

Times are tough.

It's like a drought on an African savannah. The heat is never ending, the food is scarce and every day is a challenge. But one day, the rains come in strong and wash away the dust and you soon forget all about how dry it was. The grass grows bigger and faster than before. There is feasting all around and the dust and the heat seem like a distant memory.

Bench Africa has been around for 51 years. We've been through a drought or two.

Trust us. The rain will come.



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has four pages of news and a front cover wrap from **Bench Africa**.

Bench presses on

BENCH Africa is today encouraging the travel industry to look to the future, despite the current travails impacting the sector globally.

A special reminder of longevity from the company confirms that "Bench Africa has been around for 51 years...we've been through a drought or two.

"Trust us, the rain will come," the African specialist wholesaler promises - see the **cover page**.



A-LEAGUE

A-LEAGUE WINNER R24

Congratulations

CHRIS HALL

from **Qantas**

Chris is the top tipper for R24 of *Travel Daily's* A-League footy tipping competition.

A-League tipping competition is sponsored by Etihad Airways and ReadyRooms, with the top tipper for the season winning a trip to Manchester to see Manchester City play.



ReadyRooms

NSW permit LTPS/19/38955 ACT permit TP 19/04408

Emirates, Etihad grounded

AN OVERNIGHT edict by the rulers of the United Arab Emirates has seen two of the world's largest international carriers suspend all flights effective from tomorrow night (**TD** breaking news).

The move came just a day after EK President Tim Clark and his successor Gary Chapman, issued a statement saying the airline would continue to operate passenger flights to Australia "until further notice, as long as borders remain open and there is demand".

All that changed with the UAE Government directive, which has seen Emirates temporarily suspend all of its passenger flights from 25 Mar, with the measures put in place to contain the spread of COVID-19.

"We hope to resume services as soon as feasible," the airline said,

Transit hubs shut

THE Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has issued a Smarttraveller update noting the closure of, or severe restrictions on travel through, key international transit hubs for Australians returning from Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia.

As well as Dubai and Abu Dhabi (see story above), transit is now banned for travellers through Singapore and now Hong Kong, which announced yesterday that foreign nationals will not be allowed to transit from 12.01am on Wed 25 Mar.

Free subs for NZ

TRAVEL Daily has extended its free COVID-19 subscription offer to the New Zealand travel industry, which is now facing a four-week government-mandated shutdown.

NZ agents and suppliers wanting to keep in touch with what's going on can stay up to date by signing up at no charge via subs.traveldaily.com.au.

with the travel ban currently in place for an initial 14 days.

Emirates is not charging no-show fees, and customers who booked with a travel agent are being advised to contact them for further assistance with bookings.

The UAE Government order saw Etihad immediately suspend all transit travel through Abu Dhabi International Airport, meaning passengers booked on connecting flights via AUH to anywhere else on the EY network were not permitted to travel.

Etihad pax who are not travelling to Abu Dhabi are being advised not to go to the airport.

Those with flights scheduled before 30 Jun 2020 can rebook for free to a different destination within a specified zone, or keep the value of tickets as credit.

Flights by all airlines to and from AUH will remain suspended until further notice from UAE regulatory authorities, with cargo and emergency evacuation flights exempt from the suspension.

In addition, only UAE citizens are being permitted entry into Abu Dhabi, effective immediately.

HLO dividend paid

SHAREHOLDERS in Helloworld have this week been receiving payments from the company, which declared a 9c per share interim dividend as part of its half yearly results announcement last month (**TD** 24 Feb).

The payment means CEO Andrew Burnes and Executive Director Cinzia Burnes will have received just over \$3.5 million on their 39 million share stake.

The company yesterday announced a major response to the COVID-19 downturn, including 275 redundancies and standing down 1,300 workers for at least 10 weeks.

The Burnes' will take no salary until 30 Jun 2020.

Star Alliance info

THE Star Alliance has established a page on its website offering links to each of its 26 member airlines' information pages on COVID-19.

The page aims to give travellers accurate and up-to-date information on the carriers' policies and current status during the crisis - staralliance.com.

Finding it hard to know what's going on?

Visit C-19 Central on our website for the latest updates relating to the coronavirus.

Travel Daily



Jayride cuts costs

AIRPORT transfer online travel marketplace Jayride has stood down 34 team members as part of its material cost reduction measures in response to COVID-19.

The company said it has adopted a "highly conservative outlook for the travel industry over the next 12 months" and its measures would ensure it could outlast "even a significant and prolonged downturn".

Jayride has made 77 staff part time, with the ability to scale up, the Chairman and directors will forego cash remuneration until 30 Jun and the Managing Director will also take a 40% salary cut.

The company said these initiatives would support the company for at least 12 months without the need for additional capital, with the initiatives resulting in savings of over \$3 million a year.

Agents call for protection

SUPPLIERS protecting commission has been ranked by travel agents as the most helpful initiative to help them manage the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their business, in the **TD Business Support Poll**.

The survey found 77.2% of respondents highlighted protecting commission as helpful, followed by flexible supplier cancellations (69.8%), positive news stories (66.1%) & help with business financial support (58.7%).

On the other end of the scale, only 8.5% of respondents said investment in training and development would be helpful and new promotions and deals to sell, flexible workplace conditions and increased internal communications from head office were all seen as helpful by 14.3%.

The majority of participants are anticipating the current downturn in business will last three to six months (61.4%), while 29.6% are expecting it to last seven to 12 months, and 6.3% are estimating only one to two months.

Some agents are also finding positives from the current crisis, with many emphasising that it is highlighting the value of a travel agent to clients - and those who didn't book with an agent - with many echoing AFTA's old tagline "without a travel agent, you're on your own".

Respondents also said the crisis has brought out the community spirit of the travel industry, with one saying "no matter who you are in the industry I've realised we have all come together to help and guide each other through these times".

Others said people in quarantine will build their desire to travel, resulting in pent up demand once restrictions are lifted and some are taking the extra time to work on things in their business, including restructuring policies and procedures.

United SYD-SFO

UNITED Airlines will continue flying its Sydney-San Francisco route from now through to May.

Other routes the airline will still operate include from Newark/ New York to Frankfurt, London and Tel Aviv, Houston to Sao Paulo and San Francisco to Tokyo-Narita.

Globus extends

GLOBUS Family of Brands has extended its suspension of travel through to 30 Jun across all its Globus, Cosmos, Monograms and Avalon Waterways brands and all destinations.

Previously the company had paused its trips until 30 Apr.

Travellers booked on affected holidays through to 30 Jun can reschedule their holiday in 2020, 2021 or 2022, to any destination, on any brand, without incurring a cancellation fee and will receive a credit of up to \$300pp.

Travellers booked to see the Oberammergau Passion Play, which has been postponed until 2022 can be the first to reserve their spots at the current price.

Which oceanview room has the most space?

Find out more in the Autumn edition of Travel & Cruise Weekly



Window Seat

SWAGMAN Tours MD Wayne Hamilton is busy making a last-ditch attempt to spread a smile among the travel industry by delivering care packages.

"I am running the gauntlet of border closures to try and get at least some of my customers these packages," he told **TD**.

The care packs (**pictured**) contain some "shameless self-promotion" of Swagman's Australian product, a precious roll of toilet paper and some Twinings Australian tea.



MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.582

THE Australian dollar made moderate gains overnight, responding to the US Federal Reserve's moves to the next level of its quantitative easing program, which saw it buy corporate bonds and other loan-backed securities.

The AUDUSD was 0.2% higher, while the AUDGBP jumped 1.4% as the UK ordered citizens to restrict travel and socialising.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.582
UK	£0.504
NZ	\$1.014
Euro	€0.542
Japan	¥64.79
Thailand	฿19.00
China	¥4.089
South Africa	10.322
Canada	\$0.840
Crude oil	US\$23.36

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AFTA UPDATE

from Jayson Westbury



THIS COVID-19 crisis will be with us for some considerable time and there is no question that we all need across the travel industry to really accept this and take actions now to sustain ourselves as best as humanly possible for six months.

No travel being taken does not have to mean no travel being booked. I have many reports that people are still booking for future travel and talking about making arrangements for travel in the future. I think the Australian travel bug is just in self-isolation but planning to get out is on some people's minds.

It will end, that is for sure. When, I don't know, but if the Prime Minister using all of the available resources of the Australian Federal Government is saying six months, then let's get on board with that and plan for six months.

If the virus conditions we are now in change for the better sooner, then we can all take action sooner – but making decisions now to ensure that your travel business remains as a business for the future is the critical thing we must do.

Yesterday AFTA held two town hall webinars and we have never had so many people connect at once via this method. We outlined the serious and unprecedented circumstances that the industry faces and the many and broad actions AFTA is taking via engagement with the Federal Government to seek assistance, targeted assistance for everyone in the travel value chain.

The stimulus package announced will go some way to help and support the vast majority of travel businesses via financial assistance. It is not enough and we know that it is not enough. It is not targeted to travel businesses and adequate

to elevate the many and vast issues that the travel industry faces today, tomorrow, next week and next month and the months beyond that, so we will just keep asking. Via the COVID-19 Business Liaison Unit (BLU) that has been established by the Federal Govt as an emergency function of the federal treasury, AFTA has made, and will continue to make, significant and serious submissions to get more support and action to help travel agents and the broader travel industry.

We will not stop asking. We will not stop trying to get help that fits into the travel industry and that helps quickly. Many of the measures announced will take time to decipher and process, but that should not be a reason not to look into it and grab anything and everything that you can. And then, if more comes, grab that also.

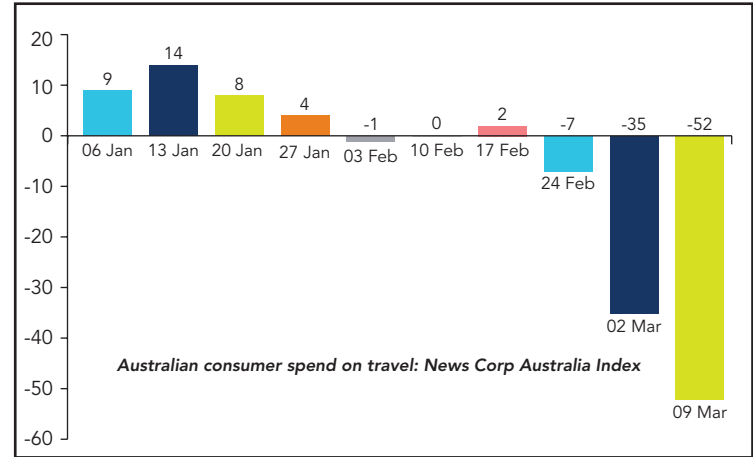
The challenges and issues facing the travel industry are deep and broad and complex. Cancellations, refunds, credit forward travel vouchers, divergence of conditions imposed by suppliers across all the sectors, complexities and complications – are in fact what the travel industry does in the normal course of business and this is because it is a complicated industry. COVID-19 has amplified these challenges and to unpack them quickly and get simple answers to complicated problems cannot happen fast enough. But, this is no reason to stop trying and all of us at AFTA will keep trying and supporting members and the broader industry during this crisis with a hope to find solutions and help that may save our industry.

Hang in there everyone... reach out and turn to friends and colleagues, sometimes just talking about it makes things seem better. AFTA is doing everything we can to get more help from the government and will do our level best to keep the industry up to date in this fast paced, ever moving crisis.

CHECK OUT OUR
EXPERIENCE OF
HURTIGRUTEN'S ALL
NEW ROALD AMUNDSEN



Travel spending plummets



EXCLUSIVE

THE latest News Corp Australia consumer travel spending index (pictured) clearly demonstrates the slump in demand, with the figures now including data for the week commencing 09 Mar.

According to News Corporation Industry Head Travel Omri Godjin the results indicate consumer spending is down to half of normal levels.

"Unfortunately, as everyone reading this knows, there is

worse to come - we have here captured just one day of trading after the announcement of 14-day quarantine for international travellers arriving in Australia," Godjin said.

The data, shared exclusively with **Travel Daily**, is an index of consumer spend with major brands across accommodation, air, cruise, OTAs, travel agents and tour companies.

Godjin said the information was part of work being done to assist News clients better understand the total retail travel market, with additional weekly data available.

MSC denies COVID

MSC Cruises has hit back at claims by WA Premier Mark McGowan that its *Magnifica*, currently in Fremantle, has passengers infected with coronavirus (**TD** yesterday).

The company said nobody on board is in isolation or has fever or respiratory issues.

SeaLink suspends

SEALINK has temporarily suspended its non-essential services across the country, including the suspension of all Captain Cook Cruises in Perth, on the Murray and Sydney Harbour from today until 31 May.

Kingfisher Bay Resort and Eurong Beach Resort are closed to new arrivals, and the company has also suspended departures of Fraser Island, Kangaroo Island and Adelaide Sightseeing tours.

Sabre reductions

SABRE Corporation will remove over \$200 million in cash costs from the business in 2020 in an effort to strengthen its financial position, with staff and directors taking a pay cut in response to the current industry conditions.

Specific cuts are being negotiated on a country-by-country basis, while Sabre is also offering voluntary unpaid time off, voluntary severance & a voluntary early retirement program.

Tas to turn away

TASMANIAN Premier Peter Gutwein said the state would turn away all but residents and essential travellers who arrive in the state on the *Spirit of Tasmania* ferry from Melbourne from today.

BridgeClimb closed

BRIDGECLIMB Sydney ceased operations yesterday, for an undefined period and requested all its partners remove all BridgeClimb product from sale, effective immediately.

Clients not able to climb on their booked date will receive a fully transferable credit voucher valid for three years, or the credit can be transferred to another res - for booking enquiries, email inbound@bridgeclimb.com.

Hawaii quarantine

HAWAII is mandating that all visitors arriving into the islands from 12.01 on 26 Mar will have to self-quarantine for 14 days.

This applies to all arrivals at state airports from the continental US and international destinations and extends to other private and commercial aircrafts.

The move follows Hawaii Governor David Ige's request that all travellers suspend their travel to Hawaii for 30 days.



Discover what you can do with beer (other than drink it) in Europe in the March issue of *travelBulletin*.

CLICK to read
travelBulletin

Agents soak up serenity



A GROUP of 10 agents managed to soak up six days of sunshine during a fam on the Cook Islands in the South Pacific, before border restrictions were put in place.

Hosted by Cook Islands Tourism Sales Ambassador Matt Brookfield, agents stayed at Tamanu Beach Resort in Aitutaki, while on Rarotonga nights were split amongst the Edgewater Resort and Spa, Pacific Resort and Moana Sands Lagoon Resort.

On Rarotonga, the team enjoyed a Night Paddle Tour with Ariki Adventures snorkelling in Muri Lagoon and a cultural night out with Te Vara Nui's over-water night show and buffet.

Highlights of Aitutaki included a 45-minute scenic flight with Air Rarotonga to the outer island, where they continued onto the waters with Bishops Lagoon Cruise, for a full day exploring, including a visit to the famed One Foot Island.

Pictured in the top row are Paul Morris, Flight Centre Chatswood;

Eloise Moore, Universal Traveller Indooroopilly; Olivia Gutensohn, Flight Centre Rose Bay; Afton Bockelberg, Port Lincoln Travel and Cruise; Natasha Melhuish, Holiday World Salamander Bay; Chelsea Doughman, Flight Centre Elwood; and Kaylee Salzke, Helloworld Travel Revesby.

In the bottom row are Caitlin Potts, Omniche Holidays; Matt Brookfield, Cook Islands Tourism; Chloe Vendt, Flight Centre St Kilda; and David Evans, Universal Traveller Belconnen.

Last NCL pax today

THE guests of Norwegian Cruise Line's last vessel with guests aboard at sea, *Norwegian Jewel*, are scheduled to disembark in Honolulu today.

Pax will board chartered flights home and despite there not being any confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19 associated with the ship, all guests will undergo enhanced medical screening prior to disembarkation.

WIN A CRUISE TO RUSSIA



Terms & conditions + full prize details

This month Viking is giving *Travel Daily* readers the opportunity to win a deluxe stateroom on the Waterways of the Tsars river cruise.

Explore the Waterways of the Tsars aboard *Viking Akun*. Travel from Moscow to St Petersburg in style, where you and a partner can experience Russia like never before.

To enter simply:

- 1) Visit Viking's Marketing Centre & download at least one file [here](#)
- 2) In 25 words or less, let us know what else you'd like to see on the Viking Marketing Centre



Submit your answers to viking@traveldaily.com.au along with your name, state & travel agency details

Contact agents.anz@vikingcruises.com if you need assistance setting up an account

For confidential tip offs, connect with *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click [HERE](#)



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