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ABERCROMBIE & Kent is today showcasing its range of exclusive Australian and New Zealand itineraries, featuring stunning destinations and accommodation accessed by private aircraft.

For more information and to book see **page seven**.

What a sweet score

WE HAVE searched far and wide for this year's winner of **Travel Daily's** International Donut Day competition and a hungry poet genius has finally been chosen.

Rachael O'Grady from Emirates has walked away with a dozen donuts for sending in her entry about balancing exercise with a desire to eat numerous donuts - keep up the push-ups Rachael!

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news and a full page from **Abercrombie & Kent**.

TA urges 'COVID-normality'

EXCLUSIVE

TOURISM Australia MD Phillipa Harrison has reiterated the importance of Australia moving to a "COVID-Normal" environment rather than pursuing an eliminationist "COVID-Zero" strategy, saying it is vital for the reopening of the country's international borders.

Speaking to **TD** at Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in Sydney yesterday, Harrison said it was vital to shift public perception.

"Once it's safe to do so, we have to accept that there will be COVID in the community, and that is something we need to manage for ever more, otherwise we're never going to open," she said.

More than 2,000 live and virtual delegates are registered to participate in ATE 2021, which also heralds the return of large business events including the biggest lunch since the

pandemic's onset at Sydney's International Convention Centre yesterday, serving about 1,400.

Harrison said Tourism Australia was keenly watching the upcoming summer travel season in the northern hemisphere, where high rates of vaccination in the US and UK are already precipitating a travel boom.

"It's going to be interesting to see whether all that travel will change perceptions here," she said, noting that while in the UK the number of daily COVID-19 cases has not actually decreased since Jan, "what has materially reduced has been the rate of hospitalisations and deaths".

She noted the strong appetite for attendance at ATE despite the Vic outbreak which has forced 172 delegates to attend virtually.

"We haven't had anyone not come because they were concerned about their health," she said - more from ATE on **p4**.

TIME payment plan

THE Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) has announced the launch of an extended, interest-free payment plan for prospective participants in the popular program.

The initiative allows mentees joining the six-month TIME mentorship scheme to pay on a monthly basis over a nine-month period, as opposed to an upfront payment in full.

TIME said the new option complemented the Feb launch of a new \$1,500+GST price and the opening up of the program to online and regional attendees.

"For as little as \$167 per month (plus GST) mentees will not only be mentored by an industry leader, they will have access to all the benefits the TIME community offers, such as skills workshops, senior level networking and ongoing mentor support," said TIME founder Penny Spencer - see travelindustrymentor.com.au.

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SeaLink superyacht

SEALINK Travel Group has unveiled *The Jackson*, a massive new three-deck superyacht which will operate on Sydney Harbour.

The 62m-long vessel can accommodate more than 500 guests, and will offer a bar and restaurant as well as a variety of function spaces as part of a "new, highly visual and desirable, accessible luxury experience on Sydney Harbour".

"*The Jackson* elevates the harbour experience by creating a new level of style and quality dining...a must-see and do destination quite separate to the overtly tourist-focused brands on the harbour," the company said.

SeaLink is currently recruiting for venue management and staff aboard the ship, which will also offer weddings along with private and corporate events.

A sneak peek video showcasing *The Jackson* is now live at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Round 2 Grant breakthrough

AUSTRADE has this morning finally confirmed the details of the verification process for applicants for Round Two of the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program, relating to businesses with turnover of more than \$500,000.

Frustration has been building across the industry over recent weeks, because while claims at the low end were paid very quickly, those with higher turnover appear to have been sitting in limbo since the program opened more than a month ago.

It's understood that no claims relating to turnover of \$500,000 have been paid yet, while officials finalised the verification arrangements mandated to confirm that TTV was not the basis for Round One payments.

AFTA Chair Tom Manwaring issued a statement today saying "following consultation with AFTA in collaboration with CATO and

ATEC, we are pleased to share that the verification process for those applicants with a turnover greater than \$500,000 has now been finalised".

He said Austrade had listened to industry, with the process now significantly simpler than that initially proposed.

"Austrade has indicated that applicants should hear from them this week, and that payments are scheduled to start flowing from next Mon 14 Jun 2021," he said.

It's understood that about 1,600 applicants from across the industry are awaiting the verification process, with today's update following the release of more details on the program, including new exceptional circumstances submission deadlines (**TD** yesterday).

The latest program guidelines, frequently asked questions and appeals processes are now online at austrade.gov.au.

Asia Escape to HLO

THE Perth operations of Asia Escape Holidays have been integrated into the Helloworld office in the WA capital, as part of real estate consolidation while Asia Escape is in hibernation.

HLO Executive Director Cinzia Burnes told **TD** the wholesaler will be "reignited once its key destinations are open again to Australian travellers".

More agent training

ANOTHER UK-based travel training firm has launched its services to the Australian market, offering travel workers online courses to help them bounce back from the pandemic.

Progressive Travel Training is offering an initial suite of 12 courses, including three free modules covering stress management in travel, migrating to remote working and blog writing to boost business - see progressivetraveltraining.com.

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Window Seat

SOME great tourism ideas just hit you like a tonne of bricks.

Just take the upcoming Lego brick exhibition which opens at the Queensland Museum on 18 Jun, an event that will offer visitors 50 amazing Lego tourist attraction masterpieces to feast your eyes on, including toy replicas of the Pyramids of Giza, the Arc de Triomphe, The Leaning Tower of Pisa and Mount Rushmore.

The creative exhibition was made using more than 1.3m Lego bricks and accounted for almost 5,000 hours of people-power to create, with the Lego installations so large they were moved using forklifts & cranes.

“Not only can visitors to this exhibition learn about the landmarks, they can also engage in the creative process and make their own Lego brick masterpieces inside the exhibition,” Qld Minister for the Arts Leeanne Enoch said.

Intrepid allocated \$30m

INTREPID Travel has been selected by Export Finance Australia to receive a \$30 million finance facility to assist with further growth opportunities and help the travel industry rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The tour operator confirmed the funding will help retain 169 of its Australian jobs, as well as create a further 24 new positions in the local market.

Intrepid also stated the Federal Government injection would generate an estimated \$45 million in domestic travel activity, in addition to overseas export sales of around \$170 million, which the business claims will return to the Australian economy over the next two years.

The cash injection will also help Intrepid accelerate its 2025 ambition of becoming the world's first purpose-led \$1 billion adventure travel company.

Areas of investment focus identified by Intrepid include further work on digital transformation, product innovation, market expansion and

purpose initiatives.

The news follows a major funding injection from French private equity group Genairgy earlier in the year (**TD** 11 Mar), which was characterised by Intrepid at the time as a deal that secured its future.

Learn about Banff

CANADA'S Banff & Lake Louise Tourism is inviting Australian travel agents to reconnect on a new virtual fam, taking attendees on a tour to see some of the region's most popular adventure activities, such as biking trails, chinook rafting, horse riding, hiking and canoeing.

The session is scheduled to take place at 9am AEST on 24 Jun - register to attend **HERE**.

Who is responsible?

AGODA'S Sustainable Travel Trends Survey has revealed governments are considered most responsible for enacting the changes required to make travel more sustainable, with overtourism rated as the greatest impact of the industry on the environment.

Just over a quarter of global respondents (26%) believe governments are most accountable for making positive environmental changes to travel, followed by tourism authorities (23%) and individuals (20%).

The survey also found the top three additional measures needed to make travel more sustainable include the easy identification of sustainable eco-friendly travel options, limited use of single-use plastics and financial incentives for accommodation providers which maximise energy efficiencies.

Respondents also stated they wanted to see more protected areas established around the world to limit tourist numbers, and the removal of single-use bathroom amenities.

Coming to America

ROYAL Caribbean International (RCI) has announced that six of its ships will begin sailing from major US cruise ports in Florida and Texas from Jul and Aug respectively, marking the line's return to the country.

The exciting news coincides with indications from the cruise line it will be back sailing its entire fleet around the globe by the end of the year.

RCI's 2021 summer cruises are now available to book and includes three- and four-night Bahamas and Perfect Day at CocoCay sailings from Miami from 02 Jul and seven-night Caribbean sailings departing from Galveston, Texas from 15 Aug.

More details about the line's future plans are available in **CW**.

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News Corp Australia



SeaLink hosts Fraser famil



SEALINK Travel Group, Tourism & Events Queensland and key distribution partners hosted one of several pre-Australian Tourism Exchange famils last week.

The group above undertook the new K'gari touring experience on Fraser Island, as well as enjoying the newly upgraded Kingfisher

Bay Resort and Eurong Beach Resort properties.

Pictured on a Fraser Explorer Tour next to the Maheno site are, from left; Karin Ohman from Tui/Musement; Richard Doyle of SeaLink; Jenny Dazely from AAT Kings; and Daniela Galler of Terra Nova Tours.

Keeping things hot

TOURISM Australia is currently undertaking a dual role, encouraging Australians to holiday at home while continuing to keep the destination top of mind in overseas markets, according to MD Phillipa Harrison.

"We are making the most of all the opportunities that are right here, right now," she told **TD**, "but we're still focused on the future so we are active in international markets, still keeping the Australia message alive because we think that's really important given the long-term nature of dreaming, planning and booking an Australian holiday".

Harrison said she was pleased at the strong attendance from local travel agents at this week's ATE, saying post-pandemic "I'm really hoping that a legacy of our time in domestic is that we will see the agents, who've been typically 90% outbound, have just a little bit more domestic business".

Content king for TA

A MAJOR national content initiative being undertaken by Tourism Australia (TA) to assist operators through the pandemic will result in significantly improved marketing assets for the industry, believes TA MD Phillipa Harrison.

She said the \$12 million project had already kicked off and would roll out over the next 18 months, showcasing about 1,800 products and experiences in 57 locations across the country.

Each participating operator will end up with a video "hype-reel" along with 10 minutes of B-roll footage and 200 professionally produced images, of which about 20% will be photoshopped to create a consistent look.

Harrison said the Gold Coast content had just been rolled out, with work also under way in Cairns and the Flinders Ranges, all employing local videographers and photographers.

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ATE builds more momentum



TRAVEL Associates Business Leader Ann-Catherine Jones was recently among those enjoying the start of the Specialist Buyers Program for the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE).

The leg included a stop at the luxury Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley conservation-based resort which is located 2.5 hours' drive west of Sydney.

The visit was hosted by the resort's Director of Sales and Marketing Kelly Webb and Executive Director of Ultimate Winery Experiences Australia Kate Shilling, where a delightful selection of wine was enjoyed.

The Australian Tourism Exchange is currently running at the ICC Sydney until tomorrow.

Pictured: Jones (centre) flanked by Webb and Shilling (far left and right) with fellow attendees.

Bring back UK/US

A CALL for the relaunch of transatlantic travel between the UK and the US has been made by the CEOs of several powerful airlines including British Airways, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines and United Airlines.

Along with the CEO of Heathrow Airport, the team of aviation executives joined a discussion panel ahead of the recent G7, asking governments of both countries to make the travel corridor quarantine-free in light of the excellent progress made on vaccination rates so far.

The US has fully vaccinated over 50% of its adults, while the UK has jabbed close to 75%.

Get the job, pops!

TRAVEL app Klook is giving away free tickets to the zoo and aquarium when senior citizens get vaccinated.

100 tickets are up for grabs to places like Sydney Zoo - register **HERE** to access the promotion.

AFTA UPDATE

from the Australian Federation of Travel Agents

IT IS great to see some real progress towards getting Australians travelling internationally again!

The introduction of additional safe travel zones on top of the trans-Tasman channel is getting closer.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison is on the ground in Singapore this Thu en route to G7 to meet with Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. On the agenda is the need for a safe travel zone between Australia and Singapore.

This is just one of a number of such zones which are actively being progressed.

At the same time the Government appears to be moving rapidly on its plans to allow Australians who have been vaccinated against COVID-19 to travel with less strict quarantine requirements in place. The Government has set up a



taskforce to look at how best to implement this, with a pilot possible within two months.

AFTA has been vocal in our support for both approaches as commonsense

solutions to get Australians travelling again including through greater take-up of vaccination.

We are working alongside other peak industry bodies to get this happening sooner rather than later. We also had the opportunity to raise this alongside the need for ongoing financial support during our recent face to face meetings in Canberra. The hard, cold facts are that Australia simply can't afford to continue as the hermit kingdom. The economic hangover of being cut off from the rest of the world grows each and every week. We all need Australia open again and international travel to be a reality.

Trip.com UN move

CHINESE OTA Trip.com Group has joined the United Nations Global Compact, as part of its aim to "mobilise a global movement to create an improved world for everyone".

The move means Trip.com is now committed to the Compact's principles relating to corporate responsibility, human rights, labour, the environment and corruption.

UA back to Tahiti

UNITED Airlines last week relaunched services to Tahiti, with Boeing 787-9 flights between San Francisco and Papeete.

The resumption will initially operate three times per week, and comes after the reopening of French Polynesia's borders to US travellers after more than a year.

Travellers who have been in the US for at least 30 days before departure can now fly to Tahiti.



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The end of sorry saga of Bestjet has wrapped up with no good news for creditors - read more the June issue of *travelBulletin*.

travelBulletin

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Regional Qld is back

THE long road back to normality is almost a reality for some regional airports in Queensland, with the Mount Isa and Longreach airports approaching pre-COVID passenger numbers.

Mount Isa recorded 15,652 travellers for the month of Apr, only marginally down on Apr 2019, while Longreach saw 3,100 passengers processed during the same month, down only 78 on Apr 2019.

MONEY

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

AU\$1 = US\$0.776

THE AUDUSD has jumped back to one-month highs following a US jobs report coming in much lower than forecasted.

The American employment market saw 559,000 jobs created, with initial expectations suggesting it would be more than 650,000.

But the relief for the Aussie dollar against the greenback may be short-lived, with the US economy likely to be buoyed by a falling unemployment rate.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.776
UK	£0.547
NZ	\$1.069
Euro	€0.634
Japan	¥84.93
Thailand	฿24.19
China	¥4.95
South Africa	10.68
Canada	\$0.934
Crude oil	US\$71.89

A toast to a brighter future



SOMETIMES there is no better way to prepare for a travel return than to get out in the open air and absorb some of the country's best tourist attractions.

Just ask the attendees at Journey Beyond Cruise Sydney's lunch sailing in Sydney this week, with a host of travel supporters taking in the stunning day on Sydney Harbour with a glass of

bubbly and some delicious food.

Pictured taking in the scenic view of Sydney are Dennis Bunnik from Bunnik Tours and Fiona Dalton from Virtuoso.

UA staff need a jab

UNITED Airlines has joined a select number of airlines to mandate new staff be vaccinated in order to fly on its planes.

The carrier will from 15 Jun require new recruits to show proof they have been vaccinated against COVID-19, following in the footsteps of Delta Air Lines which implemented a similar policy last month (*TD* 18 May).

The decision comes after an emerging trend in travel to offer incentives to be inoculated.

QR's 2050 pledge

QATAR Airways has become the latest airline to commit to net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The carrier announced it would be using a combination of advanced aircraft technology and fuel-optimisation initiatives as part of a comprehensive strategy to address its CO2 emissions.

"As we work in collaboration with the aviation industry to reconnect the world, we recognise sustainability as a strategy to build resilience post COVID-19," Group Chief Executive Akbar Al Baker said.

Other initiatives put in place to reach the objective include tackling food waste reduction on board, recycling water usage at Hamad International and further promoting its voluntary carbon offset scheme for passengers.

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EDITORIAL

Editor in Chief and Publisher – Bruce Piper

Associate Editors– Adam Bishop,

Myles Stedman

Contributors – Nicholas O'Donoghue,

Jenny Piper

info@traveldaily.com.au

ADVERTISING AND MARKETING

Sean Harrigan and Hoda Alzubaidi

advertising@traveldaily.com.au

BUSINESS MANAGER

Jenny Piper

accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
PO Box 1010 Epping NSW 1710 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8213 6350)

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