



## EK's big comeback

**EMIRATES** has announced that it will be moving to daily Brisbane services and reintroducing its flagship A380 on the route from 01 Mar.

Flights offer 14 First, 76 Business and 426 Economy class seats.

## It pays to debut

**THE** recently launched Rail Online business (**TD** 09 Feb) has added two key payment partners to its platform, with Mint EFT and TravelPay B2B both signing on.

CEO James Dunne said that since its formal debut in the Aussie market last week, the number of travel agents registering for its booking platform had "already far exceeded expectations".

Register for Rail Online [HERE](#).

## Webjet grabs upsell biz

**WEBJET** has acquired a 49% stake in the US-based automated hotel upselling solution ROOMDEX for \$10 million, which it plans to offer to customers through its B2B hotels division WebBeds.

The move follows a string of technology purchases by Webjet, including Trip Ninja (**TD** 24 Nov 2021) and Locktrip (**TD** 18 Mar 2021), with MD John Guscic making no secret of the

## Hit to Crown jewels

**THE** recently purchased Crown Resorts business (**TD** 14 Feb) has delivered a net loss after tax of \$196.3 million for the six months to 31 Dec 2021, a slide of more than 60% on the previous corresponding period.

Costs associated with mandated closures during COVID lockdowns (\$113 million), restructuring (\$7.1 million) and Crown Sydney pre-opening costs (\$20.1 million) all contributed to denting the company's bottom line, as did a dwindling EBITDA, which decreased by 80% to \$26.5m.

On a positive note, statutory revenue increased by 34% to \$778.6 million when compared to the same period last year, with CEO Steve McCann conceding its latest figures reflected the continued challenging operating conditions as a result of COVID-19, as well as the impact of ongoing regulatory matters.

company's plan to push ahead with procuring innovative travel technology solutions.

"We're continually looking for scalable technology opportunities that offer the potential to help differentiate Webjet, transform the travel industry, and deliver significant returns," he said.

"Our strategic investment in ROOMDEX reflects our tremendous confidence in both the core upselling product as well as the unique technologies we see in their product pipeline."

ROOMDEX's flagship offering is Upgrade Optimizer, an automated tool that calculates "true availability" and best price for hotels to enable them to offer room upgrades, stay extensions and guests services.

One of the major selling points of Upgrade Optimizer is its ability to deliver higher revenue returns to properties by cutting down on the often time-consuming upsell process in place internally.

Along with its 49% acquisition, Webjet has also reserved the right to purchase the remaining 51% as a future option.

### Today's issue of TD

*Travel Daily* today has eight pages of news including a photo page from **Atout France**, **Business Events News** plus full pages from:

- Entire Travel Group
- Regent Seven Seas Cruises

## Swing for a prize

**GREAT** Golf Courses of Australia and Tourism Australia are giving agents the chance to win a golf getaway for two people when they complete the Aussie Specialist Program Great Golf Courses of Australia module.

To win, respondents must explain in 50 words or less about their love of golf travel and why they are deserving of the trip.

The prize includes two nights in the Lost Farm lodge in Tasmania and two rounds of golf at Barnboughe Dunes & Barnboughe Lost Farm golf courses.

To be eligible, agents must also qualify as an Aussie Specialist & finish the Australia Foundations curriculum to access the Great Golf Courses of Australia module - for more info see [HERE](#).

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## Scoot poised for upswing

EXCLUSIVE

WHILE acknowledging that Australia's outbound international travel market is "going to take some time" to recover, Scoot's Country Manager Australia Kirsty Lucas told *Travel Daily* this week she was confident that the love affair with places like Singapore would definitely return.

"It's not going to be the floodgates opening, consumer confidence has got to grow and we want to show our commitment to consumers on the ground that we're confident that travel will rebuild," she said.

Speaking following the budget carrier's recent resumption of the Singapore to Gold Coast route after a two-year absence (*TD* 25 Jan), Lucas hailed the Australian Government's announcement to reopen to tourists as the catalyst for rebooting the route, a service that Scoot holds dear to its heart.

"The Gold Coast has always been a really important route, our first inaugural was nearly 10 years ago and over that time pre-COVID we carried more than a million passengers," Lucas said.

When asked about what forward bookings on Scoot services to and from Australia look like, Lucas wouldn't be drawn on specific numbers, but said a lot will depend on external factors not derailing consumer confidence in travel more broadly.

"I wish had a crystal ball but a lot will really depend on what faces us in 2022, I don't think any of us expected Delta or Omicron...but what we really need to do is work with our trade partners to provide flexibility where it's needed to ensure consumer confidence builds."

Scoot has continued to operate flights to Sydney, Melbourne and Perth throughout the pandemic.

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## Make the plan now

COMMUNICATION, support, and leadership will be key themes required to rebuild Queensland's shattered tourism sector, a new report compiled by the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) and The University of Queensland contends.

The survey of more than 1,500 tourism operators was designed to investigate vulnerabilities within the tourism and hospitality sector, and to develop resilience plans to tackle future challenges.

"It is critical that we not only identify the threats that have decimated our tourism's workforce, but that we also learn from these unparalleled events and better prepare ourselves for the future," QTIC CEO Daniel Gschwind said.

Heading the list of forward planning issues is how to avoid critical staff shortages which have crippled the country's tourism sector in recent times.

## ACCC ticks purchase

THE ACCC has confirmed it will not oppose the acquisition of flight simulation training company Aviation Training Holdings by Aviation Training Partners (ATP), a consortium that includes Virgin Australia parent Bain Capital.

The purchased company has facilities in Brisbane and Melbourne and is the largest independent provider of full flight simulator services in Australia, with the consumer watchdog ruling the acquisition would not restrict VA's rivals from accessing essential flight simulation training services, noting the carrier only had shared ownership rights.

## France drops tests

AUSTRALIAN travellers who are vaccinated against COVID-19 are no longer required to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test for entry into France, DFAT has advised this morning.

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## Window Seat

**EVER** pondered which movies or TV shows resonate with passengers the most when flying 40,000 feet in the air?

Well now we have some great insight from Emirates which has put together the most popular viewing list for its in-flight entertainment system in 2021.

Will Smith's *Bad Boys for Life* and *The Hitman's Bodyguard* were among the top watched movies, whilst *Mulan*, *Luca* and *Soul* were the biggest hits with kids and families.

On the TV front it was the bleak crime drama *Mare of Easttown* starring Kate Winslet which topped the list, followed by the corporate greed-ridden megahit *Succession*.

Strangely, comedy thriller *The Flight Attendant* also rated well amongst Emirates' flyers, despite the obvious objections some travellers might have to watching, while sports-lovers flocked to watch the UEFA Euro 2020, the rescheduled 2020 Summer Olympics, Wimbledon 2021, The British Open, and the hotly contested NBA finals to get their adrenaline fix.



**MEANWHILE** things were far less entertaining for staff and crew on an American Airlines flight which saw a woman kicked off the plane over a heated nut allergy argument.

The passenger claimed her objections to being served nuts in Business class "were cruelly brushed off", accusing staff of insisting the airline was contractually obliged to serve nuts to passengers.

That whole beef is nuts to us!

## Back to where we belong



**IN ANOTHER** encouraging sign that the pandemic might be starting to appear in our collective rear vision mirrors, Mary Rossi Travel has this week returned to the Sydney suburb of Lindfield after previously closing its office in Aug 2020 and relocating to Neutral Bay.

"With a significant proportion of our clients located in surrounding suburbs, it was important to return to the area as soon as possible" the agency's General Manager Michael Schischka (pictured) said.

"Coinciding with our Lindfield return, our office in Neutral Bay

has now closed and a second office has opened at Level 1, 860 Military Road in Mosman.

"With travel bookings showing strong growth as borders reopen, having these two locations in Sydney's North Shore gives us critical presence in the heartland of our client base," he added.

News of the relocation follows the company's acquisition by Mosman Travel owners Sharyn Kitchener and Penny Spencer in Jun 2021 (**TD** 21 Jun 2021).

The new store is located at Suite 104, 345 Pacific Highway.

## WA town shake-up

**FORMER** Visit Sunshine Coast Chief Executive Officer Simon Latchford has been appointed as Esperance's first ever Tourism Development Manager.

The newly created position was formed via a partnership between Australia's Golden Outback and the Shire of Esperance, with Latchford charged with implementing targeted tourism initiatives to heighten the WA town's tourism profile.

Australia's Golden Outback CEO Marcus Falconer said Latchford would play a "crucial" part in its plans, which includes agritourism initiatives - more industry appointments on **page eight**.

## Surviving all the fun

**LEARNING** how to light campfires, tie knots, build a shelter and search for some bush tucker are just some of the skills kids can learn through NRMA Parks and Resorts' upcoming Kids vs Wild Bear Grylls Survival Academy.

Available at five of its resorts, the program is open to children aged four to 17, with parents even invited to join in and fine-tune their own survival skills.

The move marks the debut of the UK-based Bear Grylls Survival Academy in Australia, whose namesake is one of the world's most famous TV survivalists, revered for pushing the limits of solo adventuring.

The courses will launch on 09 Apr and run every weekend and during school holiday periods at a cost of \$15 per child, per mission.



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One role is working normal office hours and is based in our office in Robina on QLD's Gold Coast. The second role is to cover After-Hours and can be work from home and based anywhere in Australia. Ticketing knowledge of all 3 GDS' mentioned is preferred but not essential for the office based role, but is essential for the successful applicant of the After-Hours position.

If you have a minimum of 2 years' experience in a similar role, please send your resume to Kym Ryan  
[kym@mtatravel.com.au](mailto:kym@mtatravel.com.au)



## Aussie tourism blow

**BRITONS** have ranked Australia last when asked which destinations they'd like to visit in the next 12 months, new survey data supplied to the *SMH* reveals. Residents in the UK instead listed North and South America, Asia, Africa and Europe ahead of a holiday to Australia, this despite 64% acknowledging the country's borders are opening soon. However it is not Australia's tough reputation for enacting COVID restrictions turning tourists off, with only 10% stating the stance had made Australia a less desirable destination to visit.

## Devils Corner open

**THE** Devils Corner Cellar Door in Apslawn Tasmania has opened a new venue inspired by the surrounding natural environment. Tasmanian Premier Peter Gutwein congratulated the owners for adding value to the state's east coast visitor economy.

## It's TIME for Norwegian

**NORWEGIAN** Cruise Line has partnered with the Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) to offer two aspiring individuals the chance to further their careers through a six-month advisement experience.

The two Partners First endowments will be available this year, and will help scholars achieve their individual career goals and objectives.

The partnership between Norwegian and TIME was announced by the cruise line's Senior Sales Manager Angela Middleton at yesterday's graduation event for last year's cohort.

Middleton, previously both a TIME mentee and mentor, as well as a committee member, was on hand to support her colleagues, graduating Business Development Manager NSW/ACT Vanessa Green, and current

mentee, Business Development Manager WA, NZ & Home-Based Agents Jacinta Baker, who is set to graduate in Apr.

"TIME is an incredibly well-rounded and practical program which inspired me to accelerate my career through the rewarding experience as a mentee, and later, a mentor," Middleton said.

Norwegian Sales Director AUNZ Damian Borg said "our commitment to Partners First is something we live every day, which is why we're thrilled this partnership allows us to give back to the travel community by supporting tomorrow's industry leaders on their career journey.

"I'm extremely proud NCL is contributing these two generous scholarships and we look forward to seeing our 2022 mentees take the next step in their careers."

To apply for a Partners First scholarship, **CLICK HERE**.

## New NT journeys

**AAT** Kings and Inspiring Journeys has partnered with Tourism NT to allow travellers to discover the best of the Territory with an exclusive deal.

Couples are offered a saving of up to \$600pp on selected NT tours and travel dates between 14 Feb 2022 and 31 Mar 2023.

Tours include AAT Kings' Outback Safari, and Outback Explorer guided holidays; and Red Centre Adventure, and Uluru & Kings Canyon Discovery short break trips.

Inspiring Journeys tours include Kakadu's Ancient Secrets.

Travel must be booked by the end of May - more info **HERE**.

## Swiss army of change

**THE** Swiss Federal Council has announced a shift in the country's COVID policies, from today dropping mask requirements in shops & restaurants, or a need for permits to attend large events.

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## Aussies busting for travel

**ONLINE** financial broker Savvy has found money is “burning a hole” in Australia’s pocket this Easter, with 43% set to spend their savings on local travel.

Many Australians are planning to travel in their own state (26%) or closer to home this Easter, but even those who are staying home say they’re still looking to spend big on hospitality.

A recent survey of more than 1,000 Australians revealed 17% will enjoy a staycation, taking advantage of attractions within their local area, while a further one-in-10 Aussies will travel interstate, and disappointingly only 2% will travel abroad.

Savvy also found a quarter of Australians are no longer concerned about possible future travel restrictions, with 14% stating they are “unconcerned”, and a further 13% “not concerned at all” about the possibility of

being caught in a lockdown trap.

Of those intending to travel this Easter, 22% of total respondents said their motivation for leaving home was to rest and relax, while 17% indicated the priority was to reconnect with family.

When it comes to the type of accommodation travellers will be seeking, only 12% of respondents said they’ll be spending Easter in a hotel, while 3% said they’ll be renting out a homestay.

“Governments need to continue encouraging people to spend their money on hospitality or tourism, which benefits the economy as a whole,” said Savvy’s Bill Tsouvalas.

“When it comes to overseas travel, Australians need certainty that bookings will go ahead, and they won’t be left scrambling should borders suddenly close.

“It’s great the international borders will be open on 21 Feb.”

## Delayed debut nears

**MARRIOTT** International’s design-driven brand AC Hotels will debut in Australia in Apr via the opening of AC Hotel by Marriott Melbourne Southbank.

The 205-room property was initially slated to open in Australia in 2020 (**TD** 10 Jul 2018) before being delayed by the pandemic.

Amenities of the hotel will include a fitness centre and an infinity edge pool spanning the width of the building.



## Lynx adds a sixth

**CANADIAN** low-cost carrier Lynx Air has added a sixth destination to its network in the hotly fought North American market, revealing it will now fly from Calgary International to Victoria International Airport in British Columbia from 12 May.

The moves means the airline will soon operate budget flights to six cities, including Calgary, Kelowna, Toronto, Vancouver, Victoria and Winnipeg.

## Sensing a Dubai push

**SIX** Senses has announced plans to make its debut in the UAE market with a proposed 61-room hotel, 162-branded residence property along a private stretch of beach on Palm Jumeirah’s West Crescent.

Six Senses The Palm, Dubai will open in late 2024 and feature multiple restaurants, a kids’ club, function rooms, meeting spaces, games rooms and pool bar areas.

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## 100 DAYS UNTIL VIVID SYDNEY

**THE** 100-day countdown is on until one of Sydney's biggest events gets to light up the Harbour City, with Vivid Sydney to return on 27 May after having its lights tragically switched off for the last two years due to COVID restrictions (**TD** 09 Aug 2021).

Running from 27 May to 18 Jun, the Destination NSW event will host 3D light projections, uplifting live music performances and deep-dive discussions from the world's brightest minds over a period of 23 nights.

This year will also boast a festival-first, with attendees able to enjoy a spectacular Light Walk that will stretch continuously for 8km, linking the Sydney Opera House to Central Station with 47 installations and projections.

"The 2022 program will be the biggest and brightest yet, with many festival-firsts, providing even more reasons for Sydneysiders and visitors from around the country - and all over the world - to immerse themselves in our city at its creative best," NSW Minister for



Tourism & Sport Stuart Ayres said.

"From our creative industries to entertainment and hospitality venues, accommodation and retailers, it supports the entire ecosystem of the NSW visitor economy," he added.

Two signature Countdown Clocks will also be installed on the Queen Victoria Building forecourt at Town Hall so that visitors to the CBD can capture a social media opportunity to share the countdown to Vivid Sydney using the hashtag #vividssydney.

For more details on the 2022 festival program, **CLICK HERE**.

### ATC gallops on

**THE** Australian Turf Club (ATC) is still in the swing of summer events, riding out the Omicron variant with COVID-safe solutions.

The ATC welcomed almost 60,000 racing and MICE attendees over the summer, and yesterday exhibited its WINX Stand at Get Local.

The Club attributed the success of the summer season to the quality of its dedicated team of almost 300 permanent and 1,300 casual employees, across all venues.

Senior BDM Louise White said promoting a new venue during the pandemic has not been without its challenges.

"For our team, it's about looking beyond the right now, and ensuring the opportunities are still there.

"The question on everyone's lips right now is 'How can we make it COVID-safe, and having a great solution to this'."

### Perth bags five

**FIVE** new business conferences have been secured for Perth, a result the WA Govt credits with the launch of its \$15 million funding boost for Business Events Perth.

The newly announced events include four large-scale medical conferences taking place between 2022 and 2025, as well as a 1,600-delegate education conference in 2025.

### Meet.Stay.Play

**IHG** Hotels & Resorts has launched Meet.Stay.Play to adapt to new meeting needs.

The Meet With Confidence program has launched with new offers to support the changing needs of meeting planners, including increased savings, changes to cancellations for added flexibility, and complimentary room incentives.

IHG's 2x Business Rewards has also launched, doubling the points for bookers to six points for every US\$1, up from three points.

When planners book 10 to 50 guestrooms, or up to a 50-attendee catering-only event, they will receive a bespoke package - **HERE**.

### Rocky events famil

**ADVANCE** Rockhampton, with the support of Tourism Australia, is gearing up to host a business events famil to the city in Jun.

Limited to seven spots, the trip will cover venue inspections, a river cruise, and attractions such as Rockhampton Zoo - for more details, see **HERE**.

### Ord Muster busted

**AFTER** evaluating the many challenges and COVID-19 uncertainties, this year's Ord Valley Muster has been cancelled.

"We recognise that the decision to cancel such an iconic and economically important event has far-reaching implications," Ord Valley Events lamented.



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OR call 07 3220 2277**

# France honours an Accor legend

THE French Government has recognised the exemplary personal contribution of Michael Issenberg, previous Chairman and CEO of Accor Hotels Asia Pacific, for growing France's accommodation industry in the Asia Pacific over more than two decades. For his efforts he was awarded one of France's highest civilian honours, The National Order of the Legion of Honour.

Over 50 guests including leaders in the French community and media personalities gathered at an intimate cocktail party at the stunning Club Millesime in Sofitel Darling Harbour.

In partnership with Atout France and their Director Patrick Benhamou, Michael and his team have been responsible for bringing out many legendary icons of French tourism, such as the Moulin Rouge, Alain Ducasse, the Directors of the Tour de France and the Eiffel Tower.



**MICHAEL** Issenberg and H.E. Mr Jean-Pierre Thebault, Ambassador of France.



**GREG** Brady (Sofitel Darling Harbour), Graham Wilson (Special Advisor to Accor) and Clive Scott (Sofitel Melbourne on Collins).



**THE** Hon. Natalie Ward MLC (NSW Parliament Minister) and Patrick Benhamou (Atout France).



**PHILLIPA** Harrison (Tourism Australia) and Cinzia Burnes (Helloworld).



**SARAH** Derry (Accor) and Simon McGrath (Crown Sydney).



**ALEXANDRE** de Lacharriere (Baccarat), Bernard Le Boursicot and Guillaume Brahimi.



## WA enacts net zero plan

A NEW zero-emission eVTOL aircraft fleet is set to launch in Western Australia, in a partnership between local companies Aviair & HeliSpirit, and Embraer Group's Eve Air Mobility.

The two Western Australian companies have committed to order up to 50 zero-emission eVTOL aircraft to take off as early as 2026, in a first for the state.

The new four-passenger aircraft are designed with overhead rotors and rear propellers, enabling them to take off and land vertically.

The planes will only require a helipad for departures and landings, allowing them to be used for both short intra-city air transfers, and tourism flights to

some of Western Australia's most iconic regional tourist attractions.

Initial flights will service Perth, Goldfields-Esperance, the Kimberley, and the Pilbara, with additional locations currently being considered, including Perth Airport, Rottnest Island the Swan Valley, and urban air transfers around downtown Perth.

"The low-noise footprint of the aircraft makes them particularly well-suited to operations in sensitive natural settings, including National Parks and World Heritage-listed areas, as well as for urban transfers providing quick and efficient solutions," said the Managing Director of the two companies, Michael McConachy.



AFTER nearly two-and-a-half years, the Australian-based Outrigger Hotels & Resorts sales and marketing team have finally returned to Hawaii.

The nine-day whirlwind trip consisted of property inspections and meetings with various Outrigger teams.

For Vice President Sales & Marketing APAC Andrew Gee, the highlights of the visit were "being able to reconnect, in person, with

our teams in Hawaii and also seeing the many changes that have occurred at property level".

"As our Oceania international travel restrictions lessen, we cannot wait to see and hear far more Aussie accents within our Hawaii properties".

**Pictured** are Sales Manager Retail Travel, Wholesale & Industry Partners Maria Alaveras, President & Chief Executive Officer Jeff Wagoner, and Gee.

## APPOINTMENTS



**WELCOME** to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

**Emporium Hotel South Bank** has appointed three new chefs, including new Executive Chef Owen Ealden, Executive Sous Chef James Gallagher, and Pastry Chef Charith Ponnampereuma Arachchige. General Manager John McIlwain said adding these three impressive talents to Emporium's lineup is an exciting development for diners.

The latest addition to **Entourage Travel Group** is Operations Manager **Tracey Nelson**. A veteran of the industry, Nelson previously spent more than 20 years as Bayview Travel's Sales & Operations Manager, and has also enjoyed stints at RACV, Adventure World, and MR Travel & Tours.

Ex-Turkish Airlines Chair **Ilker Ayci** has been named **Air India's** Chief Executive Officer & Managing Director. Ayci will take over from Apr, beginning a new era for Air India, with the airline having been retaken by Tata Sons last month from the Government of India.

**Sundip Mace** has joined **Accor's** Manly Pacific Sydney as Director of Brand & Marketing. Mace said she was excited to join Accor, and is looking forward to welcoming guests to the hotel, located across the road from Manly Beach, and just a seven-minute walk from Manly Wharf.

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