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on location in
**Fayetteville,
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Today's issue of TD is coming to you courtesy of Travel South USA which just hosted its 2022 International Showcase in Louisville, KY.

TODAY the Aussie contingent split up and joined various family trips organised by Travel South USA, after the conclusion of the International Showcase.

Travel Daily thought it would be fun to start a competition in the 'Aussies in Kentucky' WhatsApp group to see who is on the best trip, to spice things up a little.

But while we have been bridge walking at New River Gorge in West Virginia, followed by a very adventurous (read terrifying for height-challenged people like me) afternoon at ACE Adventure Ziplining, we later received a picture (**below**) from Lisa Monk of Travello who has today been served moonshine... by none other than Dolly Parton's niece. We have a winner.

The distillery is in Sevierville, Tennessee, and apparently Danielle Parton - also known as "Shine Girl" is a former flight attendant, pilot and military officer who distils her very own line of alcoholic beverage.

Travel Daily contacted Lisa for a quote to accompany this story, but for some reason she hasn't responded at the time of going to press.



Finnair closes local office

EXCLUSIVE

FINNAIR has announced the shutdown of its Australian office, with the position held by Arnaud Michelin, Regional Manager for Australia, New Zealand and New Caledonia, made redundant as part of a global restructure.

Michelin took on the role just over four years ago (*TD* 07 Sep 2018), prior to which it was held by Geoff Stone for about six years.

In an industry update this morning Michelin noted that "there will not be any Finnair representative in Australia starting 1st of Jan 2023".

"Your main point of contact will be the Agent Helpdesk... and the team is there to provide support 7 days a week, just as they have for the past four years, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sabre cut-off in 2019 and the situation in Ukraine," he said.

Michelin emphasised that despite the closure, Finnair is not exiting the market.

"There are a lot of developments happening in the background to continue to offer competitive fares and great routing options."

Robertson to MTA

NEIL Robertson, long-time Virgin Australia sales and management executive, has joined MTA - Mobile Travel Agents as the agency group's new Head of Product.

MTA CEO Don Beattie said Robertson's wealth of industry experience made him an ideal choice for the senior role.

"He'll continue to build on our strong supplier partner relationships and provide excellence in product choice to ensure our advisors remain leaders in their field," he said.

Robertson's career has also included former roles at Thai Airways, Consolidated Travel, Airline Marketing Australia, Guff Air, Stella and World Aviation.

Finnair's long history in Australia saw it as a perennial winner of the Best Offline Airline category at the National Travel Industry Awards, with the carrier operating a unique multiple gateway strategy to Europe via about a dozen Asian ports in partnership with a range of online local airlines.

However the airline's network has become constrained in recent months particularly with the closure of Russian airspace which has made some former long-haul destinations less viable, with some flights significantly longer.

Finnair's new strategy aims to reduce costs, boost partnerships with other oneworld members, fleet reductions and negotiations with staff to lower expenses.

Michelin said he was hoping to remain in travel, and thanked the industry for its professionalism and partnership.

Solomons steps up

TOURISM Solomons says the first three months since its borders finally opened after an 800-day lockdown have shown better than expected visitation results, with a total of 2,481 international arrivals between 01 Jul and 30 Sep.

Australians made up 42% of the total, and the organisation's primary focus is to once again regain pre-pandemic numbers of Aussies which in 2019 amounted to about 13,000 annually.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including a page of photos from **Travel South USA** and our regular **Corporate Update** feature.

There's also a **cover page** offering the final opportunity to purchase tickets for next week's **STILL Still Standing Celebration**.

WIN! with Air NZ

AIR New Zealand has launched a festive Christmas video, titled "Not quite Silent Night".

It shows the late-night Christmas antics of a young Kiwi girl whose attempt to stay up results in calamity.

The carrier is also offering two prizes of return economy flights for two to New Zealand as well as 50 \$100 digital gift cards for Australian travel agents.

To be in the running, register or login to the Duo training platform at duo.airnzagent.com.au, watch the Christmas video and answer a couple of questions.

View the NZ Xmas adventure at traveldaily.com.au/videos.

Karbo heads home

JOE Karbo has stepped down as Chief Operating Officer of the UK's Moresand Group (*TD* 11 Sep 2019) and will relocate back to Australia later this month.

Karbo, who was also formerly global CEO of Wendy Wu Tours, told *TD* he was looking forward to being closer to family.

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Ski specialist sold

SUE Thorley has today announced the sale of her locally-based online Canadian ski travel specialist agencies Ski Holidays & Tours (IATA-TIDS 96854542) and Stonebridge at Big White (IATA-TIDS 96089066).

Both of the businesses have been purchased by Rob Pollock, based in Mount Lofty, Qld, with the transition to new ownership rolling out in the coming months and Thorley to remain behind the scenes in a support role.

"After 40 years in the travel industry, I have made the heavy decision that it's time I spent more of my life in the Canadian mountains with my family," Thorley told *Travel Daily*.

"Sharing the passion for planning Canadian ski trips has always inspired me, but now it's time to live what I love".

Pollock and his family will relocate to Alberta and British Columbia next year to meet with resort partners and suppliers.

Aussies key for Los Angeles

AUSTRALIA and NZ are on track to potentially become the number one international visitor market to Los Angeles, with recovery in the local market seen as vital for the LA tourism sector.

Adam Burke, CEO of the Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board, is here this week for the first time in nine years, highlighting the strong focus of the organisation on Australia.

Pre-pandemic Australia was in about third position, with 2019 seeing 421,000 Australian visitors to the Californian city.

"I can't overstate it, we will not see full recovery without the return of Australian visitation," Burke told *Travel Daily* yesterday.

He said as a non-profit organisation, LA Tourism's key goal is to support the city's tourism and hospitality sector, "so it's all about driving demand and getting people back to work".

Burke noted huge investment

in the key LAX gateway which is creating improvements "month by month", while the organisation itself has just launched its largest ever international marketing campaign here (*TD* 07 Nov).

Numbers are already beginning to recover, with airlines operating between Australasia and LAX continuing to boost capacity - a reflection, Burke believes, of strong ongoing relationships and concerted efforts by the Los Angeles Tourism team locally, which has maintained a fully staffed office led by Craig Gibbons despite the pandemic's travails.

Recent initiatives have included the creation of suggested short LA itineraries focusing on different product pillars, such as sports & live entertainment, outdoor & wellness, shopping & fashion, culinary, and theme parks & attractions.

The "Now Playing" campaign is live at discoverlosangeles.com.

Railbookers surge

AUSTRALIAN revenue for train travel package specialist Railbookers Group has jumped 135% compared to pre-pandemic figures, with the local operation riding a boom in demand for both the Railbookers and Amtrak Vacations brands.


Passenger numbers are also up 25%, with Railbookers VP of Strategic Partnerships, Jim Marini, saying "Australian travel advisors have spoken loud and clear, saying that their clients are ready to get back to travelling around the world".

Packages are available across the USA, Europe, Scandinavia, Canada and more, with pricing in Australian dollars and a strong local team to support bookings.

Marini noted Railbookers offered access to exclusive inventory on some of the most in-demand trains and hotels as well as customisable, tailor-made journeys with optional add-ons & upgrades - railbookers.com.au.

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Great news from Great Britain



SINCE Aussie travel restrictions lifted in Jan, VisitBritain has seen an exponential rise in the pace of its inbound recovery from Down Under - great news for the destination, as it anticipates next year as one of its biggest on record for Australian visitors.

VisitBritain Country Manager Maria Sykes (pictured) told *Travel Daily* both accelerated forward flight bookings, as well as arrival figures, have jumped since the lifting of travel restrictions; and

QF ramping up

QANTAS has flagged a busy upcoming holiday travel period, with the carrier resuming a number of seasonal routes and ramping up other customer service initiatives.

A refurbished QF lounge in Honolulu will open on 16 Dec, in time for two additional weekly SYD-HNL flights operating for six weeks over summer.

A330s will be deployed between Sydney and Cairns, while capacity is also being boosted to Fiji, Queenstown and Bali and MEL-DFW will debut on 03 Dec followed by the inaugural Qantas Sydney-Seoul service on 10 Dec.

Domestic group capacity is at 95% of pre-COVID levels and both QF and JQ have ongoing sale activity with discounted fares and more frequent flyer seat availability, the company said.

with a number of bucket list events next year, it is a promising trajectory for the country.

"We're delighted that Australia has reclaimed its place as the UK's fifth most valuable international source market," she said.

Sykes said demand from Australia is expected to grow, due to landmark events such as the coronation of Charles III in London in May, and the Eurovision Song Contest in Liverpool the same month.

These two events represent a significant opportunity for travel advisors, who will continue to remain an important part of booking Australians to Great Britain, Sykes suggested.

"Agents on and offline remain a key source of trust and expert knowledge for Australians when planning trips to Britain," she said.

"VisitBritain will continue supporting Australian agents with engaging and innovating training platforms and opportunities, ensuring they are well positioned to convert this demand into bookings," Sykes affirmed.

New developments include the England Coast Path, a 4,500km long-distance National Trail which follows the country's shoreline and is expected to debut in 2023.

VisitBritain is also continuing to keep London's positioning as a premium luxury destination front-of-mind, highlighting a number of ongoing five-star hotel openings.

Skal Sydney Xmas

SKAL International Sydney is inviting the travel and tourism sector to celebrate Christmas at its annual festive luncheon, scheduled for Fri 09 Dec at Sydney's Four Seasons Hotel.

Priced from \$140, the event will be complete with a visit from Santa, lucky door prizes and the opportunity to once again donate "socks and jocks" to charity partner the Wayside Chapel.

A Kris Kringle gift exchange with a maximum of \$25 per present will add to the fun - for more details and to book **CLICK HERE**.

We are helping, insists Farrell

THE new Federal Government is "supporting the tourism and travel sector's recovery in a way that the former Liberal-National government never, ever did," according to Tourism Minister Don Farrell.

Speaking in Parliament yesterday, Farrell acknowledged that the vast majority of tourism businesses are small and medium-sized, and "collectively make a significant contribution to employment and our economy".

"To support this sector, we are delivering on our commitments... and we're directly engaging with industry to address the challenges that they face," he said.

"In August, we held a tourism jobs summit...we've launched a visitor-economy disability pilot, [and] we're working on a project to better connect workers and employees in the industry."

Farrell noted the Tourism Minister's Meeting in SA (**TD** 07 Oct), while the same month saw the launch of Tourism Australia's new Come and Say G'day campaign which has so far attracted 122 million views.

The Minister also highlighted the \$10 million Caravan Parks Grant Program now open for applications of between \$10,000 and \$100,000 to help operators upgrade facilities.



YOU may know that Kentucky, from where **TD** is reporting this week, is the spiritual home of bourbon.

Kentuckians will quickly tell you that 100% of good bourbon is produced within the state - a claim naturally disputed by other producers.

While Kentucky has a great deal else on offer - a rich history around horses, amazing hospitality and a certain brand of fried chicken are but a few - it will therefore come as no surprise to learn that many of the tours organised by Travel South USA during its showcase here this week have featured bourbon distilleries and tastings.

On Mon alone **TD** visited Heaven Hill Distillery in the morning, followed by lunch at Jim Beam, where even the desserts were bourbon flavoured.

Later that same evening a function was held at Evan Williams Bourbon Experience.

You get the idea.

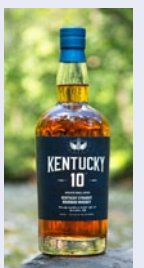
Being bourbon novices ourselves, reporting on these things can be a tricky business, but it'sch important for you to now that we're not affected in any shape, form, way or indeed shape with all this bourbon we're consuming.

No sirree. Abshoutely not at all - we have been professionalll at every schtep of the way.

And anotheerr thing...y'all shud come here ASAP!

Don't mis next week's Window Scheat! We'll be talking about bourbon, having totally forgotten righting about it today.

ZZZZzzzzzz.....



CORPORATE UPDATE

Rob Dell retiring this month

AUSTRALIAN corporate travel legend Rob Dell will retire from the industry in mid-Dec after a career spanning almost 55 years.

Dell (**pictured**) was the Chairman of the Association of Travel Management Companies (ATMC) for five years prior to stepping down earlier this year, and as well as a variety of senior TMC roles over the last two decades, his career has also seen him work in retail and wholesale travel, airlines and cruising.

Initially joining Thomas Cook at its London HQ in 1968, Dell transferred to Auckland two years later, then in 1972 joined Atlantic and Pacific Travel as a manager.

In 1974 he had the opportunity to buy into a South American wholesaler, which was appointed as the GSA for Braniff International for Australia and NZ.

1978 saw him join LAN Chile as NZ manager, followed by a move to Sydney as LAN's GM APAC.

Dell became Walshes World



GM for Australia in 1984 and then in 1990 he took a role with American Express as Director of Supplier Relations.

Cruising was next on the horizon, with roles at Cunard and then as GM of Sales for Sarina Bratton's Norwegian Capricorn Cruise Line startup.

In 2000 he joined Harvey World Travel as Commercial Director, then became MD of Harveys Choice Holidays.

Corporate travel beckoned in 2003 when he joined Flight Centre's TQ3 as MD, followed by many roles within FCM, and then in 2018 he became Head of Account Management at HRG - which ultimately evolved into his current role at Amex GBT.

"Travel is a fabulous industry, and one which has proven time and again that it will bounce back regardless of the impacts of world events," he told **Travel Daily**.

"I sincerely hope that it will soon attract a new cohort of generations X, Y, Z and Alpha young people as it gathers momentum," Dell added.

Workspace merger

THE Flexi Group has merged the Hive, Common Ground and The Cluster to create a portfolio of 45 flexible workspace locations across the Asia-Pacific region.

Spaces are now available under the single brand in Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia, Australia, Thailand, Taiwan, Vietnam, Philippines and Japan - see theflexigroup.com.



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TMC tender update

A **NEW** addendum to the current Whole of Australian Government Travel Management Services tender (**TD 16 Nov**) has been released by the Federal Department of Finance, with responses to several questions from interested parties.

One of the queries relates to breaking down expenditure information for accommodation, with Finance saying it's unable to release spending details at the hotel level as contracted rates are commercially sensitive.

Another asks for clarification on a requirement to provide a toll-free number and dedicated email address per participating agency, which are required to effectively manage call queues and direct enquiries to relevant teams.

The update notes that it's not envisaged that implants will be required, and also clarifies the umbrella WoAG travel policies including "lowest practical fare" and "best fare of the day".

CTM makes US appointments

CORPORATE Travel Management's North American office has appointed Kristen Pratt to the newly created role of Senior VP of Technology Initiatives, supporting "product integration readiness and global data management and aggregation for CTM's clients".

Her current role as Vice President of Global Customer Solutions is being filled by Eve White, an industry veteran with over 30 years experience, including roles at Northwest Airlines, BCD Travel, HRG, WhereTo and FCM Travel.

The company has also appointed Sarah D'Alessandro as SVP/GM overseeing the New York/New Jersey region.

CTM CEO for North America, Kevin O'Malley, said the appointments would "further our value to our customers in service and innovation/technology".

EU sustainability reporting change

THE European Union has formally adopted a new EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) which creates new, detailed sustainability reporting requirements and significantly expands the number of European and non-European companies subject to the framework.

The CSRD replaces the existing Non-Financial Reporting Directive, and applies to all large companies in the EU as well as external businesses with at least one branch in the EU and net EU sales of 150 million or more.

The Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) welcomed the move, which includes a CountEmissionsEU proposal said to be critical to providing a harmonised methodology to calculate transport related emissions - more details **HERE**.

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business events news

TRAVEL Daily was among a select group of Australians who were lucky enough to participate in the 2022 International Showcase hosted by Travel South USA which took place in Louisville, Kentucky this week.

The event showcased 12 US states, amid keen interest from Aussies in heading to more off-the-beaten-track destinations and a surge in popularity for activities on offer such as horse riding, history, hospitality, Kentucky Fried Chicken and of course bourbon!

These photos were taken by our special correspondent Richard Taylor, who has been reporting "on location" from the event.



MAURICIO Beckstrom from Noble House Hotels & Resorts; Jo Palmer, Gate 7; Ruth Bullock, Travel Associates; Kristy Prince, Adventure World; Lisa Monk, Travello; Penny Brand, Gate 7; Lauren Gainey, Qantas Hotels and Holidays; James Whiting, Travel Junction; Steve Labroski, itravel; and Richard Taylor, Travel Community Hub.



GATE 7's Jo Palmer and Penny Brand in celebratory mode after a successful Travel South USA International Showcase.



STEVE Labroski and James Whiting are still celebrating after picking up their Travel South Ambassador Awards.



LAUREN Gainey from Qantas Hotels & Holidays snaps a selfie.



PENNY Brand is ready to race... starting from Gate 7 of course!



A BLUEGRASS band entertains the punters at the Y'all Ball.



PENNY Brand, Richard Taylor and Jo Palmer.



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itravel gets into the spirit



CHRISTMAS came early for itravel, which hosted a sky-high Christmas Party at Nick & Nora's in Parramatta, NSW last week.

The itravel family gathered at the rooftop location to mingle and enjoy drinks, while reflecting on a year of massive growth for

the organisation.

"We are so lucky to have had such an amazing team alongside us working towards the same goal," Managing Director Steve Labroski said.

Some of the team are **pictured** from left: Steve Labroski; Head of Commercial Josh Gordon; Head of Operations Kim Wudko; Emma Will, Operations & Solutions; Head of Digital Media & Marketing Dee Jaswal; itravel Liverpool's Rebecca McHenry and Kathleen Fowler; and MD Louie Apostolovski.

IATA Oct figures

AUSTRALIA almost tripled its Oct domestic air traffic from last year (293%), which now stands at 16% below pre-pandemic levels, the latest figures from The International Air Transport Association (IATA) reveal.

Asia Pacific airlines showed the strongest year-over-year growth among the regions, with a 440% rise in Oct traffic compared to last year, and a 165% rise in capacity.

Globally, total air traffic has now reached 74% of pre-pandemic levels, with forward bookings at 75% of the figures in 2019.

Rwanda for WTTC

THE World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) has revealed it will host its next Global Summit in Africa for the first time, in the Rwandan capital of Kigali.

The announcement came as WTTC wrapped up its largest-ever Global Summit yesterday in Saudi Arabia, which saw more than 3,000 delegates in attendance.

Silversea restart

SILVERSEA Cruises has resumed operations in the Asia Pacific region for the first time in more than 1,000 days, with *Silver Muse* this morning departing on an 18-day voyage from Singapore to Sydney - a departure port supported by a partnership with the Singapore Tourism Board which will also see *Silver Nova* sailing from there in 2024.

Ireland roadshows

TOURISM Ireland has confirmed the dates for its upcoming four city trade mission to Australia and New Zealand.

Up to 15 Irish operators are expected to participate in the showcase, with evening travel agent networking events scheduled for Brisbane (13 Feb), Sydney (14 Feb), Melbourne (16 Feb) and Auckland (20 Feb).

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

Travelmarvel is offering savings of up to \$3,000 per couple on its 12-day Essential Vietnam and Cambodia itinerary, which includes a seven-night cruise on the Mekong River aboard *RV Apsara* in a Balcony suite. Guests will enjoy two nights in premium accommodation in Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap, and receive a traditional Buddhist blessing by monks in Oudong. The offer is strictly limited until sold out - call 1300 278 278.

Today is the last day Australian travellers can book a flight to Mauritius from \$795 return from Perth, or \$1,216 return from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Adelaide with **Air Mauritius**. The deal applies to departure dates between 05 Feb-30 Jun 2023 - airmauritius.com.

Out of the Ordinary Outback is offering savings, bonus meals and free nights at its Warrawong on the Darling retreat on the outskirts of Wilcannia, NSW. Go to warrawongonthedarling.com.au to learn more.

Jetstar has launched its Bali Breaks Sale, with packages starting from \$492 per person, including return starter fares, accommodation, and a number of inclusions such as daily buffet breakfast, late checkout, room upgrades and more. The sale ends 05 Dec unless sold out prior - for more details visit jetstar.com.

Aranui Cruises has launched a post-Black Friday summer sale, taking 30% off three of its Discovery cruises in 2023. The offer is valid for bookings prior to 31 Jan, with Pitcairn voyages departing Papeete on 18 Feb and 07 Oct 2023 available from \$6237pp - a saving of over \$2,400. The voyages are fully commissionable to agents - aranuicruises.com.au.

A Journey EventFULL sale from **Celebrity Cruises** launched this morning, offering 75% off second guests and savings of up to \$600 per stateroom, plus up to US\$400 onboard credit. Available for bookings from today until 08 Dec for sailings 3 nights and longer departing 02 Jan 2023 through to 30 Apr 2025 - see celebritycruises.com.au.

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