



Kirsty Eccles
Meridian Travel & Cruise

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Vignette revealed

MORE details about IHG's latest upscale independent offering (**TD** 16 Aug) has been revealed, with Hotel X in Brisbane selected as one of the first hotels to pilot the new Vignette brand.

The property in Fortitude Valley will soon be able to access IHG's luxury expertise loyalty program while retaining its distinctive brand identity.

IHG said Vignette will target approximately 100 hotels to be under its umbrella over the next decade, with Thailand's Pattaya Aquatique hotel also agreeing to terms with IHG to be on board.

Hurtigruten adds third battery ship

HURTIGRUTEN Expeditions' newest battery-hybrid powered vessel *MS Otto Sverdrup* has set sail from Hamburg Germany on her maiden voyage overnight.

The sailing marks a number of important milestones for the cruise line, including its first year-round expedition cruises from Germany, as well as the return of expedition cruises after more than a year due to the pandemic.

Equipped with battery packs and other green technology on board, *MS Otto Sverdrup* will operate year-round expedition cruises from Hamburg to the Norwegian coast.

Check out the exciting new ship's full suite of eco and cruise features in more detail **HERE**.

TTC calls a halt to travel

THE Travel Corporation (TTC) announced this morning that it is temporarily suspending Australian group tour departures until 01 Dec in light of ongoing uncertainty around internal borders (**TD** breaking news).

This decision will impact AAT Kings Guided Holidays (First Choice and Best Buys), Contiki, Trafalgar, Insight Vacations and Inspiring Journeys, however, AAT Kings Day Tours and Short Breaks programs in the NT will continue to operate in the meantime.

While the decision to pause tours will come as a blow to the industry, TTC today reiterated its commitment to travel agency partners and guests that its reservations, sales and charter teams are working hard behind the scenes so that travel plans can resume safely and without interruption beyond 01 Dec.

The operator also revealed that it will require all eligible travellers

and front-line team members to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 from 01 Dec in a bid to enforce health and safety priorities for staff and clients.

"Following what TTC has already implemented in the United States and Europe, we are proud to be taking a positive stance on vaccination requirements for our guests and customer facing team members in Australia and New Zealand," the company's CEO David Hosking said.

"Our aim is to help our guests, agency partners and team transition to what is inevitably going to be the 'new normal' in safe travel and help the industry rebound in a sustained way."

Hosking also added that TTC continues to see strong bookings for 2022 and confirmed his company would be in direct contact with affected guests.

Lines' new pay way

HOLLAND America Line (HAL) and Seabourn have launched the Bank Payments in POLAR Online service, a free way for agents to process payments instantly.

Funds for payments are applied to bookings instantly and operate around the clock - register for HAL **HERE** and Seabourn **HERE**.

Vax the way to stay!

INDEPENDENT hotel company Crystalbrook Collection is offering fully vaccinated travellers complimentary room upgrades for those staying before 20 Dec.

This offer is valid for new bookings made before 31 Oct and must be made directly through the company's website, with the code "VAXED" needed at the time of making the booking.

"Offering an upgrade to guests who have vaccinated themselves against COVID-19 is a small gesture of thanks so that we can revive travel and hospitality," Crystalbrook Collection Chief Executive Officer Geoff York said.

Today's issue of TD

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

Anchorage returns

VISIT Anchorage has announced plans to refocus its energy on the Australian and New Zealand markets, re-appointing Canuckiwi as its representative agency.

The tourism body said the news coincides with a new webinar series on its Anchorage Wildlife Experts platform.

Advisors who take part not only become certified Anchorage experts, but also join an incentive program that includes famil trips, exclusive events and the chance of winning various competitions.

At the end of the four module program, one agent who has completed all four webinars will win a free trip in Alaska in 2022.

The first webinar takes place on 15 Sep and will run through to 07 Dec - register to attend **HERE**.

Apollo revenue drop

RECREATIONAL vehicle rental business Apollo Tourism & Leisure has recorded a 73% drop in revenue for the 12 months to 30 Jun, pulling in \$293.3 million for the period, a sizable decrease on the \$366.7 million noted for the FY 2020 last year.

The Australian market contributed \$191.6m in revenue which was fuelled by periods where domestic borders were open, and was the largest volume of any market for Apollo, followed by North America with \$136.4m.

Despite the drop in income, Apollo did manage to claw back some ground in its net loss after tax result of \$17.9 million, a vast improvement on the \$61.2 million loss recorded in the previous corresponding period.

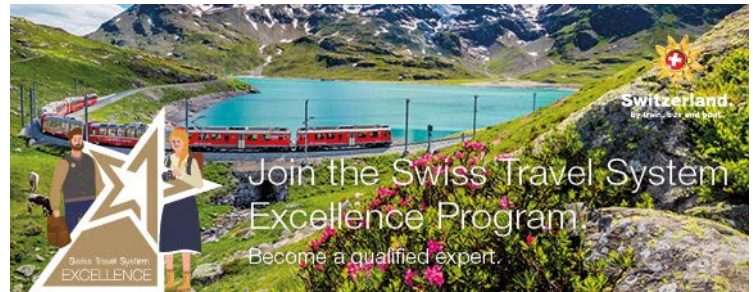
Part of that positive movement was driven by a significant reduction in operating costs, which for the year to 30 Jun was \$280.6 million, trimming the outgoings by \$96.1m on last year.

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SeaLink is far from sunk

THE parent company for marine tourism brands Captain Cook Cruises and SeaLink has posted a major turnaround in its profit after tax and amortization for the 12 months to 30 Jun, up by 152.5% on the previous period and delivering \$74.7 million.

SeaLink Travel Group's revenue also rebounded strongly for the 12-month period, rising by 88% to \$1.73 billion from the previous year, while EBITDA also climbed by a similar percentage to \$167.5 million.

While most of the turnaround was driven by the company's government bus contract division, contributing the bulk of incomings with \$702.1 million, the company noted that its tourism arm had performed strongly when demand was created by open borders.

SeaLink's tourism brands contributed a total of \$215.1 million in revenue for the period,

servicing sea travel and travellers experiences to 14 domestic island destinations.

"The volatile domestic and interstate travel markets have presented challenges for our marine and tourism operations," Group CEO Clint Feuerherdt said.

"Fortunately, domestic demand has been strong during periods where restrictions were eased and we continue to look for opportunities to capitalise on heightened tourism demand."

SeaLink cited the leveraging of its marine and bus tour operations as a highlight of the period, and indicated the next 12 months would see a focus on enhancing tourism product to capture the resurgent demand.

Planning phases for new marine products are already in motion, while the company said it would also pursue bolt-on acquisition opportunities, and upgrade resorts and vessels in 2022.

I'm now a Showponi

TRAVLR'S Chief Acquisition Officer Gordon Bayne has announced his departure from the group after three-and-a-half years to start his own Maori and Pasifika-focused marketing agency called Showponi.

Bayne called out the success of The Bali Bible as a highlight of his time at Travlr, which allows travellers to book & curate trips.

SYD loses 20 airlines

ALMOST two-dozen airlines have said hooroo to Sydney Airport since the pandemic, the hub confirmed.

Among the airlines calling it quits was British Airways, the only European airline to fly into Sydney, as well as South American carrier LATAM Airlines, which suspended its Santiago-Sydney flights last year.

Samoa Airlines has also paused during the downturn, in addition to Chinese carriers Sichuan Airlines and Tianjin Airlines.

Tas support details

THE Tasmanian Government has revealed more details about its \$50 million tourism loan scheme (**TD** 23 Aug), confirming an increase in the interest-free loan cap to \$2 million for three years, up from its initial election commitment of \$1 million.

"This will provide the tourism industry with resourcing to genuinely...enhance Tasmania's destination appeal," the govt said.

Lose your Virginia

BRAND USA is gearing up to run a new webinar for Australian agents regarding all of the latest updates and resources on offer to better sell the state of Virginia.

The session will take place at 10am AEST on 08 Sep, with in-market representative for Virginia Tourism Corporation Penny Brand to provide a special presentation.

Attending agents can also score a \$200 Visa gift card - sign up to attend the online session **HERE**.

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Intrepid boosts Premium

INTREPID Travel has announced that its Peregrine Adventures brand will be phased out from Jan 2022 and folded into the operator's recently launched Premium and Comfort ranges (**TD** breaking news).

The company said the move to simplify its premium touring products would support its ambitious growth strategy, with the shelving of Peregrine designed to introduce travellers to a wider choice of travel in terms of both itineraries and destinations.

Intrepid's global Chief Commercial Officer Brett Mitchell told **Travel Daily** that the brand restructure would not throw the baby out with the bathwater, with many of the key selling points of the Peregrine product to be retained moving forward.

"There will be a lot of similarities in the sense that the product at its core is all about getting under the skin of a destination and that deep cultural exchange will be the same as well as the sustainability aspects, but what we've really worked on with the Intrepid Premium range is to really lift the standard of

accommodation," Mitchell said.

"It's going up to four-and-a-half star and we have some really cool hand-picked stays on offer, and the other really big difference will be the level of inclusions, whether that refers to meals, tipping or activities."

Mitchell added that the deeper motivation to remove Peregrine and boost its Premium range was arrived at during the COVID shutdown, where Intrepid sought to improve its pathway to stronger growth post-pandemic.

"For us we have really tried to refocus all of our expertise and resources on one brand and create a bigger range of product, a better selection and a better value-proposition by concentrating that focus and allowing the best way for us to grow," Mitchell said.

"Peregrine was also a brand that was primarily marketed out of Australia and New Zealand and our other source markets like Canada and the US have been craving more of this premium-style product, so we had a choice to either create a new brand for those markets or really leverage off the Intrepid brand," he added.

Nth Qld job losses

MORE than 3,000 tropical North Queensland tourism jobs will be lost by Christmas due to ongoing travel restrictions, new research from the Tourism and Transport Forum has found.

Tourism Tropical North Queensland Chair Ken Chapman said income support was needed for the tourism staff who are on the brink of losing their livelihoods in the months ahead.

"By Jul 2021 we had lost 3,600 permanent staff, even with the support of JobKeeper and a returning domestic market," Chapman warned.

"The region grew its workforce across the entire supply chain ready for a busy winter, but now these new recruits, including more than 200 from the tourism industry, who have been in training for months are being told to find other work," he added.

While cities such as Cairns remain the fifth most searched and sixth most booked travel destination over the past four weeks, the destination is running at less than 25% of the searches and 55% of bookings from where it was pre-COVID.

Pounce on Mackay

RED Cat Adventures has introduced new tours of the Greater Barrier Reef from Mackay, with the operator taking bookings from today.

"Our brand new 'Wildcat' catamaran is going to provide locals and tourists with a 'Pure Escape' experience out to some of the unique, pristine islands off the Mackay coast in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park," Red Cat Adventures Director Julie Telford said.

"Guests will get to discover untouched beaches at a variety of locations to suit the winds and tides of the day; snorkel at coral-encrusted reefs and swim with diverse marine life – all while fully catered and crewed on our new ...catamaran," she added.



Window Seat

FORMER Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull recently lamented his missed opportunity at being able to fly on the new PMs jet which he personally approved for design but never got to step aboard.

Speaking on the *Uncomfortable Conversations* podcast, Turnbull admitted it "sux" that he never got to fly on the A330 aircraft with a VIP fitout boasting a swanky bedroom for the country's leader, among other features.

"The plane that I used to fly around internationally on was one of the two Boeing business jets which are very nice, they're 737s, they are sort of old and noisy but I like old and quirky things because I guess I'm a bit old and quirky too," Turnbull admitted.

The former Liberal leader also revealed that being the head of the nation doesn't always guarantee you the best accommodation on offer, especially if you're slightly superstitious like he is.

"At the Lodge I used to sleep in the bedroom that [former PM] John Curtin used to sleep in and which I assumed he had died in, so I was sort of always wondering if I might encounter his ghost," Turnbull said.

He also chastised the Lodge's Menzies Room for not having a window you could open to let some fresh air into, forcing him to sleep on the other side of the house which was also "less noisy," he claimed.



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Travel Daily

NITA hails class of 2021



VOYAGES Indigenous Tourism Australia recently held a presentation ceremony at the Ayers Rock Resort to recognise 35 new graduates from the National Indigenous Training Academy (NITA) for 2021 (pictured).

The training academy was established 10 years ago to provide young Indigenous Australians with improved career prospects in a host of tourism and tourism-related industries, including hospitality and retail. With current lockdown protocols in place in various areas across the country, the event was also live-streamed for the first time so that Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia CEO Matthew Cameron-Smith, as well as friends and family, could view the graduation ceremony.

"If there was one night I wish I could be at Uluru, it's tonight," Cameron-Smith lamented.

"Take a look around at your fellow graduates tonight as you are looking at the future of our industry, your achievement in graduating during such a difficult trading period is an inspiration.

"The determination exhibited by every one of you has got you this far and it is your determination

that will carry you as far as you want to go," he added.

The latest cohort brings the total number of graduates since the program's inception to 561.

Agent comes to the rescue for Kiwis

A **TRAVEL** agent from Vincent George Travel in Dunedin has recently come to the rescue of her Kiwi clients stranded in Perth, organising a trip home via Singapore to circumnavigate travel restrictions.

The Director and Personal Travel Manager of the agency, Rosann Connolly-George, said she was able to arrange the travel plans for the Auckland-based couple just before the Alert Level 4 lockdown in NZ kicked in.

"It's not as simple as...I'm going to travel via Singapore to come home', you need to have a lot of things lined up in order for this to happen smoothly," Connolly-George said, adding that it's far from ideal but is there for those who are desperate and have a valid passport with more than six months' expiry left to run and are prepared to pay more for it to happen, she told *stuff.co.nz*.

DL's 30 A321neos

DELTA Air Lines has continued its fleet renewal by adding an extra 30 Airbus A321neos to its existing order book.

The fleet refresh also helps to support DL's carbon neutrality commitment by replacing less fuel-efficient aircraft as part of its Flight to Net Zero push.

Under its existing A321neo purchase agreement with Airbus, DL stated it is in the process of converting purchase rights for the aircraft into a firm order.

Jayride investment

AIRPORT transfer marketplace Jayride has announced the successful raising of \$11 million in new capital, revealing the funds will be used for selective investment in its global growth strategy and to pay down debt.

The company confirmed \$2 million in cash was used to eliminate its total debt, resulting in a saving of \$102k in interest.

"This has ensured Jayride is well placed to accelerate our growth strategy," MD Rod Bishop said.

The August issue of *travelBulletin* is out now. Read about how businesses are facing up to the climate change challenge amidst the ongoing pandemic pause.

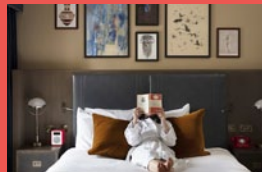
CLICK to read *travelBulletin*

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed 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.



Blending nature and heritage, **Radisson Resort & Spa Lonavala** in India has opened its doors to guests. The hotel is Radisson Hotel Group's first lodging in the scenic hills of Lonavala, a drivable getaway with convenient air, rail and road connectivity from Mumbai and Pune. The resort is spread over 14,100m², offering sweeping views of the Western Ghats, and is now one of the largest venues for hosting off-site meetings and large weddings in the region.



Kimpton has launched a new Book Club, allowing bookworms to enjoy literary travel while they wait for literal travel. Launching yesterday, Kimpton Book Club invites travellers to explore the fascinating cities where the brand's hotels are located. Titles are by classic and modern writers, novelists and poets, and represent perspectives of those who are natives of the city and visitors. Dig into the reading lists from Kimpton hotels [HERE](#).



Hyatt Regency Coralville Hotel & Conference Center, which has been reflagged from Coralville Hotel & Conference Center, has become the first of the brand in the US state of Iowa. The 286-key property will undergo a phased renovation to include refreshed guestrooms and a new restaurant & bar to appeal to both travellers and local guests. The hotel is situated in the heart of the Iowa River Landing, a 72-hectare mixed-use development.