

Travel Daily

First with the news

Thursday 23rd June 2022

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Hamilton to 131°

WAYNE Hamilton, formerly with The Africa Safari Co and Swagman Tours, has taken a new role as Experiences Manager at Longitude 131° in Australia's Red Centre.

More industry appointments on page five of today's *Travel Daily*.

A&K adds Crystal to group

ABERCROMBIE & Kent MD Australia, Debra Fox, has hailed the overnight news revealing the acquisition of *Crystal Serenity* and *Crystal Symphony* by the company, saying "this further investment and expansion by A&K in delivering exceptional guest experiences is more outstanding news for both our trade partners and guests".

The deal's revelation followed an auction last week in which the ships were sold by the administrators of the collapsed Genting Hong Kong to an at the time unknown buyer for US\$103 million (*Serenity*) and US\$25 million (*Symphony*).

It's now been confirmed that A&K Travel Group, the parent company of Abercrombie & Kent owned by Geoffrey Kent and former Silversea Chairman Manfredi Lefebvre d'Ovidio, has also acquired the Crystal Cruises

brand, with plans to relaunch operations in 2023.

Both ships will undergo a refurbishment, and Crystal will report alongside A&K to Cristina Levis, former Silversea Expeditions President who is CEO of A&K Travel Group Limited.

Geoffrey Kent will chair Crystal alongside d'Ovidio, and said "the idea of combining the unparalleled onboard service that Crystal Cruises is known for, with the extraordinary tailor-made experiences Abercrombie & Kent has been successfully providing for our guests for the past 60 years, fills me with excitement, enthusiasm and pride".

Levis said the acquisition of Crystal had been challenging, but "the satisfaction of having this jewel in our family is the best payoff for all the hard work and efforts of the A&K team".

She said the group looked forward to welcoming past Crystal and A&K guests onboard, as well as any clients seeking "rewarding luxury experiences".

voco turns Japanese

IHG Hotels & Resorts will introduce its voco Hotels brand to Japan for the first time next year, after signing a management agreement for the new voco Osaka Central.

The 191-room flagship property marks the 75th signing for the voco brand since its 2018 launch.

It will be IHG's sixth hotel in Osaka, alongside other brands including InterContinental, ANA Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Holiday Inn Express.

EK boosts Mexico

EMIRATES is increasing frequencies on its Dubai-Barcelona-Mexico City route, with daily flights effective 23 Jun using a two-class 777-200LR.

EK also today launches non-stop flights from Dubai to Tel Aviv and has announced its return to Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro on 02 Nov this year.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news including *Business Events News*.

Travellers Choice heads to Melbourne

TRAVELLERS Choice will host its 2022 conference in Melbourne, with the highly anticipated event scheduled for 25-27 Nov.

It will be the first time in three years that the group's travel agency members and preferred partners have been brought together in person.

"During the pandemic we used a variety of technology solutions to ensure our members stayed connected with colleagues, management and suppliers," said MD Christian Hunter.

"Nevertheless, as we all know, nothing can replace the human touch," he said, with more info to be released in coming months.

Costa ships to US

CARNIVAL Corporation has announced the introduction of a new "Costa by Carnival" brand which will see *Costa Venezia* and *Costa Firenze* deployed to operate in American waters.

Both ships will be managed by Carnival Cruise Line (CCL), with *Venezia* to sail from New York City next year followed by *Firenze* out of Long Beach in 2024.

"We're going to invite our guests to Choose Fun with Carnival, Italian Style!" enthused CCL CEO Christine Duffy.

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Window Seat

WATCH out Tourism Australia, one of your country's big tourism draws has come under heavy fire from an influential American travel blogger.

Erin Fang, whose popular TikTok account tracks her journeys around the world, recently slammed Australian coffee, claiming our beans are highly overrated.

"Honestly, we heard that Melbourne had the best coffee but it just didn't live up to the hype," Fang scoffed.

While she may not have been enamoured with our coffee, the blogger did go nuts for one popular cafe favourite allegedly costing Millennials a chance of owning a home.

"Do not underestimate the smashed avo - it's the national dish for a reason and it is delicious," she said.

Other tips for travellers to Australia included catching a ferry to Manly for that perfect Sydney Opera House shot.

EY ups Abu Dhabi appeal

ETIHAD Airways has sweetened the pot for Australian travellers mulling a trip via the UAE, unveiling discounted and complementary hotel nights for those stopping over in Abu Dhabi.

Through the revamped Etihad Stopovers promotion, Aussies can access 40% discounts on the price of selected premium four- and five-star hotels, or a free one- or two-night stay in a range of three- or four-star participating hotels.

"The Etihad Stopover has always been extremely popular, especially for guests looking to break up ultra-long haul travel with a couple of days enjoying the wonders of Abu Dhabi," the

airline's Senior Vice President Global Sales Martin Drew said.

"Our new offers enhance that proposition even further, allowing guests to discover our beautiful Emirate with all of its diverse attractions," he added.

Participating premium hotels in the campaign include Courtyard by Marriott WTC Abu Dhabi, Crowne Plaza Abu Dhabi Yas Island, and Grand Hyatt Abu Dhabi, while free nights are on offer at properties like TRYP by Wyndham Abu Dhabi, Ramada Abu Dhabi Corniche, and Centro Al Manhal Abu Dhabi.

The city has been working hard during the travel shutdown to improve its appeal as a stopover destination, spurred on by strong gains made by rival cities in the region such as Doha in Qatar.

Attractions for travellers to check out in Abu Dhabi include new cycling courses constructed on Al Hudayriyat Island, as well as many new and emerging golf courses for sports lovers.

More details on EY's offer [HERE](#).

QF closer to JNB

QANTAS has reportedly progressed to the final round of negotiations with Perth Airport to introduce thrice-weekly flights to Johannesburg from 01 Nov.

The carrier plans on deploying an A330 on the route, representing 27 Business and 224 Economy seats from terminal three, with planned services to operate all year round.

Rex pilots take action

REX Airlines' Saab turboprop pilots have voted in favour of taking protected industrial action after failing to reach an agreement regarding a new Enterprise Agreement.

The protest will see pilots not wear some or all of the uniform, stopping work every four hours, a ban on operating aircraft with a deferred defect, and a ban on signing on after less than 10 hours free of duty when away.

Some of the aforementioned actions will start from 28 Jun.

Speak up for agents

TRAVELMANAGERS has revealed two of the keynote speakers who will address agents at its upcoming annual national conference in Sydney on 09 Sep.

Thought leader Amanda Stevens will be one of the presenters, a sales and marketing expert who has authored five books, while former Olympian and SAS *Australia* alumni Jana Pittman will also deliver a speech about resilience.



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Air NZ restarts 14 routes

THE international schedule for Air New Zealand is edging closer to a pre-pandemic look, with 14 more overseas routes to be launched over the next 16 days.

In preparation for the busy Jul holiday period, Air New Zealand has flagged plans to reintroduce a number of Australian services, bringing its international capacity back to 60% of 2019 volumes.

Auckland services include flights to Adelaide three/four times a week from 06 Jul, three-times weekly to Cairns from 05 Jul, twice weekly flights to Hobart from 07 Jul and services to the Sunshine Coast from 09 Jul.

Meanwhile, flights linking Christchurch and the Gold Coast will start up again on 03 Jul, operating two/four times a week, while the popular ski resort city of Queenstown will see services recommence even sooner, with

Everest camp shift?

NEPAL'S Department of Tourism is reportedly considering the relocation of Mount Everest's Base Camp due to rising environmental concerns.

The tourism group has received numerous submissions from stakeholders who claim the site is at risk from the melt of the nearby Khumbu glacier.

"While no decisions have been made yet, we are taking these suggestions very seriously," Tourism Nepal said, adding a final decision could take three years.

flights linking Sydney (25 Jun), Melbourne (24 Jun) and Brisbane (24 Jun) starting from tomorrow.

Destinations like Honolulu, Houston, and Tahiti will also once again be linked from New Zealand over the next two weeks after enduring a hiatus of more than 800 days.

The ramping-up of services will also see the Boeing 777-300 aircraft brought back, and the hiring of more than 2,000 New Zealanders as pilots, flight attendants, and ground staff.

Germany back online

AUSTRALIAN travellers heading off to Germany can now enter the country without having to contend with any COVID-19 related restrictions, DFAT advised this morning.

Croc-loving lodge

THE Crocodile Hunter Lodge has opened at Australia Zoo, honouring Steve Irwin's vision and everlasting legacy.

Offering luxury accommodation surrounded by wilderness and native fauna, The Crocodile Hunter Lodge features eight unique, family-friendly rustic cabins with spacious decks, and even an accessibility cabin.

Guests staying at The Crocodile Hunter Lodge will receive complimentary breakfast and a gift pack, along with unlimited entry to Australia Zoo.

Marriott signs up for eight in Vietnam

MARRIOTT International has signed an agreement with Vietnamese leisure chain Vinpearl to develop close to 2,200 rooms across eight hotels in the country.

The deal will see the debut of the Autograph Collection Hotels brand in the popular Asian tourist destination, while other planned openings will also span the Marriott Hotels, Sheraton Hotels & Resorts, and Four Points by Sheraton brands.

Six of the locations will be conversions, with all projects to be completed by the end of 2022.

Muslims urged to book for Hajj lottery

MANY Australian Muslims have been told their travel plans to take part in Saudi Arabia's Hajj pilgrimage (07-12 Jul) are in doubt after the country's government announced it would not be accommodating all inbound travellers to Mecca.

Instead, Saudi Arabia will introduce a new visa lottery system, which has seen Australia allotted just over 2,000 spots.

Saudi officials said the online lottery portal was introduced to crack down on Hajj-related scams run by fraudulent travel agents.

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Kakadu trips

KAKADU Tourism has launched Kakadu Tourism Incentive Trips, a new set of packages including activities, experiences, catering and meetings that showcase the region's natural landscape and cultural heritage.

The program aims to attract interstate and international groups seeking authentic, "out of the ordinary" experiences, like the Crocs & Canapes twilight cruise on Yellow Water Billabong.

Another highlight is Kakadu under the Stars, where guests can participate in art and craft activities and didgeridoo performances and lessons at the Warradjan Cultural Centre in Cooina.

CLICK HERE to view the new Kakadu Tourism Incentive Trips brochure.

QUEENSLAND NEEDS TO COMPETE

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Reference Panel has recommended the creation of a Business Events Strategy, as part of an action plan to speed up Queensland's post-pandemic recovery and ensure the long-term success of the state's visitor economy.

At the request of the Queensland Government, the panel made a series of recommendations, including an \$80 million increase for the events and destination marketing fund, in its 'Towards 2023: Reshaping Queensland's visitor economy to welcome the world' report released this week.

Australia's business events sector is worth around \$35.7 billion the report highlighted, but only 16% of the country's business events are hosted in Queensland, compared to 55% in NSW and Victoria, collectively.



PICTURED: The Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The panel recommends a Business Events Strategy to ensure a strong return on the \$14 million the state government has allocated to bids for conference and business events over the next two years.

The panel said the strategy should identify Queensland's comparative advantages and diverse offerings; identify and deliver conferences that align with the particular assets and capacities of a destination; and better align the efforts of relevant government departments and convention bureaus.

The funding, which is usually allocated annually, should also be committed on a three or four-year basis to better align with the business event bidding cycle, the panel suggested.

In a snapshot of what Queensland's business events sector will look like in 2032 if the recommendations are followed, the panel envisions "our calendar will include major events and global business gatherings; visitors will criss-cross the state, including via electric vehicle-enabled touring routes" - **CLICK HERE** to view the full action plan.

Perth wins ICEF

BUSINESS Events Perth, in partnership with Study Perth and the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, & Innovation, has won the bid to host the 15th annual International Consultants for Education & Fairs (ICEF) Australia & New Zealand (ANZA) Conference.

The two-day networking & trade event will be held in Apr, and is expected to attract 300 top international student recruitment agents and inject over \$935,000 into Western Australia's economy.

WA's proximity to the Asia-Pacific region, its solid educational reputation, and high-quality student accommodation offerings were factors that contributed to the win.

Business Events Perth Chief Executive Gareth Martin said the event is "the perfect platform to showcase the strength of our state's international education sector and hands-on student services, on the global stage".

Tourism Noosa sees green

TOURISM Noosa hosted 20 Noosa-based event organisers at an information session earlier this week, where they heard about the organisation's Event Sustainability program and learnt five key tools to help them run a successful, sustainable event.

Event Organiser for Cooroy Mountain Park – Dash for Cash, Andy Town, was in attendance and said "it was so thought provoking and insightful...I had no idea of the myriad of ways to include sustainability in so many facets of event planning and delivery, I'm hooked!"

For more about Tourism Noosa's sustainability criteria program, contact Sustainable Events Officer, Amanda Pummer, via email **HERE**.

Meet Mindfully at Crystalbrook

CRYSTALBROOK Collection has launched 'Meet Mindfully', a series of team-bonding activities unique to each destination, to encourage a more sustainable and conscious way to travel and gather for meetings and events.

Highlights include guided sound healing at Crystalbrook Byron, local gin blending at Crystalbrook Kingsley, and beehive workshops at Crystalbrook Riley.



As part of the initiative, all Crystalbrook properties will also feature a technology power-down period, clean-up kits, local produce, no plastics policy, and bikes to ride around the block (**pictured**).

MCEC video series

MELBOURNE Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) has released the latest instalment of its Event Expert video series, which features Digital Event Manager, Mark Higgins.

CLICK HERE to watch the video, which discusses the future of virtual and hybrid events, and the importance of long lead planning.

Vivid 2023 plans

PLANNING is already underway for Vivid Sydney 2023, with the event to return from 26 May to 17 Jun with the addition of Vivid Food, which will give restaurant owners and event companies the opportunity to create festival food events.



Brand new *Wonder of the Seas* shows size does matter in cruising. Read all about it in the latest issue of *travelBulletin*.

travelBulletin

Grab your helmets and gear up GC!

THE Gold Coast is gearing up to host the BMX Freestyle World Cup, which will take place at the Urban Sport Fest from 09-11 Dec at Metricon Stadium.

It will be the first time the BMX Freestyle Cup is held in Australia, and will bring in 150 of the world's best riders.

The sports & music festival will include performances by rising stars of the Australian music industry, "come and try" action sport activations, and a multitude of food and beverage options.

Tickets are priced at \$90 for a three-day adult pass and \$60 for children up to 14 years - **CLICK HERE** for more.

IHG flushes plastic

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced it will collaborate with Unilever to replace bathroom miniatures with bulk amenities in more than 4,000 of its hotels globally.

The company will roll-out full-size Dove liquid soap, shower gel, shampoo, conditioner, and body lotion to IHG Essentials and Suites Collection hotels, which accounts for 80% of its portfolio.

The move forms part of IHG's 10-year Journey to Tomorrow responsible business plan, and brings it closer to its goal of eliminating single-use items by the end of the decade, in addition to minimising food waste and adopting circular solutions for major hotel commodity items.

Taste of Fiji comes to Brisbane



STANLEY Restaurant's head chef Louis Tikaram recently treated members of the Queensland tourism trade to a special meal in Brisbane to celebrate a new collaboration with Fiji's Nanuku Resort.

Tikaram (**pictured** far left) is set to bring his culinary influence to Fiji later this year for a major Nanuku Resort event, an agreement the respected chef said would reconnect him with his childhood home of Fiji.

In front of amazing Brisbane

views, guests tucked into Fijian-inspired cocktails and canapes including a classic Fijian kokoda with a "Stanley twist" of course.

Other small plates on the night included Sydney rock oysters with a rice wine vinaigrette, free range crispy pork belly with English mustard, and cumin spiced lamb ribs with chilli, sesame and lime.

The Luxury Nanuku Resort located on a 500-acre private estate along the coast of Fiji's main island Viti Levu, specialising in wellness and bespoke dining.

Pictured: Tikaram with the resort's GM Logan Miller (second from the right), with tourism trade attendees.

Freeman takes role

THE US Travel Association has announced that Geoff Freeman will be its next CEO, replacing Roger Dow, who recently revealed he will be stepping down following a 17-year tenure at the organisation (**TD** 09 Jun).

He will join the group from 01 Sep, and arrives after stints leading the American Gaming Association and the Consumer Brands Association in the US.

Freeman's prior leadership role at US Travel also saw him preside over Brand USA's creation.

Kiribati eyes return

THE Government of Kiribati has announced that it will allow international travellers to return to the small Pacific island nation from 01 Aug without restriction.

In the meantime, quarantine has been reduced from seven days to three for arrivals.

The news follows the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu planning to reopen borders on 01 Jul.

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.

The Star Sydney has appointed two new General Manager to its leadership team. **Christina Grasso** has been promoted to General Manager Hotels, Events & Guest Experience, while **Jason Alcock** assumes the position of General Manager Food & Beverage. Grasso has more than 15 years' experience in the tourism, hospitality, and accommodation sectors, and has been with The Star for three years; Alcock has been with The Star for more than a decade, and adds a wealth of local and international experience to the property's leadership team.

Randy Shimabuku has been appointed General Manager of **Four Seasons Resorts Bali**. Shimabuku takes the leadership of Four Season's two resorts in the province at Jimbaran Bay and Sayan at a critical time, as the destination reopens to the world. The Bali resorts have also unveiled a brand new spa, a new culinary team, and immersive experiences showcasing the island's vibrant culture and diverse landscapes. "As a leader, you have to be inspired and enriched in order to enrich others," Shimabuku said. "There's so much inspiration in Bali, I feel like a kid again. I want to soak it all in and learn about their culture, their foods, their traditions - that sense of community is as important to our company culture as it is to the guest experience."