

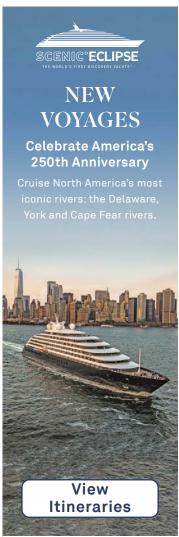
Travel Daily First with the news

Thursday 27th Jun 2024



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news, a cover wrap from Journey Beyond, a photo page from La Collection, our Business Events News page and a full page from Infinity Holidays.



Qatar eyes VA equity deal

VIRGIN Australia could soon receive a major boost in its fight to challenge Qantas' market dominance, with reports suggesting Middle Eastern powerhouse Qatar Airways is in advanced discussions to buy 20% of the Australian carrier.

According to the AFR, two anonymous sources close to transaction discussions said an acquisition deal could be finalised as early as next week.

VA and QR already enjoy a strong alignment, with a codeshare and reciprocal loyalty benefits in place, viewed as an important counter to Qantas'

Extra EOFY comm

INFINITY Holidays is offering a bonus 2% commission on top of existing levels on all AtlasHotels deals booked by 31 Dec 2024 in its end of financial year sale.

For more details and pre-loaded Helio packages, see page eight.

close relationship with Emirates.

If the purchase was to go ahead, it would cast doubt on Bain Capital's delayed plan to list VA on the ASX, which has experienced several setbacks over the past 12 months.

The rumoured deal would also have to jump a number of regulatory hurdles, including getting the green light from the Foreign Investment Review Board and the final stamp of approval from the Federal Government.

The recent history between the Qatar-owned carrier and the government has been turbulent, with the airline turned down for extra capacity in Australia before a Senate Committee recommended the decision be reviewed in the interests of consumer fairness & competition.

Interestingly, the unnamed sources also suggested VA had been in talks with Singapore Airlines to buy equity, before both parties walked away. AB

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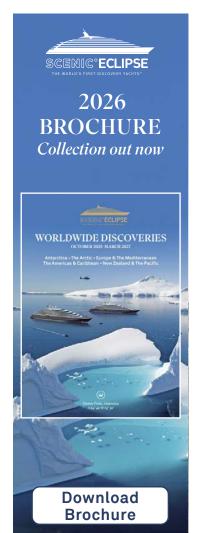
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SAVOUR Australia's east coast one bite at a time on Journey Beyond's epicurean odyssey known as the Great Southern. Only a few days remain to fly and stay a free night in either Adelaide or Brisbane - see today's cover page for more information.









The industry experts you need to hear from. Get your tickets now!



Zurich acquires AIG

ZURICH Insurance Group, the parent company of Cover-More Travel Insurance, has acquired AIG's global personal travel insurance and assistance businesses for US\$600 million (*TD* breaking news yesterday).

The deal will see AIG's Travel Guard brand combined with Cover-More, expanding the latter's footprint in the US and giving Zurich access to a new global retail customer base.

"This transaction is a great strategic fit, which enhances Zurich's existing capabilities and makes us a leading travel insurance provider across all regions," Zurich Chief Executive Officer, Cara Morton, said.

The buyout is expected to result in combined annual gross written premiums of around US\$2 billion for Cover-More Group, which has confirmed that it will no longer provide retail travel insurance for Flight Centre Travel Group from Nov.

QF/JQ launch Vanuatu

FOLLOWING the collapse of Air Vanuatu in May (*TD* 10 May), air capacity is set to be bolstered by new Qantas and Jetstar services operated between Sydney, Brisbane and Port Vila.

After being approved for extra capacity last week (*TD* 20 Jun), Qantas has moved quickly to lock in flight schedules, confirming this morning three-times weekly Qantas services between Brisbane and Port Vila from 10 Sep, and Jetstar flights up to four times a week between Sydney and Port Vila from 12 Dec.

Jetstar will use its growing fleet of longer-range A321neos to undertake the new flights.

When both routes take to the air later this year, they will represent 150,000 additional seats each year between Australia and Vanuatu.

Qantas had previously operated a codeshare arrangement with Air Vanuatu until the Pacific carrier's



untimely collapse.

Commenting on the upcoming launch, Qantas International CEO Cam Wallace said the routes would offer more choice and price points to fuel demand.

"We're thrilled to offer our customers direct flights between Brisbane and Vanuatu and build on this important route, which will maintain essential connectivity for leisure and business travel," Wallace said.

Virgin Australia was also approved for extra Vanuatu capacity, which it will use to operate seven return services a week between Brisbane and Port Vila from 09 Jul (*TD* 04 Jun).

Fares are on sale from today at qantas.com and jetstar.com and through travel agents. AB

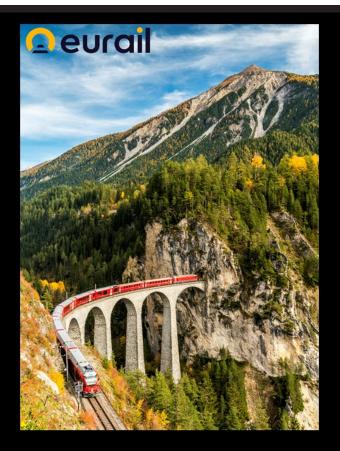
Foster joins itravel

ITRAVEL has welcomed Hannah Foster (pictured), who is based in Sydney, as the newest mobile agent in its network.

Foster said joining the itravel network was an easy decision, as it "prioritises supporting and giving back to their members, and the tools and technology they provide are exceptional".

"Since day one, I've felt incredibly welcomed and supported, which has made all the difference in starting this new chapter of my career."





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Window Seat

MANY people love the feeling of driving around in a convertible with the roof down, but one Dutch pilot learnt the hard way that the experience doesn't quite translate when you're flying a plane.

Narin Malcomjan shared footage **HERE** of the heartstopping moment when the canopy of her two-seat aircraft unexpectedly opened midflight - thankfully, she managed to safely land the plane despite being battered by intense wind, which caused temporary breathing and vision problems.

Freeman sprints to TM

AUSTRALIAN athletics champion Cathy Freeman has been announced as a speaker at this year's TravelManagers Annual Conference in Cairns in Sep.

Freeman will participate in a closing Q&A session at the threeday event.

"Cathy is one of Australia's most admired and respected athletes, a proud Kuku Yalanji woman, an Olympic champion and a national treasure," said TravelManagers COO Grant Campbell.

"She was awarded Young Australian of the Year in 1990 and Australian of the Year in 1998, and we are honoured and excited that she has accepted our invitation to join us in Cairns."



Taking place on 12 Sep, the theme of this year's conference will be 'Working Smarter' and the opening address will be delivered by mindfulness and meditation practitioner, Chelsea Pottenger.

"Chelsea's presentation aligns with the overall focus of this year's conference, which aims to help PTMs to develop the tools they need to reduce stress, tap into positive energy & build resilience," Campbell said. JHM

Keeping Canuckiwi

THE Utah Office of Tourism (UOT) has re-appointed Canuckiwi to represent it in the Australia and New Zealand market.

The PR firm has led the UOT account for the past 10 years, spearheading its marketing, travel trade relations, and PR initiatives.



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Wild Bush incentive

AGENTS can earn a fully hosted walk in the SA Flinders Ranges or Maria Island in Tasmania as part of a new incentive launched by multi-day walking holiday operator, Wild Bush Luxury.

To be eligible, sellers must make five bookings for Wild Bush Luxury's Maria Island or Arkaba Flinders Ranges walks by 31 Oct.

A separate prize of two nights' accommodation at Bamurru Plains in the NT or Arkaba Homestead in SA is also open to agents who sell five nights.

Agents eager to experience the Wild Bush Luxury product themselves can also enjoy agent rates of 30% off all experiences, with the offer valid to 31 Dec.



Choose a new future for your business



Turbulence claims soaring

TRAVEL insurance claims based on in-flight turbulence have skyrocketed 700% since 2022, new data released by Southern Cross Travel Insurance reveals.

In the wake of widely publicised incidents of turbulence suffered by Singapore Airlines, Qatar Airways, Korean Air and several others, the insurer said the claims still make up the minority of all claims lodged.

"Should turbulence impact your travel plans or cause injury, having travel insurance means there's one less thing to think about, while you navigate a highly

Luxe boost for GC

MARRIOTT International will introduce its second Australian Luxury Collection property in the form of a newbuild resort on the Gold Coast.

Marina Mirage Gold Coast, a Luxury Collection Resort will offer 122 rooms and suites, a signature restaurant, rooftop bar, pool and jacuzzi and large event spaces.

Anticipated to open in 2027, it will be Marriott's second Luxury Collection property and first on the Australian mainland, alongside The Tasman in Hobart.

Marina Mirage Gold Coast will complement a strong assortment of high-end Marriott International brands coming to the Queensland holiday strip, including Ritz-Carlton Gold Coast and St Regis, both on track to open in 2026 and 2027 respectively.

stressful situation," said Southern Cross Travel Insurance Chief Executive, Jo McCauley.

The insurer said travellers are usually covered for turbulence in a standard policy, alongside more common occurrences such as cancellations or rescheduling.

"We have covered our customers for claims relating to turbulence, including a claim for over \$20,000 when a customer was injured during a flight due to turbulence and had to cancel all travel plans and return to Sydney," McCauley said.

"These unexpected circumstances are exactly why we always recommend people shouldn't travel without travel insurance." ML

JQ eats Bonza's lunch

JETSTAR will offer a direct link between Cairns and the Sunshine Coast from 03 Dec, one of Bonza's former mainstay routes.

Qantas' budget carrier will operate the route up to four times a week using A320 aircraft, with the new flights expected to carry around 4,000 pax a month.

"These new flights are expected to be popular with both interstate and overseas tourists wanting to explore more of Queensland and locals taking off on holiday or reconnecting with family and friends," Executive Manager, Customer, Jenn Armor, said.

The service is tipped to be popular with leisure & VFR pax.

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CVFR's moment in the sun



CVFR Travel Group was recently acknowledged by Malaysia Airlines for being a strong strategic partner for the Australia market, walking away with a special award of recognition at the carrier's Trade Elevation Summit hosted in Kuala Lumpur.

Group CEO for CVFR, Ram Chhabra, was on hand to personally accept the honour (pictured), which was bestowed in the presence of MH senior executives, including Group CEO Izham Ismail, Global Head of Sales Syazwan Ahmad Sabri, and Chief Commercial Officer Dersenish Aresandiran.

CVFR's award was one of only two to be received by an agency from the Australia/New Zealand region, with Flight Centre Travel Group also honoured.

The Malaysia Airlines Trade Elevation Summit 2024 kicked off on 24 Jun and has been attended by 300 global partners from 48 cities all around the world.

Attendees enjoyed networking sessions & tours of Malaysia. AB

Swan into Virtuoso

SWAN Hellenic has joined Virtuoso as a luxury travel partner, with the cruise line to offer special amenities, values and experiences to the network's travel advisors and their clients.

The brand's acceptance into Virtuoso means it can market to luxury clients via network vehicles and to leisure travel agencies in the North and Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Asia-Pacific, Africa and the Middle East via multiple communications channels and events, including Virtuoso Travel Week.

"Virtuoso's acceptance process is incredibly selective, so becoming a preferred partner is a true honour," the cruise line's CCO, Patrizia lantorno, said.

"The reputation Virtuoso member agencies have for outstanding dedication to their clients is a perfect fit with our own bespoke approach to service," she added.

See today's CW for more details.



Click here to get your tickets for Travel 24 now!





THE first stop on the Smartflyer famil was the stunning Blue Palace.

La Collection's luxury European getaway

LUXURY representation company La Collection recently completed the European leg of its highly anticipated 2024 Educationals.

Travel advisors were treated to some of the best hotels across Italy and Greece, along with some first class service La Collection is known for.



Lea Seguier hosted advisors from Mosman Travel and Frontier Travel to Villa Spalletti Trivelli in Rome, Borgo Santandrea on the Amalfi Coast, while San Montano Resort and Spa was their home on the island of Ischia.

A similar itinerary was enjoyed by a group of Virtuoso advisors earlier in May, with Craig Farrell the host.

Greece was the word for the next two lucky groups, who enjoyed stays at the brand-new Myconian DEOS on Mykonos, iconic Mystique on Santorini, while on Paros, COSME offered the perfect launchpad to explore the island.

A group of Smartflyer advisors also extended their Greek adventure to include Cape Sounio on the Athens Riviera, The Dolli in Athens, and Blue Palace on Crete.



SANTORINI was the perfect place to burn off some calories with a hike from Fira to Oia.



LEA Seguier and Antonella Gatto from Borgo Santandrea hosted drinks with Kate Vasiliou, Mosman Travel; Donna Phillips; Sonia Jones; and Kevin Garwood, Frontier Travel.



ADVISORS from Savenio, Tribe Travel, MTA, Jigsaw Travel and Travel Associates explored Megalahori village on Santorini, and enjoyed lunch at O by Myconian Collection, on Mykonos.



ENJOYING a complimentary transfer from Borgo Santandrea to Amalfi.



DEBBIE Collins (Spencer) and Gena Summons (Travel Associates) explore Ischia.



business events news

Thursday 27th Jun 2024

businesseventsnews.com.au

Centara's new **MICE** agenda

CENTARA Hotels & Resorts has unveiled Meetings Redesigned, a new one-stop MICE solution available at its properties around the world.

Corporate event organisers can take advantage of a personal onsite Meeting Guru, who will plan and coordinate their event.

The new offering also includes team building programs in partnership with Asia Ability, and creative catering experiences such as casual beach BBQs, cooking challenges, and customisable cocktail bars.

For a limited time, planners can book Centara's teambuilding activities with a 50% discount on its best available rates, and enjoy a Premium Coffee Break upgrade HERE.

SYD BUSINESSES BOOM IN VIVID

HUNDREDS of Sydney operators shone brightly during the Vivid festival this winter, with a record-breaking 201 businesses hosting special experiences, menus, packages and tours as part of the Vivid Sydney Local Business Program.

Run by the NSW Government and Destination NSW, the program gives businesses the opportunity to leverage the influx of visitors reeled in each year by Australia's largest festival.

Over the 2024 campaign period, the vividsydney.com website generated over 380,000 industry and event partner leads.

"Vivid Sydney brings hundreds of thousands of visitors to the city from across Australia and around the world to experience the Southern Hemisphere's largest festival of light, music, ideas and food," Destination NSW CEO Steve Cox said.



"I am so pleased more than 200 businesses have registered to work with Vivid Sydney to ensure their business shines brightly to so many potential customers visiting the festival to have an unforgettable experience.

"Vivid Sydney plays a key role in driving visitation to Sydney and supporting the NSW visitor economy and we want to ensure

all our visitors enjoy their Vivid Sydney experience and leave wanting to return for even more of Sydney's hospitality."

Hickson House, a distillery and bar in the Rocks precinct, was among the participating businesses which benefited from the influx of festival-goers.

The venue hosted illuminated projections, exclusive gin tastings, and an immersive dark room experience complete with glowing cocktails on Fri and Sat nights during the 23-night festival.

The bar's founder, Mikey Enright, shared, "Vivid Sydney attracts huge crowds of consumers to the Rocks precinct.

"Hickson House has had great exposure through the Local Business Program and we've been able to elevate the experiences to them." he added.

For details on the Local Business Program, CLICK HERE. JM

Lions loose in Vic

OVER 10.500 Lions members descended on Melbourne this week for the the Lions International Convention 2024, which took place from 21-25 Jun at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre

Attendees arrived from more than 170 countries to attend the five-day conference, which prompted a further 80 ancillary events around Melbourne, and is expected to deliver \$68 million to the local economy and drive hotel occupancy during low season.

First Wednesday Connect marks 100

THE Canberra Innovation Network is gearing up to host its 100th First Wednesday Connect event on 06 Jul, bringing together the city's innovation community.

The milestone event is set to be bigger than ever, with over 300 people expected to converge in the ACT Government Building.

Since launching in 2015, First Wednesday Connect has facilitated over 1,000 pitches

from the entrepreneurs within the community, heard by almost 20,000 people in locations across Canberra.

"The highly interactive atmosphere offers a very welcome alternative to digital social channels that, in my opinion, often maintain distance rather than truly connect people," said Petr Adamek, the network's CEO.

Registration is essential -**CLICK HERE** for more info.

Save 24 at Accor

TO CELEBRATE the upcoming Summer Olympics, Accor is offering savings of up to 24% on events, meetings and conferences hosted at any of its Pullman, Novotel and ibis hotels located at Sydney Olympic Park.

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APPOINTMENTS

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Sam Storey has embarked on a new journey with Wendy Wu Tours as its State Account Manager for Victoria. With a strong background in the tourism and hospitality sectors, Storey brings valuable experience to his new role. He has worked with Flight Centre Travel Group for more than eight years, where he was most recently the Business Development Manager specialising in luxury small ship cruise sales.

The Lux Collective has appointed Olivier Chavy as its next Chief Executive Officer. Chavy has over three decades of travel industry experience under his belt, including his most recent role as President at Travel + Leisure Co. His impressive CV also includes a stint as Chief Executive Officer at Movenpick Hotels & Resorts, as well as senior executive roles at Hilton Worldwide.

Toni Westlake has been promoted by Big Red Group to the newly created role of Head of Brand & Marketing, Westlake, who has been with the experience network for nearly four years, initially came onboard in 2020 as Brand Manager for its adventure marketplace Adrenaline, before working her way up to Senior Marketing Manager a year later. In her new role, she will focus on growing the marketing team and supporting the long-term growth of Big Red Group and its consumer brands.

GALTA, Australia's LGBTQ+ travel association, has welcomed Sunshine Coast mayoral candidate Wayne Parcell as its latest board member. The appointment will see Parcell - who founded Queensland's non-for-profit Rangebow Festival - advocate for diversity, equity and inclusion as well as promote hinterland and regional tourism.

Paradise Cruises and Hotels Halong Bay, Vietnam has announced the appointment of Gordon Bell as its Australian representative. He is tasked with positioning the brand as the ideal choice for Australian travellers who are seeking memorable cruising experiences on Halong Bay. Launched in 2008, Paradise boasts a collection of 12 luxury cruise vessels as well as the Paradise Suites Hotel in Tuan Chau Island.

Effective o1 Oct, the African Travel and Tourism Association has announced the appointment of James Haigh as its new Chair. Haigh is a leading figure in the African tourism industry, where he has held a range of senior positions in countries like Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, South Africa, and more. He was also joint CEO with his wife Leanne of the East African operations of tourism group Tourvest for more than a decade.

The Advantage Travel Partnership has appointed John Simmons to the newly created role of Business Development Manager - Business Travel for Advantage Managed Services (AMS). Based in the UK, Simmons will draw on his 15-plus years of corporate travel experience to oversee day-to-day business development opportunities as well as attract new business for AMS members.



Kiwis ready for the winter sun



THE return of seasonal Air New Zealand flights between Auckland and the Sunshine Coast yesterday puts the Qld destination in a good position to attract a record number of Kiwi visitors in 2024.

The teams from Visit Sunshine Coast, Sunshine Coast Airport and Air NZ met with local trade partners vesterday to ramp up

Monsters take over

DRACULA, the Wolf Man. Frankenstein's monster and many other creatures will feature at Universal Studios' new Epic Universe theme park, opening in Orlando next year (TD 05 Feb).

The 'Dark Universe' world will be one of five worlds to explore, with guests entering 'Darkmoor' via a portal sizzling with electricity to symbolise the mad science taking place within.

Frankenstein's Manor will be the central attraction, with the centrepiece ride being a journey through the chilling experiments conducted by Dr Frankenstein's granddaughter, Victoria.

excitement for the route.

Direct services from Auckland will run through to Oct, with more than 17,000 seats available between the two cities, giving adventure lovers and foodies an ample opportunity to indulge in a southeast Queensland getaway.

Visit Sunshine Coast CEO Matt Stoeckel said the region was a hotspot for activities including whale watching, whale swimming and even whale listening.

"We know the Kiwi market has a great affinity with the Sunshine Coast; it's our biggest international market and we see great potential for it to grow," Stoeckel commented.

Epicureans will also find favour in the region in late Jul with The Curated Plate food festival taking place until 04 Aug. ML

Pictured above is Rachael Titter, Air New Zealand; Hayley Daffurn, Air New Zealand; Emily Zinowki, Visit Sunshine Coast; Matt Stoeckel, Visit Sunshine Coast; Carl Jones, Sunshine Coast Airport and Jake Cosmai from Sunshine Coast Airport.

Travel Daily www.traveldaily.com.au

Travel Daily is part of the Business Publishing Group family of publications.

Produced each weekday since 1994, Travel Daily is Australia's leading travel industry publication.

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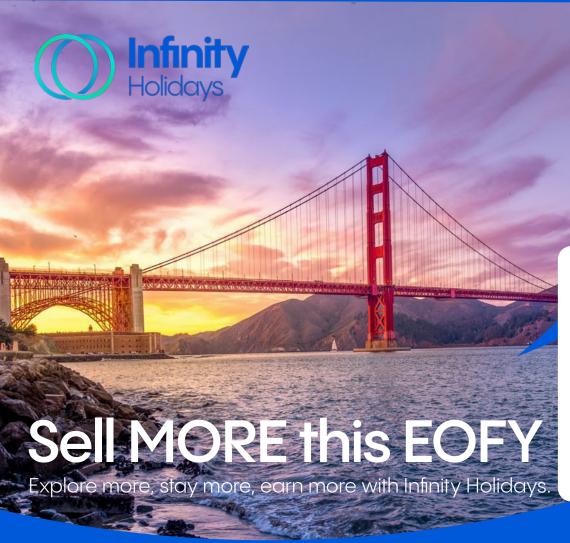
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