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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily's today features seven pages of the latest travel industry news, including a native page from **Railbookers**, our regular **Sustainability** page, plus a full page from **Silversea**.



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Int'l recovery a mixed bag

FRESH insights from the Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has shown a mixed recovery in international leisure travel from Australia in 2023.

Around 11.3 million Aussies travelled overseas during the first full calendar year of travel post-pandemic, representing a drop of 12% compared to 2019, according to the industry body's *2023 Australians on Holiday: International Leisure Travel Trends* report.

Aussies spent a collective \$50 billion on international leisure travel, lagging behind 2019 figures by 22%, and holidayed for an average of 17.7 days - down 8% on the pre-COVID average.

Land-based multi-day tours were a popular choice among Aussies however, generating an expenditure of \$4.4 billion, fuelled by traditional coach tours, which alone captured a \$2.1 billion spend.

There were some notable shifts

when it came to destination choices, with South Korea and Fiji both seeing significant jumps compared to 2019, up 57.5% and 16.6% respectively, while travel to the USA was down substantially, dropping 43.7%.

However, the US has shown plenty of green shoots this year. "These findings highlight a vibrant rebound in international travel, echoing trends seen in 2019, and demonstrate Australians' enduring enthusiasm for global exploration," CATO said.

View the full report compiled by CATO **HERE**. JM

Teiotu joins Travel24

MSC Cruises MD Lisa Teiotu is the latest executive to join the speaker line-up at the upcoming **Travel24** conference.

Teiotu will join a discussion on the future of ocean cruising, alongside previously announced Silversea MD Adam Radwanski.



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SILVERSEA is today offering \$6,000 worth of reasons to sail with the cruise line, as part of a limited-time offer.

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Savenio stands out at ILTM



LUXURY travel specialists Savenio was out in force at ILTM Asia Pacific, with Managing Director David Brandon and several of the agency's luxury travel advisors on the ground in Singapore last week.

While there, the group was able to network and explore an exclusive selection of destinations, experiences, and products to further boost their knowledge, in turn helping them craft their clients' dream trips.

Likuliku renovation

FIJIAN hotel Likuliku Lagoon Resort will undergo major refurbishments next year, during which time the property will close from 01 Feb to 30 Apr.

The projects include refreshing all bures, including the addition of private pools; a refurbishment of the main pool; & new restaurant.

The new na Vanua Conservation Hub will celebrate the resort's partnership with the traditional land owners.

"We are investing the significant sum of FJD\$10 million in order to enhance and elevate the product offerings and guest experiences of Likuliku - the results of which will solidify our existing reputation as one of Fiji's iconic and renowned luxury resorts," said Ahura Resorts Managing Director, Tony Whitton.

"Savenio continues to expand its network with exceptional independent travel advisors," Brandon shared.

"We are thrilled to welcome Michelle Tavli into our boutique network," he added. *JM*

Pictured: Back row - Brandon; Melissa Uglesic; Kisane Salib; David Uglesic; Patricia Gordon; Alex Prez; Laura Tidswell; Melinda Ford; Belinda Ferguson. Front row - Kelly Campbell and Tavli.

Infinite WA appeal

INFINITY Holidays and Tourism WA have launched a month-long campaign to promote new itineraries across the state, from Perth and the Margaret River region to Ningaloo Reef (Nyinggulu), Esperance (Kepa Kurl), Broome (Rubibi), the Kimberley and beyond.

The customisable packages are available through Helio, with car hire included and one-way options available for those who prefer to drive point-to-point.

To celebrate the new WA itineraries, several prizes are up for grabs for travel agents.

Advisors must sell WA product and packages during the next month to qualify, with the top-selling agent scoring a three-night stay at Smiths Beach Resort and other entrants going into the draw for a \$500 travel voucher.



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Boeing pleads guilty to fraud

BOEING has pled guilty in the US to a criminal fraud conspiracy charge relating to two fatal 737 Max crashes, in a bid to avoid a protracted criminal trial.

The charge was levelled at the company by prosecutors in 2021, accusing Boeing of a conspiracy to defraud regulators and deliberately deceive the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) about the failures of its MCAS flight control system.

Boeing's MCAS system was found to have played a significant role by investigators in both the Ethiopian Airlines and Lion Air crashes that killed 346 people.

The US Department of Justice also confirmed the manufacturer had agreed to pay a criminal fine of US\$243.6 million (A\$361.5 million) and invest a further US\$455 million (A\$675 million) to improve safety processes.

In exchange for pleading guilty, Boeing will avoid being

prosecuted, leading a group representing relatives of the crash victims to label the development a "sweetheart plea deal" that will shield Boeing's full suite of failures from the public.

A US judge must ratify the deal.

Alice Springs curfew

VIOLENCE in Alice Springs has seen the NT Police Commissioner Michael Murphy confirm a curfew will be reimposed on the town from 10pm to 6am over the next three nights.

The move, which also applies to tourists, follows a period of severe unrest last year, which saw tourism operators lament the negative brand damage caused.

Charter operator ATG Downunder last year made the call to pull out of Central Australia for the 2025 tourism season as a result of the unrest, relocating its assets to Darwin instead.

Rail Europe



Unlock European Trains with James Hooper

Italian trains

Italo: WA privately owned high-speed rail operator servicing the major cities of Milano, Bologna, Firenze, Roma, Napoli, Salerno, Venezia, Torino and Padova. Italo trains offer competitive pricing and travel times. Click [here](#) for more information. Note: Italo tickets are not issued with the booking confirmations - they can be retrieved [here](#) by entering your clients name and PNR.

Trenitalia: The Trenitalia Frecciarossa, Frecciargento and Frecciabianco trains, as well as the Freccialink buses. Travelling up to 400km/h these trains operate intercity and regional connections. Click [here](#) to view the full product page.

Expert Tip: For clients looking for new things to see and experience in Italy, refer them to this [Rail Itineraries Brochure](#) for fresh inspiration.

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The Chat
with Jenny

Travel Daily
A conversation with Penny Spencer

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TA appoints agency panel

ACCENTURE Song, The Monkeys, and Droga5 will serve as a panel of agencies providing Tourism Australia's (TA) creative and digital services.

The panel has been appointed for five years from Jul 2024, structured as an initial three-year contract with options for two further one-year extensions.

Tourism Australia revealed in Sep it would be shifting to a panel model for creative and digital agency providers, as it seeks to respond to future opportunities and challenges (TD 18 Sep 2023).

"We have a very specific brief at Tourism Australia with a global footprint that sees us actively market into 15 key international markets," Tourism Australia Managing Director Phillipa Harrison said.

"Our campaigns have set a high benchmark over the years and as our operating environment continues to evolve, we need to

ensure Australia stands out on the world stage.

"During the tender process Accenture Song, along with The Monkeys and Droga5, proved they were best placed to provide Tourism Australia with the integrated global creative and digital services we need."

Harrison added the change is needed to fight the challenge posed by competitor destinations.

TA CMO Susan Coghill thanked M&C Saatchi and Digitas for their hard work over the last five years handling the tourism marketing body's account.

"It was a challenging period and thanks to both agencies, we were able to pivot into the domestic space, with the 'Holiday Here This Year' campaigns, and once international travel resumed, we launched our current global campaign 'Come and Say G'day' welcoming travellers back to Australia," she added. MS

Agents brush up on Europe



PONANT teamed up with Tauck and DriveAway to host a lucky bunch of agents at a fun-filled Paint & Sip evening on the NSW Central Coast last week.

The theme of the night was 'Europe and the Greek Islands', with the presentations inspiring some impressive artworks.

The event was hosted by Ponant

State Manager NSW & ACT, Kristina Sambaher & Inside Sales Executive, Sandra Cahill, along with Helen Eves from Tauck and Susie Goumas from DriveAway.

There will be two more Paint & Sip evenings taking place later this month in Sydney. JM

Pictured: Agents add the finishing touches to their masterpieces.

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Flighties celebrate Flichella



THOUSANDS of Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) employees gathered in Brisbane over the weekend for the annual Flichella Festival to celebrate the end of the financial year.

Held at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre with a 'Boogie Wonderland' theme, nearly 4,000 attendees enjoyed performances by Australian music icons Sneaky Sound System, Baker Boy, Bag Raiders, and DJ Wildflower.

The event was hosted by *America's Got Talent* star Hans.

FCTG Managing Director Australia, James Kavanagh, highlighted that the festival allowed team members from various brands to unite and celebrate their achievements.

"Celebration is a very important part of our culture at FCTG, and Flichella is our chance to say a big

thank you to our people for their hard work," Kavanagh said.

"Reward and recognition are deeply rooted in the FCTG way and it's one of the many reasons it's a great place to work." JG

NAIDOC in the air

A NEW behind-the-scenes Wintjiri Wiru documentary will premiere on Qantas Airways flights for NAIDOC Week.

An Ancient Story Takes Flight will air on Qantas' in-flight entertainment systems, taking viewers behind the curtain of the new show at Ayers Rock Resort.

The documentary offers a glimpse into how ancient tradition and modern technology come together to bring the show to life, and how the Anangu people guided Ayers Rock Resort through the project.

ATIA UPDATE

from Richard Taylor, Director of Membership Experience



BACK when I first started visiting travel companies, one of the first things that struck me was the amount of award winners that I was honoured to

spend time with.

Each and every office would have shelves that groaned under the collective weight of the various gongs they had picked up across their history.

Only later did it dawn on me that if the company I was working for was handing out awards like lollies at a children's party, so must everyone else.

When I started inspecting these trophies a little more carefully, I noticed that the wholesalers were awarding the agents, the agents were awarding the wholesalers, the GDS companies were awarding people for booking flights.

And fair enough. After all, who doesn't enjoy an award?

But as time passed and I learned more about the Australian industry, it became clear that what really mattered were the National Travel Industry Awards.

With a record-breaking 1,715 nominations for Oct's night of nights, that's a lot of people and businesses who have been recognised by peers as offering something above and beyond.

Our sincere congratulations to each and every one of them.

With nominees due to send in submissions by this Fri (12 Jul) for voted categories and next Sun (21 Jul) for written or video submissions in the others, this column is a shout-out to anyone that has been nominated who might be deliberating about participating further.

Is it worth the effort? Should I hire a professional submissions writer? If my category requires a video, should I rent a professional studio and record that in high-definition 4K? Should I use Chat GPT for the script? Yes. No. Definitely no. And no again.

There are many questions that we receive each and every year.

Coming soon to these columns, my colleague and NTIA star organiser Jenny Le will help to dispel some of the myths.

In the meantime, the fact is that putting forward an awards submission is highly worthwhile.

Doing so not only offers you the opportunity to hone your skills in presenting what you do, but most importantly, the exercise of listing your achievements over the last 12 months is something that everybody benefits from.

And the more submissions we receive, the more we're collectively elevating the industry and ensuring that the finalists really are deserving, and that is a win-win because we all like winning.

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New itineraries out now

RAILBOOKERS prides itself on listening to customers and adapting quickly to their needs.

As travellers seek unique, tailored experiences covering specific destinations, Railbookers has responded by creating exciting new journeys.

These new itineraries save travel agents time by offering meticulously crafted, ready-made options, allowing them to focus more on providing exceptional service to their clients.

These itineraries combine convenience, comfort, and the promise of long-lasting memories.

One such itinerary is [The Best of Switzerland from Zurich](#).

In response to numerous requests, we've curated an all-encompassing eight-night rail odyssey through Switzerland.

Experience the stunning Bernina Express Train and the world's steepest cogwheel train on Mount Pilatus.

This new itinerary allows you to experience the city, mountains, and lakes all in one trip.

Another sought-after destination is the new [European Panorama](#) itinerary.

This trip covers Munich, Lucerne, Interlaken, Lake Como, and Rome, offering a comprehensive exploration of Europe's most beloved destinations.



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AA on the way

AMERICAN Airlines has highlighted its key progress towards achieving zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in its newly released *2023 Sustainability Report*.

The paper tracks the carrier's headway towards sustainability goals across four priority areas, including safety; support for team members; customer satisfaction and operational performance; and climate change and fuel efficiency.

In the report, American Airlines details how it is extending its commitment to sustainability to its sourcing and procurement practices, and highlights its collaboration with Breakthrough Energy and Google Research on contrail avoidance research.

"There is far more work to be done and many areas where we will continue to rely on policymakers and partnerships to make progress," said American's Chief Executive Officer Robert Isom.

"But I'm proud of our record - from advancing the development of lower-carbon technologies, to our work to better develop and recruit a diverse and talented group of leaders with unmatched expertise throughout the company."

CAMPLIFY GOES WALKABOUT FOR NAIDOC

AUSTRALIAN RV rental platform Camplify has joined forces with Walkabout Cultural Adventures to raise awareness for First Nations tourism during NAIDOC Week.

The Aboriginal cultural tour company, which operates in the Port Douglas Daintree region, will work with Camplify to educate road trippers across the country on how they can travel Australia respectfully.

The collaboration follows new research from Camplify, which revealed 53% of respondents did not know what the term 'First Nations tourism' meant, and 60% said they don't consider First Nations heritage of Australia when travelling domestically.

To encourage understanding of Indigenous culture, the two companies will develop a



tailored bank of content offering information on how to travel mindfully and respectfully.

"Our partnership with Walkabout Cultural Adventures represents an important step towards deepening our appreciation for First Nations cultures, histories and perspectives," said Alastair McCausland, Camplify's Chief

Marketing Officer.

"From this partnership, we aim to learn from Traditional Owners and incorporate their knowledge into our dialogue, with the aim to foster a more inclusive and culturally aware organisation, that celebrates diversity and promotes greater harmony within our society." *JM*

Balloon Aloft lifts to lofty green heights

BALLOON Aloft has been announced as the first tourism operator in Australia to progress through the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and also the high watermark of Ecotourism Australia's Sustainable Tourism Cert.

The balloon ride tour agency, which operates in regional areas of NSW and Queensland, is family owned and operated.

Through a partnership with Greenfleet, Balloon Aloft includes carbon offsetting in every ticket it sells and also

operates a Sea Shepherd balloon in an effort to raise awareness for the non-profit's work in marine conservation.

"Our Balloon Aloft team is committed to preserving the environment, reducing our carbon footprint and promoting sustainability through a range of initiatives across our ballooning operations," Matthew Scaife, Pilot and Director of Balloon Aloft, said.

Read more about the company's journey towards sustainability, [HERE](#).

Waste reduction

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has partnered with the Aviation Sustainability Forum (ASF) to launch a standardised Cabin Waste Composition Audit (CWCA).

The audit will generate comparable data on waste from flights - 65% of which is food and beverage - and will be used to guide the airline industry and policy-makers in their efforts to reduce waste and identify opportunities for re-use and recycling.



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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, TD's Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.674

NOW is a great time for Aussies to travel overseas, with the Australian dollar hitting a six-month high at the end of last week, reaching more than US\$0.67c for the first time since early Jan.

The AUD is also performing strongly against the Euro, the Chinese Yuan and the New Zealand Dollar, ending last Fri at or near a one-year-high against all three currencies.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.674
UK	£0.526
NZ	\$1.099
Euro	€0.622
Japan	¥108.32
Thailand	฿24.53
China	¥4.897
South Africa	12.20
Canada	\$0.919
Crude oil	US\$82.90

100% NZ, all the time

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) has refreshed its 'If you Seek' global campaign, with a focus on inspiring travellers to visit New Zealand at all times of the year.

The new content showcases New Zealand as a year-round holiday destination, and highlights its culture, landscapes and foodie experiences.

Since its launch in 2022, the campaign has helped drive record high preference for the country among potential visitors.

A&K represented in Adelaide



ABERCROMBIE & Kent's (A&K) Regional Manager for SA/WA/NT, Alison Banks, recently flew out to Adelaide to represent the upscale travel group at the Phil Hoffman Travel Luxury Day.

Banks, who joined A&K last month (**TD** 05 Jun), shared on LinkedIn that it was "great getting to meet our travel advisor partners across the various travel consortia this week".

Explora entertains

EXPLORA Journeys launched a new entertainment program aboard *Explora I* last week, which included a series of evening performances, interactive activities, and exclusive events.

Guests can use special QR codes throughout the ship to engage in daily activities on their device, including trivia, crosswords and word searches, as well as make special musical requests directly to performers.

There will also be spontaneous pop-up performances by the pool during the day, and main stage performances, intimate lobby bar sessions, and more by night.

She added that it was "so lovely to reconnect with industry friends and colleagues", including Patrick Clementson, A&K's Global Tailor Made Product Manager - Africa, and Jacqui Tufala, Key Account Manager for Crystal Cruises, who are both **pictured**. *JM*

Booze ban rethink

IN A bid to boost tourism and uplift its economy, Thailand is considering putting an end to its 52-year-old ban on afternoon alcohol sales.

The three-hour booze ban has been in effect since 1972.

Zoo's new venue

AUSTRALIA Zoo has opened Grasslands Cafe, a new dining venue which overlooks African wildlife, including zebras, rhinos, giraffes, cheetahs and meerkats.

The cafe's menu features dishes inspired by traditional African flavours and ingredients, including crispy savannah chips, Moroccan-style freekeh salad and a spicy piri piri wrap, with vegetarian options also available.

Window Seat

BALLOONS were the unlikely culprit behind flight disruptions in South Korea last month - but not the bright and colourful type that you'd see at a birthday party.

More than 10,000 passengers had their travel plans thrown into disarray after North Korea sent 1,000 trash-carrying balloons (**pictured**) across the border, in a move that is being described as "soft terrorism".

According to new data from the country's transport ministry, the balloon launches affected 115 commercial flights from late May to late Jun, including forcing a three-hour halt to flights in and out of South Korea's Incheon airport on 26 Jun.

At least 15 aircraft, including arrivals from the United States, needed to make alternative landings.

The stinky balloons arrive as tension continues to mount between North Korea and South Korea, with The Centre for Strategic and International Studies emphasising the balloons "should not be taken lightly" as "the damage they do is a form of soft terrorism."



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