property's former life as Melbourne's original Rolls Royce mechanic workshop. *ML*

Pictured: The elegant Showroom Bar at The Royce.

A&K tap Ecoventura to launch deluxe Peruvian riverboat on the Amazon

ULTRA-LUXE tour operator Abercrombie & Kent will debut a new Peruvian riverboat experience on the Amazon River in 2025 in partnership with luxury yacht operator, Ecoventura.

The new vessel, unnamed at present, marks A&K's maiden river presence in South America despite more than 25 years of the brand operating in Peru.

Ten double suites and two single cabins will be available to guests on three- and four-night sailings, which can be combined into a

complete seven-night expedition.

Itineraries will immerse guests in remote corners and inlets of the Amazon, celebrating Peru's unique biodiversity, captivating landscapes and cultural heritage.

Abercrombie & Kent Travel Group CEO, Cristina Levis, said the new riverboat marked an exciting new chapter in A&K's history.

"This venture embodies our unwavering commitment to delivering experiences that are not only luxurious but also deeply enriching and sustainable.



"We are excited to introduce our guests to the untold stories and serene beauty of the Peruvian Amazon in a manner that honours and preserves the essence of this remarkable destination," Levis said.



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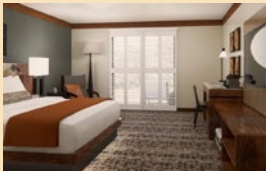
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Vibe Hotel Melbourne has opened the tallest rooftop bar on Flinders Street. Sitting atop the 68-metre-tall building, the venue, dubbed 'Fleet', promises sweeping views of the Yarra and beyond, with a capacity for 90 people. Fleet offers international cuisines and an expansive drinks menu featuring timeless classics and distinctive local flavours. Guests can also enjoy the bar's snack menu, which pays homage to the state's best producers.



Visitors can soon enjoy new and improved accommodation at **Tenaya at Yosemite**, located near Yosemite National Park. The refreshed guestrooms now feature warm wood tones and a palette of earthy colours, while the headboards, night stands, desks, luggage bench, and acoustical TV wall panels have also been upgraded to ensure a comfortable stay. The hotel is now accepting reservations for stays beginning in May.



The iconic **Marble Bar** inside **Hilton Sydney** is now open seven nights a week, with a new food and cocktail menu also available for patrons. The historic venue now has a new live music schedule, featuring renowned musicians from Mon to Sat night, featuring different music styles such as soul, pop, and R&B. The new opening hours are between 4pm to midnight every day except for Sun, which closes earlier at 10pm



Radisson Hotel Group has introduced the Radisson brand to South Africa's capital city. The existing property, Park Inn Cape Town Foreshore, will be transformed into the **Radisson Hotel Cape Town Foreshore**, which will offer 120 modern rooms. The property is strategically located near the International Convention Centre and the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.



To celebrate a decade of operations, **Longitude 131°** located just outside Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park in the NT has reopened following a \$2.5 million makeover. The luxury wilderness camp now houses 15 refreshed guest tents, while the restaurant at the main Dune House, which features an outdoor terrace overlooking Uluru, also underwent a refurbishment.

New itravel opens in NSW



CONTINUING its expansion across the country, itravel has announced the launch of its newest fully-branded franchise store in Camden, NSW.

Owner and Managing Director, Christine Kelly, was at the opening event this week to greet clients and trade partners, which included NCL, GO insurance, Holland America and G Adventures.

CEO Steve Labroski, National BDM Jo Howard and key leaders from itravel's head office also attended the opening.

"Ittravel Camden is an exciting addition to the growing list of fully branded itravel franchise stores," Labroski enthused.

"With many years of experience as a previous business owner plus, home-based mobile agent, Christine Kelly is a very well respected and supported member of the itravel brand and travel industry.

"[She] has been able to seamlessly transition from an itravel home-based agent to her very own itravel store." *JM*

Pictured: Labroski and Kelly.

BA flexible on loyalty

BRITISH Airways had made it easier for loyalty members to purchase tickets with Avios loyalty points, introducing the option of outlaying a minimum part payment of £1 (A\$1.94).

Previously, Executive Club loyalty members had to use a higher monetary purchase in combination with loyalty points, dependent on varying factors.

"We've listened to our members' feedback and we're really excited to be introducing this latest update for them," said Colm Lacy, the airline's Chief Commercial Officer.

"Most of our customers choose the lowest cash amount when it comes to making reward flight bookings, so we anticipate this to be a popular option for those using Avios part payment too."



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