Travel Daily First with the news





Friday 22nd January 2021

EK returns to SYD, MEL, BNE

Today's issue of TD

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

Bench GM resigns

CAMERON Neill has stepped down from the General Manager role at Bench Africa, about 10 months after being promoted to replace former GM Martin Edwards (TD 06 Mar 2020).

Neill was "vital in forming a strategy for the company's future, and in keeping staff morale high at a time when it was needed most," said Bench's Groups and Operations Director Julie De Palo.

"We are sad to see a valued member of our tribe go but very much respect his decision to focus on other endeavours," De Palo added.

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Travel Daily



EMIRATES overnight

announced the resumption of passenger flights to Australia's east coast capitals next week, after resolving a range of issues associated with state border closures which a spokesperson said had "added complexity and burden to our operations".

The shock pullout (TD 18 Jan) was the result of the "dynamic restrictions and requirements implemented by the different state authorities in Australia," the airline said, adding it had decided to temporarily cease flying while it engaged with stakeholders regarding crew protocols.

"Following this engagement we've made the decision to resume services with adjustments to our operations, so that we can continue serving our customers." All EK crew on Australian flights had already been mandated to take a PCR test 48 hours prior to

New Virtuoso role

ZOE Dean has been appointed as Virtuoso's new Marketing Manager for Australia and NZ. She joins the group after three years at The Travel Corporation, most recently as Head of Marketing, Australia for Uniworld.

New CLIA Chairman

MSC Cruises Executive Chairman Pierfrancesco Vago has been appointed as Global Chair of Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

Vago succeeds Adam Goldstein in the role, with a two-year term.

He said he looked forward to working with CLIA leadership to advance the resumption of cruising across the globe.

"With over 200 sailings that have taken place since last summer in various markets around the world, all with strict measures in place to promote public health, we have proven that a return to cruising is possible," he said.

scheduled departure from Dubai, but under the new adjustments these tests will be administered in their homes and crew will then observe self-quarantine at home until their flight.

"Combined with the hotel guarantine and tests on arrival in Australia, this effectively means that our crew are in a 'bubble' from 48 hours before their flight until they return to Dubai," the carrier said.

"This is an added burden for our crew as individuals, for our rostering and operating costs, and therefore this decision was made after careful review and consideration."

EK affirmed that its commitment to Australia remains as strong as ever, adding "we look forward to helping more Australians get to where they need to be".

More Carnival delay

CARNIVAL Cruise Line this morning advised of a further extension to its rolling pause in Australian operations, with all Carnival Splendor sailings through to 19 May 2021 cancelled.

Travel agent commission is being protected on all fully paid bookings, and clients can receive a full refund. or an extra value future cruise credit combined with an onboard credit offer.

Writing workshop

TRAVEL writer Rob McFarland will hold another one of his popular courses on 26 Feb, aimed at tourism marketers, operators and public relations execs.

The half-day online workshop covers press release writing and story pitching, and is limited to 12 people at a cost of \$450pp.

More info at robmcfarland.org.

No issue Mon, Tue

THE upcoming Australia Day public holiday will see the Travel Daily team take a break until next Wed 27 Jan.

GBT acquisition

KING

AMERICAN Express Global Travel (GBT) has announced the acquisition of New York-based Ovation Travel Group, which has operations in over 30 US and UK locations, with a pre-COVID TTV of about US\$1.7 billion.

Brands operated under the Ovation banner, including Chartwell Travel and Lawyers Travel, will remain in place the company said, with Ovation having over 700 employees and about 200 independent travel advisors focusing on business travel services, upmarket luxury travel experiences and meeting & special event planning.

Terms of the deal were not disclosed.

More corporate travel news on page five of today's TD.

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VA to continue Cooks, PNG

VIRGIN Australia has downplayed speculation that it is pulling out of several Pacific island destinations, after several online forums picked up changes to the airline's commercial policies for flights to Rarotonga, Port Moresby & Nuku'alofa Tonga.

While VA's short-haul international operations will not resume until borders reopen, the carrier has affirmed that it will be seeking to operate to Port Moresby and Rarotonga, while its withdrawal from Tonga had already been announced in Sep.

The new policy is offering feefree changes and rebookings to new destinations for customers holding tickets to and from Tonga, Rarotonga and Port Moresby for travel before 27 Mar.

However the carrier told **Travel Daily** this morning that previously its services to PNG were operated under a wet lease arrangement with Alliance Airlines. "We are seeking to continue operating these services under a co-operative agreement with Alliance Airlines when international travel returns," a VA spokesperson said.

Similarly, services to the Cook Islands are currently suspended due to COVID-19, but Virgin Australia said it also expects to reapply for slots to and from Rarotonga "in the near future".

Pacific Princess sold

PRINCESS Cruises today announced the sale of its *Pacific Princess* to an undisclosed buyer.

The disposal of the much-loved 670-passenger ship is in line with parent firm Carnival Corporation's fleet downsizing initiative.

The vessel debuted in 1999 as Renaissance Cruises' *R Three*, before joining Princess in 2002. All remaining *Pacific Princess* voyages have been cancelled.



Why is Salzburg also known as 'Rome of the North'?

Travel Daily

Head to the *Travel Daily Training Academy* to fin the answer and learn more about this and other destinations.

Oceania incentive

OCEANIA Cruises has launched a new trade initiative designed to run alongside its Australia Day upgrade sale.

For every booking made on sailings departing from 01 Oct 2021 through to the end of 2022, travel advisors will be rewarded with an upfront bonus commission in the form of a \$150 gift card.

The promo runs from 22 Jan to 28 Feb & doesn't apply to group booking transfers, with bookings to be deposited by 07 Mar.

Air Tahiti Nui delays

AIR Tahiti Nui has extended the suspension of its Auckland schedule, which was initially planned to recommence in Apr.

The French Polynesian flag carrier will extend the suspension through to the end of Jun, with flights to New Zealand now expected to resume from 03 Jul for info, call 02 9061 8913.



INSTAGRAM may be running a little low on artistic waterfall tourist selfies during the shutdown, but here is some inspo to keep you social media boffins going until borders ease.

Showerstoyou.co.uk recently collated the most popular Instagram hashtags for waterfalls around the world, with Niagara Falls landing the top spot by generating 3.4 million hashtags.

Iguazu Falls in Argentina claimed the next spot with just over a million posts, while Iceland's Gullfoss rounded out the top three with 329,576.

Worryingly, the same study found 59% of social media users are prepared to break travel restrictions to grab their next perfect travel selfie - oh dear.

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APAC "fragile & uneven"

THE Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) has warned that travel growth scenarios for the APAC region will remain fragile and uneven until 2023.

In the just-released Executive Summary of the Asia Pacific Visitor Forecasts 2021-2023 report, which reviews the growth prospects for 39 Asia-Pacific destinations, PATA stated that even under a mild scenario, the region is likely to have around 4% fewer arrivals in 2023 when compared to 2019 numbers.

Under PATA's medium scenario, visitor numbers in 2023 could be less than three-quarters of the 2019 volume, while under the most severe forecast, less than half of the 2019 volume of international arrivals would be expected in 2023.

However, PATA CEO Mario Hardy said there was still cause for optimism in the future. "While growth in international visitor arrivals into and across the Asia-Pacific remains difficult in 2021, there are promising signs for 2022 and 2023," he said.

"A return to near pre-COVID-19 levels of arrivals, while possible by 2023, appears now to be feasible, at least if conditions as they are now, abate quickly and permanently.

"Much, however, will depend on events during this present northern winter and the arrival and management of the more traditional flu season."

Hardy added that travel and tourism performance metrics in the future may lean toward the length of stay and visitor satisfaction, rather than on a generic headcount of arrivals, which may provide a better guide to travel potential.

The PATA forecast report this year focuses on regions and subregions due to the rapid and fluid nature of the pandemic.

Calls to do more for regional tourism

AUSTRALIAN Regional Tourism (ART) is calling on govts around the country to better promote discussions about the needs of regional tourism businesses.

The industry body believes there is an "overly optimistic" perception around the health of the regional tourism space that is unfounded, with COVID and bushfires leaving the sector struggling for survival.

"Positive signs are visible in some destinations, with businesses experiencing good trade over the recent summer weeks, but the goal of 'recovery' is far from achieved," said ART Chair Coralie Bell.

The group is calling for more tourism data to be gathered in order to support sustainable planning, more initiatives that encourage regional dispersal, and to address key skills shortages.

SIA COVID trial

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) pax departing Singapore, Jakarta and Medan are now able to book pre-departure COVID-19 PCR and serology tests and receive results on a new one-stop online portal, as part of a new pilot service launched by the airline this week.

MCEC now at 75%

THE Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre's (MCEC) allowable attendee capacity has increased to 5,000 people (75%).

MCEC has an approved COVIDSafe Event plan from the Vic Govt, including contact tracing methods, changes to food & beverage service and physical distancing, and preventing attendance at events by delegates from designated red zones.

Event organisers are being asked to contact MCEC to determine if their event complies with regulations, and to provide any additional info to the Victorian Department of Health.

Star Gold Coast tower 2 approved

A GREEN light has been given for a second tower at The Star Gold Coast.

The \$400 million development, which The Star Entertainment Group is calling a "Tower for Tourism", will be a 63-storey mixed-use development that will include a yet-to-be-branded, 210room five-star hotel.

Planned for a mid-to-late 2024 opening, the second tower will be built on the southeastern part of Broadbeach Island, and is part of a \$2 billion master plan.



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Letters to the editor...

THE responses continue to flow in from Tue's opinion piece on the comments of Professor Brendan Murphy (TD 19 Jan), with this collection wrapping up the input on this particular matter - but we always want to hear from our readers.

Got something to share? Let us know via email to feedback@ traveldaily.com.au. (contributions are edited for length).

AFTA, we need a plan now!

"

Ben Caplan is MD of Wall Street Travel. AFTER Brendan Murphy provided the answer to my

previous questions

(TD 18 Jan), the



best we can get from AFTA is an update in Tuesday's Travel Daily that was no longer current based on the former CMO's forecasts.

I have been calling on AFTA for seven months to devise a plan for the industry's future, e.g. the Agent of Last Resort.

Based on Mr Murphy's advice/ view, a detailed plan must now be presented using the available facts. Due to ATAS, AFTA has a bird's-eye view into the balance sheets of members and their financial capacity going forward. AFTA has insight and perspective of what is achievable and who can possibly survive. What we know (a list

in no particular order, relevance or exclusive): 1. International

- borders are not going to reopen before the end of the year. This must be clarified; does it mean Nov, Dec 2021 or Jan 2022?
- 2. OR, does it mean Feb 2022, to avoid large numbers travelling to destinations where COVID is still an issue during the summer break?
- 3. Currently the Federal

Government has made it clear that JobKeeper will end on 31 Mar. The only place where I have read that a new version of JobKeeper will be offered to travel agents is from AFTA. What is the basis that this statement is propagated? Can members rely on AFTA's statement on a version 4 of JobKeeper, at what level and for how long? Time is of the essence.

4. The Federal Government has made it clear they believe the economy is travelling very well, except for specific industries. Unfortunately international travel is at the top of the list of sectors that have been totally decimated. Is the Federal Government willing to financially back the Australian travel agent?

AFTA, how many agencies have the financial capacity to survive 12 months with little to no revenue, if no significant government funding is forthcoming? Note: I am not talking of grants of between \$1,500-\$100,000.

Companies need access to real funding, those that sadly must close and now deal Ve need with entitlements, redundancies, a plan terminating leases and any other - the contracts that are associated with running a business. clock is For those that can survive another 12 months, what tickina! financial assistance will be available? Staff cannot be paid at the current JobKeeper

rate for another 12 months in my opinion.

I believe that anger is a wasted emotion on this issue. In hindsight, many things could and should have been done differently by national and state governments around the world; remember COVID-19 is apparently a once in a 100-year event (I hope).

If we are talking about our futures in this industry, or just in general, I am not saying we should forget or even forgive. Let us just focus on getting through for now and spend time planning for a better future.

AFTA, we need a plan, the clock is ticking!



Friday 22nd January 2021

Waiting for the tide to turn...

<u>O P I N I O N</u>

Many in the travel and tourism industry have had sleepless nights in the last year, and this poetic 3am contribution from a Western Australian travel advisor will resonate across the board.

Tide

It's been 12 months to the day since I've boarded a plane, So much can change in a year,

it's insane. The dreaded COVID-19 like a thief in the night.

Just like that vicious dog with a nasty bite.

We hold on and struggle because we love travel.

we're dedicated yet helpless as we watch it unravel.

Previously I often cruised the high seas

And now I'm literally on my knees.

JobKeeper came along and saved the day.

But in reality all it did was delay, the inevitable loss that no one understands

Seeing it disappear through our trembling hands.

We've lost jobs, careers and friends in high places. Getting used to the absence of smiles on their faces.

We refund, recall, cancel and credit.

Our bank accounts also in debit. We soldier on. We're not giving up

For we must yet again overflow our cup.

We have to believe the tide will turn

soon again frequent flyer miles we will earn.

I'm sticking it out

I'll survive this drought. Just have to get through to the other side,

to see our ship come back in, with the turning tide.

Thanks for writing

Sarah Webster is a Travel Partners member at Wayfinder Travel & Cruise.

THE article commenting on Brendan Murphy's predictions was such a well-written piece and entirely spot-on! Bravo!

As a Brit living in Queensland for the last 11 years I haven't been lucky enough to be eligible for JobKeeper, or any grants for that matter, and when I heard about Brendan Murphy's comment this week I was surprised that I didn't cry! Instead I'm really annoyed.

Please pass on my thanks to the author for voicing my own thoughts (and then some!) so eloquently!

Perhaps they should be running for office so we end up with someone decent in charge?!

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CORPORATE UPDATE UK TMC pricing guidance

BRITAIN'S Business Travel Association (BTA) has issued a new document providing guidance on how Travel Management Companies (TMCs) should be remunerated by their clients.

Developed after a consultation period with TMCs and corporates late last year, the guidance builds on a white paper outlining the pros and cons of different models and calling for greater clarity and transparency from the industry.

The document provides insights for customers into the difference between transaction fee, subscription fee and management fee models, outlining key considerations and baseline parameters to help define commercial relationships going forward.

"We hope it will become a vital reference document, not just during contractual negotiations, but one which helps to ensure continuous quality on a daily basis," said BTA CEO Clive Wratten.

The industry devastation wrought by COVID-19 had been a catalyst for the project, with the industry recognising that outdated models needed change.

Trondent add-on

CORPORATE travel technology provider Trondent has developed a COVID data add-on feature for its customers, helping to deliver relevant, easy-to-find information to travellers relating to their specific trip requests.

Travel managers can choose from a number of data parameters and decide what information is relayed to their staff and travel approvers based on company needs.

Policy rules based on the data can also be incorporated into a business's approval workflow.

Data provided can include general COVID information on a destination such as numbers of cases and current trends, as well as any lockdown or other restrictions in place. The document compares the various industry pricing models with mobile phone agreements such as a Transaction Fee model equating to a "pay as you go" phone contract.

By contrast a Subscription Fee model is to be thought of as like a monthly phone contract with prescribed limits on call minutes, texts and data.

Finally a Management Fee TMC pricing model is compared to an enterprise mobile phone contract where an organisation buys plans and phones for all its staff.

The guidance aims to help determine which model is best suited to particular customer types, with Wratten saying the new standards are "designed to be a benchmark that can be adopted across the business travel ecosystem, and provide consistency and best practice for all stakeholders".

View the doc at thebta.org.uk.

Vax resistance

A NEW survey by US-based not-for-profit group Travel Again has found that almost 25% of American business travellers will not take the COVID-19 vaccine once it becomes widely available.

The Washington DC-based organisation is working to help restore traveller confidence, drive recovery and rebuild the industry, and conducts a monthly Traveller Confidence poll.

The Dec results also found more than a third of corporate travellers do not wish to take and share the results of COVID tests in order to resume travelling.

Travel Again co-founder Mike McCormick said the future of business travel "remains clouded with significant uncertainty".

Road warriors polled said the most important confidencebuilding elements included empty middle seats, limited crowd sizes, social distancing and frequent cleaning - while leisure travellers also wanted mandatory masks.

NEED A DISTRACTION AMID THE DOOM AND GLOOM?



Check out our daily puzzle page.

Spencer team stays strong



THE sales team from Spencer Travel have held their first official meeting of the year, this week discussing plans for 2021 as their COVID-19 recovery continues.

Pictured around the boardroom table in Spencer Travel's world headquarters in Sydney are, from left: Olivia Kerr, Penny Spencer, Viki Adkin, Karen Doherty, Dayna Porter and Makai Beaumont.

Elf expands role

MELISSA Elf has been named General Manager - Large Market & Specialist Brands within Flight Centre, giving her overall responsibility for FCM Travel Solutions, FCM Meetings & Events and Stage & Screen.

The role sees her lead the team providing expertise in travel management for large, national and multinational customers across enterprise, government, academic, film, music and sporting organisations.

GBTA flags return

THE Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) says confidence is growing for a return to business travel, releasing the results of its first corporate travel sentiment survey for 2021.

More than half of respondents said they expected most of their employees will return to the office by the third quarter of the year, alongside a return to nonessential business travel and a growth in traveller confidence.

"While we continue to face challenges for our industry, there is light at the end of the tunnel and projections for a return to some normality remain positive for Q3," said GBTA Interim Executive Director Dave Hilfman.

"The global rollout of vaccination programs continues to be a key driver in restoring traveller confidence," he said, noting uncertainty around specific requirements persisted.





Icon under a microscope



THIS landmark is iconic and easily recognisable when you see the whole picture, but can you identify it from this small portion of the image?

Each year approximately

six million people visit this spectacular rock formation, which has developed over the past six million years as a river cuts through the rock and exposed more over time.

Test your knowledge

FOR travel, flying is a key part of our industry, and it's also full of symbols and acronyms.

Agents have to know airport codes, airline codes, airline liveries and more.

How well do you know the aviation industry? Do you know what airports these codes stand for, and what plane liveries are pictured?

AIRPORT CODES 1. ORD 2. CNS 3. BUD 4. DPS AIRLINE LIVERIES 3

Skroo Turner on Flight Centre, the pandemic and what the future holds for the business and industry - read it all in our exclusive interview in the December issue of *travelBulletin*.



traveBulletin

Pub quiz

- 1. Which Indonesian island is unfortunately known for its many critically endangered species of animal?
- 2. What is larger: Kakadu National Park or Switzerland?
- 3. What constellation is featured on the state flag of Alaska?
- 4. Ben Thanh Market is located in which city?
- 5. Which city in New Zealand features many streets named after rivers in Scotland?
- 6. What major Asian city is set in the Klang Valley?
- 7. Which African country, the continent's oldest continuous democracy, is long-thought to be the least corrupt?
- 8. In the latest, mid-pandemic Henley Passport Index, what country occupies the top spot, issuing the world's most powerful passport?
- 9. Machu Picchu was built in which century?
- 10. Which country has been the largest producer of coffee for the past 150 years?

A-maze-ing

CAN you find your way through this maze? Start at the top right corner and finish in the bottom left.



ANSWERS 21 JAN

Whose flag is this: Nicaragua Know your brands: 1 TerryWhite Chemmart, 2 Flickr, 3 Hilton Hotels & Resorts, 4 PUMA Whose animal is this: Arabian camel - Eritrea



Sydney Tower eyes another nine years

SYDNEY Tower Eye is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, with its future now secured until at least 2030.

The observation tower will celebrate its lease extension this year with special events planned throughout the next 12 months.

Celebratory offerings at Sydney Tower Eye will kick off in Mar, and include two new virtual reality pods which will provide guests with an immersive roller coaster ride above Sydney Harbour with spectacular views of the city.

More activations will be announced shortly, including a range of 1980s-themed events.

The Observation Deck is open Thu-Mon from 10am – 7pm.

Funyard & Minor partner in China

FUNYARD Hotels & Resorts has signed a memorandum of understanding with Minor Hotels, which will see the latter expand its presence in China.

The partnership will fuel the expansion of Minor brands such as Anantara, Avani, Elewana, NH, Oaks, and Tivoli, with many of them to make their debut in the populous Asian nation.

The new joint venture is poised to become one of China's leading hospitality players.

Funyard Hotels & Resorts currently manages more than 200 upscale hotels, providing operations and asset management services to around 50,000 guestrooms.

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

Savings of up to \$1,000 per couple are available on the new Outback NSW Adventure with **The Africa Safari Co**. Deals are valid for the 10-day escorted small group tour, departing 14 Jun from \$5,095. For details, call 1800 659 279.

Qatar Airways is offering a new sale for Australian travellers who want to plan ahead. With flights to Europe from as little as \$1,339 return, the fares are available from now until the end of the week, for travel by 30 Nov. For more information go to www.qatarairways.com/au.

Book a single room on over 50 tours with **Wendy Wu Tours**, with a free single supplement, offering savings of up to \$2,715. Choose from tours to Borneo, Central Asia, China, India, Japan, Myanmar, Oman and South America for travel in late 2021 and 2022. For the full range of tours included in the special call 1300 128 738.

Intrepid Travel has released 25% off their six-day Whitsundays Island Explorer trip, departing on 03 Feb. Prices now lead in from \$1,872 per person twin share, down from \$2,495ppts. Inclusions feature accommodation, transport, and some meals & activities - **CLICK HERE**.

A bridge over lovey waters



LOVE is 134 metres in the air this Valentine's Day with BridgeClimb Sydney.

Special packages for the romantic weekend in Feb include a variety of Climb and Dine options, as well as various gift vouchers and proposals options.

Also available is the BridgeClimb Pinnacle package, which combines a climb with a dining experience at Quay Restaurant in the Rocks, where climbers can choose between a signature six or 10-course menu, or the limitededition Valentine's Day menu.

Packages start from \$548 per person and include complimentary refreshments, a framed photo, exclusive reservation access and a BridgeClimb events coordinator to manage your special day.

Climbers can also add perks such as a limousine transfer, a private climb or a bouquet of flowers available on arrival. For more info, **CLICK HERE**.



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