

NZ expands refunds

AIR New Zealand has established a dedicated team to review COVID-19-related refunds, with the aim of making it easier for customers currently holding a credit to request their money back on compassionate grounds.

Since the pandemic started, Air NZ has been allowing customers to apply for a refund if they are no longer able to travel due to ill health or financial hardship caused by COVID-19, according to NZ Chief Sales & Customer Officer Leanne Geraghty.

"We're now a year on from the start of COVID-19 and know that for many, circumstances have changed...none of us knew how long this was going to last and how deep the impacts would be.

"By now we thought more borders would be open," she said.

A dedicated hotline has been established for New Zealand-based customers, while refunds can also be requested via email to covidrefunds@airnz.co.nz.

AFTA now without a CEO

UNFORTUNATELY the abrupt departure of Darren Rudd as CEO of the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (TD breaking news Thu) was not an April Fool's joke.

The move has left the industry reeling, coinciding with the end of JobKeeper and right in the midst of delicate negotiations over the \$130 million Round 2 of the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program.

Citing "personal reasons," Rudd has stepped aside effective immediately, with Express Travel Group CEO Tom Manwaring, the organisation's Chair, set to become AFTA's Executive Chair as an interim measure.

Manwaring noted that Rudd's nine months in the CEO role had coincided with "one of the most challenging periods for the organisation, our members and the wider tourism sector ever".

"The AFTA Board wish to thank Darren for his contribution during

this very difficult time, but we understand and respect that this is the right decision for Darren," Manwaring said.

Rudd said it had been an honour to lead AFTA, adding he was incredibly proud of what had been achieved given the significant financial constraints in place and the multiple, ongoing challenges of COVID.

"The Board, the team and I have all worked tirelessly as one to support the wonderful travel agents of Australia...during my time as CEO, AFTA successfully secured a total of \$258 million in tailored support [and] together with our members we made sure that the plight of travel agents and businesses and the need for support was understood at every level of government."

Manwaring noted the AFTA Board had been heavily involved with the organisation's lobbying during the pandemic, "given the seriousness and scope of the COVID impact on our members, our sector and AFTA itself".

"We are all actively focused on navigating our sector and this organisation through this on behalf of our members... all Directors have been and will continue to be active in engaging with Government at all levels to maximise support for our members," he said.

Outback Qld events

OUTBACK Queensland is today continuing to engage with the travel trade to boost visitation, highlighting the huge calendar of upcoming events in the region.

Opera, country music, golf, film, festivals and more are on the agenda - see **page six** for details.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of news including our PUZZLE page plus a product profile from **Outback Queensland**.

ATG cruising hope

THE APT Travel Group (ATG) says it is still hopeful of conducting its planned Kimberley cruise season, despite the shock decision by the NT Government restricting vessels to a maximum of 100 people on board (TD 29 Mar).

ATG MD Chris Hall told *Travel Daily* the group's originally published itineraries were actually between Broome and Wyndham, enabling a fully WA-based operation.

"We're naturally disappointed at the decision, but it won't stop us operating," he said.

Ongoing discussions with the NT Government were also "very positive," Hall said, with hopes that the COVID-19 vaccination rollout will give officials confidence to open up sooner - more in today's *Cruise Weekly*.



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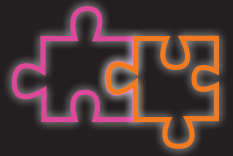
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AND GLOOM?**

Check out our daily puzzle page.



Travel Daily

Travel Daily en route to Darwin, NT

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of *Journey Beyond*, which is taking us on a special *The Ghan* departure from Darwin to Adelaide.

THE Ghan Expedition takes travellers through the heart of Australia, with our itinerary including stops in Katherine, Alice Springs and Coober Pedy.

We board the train tomorrow, but tonight *Journey Beyond* is also treating familar participants to a *Charles Darwin* Dinner Cruise, which is part of the group's Darwin Harbour Cruises portfolio.

Guests enjoy a famous NT sunset along with a delicious Territory meal, taking in the spread from the air conditioned comfort of the lower deck, or in the fresh air of the Captain's Deck of the 25m tri-level catamaran - for more details see darwinharbourcruises.com.au.

FCTG's Cross Hotels expands into Japan

CROSS Hotels & Resorts, the Asian hotel management business operated by Flight Centre Travel Group, has announced an agreement with Tokyo-based AB Accommo Company Limited which will see seven Japanese hotels operated under the Cross Away and Cross Vibe brands over the next four years.

The franchising deal gives Cross a low-cost, low-risk entry into the market, complementing its existing 21-strong portfolio in Thailand, Vietnam & Indonesia.

A total of 844 keys in properties stretching between Okinawa and Hokkaido will be added, with the first, opening in Jul, named Away Okinawa Khouri Island Resort.

Cross Hotels & Resorts MD Kent Davidson said the expansion of the group into Japan is a "watershed moment".

CDC relaxes travel rules

THE US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has announced that fully vaccinated people can now travel anywhere within the United States without the need for post-travel self-quarantine.

Under the new guidance issued on Fri, travellers who have received both COVID-19 jabs will no longer have to self-quarantine after arriving from overseas, unless otherwise stated by a state or local jurisdiction, however they will still be required to obtain a negative COVID-19 test result before they board a flight to the United States and get a COVID-19 test three-five days after arrival.

The CDC defines a "fully

vaccinated" person as someone who has received the second dose of a vaccine more than two week prior to travel.

Policies towards unvaccinated travellers remain unchanged, with the CDC suggesting they get tested one to three days before domestic travel and again three to five days after travel, as well as quarantining for seven days after completing travel.

MEANWHILE, CLIA has called for the CDC to lift its Conditional Sailing Order which prevents cruising, citing an inconsistent approach - see **CW** for details.

Alliance E190 tick

ALLIANCE Aviation has received regulatory approval from the Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) to start operating flights using its Embraer E190 aircraft.

The airline will commence the aircraft's first commercial services on 10 Apr from its hubs in Darwin and Adelaide, with previously announced E190 wet lease agreements made with Qantas (**TD** 04 Feb) set to be formally active from 25 May.

Tassie grant EOIs

APPLICATIONS for Tasmania-based travel agents to apply for their share of \$1 million in support funding will open from 12 noon (AEDT) tomorrow.

The Tasmanian Travel Agent Support Package will be delivered in two rounds, with agents needing to complete an initial expression of interest as well as an application form to be eligible for a share of the package.

Applicants must apply to the expression of interest process first and only eligible agents will be invited to apply for grant funding from 30 Apr until 14 May.

More details available **HERE**.

Last minute Luxury

LUXURY Escapes has launched a new "last minute escapes" portal, tapping into the strong trend towards short lead time domestic bookings which has emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The special page is updated each Wed with offers valid for travel only in the next seven days and a range of bonus inclusions.

Current deals feature properties in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra and Brisbane - see luxuryescapes.com/last-minute.



Window Seat

WE'VE witnessed street parades with more life and pizzazz before, sure, but Egypt definitely showed it was dead keen on promoting its historical tourism appeal last week.

The country recently held a grand parade of 22 mummies through the streets of Cairo, most of whom were New Kingdom rulers, to mark their relocation to a new museum.

Noted pharaohs on the trip included Ramses II and Hatshepsut and were transported in special climate-controlled cases which were loaded onto trucks decorated with wings and ancient Egyptian designs to their new home.

The new National Museum of Egyptian Civilization is located in Fustat and opened this week.



Travel Daily
Cocktail
compendium

Fancy a drink? Check out our Cocktail Compendium today.

GPT rides out 25 years



NEW Zealand Coach Holiday operator Grand Pacific Tours celebrated a major milestone on the first of the month, notching up 25 years of operation.

Founded in Melbourne in 1996 by travel entrepreneur Peter Harding, the business has now evolved to offer travellers more than 250 guaranteed departures with an 84-page brochure launched each year.

“Over the years our team has worked incredibly hard to develop an enhanced range of itineraries with multiple unique options for travellers to choose from,” said Managing Director Peter Harding.

“We now provide 30 itinerary options with three ways to travel,

utilising full size coaches with capacities of 20, 32 and 48 seats.”

Pictured: MD and cake connoisseur Peter Harding (far right) balancing the morning tea celebrations with his staff along with plenty of refreshments.

ATAC TAAPS more from Expedia

THE Australian Travel Agent Cooperative (ATAC) has signed a new partnership agreement which will make Expedia TAAP its preferred supplier.

“Many members have been trialling Expedia TAAP for some time now and affirmed it’s a great platform for their business,” said ATAC GM Michelle Emerton.

Director for TAAP in Australia and New Zealand, Stu Udy, added the company had “long-considered ATAC to be a highly regarded group in the industry.”

Trip.com marketing

TRIP.COM Group has unveiled Star Store, a new marketing hub which will help empower its industry partners and help attract post-pandemic travellers.

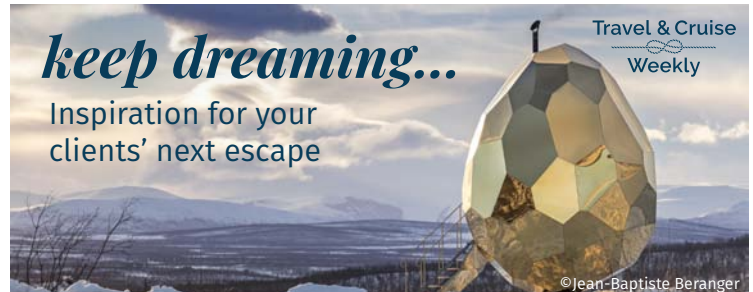
Giving a boost to its content ecosystem and its partners’ marketing capabilities, the new marketing resource will allow suppliers to expand and enhance their marketing activities across Trip.com Group’s platforms.

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AFTA UPDATE

from the Australian Federation of Travel Agents

DETAILED discussions with the Federal Government and across the sector have been ongoing, including over the Easter Long Weekend.

The focus has continued to be eligibility for grant support, more equitable

tiering including with respect to outstanding funding from the first round, the difference between turnover for GST purposes and TTV within the sector, and pushing for ongoing review of those applicants who have been rejected. There is also acknowledgement that a large part of the employed industry is currently ineligible for any grant support. This too continues to be a priority and is on the table for detailed discussion.

AFTA Chair Tom Manwaring and a number of Directors have been consistently and deeply involved in this process from the very beginning in putting the need for tailored support to Tourism Minister the Hon Dan Tehan (and his predecessor the Hon Simon Birmingham).

There is clear political intent and commitment to ensuring as many in our sector receive as much support as possible and Government certainly understands the urgency.

An Austrade announcement is



afta

AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION OF TRAVEL AGENTS

due soon regarding outcomes for the second round of the Grant process as well as the application guidelines.

AFTA, CATO and ATEC are also still pressing the urgent need for additional

support above and beyond the existing \$258 million allocated as part of the Federal Government’s COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program. A number of promising conversations continue with Govt to both improve the roll out and work towards extension of support within the impending May Budget. Each of the AFTA Directors is also able to bring to these discussions the hard, cold reality that their own networks, members and business are facing. Each AFTA Director knows first-hand of the often overwhelming challenges their franchised, independent, working from home, leisure and corporate members face.

You may also have seen the announcement last week that CEO Darren Rudd has left the organisation for personal reasons with Tom Manwaring becoming Interim Executive Chair of AFTA. The AFTA Board thanks Darren for his contribution to AFTA and our members during his time as CEO and wishes him all the best.

UK PM is “hopeful”

UK PRIME Minister Boris Johnson has revealed he is “hopeful” that the country will be able to reopen international travel from 17 May, cautioning the date will depend on how the vaccine rollout is going overseas.

The UK has administered jabs to more than half of its population.

AC pulls the plug

AIR Canada has been forced to abandon its proposed C\$190 million acquisition of Montreal-based competitor Transat AT after the European Commission said it would not approve the deal citing competition concerns.

The airline will now have to pay a C\$12.5-million termination fee.

Table Tennis Day



TODAY is World Table Tennis Day, a day to celebrate the sport which is often played by people of all ages and skill levels.

The celebration of this day began in 2015 and also falls on the same day as the International Day of Sport of Development and Peace.

The International Table Tennis Foundation wants people around the world to get involved with table tennis and celebrate this

socially inclusive sport on 06 Apr.

Table tennis originated in England during the Victorian era and was played as a parlour game.

Over the years it has become a competitive sport and was included in the Olympics in 1988.

Celebrate this sport with a spot of round robin competition in your office or at home - you can even buy special kits that will let you transform any table.

Pub quiz

1. Charles Dickens, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Virginia Woolf famously lived on which major London street?
2. Which mountain is taller: Australia's Mount Kosciuszko or Sweden's Kebnekaise?
3. Nong Nooch Tropical Botanical Garden is located in which country?
4. Which Nordic country successfully reinvented its economy around tourism in the 2010s, following a national financial crisis?
5. The Bussell family founded what small town?
6. Next year will mark how many Melbourne Cup races?
7. Croatia borders what sea?
8. After New York City, what is New York state's next most populous town?
9. Halifax is the capital of which Canadian province?
10. Does Monaco have a club soccer team in the French league, a national team that competes internationally, or both?

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.

A	L	I
T	P	L
O	C	I

Good – 12 words
Very good – 18 words
Excellent – 24 words

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

Famous faces



THERE are three different faces that make up this picture.

They are a mixture of famous celebrities and travel names. Can you figure out who the

eyes, nose and mouth in this picture belong to?

And don't worry if you can't guess them all, two out of three ain't bad!

ANSWERS 01 APR

Whose flag is this: Papua New Guinea

Know your brands: 1 Uniworld Boutique River Cruises, 2 YHA Australia, 3 Marriott, 4 Zoom (Meetings)

Whose animal is this: Western Chimpanzee - Sierra Leone



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Travel Daily

Walk 1000 Miles in their shoes



AFTER 21 days of no coronavirus cases, Western Australia reopened, Victoria, allowing 1000 Mile Travel Group Chief Executive Officer Ben Ross and Executive Director Nicola Veltman to fly to Perth to visit the team following a lengthy period of absence.

It has been more than 15 months since Ross & Veltman last saw their beloved staff, with the most recent trip postponed at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic 12 months ago, and meetings in the intervening period having to take place on Zoom instead.

The trip marked the third leg of 1000 Mile's Roadshow, held at Crown Metropol Perth, with the next stop on the trip to be New South Wales.

Pictured: Veltman and Ross (second and third from the left) locks arms with their team, and **inset**, the pair celebrate with a few long overdue drinks.

Quantum extended

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has extended its Singapore season, adding new cruises through Oct aboard *Quantum of the Seas*.

The season, which begun in Dec, has seen more than 50,000 guests sail safely on one of Royal Caribbean's Ocean Getaways.

Following a successful initial run, RCI first extended the season for three months, through June 2021, and is doing so again for an additional four months, thanks to the partnership with the Singapore government.

This extension of *Quantum's* Singapore season does not affect her Australian season, currently scheduled to begin on 30 Oct, the cruise line said.

E-Scape in Melb

STUDENT accommodation firm Scape Living Australia has launched Scape Living at Aurora on La Trobe Street in Melbourne.

Located in the heart of downtown Melbourne, Scape Living at Aurora features studios, as well as one- and two-bedroom apartments.

The property will also feature a team of 24/7 'Lifestyle Jugglers', trained in a range of requests such as "stock my pantry", with guests also having access to the building's pool terrace, gym, library and private cinema room.

The new development is the first in a pipeline that will aim to reach the young professional market, and check-in and check-out can happen at any hour of the day, with guests welcome for both short and long stays.

Vax or don't board

WINDSTAR Cruises has announced its guests will now be required to be vaccinated against coronavirus in order to sail on its ships, in line with the cruise line's new Beyond Ordinary Care safety program.

MEANWHILE Riviera Travel River Cruises has also announced guests on its cruises must be fully vaccinated against coronavirus to embark on its vessels, with any guest who has not had both doses to be offered a complimentary coronavirus test.

This requirements will also apply to crew members who will have additional daily temperature checks and ongoing health screenings, the cruise line has confirmed.

Qatar donates

QATAR Airways has announced a generous donation of \$80,000 in funds towards the 2021 Good Friday Appeal.

The airline said it was supporting the annual charity drive to raise funds for the The Children's Hospital at Westmead.

According to Qatar Vice President Australasia & North Asia Thomas Scruby, the donation provides an opportunity for the airline to thank the local community after a tough year.

MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.763

THE Australian dollar has rebounded from lows brought on by the strengthening US dollar, ending slightly higher overnight, with markets reacting to a solid session in American shares.

The first three months of the year has seen an unexpected rally in the US dollar, with the AUDUSD up 0.6% overnight, rebounding from recent three-months lows.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.763
UK	£0.548
NZ	\$1.076
Euro	€0.646
Japan	¥84.25
Thailand	฿23.81
China	¥4.939
South Africa	11.05
Canada	\$0.951
Crude oil	US\$62.15

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Travel Daily

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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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Easter in the Country - Roma



Outback Queensland Masters



Mount Isa Mines Rodeo - Mount Isa

Outback Queensland Events are Good to Go!

Outback Queensland is good to go, and we have a huge and exciting calendar of events to add fun times and to experience Outback life in every itinerary.

Our event calendar is filled with country shows, food and craft markets, car rally's, horse and camel racing, iconic rodeo's and musters. There are film, music and cultural events too. Get-along to events featuring country music, Australian rock, classics and opera!

Make sure you pre-book all your Outback events, accommodation and attractions – to avoid disappointment.

Here's a small sample of Outback Queensland Events that will make unforgettable memories for your travel clients in 2021:

- May 13 – 16, Music in the Mulga – Country Music Festival staged on a working sheep and cattle station in Eulo

- May 19 – 27, Regional Festival of Outback Opera presented by Opera Queensland in partnership with Camerata, Queensland's Chamber Orchestra. The tour will visit the communities of Winton, Longreach, Barcaldine, Blackall and Windorah.

- June 19 – July 25, Outback Queensland Masters – Australia's most remote golf series visiting the unique golf courses of Biloela, Charleville, Quilpie, Blackall, Hughenden, and in Longreach compete in the Million Dollar Hole-In-One Challenge

- June 25 – 3 July, Vision Splendid Outback Film Festival, Winton

- July 6 – 8, Big Red Bash in Birdsville 'Rockin the Simpson' – the world's most remote music festival

- August 12 – 15, Mount Isa Mines Rodeo, the biggest and richest rodeo in the Southern Hemisphere

[SEE ALL OUTBACK QUEENSLAND EVENTS HERE.](#)

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