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Wednesday 8th January 2014

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has four pages of news & photos plus full pages from:

- AA Appointments jobs
- Etihad Airways Perth jobs

Summer pop-up bar

MERCURE Sydney Central is preparing to launch a pop-up bar for the duration of the upcoming Sydney Festival from 09-26 Jan.

Entitled Summer Sunsets on Railway Square, the temporary facility follows recent renovations at the property in which all rooms were given a full refresh with new marble bathrooms and paint jobs.

The pop-up bar will be located on the property's terrace, open from 5-8pm Tue-Fri and 4-8pm Saturday - more of the latest Accom Updates on **page four**.

NSW venues on show in LA

LATEST updates on the ongoing transformation of many of NSW's biggest infrastructure projects will this week be promoted to US tourism industry leaders attending the annual *G'Day USA* festivities in Los Angeles, which begin today.

Waterfront redevelopment at Barangaroo, including plans for

the upcoming six-star Crown casino precinct will feature along with White Bay Cruise Terminal.

The Sydney Int'l Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct (which is replacing the Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre) will also be showcased, along with NSW's calendar of sporting and cultural events.

Australia's annual promotional campaign push to the US market this year consists of five days of summits and gala events, starting with the Qantas Spirit of Australia event tonight, followed by a two-day Tourism Summit hosted by Tourism Australia.

Taking place at the Beverly Hills Hotel, the summit will canvass issues such as economic outlooks and consumer trends, with a series of panel discussions also set to take place.

Australian celebrity chef Curtis Stone will present on the appeals of the nation as a destination for food & wine lovers in a preview of TA's upcoming Restaurant Australia campaign (**TD** 16 Sep).

Saturday night will see the Black Tie Gala, traditionally attended by many of Australian entertainment industry icons, expats & A-listers.

Bangladesh warning

AUSTRALIANS have been urged to 'Reconsider your need to travel' to Bangladesh by the Federal Government due to "the unpredictable security and volatile political situation."

The upgrade is only one level below Smartraveller's 'Do not travel' advisory.

The increased alert comes in the wake of political conflict after general elections held last weekend, with general strikes, transport blockades and violent clashes between political groups and security forces expected.

On 05 Jan, 18 people were killed in clashes while several hundred were killed during political clashes throughout 2013.

An update from Smartraveller today said: "In the current environment, Australians in Bangladesh should not expect to travel or go about their business normally."

"Travelling during a hartal or through a blockade will expose you to the risk of violence. Should a hartal occur you should avoid travel and follow the instructions of local authorities."

CLICK HERE for more details.

New Noosa property

AFTER a nine-month closure and \$16m renovation, the Seahaven Resort Noosa has reopened its doors and welcomed guests to its new look property this week.

The resort occupies beachfront real estate on Hastings Street and offers 68 studio, one- and two-bedroom apartments, suites and rooftop penthouse apartments with full kitchens and laundries.

Public areas include four heated pools, BBQ area, gym, courtyards and comes as the latest opening in a revitalisation of the precinct.

To celebrate the opening, the resort is offering late checkout of 2pm for two-night studio rooms booked for travel by 30 Mar - see www.seahavenresort.com.au.

AAX earlybird fares

AIRASIA X has launched a new earlybird sale across its entire network for travellers looking to depart between Apr-Sep 2014.

One-way fares to Kuala Lumpur start from MYR249 (AU\$85) from Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth or Gold Coast or MYR699 (AU\$239) for Business Class.

Seats are on sale until 19 Jan.

McLaren retreat refit

A **\$400,000** upgrade to South Australia's Vineyard Retreat will boost high end accommodation options in McLaren Vale, says the South Australian Government.

The boutique property unveiled upgrades to four 4-star log cabin guest houses yesterday, featuring log fires and private verandahs.

SA Tourism Minister Leon Bignell said McLaren Vale appealed to overseas, interstate & intrastate visitors "so it is vital we maintain high-end accommodation which is befitting of our luxury destination."

More at thevineyardmv.com.au.

QF mull new fleet

QANTAS says it may invest in a fleet of fuel-efficient aircraft depending on what projects the Abbott Government chooses to fund with its \$1.55 billion emission reduction fund.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported QF would also evaluate improving air traffic management based on how the government designs its climate policy.

Hawaiian 2013 record

A **TOTAL** of 9,935,743 pax flew on the Hawaiian Airlines network in 2013 - the highest in the carrier's 84-year history, according to full year statistics released by the airline.

The result was a 4.8% increase on the full year prior, however load factors fell 1.7% to 81.5%.



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Bangkok contingency

THAILAND'S Caretaker Tourism Minister Somsak Pureesriak says an operational centre has been established by the Tourism Authority of Thailand to provide assistance to international visitors should they face disruptions by demonstrations planned for Bangkok on Mon (**TD** yest).

Somsak stressed the Thai Tourism Ministry was ready to offer an information service to overseas travellers for their convenience and safety while in Thailand, *Bernama* reported.

Tallest NYC hotel

MARRIOTT Int'l has opened the tallest single-use hotel in North America - the 68-storey combined Courtyard by Marriott & Residence Inn Central Park.

The property consists of the 378-room Courtyard by Marriott and 261-suite Residence Inn and is located in Midtown Manhattan at 1717 Broadway, offering easy access to Carnegie Hall, Fifth Ave, the Broadway Theater District, Rockefeller Centre and more.

Some guest rooms offer views to Central Park, Times Square and the Hudson River.

Tigerair pax traffic soars

BUDGET airline Tigerair Australia has seen a near 30% year-on-year surge in traffic for the 2013/14 financial year ending Nov, up by more than 300,000 passengers.

According to Virgin Australia monthly stats released today for its no-frill off-shoot, TT's revenue passenger kilometres (RPKs) rose 31.8%, outstripping available seat kms (ASKs) which spiked 24.8% over the same period.

Revenue load factors jumped five percentage points to 89%.

During Nov, passenger numbers increased 8.5%, or over 20,000 movements on the corresponding month in 2012, to 259,000.

Qld liquor changes

THE Queensland Government has outlined recent changes to liquor and gaming regulations that benefit small businesses and the Qld tourism industry.

Aimed at cutting red-tape, changes include letting tour operators serve small amounts of liquor to guests without a licence & removal of a requirement that vessel operators need to have an approved manager onboard.

Tigerair's RPKs and ASKs for Nov were up over 19%.

MEANWHILE, Virgin Australia itself reported drops in both domestic (-0.3%) & international (-1.6%) passenger carriage during the month of Nov.

For the financial year-to-date to Nov, VA's total network traffic is up 3.5% to 8.76m passengers.

Serko acquisition

ONLINE corporate travel booking firm Serko has acquired Sydney-based online expense management company Incharge.

The transaction covers all assets and customers of Incharge, and enables Serko to round out its SaaS-based travel booking solution, used by many top corporations and government agencies in Australasia.

"Travel booking and expense management go together naturally, so this is both a logical and exciting opportunity for us," Incharge ceo Paul Turner said.

Turner said that working with Serko will allow Incharge to expand its reach and create an integrated solution to benefit businesses.

In due course, the business will rebrand as 'Serko Incharge'.

Excitor Fiji appoints

PACIFIC Pulse Travel Marketing has been recruited as the sales & marketing office for the new adventure jetboat firm Excitor Fiji.

Operating daily from Port Denarau, Excitor Fiji offers three touring options including a 1-hr Five Island Tour, Bounty Island Lunch Tour and Treasure Island Lunch Tour - see excitorfiji.com.

Marvel extra dates

TWO additional tour departures in 2014 to South America have been released by Travelmarvel in response to demand for the firm's program from Aussie travellers.

Options include the 20-day Highlights of South America or the 23-day Highlights of South America with Colca Canyon and Arequipa, scheduled to depart on 19 Sep and/or 15 Nov.

Trips are priced from \$7,995ppts or \$8,995ppts respectively.

A companion fly free promo that includes air taxes is available until sold out.

Tempo hotel bargains

TEMPO Holidays is promoting a selection of special deals and bonus inclusions at hotels in Rome and Paris during 2014.

The Domus Australia Hotel and Hotel White in Rome are priced from \$104ppts and \$145ppts respectively including brekkie.

In Paris, Le Royal Rive Gauche is offering a free upgrade to a Deluxe room, a free ticket for a Seine River Cruise and daily breakfast, priced from \$145ppts for travel between 05 Jul-31 Aug.

More at tempoholidays.com.au.

Mandela tourism push

TOUR operators in South Africa are scrambling to develop and promote a range of tour products allowing travellers to visit sights and landmarks involved in the life of revered leader Nelson Mandela.

South African Tourism ceo Thulani Nzima said Mandela was so important to the nation that his name alone draws millions of tourists to the country each year, and left a legacy and personal history that should be celebrated.

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AA/US begin aligning benefits

AMERICAN Airlines and US Airways have commenced the first phase of their integration process in the American Airlines Group network.

Enabling AAdvantage and Dividend Miles members to earn and redeem miles across all travel on the combined network is the first stage in the process.

Elite members of both programs can take advantage of select reciprocal benefits, including First & Business Class check-in, priority security, boarding and baggage delivery and access to Preferred Seats at no additional charge.

American Admiral Club or US Airways Club members will also have reciprocal club benefits, providing them access to the 35 Admiral Clubs and 19 US Airways Clubs network-wide.

Airport and web check-in timeframes will also be aligned for both AA and US.

"Our customers are ready to

reap the benefits of our merger and we are pleased they'll get to experience these perks they value most so early in the integration process," said American Airlines president Scott Kirby.

Other benefits to be introduced over coming months include a codeshare agreement, co-location of extra ticket counters and gates in key markets and the alignment of select frequent flyer program policies, such as upgrades.

The two carriers will continue to operate separately as they work through the integration process.

MEANWHILE, American Airlines has commenced transcontinental services using new Airbus A321T aircraft, featuring lie-flat First and Business Class seating.

Configured with a triple class cabin, the A321T will initially operate between New York JFK and Los Angeles before being deployed on the JFK to San Francisco city pairs from 06 Mar.

Ballooning over Uluru

APPLICATION forms have been lodged with the Federal Govt for the development of a tethered helium balloon attraction flying high over Ayers Rock.

Dubbed Skyflyer, the balloon would incorporate an observation deck to give visitors 360° views of the Rock and surrounding landscapes at a height of 150m, with plans for the operation of eight 30-minute flights per day.

The proposal is being driven by a firm known as Stratosphere in partnership with Voyages Indigenous Tourism.

Bird strike impacts FJ

FIJI Airways achieved an on-time performance of 78% for Dec - a minor improvement on the month prior, but five points less than Oct 2013.

The carrier cited a hydraulic leak and a bird strike to two aircraft plus weather restrictions in Dec for the lower than hoped OTP.



Window Seat

"DON'T mention the war."

UK promotional organisation VisitBritain has found itself in a bit of hot water thanks to a do's and don'ts list created to assist hoteliers welcoming guests from a range of nationalities.

Described by a UK newspaper as a "Fawlty Towers guide to foreigners," the list has been criticised for being too general with mannerisms & expectations sought by travellers.

The list advises hotel operators that Indians can tend to change their mind frequently and that Germans and Austrians can be somewhat "demanding".

Russians apparently should not be given a room with a low ceiling as they are a "tall nation" while Hong Kong visitors should not be given four-poster beds as they associate them with ghosts.

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Voyages Rock specials

VOYAGES Indigenous Tourism Australia has released a new Discover Uluru deal to encourage Australians wanting to see Ayers Rock to make 2014 the year to go. Packages for the Ayers Rock Resort are priced from \$259ppts & include two nights accom with daily breakfast, airport transfers and a daily Indigenous activities program, valid for bookings until 31 Mar - phone 1300 134 044.

Sabre calls for parity

TRAVEL technology giant Sabre has called for antitrust claims made by US Airways against the GDS to be dismissed because of a "virtually identical" lawsuit settled two years ago by new US merger carrier American Airlines. In a submission to a US District Court, Sabre claims the recent merger of the carriers means US Airways should be subject to the settlement agreement in effect.



EK daytrip to Auckland for PTMs



AS FAR as long lunches go, this would have to be right up there. Emirates recently treated nine Vic-based PTMs from home-based group TravelManagers to an exclusive day trip for lunch in Auckland, enjoying the service & comfort of the A380 both ways.

The EK service wasn't limited only to the plane, with access to the lounge at Melbourne Airport delivering the luxury before the group had become airborne.


After alighting from the aircraft, the Personal Travel Managers headed to the adjacent Novotel Auckland Airport for a sumptuous lunch ahead of a hotel inspection.

Capping off the day was a return journey in Business Class, with some choosing the lie-flat beds while others headed to the bar at the rear of the cabin.

Pictured above around the table in the MEL Emirates lounge ahead of their trans-Tasman day are PTMs Brett Ray, Danica Bennett, Di Yates and Helen Rolton, with champagne pouring service from Carl Matto, Emirates sales executive for Victoria.

Accommodation Updates

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wednesday feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



The **Oaks Oasis Caloundra** on the Sunshine Coast has recently opened a new waterpark attraction pitched at families. The 500sqm facility comprises a splash pool situated near a multi-level structure featuring waterslides, fountains, a water tipping bucket and a host of interactive games and activities, with a shaded picnic area nearby. The new park comes following the full refurbishment & upgrade of 110 rooms in the property's Boomerang Wing.



Accor has carried out a \$3.5m refurbishment at the **Ibis Styles Kalgoorlie**, transforming its interior with a bright, relaxed colour scheme while updating furniture and public areas. All 100 guest rooms have been given a refresh with burnt orange feature walls, full length mirrors, new bedding and brand new bathrooms. In addition, the hotel's restaurant has also been enhanced, while a new function room was added to the property earlier last year.



Debuting recently at the **St Regis New York** in Manhattan is the product of many months of renovation and refurbishment work, with new look guestrooms, suites and public spaces reflecting the property's legacy yet offering a contemporary feel. A new King Cole Bar & Salon has also opened under the control of famed restaurateur John DeLucie. New Waterford crystal chandeliers adorn public areas along with large-format art, fabrics & beveled mirrors.

LA set to capitalise

PROMOTION of Los Angeles as a holiday destination is set to be ramped up locally this year, with the Los Angeles Tourism and Convention Board planning to roll out a new integrated marketing campaign in coming months.

The plan was revealed as part of an announcement reporting a total of 42.2 million visitor arrivals for the full year in 2013 - a 2% year-on-year increase.

International visitors made up 6.2 million of the total tally, with China ending the year at No 1, while average hotel occupancies for the year closed at 76.8%.

Success of expanded promotion efforts in growing markets including Australia were praised among the highlights for the year.

Ethihad appointment

CHRISTOPHE Didier has been appointed as general manager for Brazil at Etihad Airways.

His past experience includes senior sales roles with Delta Air Lines and Air France.

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