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Wednesday 7th Dec 2022



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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news, a cover page from **Tourism NZ** plus a full page from **Scenic**.

Le Meridien returns

LE MERIDIEN Hotels & Resorts will make a return to the Australian market in early 2023, with the Marriott Bonvoy brand announcing that it will open its doors on Bourke St in Melbourne.

The new hotel will offer guests 235 rooms and suites, a ground floor cafe & bar area, a restaurant, meetings and events spaces, as well as a "showstopping rooftop pool deck" boasting views overlooking Parliament House.

When it opens, the Marriott Bonvoy portfolio will include 29 Australian properties, with four opened in Melbourne alone since the start of 2020, including W Melbourne, Melbourne Marriott Hotel Docklands, Courtyard by Marriott Flagstaff Gardens and AC by Marriott Melbourne Southbank - more luxury on P4.

P&O appoints VP

DEBORAH Cogin has joined P&O Australia as its new Vice President of Guest Experience Hotel Operations, replacing Thomas Karlsson, who is heading back to Europe for a new role with Carnival UK.

Cogin said she would aim to bring her undivided attention to ensure her team is confident in delivering a guest experience that leaves a positive impression that surpasses expectations.

She joins the line from her role as COO Operations, Marketing at BridgeClimb Sydney.

QF, EK alliance renewal

QANTAS and Emirates have lodged a joint application with the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC), seeking to continue their extensive global cooperation for at least another five years.

The existing approval expires in Mar 2023, with the process of seeking re-authorisation from regulators now underway.

Previously QF and EK were granted approval to engage in the same conduct for a period of five years in both 2013 and then again in 2018, subject to a condition that they report on passenger numbers of certain routes.

They're seeking to have this condition lifted, and also to receive an interim authorisation so they can "continue to discuss and plan" while the overall application is considered.

The wide-ranging restated Master Coordination Agreement covers sales, marketing, distribution strategies, reservation priority and pricing for passengers, connectivity and integration of certain routes, planning and scheduling, codeshare and interline agreements and control of inventories & yield management.

All passenger-related aspects of customer service including lounge access and ground services, frequent flyer programs and harmonised IT systems are also envisaged, along with joint airport facilities, joint sales offices and potentially even joint procurement.

The carriers said the proposed conduct enables QF and EK to "better connect Australia and New Zealand to Asia, the United

Kingdom, Europe and the Middle East and Northern Africa" and thereby offer greater choice and convenience to consumers.

It is "fundamentally pro-competitive and will continue to assist both airlines to offer a compelling customer proposition going forward," they said.

The submission notes a range of benefits, including supporting network rebuilding on the Tasman by both carriers, with EK intending to shortly reinstate its direct DXB-AKL service.

The document also notes that Emirates is planning to reinstate services between Melbourne and Singapore next year, in conjunction with QF.

The ACCC said it expects to issue a draft determination in Feb or Mar 2023, with a final ruling in Apr or May next year.

The full submission is available online at acc.gov.au.

APT extends deal

APT has extended its 95 Year Anniversary Sale until 15 Dec, offering discounts on Europe river cruise departures in 2023.

The sale applies to popular cruises like the 15-day Magnificent Europe itinerary, and includes flights and half-price discounts on cabin upgrades.

Seek more in NZ

THOSE agents who are curious enough to immerse, embrace, respect and discover the wonder of New Zealand are being given the opportunity to earn their place on the ultimate famil - if this sounds like you, see the **front page** for more details.

WA agents are back

TRAVEL agents in Western Australia have started to exceed pre-COVID turnover levels in terms of both value and volume, according to new spending data released by Bankwest.

Agent transaction volumes were shown to be up 82% year-on-year, with values more than tripling, while similar gains were also noted for airline bookings, with transactions up by 85% and the value of purchases up 159%.

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FC Independent grows team

FORMER senior Helloworld Travel Limited executive Sue Graham has been appointed as the new Global Leader of Product for Flight Centre Travel Group Independent (**TD** breaking news).

Graham's extensive industry career has also seen her in key roles at CT Partners, Travelocity, CiEvents and Jetset Travelworld.

Also new to the FC Independent team is Vanessa Whitaker, who joined Flight Centre's Global Land Supply division in Jul last year after previous roles at TripADeal and MTA Mobile Travel Agents.

The pair of product leaders were "hand-selected" by Flight Centre Travel Group Global MD of Independent and Luxury, Danielle Galloway, with the expansion seen as a clear indication of the organisation's commitment to the independent agency sector.

Graham said she felt very privileged to be joining the team.

"My passion has always been working collaboratively and commercially with suppliers and independent agents, and FCTG Independent presents a huge opportunity globally for

both sectors to leverage strong partnerships and drive business growth," she said.

Whitaker said she was also excited to be joining FCTG Independent to develop existing relationships, identify new opportunities and help members across the globe achieve results.

Galloway said Graham and Whitaker's detailed knowledge of the independent space would see them hit the ground running and "propel our business forward to deliver a world-leading product range for independent travel agencies".

"Our leadership team has developed a clear vision for growth and plans to deliver the most competitive independent travel agency offering available."

Owens taking off

CRAIG Owens has taken a new role as BDM with Aircalin and New Caledonia Tourism.

Owens' previous industry roles include positions at Journey Beyond, Silversea, Oceania, MSC, Cunard and Seabourn.

EK ramps up LGW

EMIRATES has boosted its UK operations by adding a third daily A380 flight to Gatwick Airport.

The extra service will offer more than 1,000 seats between Gatwick and Dubai every day.

Emirates currently operates 119 weekly flights across seven UK hubs, including six-times daily to London Heathrow and daily service to London Stansted.

Uber fined \$21m

UBER has been fined \$21 million by the Federal Court this week for misleading customers about their fare estimates and trip cancellation fees.

The penalty was \$5m lower than what the ACCC had requested (**TD** 27 Apr), with the Court deeming the original figure "excessive".

Getaway with \$500

SCENIC is giving agents the chance to win one of five \$500 gift vouchers - all you have to do is tune in to watch *Getaway* on Channel 9 tomorrow night (Thu 08 Dec) at 7.30pm.

See **back page** for more info.

Murray plummets

MORE than half of the Murray region's tourism businesses have lost at least 40% of their bookings for the peak Christmas/New Year period, as a result of the flood disaster (**TD** 23 Nov).

The Murray River Tourism Board (MRTB) has released figures showing that while two-thirds of tourism businesses in the region have only minor infrastructure damage, the lack of visitors has resulted in a \$128 million loss of income over a three-week period.

Very Hungry Nomads



FORMER Topdeck guides Rachel Davey and Martina Sebova have achieved the remarkable feat of travelling everywhere (literally) in the world - and they believe they may be first females of their nationalities to do so.

The Australian and Slovakian couple (**pictured**) documented their journey on social media under the moniker 'Very Hungry Nomads', with thousands watching on as they trekked to 195 countries over 1,685 days.

In order to turn their dream into a reality, the couple sold all their possessions and saved up for years, sticking to a budget

of around \$73 per day during their travels - which needed to cover everything from flights, accommodation, visas, transport, food and sightseeing.

Sharing local cuisines was a highlight for the duo, who said they were often invited to eat with the locals and experience different cuisines.

When asked about their favourite destinations, Thailand, Mexico, Italy, and Madagascar topped the list.

"We have set out on this journey to inspire other women and add more women to the list," Sebova said.





Window Seat

WE PREFER room service!

A traveller who posted his cheap hotel meal hack to Twitter has created a storm of disgust, with many labelling his cooking of raw chicken in the room's coffee machine as dangerously unhygienic.

The man slipped chicken breasts, butter and garlic into the glass vessel to be boiled, commenting that although his company covers the expenses, every dollar counts.

Replies were awash with similar disgusting stories, including an alleged trend of guests washing their underwear in the hotel kettle.



IATA "modern retailing"

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has announced the establishment of the Modern Airline Retailing program, which promises to transform the flight distribution system.

Supported by a consortium of "advanced airline adopters" including Emirates, Singapore Airlines, American Airlines, British Airways, Lufthansa Group and more, IATA said the platform will seek to "replace decades-old standards, processes and technology".

"The airline industry must adopt modern retailing practices that will create additional value for travellers and reduce the hassles of increasingly complex passenger document checking requirements," IATA said.

"Modern Airline Retailing will solve this dilemma and unleash value creation opportunities by transforming airline distribution to a system of 'Offers and Orders'

that parallel what most other retailers use.

"Our aim is to create value for travellers by meeting their needs...we know that passengers want a seamless digital experience and they expect consistent service irrespective of how they purchased their travel," IATA's Senior Vice President of Financial Settlement and Distribution Services, Muhammad Albakri said.

IATA's Modern Airline Retailing program is built on three pillars: "customer identification" (with industry standards including advance information sharing and biometric airport recognition); "retailing with offers" based on NDC platforms which currently comprise just over 10% of travel agent sales globally; and "delivery with orders" including a full suite of new industry standards to remove the need to juggle PNRs, e-ticket numbers and EMDs.

We're still struggling

SOME parts of Sydney Airport's operations are still fragile heading into the busy summer holiday period, with CEO Geoff Culbert calling on travellers to be "kind and patient" in the face of any possible delays.

"We estimate we are around 2,000 employees short of where we need to be, but we are working hard to make sure most passengers will have a typical pre-COVID Christmas experience at the airport - busy but not chaotic," Culbert said.

More than 2.2 million people are set to pass through Sydney Airport's gates during the Christmas peak, representing the busiest holiday period since 2019, with 1.4 million domestic passengers and 800,000 international passengers forecast to be processed.

Sydney Airport has confirmed it will have around 60 extra staff on deck daily to help alleviate kinks during busy holiday period.

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LUX* expansion

THE Lux Collective has revealed four new projects which will launch over the coming years under its flagship LUX* brand.

In the Middle East the growth in 2024 includes two properties in Sharjah: LUX* Al Jabal, a 45-key hillside retreat overlooking the Gulf of Oman, and LUX* Al Bridi, which will overlook a major conservation project with 35 tented safari-style retreats.

Also in 2024 the group plans to open LUXNAM* Phu Quoc in Vietnam, a 126 villa-only overwater resort, while the same year the Collective will look to Europe with LUX* Marseillan in France.

Tasty Ritz-Carlton

THE new Ritz-Carlton, Melbourne has announced that Executive Chef Michael Greenlaw and Culinary Advisor Mark Best will lead its culinary team when the highly anticipated property makes its debut in Mar 2023.

Greenlaw has over 15 years of experience in five-star hotels and Michelin-starred and hatted restaurants, including Gilt in New York, London's Bibendum, and Vue de Monde in Melbourne, while Best is simply described as "an icon of the new Australian cuisine".

TRAVEL ASSOCIATES ADDS FOUR

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's luxury-focused Travel Associates brand is continuing to expand, with its fourth new business for 2022 debuting earlier this week.

Carswell & Turner Travel Associates in Coffs Harbour, NSW (**pictured**) is led by an "invested and entrepreneurial leader", Ian Carswell, according to Travel Associates Global Brand & Marketing Director - Luxury, Anna Burgdorf.

"We encourage our business leaders to invest in their businesses, not only to share in the success of the business but also to encourage an entrepreneurial mindset which comes with owning your own business and the desire to be profitable and grow as a proud community-based business," Burgdorf told *Travel Daily*.

"Our goal is for every single business we own to have a 'name on the door' which signifies investment, small business



entrepreneurship and success."

Burgdorf noted that Carswell & Turner - formerly trading in a different location as Travel Associates Coffs Harbour - was the fourth new business the group had invested in over the past eight months.

"Ian Carswell is one of our finest, and our investment in his new location and the brand-new Travel Associates luxury fit-out is well deserved for this team who provide exceptional service to their clients on a daily basis."

The other new Travel Associates

businesses for this year include Martin, Stockdale & Turner Travel Associates in Hampton, Vic (previously Travel Associates Hampton); Low & James Travel Associates in Neutral Bay, NSW; and Dare & Turner Travel Associates in Broadbeach, Qld.

Travel Associates has also just gone live with the latest phase of its new brand campaign, firmly focusing on its mission to "create the most incredible memories for our clients by curating end-to-end 'one of a kind' travel experiences for one-of-a-kind individuals".

Explora releases itineraries for its second ship

EXPLORA Journeys, the new luxury small-ship venture backed by MSC, has opened bookings for the inaugural season of its second newbuild.

Explora II is scheduled to debut in mid-2024, with an initial Mediterranean deployment followed by a Suez Canal transit and then cruising in the Middle East.

She will then cruise the coast of India, then cross the Indian Ocean to Africa.

"As with *Explora I*, *Explora II*'s guests will reside in carefully curated 'Homes at Sea,'" the company said.

Reservations for *Explora II* sailings from Aug 2024 through to Apr 2025 are now open - more at explorajourneys.com.

Japan in Oman in '27

HOTEL Okura Co has confirmed it will open the luxury Okura Resort Muscat in Oman in 2027 - marking the first Japanese-branded hotel in the country.

The upmarket property will boast 150 rooms, all with views of the Al Mouj Golf course, as well as multiple pools and restaurants.

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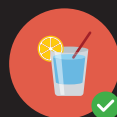
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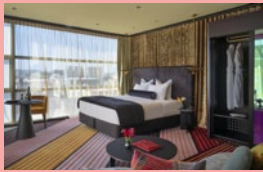


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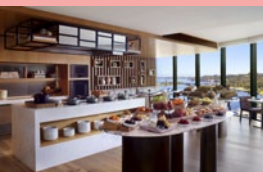
WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, *Travel Daily's* Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



Singapore-based Naumi Hotels has announced the opening of its **Naumi Wellington**, a new property on Cuba Street and the sister property to Naumi Studio Wellington. The hotel offers 62 guest rooms sized like large studio apartments with floor-to-ceiling windows, and shares the Lola Rouge restaurant and bar with its sister hotel, which offers a South-East Asia menu, as well as The Parlour, which serves high tea and cocktails.



Singapore's **Swissotel The Stamford** has unveiled a refreshed dining option, **JAAN** by Kirk Westaway, which reopened to guests yesterday following a three-month transformation. The two Michelin-starred restaurant features a floor-to-ceiling light installation in the centre of its main dining area, which includes a mix of banquet and regular seats to cater for 35 people. Guests will be able to enjoy a new winter menu for the festive season.



The **Ritz-Carlton Perth** will reopen its Club Lounge tomorrow after receiving a transformation. The lounge will now offer a WA Wine Discovery Tour led by the hotel's sommelier, a Blue Boat Shed Discovery Tour, a Sunset Drawing experience, and a cookie decorating class for kids. Guests can enjoy five daily signature culinary experiences, including a fresh breakfast with live cooking stations, classic canapes and a spritz station, WA delicacies, and more.

50 degrees lowers temp

50 DEGREES North has unveiled its new Climate Action Plan to help combat rising temperatures, after becoming one of the founding signatures of the United Nations Glasgow Declaration.

The Nordic tour operator committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieving a net-zero sector by, or at the latest by 2050, when it signed the declaration during the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, along with 300 other tourism companies.

The company's founder and Chief Executive Officer, Tietse Stelma, believes the important environmental declaration will be "one of the most important movements within the travel industry to combat the scourge of

climate change".

"[It] unites our sector in a shared goal and creates positive actions that all tourism companies can be involved in," she added.

The newly unveiled Climate Action Plan details the actions that the tour operator will take to reduce its carbon emissions, including communicating the carbon footprint for its most popular tours, including small group and escorted holidays.

The five-step plan also reveals a focus on assisting customers and travel agents to make sustainable choices when planning their trips, and increasing the percentage of electric vehicles it uses for touring or transfers.

To read more about the 50 Degree North's Climate Action Plan, **CLICK HERE**.

Jetstar Changi move

THE Jetstar Group of airlines has agreed to relocate from Terminal 1 at Singapore's Changi Airport to Terminal 4 on 22 Mar, following months of attempts to resist the shift (**TD** 25 Jul).

The move means Jetstar Asia Airways and Jetstar Airways pax will be an inter-terminal train ride away from parent airline Qantas and its Oneworld partners; however, Jetstar executives said connectivity with their partner airlines would not be impacted.

Titanic far from sunk

BELFAST'S Titanic exhibition is set to undergo a multi-million-dollar revamp from 02 Jan to Feb 2023, which will see it "push boundaries", using immersive technology to offer "a world-class narration of the *Titanic* story".

The attraction, which recently welcomed its seven millionth visitor, will be closed during the refreshment program, however visitors will still be able to learn about the *Titanic* on the outdoor Discovery Tours, which run daily.

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