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Expedia refunds

EXPEDIA is offering penalty-free cancellations of all upcoming hotel stays for arrivals before 30 Apr 2020, even on non-refundable bookings.

Travellers will be eligible for a full refund or, in some cases, a voucher allowing them to rebook the original property at later dates.

The ATAS-accredited company is also urging travel agents to “nurture your return” - see the **cover page** of today's *TD*.

A silver lining?

NOT sure what to do with all your new free time?

Some exceptional ideas in our new inspirational video from *TD*'s own Jenny Piper - **CLICK HERE**.

Today's issue of *TD*

Travel Daily today has four pages of news plus a cover page from **Expedia**.

Qatar Airways BNE debut

QATAR Airways will operate flights from Doha to Brisbane for the first time ever, as it ramps up operations to Australia in order to help get people home.

The carrier has announced daily 777-300ER services to Brisbane, along with double daily Perth flights, double daily services to Melbourne, and triple daily Sydney frequencies.

CATO Awards off

THE Council of Australian Tour Operators (CATO) has confirmed it will postpone the inaugural CATO Awards, which had been set to take place on 23 Oct this year.

CATO MD Brett Jardine said the “appropriate decision” reflected the challenges facing the entire industry right now.

AFTA earlier this week also announced it would not operate the National Travel Industry Awards this year (*TD* 25 Mar).

The operations will add an additional 48,000 seats to the market to help assist stranded passengers around the world.

Qatar Airways CEO Akbar Al Baker said, “we know there are many people who want to be with their families and loved ones during this difficult time.

“We are thankful to the Australian Government, airports and staff for their support in helping us to add additional flights to get people home, and in particular, to bring flights to Brisbane,” he said.

Allison on Ruby

PRINCESS Cruises regional Senior VP Stuart Allison has appeared in a special video update explaining the line's procedures around the high profile disembarkation of *Ruby Princess* and associated COVID-19 spread - traveldaily.com.au/videos.

APT extension

THE APT Travel Group (ATG) has confirmed the suspension of all international and domestic touring and cruising up to and including 31 May 2020.

The company is offering a “Future Holiday Credit” across the APT, TravelMarvel, Botanica and TravelGlo portfolio, and due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19, is also absorbing any applicable third party fees (some airline fees may apply), in an extension of ATG's usual terms and conditions.

MD Chris Hall also confirmed that all payments to the company were held in a separate bank account, meaning “all funds are safe and used only for payments related to holidays”.

“As a business, the APT Travel Group is doing all we can to accommodate, assist and assure our valued guests and travel partners,” he said.

Full policy at aptouring.com.au.

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Travel & Cruise Weekly



Window Seat

AS HOTELS begin to offer COVID-19 escape packages, one in Switzerland has gone a step further.

Le Bijou Hotel & Resort in Switzerland is advertising quarantine packages, complete with medical check-ups and coronavirus tests inside its “quarantine apartments”.

On its dedicated COVID-19 page on its website, the hotel says “you don’t need to expose yourself to infected patients and hospital infections: Together with our healthcare partner Double Check, we provide medical check-ups and coronavirus tests inside your Le Bijou apartment”.

The property also offers “private health centre” services, with external specialists, spruiking its “immediate proximity to emergency hospitals”, and all from between US\$12,000-\$14,000 per day, plus additional services.

Crooked Compass grows

CROOKED Compass is planning to launch Crooked Compass Australia, offering trips to show travellers a side of the country “they wouldn’t even dream existed”, founder and Director Lisa Pagotto told *Travel Daily*.

The collection will initially launch with Tasmania and NSW product and later expand to Queensland, the NT and SA.

Pagotto explained that the itineraries will be shorter in length - ranging from four to eight days - to allow travellers to add on the “must do” items like the Opera House and BridgeClimb, if they wish.

“A lot of people when they come to Australia, they do want to see the bucket list things, and that’s not what we’re about,” Pagotto said.

“We really want something that is truly authentic and is really different to the way that Indigenous experiences have been done before,” Pagotto said.

For example, in Tasmania travellers will visit a family which owns the private property which is where European explorers first

made land contact with the island state and its first people.

Followed by a traditional smoke cleansing and connection to country, an Indigenous guide will take them to where Abel Tasman came ashore in 1642 and they will learn about traditional bush foods and medicine.

At night, they will witness a traditional fire circle night sky viewing and storytelling.

Crooked Compass will also offer a round trip outback experience from Orange in NSW, complete with a swag, damper, old goldmine towns and classic Australian pubs.

From Queensland, the company will take passengers on a chartered yacht to the Torres Strait Islands and down the inner-side of the reef to Lizard Island.

On the same yacht, Crooked Compass Australia will operate an itinerary exploring East Arnhem Land, venturing to Wessel Islands, which used to be inhabited by thousands of Indigenous people.

“It’s about exclusivity, finding something that is different but that is truly Australian,” Pagotto explained.

Crooked Compass Australia will also offer land-based tours in Queensland and explore South Australia’s Eyre Peninsula.

China borders close

CHINA will close its borders to foreign nationals from tomorrow and place limits on its international passenger flights from Sun in an effort to contain the risks of imported COVID-19 cases.

The Civil Aviation Administration of China has advised that each foreign airline is only allowed to maintain one route to China with no more than one weekly flight.

Chinese airlines have also been limited, and are allowed to maintain only one route to any specific country with no more than one flight per week.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

Today’s Technology Update is brought to you by Tramada Systems Pty. Ltd

Beware of COVID-19 Cybercriminals



The lockdown measures coming into place across Australia could not come quickly enough. The sooner they happen, the sooner we can get through this thing. And yes, there is light at the end of the tunnel -- the travel market will pick up again.

But here’s what’s happening in the tunnel from a technology perspective: there are multiple media reports recently that the number of cyberattacks have increased dramatically as cybercriminals take advantage of the disorder around them. Here are four preventative measures to help you secure your data and your client’s data during this time of change:

- Only open emails and documents from trusted parties.
- Only access trusted websites. This is particularly important these days with all of us eager to access the latest information regarding COVID-19. Unfortunately, there are many malicious sites with cybercriminals taking advantage of this.
- Enable 2FA (2 Factor Authentication) for your newly working-from-home staff to ensure no unauthorised logins.
- Remember to deactivate login access for any staff who have left the business.

Naturally, the sooner you implement these measures, the safer you’re making your business.

Susan Enners, Country Manager Australia/New Zealand, Tramada – your travel technology partner



Finding it hard to know what’s going on?

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



Regional carrier cooperation

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has granted permission for Qantas, Virgin Australia and Regional Express (Rex) to coordinate operations on a range of regional routes.

The interim authorisation covers 10 routes: Sydney to Wagga Wagga, Albury, Armidale and Dubbo; Melbourne to Mildura; Adelaide to Port Lincoln, Whyalla and Kangaroo Island; and Townsville to Mt Isa and Cairns.

Rex Chairman John Sharp said the carrier would enter into discussions with Qantas Link on how best to service regional communities, but warned that the decision was only the first step in ensuring services can continue.

He said urgent assistance was also required "so that the airlines can at least provide the bare minimum of essential air services to keep the communities going".

Sharp said despite the quick

ACCC ruling as well as relief from CASA, much more was required, with no concrete proposals from governments at this stage.

Sharp said Rex expected to make an announcement today regarding the shutting down of its network, impacting regional communities as well as the carriage of critical blood supplies and COVID-19 samples.

CMV Vasco update

CRUISE and Maritime Voyages' *Vasco de Gama* will no longer be able to disembark guests in Fremantle today after WA Premier Mark McGowan reversed the previously granted permission.

Guests will be disembarked on 30 Mar instead, and the WA Premier has indicated all West Australians will be transferred to Rottnest Island to spend 14 days in self-isolation before being allowed to continue with their onwards journey.

McGowan said he is awaiting notice from other states and territories as to transport arrangements for the rest of the ship's Australian guests, and at this stage they will no longer be permitted to self-isolate on Rottnest Island as he originally announced on Wed.

SAA office closure

SOUTH African Airways has shut its offices across Australasia from today until 16 Apr.

The move is due to the carrier's head office and support systems not being available while South Africa is in lockdown.

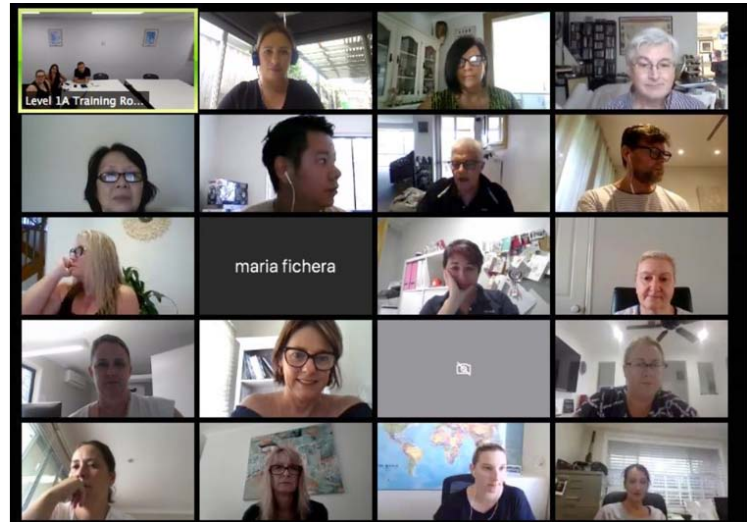
TRAVEL SPECIALS

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

Emporium Hotel South Bank is offering an Isolation Package from \$175 per night. For an additional \$50pp per day, three meals will be delivered, or for an \$75 per person per day, guests will receive three meals, unlimited in suite movies and an entertainment pack with drinks and snacks, which replenished daily. For more, [CLICK HERE](#).

Corporate travellers returning from overseas and local families are being targeted by **Urban Rest Apartments'** 14-day COVID-10 self-isolation package. Stays at properties start from \$120 per night - less than half the company's standard rates. See www.urbanrest.com.au.

Ovolo has a series of packages available, including for 14-night, seven-night and one-night stays. Perks include free continental breakfast, a daily "loot bag", free mini bar, extended happy hour and a daily Tumeric-based shooter". Details at ovolohotels.com/ovolo/offers.



JUST because face-to-face meeting are off, doesn't mean the itravel network stops, with over 35 agents tuning into itravel's first video network meeting on Tue.

itravel Head of Operations Kim Wudko said, "naturally the conversation was all serious - about the ever changing airline reissue policies - until someone revealed an almost empty bottle of gin from under her desk. "Despite all the doom and

gloom everyone is remaining positive," Wudko added.

Some of the itravel participants are **pictured** above.

Qantas flight credit

QANTAS is offering any travellers with a ticket for travel before 31 Jul a flight credit valid for booking and travel until 31 Dec 2021.

Travellers who have a flight credit issued on or after 31 Jan, will have their credit automatically extended.

Qantas is advising travellers who booked flights with a travel agency or third-party website to contact these companies directly to make changes to their booking.

Singapore funding

SINGAPORE Airlines will issue additional shares, offer convertible bonds and has secured a loan in a move to help see it through the impact of COVID-19 on its business.

The carrier will offer all shareholders S\$5.3 billion in new equity and up to a further S\$9.7 billion through a 10-year Mandatory Convertible Bond.

It has also arranged a S\$4 billion bridge loan facility with DBS Bank. Singapore Airlines said the initiatives would help fund capital and operational expenditure requirements.

Govt backs Chimu

THE Federal Government has confirmed it is working with Chimu Adventures to manage repatriation flights from Peru.

Last week Chimu Adventures and Viva Expeditions announced they were offering special repatriation charter flights early next week for Aussies stranded in South America (**TD** 20 Mar), with Chimu telling **TD** it had been working with DFAT from the outset.

For updates on the services, [CLICK HERE](#).

No more ships due

CRUISE Lines International Association (CLIA) has moved to clarify that no cruise passengers are scheduled to disembark in Sydney and no out-of-service ships berthed or anchored in NSW are carrying passengers.

Yesterday NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian said no further action would be taken "in relation to releasing any passenger from any boat in Sydney until we get a tick off from all authorities on the new protocols moving forward," (**TD** yesterday).

However, CLIA said all vessels that had been due to return to Sydney have already completed their journeys and disembarked passengers.

"These arrivals took place last week under direction from Australian Border Force and health authorities and the vessels concerned are now out of service," CLIA said.

CORPORATE UPDATE

89% of Mar trips cancelled

ALMOST 90% of business trips booked in Mar 2020 were cancelled as a result of the coronavirus, according to a new poll of Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) members.

Almost every company reported they had cancelled and/or suspended all or most of their international business travel, regardless of location.

And more than 80% also confirmed the suspension of domestic business travel within their respective countries.

Other measures being taken by GBTA members included instituting work from home policies, the development of business continuation plans, office closures and shutdowns.

Almost all of those polled had cancelled or postponed meetings,

conferences or events.

The survey, conducted earlier this month, also found that about 40% of those polled expected business travel to resume within the next three months.

A further 17% expected a return to normality within six months.

GBTA estimated the monthly revenue impact was a downturn of US\$119.4 billion in business travel spending.

VA downgrade

RATINGS agency S&P has placed Virgin Australia on "CreditWatch" after the carrier's decision to temporarily ground 125 aircraft and suspend certain supplier payments, reflecting a view that VA's "cash outflow liquidity pressures have intensified".

Aeronology joins IATA program

MELBOURNE-BASED travel technology startup Aeronology has been selected for a special "accelerator" program operated by the International Air Transport Association (IATA).

Aeronology's Russell Carstensen (pictured) said the "selective and prestigious program" only accepts travel technology businesses which can show their products are able to improve, automate and provide IATA's 290 member carriers with "cutting edge transactional services".

The ACCELERATE@IATA scheme has been created to support airlines on their digital retailing journey, giving participants the opportunity to pilot technologies at scale, and determine within 100 days whether projects should continue.

"Aeronology was selected because this business was able to meet the global criteria of our needs and expectations," said Kristi Choi of Plug and Play Venture, the organisation coordinating the program on behalf of IATA.



Carstensen said "the tragedy of the COVID-19 virus will change the industry forever, and doing more with robotic transaction services will be the new normal.

"Outsourcing will reduce, travel agents will take back control, and their travel consultants who on average generate a maximum of AU\$2 million of travel bookings a year will be able to increase this to the \$8-10 million range.

"Aeronology is ahead of the curve when the rebound happens, and the rebound will happen," he promised.

"When the going gets tough, the tough get developing."

For more details of the IATA accelerator program see iata.org.



Take a glimpse at the reimagined Intercontinental Hayman Island

CORPORATE CHATTER

with Chris Goddard

We must work together

NO MATTER where you look nowadays, there seems to be dissent, antagonism and divisiveness. Whether you look to the political world or the business world, the age of divide and conquer seems to be the prominent ideology.

Out of all years, 2019 seems to have been one of the most tumultuous ones in the travel industry. More than usual, bankruptcies, a seismic shift in the way industry is remunerated and the promise of cutting-edge technology is apparently going to reshape the industry.

What seems to have occurred though, is that instead of bringing all partners to the table for discussion, agreement and commitment to the desired outcomes, a more aggressive and authoritarian regime seems to be the new normal.

History has repeatedly shown that alienating and destabilising your base is fraught with danger and inevitably not successful. There may be some short-term gains – particularly financially, but the longer term goals are more often missed because of this misguided ideal.

The power of the collective is indisputable, and all elements of industry must realise that the voice of many needs to be heard.

The critical point though, is that the agency community, although speaking with many voices, must all say the one thing.

The message is clear. Divisiveness and combative attitudes will not work.

If the premise of the relationship is that of a partnership, then be true to your commitment and display behaviours of that of a partner. It is with togetherness and mutual respect that goals are not only achieved but often exceeded.

Nelson Mandela said it best: "If you want the cooperation of humans

around you, you must make them feel they are important - and you do that by being genuine and humble."

*** Opinions expressed are those of the author.*

Comments are welcome, please email corporatchatter@traveldaily.com.au

“ More than usual, bankruptcies, a seismic shift in the way industry is remunerated and the promise of cutting-edge technology is apparently going to reshape the industry ”



Chris Goddard has been in the travel industry for over 30 years, working his way up from being an office junior at Maxim's Travel, to now being the Managing Director and owner. Chris' passion and determination has seen Maxim's Travel grow from strength to strength and continually be at the forefront of technologies with the online booking tool MAXIMise.



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Singapore rebrand

MANDARIN Orchard Singapore will relaunch as **Hilton Singapore Orchard**, following an agreement between the property's master lessee, OUE, and Conrad International Management Services.

The hotel will become Hilton's flagship in Singapore and the largest Hilton hotel in Asia-Pacific.

It will relaunch in 2022, featuring 1,080 rooms and five restaurants and bars.

Former agent jailed

DISGRACED former US travel agent, Brian Box, has been sentenced to a minimum of 18 months behind bars after pleading guilty to 28 counts of theft from customers.

Box was the chief operator at the hunting-focused Top Travel and Outdoor Pursuit agency in Wyoming, US, and was alleged to have stolen US\$125,000 from clients between late 2018 and early 2019.

US stimulus package lifeline

AUTHORITIES in America have announced trillions of dollars in funding to assist businesses survive the COVID-19 crisis, with the US Travel Association (USTA) describing the bipartisan deal as a "vital lifeline to protect millions of travel workers".

USTA President, Roger Dow, highlighted provisions of the new legislation, which includes the US\$377 billion in loans and loan forgiveness for small travel businesses.

Companies with 500 staff or less, or self-employed individuals, can access Small Business Administration loans, with recipients receiving tax-free forgiveness on a portion of the loan equal to eight weeks of payroll and other expenses.

Loan guarantees are also part of the offer, along with allowing companies to temporarily defer

tax liabilities.

There's also US\$10 billion in airport grants to support vital operations, along with \$6.5 billion in Community Development grants for "economic injuries caused by COVID-19", including to the tourism industry.

"Travel businesses - 83% of which are small businesses - help supply 15.8 million US jobs, almost six million of which could disappear within the next five weeks," Dow warned.

Quokka cuddles

WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo is continuing with its live stream fun, and will be broadcasting a behind-the-scenes quokka experience today at 3pm.

To take place on WILD LIFE Sydney Zoo's Facebook page, the experience will introduce viewers to Davey the Quokka.

His keepers will showcase Davey's new target and station training program, and finish up with his favourite - belly scratches.

Maldives initiative

ADDICTED to Maldives has launched a project called Maldives United, which aims to stabilise tourism in the Maldives, bolster travel advisors and reignite consumer confidence.

The project, which has 17 resorts so far, is offering extended final payment and full cancellation until seven days before departure on travel until Dec 2021.

See maldivesunited.com.

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

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



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