

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news including our PUZZLE page.

Astier ex Accor

ACCOR'S Communication Manager - Pacific, Rebecca Astier (nee Freestun), is leaving the hotelier after 15 years.

She's been stood down for much of 2020 and has now decided to take a voluntary redundancy.

Astier came to fame back in 2009 with a gutsy performance in the inaugural (and only) **Travel Daily** Travel Industry Talent Extravaganza - reminisce by [CLICKING HERE](#).

Bali cleans it up

AUTHORITIES in Indonesia have launched a new safe travel program called #InDOnesiaCare to prioritise health and safety procedures for visitors to Bali as international flights reopen.

Measures include regular disinfection, physical distancing and temperature checking, and before entering Bali visitors must present a negative COVID-19 swab test and provide a QR code for verification by the Ministry of Health at immigration points.

All baggage is sanitised on arrival at hotels, and tourism businesses will earn an official COVID-safe certification after official assessment.

An online health declaration for inbound passengers must be completed at inahac.kemkes.go.id.

ETG takes on Counsellors

EXPRESS Travel Group (ETG) is set to significantly expand its offering for independent agents, collaborating to smooth the transition for the home-based network of Travel Counsellors as it exits the Australian market after 13 years (TD breaking news).

Travel Counsellors expanded into Australia in 2007, with the local operation initially established by the late Peter Watson (TD 30 Sep 2016) and then subsequently led by others including Cathy Burke, Samantha Hutton, Deb Duncan, David Hughes, Fred Van Eyk and most recently Kaylene Shuttlewood.

The company's global CEO, Steve Byrne, said Travel Counsellors had been quick to react and adapt to the COVID-19 pandemic both financially and operationally.

He said the decision to transition out of Australia was part of a "package of measures to support our long-term strategy and future growth".

The agreement with Express Travel Group will ensure that individual Australian Travel Counsellors will be fully supported to continue running their corporate and leisure travel businesses, with a formal transition to take place on 01 Feb.

Byrne will oversee the changes in an advisory role, while Shuttlewood and a number of the Travel Counsellors support team in Melbourne will transfer to ETG.

"Our aim in this has been to find an elegant and caring

way forward for our people, and support as many of our franchisees as possible to transition their business to Express Travel Group," Byrne said.

"We have taken great care to source the right business partner for our people, and in doing so have found Express Travel Group share our core values which are based on showing care, providing personal service to customers and feature a strong organisational culture centred around putting people at the heart of everything they do," he added.

ETG MD Tom Manwaring said the company looked forward to welcoming Travel Counsellors into the ETG family.

"The care and attention Travel Counsellors show to their customers means they are a natural fit for our community here in Australia," he added.

Manwaring confirmed plans to provide a new division for ETG's mobile members, powered by Express Tickets and the new Aeronology NDC technology platform (TD yesterday).

New Princess Pryde

HEATHER Pryde has today been named as the new National Account Manager for Princess Cruises in Australia and NZ.

She will nurture and grow the cruise line's relationships with national and tour operator clients as well as continuing to support refund and credit processing.

Rex appoints new sales chief

REGIONAL Express has announced the appointment of Ann Elliott as its new General Manager Sales.

Taking up her new role effective immediately, Elliott comes to Rex with more than 32 years in the airline and travel agent sector, with her most recent position being as General Manager ANZ Sales with Virgin Australia.

Elliott started her career in a travel agency in Armidale, NSW, with the airline saying she is "coming back to her country origins to work with Rex".

She will lead the Regional Express sales team as it embarks on its "historic domestic expansion", adding Boeing 737 jet services on mainline routes head to head with Virgin and Qantas.

"I am thrilled to be starting at Rex at such a challenging and exciting time," she said.

The first Rex Sydney-Melbourne flights will take off on 01 Mar 2021, with Brisbane services set to be added after Easter.

HAL upgrade event

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) is offering a range of bonuses for customers who book a 2021 or 2022 voyage before 28 Feb.

The offer includes a "big" stateroom upgrade, a Signature Beverage Package, bonus specialty dining, 10% off shore excursions, 50% off deposits and reduced fares for kids.

More details on 1300 987 322.

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HURTIGRUTEN





COVID refund tool

ALLIANZ Partners Australia has developed a new self-serve refund portal which calculates the premium refund that COVID-19 affected travellers are eligible to receive, cutting down the refund timeline to as little as three business days.

The new platform can assess a range of travel types, from single and multi-trip travel policies, rental vehicle excess, as well as unused event ticket insurance.

Allianz Partners has so far refunded \$8.5m to 24,500 clients.

The COVID-19 Insurance Refund Portal can be accessed [HERE](#).

Axis fraud sentence

ARTHUR Zacharias, the travel consultant who defrauded hundreds of thousands of dollars from Adelaide's Axis Travel Centre (**TD** 09 Aug 2016) will be sentenced in Jan, after late last month pleading guilty to all the outstanding charges in the case.

Vic voucher agent tick

VISIT Victoria has confirmed that travel agency bookings are eligible for the state government's \$200 tourism voucher program (**TD** yesterday) which is providing \$28 million to support the tourism sector.

The new Regional Travel Voucher Scheme is open to Vic residents aged 18 or over when they spend a minimum of \$400 on accommodation, experiences or tours in regional Victoria.

Vouchers are limited to one per household, and travellers must spend at least two nights in paid accommodation to qualify for the \$200 rebate.

Applications opened this morning at business.vic.gov.au, and the vouchers, released in three tranches of 40,000 at a time, must be redeemed after travel, meaning cash flows quickly to regional businesses.

Expedia TAAP GM Stuart Udy has received confirmation that

bookings via agents are able to be recouped under the scheme, as long as customer receipts confirm the accommodation address is in regional Vic for travel between 12 Dec and 22 Jan.

Udy noted that Expedia TAAP has thousands of rooms available across the state, with "fabulous rates and inventory including home stays, hotels, motels, apartments, villas, holiday parks, camp sites and more".

"Agents can confidently let their customers know they have access to all types of accommodation, make the booking via the agency and still be eligible for the Visit Victoria Voucher.

"These are your windows of opportunity," Udy urged agents.

"Seize them, let your customers know you can provide the deals and [have the] experience to manage these bookings for them.

"Be relevant and crack the COVID curse," he concluded.



Window Seat

AUTHORITIES at the North Pole have reportedly confirmed that Santa's sleigh will perform a ceremonial fly-by of the International Space Station (ISS).

The socially-distanced visit by the jolly red man and his reindeers is in honour of the 20th anniversary of continuous habitation of the ISS.

The visit will be tracked by the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), which each year follows the global peregrinations of St Nick.

The official NORAD Santa Tracker at noradsanta.org will feature the precise real-time location of the ISS on 24 Dec, while Santa will this year be wearing a face mask - and of course a space helmet while he's in the upper atmosphere.

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Travel Daily

NEWS ON THE FLY



Victory smells sweet

A PLAN to build two interconnected hotels in Launceston has cleared another hurdle, with Tasmania's planning tribunal dismissing a case to stop the project brought by the Launceston Heritage Not High-rise group.

Global Premium Hotels, part of the Fragrance Group, lodged the \$50 million plan back in Mar and will offer 230 hotel rooms across 12 storeys, infrastructure the state's Growth Minister Michael Ferguson said would help Tassie recover from COVID-19.

VA caps regional fares

VIRGIN Australia has introduced a new Regional Fares Program that will cap the price of last-minute essential travel to some capital cities for residents in remote regions of Western Australia, Qld and the NT.

Fares are available to residents who are members of the carrier's Velocity Frequent Flyer program and who have their profile linked to an eligible regional address, with bookings needing to be made directly through the Regional Fares Program page on Virgin Australia's website.

Maximum return fares will be capped at \$700, and in some cases lowered to \$600 on certain routes such as Kalgoorlie to Perth and Emerald to Brisbane.

Virgin Australia General Manager Network and Revenue Management Russell Shaw said the cost-lowering initiatives had been launched in response to regional community feedback that suggested air travel needed to be made more accessible in a range of rural areas.

"We understand residents in our regional communities sometimes need to make last-minute travel plans, but short booking timeframes and demand for these services can mean fares become very expensive," he said.

"We're pleased to be able to help alleviate some of the stress involved when having to book last minute and to keep our guests located in regional areas connected when it matters most," Shaw added.

DL cuts change fees

DELTA Air Lines has scrapped change fees for all international flights originating from the US.

The decision follows a move by DL to eliminate change fees on all of its domestic flights earlier in the year (TD 02 Sep), a policy also implemented by fellow American carriers United Airlines and American Airlines.

The carrier has also extended its existing waiver of no change fees for all tickets purchased through 30 Mar, 2021 for all flights.

Solace for Quantum

THE Singapore Tourism Board has today confirmed a suspected case of COVID-19 on board Royal Caribbean's *Quantum of the Seas* in Singapore was, in fact, a false positive result.

The passenger's original sample has since been retested and has come back negative, more details on the developing story in **CW**.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Today's Technology Update is brought to you by *Stuba Pacific*

TECHNOLOGY in 2020 didn't "change" our lives, but allowed us to cope and thrive with chaos



around us. Whilst nearly killing the travel industry, the silver lining is an opportunity for travel agents who can survive...side hustle anyone?

Lockdown in Victoria dragged like a dog in the park with "piles" and led to big business saying "we are mothballing BUILDINGS...keep working at home". This change is sticking. It's a good thing.

Whether it was "teaming" or "skyping" or "slacking" or "messaging", it was "sorry darls, about to zoom". All of Stuba, even if around the corner, was running in "offshore mode". Those challenges were massive.

The technologies we put in place were Mural and Confluence, but I added in loads of learning from the "Resilient Mind Quest" and research on humans working in isolation. The answers are out there.

Good for agents? We are sick of screens. People WANT to travel. You can go hybrid.

Empathetic agents who can build dreams and transport people away from daily woes will be revered. Choose to make it your opportunity and silver lining for an industry you love.

Stick with it – Stuba needs you – we are always here for you. Osu

Mark Luckey,
CIO, Stuba



Poet looks on the bright side

WE ARE continuing to receive many entries to our Christmas competition. We've decided to publish a few over the next week or so to inspire your entries.

A reminder that a Haigh's chocolate hamper is up for grabs to the best poem or rhyme reflecting on 2020 or looking

forward to 2021.

Send your entries to christmas@traveldaily.com.au before 16 Dec.

Today's entry comes from **Brooke Wood from Main Street Travel Mornington:**

*Home-schooling had its challenges,
But now I can add school teacher to my resume.*

Not driving to and from

*work,
Meant money saved on petrol.*

*They say a change is as good as a holiday
Well I had plenty of holidays then.*

*Masks were made compulsory,
So I didn't have to wear makeup.*

*Spending more time at home with family,
Was a blessing in disguise.*

*COVID-19 lockdown meant more time to exercise,
And loose those few extra kilos before Christmas.*

*Not being able to hit the shops,
Meant no credit card debts.*

*Not able to go out to restaurants,
Made me learn how to cook.*

*Missing seeing my friends,
Made us stronger than ever.*

*If there's one thing this has taught me,
Is life is too short so enjoy each & every day!*

CORPORATE UPDATE

Survival challenge for TMCs

THE most imminent challenge for corporate travel agencies in the current environment is simply survival, according to a new report from Amadeus.

The tech firm compiled the study based on interviews with almost 100 executives from travel management companies (TMCs) across the globe about their priorities, needs and business strategies in 2021 and beyond.

“Given low business demand, many face significant cash flow concerns and a need to tightly manage costs,” Amadeus said.

“The main recovery strategy for executives in the APAC region was clear: 64% said cost optimisation would be their top priority in the mid-term, with a focus on operational optimisation using automation and digitisation.

“This was closely followed by building critical workforce capabilities to manage new technology and deliver better journeys,” the report added.

Key trends identified were a potential shift from unmanaged to managed travel, due to travel

restrictions and border closures changing frequently meaning there would be a “strong business need for real-time information on quarantine requirements, schedule changes and route management tied to the establishment of travel bubbles”.

And in contrast to the pre-COVID environment where travel budget was an important driver, in the new world duty of care, risk management and traveller safety will take priority, according to the respondents.

Companies in the Asia-Pacific region are expected to prefer “larger travel brands” with robust and regulated safety standards.

When asked what the future of business travel would look like, there was consensus on a growing demand for beyond-air content, including hotels, car rentals, rail and insurance.

The full Reboot, Recharge, Rethink Business Travel report is now online at amadeus.com.

Alaska tier match

ALASKA Airlines has revealed the levels that members of its Mileage Plan loyalty program will achieve within the oneworld alliance when it formally joins the group at the end of Mar 2021.

Alaska MVP Gold 75K members will automatically become oneworld Emerald, while MVP Gold will correspond to oneworld Sapphire and MVP members will be at the Ruby level.

Taiwan Aussie tick

AUTHORITIES in Taiwan have now classified the whole of Australia and NZ as “low risk” for COVID-19 transmission, meaning business travellers from both nations can enter Taiwan with just five days of quarantine and then a negative COVID-19 test.

Other countries on Taiwan’s low-risk list include Fiji, Thailand, Mauritius, Vietnam, Singapore and Cambodia.

Batten hatches role

FIONA Batten has joined the Travel Beyond Group as Chief Operating Officer Australia/NZ.

Batten joins the TMC after a long career within Flight Centre’s cevents, most recently as General Manager Australia.

Pulse migration

PULSE Travel has switched its GDS platform to Amadeus, taking on multiple products including Amadeus Selling Platform Connect to help drive business.

Amadeus Ticket Changer, Amadeus Web Services, Amadeus Offers and Amadeus Productivity Suite will help facilitate automation of previously manual tasks, with Pulse Travel MD Stan Klinakis saying the change would help “improve efficiencies across our consultants’ processes”.

Skroo Turner on Flight Centre, the pandemic and what the future holds for the business and industry - read it all in our exclusive interview in the December issue of *travelBulletin*.

travelBulletin



FCM lights up Langham



FCM Travel Solutions, FCM Meetings & Events and The Langham Sydney partnered to host a gathering earlier this week to provide a much-welcome opportunity for suppliers and customers to catch up face-to-face after a tumultuous year.

Representatives from IHG, Hilton, Accor, The Langham, Virgin Australia, Air New Zealand and Delta Air Lines celebrated with corporate buyers at the carbon-neutral event, which

also saw attendees donate 45 SolarBuddy lights which will help kids living in energy poverty.

Jamison Warren from FCM Travel Solutions said the event aimed to demonstrate that it is OK to gather face-to-face, as well as to simply support one another.

Due to COVID safety requirements, numbers were limited to a maximum of 50, but a follow-up event is planned for Feb.

Some of the guests are **pictured** at the Langham photo wall.

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Pub quiz

1. The ancient city of Byzantium is now known as what?
2. Which country has the largest population under 100 million people?
3. P&O Cruises Australia's recently departed *Pacific Dawn* initially sailed for which cruise line?
4. Panama seceded from which country in 1903?
5. The coat of arms of Mexico depicts a golden eagle perched atop what sort of plant?
6. How many countries currently boast a population of over 100 million people?
 - a) Seventeen
 - b) Nine
 - c) Fourteen
 - d) Twelve
7. How many towers are located in the Etihad Towers complex?
8. Which bay in Australia is said to possess the whitest sand in the world?
9. The Darwin Triple Crown is contested in which sport?
10. What natural feature dominates the Hobart skyline?

Unscramble

HOW many words can you make out of these nine letters? Every word needs to include the centre letter, have four letters or more and not be a proper noun or a plural. You can only use each letter once.

O	R	O
H	C	A
C	K	C

Good – 12 words
 Very good – 18 words
 Excellent – 23 words

NOTE: We've used Chambers Dictionary to decide what words are acceptable.

ANSWERS 10 DEC

Whose flag is this: New Zealand

Know your brands: 1 LinkedIn, 2 Heart Foundation Australia, 3 Thai Airways, 4 PlayStation

Whose animal is this: Karabakh horse - Azerbaijan

Where in the world?



THIS opulent building is the second-largest art museum in the world.

It was founded in 1764 when the country's ruler acquired a large collection of paintings from a merchant.

There are now over three million items in the museum, but only a small proportion of them

are ever on display.

There are so many items that they are housed in six buildings, one of which was a former residence of the rulers of the country.

Of the six buildings, five of them are open to the public.

Do you know where in the world this is located?

Funnies Flashback



WE'VE trawled through the *TD* Window Seat archives to give you a blast from the past. Here's some gems from 13 Mar 2014:

A CALIFORNIA man will spend the next 14 years in prison after being convicted of endangering aviation safety by pointing a laser at a helicopter.

26-year-old Sergio Rodriguez certainly picked the wrong target for his prank, repeatedly using a high powered green laser on the cockpit of a police chopper in the city of Fresno.

The full weight of the law was brought to bear on the offender, with US Attorney Benjamin Wagner saying "this is not a game, it is dangerous and it is a felony".

IT'S great to have an easy-to-remember phone number, but this is a bit ridiculous.

The cell phone number 0507 777 777 has been sold for more than A\$2.3m in a live charity auction held last weekend across Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

UAE communications group Etisalat auctioned 70 premium numbers in the auction, with the top ten numbers bringing in a total of more than \$4 million.



Santa and a bit of holiday magic in 2020," said Airthorth Chief Executive Daniel Bowden.

Pictured: Santa handing out his big bag of loot at the St Joseph Catholic Primary School.

Qld welcomes NZ

QUEENSLAND Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk has confirmed that travellers from New Zealand will be welcome to visit the state from tomorrow without the need to stay in quarantine for 14 days.

"More New Zealand citizens call Qld home than any other Australian state," Palaszczuk said.

UK/EU travel plan B

THE European Commission has proposed contingency measures ensuring basic air connectivity between the EU and the UK, as the prospect of a "no deal" BREXIT looks increasingly likely.

The recommendations include certain air services being assured to operate for at least six months.

Give it a go in Qld

TOURISM and Events Queensland has launched a new campaign designed to attract a greater number of tourism workers to the state.

Targeting grey nomads and gap year students, the marketing push aims to highlight the "diverse places with job opportunities" available, including vocations like baristas at Burleigh, restaurant waiters in the Whitsundays or kitchen hands in Cairns.

Greyhound Queensland and Queensland Rail are also partnering in the tourism employment campaign, offering discounted travel for people relocating for a tourism job.

The campaign will run through digital and social channels, as well as via various press outlets.

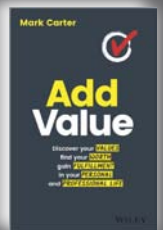
REGIONAL carrier Airthorth has embarked upon its annual Santa Run this week, delivering plenty of Christmas cheer to the communities of Elcho Island, Milingimbi and Kununurra.

Airthorth visited local primary schools in each destination, partnering with Coles Northlakes and the McDonalds restaurants of greater Darwin to deliver fruit, candy canes, water bottles and SunSmart hats to kids.

"Our annual Santa Run always serves as a reminder of the importance of community and this year with many of our more remote regions experiencing even greater isolation as a result of COVID-19, we felt it was especially important to uphold our tradition of delivering

Win Mark Carter's new book Add Value

To celebrate the launch of leadership development specialist Mark Carter's new book *Add Value*, each day this week Travel Daily is giving a lucky reader the chance to win an autographed copy.



The impact of COVID-19 has forced many of us to re-evaluate what really matters. In his second book, Mark takes a deep dive into the meaning of value and provides readers with a unique framework to help you tap into your core values and be prepared and skilled to manage the challenges of today and tomorrow.

To win, simply tell us what value you add at work or beyond to addvalue@traveldaily.com.au

More at markcarter.com.au

TRAVEL SPECIALS

WELCOME to Travel Specials, *Travel Daily's* Friday feature. If your firm has released a travel special you'd like to make the industry aware of, send the details to specials@traveldaily.com.au

Savings of up to \$400 per couple are available on the Grand Tasman 10-day cruise with **Travelmarvel**. The deal is valid for the 12 Jan departure, priced from \$3,395 per person, twin share, travelling return from Launceston. The trip includes 17 meals, nine nights in premium accommodation, air-conditioned coach travel and more - [HERE](#).

Holland America Line is holding a View & Verandah upgrade event. Valid for bookings made until the end of Feb, the deal includes stateroom upgrades, free gratuities, one-night speciality dining, beverages and reduced kids fares. For more info, call 1300 987 322.

Book a golf lovers Fiji island getaway with **Blue Lagoon Cruises** and get 40% off four- and seven-night cruises and four complimentary rounds of golf. Only one week remains for this sale, for which only a deposit is required - [CLICK HERE](#) for more information or to book.

InterContinental Hotels Group has launched its summer sale, with up to 40% off hotels and resorts. The campaign has flexibility at its heart, according to IHG, with zero deposit and free cancellation 72 hours prior to arrival. For more information, [CLICK HERE](#).

Fantasea explorer

FANTASEA Cruises has launched a new Sydney Harbour Explorer experience, providing an "exciting new way for people to enjoy Sydney Harbour's iconic destinations and hidden gems".

The new operation will debut on Sat 19 Dec, with daily connections between Balmoral Beach, Chowder Bay, Manly, Watsons Bay, Circular Quay and Taronga Zoo.

Visitors can buy a one- or two-day pass to hop on and hop off at each stop as often as they like, or pay for single segments via an Opal Card - fantasea.com.au.

Got a confidential tip? Contact *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#)