

## Travel Daily on location in Fiji

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Tourism Fiji and Fiji Airways, which are celebrating the reopening of the nation to tourists this week.

**ARRIVALS** continue to stream into Fiji under the new Travel Partner Country arrangements, with a planeload of Americans landing in Nadi this morning aboard Fiji Airways' sparkling new Airbus A350.

After the Sydney inaugural flight yesterday, a FJ flight has also arrived from Melbourne, while more SYD pax land today.

Some are staying at the Momi Bay Resort (see **page five**), where last night GM Silvano Dressino hosted a group at the upmarket Fish Bar Restaurant to watch the sunset over the infinity pool before a delightful meal curated by the hotel's adept Executive Chef Christian Knecht.

After 20 months of lockdowns visitors seem keen to simply chill out under the protocols which see them take a day two Rapid Antigen Test before venturing out of their resorts - although they are permitted to undertake activities conducted by any of the hundreds of Care Fiji Certified operators.

Prior to returning home, properties also facilitate any required PCR testing which takes place in-resort before departure.

## NRMA unveils SIXT in Oz

**THE** NRMA has announced it will be representing the German-based SIXT brand in Australia from today, heralding a migration toward offering travellers more electric vehicle options.

The SIXT network represents a fleet of more than 200,000 vehicles in 110 countries, offering car rental and ridesharing services, with the NRMA signing an independent franchisee agreement to trade as SIXT Australia.

The NRMA's adoption of the SIXT brand coincides with an initial 40 MG EV and 25 Tesla Model 3 vehicles for hire, making it one of the largest EV fleets for hire in the country.

"The launch of our SIXT EV fleet represents the biggest shake-up of the car rental industry in Australia in years and we are absolutely committed to giving Australians a glimpse into the future of hiring a car that is cheaper to drive, cleaner for the

environment and easier to book," SIXT Australia Managing Director Matthew Beattie said.

"We are proud to unveil one of the largest electric vehicle fleets in Australia and we plan to increase the size of the fleet aggressively in the coming years."

NRMA's decision coincides with the expiry of its master franchise agreement with Hertz, which today announced it would transition the Dollar and Thrifty car rental brands back to a direct management operation.

The Thrifty and Dollar brands will operate from existing Hertz locations in Australia, New Zealand and Fiji from this month.

## Crown rejects offer

**THE** Crown Resorts Board has rejected yet another takeover bid from Blackstone, the last offer of which proposed to acquire all of the casino/resort operator's equity for \$12.50 in cash per share (**TD** 19 Nov).

Crown said that its decision to rebuff the acquisition bid was due to an insufficient value offered, however the company has provided Blackstone with the opportunity to access non-public information so that it can formulate a revised proposal.

The troubled Crown business had previously rejected a takeover bid from Blackstone in May (**TD** 17 May), which was a bid valuing the purchase target at \$12.35 a share (\$8.2 billion).

## BAC appoints

**THE** Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) has appointed Ryan Both as its new Executive General Manager Aviation.

Starting in the role on 01 Feb, Both replaces Jim Parashos who is leaving after five years in the role.

He brings experience in aviation development and forecasting, as well as previous management of fly-in-fly-out operations.

More appointments on **page 5**.

## Better agent earning

**SILVERSEA** Cruises offers agents better earning opportunities via advanced marketing tools & a user-friendly digital platform.

For more details, see **page six**.

## Aussie Spirit returns

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line's (NCL) *Norwegian Spirit* will return to Australia and New Zealand in Dec 2023, with the cruise line today unveiling its 2023/24/25 deployment details.

Eight 12-day sailings will be on offer between Sydney and Auckland on the recently refurbished vessel, with highlights including visits to Napier, as well as a scenic sailing through New Zealand's famous sounds.

The latest collection, which features 35 departure ports, includes new homeports in Haifa, Israel and La Romana in the Dominican Republic.

Call 1300 255 200 for details.

## Safest with Viking

**VIKING** has a world-leading health and safety program, offering a range of protocols to keep passenger safe at sea.

See **page seven** for more details.

## Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today has five pages of news, including **Business Events News** plus full pages from:

- Silversea Cruises
- Viking Cruises

# WHITSUNDAYS

## Big Island Day Tour

**SEALINK**

**COMING SOON!**

✓ Bookings Open 26 November 2021 ✓ Travel dates from 11 December 2021 ✓ Departing from Shute Harbour

**We're still standing!**

Last month, the travel industry came together to celebrate and reunite. Catch some photos of the festivities in the December/January issue of *travelBulletin*.

**travelBulletin**

**CLICK to read**

## VA Links SYD/CBR

**VIRGIN** Australia has signed an exclusive agreement with Link Airways to reboot services between Sydney and Canberra from 30 Jan 2022.

Operating 53 times per week with up to nine flights per day on weekdays, the route will use Link Airways' Saab 340 B Plus aircraft and crew, replacing VA's 737-800s which the carrier noted at this stage cannot serve routes like CBR/SYD effectively.

**MEANWHILE** VA has welcomed back customers to its Canberra Lounge, which now boasts a revamped menu and a new selection of Australian wine and craft beer options.

## Anchorage session

**VISIT** Anchorage and Canuckiwi will host agents for the final webinar in its wildlife series, with one agent to win a trip to Alaska.

Session takes place 07 Dec at 9am AEDT - register [HERE](#).

## "Astounding" Fiji demand

**TOURISM** Fiji CEO Brent Hill says the response to the reopening of the country has been well ahead of expectations, with booking levels over the next two months already running at 65% of pre-COVID levels.

Speaking to *Travel Daily* at Nadi Airport after the arrival of the first flight (*TD* yesterday), he said the demand was all the more remarkable given that it's only coming from parts of Australia and the USA, while other traditional markets for Fiji such as New Zealand, China and other parts of Asia remain closed.

And while just being able to provide an international travel option after such a long period of inactivity is part of the rationale for the booking frenzy, Hill believes the destination is strongly resonating with travellers weary of lockdowns.

"I'm really convinced that Fiji has exactly what the world

wants as we emerge from COVID, beautiful, pristine, amazing people, it's not crowded, you can find your own space, it's kind of what everybody wants, get a cocktail in their hands, sit by the pool in the sun, not have to worry," he said.

Hill particularly highlighted the astonishing response to the Luxury Escapes promotion which ran shortly after the new travel arrangements were announced.

"I've not really seen a campaign that's just taken off like that, and that just filled us with so much hope that we were really going to be able to fill the hotels, and that we could do more.

"It was kind of testing the water, and it just took off," he said.

Fiji Airways, working with the Fijian Government, was also a key component to the successful restart, offering all-inclusive Bula Bubble packages which have sold "incredibly well," offering return airfares, accommodation, meals and transfers.

"We needed to create an immediate drive, we need to get people back into work again, we couldn't really afford to ease our way back in...so we just decided to go all in," Hill added.

Air capacity has also been key, with Fiji Airways already ramping up to 80% of its pre-COVID flying levels this month.

On top of that Qantas, Jetstar and Virgin Australia flights to Nadi will return in the coming weeks, further helping drive recovery.

## Early agent access

**AGENTS** will be given exclusive access from tomorrow to Journey Beyond Rail Expeditions' 2023 season to re-book clients using travel vouchers until 15 Jan.

Prices will be matched with 2021 rates and free upgrades are on offer for select Ghan trips.

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## WA pledges \$185m

**WESTERN** Australia has announced a \$185 million package to promote the state as a safe engaging destination to visit in 2022 and 2023.

The new funding will target tourists, skilled workers and international students, and includes establishing new flight routes with Germany, India, China and Vietnam.

The \$65 million aviation fund component of the package will also seek to establish more interstate and intrastate air routes, while the same amount will also be spent on a campaign to attract more visitors after the state reopens its borders.

The attraction scheme will include incentives for students to study in WA by offering them up to \$1,500 in accommodation support for the first 5,000 students, while \$15m in funding will boost WA's events appeal - see **page four** for details.

## Nolan takes full control



**MICHAEL** Nolan has recently become the sole owner of the Victoria-based Bayview Travel, after co-owner Chris McGetrick made the decision to step back from day-to-day operations and sell his stake in the business.

While McGetrick may not have any equity in the CT Partners agency, he will continue to be

involved in the industry and with Bayview Travel, conducting a range of special projects.

"The pandemic has given us all a chance to recalibrate our lives and reassess our futures and this is a fresh new opportunity for us both," Nolan said.

**Pictured:** Nolan and Chris McGetrick ready for the future.



## Window Seat

**LISTEN** up Elvis fans, you no longer have to make your way to Memphis to enjoy The King of rock 'n roll.

Bendigo is getting "all shook up" next year as it hosts the Elvis: Direct from Graceland 2020 Exhibition at the historic Bendigo Art Gallery from 19 Mar to 17 Jul 2022.

The event will feature more than 300 exclusive Elvis artefacts direct from Graceland in Memphis, such as The King's famous jumpsuits, vintage memorabilia and treasured personal items.

Earlybird accommodation packages are also on offer, so hurry up so you aren't left Crying in the Chapel when they sell out - more details **HERE**.



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## \$15 MILLION FOR PERTH EVENTS

**THE** Western Australia Government has unveiled a new visitor stimulus package that will see Business Events Perth receive \$15 million in funding to attract more high-profile business events to the state.

Business Events Perth Chair Bradley Woods welcomed the funding as a major pillar towards helping WA's event sector recover from the pandemic.

"In 2019, Business Events Perth generated \$153 million in confirmed business events with \$5.3 million in funding, which is a return on investment of 1:29, so we expect that this new funding from the WA Government will generate significant economic returns for Western Australia and



PICTURED: Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre.

also support Perth's CBD hotels which have borne the brunt of the pandemic," he said.

"With business event delegates spending up to five times more than their leisure counterparts and almost two thirds of delegates choosing to attend a conference in order to extend

their trip to take a holiday, the business events sector has a vital role to play in the ongoing recovery of Western Australia's overall tourism industry."

BE Perth has directly supported over 350 local events over the last 15 months thanks to previous state funding packages.

### Hotels on board

**A NUMBER** of high-profile hotels have signed on to exhibit at the Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) taking place at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre from 21 to 23 Mar in-person and 28 Mar to 01 Apr online.

Marriott International, Langham Hotels & Resorts, Crown Hotel & Resorts, Hilton Hotels & Resorts, Pan Pacific Hotels Group, TFE Hotels, Minor Hotels and IHG Hotels & Resorts will all be represented at the event, with all brands to also accommodate hosted domestic and international buyers during the show.

### Sydney funding

**ACCELERATE** funding is available now to boost business events and drive Sydney's economic recovery.

The Government of NSW and Business Events Sydney have released details of The Accelerate Sydney Business Events Fund, which comes hot on the heels of the removal of the 2m<sup>2</sup> density limits by the state.

The new funding program is open to organisers of B2B conferences, conventions, symposia, congresses, seminars, training courses and trade exhibitions to offset venue costs matched dollar-for-dollar by the organiser.

Applicants can be based anywhere in Australia, however to access the latest tranche of funding, the events must be held at a public venue in Sydney, Newcastle or Wollongong, and must also be of at least one day in duration, and attract 100 or more delegates.

### First glimpse of IBTM Asia Pacific

**THE** first details have been revealed for IBTM Asia Pacific 2022, which will take place from 05-06 Apr at the Marina Bay Sands Expo & Convention Centre in Singapore.

IBTM Asia Pacific 2022 will be themed "Make Every Connection Count", and will provide a meeting point for event professionals from around the world to come together and reconnect with key suppliers, destinations, venues and high-quality Hosted Buyers.

### MCEC vax hub

**THE** Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has helped Victoria reach its 90% vaccination rate, jabbing more than 281,000 arms.

MCEC housed one of the largest vaccination hubs in Victoria, helping Victoria reach its important vaccination milestones.

Last month, MCEC averaged a daily rate of more than 1,680 vaccination doses.

### ICC Sydney wines and dines industry



**ICC** Sydney is continuing to champion the best of the New South Wales wine industry, strengthening its commitment to local wine producers.

The convention, exhibition & entertainment venue will continue to support a number of key wine industry activities, including the ICC Sydney NSW Wine Awards, to promote New South Wales produce through its international network.

ICC's partnership with the NSW Wine Industry

Association, now in its third year, builds on the venue's support for the state's wine industry, in a move that is more important than ever in the wake of harsh climate conditions and the COVID-19 pandemic's effects.

**Pictured:** NSW Wine Industry Association Executive Officer Angus Barnes and President Mark Bourne, and ICC Sydney NSW Wine Awards Chief Judge Nick Spencer and Beverage Floor Manager Mitchell Beattie.



## Travelport deal

**TRAVELPORT** and Air France-KLM have reached agreement on NDC distribution via Travelport+. The global distribution system's next-generation platform allows travel advisors who sign an access agreement with Air France-KLM to access the airline group's NDC content and service via the agency point-of-sale Smartpoint, or through modern & lightweight API connections. The pair are well-progressed on the technical solution for NDC distribution, which will be rolled out from early 2022, with features to be added progressively.

## Hyatt Centric opens

**HYATT** Centric Melbourne has opened for travellers to rediscover the Victorian capital. Opening yesterday on Downie St as the first Australian Hyatt Centric location, the hotel offers convenient access to Southern Cross and Marvel Stadium. Built on the site of an 1840s blacksmith, Hyatt Centric Melbourne will offer 277 contemporary guest rooms across 25 storeys, a cafe, a restaurant, an indoor dedicated events floor, a 25-metre pool, a 24-hour fitness studio, and a rare inner-city outdoor space that caters for personalised celebrations.

## APPOINTMENTS

**WELCOME** to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

**Hamilton Island** has appointed **Kirstie Myers** to the position of Account Manager. Myers joins with a wealth of industry experience across several roles including over 10 years with Virgin Australia. She will be managing key accounts across industry partners and joins Hamilton Island in the run up to Qld reopening its borders soon.

Boutique hotel **Osborn House** in the NSW Southern Highlands has appointed **Adrian Levy** to be its new General Manager. The property, which opened its doors this month, offers guests 22 personalised suites and cabins created by former Soho House design director, Linda Boronkay. Levy returns to Australia following a two-year stint as General Manager at the New Zealand luxury lodge Kauri Cliffs.

**Silversea Cruises** has appointed cruise industry veteran **Katina Athanasiou** to be its new Senior Vice President of Sales. She will be charged with driving the company's sales strategy in the Americas across all channels, and will report to MD, The Americas Mark Conroy.

MSC Group's luxury travel brand **Explora Journeys** has made several new global appointments, with **Helen Beck** joining as Head of Global Sales, **Saul Fonseca** as Head of Sales USA East and The Americas, **Aimee Price** joining as Head of Sales USA West and Canada, and **Priti Mehta** to be its Head of Sales UK & Ireland.

## I want my Momi!!



**FIJI'S** Momi Bay Resort is among scores of hotels across the country eagerly welcoming overseas visitors this week as things restart.

The reopening at Momi Bay has seen the return of full-time work for hundreds of staff, who have been stood down or working severely reduced hours over the last 20 months.

Last night as passengers were

transferred to the resort from FJ910, the second Sydney-Nadi flight of the day, bystanders in the street clapped and cheered with friendly "Bulas", reflecting the excitement across the nation.

Despite hotel employees clearly having been unable to practice their skills during the pandemic, service standards have not slipped one iota, with an impeccable five-star offering from the friendly team at Momi Bay.

**Pictured** at the Fish Bar oceanfront restaurant after a fabulous "Salt" degustation menu where every dish is perfectly paired with a different variety of locally-produced salt such as coconut, lime, hibiscus and chilli (and matched wines of course), are, from left: Momi Bay General Manager Silvano Dressino; Marketing Executive Sally Yuen; and Javed Shameem, Marriott's Market Director of Sales for Fiji and Samoa.

## SAT "disappointed"

**THE** Omicron COVID variant is "certainly going to have a devastating effect on our tourism industry, airlines and business partners," South African Tourism (SAT) Acting CEO Sthembiso Dlamini has admitted.

In a joint statement, Tourism Business Council of South Africa, Chief Executive Officer Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa said the latest travel bans on the country are "extremely disappointing and premature" considering the limited information we have about this new variant.

"While the South African scientists correctly and proactively informed the world in contributing to the global efforts to alleviate the spread of the new variant, this did not mean that the variant originated in South Africa," the statement read.

## Wendy global sale

**WENDY** Wu Tours has released its Worldwide Sale, offering savings of \$250 per person on all international group tours departing in 2022 and 2023.

There are more than 85 tours and 1,000 departure dates including Japan's highly sought-after cherry blossom season.

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

Travel Daily

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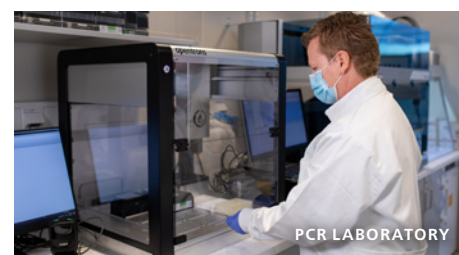
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With the return of international travel, many are wondering what the future of cruising looks like. While we have been unable to sail domestically for some time, Viking has been successfully cruising internationally for our UK and US guests since May this year, putting our comprehensive health and safety protocols to the test. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, with record high ratings and many guests saying that travelling with Viking was the safest they have felt during the entire pandemic.

## So, what is it that makes guests feel relaxed and comfortable in this new age of cruising?

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## A program built on science

While we are all familiar with mask wearing and social distancing, which form a crucial part of our Health & Safety protocols, we have gone above and beyond to implement additional measures, with a scientific foundation, to

ensure the wellbeing of all guests and crew is maintained throughout their journey. We commissioned an epidemiological study of COVID-19 transmission to better understand the virus, and appointed Vice Admiral Raquel C. Bono, M.D. as Viking Chief Health Officer, paving the way for one of the most comprehensive prevention and mitigation plans in the travel industry.

## Setting the standard

In an industry first, every Viking ocean ship now houses a full-scale PCR laboratory, facilitating our daily non-invasive saliva testing, which is included in your cruise fare. Our river ships rely on a strong network of dedicated shoreside laboratories, also an industry first. PCR tests are considered the gold standard for COVID-19 detection. Utilising modern technologies, UV-C sanitisation robots work during the night while guests sleep to sanitise public spaces. And while all Viking ocean and river ships have always featured independent air handling units for guest staterooms meaning no air is shared between staterooms and public areas, we have also installed new high-density filters and UV-C lights which kill 99.99% of airborne viruses and bacteria in shared spaces, ensuring every Viking ship is quite possibly one of the safest ways to travel.

## Key Highlights of the Viking Health & Safety Program

- All guests and crew are fully vaccinated. With our no kids under 18 policy, this makes Viking one of the only true fully vaccinated travel companies.
- Daily onboard non-invasive saliva PCR testing for all guests. No nasal swabs.
- Full-scale PCR laboratory on board every ocean ship – an industry first.
- New air purification technologies including high-density filters and UV-C lights which kill 99.99% of airborne viruses and bacteria.
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- Regular Digital Health Surveys and temperature monitoring through touch-free thermometers.
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- All veranda staterooms offer a private space with fresh air.
- PCR test conducted prior to disembarkation. As a complimentary service, Viking provides all guests with the PCR test result needed for their return flight home.

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