

Free Google Hotels

GOOGLE is now offering hotels free booking links on its Google Hotels platform, allowing any accom or booking provider to list properties at no charge via the google.com/travel platform.

The company previously only offered paid links on Google Hotels, in contrast to listings on Google Flights which became free for airlines last year.

“When travel does resume in earnest, it’s crucial that people can find the information they’re looking for and easily connect with travel companies online,” the company’s VP for Travel, Richard Holden said.

Formerly booking links on Google Hotels were offered via a Hotel Ads product which displayed real-time pricing and availability for specific travel dates, but the new policy “brings a new, free way to reach potential customers” for all hotels and travel companies, Holden added.

For details on setting up a Google hotel account [CLICK HERE](#).

Crystal restart

CRYSTAL Cruises says it will be the first major cruise line to resume in Nth America, with a planned *Crystal Serenity* season out of the Bahamas from Jul.

Week-long voyages roundtrip from Nassau will only call on Bahamian destinations, with the season conducted in partnership with local tourism authorities. See *Cruise Weekly* for more.

Tehan promises “adjustments”

TOURISM Minister Dan Tehan today confirmed that “several adjustments” will be made to the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program for the travel industry, but at this stage it looks likely any funding will continue to be administered via grants to travel agents and tour arrangement service providers.

Speaking on the Gold Coast about the Government’s \$1.2 billion aviation and tourism package (**TD** yesterday), Tehan noted the provision of an “additional \$130 million...to help give eligible travel agents additional breathing space to facilitate customer refunds, follow up travel credits and process consumer refunds”.

However no detail on what the extension actually means in terms of the flow of funds has been forthcoming at this stage.

“The Government will continue to consult with the industry to finalise the conditions of the program extension,” he said.

Interestingly, a formal media statement from the Minister’s office included an enthusiastic endorsement of the program from Crooked Compass founder Lisa Pagotto, who said it had been a “lifeline for her company”.

“The scale of detriment

Today’s issue of TD

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

COVID-19 has had on the travel industry is something even the best leadership or business skills couldn’t prepare for,” she said.

“I have great appreciation for government support to help keep Australian businesses afloat”.

After the Govt’s announcement yesterday, some changes were made to the Services Australia application portal for the program, referring to a second round.

However today these updates have been reversed, with the page only noting the outdated information that applications for the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program close at midnight tomorrow, 13 Mar 2021.

MEANWHILE Qantas CEO Alan Joyce has told Sydney radio presenter Ray Hadley in relation to the 800,000 subsidised airfares in the program, the carrier is “happy to package them together with travel agents, offering a hotel combination and the like”.

“We are reaching out to the travel agents now to try to help them get through this as well, because they’re a big part of the ecosystem,” Joyce said.

Geisha tours live

THE Kyoto City Tourism Association will host a series of free upcoming live stream events, including a geisha performance and a geisha district guided tour.

The initiative was showcased to the Australian travel trade earlier this week in a session facilitated by Kyoto’s local representative, Tourism Garden, attended by a host of Australian-based Japanese tour operators and top end luxury travel agents.

Spaces are limited for the upcoming events which will take place at 9pm (AEDT) on 17 Mar and 10am (AEDT) on 19 Mar.

Live streamed from Kyoto, participants will be guided in a walking tour around one of the geisha districts, with free rego available by [CLICKING HERE](#).

New HA route

HAWAIIAN Airlines has inaugurated a new non-stop route between Long Beach in California and Kahului, Maui.

Maui is the second HA port served from Long Beach, with the new route complementing existing daily flights to Honolulu.

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A&K's ultimate jet

ABERCROMBIE & Kent has introduced a new 23-day round-the-world private jet journey departing in 2022, with guests able to take part in some of the most sought-after activities on offer in countries like Nepal, the UAE, Bhutan and India.

Highlights of the Cultural Treasures: Around the World by Private Jet adventure include a helicopter flight around Mount Everest and a hike to the Tiger's Nest Monastery above the Paro Valley in Bhutan.

The flight is capped at only 48 passengers with experts leading tours in the air and on the ground, with land excursions capped at only 16 people.

A&K will offer a crew-to-guest ratio of 1:7, with seats able to convert to fully lie-flat beds.

Leaving Seattle 05 May 2022, the trip is priced at \$200,000ppst - [CLICK HERE](#) for more details.

Geographer ready

THE Vard Vung Tau shipyard in Vietnam has delivered Coral Expeditions' highly anticipated 120-passenger *Coral Geographer* vessel, with her maiden voyage scheduled to depart Cairns at the end of Mar.

Sister to *Coral Adventurer*, she will boast six more bridge deck suites with horizon bathtubs.

WA tourism plea

TOURISM Council WA has launched a petition in response to yesterday's tourism support package unveiled by the Federal Government (**TD 10** Mar), after only one of the state's destinations was named (Broome) as part of its cheap domestic airfare scheme.

"Excluding Perth and regional WA airports will mean tourism businesses lose bookings to other destinations such as Queensland and Tasmania which have been favoured by the Federal Government," the body argued.

View the petition [HERE](#).

Consolidated NDC plan

CONSOLIDATED Travel is set to launch an NDC-enabled version of its Quikticket platform, with the consolidator advising agents this week the system will be available after 01 Jul this year.

Use of Quikticket NDC still requires travel agents to register with airlines for access to NDC content, and also nominate Consolidated Travel as their airline ticket consolidator.

"Agents will usually be provided with a few options on how they wish to access NDC fares - airline agency website, directly using NDC APIs, or via a third party technology provider, including GDS...more than one option can be chosen but in order to issue tickets with Quikticket agents must choose to access NDC content via the GDS," an update

from Consolidated noted.

Agents will create "NDC Orders" via the GDS in the same way as other bookings, and once created they can retrieve it in Quikticket using their NDC Order ID or PNR record locator.

Tickets can then be issued in the same way as other GDS bookings.

Consolidated said it was working with Sabre, Amadeus, Galileo and airlines directly to enhance Quikticket for NDC ticketing.

However the company noted that airline and GDS systems are still undergoing many changes to handle the new NDC workflow and it is not yet available for use.

Moreover "many airlines have still not released any NDC fares for use in the Australian/NZ market and international travel is still very limited around the globe due to the ongoing pandemic.

"While there are many dependencies, we envisage and hope that Quikticket will be ready to issue NDC tickets from 01 Jul 2021," the company said.

Initial testing and development involves NDC content from QF, SQ and AA, but will include "many other airlines over time".

Food for thought

LOCAL culinary experiences present a powerful opportunity for the domestic tourism sector to recover from the health crisis, a joint study by the University of South Australia and the University of Technology Sydney has found.

The study canvassing 518 people showed that leisure travellers and not just foodies consider food to be a "central part" of their holiday experience.

"With international travel on indefinite hold since the onset of COVID-19, local tourism bodies must now focus their efforts on domestic offerings if they are to recover lost tourism dollars," said Researcher Dr Janine Williamson.

"Showing tourists what's the connection to the area, what's the historical connection, why is that local food connected to the local area and why it is connected to the local community, we found that was something that was really important," she added.

Since the pandemic started, Australia has lost \$23b in int'l tourism spend from the beginning of 2020 to the end of Sep.

Window Seat

QUARANTINE has earned itself a bad reputation during the COVID-19 pandemic, but perhaps Thailand is one country that can rehabilitate its image?

The Thai Government is setting sail on the idea that international arrivals might be able to spend their time in isolation on board luxury yachts instead of more conventional facilities like hotel rooms.

Dubbed "The Yacht Program", the proposed initiative would see members of the Royal Thai Navy monitor and track the boats, and at the end of the isolation period, the spoilt visitors would be able to dock on dry land and enjoy all of the usual Thai beaches and resorts.

Arrivals will still need a negative test to participate.

The pandemic saw the number of tourists to the country plummet from 50,000 a day to just hundreds, so the govt is hopeful of boosting its visitor economy as soon as possible via novel schemes like this one.



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CORPORATE UPDATE

Amadeus, Mastercard pact

AMADEUS overnight announced a five year “extended global collaboration” with credit card provider Mastercard, building on the organisations’ existing strategic relationship with the aim of helping “broaden access to virtual card payments across the travel ecosystem”.

The joint offering combines Amadeus’ B2B Wallet payment platform with virtual payment technology via the Mastercard Wholesale Program, a solution specifically designed for the travel industry utilising virtual card technology.

“The way travel agencies make payments to suppliers is changing,” said Bart Tompkins, Amadeus MD Payments.

“Virtual card payments help agencies respond to the challenges of COVID-19 by protecting cashflow, reducing risk and improving back-office

efficiency, whilst also improving settlement terms,” he said.

The system was launched about five years ago (*TD* 11 Jul 2016) and the extension of the agreement will see Amadeus and Mastercard “continue to provide flexible, secure and efficient ways to make and receive payments”.

Travel policy in dismissal focus

VEHICLE giant Toyota has been forced to pay more than \$270,000 to a former employee who was sacked over allegedly breaching the company’s travel policy during a trip to Melbourne three years ago.

Greg Sherry sued the company in the NSW District Court after being summarily dismissed in Mar 2018, just one working day short of him qualifying for a \$379,000 redundancy package after more than 20 years at Toyota.

The company alleged “serious misconduct” for the sacking, including booking a suite rather than a room on a work trip to Melbourne, as well as purchasing a pizza on a company credit card for his young son.

The accommodation booking at the Crown Metropal (during the 2018 Australian Open Tennis) was fulfilled through American Express Global Business Travel via the Serko platform, with Toyota later disputing the charge with Sherry despite his manager having approved the cost.

Sherry’s credit card expenses were also in focus as he had not submitted them correctly for some years after the introduction of the Concur platform.

The judge ruled that despite some breaches of Toyota’s travel and expense policy, the former staffer’s behaviour did not satisfy the definition of “serious misconduct” and awarded the company to pay the balance of Sherry’s redundancy payout plus interest and his legal costs.

Biz travel will be different, not dead

EXECUTIVE Vice President of Product and Strategy for American Express Global Business Travel Evan Konwiser believes corporate travel will change irreversibly because of the pandemic, but it will never die.

Speaking with Bloomberg recently, Konwiser said it had become on-trend to talk about the death of business trips, but the reality is they remain crucial to business success.

“There’s some truth there that we should acknowledge and adapt to but business travel exists for really important reasons - it helps businesses conduct business successfully,” he said.

“After the global financial crisis in 2008, CEOs, CFOs and procurement officers pulled out, but they all gradually came back as they realised that business travel was an investment in their employees, their culture and their competitiveness.”



Little Queen goes upmarket



HILTON Melbourne Little Queen Street is set to launch soon, an upscale hotel that has been designed by leading Australian architecture studio Bates Smart.

Scheduled to open 22 Mar, the property will feature a Romanesque and Gothic Revival architectural style, playing off the old-world charm of the original building which was constructed in the 1930s.

Hilton Melbourne Little



Queen Street encompasses 244 guestrooms and suites, and also features food and beverage outlets, a bar (inset), seven meetings and event spaces and a mural by Kitt Bennett (pictured).

Help us discover chocolate

AROUND THE WORLD

In the lead up to Easter, submit your chocolate recipes from around the world for our weekly feature.

[CLICK HERE](#)

Travel Daily

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?

This landmark is a freestanding bell tower, linked to the main

cathedral of the city in which it is located.

It was built in the 12th century, when it began to sink into the ground on one side, due to the ground being too soft to properly support the structure's weight.

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. BLR
2. DOD
3. KTA
4. FCO

2



AIRLINE LIVERIES

1



3

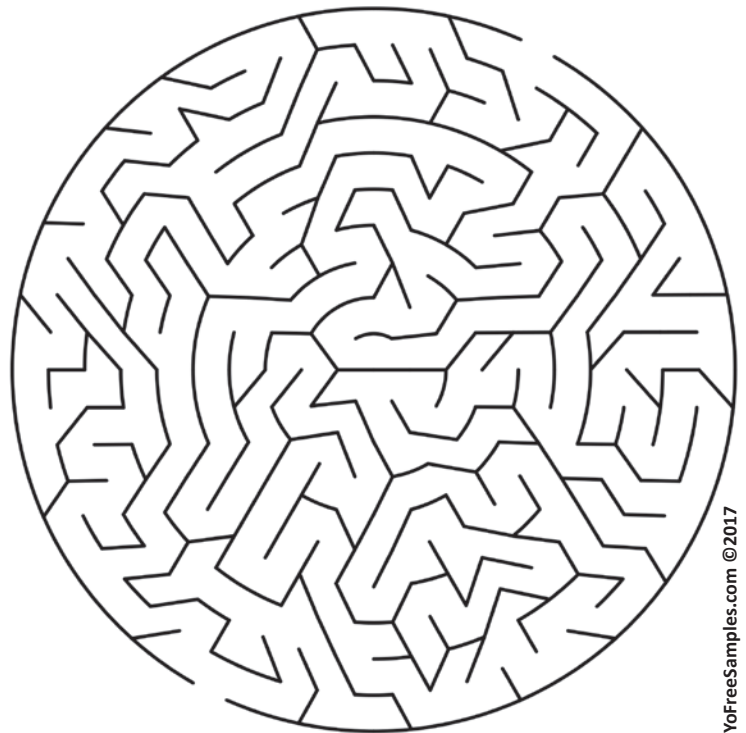


Pub quiz

1. Roughly how many kilometres of canals does Amsterdam have?
a) Over 50km
b) Over 100km
c) Over 150km
d) Over 200km
2. What hotel was built on the site of the former Sands Hotel & Casino?
3. Where does Central Park rank among the largest parks in New York City?
4. The London Eye is also known as what?
5. Which Australian capital contains the highest percentage of Australian-born residents?
6. In which decade was petroleum discovered in Saudi Arabia?
a) In the 1930s
b) In the 1940s
c) In the 1950s
7. Which German city has been hosting an international toy fair every year since 1949?
8. Mparntwe is the local indigenous name of which Australian city?
9. What is the largest inhabited island in the Whitsunday Islands?
10. What are Norway's two official languages?

A-maze-ing

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



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ANSWERS 11 MAR

Where in the world: Dunedin, Otago Peninsula, New Zealand
Know your brands: 1 G Adventures, 2 Vodafone, 3 GIVENCHY, 4 Alinta Energy
Whose animal is this: Black panther - Gabon

LATAM Q4 plunge

SOUTH American airline LATAM recorded a mammoth US\$962.5 million profit decline for the fourth quarter of 2020 when compared to 2019, with the carrier also seeing its revenue plummet by 69% to US\$897.5 million for the same period.

LATAM attributed the stark drops to the impact of the health crisis, tempering the results with news it still has more than US\$3 billion of liquidity in the bank.

The airline also stressed it had implemented a wide-ranging cost-cutting program which continued to deliver important savings to the company.

“We will emerge as a closer, simpler, more agile, and more efficient company,” said Chief Executive Officer Roberto Alvo.

Oceania's best day

OCEANIA Cruises recently enjoyed its best single day for sales in its history, with 03 Mar proving to attract unprecedented interest in the line's newly launched exotic itineraries for winter 2022-2023 collection.

The most popular destinations in the program were Asia, Africa, and South America, with Australia and New Zealand also producing “strong results”, Oceania said.

“The tremendous wave of bookings we saw on the day... underscores the extraordinary demand for long and exotic cruise vacations,” said CEO Bob Binder.

“Upscale travellers are eager to explore the world once more and are booking farther in advance to ensure their travel dreams are fulfilled,” he added.



FRESH from receiving a boost on the back of Federal Government's cut-price air tickets stimulus (**TD** 10 Mar), the Gold Coast now has another reason to ride a wave of optimism.

The Endless Surf Wave Lagoon (artist's conception **pictured**) has been earmarked to open in 2023, situated close by to The Club Parkwood Village.

“Not only will this development add to our offering but it's also a prime example of our private sector backing the Gold Coast through continued investment,” said Destination Gold Coast CEO Patricia O'Callaghan.

Touted by Gold Coast tourism bosses as the biggest tourist

drawcard for the region in more than 20 years, the attraction will boast a man-made surfing area, swim-up bar, giant video screen, numerous cafes and eateries, as well as an adjoining resort hotel and sporting facilities.

Parkwood Village Managing Director Luke Altschwager said that when the giant wave park opens it will help generate much-needed funds for the tropical city's visitor economy.

“A world-class surf park is a perfect fit for our active community as it anchors a whole new level of economic investment into the area,” he said.

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

Complimentary meals and room category upgrades are on offer at **Accor's** Maldives resorts when bookings are made by 30 Apr. The promotion applies to stays taken before 30 Sep, with Accor Plus members entitled to an additional 10% discount. Accor's properties in The Maldives includes Raffles Maldives Meradhoo, the Mercure Maldives Kooodoo Resort & Movenpick Resort Kuredhivaru Maldives. **CLICK HERE** for info.

IHG Hotels & Resorts has introduced its Stay Here and Explore There campaign, offering savings of up to 25% when bookings are made at its Australian and New Zealand properties by 30 Apr. The deal is applicable to stays taken until 30 Dec. See **HERE** for more details.

Riviera Travel has extended its offer of giving guests €500 of onboard ship credit for 2022 sailings, with travellers now having until 31 Mar to take advantage of the deal. Call 1300 857 437 for further details.

Travellers are running out of time to utilise **Viking's** Discovery Cruise Sale, offering savings of up to \$5,600 per couple and flight credits for select itineraries. The promotion is set to end 31 Mar and applies to a range of Aussie, European and Antarctica cruises. Call 138 747 for details.

Boeing's nose is up

BOEING has posted its first sales increase since Nov 2019, with the month of Feb seeing 82 orders made, up by 78 on Jan.

The month alone counted for almost half of the company's total orders taken in 2020, a year which also included a number of cancelled orders following the global travel shut down and concerns over its 737 Max.

While the recently returned Max has seen a number of orders, its Dreamliner has not seen a single delivery since Oct 2020.

Vietnam eyes Jul

VIETNAM is staging plans to open up again to international tourists from Jul, according to the Chairman of the Vietnam Tourism Association Nguyen Huu Tho.

The tourism chief cited Vietnam's strong record on containing COVID, as well as similar opening dates put forward by neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore as reasons to open up borders.

“Promoting tourism...cannot save the tourism industry, the road map to opening up international borders is the only solution,” Tho said.

Got a confidential tip? Contact *Travel Daily* via our secure WhatsApp service on +61 2 8007 6760 or click **HERE**