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The Rush Slide



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Vibe Beach Club



Summer: The Donna Summer Musical



Club Balcony Suite

Norwegian Prima to debut in Aug

IT'S now less than 12 months until the inaugural voyage of Norwegian Cruise Line's new *Norwegian Prima*, with the company today showcasing the innovative vessel's wide array of onboard attractions.

Prima features The Vibe Beach Club, the exhilarating shipside The Rush Slide and the biggest onboard speedway plus much more - see the **cover page**.

DFAT releases VDS app

A NEWLY launched smartphone app from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides a simple way for anyone to verify Visible Digital Seal for Non-Constrained Environments (VDS-NC) digital health certificates, initially for COVID-19 vaccinations in Australia but with future applications for other countries.

Now available on the Apple iOS store, and expected to

become shortly available on the Google Play store too, the VDS-NC Checker app developed by the Australian Passport Office complies with standards specified by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

VDS-NC certificates are "like a passport chip in QR format, with the same high level of security against forgery," the app description notes, and can be authenticated online or offline.

The certificates have been developed in conformity with World Health Organization guidance on digital secure vaccination documentation, and are compatible with digital wallets and COVID-19 travel apps such as the IATA TravelPass.

The new app will complement authentication facilities in normal passport readers, with DFAT noting that not all countries issue ePassports, or have had the opportunity to modify their readers to consume health data.

"Moreover, a need to authenticate VDS-NC certificates will not be limited to borders - health departments and other entities will also wish to process them," DFAT said.

If the QR code being checked is authentic, the app displays information from the certificate including the holder's "biodata and COVID-19 immunisations".

The app is part of new digital infrastructure being developed by the government for vaccine passports (**TD 04 Aug**).

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has five pages of news plus a front cover page from **Norwegian Cruise Line**.

Scenic announces 2nd Emerald yacht

EMERALD Waterways has announced the 2023 debut of *Emerald Sakara*, the Scenic Group's second luxury superyacht under the Emerald brand.

Bookings are now open for the 110m-long newbuild, which is currently under construction in Ha Long City Vietnam.

A sister to *Emerald Azzura*, *Sakara* will operate her maiden voyage in the Seychelles, with Emerald Cruises Director of Sales, Marketing and Product Angus Crichton saying "we are delighted with the strong response from Australian and New Zealand guests who have embraced our unique superyacht cruising concept".

"The extra capacity and new destinations the second ship offers are certain to be welcomed by our travel agent partners and their clients," he said.

Sakara's all-inclusive pricing includes all onboard meals, complimentary beverages at lunch and dinner, wi-fi, airport transfers, port charges and taxes as well as a number of included excursions and onboard activities.

Emerald Azzura is due to commence sailing in the Red Sea on 28 Jan 2022 - more details at emeraldcruises.com.au.

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Scenic Enrich, Willowbank Wildlife Reserve, Christchurch

ACCC airport price warning

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has issued its latest Airline Competition in Australia report, citing concerns from some carriers that “airports may seek to significantly increase charges to airlines in order to recover lost profits from the pandemic”.

The report summarises the drastic downturn in Australia’s aviation sector due to COVID-19 domestic and international border closures, but says “the industry remains optimistic that demand for domestic travel, especially to leisure destinations, will bounce back strongly when vaccination targets are reached and border restrictions are eased”.

Qantas welcomed the report, with CEO Alan Joyce noting that in recent months some

airports had been using their “unregulated monopoly” position to aggressively lift charges.

“There’s nothing really stopping them charging whatever they like.

“We can’t say to our passengers ‘we’ve lost \$20 billion in revenue due to COVID so we are going to increase airfares accordingly to recover our losses’ because it’s highly competitive between airlines, and it’s not the right thing to do,” he said.

“There’s no way airports should be able to do the same to their customers,” Joyce said.

The ACCC report also noted that since the pandemic began the Qantas Group had extended its dominance in regional areas, in contrast to Virgin and Rex.

Virgin’s shift towards more value-conscious travellers also merited further monitoring by the ACCC, with the Commission saying this “may result in Qantas facing less competition at the premium end of the market.”

The report is now available for download at acc.gov.au.

Air Niugini to CNS

AIR Niugini will operate four special Boeing 767 flights between Cairns and Port Moresby over the next few months, with the *Cairns Post* reporting the move will allow local produce exporters to get goods into Asia on connecting flights to Hong Kong and Singapore.

Passengers will also be able to book one-way services to Port Moresby, but the southbound return will be freight-only, bringing PNG products to Australia but not carrying passengers due to Qld’s border posture.

Black Sheep + HMA

THE newly launched Black Sheep Tourism (**TD** 21 Sep) has announced a partnership with US based hospitality data management company HMA.

The deal will see Black Sheep’s client services powered by the HMA marketing platform to “drive revenue and engagement”.

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AFTA begs for help

AN ONGOING financial lifeline for Australia’s travel sector is now critical, according to AFTA Chairman Tom Manwaring, who today urged the Government to provide support in the coming months for the 3,000 travel agencies and 30,000 jobs left.

He noted that the industry had been in hard lockdown for 600 days now, with no relief in sight.

“A third of our sector, 15,000 jobs, have been wiped out.

“We need help and we need it until international travel normalises so we are here as employers and to support travelling Australians,” he said.

“It’s simply not the case that everything returns to normal when the international travel ban is lifted...there will be a lag before flight capacity lifts and prices normalise, and until then, we need support well into 2022.”

New Carnival chief

CARNIVAL Australia last night announced the appointment of Marguerite Fitzgerald to the dual roles of President of P&O Cruises Australia and Carnival Australia.

Incumbent Sture Myrmell will leave Australia this month to take up a new position as president of Carnival UK, overseeing the P&O Cruises UK brand as well as Cunard while a replacement is sought for Simon Palethorpe.

Myrmell, who has led Carnival Australia for five years (**TD** 17 Dec 2015) will be based in Southampton, reporting to Carnival Corp Chief Operations Officer, Josh Weinstein.

Australian-born Fitzgerald has significant travel and tourism expertise, most recently serving in Miami as the lead for Boston Consulting Group’s global lodging and leisure practice.

Commencing her new role early in the new year, she will report to Jan Swartz, group president of Carnival’s Holland America Group.

More cruise news in today’s issue of **Cruise Weekly**.



Window Seat

BIG news for Star Trek fans - Captain Kirk himself is actually heading to space IRL.

Actor William Shatner, who sat at the helm of the *USS Enterprise* through many TV seasons of the show, has been confirmed as one of the passengers on the next flight of Blue Origin, the space operation started by billionaire Jeff Bezos.

If the plans flagged by gossip website *TMZ* come to fruition, 90-year-old Shatner will be the oldest human ever launched into space.

The 15-minute civilian flight is scheduled for next month, with *TMZ* saying it’s unclear at this stage whether he will wear his Captain Kirk uniform for the trip, but adding that it would be “AWESOME” if he did.

Air NZ flexibility

AIR New Zealand has revamped its domestic fare offering, with enhanced flexibility and clearer conditions around change fees.

The newly named Flexirefund fare gives maximum flexibility to change the date, time, origin or destination of flights right up until departure without incurring a change fee, as well as receiving a refund if pax choose not to fly.

Flexichange fares have no change fees for date, route and time of travel until departure, while the lowest cost Seat and Seat+bag options now allow time or date changes on the day of travel with applicable fees, where previously the changes had to be made before the travel date.

NZ Chief Customer and Sales Officer, Leanne Geraghty, said “with normal fare rules for domestic travel due to resume from 01 Nov we wanted to ensure we had a long-term fare structure in place providing customers with more options when it comes to travel flexibility”.

News Corp Australia

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Bali flights loaded

QANTAS, Jetstar and Virgin Australia are plotting their return to Bali, with all three carriers loading flights from Australia to the Indonesian island destination effective 27 Mar next year.

VA has scheduled non-stop services to Bali from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, while Qantas has pencilled in 737 flights to Sydney and Melbourne.

Jetstar's first Bali service is currently listed as operating on 01 Apr 2022 using a Boeing 787.

Spectrum Singapore

ROYAL Caribbean International's *Spectrum of the Seas* will homeport in Singapore this time next year.

When she arrives in Oct 2022, *Spectrum* will offer travellers three-to-nine-night sailings visiting the best of Asia, with itineraries on sale now.

Quantum of the Seas has also extended her Singapore season.

EK celebrates 25 years here



EMIRATES this week celebrated the 25th anniversary of its first flight to Australia, with the carrier now having taken more than 39 million passengers in and out of the country since 1996.

EK Divisional Vice President for Australasia, Barry Brown, said the milestone highlighted the airline's long-standing commitment to the local market, where Emirates had also invested more than \$100

million in arts, community and sports sponsorships.

More than 200,000 EK flights have operated to and from Australian ports, with top international destinations including the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy and Greece.

Landmarks include the extensive partnership with Qantas, which "goes beyond a traditional codeshare alliance to include integrated network collaboration," Brown said.

Throughout the pandemic EK continued cargo services, participating in the Australian Government's International Freight Assistance Mechanism, while supporting exporters and bringing in millions of doses of COVID-19 vaccines.

The carrier had also invested more than \$125 million in developing Emirates One&Only Wolgan Valley Resort west of Sydney's Blue Mountains, the world's first resort to achieve carbon-neutral accreditation through the planting of 175,000 native trees since its 2009 debut.

"Australia remains one of Emirates' most important markets and it's our crew, local suppliers and, of course, our Australian passengers that have made the last 25 years so memorable.

"We are here for the long haul and, despite the challenges and restrictions imposed on airlines operating in Australia over the past year, we continued serving the country and our customers."

Airlines not ready

AIRLINES based overseas which are still flying to Australia are postponing opening up any further bookings until the Federal Government provides more detail about its international travel plan, Executive Director of the Board of Airline Representatives of Australia Barry Abrams believes.

"International airlines are not selling tickets to Australians desperate to return home this summer because they do not know if strict arrival limits will be in place, nor what testing, quarantine and vaccination rules will apply," he said.

Issues that need more clarity include who will be allowed in and out of the country and on what conditions, Abrams added.

Treasures of trivia

TREASURES of the South Pacific (TOSP) will be hosting a special Treasures Pursuit night of trivia on 07 Oct.

The event will be held online at 5pm AEDT and will focus on bringing the industry together for a night to be enjoyed by all.

TOSP is encouraging all to come along with a drink in hand and ready for a few laughs.

To register for the event, please **CLICK HERE**.

New IHG UK boss

JOANNA Kurowska has been named as the new MD for UK and Ireland at IHG Hotels & Resorts.

Kurowska has been with IHG for a decade in a range of finance and operational roles across the firm's European region.

Testing at home

HOME COVID-19 tests have been approved by the TGA for Australians from Nov, enabling tests to be conducted at home.

The testing kits may prove to be a useful tool in resuming international travel, with home isolation tipped to replace the hotel quarantine system.



Expedition Specialist

Recruiting Now

Hurtigruten now has an opportunity for an Expedition Specialist to join our Head Office team in Melbourne.

Building on our explorer heritage dating back to 1893, Hurtigruten offers unique nature experiences and our focus on sustainable expedition travel means we have an environmental footprint we can be proud of.

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Tourism losses over \$100b

AUSTRALIAN tourism losses have totalled more than \$100 billion since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic to 30 Jun, new figures from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) show.

The latest TRA report indicated that \$38.3 billion had been lost through a decline in domestic overnight travel, while \$12.1 billion was leaked through less domestic day trips and a whopping \$51.3 billion was missed due to the hole left by international travellers.

Meanwhile the 12 months to 30 Jun saw 87.4 million total visits across the country, as well as around 333 million nights, and \$61.3 billion spent on trips.

The average trip over the period included a \$702 spend across four nights, with taking holidays leading the way as the reason for travel, accounting for close to 40,000 trips, followed by visiting family (29,100) and business trips (14,900).

For the latest Jun quarter, overnight trips were down 19% to 24.6 million on the same quarter before the pandemic in 2019,

and while improvements were noted for interstate travel due to improved border restrictions between Mar and Jun when compared to the preceding months, there was still a slide on pre-COVID spend, down by 6% to \$9.9 billion.

Regional areas also fared better than capital cities, with spend up 3% (\$1.2b) for Australia's country regions, while in contrast capital cities recorded large declines, with overnight trips falling by 41% to 27.8m and spend plummeting by 46% (-\$17.3b) to \$20.5b compared to the year to Jun 2019.

Qld hotel savings

SAVINGS of 20% is currently being offered at Peppers Soul Surfers Paradise and The Sebel Twin Waters.

Valid for until the end of next month, the Peppers Surfers Paradise deal is for stays until 10 Dec, while the Sebel Twin Waters promotion is on offer for stays until the end of Mar - **CLICK HERE** for further details.

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Eclipse II goes deep on features



THE level of luxury planned on Scenic's upcoming *Scenic Eclipse II* vessel just got a whole lot deeper, with news the cruise line has signed a partnership with submersibles manufacturer Triton Submarines to supply it with craft to carry out submarine explorations for guests.

Scenic becomes the first cruise line to sign a distribution deal with Triton, with its configurable Triton 660/9 AVA model (render **pictured**) chosen as the craft to be installed on the luxury expedition ship.

The Triton 660/9 is capable of submerging up to 200 metres under water and can accommodate up to eight passengers plus the pilot.

Amazingly the submarine is also advertised as having enough interior space to be reconfigured to host private dining events, cocktail parties and weddings.

Although Scenic's deal is the first time a cruise line has signed up to purchase a Triton submarine, the manufacturer does have precedent in supplying its products to the tourism space, with orders already in place for a boutique resort and private yacht charter company.

Scenic's second Discovery Yacht vessel, *Eclipse II*, is scheduled to launch in 2023 and be equipped to navigate both polar and tropical regions.

SQ recommences

SINGAPORE Airlines has announced plans to recommence two major US routes from 02 Nov, with its New York to Frankfurt and its San Francisco to Hong Kong routes scheduled to reboot.

The news follows a decision by the United States to relax a range of inbound travel restrictions.

MEANWHILE Singapore Airlines has also reopened its SilverKris Lounge at London Heathrow, Terminal 2 this week.

The First and Business class sections are both operational, with the facility welcoming both Singapore Airlines and Star Alliance member customers.

Vegas hotel bought

PROPERTY investment company Blackstone has made the decision to off-load its Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas hotel to the Cherng Family Trust for US\$5.65 billion.

The deal will see the 3,000-room Vegas strip property operated by MGM Resorts International, which has paid US\$1.6 billion of the price tag for its role in the venture.

The Cosmopolitan includes a casino, the Marquee nightclub, restaurants and a fourth-floor swimming pool.

The final transaction is still dependent on regulatory approval and is projected to close in the first half of 2022.



travelBulletin

CLICK to read

CATO is forging its own future with a new constitution, accreditation scheme and other reforms. Read more in the September issue of *travelBulletin*.

Where in the world?



©Jens Uhlenbrock

PUZZLE

MADE up of a series of massive canyons joined together, this canyon gets its name from the hue of canyon walls.

Linked together, these series of canyons are both longer and deeper than the Grand Canyon and are popular for hiking and mountain biking.

The canyon system was formed

by six rivers and is accessed by a popular train nicknamed ChePe.

If you don't go to see the canyon for its grandeur, its worth it just to take the train ride, which winds through difficult terrain with 39 bridges and 86 tunnels.

Do you know where in the world this is?

Answer: Copper Canyon, Chihuahua, Mexico

Hilton courts China

HILTON has introduced a large-scale franchise model in China which will encourage investors to explore franchise opportunities for the hotelier's upscale service brand, Hilton Garden Inn.

"We remain optimistic about travel industry recovery in the long term as we continue to see strong domestic leisure demand in various parts of Asia Pacific... providing opportunities is a great step towards winning the hearts and minds of strong, savvy hotel owners in China," Hilton said.

Burj Al Arab tours

DUBAI'S famous sail-shaped Burj Al Arab is now hosting special hotel tours, providing visitors access to the famous building's most prestigious spaces for the first time.

Jumeirah Group revealed this week that the new 90-minute butler-guided tour will explore Burj Al Arab's atrium, the luxurious Royal Suite, the best vantage points to take in a sunset view, as well as various digital activities that retell its history and construction.

Surf Yamba opens

THE highly anticipated 12-room Surf Yamba has opened its doors to the public this week, with the beach-front property offering guests a rooftop terrace with plunge pools.

The resort also markets itself as a boutique wedding venue, with the terrace perfect for receptions and the Breakwater Room able to accommodate large gatherings.

Rooms at Surf Yamba lead in from \$295 a night with a two-night minimum stay.

Marriott expansion

MARRIOTT International is pushing ahead with its aggressive expansion strategy in South Asia, announcing the successful signing of 22 new hotel agreements in India, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Nepal over the past 18 months.

The new swathe of properties will add approximately 2,700 rooms to its portfolio, with Marriott adding that South Asia represents a "high potential region" for future growth.

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



The newly-opened **Grand Mercure Khao Lak Bangsak** is located on Thailand's Andaman Coast in the province of Phang Nga, and offers guests a tranquil getaway option in South East Asia. Features of the luxurious resort include an all-day dining

restaurant, a swim-up pool bar, a fitness centre, and for families with younger children, the option of enjoying a range of activities at the Kids' Corner or opting for a swim in the kids' pool.



IHG Hotels & Resorts boutique Hotel Indigo continues to experience solid international growth, with its latest property opening in Indonesia. The **Hotel Indigo Bandung Dago Pakar** boasts 275 rooms, multiple on-site restaurants, a health and fitness club, two swimming pools, and a kids' club. The resort also offers the first rooftop pool and bar in Bandung, with amazing views in all directions of the surrounding landscape and city.



The **LF Soneva Fushi Maldives** will be the first location for the brand when it opens its doors in May 2022. Partnering with resorts operator Soneva, the property will boast 63 one- to nine-bedroom beach-front villas and eight one- and two-bedroom water retreats, all located within the UNESCO-recognised Baa Atoll Biosphere Reserve. The resort also features an outdoor Cinema Paradiso, a luxurious spa area and a huge children's wonderland attraction.