

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news plus a full page from Entire Travel Group.

Samoa shuts door

SAMOA has closed its borders to all travellers from Australia until further notice, suspending all commercial and repatriation flights between the two neighbouring countries.

The announcement follows lockdowns implemented by the Samoan Government to contain a COVID-19 outbreak which is believed to have been brought into the country by international travellers.

Book & win today

BOOK with Entire Travel Group and give yourself a chance of winning an amazing \$5,000 holiday package.

For details on the prize and other benefits - see **page eight**.

Still no date for cruising

HOPES that a National Cabinet Meeting held yesterday would provide the local cruise sector with a resumption date were not forthcoming, however there are encouraging signs the ban may be lifted soon.

A release from the Prime Minister's office late yesterday noted that a recommencement of cruising in Australia would now depend on shared efforts between federal, state and territory leaders to come up with a combined framework.

"National Cabinet agreed that following a decision by the Commonwealth to lift the bio-security orders that currently prevent cruise ships from coming to Australia [17 Feb at the earliest], that states and the NT would then determine when recommencement of cruises would occur in each jurisdiction," PM Scott Morrison said.

Specifically the Federal,

NSW, Victoria and Queensland governments all agreed yesterday to work with the cruise industry to implement new protocols that will enable the resumption of cruising "over coming months".

Responding to the news this morning, CLIA Australasia MD Joel Katz said the results of yesterday's meeting provided a "glimmer of hope" for the 18,000 Australians who rely on the cruise industry for their livelihoods.

"It's encouraging that these states have committed to working with industry to finalise plans for a cruise restart," he said.

After a protracted period of radio silence from the Federal Government on when cruising should restart in Australia, it has only been in the last few weeks that the sector has been directly addressed by government, including Tourism Minister Dan Tehan on Mon who noted cruise should restart as soon as possible.

ATPI to CT Partners

CT PARTNERS has announced the addition of its 30th member, the Australian division of global corporate travel and events management company ATPI.

ATPI is a connected network of over 100 worldwide offices, with Regional MD for Australasia and Africa, Peter Muller, saying he was pleased to be part of CT Partners and its high calibre of members.

"Joining forces to achieve strong supplier outcomes makes sense for our local business and customers," he said.

The move follows the recent addition of Aurora Travel to the CT Partners ranks (**TD** 20 Jan), with the group's CEO Matt Masson saying both Aurora and ATPI recognised the value driven "through our exceptional buying power, commitment to our members and our intelligent, informed advice and support".

For more details about the latest corporate travel sector news, see **page six**.

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Window Seat

SOME commentators have described watching Channel 9's *Married at First Sight* (MAFS) as akin to a car crash in slow motion - but we completely disagree, because just like the geniuses who pair up complete strangers as "newlyweds" each season, we know it's actually all about SCIENCE.

So you can imagine our joy yesterday at receiving a special viewing aid from SKYE Suites, in the form of a gigantic Variety Jumbo Pack of miniature chocolates (pictured).

The link, of course, is that this week the couples moved into SKYE Suites Sydney to start their journey living together, with the guilty pleasure showcasing the property for the third year running in 2022.

SKYE Suites provides the perfect backdrop for the marital drama, with spacious rooms, balconies and an inhouse pool, spa and gym which we are definitely going to need after scoffing the special gift.



\$3 million for WA agents

BELEAGUERED travel agents in Western Australia will soon be able to access some much needed financial relief, with the Western Australian Government allocating the sector \$3 million in support funding.

The financial assistance arrives as part of the state's recently unveiled \$77 million Safe Transition Industry Support Package, designed to help industries significantly affected by the delay to a full border reopening as a result of the controversial McGowan backflip last month (TD 21 Jan).

Bricks and mortar agents will be eligible for the largest grants, with payments of up to \$20,000 on offer for businesses that can verify a 30% reduction in turnover between 2019 and 2021.

Home-based agencies without staff which earned commissions/margins of between \$25,000 and \$50,000 can claim \$5,000, while remote companies with staff and at least \$25,000 of commissions/margins, or without staff but commissions/margins above \$50,000, can claim \$10,000.

The broader support package also includes \$20 million to provide assistance of \$10,000 to sole traders and \$20,000 to employing tourism businesses that have incurred expenses in preparation for the unfulfilled pledge to fully open the border on 05 Feb.

\$15 million has also been set aside to provide up to \$50,000 to eligible tourism businesses forced to refund deposits from cancelled travel bookings.

Hop to it & learn

JOIN Exceptional Kangaroo Island's MD Craig Wickham for an online update on the SA island, including hotel options, air & sea access and bushfire recovery.

Two sessions are on offer on 25 Feb, one at 10.30am AEDT **HERE** & another at 8.30pm AEDT **HERE**.

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\$2.7 billion in losses added

INTERSTATE overnight travel continued to see major losses mount in Nov 2021, with the month adding an extra \$2.7 billion in leaked revenue, according to new figures from Tourism Research Australia.

The latest monthly loss adds to a costly cumulative downturn since the pandemic began, which now stands at \$51.2 billion between Mar 2020 & Nov 2021.

Overnight spend (\$4.5 billion) in Nov was down 30% on Nov 2019, while overnight trips also dipped by a quarter on the same period before the pandemic, with only 7.2 million undertaken.

Nov also saw the number of nights spent on trips fall by 26% to 24.1 million in total.

On a positive note however, Nov did make some gains on the previous month of Oct, showing an improvement of 1.9 million additional domestic overnight trips taken, driven largely by

easing restrictions across the country's eastern states.

The latest TRA figures continued to show the trend away from travelling to the big cities and towards less populated areas in Nov, with regional Australia enjoying 5.2 million trips and \$3 billion in spend, only marginally down on pre-pandemic figures, -9% and -4% respectively.

Conversely, capital cities during the period saw a 49% fall in overnight trips and a 55% plummet in spend when contrasted with 2019 numbers.

Fiji Airways deal

FIJI Airways has released holiday packages which are up to 45% more affordable than two years ago, ahead of commencing daily commercial flights between New Zealand and Fiji from 14 Mar, from AKL, CHC, WLG to NAN.

More specials on **page seven**.

Emirates ups Sydney

EMIRATES has announced it will now fly a second daily flight on the Sydney-Dubai route from 01 Mar, bringing its total services between the two cities to 14.

The move adds 14 First class suites, 76 Business class and 426 Economy class seats to the route a week on board an A380 aircraft.

Wendy's incentive

WENDY Wu Tours (WWT) is giving travel agents the chance of scoring themselves up to \$1,500 worth of marketing funds as part of its Tigers Den initiative.

The promotion, celebrating the Year of the Tiger, is challenging agents to submit a unique marketing campaign that promotes WWT's destinations with a focus on international touring in 2023.

Three marketing fund packages are up for grabs with submissions due by 28 Feb, see **HERE** for further entry details.

Club Med growth

CLUB Med has unveiled plans to undertake an aggressive expansion of its network, confirming intentions to open 17 new resorts by 2024.

The bulk of the new properties will be opened in Europe, and will include Club Med Magna Marbella Spain (May 2022), Club Med Tignes French Alps (Dec 2022), Club Med Val d'Isère, French Alps (Dec 2022), and Club Med San Sicario, Italian Alps in Dec 2024.

Asia will see two resorts added during the same period, Club Med Hokkaido Japan in 2023 and Club Med Borneo Kota Kinabalu Malaysia in 2024, while the United States will see the opening of a Utah property in 2024.

The company will also embark upon a major refurbishment plan over the next three years, which will see extensions added to Club Med Phuket Thailand in 2023/24 and Club Med Gregolimano Greece in 2023.

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\$200m Qld injection

THE Qld Government has joined airports across Queensland to invest \$200 million in the state's international reopening plan.

The investment will see \$100 million allocated by the Qld Government's Attracting Aviation Investment Fund, as well as \$100 million from the state's major airports, and is expected to deliver more than 5.3 million extra airline seats per year and generate almost \$4 billion for the Qld's tourism economy.

Make a better Wish

DISNEY Cruise Line's newest ship *Disney Wish* has been delayed by six weeks due to COVID-related complications taking place at its shipyard in Germany, Meyer Werft.

The facility is owned by the embattled Genting Hong Kong (TD 19 Jan), and was recently refused a state bailout from German authorities.

Scenic 2023/24

SCENIC Luxury Cruises & Tours has announced the full release of its 2023/2024 *Scenic Eclipse* ultra-luxury Antarctica and South America brochure collection, featuring new Fly & Sail and Beyond the Antarctica circle voyages.

The full release builds upon the preview collection, released late last year, and features the addition of *Scenic Eclipse II*, which will increase the line's capacity in the Polar regions - more in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

Book a cruise & win

AGENTS are being reminded that time is running out to make a booking with Celebrity Cruises and win a cruise, exclusively through Creative Cruising.

One lucky travel advisor with the highest revenue on booked and deposited international cruises will win - call 1300 362 599 for more information.

itravel's Mex-cellent famil



ITRAVEL has wasted no time stretching its legs since the reopening of borders, with a number of employees last week returning from the company's second famil since Dec.

Five itravel advisors joined Gate 7's Jo Palmer for the five-day trip to California and Baja California Sur, which was nothing short of a raging success, with no COVID

hiccups along the way.

Pictured with a refreshment at Viceroy Los Cabos are Santina Foscari, itravel Griffith; Jo Palmer, Gate 7; Rebecca McHenry, itravel Liverpool; Luis Martinez, Viceroy Los Cabos; Belle Goldie, itavel Penrith; Nina Moussalli, freelance travel advisor; and Sue Todorovski, itravel Carlingford.

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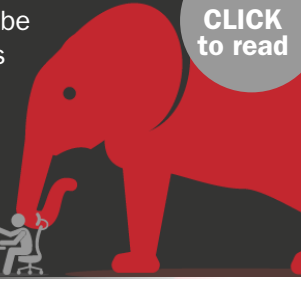


Japan.
Endless
Discovery.

The world as we know it will never be the same. Bruce Piper investigates five big issues facing the travel industry, that can no longer be ignored in the cover story of February's *travelBulletin*.

travelBulletin

CLICK to read



Singapore cash sling

TOURISM Australia is flooding \$4 million into a campaign aimed at attracting more Singaporean travellers to the country.

The 'Yours to Explore' campaign will be rolled out both online and offline, and complemented with other marketing activities to promote tours, self-drive packages and other offers in partnership with distribution partners, such as Chan Brothers, Klook, and UOB Travel.

"We also continue to work closely with Singapore Airlines and Qantas to recommence [more services] in and out of Australia in the coming months," Tourism Australia Regional Manager South & Southeast Asia Brent Anderson said.

Spicy Byron luxury

HINTERLAND House has partnered with Private Collection by Spicers to offer luxury boutique accommodation to Byron Bay's backwoods.

Sleeping 16 guests, the partnership will see Hinterland House become the largest property in the Spicers Collection.

Residing on top of a macadamia plantation, Hinterland House is just minutes from the town of Bangalow, and only a short 20-minute transfer to Byron Bay.

Hinterland House's "little black book" of the best suppliers in the region range from private chefs, spa therapists, helicopter transfers to wellness practitioners on call.

Thailand, just as I remember it



EAGER to gauge the impact of the past two years, a wave of TravelManagers' Personal Travel Managers have ventured beyond Australia's borders over the last few months to see how some of Australia's favourite holiday destinations have changed.

One such agent was Annette Fyfe, TravelManagers' representative for Victoria Point in Qld, who recently spent three weeks with her family in Phuket and Khao Lak as part of Thailand's staged reopening plan.

Fyfe's Thai the Knot Weddings destination weddings business came to a virtual standstill during the pandemic, stating her reunion with Thai suppliers and friends was a very joyful experience.

"It's hard for me to put into words just how amazing our trip was, after the events of the last two years, I wasn't prepared for how emotional it would be to be

back in a place I love and to catch up with my suppliers," she said.

"There were a few tears of pure happiness shed, just to be in another country and enjoy some semblance of normal life."

Another advisor conducting a Thai reconnaissance was representative for Ulladulla in NSW, Jo Patton, who spent 10 nights in Phuket with her partner, revealing she was "pleasantly surprised" that there was still plenty to see and experience in the hard hit tourist mecca.

"The highlight was spending my birthday on a scuba diving day trip - the first time in decades that I'd been diving, and the first time with my partner," she said.

Pictured: PTM Jo Patton (right) met up in Phuket to toast her happy return to Thailand with fellow PTM Annette Fyfe, with both women boasting they are already planning their next visit.

Tassie makes a case

TASMANIA has made a bold bid to play a part in hosting the 2026 Commonwealth Games, a move that could provide a much needed boost to the state's battered visitor economy.

The state's Premier Peter Gutwein has sent a letter to Commonwealth Games Australia CEO Craig Phillips formally requesting that Tasmania be considered to play a role in hosting the major sporting event.

"We are confident that we can work collaboratively with Commonwealth Games Australia on the opportunities Tasmania presents as either a host or co-host of the 2026 Commonwealth Games," said Tasmania's Minister for Sport Jane Howlett.

In Dec, the Commonwealth Games Federation said it would reveal a host nation in Mar, three years after a destination was initially intended to be selected.

Marriott's 1000th

MARRIOTT International is planning further Asia-Pacific expansion, with its 1,000th property in the region anticipated to open later this year.

The company expects to open nearly 100 properties in the region this year alone, with Group President International Craig Smith noting he was very pleased with last year's developments for Marriott in Asia-Pacific.

"Last year in APAC, we signed two new development deals a week on average," he said.

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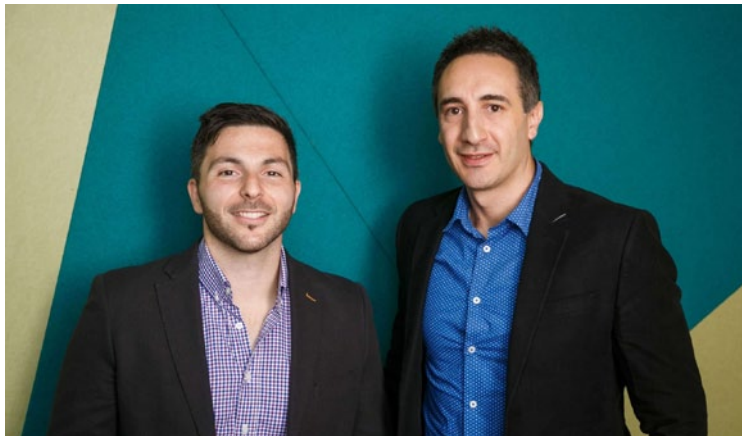
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CORPORATE UPDATE

Locomote launches in NZ



TWO former senior Helloworld executives, Nick Sutherland and Simon McKearney, are once again doing business together, with the New Zealand launch of corporate travel technology firm Locomote, in partnership with Travel Lab.

Travel Lab is led by McKearney, who previously headed up Helloworld in NZ but tendered his resignation (**TD** 26 Jun 2020) and left the company in Nov 2020.

Locomote, which was founded in 2012 by Dave and Ross Fastuca, ended up being acquired by Travelport in 2016, but the Fastucas took back control of the business in Jul 2020 (**TD** 03 Jul 2020) and have since successfully raised \$4m in additional capital at an overall \$30 million valuation.

The Fastucas (**pictured**) also appointed Sutherland, former Helloworld Group GM Corporate, as Chief Commercial Officer (**TD** 29 Oct 2021), with a number of other HLO corporate staffers joining the business as well.

The Locomote platform is described as “decentralising how corporate travel is handled” by giving companies a travel booking solution similar to Uber, but designed for business travel.

The new preferred partnership agreement with Travel Lab will underpin a new, yet-to-be announced corporate travel brand, with both McKearney and Sutherland agreeing there is a “massive opportunity” in the business travel market in

Australia and NZ with so many agents leaving the industry as a result of COVID-19.

“We have the chance to deliver the best technology for the customer, servicing the market requirements of both New Zealand and Australia in one platform,” they said.

McKearney said the focus of Travel Lab over the last 12 months had been about creating technology that not only provides a superior consumer experience but also helps the industry as a whole, adding: “this effectively reinvents and rewrites the travel book of old - Locomote ticks this box in a very big way for corporate travel”.

Ross Fastuca said expanding into NZ was just the beginning of Locomote’s new growth story.

“Having built this innovative technology over the past 10 years, we believe we’re in one of the best positions globally to grow with the market as business travellers return to the sky.

“Having Simon’s experience and knowledge as our NZ partner is a massive bonus for our growth plans...we’re primed for the inevitable return of the new business travel era,” he said.

McKearney told **TD** he was excited about the opportunity to collaborate with Locomote and reconnect with Sutherland.

“Given our corporate backgrounds, the Tasman is going to be great fun!,” he enthused.

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Corporate Traveller unveils platform

FLIGHT Centre’s Corporate Traveller has released a new “fully integrated online travel booking solution” called CT.GO, which is said to allow travellers and bookers to manage all aspects of their trip including passport details, rewards and loyalty programs, travel alerts and travel expense reports.

Newly promoted global Corporate Traveller chief Tom Walley (**TD** 02 Feb) said the tool can be implemented in just 24 hours, allowing onboarding of new clients who can start making bookings the next business day.

“This is a fully integrated online travel booking solution for businesses that want to book trips with minimal fuss,” he said, adding that customers also gain access to Flight Centre’s AI-powered online booking tool Savi and the Sam mobile app.

TripActions buy

CONSOLIDATION in the global business travel management sector continued this week with another acquisition by technology firm TripActions, which announced the takeover of German TMC Comtravo.

The addition of the Berlin-based company will add “a wealth of regional expertise and inventory, including domestic rail, low cost carriers and ancillary air travel supply,” the company said.

As well as a strong customer base in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Scandinavia, Comtravo also has in-house “specialised invoicing and VAT technology,” TripActions noted.

The deal follows TripAction’s purchase last year of UK-based Reed & Mackay (**TD** 07 May 2021), which also saw it acquire that company’s Australian operations which formerly traded as Concierge Business Travel.

TripActions said its portfolio now accounted for about US\$6b in annual travel spending.

GBTA backs target

THE Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) has formally endorsed the *Toulouse Declaration on future sustainability and decarbonisation of aviation*, which was launched last week at the EU Aviation Summit.

The declaration brings together more than 35 European countries and numerous industry stakeholders in a common commitment to decarbonise air travel by 2050.

GBTA CEO Suzanne Neufang said the commitments made in the Toulouse Declaration “align with GBTA’s own sustainability objectives, to support alliances across the travel eco-system and a basket of measures to decarbonise both European and international air travel”.

“Through the use of sustainable aviation fuels, market-based measures such as CORSIA, improved aircraft technology, and financial incentives, we believe these ambitious targets can be met,” Neufang said.

Sully hails reopening

AMERICAN Express GBT Regional GM, Jo Sully, has welcomed the announcement from PM Scott Morrison that Australia’s borders will open to international travel from 21 Feb.

“Business travel is the backbone of our global economy - the engine room of commerce and a vital connector of cultures.

“Reopening the border signals Australia’s return to the world stage,” she said, noting that over the past two years the industry had helped essential workers and business professionals get where they needed to be with a paramount collective commitment to safety and wellbeing.

“We are open for international business, ready to help clients, colleagues, partners and suppliers reconnect across the global community,” Sully added.

Click to read

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

The zero deposit promotion for Mississippi river sailings with American Queen Voyages via **Cruise Traveller** has been extended for bookings made by 31 Mar for 2023 sailings. Earlybird bookings for 2023 cruises made by 28 Feb will also save up to US\$2,000 per couple. For further information, call 1800 507 777.

Guests who have previously travelled with **Rocky Mountaineer** are entitled to savings of \$500 per couple on trips taken in the United States or Canada in 2022. The promotion can also be taken in conjunction with the current \$1,140 discount per couple as part of the rail operator's Spring/Fall promotion. Email sales@rockymountaineer.com for further booking details.

To celebrate Valentine's Day, small ship Croatian cruise specialists **Beyond Travel** is offering agents 15% commission on a dozen of the brand's most popular 2022 deluxe and first-class cruises. Departures are available throughout the European summer from Venice, Dubrovnik, Split and Zadar, with itineraries from eight to 16 days available. For more information, call 1300 664 790.

Until 15 Feb, **Royal Caribbean's** WOW Sale is offering cruisers up to 30% off select voyages and \$1,000 of onboard credit. Applicable cruises include a six-night Queensland journey and seven-night Tasmania cruise from Sydney on board *Ovation of the Seas*. **CLICK HERE** for more.

Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection has introduced its Cruise Back Into Cruise Air promotion in partnership with Qatar Airways on all new European River Cruise bookings in 2022 (excluding Christmas Markets). Travellers are also invited to upgrade to QR's Qsuite Business class from \$4,650 per person. These offers are available from now until 15 Mar. Call 1300 780 231 for more details.

Travelling down to a fine art



SEATTLE is taking a decidedly artistic approach to its preparations for Aussie travellers returning to the city, with Seattle-Tacoma International Airport this week providing a sneak peek of the unusual designs (**pictured**) gracing its new International Arrivals Facility.

The soon-to-open area will boast a new passenger walkway, an extension on A Concourse, a large Grand Hall area, plus some distinctive hanging artwork designed to evoke the natural beauty of the region through

colours, shapes, and movement.

"The innovative design and passenger experience demonstrates our commitment to the future of international travel and to providing facilities that reflect the diversity of our region and our guests," the airport's MD Lance Lyttle said.

Travel agents around the world are being invited to tune into a special unveiling of the new expansion through a reveal video program that will be streamed online on 03 Mar at 11am AEDT - see **HERE** for registration details.

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