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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages, including the featured **Luxury Page**.

HK eases further

THE Hong Kong Government has eliminated some of the few remaining COVID-19 travel restrictions to the destination, with the move aimed at helping to restore passenger numbers to Hong Kong International.

From today, international arrivals to the Asian hub will be allowed to visit restaurants and bars within their first three days of landing, ending rules which prohibited travellers from entering select venues within the first 72 hours of arrival, while the mandatory COVID-19 mobile application has also been axed.

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JOURNEY BEYOND

VA links Cairns to Japan

VIRGIN Australia has announced a new international daily return service between Cairns and Tokyo (Haneda), which is scheduled to take off on 28 Jun 2023 (**TD** breaking news).

The route, which was landed thanks to the lobbying efforts of the Queensland Government and Cairns Airport through the Queensland Government's Attracting Aviation Investment Fund, is the first time the two cities have been connected directly, and will add over 2,000 seats between the two cities every week.

VA's new service will not only help to action pent-up outbound travel demand from Aussies for trips to Japan, but also add a valuable flow of high-yield tourists to north Queensland, which was one of the hardest hit regions for tourism in the country during the pandemic.

"We know the Japanese market

CASA waits on Bonza

THE Civil Aviation Safety Authority (CASA) has stated it is still waiting to receive key documents from Bonza before it can push ahead with approving the airline's local operations.

"CASA will be able to make a final decision once all documentation has been received and assessed and a proving flight completed," a spokesperson for CASA told the ABC.

Bonza CEO, Tim Jordan, said that given the carrier is the first new high-capacity airline in Australia for 15 years, the process associated with signing that off has to be thorough.

"Once we believe we are ready, we will reach out to the regulator and ask for them to come and make sure that is absolutely the case," Jordan confirmed.

A specialised CASA team is currently reviewing processes and documents to ensure Bonza meets safety standards to obtain an Air Operator's Certificate.

is hugely important to trade and tourism in Far North Queensland and the Sunshine State and our service will result in more international visitors arriving in Cairns every year, having a very positive impact on the state's economy," VA CEO Chief Jayne Hrdlicka said.

It is estimated the new route will generate close to \$70 million for the Tropical North's visitor economy and support around 680 Queensland jobs.

To celebrate the launch, Virgin Australia has introduced its 'Hello Tokyo' sale, with tickets on sale from \$699 return, until midnight next Tue 20 Dec, or until sold out.

MEANWHILE Virgin Australia's direct flights from Adelaide to Bali (**TD** 21 Sep) have taken off today, with the year-round route to provide over 70,000 additional seats to Denpasar each year.

Brazil disruptions

DFAT has advised the rising risk of protests around Brazil could affect the availability of flights to and from the country.

Violent unrest had previously broken out over the presidential election win of far-left Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva over far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro.

Risk of travel disruptions have increased in the run up to the inauguration on 01 Jan 2023.

Travel Daily on location aboard Queen Elizabeth

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Cunard, aboard the line's *Queen Elizabeth* as she voyages on an Australian Short Break cruise between Sydney and Melbourne.

A DAY at sea aboard *Queen Elizabeth* provides plenty of opportunities for action, with a host of activities on offer including art classes, line dancing, table tennis and even "chairobics" for those wanting to get a little physical.

Guest lecturer John Stainton is on board - the manager of the late great Steve Irwin, with tales from behind the scenes of his tragically too short a life.

There are movies, ballroom dance classes, trivia, bingo and karaoke, as well as a host of entertainment options including musicians, comedians and funky tunes from DJ Felipe.

But many on board are also content to while away the hours watching the ocean or curled up with a good book in one of the many cosy nooks and crannies aboard the magnificent vessel.

There's also a full spa offering wellness treatments and the opportunity to get glammed up for tonight's onboard Gala Night where many dress to the nines.

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Biggest 787 order

UNITED Airlines (UA) has this week placed the biggest widebody aircraft order by an American carrier in commercial aviation history, with the airline flagging the purchase of 100 Boeing 787 Dreamliners, with the option to purchase 100 more.

Delivery of the new widebody planes will take place between 2024 and 2032, with the option to choose from either 787-8, -9 or -10 models, providing added flexibility to support a wide range of operations and routes.

The latest move will also see UA take delivery of a total 700 new narrow and widebody aircraft by 2032, representing the addition of two planes every week in 2023 and three a week in 2024.

\$500m hotel splash

AN ASIAN investor is targeting a \$500 million investment in Australian hotels, primarily across the country's eastern states.

Singapore-based Invictus Developments' first acquisition is the five-star boutique Harbour Rocks Hotel in Sydney, managed by MGallery by Sofitel.

It is Invictus' first acquisition outside of Singapore, according to Principal Chayadi Karim, who said the company is aspiring to build a portfolio of boutique and upscale hotels in Australia.

"We are committed to further investment across Australia's Eastern Seaboard in the coming years, which is recovering strongly," he said.

Jucy buys Star RV business

JUCY campervans has formally purchased the Star RV business in Australia and New Zealand from Apollo Tourism & Leisure for \$50 million, heralding the buyer's official entry into the premium motorhome market.

The acquisition was made possible as a result of the merger between Apollo Tourism & Leisure and Tourism Holdings Limited, which, after much wrangling with the consumer watchdogs in Australia and New Zealand, was able to proceed so long as key assets were divested to subdue competition concerns (**TD** 01 Jul).

Following the purchase, Jucy has now flagged plans to invest more than \$1 million in further developing the brand and improving the delivery experience for tourists over the next 12 months, while lease agreements for five new trans-Tasman rental locations have also been signed, including a new 14,000m² area at Auckland Airport.

CEO of Jucy Group, Dan Alpe, said that forecasted growth in the premium campervan segment in Australia and NZ would precipitate substantial investment into additional capacity across both brands in the coming years, a move he believes will allow Jucy to double its annual revenue in the near-term.

"This high-value tourism segment is primarily European or North American, aged 35+, move around in a more structured way



and are prepared to spend more for a premium product when they travel the countries," he said.

"The feedback we are getting from our global wholesalers is there is a high level of demand for the markets and while we will see the first wave of this group arrive over the coming weeks, we are expecting to see a return to pre-pandemic volumes during 2023/24 seasons," Alpe added.

VA gets support

QUEENSLAND Airports Limited has thrown its support behind Virgin Australia seeking to permit the use of codeshare services with QR and SQ on its routes to Bali (**TD** 29 Nov).

In its submission to the International Air Services Commission, Queensland Airports said the move would drive increased connectivity from Gold Coast Airport via the soon-to-be-launched Gold Coast-Denpasar service, and help GC tourism.

Explorer tragedy

CARNIVAL Corporation has confirmed a guest missing from P&O Cruises Australia's *Pacific Explorer* has tragically been found deceased, after an overnight search-and-rescue mission.

The woman fell overboard off the coast of SA - more in **CW**.



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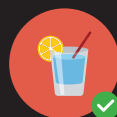
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Window Seat

POKEMON fans in Japan can now immerse themselves in the “kawaii-ness” or cuteness of the beloved anime via a unique train ride.

The **POKEMON with YOU Train** features a Pikachu-inspired design for passengers young and old to enjoy while they take in the stunning scenery of the Tohoku region.

The train travels from Ichinoseki to the beachside town of Kesennuma, with plenty of sight-seeing stops along the way.

Kids will love the Playroom Car, where they can play with toys, experience what it's like to be the conductor in the driver's cab, and even check out the engine room.

Spreading the fun to more places in Japan, East Japan Railway Company has joined forces with Pokemon to bring Pokemon-themed photo spots to 16 JR East stations, including the Fukushima, Takasaki and Hachi stations.

Pokemon lovers are encouraged to snap a pic of any Pokemon they find at the stations and post it on socials with the hashtag #pokegenic.



An educated acquisition

GLOBAL educational travel company WorldStrides has announced the acquisition of Australia's G.E.T Educational Tours for an undisclosed sum.

The purchase will see G.E.T. join WorldStrides' operations in Australia, allowing the global company to expand its presence in the local market as domestic and international educational travel continues to rebound.

G.E.T will also gain access to WorldStrides' global network and health & safety resources, and will continue to operate under the same brand and retain all employees - including long-standing Managing Director Anne-Marie Mitchell, who has been with the company for close to 50 years.

“As we expand our Australian footprint, we also see growing demand for travel to the region from K-12 to college students for experiential learning and travel across our programs, including the FIFA Women's World Cup in 2023,” WorldStrides President

and CEO Bob Gogel said.

“The addition of G.E.T will further this momentum as educational travel rebounds.”

G.E.T MD Anne-Marie Mitchell added the purchase of her business would allow the long-running operation to scale new heights in travel.

“Since our humble beginnings as an outdoor educational camp for students, G.E.T has evolved into an Australian leader in educational travel within the country and overseas,” she said.

“Our vision is for every student and teacher to grow by safely exploring the world and experiencing all its diversity - WorldStrides is the company to help us do that.”

G.E.T was founded in 1960, offers education tours to 12,000 students each year within Australia and overseas, while WorldStrides offers travel programs to 550,000 students annually to over 100 countries.

Finnair inks Amadeus

AMADEUS has partnered with Finnair, with the two planning to collaborate to “transform” the future of airline retailing.

The new Offers and Orders capabilities will bring simplicity, flexibility, personalisation, and real-time insights to Finnair.

The deal also expands on the existing capabilities between the two companies, and will better position Finnair to serve customers in possible disruption situations, and create packages using real-time traveller insights.

\$870 over the bar

VIRGIN Voyages is offering cruise passengers up to US\$600 (A\$870) in free drinks and hand-crafted cocktails for all new bookings made for select 2022/23 sailings of seven nights or more.

The same inclusive promo will offer a complimentary bar tab of US\$300 (A\$443) for voyages six nights or fewer, and applies to all four Virgin Voyages vessels over the following dates: *Scarlet* (18 Dec 2022 to 27 Dec 2023), *Valiant* (17 Dec 2022 to 30 Dec 2023), *Resilient* (14 May 2023 to 15 Mar 2024) and *Brilliant* (24 Dec 2023 to 30 Dec 2023).

IATA: France ban is “not a solution”

INTERNATIONAL Air Transport Association (IATA) Director General Willie Walsh has lashed France's recent decision to ban domestic short-haul flights, labelling the move as “complete and utter nonsense”.

Announced yesterday, the ban will put an end to flights between French cities that are already connected via rail in an effort to fight climate change.

Speaking at a media event last week, Walsh said the decision “won't have the impact that some politicians would lead you to believe”, arguing that even the elimination of every single flight in Europe of less than 500km would only result in a CO2 reduction of around 4%.

Instead, Walsh believes the solution is to reform Air Traffic Control in Europe, which he said would result in a CO2 reduction of 10% and eliminates the need for alternative infrastructure to support rail travel.

Qantas CEO Alan Joyce voiced a similar sentiment earlier this year when he spoke to the *Sydney Morning Herald* about “flight shame”, which he identified as the industry's next big challenge once it recovers from COVID-19.

“We need to make sure that people do not feel they need to stop flying...you don't have to make that tough decision if the airlines - and Qantas will be - do the right thing,” he said.

Virgin Australia declined to comment when contacted by **TD**.

The banning of the short-haul flights has also been a hot topic of discussion in countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

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India rises in popularity

AUSTRALIANS are more eager than ever to visit India, with the latest statistics from the ABS revealing a significant uptick in the number of short-term trips taken to the South Asian country.

For the month of Oct, Australians took 35,010 trips to India - a huge jump from the 20,990 trips taken the previous month, as well as a big increase on the pre-COVID 2019 level for Oct, which was 29,090.

Singapore also gained popularity among Australian travellers, with the number of trips taken rising from 25,460 in Sep to 38,010 in Oct - which is only around 3% below pre-pandemic level.

New South Wales residents were the most eager to travel overseas during Oct, comprising 37% of the total trips taken, while the Northern Territory fell behind considerably at less than 1%.

Overall, Australia's appetite for international travel continued to

gather momentum throughout Oct, with the statistics showing a 13% rise in the number of Aussies heading overseas on short-term trips compared to Sep.

The positive trajectory puts Australia's outbound tourism on track to continue its recovery, with the amount of outbound trips for Oct 2022 now sitting at 37% below the pre-pandemic level for the same period.

Peru tourist warning

VIOLENT protests and demonstrations are occurring in some regions of Peru, including the popular tourist hubs of Cusco, Puno and Arequipa, with DFAT warning this morning that disruptions may spread further around the country.

Protests have resulted in the temporary closure of some airports and the declaration of emergencies in some regions.

Wafaifo to debut

AUSSIE travellers to Vietnam will soon be able to benefit from a new international hospitality brand and hotel launching in the country, with plans in place to debut in Q1, 2024.

Wafaifo will open a 134-key lifestyle resort, the Wafaifo Resort Hoi An, as part of a strategic plan that includes a new mall and other tourism-related projects.

Former senior executive at Raffles, Six Senses, Minor and Peninsula Hotels, Pieter van der Hoeven, will head up the implementation on the ground.

LATAM eyes 85%

LATAM Airlines projects an 85% passenger operation by the end of Dec (measured in available seat kilometres) compared to the same period of 2019, with the group expecting to operate around 1,370 domestic and int'l daily flights during the month, connecting 144 destinations.

G'day Group adds

G'DAY Group has expanded its Western Australian footprint through the acquisition of Wintersun Caravan and Tourist Park in Carnarvon on the state's mid north coast.

Located in the popular stopover town near Ningaloo Reef and Shark Bay, the property will be renamed Discovery Parks Carnarvon, a site which currently offers 173 tourist sites, 19 cabins, a resort-style swimming pool, recreation shed, grass bowling green, and kids playground.

"Carnarvon is a hugely popular destination for the caravan and camping community with more than half a million domestic visitor nights each year, around half of which are in holiday parks," G'day Group Chief Investment Officer Amanda Baldwin said.

G'day Group will spend \$1m installing new lighting & signage, new playground equipment, as well as a shade over the pool.



Outback Spirit

General Manager | Operations

Outback Spirit takes guests to the country's most remote regions on an immersive journey that leaves them with life-long memories.

Outback Spirit's adventures capture the essence of Australia, from the rugged red cliffs of the Kimberley to the unspoiled natural wonder of Tasmania. Outback Spirit also operates a number of Wilderness Camps and Lodges, complementing adventure tours, desert safaris and luxury short stays across our beautiful country.

We are looking for a hands-on **General Manager of Operations** to contribute to sharing special places and shaping lasting memories with Australia's leading experiential tourism business. This role will lead a team of guides, drivers, and operations staff who are passionate about the outdoors, and take pride in bringing guests on the adventure of a lifetime.

Confidential enquiries can be made to Delinda Kalic at Morton Philips on 08 8210 8510. Applications are welcome in Word format through Seek.

Morton Philips

Cheers to ILTM!



CRAIG Farrell and Lea Seguiet were among the Australian contingent in Cannes, France last week for the 2022 edition of International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM).

The pair were representing their extensive portfolio of properties including the Myconian Collection, Blue Palace, Chateau Voltaire, La Reserve Geneve, The Alpina Gstaad and many more.

By all accounts there were plenty of Asia-Pacific travel advisors there too, including James Jang from Where2Travel and CTM/1000 Mile Travel Group's Nicola Veltman (pictured above).



The annual luxury trade show will return to Cannes next year from 04-07 Dec, continuing the event's tradition of pre-scheduled appointments, educational sessions and networking - for more info see iltm.com.



SEVEN SEAS EXPLORER IS COMING



REGENT Seven Seas Cruises is eagerly awaiting the Sydney arrival of its *Seven Seas Explorer* vessel, which is making her maiden visit to the Asia Pacific region and is currently en route from Singapore (pictured).

Dubbed "The Most Luxurious Ship Ever Built," RSCC local chief Steve Odell, and some of his team, have been meeting with trade partners in Asia this week, inspecting the ship which made her debut in the Mediterranean in Feb 2020.

Odell said "*Seven Seas Explorer* delivers a level of luxury never seen before in this region, and we can't wait to share her with local travellers".

"From her all-balcony, all-suite accommodation, sublime cuisine and lavish interiors, to one of the highest space-to-guest and staff-to-guest ratios at sea, ensuring impeccable service, together

with a crew delivering exemplary service on board, sailing on *Seven Seas Explorer* is an experience our guests will treasure forever."

The extensive all-inclusive offering features unlimited shore excursions in every port, unlimited fine wines and spirits, included specialty dining, prepaid gratuities, unlimited wi-fi and valet laundry service.

Explorer is also scheduled to return to Australasian waters in 2023/24, with a series of itineraries including a 17-night Bali to Sydney cruise departing on 05 Dec 2023, and a two-week Sydney to Auckland festive season voyage on 22 Dec 2023.

Upcoming itineraries also include a 12-night Tokyo roundtrip in Mar 2024, featuring up to 44 included excursions and taking in the hidden shores of Beppu, Oshima Island and Kochi. For more, call 1300 455 200.

Silversea discounts

SILVERSEA Cruises says it's "enhancing its pricing model" with the introduction of savings worth up to 20% on new prepaid port-to-port fares across its portfolio.

The innovative 'prepaid' option is valid for new bookings made between 12 Dec and 28 Feb 2023, when paying the non-refundable cruise fare in full within five days of making a reservation.

Langham Saudi

LANGHAM Hospitality Group has announced a new management agreement for The Langham in Diriyah, about 15 minutes from downtown Riyadh.

The property is set to open in 2026 as an integral part of the Diriyah development, which aims to become the "world's largest cultural destination" showcasing Saudi Arabia's rich heritage.

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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.



Hyatt Place Chengdu Bio-Town is now officially welcoming guests, marking the second Hyatt Place hotel in the capital of southwestern China's Sichuan province. The 227-room hotel is a stone's throw to Yong'an Lake Forest Park, and less than a 20-minute drive to Western China International Expo City, making it ideal for both business and leisure travellers. Guests can enjoy free wi-fi, 24-hour food offerings and a 24-hour fitness centre, plus event spaces and a pool.



InterContinental Sydney has unveiled its new rooftop club lounge, which will open to Club Room guests on 28 Dec following the property's \$120 million transformation. Located on level 31, the revamped space offers panoramic views of the Sydney Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney Harbour and the Sydney Opera House, with guests also able to enjoy personalised service and a refined culinary offering, including an exclusive daily breakfast.



A new rooftop garden overlooking the city opened at the **Sheraton Melbourne Hotel** last week, complete with lush greenery and fireplaces, as well as live acoustic entertainment by local artists every Fri. The Terrace Bar features a gin pop-up collaboration with Fever-Tree and local artisan spirit distillers, offering a menu of bespoke specialised spritzers and long drinks. Guests can pair their drinks with the bar-style snacks offered on the share-style menu.

Turboprop stalled

EMBRAER has suspended plans to develop a next-generation turboprop aircraft, stating it is "not the right time" to proceed with the project, despite high demand and promising discussions with airlines and potential customers.

A lack of supplier options means the clean-sheet turboprop would not be able to meet the necessary performance, maintenance and sustainability targets in order to be a success, according to the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer.

ASIC seeks penalty

ELEVEN current and former Star Entertainment Group directors and executives could face fines of more than \$1 million each, in addition to being banned from sitting on company boards.

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) initiated civil proceedings against the individuals on Mon, alleging that they failed to "do their duties" when it came to anti-money laundering protocols at the company's casinos.

Air NZ inks innovation deal



AIR New Zealand has announced the four innovators it will be working with to help realise its mission to have its first zero emissions demonstrator flight take to the skies from 2026.

The four partners are BETA Technologies, VoltAero, Cranfield Aerospace Solutions and Eviation Aircraft, which collectively will provide the Kiwi carrier with a combination of electric, green hydrogen, and hybrid aircraft technologies to help accelerate green flight innovation.

In addition to naming the partners, Air New Zealand has also signed a "statement of intent to order", meaning the airline will likely acquire three aircraft initially, with further options for 20 planes from one or more of the partners, subject to an evaluation process.

Air New Zealand CEO Greg Foran said the airline selected the partners based on the stage they are at in their aircraft development journey.

"Mission 'NextGen Aircraft' is not about backing one innovator, it's about working with a range of leaders in zero emissions aircraft

technology to help move the whole ecosystem along," he said.

"Our goal is to confirm our commitment with one or more of these partners in the next 12 months with the ambition of purchasing an aircraft for delivery from 2026, with the learnings we take from flying an aircraft with next-generation propulsion technology from 2026 then paving the way for our long-term partners to deliver an aircraft that can replace our Q300 turbo prop domestic fleet," Foran added.

Air New Zealand has also signed a strategic alliance agreement with Hiringa Energy, a New Zealand-based green-hydrogen supply and refuelling infrastructure company, with Fona noting that infrastructure partners are just as important as aligning with innovative aircraft manufacturers, and is viewed as key to accelerating the development of hydrogen as a sustainable and renewable zero emission fuel for the airline.

Pictured: Renders of the four different sustainable jet prototypes from Air New Zealand's new partners.