

TIME to plan future

THE Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) will accept its next group of mentees on 27 Apr, offering those in travel who want to progress their careers the chance to develop management skills and engage in strategic career planning.

To apply to be part of the next cohort, [CLICK HERE](#).

Vic adds vouchers

THE Victorian Government has released a further 140,000 vouchers as part of its ongoing support of the accommodation, attraction & experiences sectors.

The cash-back vouchers will be issued from 2pm today on a first-come, first-served basis, allowing travellers to claim back \$200 when a minimum of \$400 is spent on select tourism experiences between 08 Apr and 27 May.

The latest tranche of vouchers are in addition to 10,000 vouchers made available to seniors via a ballot last week.

Cajoling NZ cruising

CLIA Australasia and the New Zealand Cruise Association (NZCA) have teamed up to launch a Kiwi version of the Ready, Set, Sail campaign, designed to ratchet up pressure on the NZ Government to expedite a cruise restart.

The NZ campaign will give local agents and stakeholders the chance to make themselves heard among key political leaders in Wellington - Kiwis wanting to take part in the push can [CLICK HERE](#).

Fuel rises force Rex's hand

REX Airlines has become the first Australian carrier to raise ticket prices in response to what it labels "spiralling fuel costs".

The airline announced this morning that steep increases in operational costs had forced its hand in revaluating its fares, confirming that prices will increase by \$10, with larger hikes anticipated across its lower priced promotional fares.

"This will be the first time Rex has increased fares in more than three years," Rex's General Manager Network Strategy, Warrick Lodge said.

"With fuel prices shooting up by over 30% in recent weeks and with supply chains being severely disrupted, the existing ticket prices are no longer tenable."

While conceding the price rises

are far from ideal, Lodge was keen to let travellers know that Rex's prices have been historically very stable and within reach of most Aussie passengers.

"Our new fares are still extremely affordable with Sydney-Melbourne and Sydney-Brisbane starting from \$109, and Rex's Business class starts from \$299 and is often even cheaper than Qantas' Economy class which can well exceed \$500 - particularly during periods not competing directly with Rex," Lodge reasoned.

The carrier added it will soon be introducing more aircraft to its fleet to connect more Australian cities and boost frequencies.

The price rises will come into effect from 25 Mar.

Pre-testing could go

PRIME Minister Scott Morrison has hinted that Australia will soon be dropping pre-testing protocols currently in place for travellers boarding flights Down Under.

Speaking in Cairns yesterday, Morrison said the scrapping of the tests "were not too far away from us now".

"When it comes to the international borders, they're open and there are no caps on flights, people can come and in the very near future the Health Minister [Greg Hunt] will be making some further announcements about things, particularly involving pre-testing of flights of those who are getting on flights to come to Australia."

Morrison added the dropping of pre-flight testing would mark a key milestone in travel's recovery.

Club Med refresh

CLUB Med has rolled out a revamped Club Med Travel Agent portal featuring a new booking service designed to make organising all-inclusive holidays for clients smoother for advisors.

Agents can register for the new platform [HERE](#), with those signed up to the previous incarnation needing to register again.

A similar refreshed version for the New Zealand market will be launched in Apr.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of news.

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THE LONG, WINDING ROAD TO RECOVERY

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A first bite of the Apple

AIR New Zealand has announced it will debut non-stop flights to New York City from Auckland starting 17 Sep.

The upcoming service will operate three times a week, year-round between John F. Kennedy Airport and Auckland Airport using the airline's Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft.

Air New Zealand's CEO Greg Foran said the timing to introduce the major US route was right with the country's borders reopening on 02 May to visa-waiver countries.

"We've worked incredibly hard over the last few years to make this ultra-long-haul service a reality - it's one of the longest routes in the world, at just over 16 hours northbound and 17 and a half hours southbound," Foran said, adding that the carrier had injected "a lot of thought" into refreshing the onboard

experiences on the route, with the full details yet to be revealed.

Air New Zealand has long considered the United States a key international market, with Foran claiming the new NYC route will cement its commitment to developing tourism opportunities between the two countries.

"In the six years leading up to COVID, the US visitor numbers to New Zealand doubled and looking at the average spend in New Zealand by US tourists, we estimate that this new route would contribute an additional \$65 million per year into the local economy," he said.

The non-stop route will also be strategically important for Air New Zealand's codeshare relationship with United Airlines, which will be able to connect travellers from NYC to key US cities, as well as directly to Canada and the United Kingdom.

EK adds MEL flight

EMIRATES will add a second daily flight on its Dubai-Melbourne route from 01 May, bringing the total number of weekly services offered between the two cities to 14.

To be serviced by the airline's flagship A380 aircraft, the extra flights will see seats offered exceed 1,000 a day across a 14 First class, 76 Business and 426 Economy configuration.

Checkpoint rollout

THE United States' Transportation Security Administration has awarded US\$781.2 million to security technology firm Analogic to produce CT x-ray scanners for airport checkpoints.

The two orders will be used for carry-on items, and are one element of a much larger effort to improve the efficiency of checkpoint security screening nationwide.



Window Seat

WITH Air New Zealand announcing it will debut its non-stop flights to New York City, the airline has decided to celebrate.

Air NZ was kind enough to send the *Travel Daily* team a bushel of delectable apple-inspired pastries (pictured), paying homage to NYC's nickname, 'The Big Apple'.

The treats are now ancient history, inside our bellies, unlike the flights, which will take off on 17 Sep.



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The Cherry on top

A NEW browser extension that provides travellers with competitive hotel rates without the need for third party booking sites has launched to the Australian market today.

Cherry, a new division of the Melbourne-based SaaS accommodation company reZme, is compatible with Chrome, Safari, Microsoft Edge and Firefox, with thousands of hotels registering to be applicable with the new browser add-on.

The extension works in the background every time users search for accommodation options on any booking site, with the tech scanning the web for the best deals on offer and issuing a discount code and website redirect link to access the deal.

More info on Cherry [HERE](#).

Gschwind departs

THE Queensland Tourism Industry Council's (QTIC) CEO Daniel Gschwind will step down from the role at the end of next month, with Brett Fraser to assume the position.

Fraser brings with him a wealth of experience in the tourism, international trade and investment and mining sectors, and holds board roles with the Tourism & Transport Forum, as well as the Association of Australian Convention Bureaux.

Gschwind has been in the CEO role at QTIC for more than 20 years, admitting it would be an "emotional day" when he exits the organisation, but said he was committed to supporting Fraser and the entire team in facilitating a seamless transition, and that the operation was in "safe hands".

AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



IT HAS been an exciting few weeks with the announcement of a cruise date from the Federal and Queensland governments

and the very welcome news the Federal Government has approved the release of the outstanding \$75.5 million remaining from the total \$258 million secured under the COVID-19 Consumer Travel Support Program.

There's been a lot of work behind the scenes as well as in the public eye to get us to this point and that work must continue.

In fact, the months ahead are perhaps even more critical as we entrench support in the policy frameworks of the major parties and continue to educate political and department decision-makers on why travel matters.

The foundations of our sector for a post COVID-19 rebound are there but there is more to do.

We must first fight to ensure as many businesses as possible benefit from the announcement on Sat through a simple and

effective eligibility criteria.

AFTA is lobbying to ensure all of those travel businesses that have continued to operate supporting Australians and maintained their ATAS Accreditation do not fall through the cracks.

We must also not lose focus on the remaining elements of our pre-Budget submission.

This submission and policy paper details the need for Federal Government support for a Travel Sector Skills Retention and Recovery Package, including \$100 million to retain and re-engage travel professionals to address the loss of the 15,000 skilled individuals due to COVID.

As I close this column this week, I am reminded of a quote by Richard Branson, "There are no quick wins in business, it takes years to become an overnight success".

The same can be said about advocacy and public policy.

That is why next week our board of directors will be back in Canberra for budget week and meetings with key ministerial and opposition spokespeople to ensure we continue to build on our recent success.

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WA travel deals

TOURISM Western Australia has teamed up with Trip.com to promote savings on hotel bookings and domestic flights to the state.

Savings of \$60 can be accessed by Australians for travel between 22 Mar and 12 Apr - see the full suite of discounts on offer by [CLICKING HERE](#).

MSC in the fast lane

MSC Cruises has signed on to be a global partner for the upcoming Formula 1 2022 season.

The collaboration will see MSC ships ferry passengers to be port-side to select Grand Prix weekends, offering cruise travellers the option of attending motor racing events in conjunction with various sailings.

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Africa experts in the mist



THE Africa Safari Co CEO Susie Potter is assuring the industry that travel to and around Africa is once again a very smooth process, after deciding to check it out first-hand last month.

Potter, **pictured** in Rwanda with her hubby Steve during a visit to the famous mountain gorillas, left Australia on 24 Feb and flew via Johannesburg to Kigali.

Mandatory PCR tests on arrival in Rwanda and before visiting the majestic creatures were part of simple health protocols, and then she took another quick PCR test

before a flight to Kenya and onto the Masai Mara for a “fabulous tourist-free safari”.

Another PCR was required before flying to South Africa to experience Kruger National Park, and then finally a RAT test at JNB was all that was needed for the flight home to Australia.

“17 days in Africa, visiting three countries and nine flights later I can report that things are much easier to do than you think...have your paperwork in order, plenty of US dollars in your pocket and you can travel freely through the beautiful continent,” she said.

Things have become even simpler since her return, with Kenya and Botswana having both now dropped PCR testing.

Malaysia TA activity

AS PART of Tourism Australia’s (TA) reopening campaign, ‘Welcome back’ messaging is being featured across digital channels in the key source market of Malaysia.

Under the ‘Australia. Yours to Explore’ campaign, the messaging has been supported with conversion activities by distribution and airline partners as they scale up capacity.

The campaign is in line with Tourism Australia’s primary goals to restore aviation connectivity and distribution recovery.

Malaysia frequently responds as “holiday” for purpose of visit among its arrivals to Australia, and with significant pent-up demand, Tourism Australia is seeing strong interest in our country from the market.

Swan flies a new way

SWAN Hellenic has announced changes to its 2022-2023 *Minerva* cruises in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Minerva will set a new course, with additional United Kingdom Celtic discovery sailings and a refocused Arctic season.

The ship will then join her upcoming sister *Vega*, which is due to launch in Sep, for a dual Antarctica season.

Chief Executive Officer Andrea Zito apologised to guests for any disappointment caused, but said Swan Hellenic was very proud of its new itineraries.

Aviation footprint progress

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has introduced a new industry-standard methodology to help travel agents and corporate travel managers better calculate the carbon footprint of flights.

The Recommended Practice Per-Passenger CO2 Calculation Methodology uses verified airline operational data as the basis for its computation, with the industry body stating a uniform method for determining travel emissions was critical as demand from travellers wanting to reduce their environmental impact rises.

“Airlines have worked together through IATA to develop an accurate and transparent methodology using verified airline operational data to provide the most accurate CO2 calculation for organisations and individuals to make informed choices about flying sustainably,” IATA’s Director General Willie Walsh said.

Factors incorporated into the calculus include: jet fuel measurements, non-CO2 related emissions, weight-based calculation principles allocating CO2 emissions by passenger and belly cargo, passenger weight,

Cabin class weighting and multipliers to reflect different cabin configurations, as well as Guidance on Sustainable Aviation Fuels and carbon offsets. More information **HERE**.

Feb’s mixed bag

LAST month’s on-time arrivals figure of 83.6% was higher than the long-term average for all routes (82.4%), while 82.7% of departures during Feb were on time, which was lower than the average (83.6%).

The rate of cancellations (3.6%) was higher than the long-term average of 2%, with figures wildly different from Feb 2021’s numbers, with arrivals (90.3%) and departures (89.9%) all performing more poorly last month than a year ago.

Qantas Airways achieved both the highest on-time arrivals and departures among the major domestic airlines, at 89% and 88.9% respectively.

Of the 56 routes recorded, Canberra-Adelaide had the highest percentage of on-time arrivals (93.4%), while every PER-DRW flight departed on time.

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Africa safari debut

MARRIOTT International has signed an agreement with Baraka Lodges to open its first luxury safari lodge in Africa.

The JW Marriott Masai Mara Lodge in Kenya marks Marriott's key growth in Africa, as it enters the luxury safari segment.

Located within the Maasai Mara National Reserve, one of Africa's most renowned wildlife conservation regions, the resort will offer an unparalleled setting overlooking the Talek River upon its opening next year.

AC adds A32neos

AIR Canada has announced the acquisition of 26 Airbus A321neo extra-long-range aircraft.

The single-aisle airplanes offer greater comfort, and a projected fuel efficiency gain of up to 23%.

Deliveries are to begin in the first quarter of 2024, with the final aircraft to arrive in the first quarter of 2027.

MEANWHILE, Air Canada has expanded its initiatives to support Ukraine, with \$10 dollars from every booking made to be donated to the war relief effort.

Ahoy there again Travelmarvel!



TRAVELMARVEL is celebrating its first sailing in Europe for 826 days this week, while at the same time marking the cruise line's first ever Balkans sailing with the maiden voyage for its highly anticipated *Travelmarvel Vega*.

Before the new ship made her debut on the Danube from Budapest through to Bucharest, it had been more than two years since the APT Travel Group (ATG) had cruised in Europe.

As part of *Vega's* debut, she played host to 250 delegates attending the Cruise Lines International Association RiverView Conference in Budapest, with those in attendance conducting a site visit to explore the ship, followed by cocktails on the Sky Deck and a presentation by ATG Managing Director Europe Paul Melinis.

"Without doubt, this is one of the most exciting and celebratory days for the company in a long time," commented ATG Chief Executive Officer David Cox.

"We are so proud of our new Travelmarvel ships and pleased to

have *Vega* the first of the three on the waters this month with her sister ships, the *Polaris* and the *Capella*, set to sail soon.

"After the last couple of years, it is so great to have such positive travel news," he added.

The three new state-of-the-art river ships feature suites and staterooms across the three decks, and each cabin has an ensuite, personal climate control, luxurious linen, ample storage, a TV, a safe, and a mini-fridge.

Each suite also includes electric slide-down windows that open to a French balcony, while the ship also feature multiple social areas with abundant space and greater access to fresh air, to enable guests to enjoy the scenery.

Across the globe, ATG employees marked the celebration, including the Melbourne office;

Pictured: are ATG General Manager Product Mladen Vukic, ATG Chief Operating Officer Lorna Heyward, and Travelmarvel Europe Product Manager Rochelle Jonson-Deak.

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.



Courtyard by Marriott North Pattaya has opened its doors on Thailand's dynamic eastern seaboard. The hotel will welcome guests with inviting spaces, thoughtful amenities, and technology catering to the needs of next-gen business & leisure travellers. Located a few minutes away from the Wong Ammat Beach on Naklua Bay, the new hotel is only two hours' drive from Bangkok, and one-and-a-half hours from Suvarnabhumi Airport.



Centara Hotels & Resorts has announced the reopening of its Centara Resort in Phuket from next month. The family friendly resort is located just a few minutes' walk from Karon Beach, known for its white powder soft sand and turquoise waters.

Centara Phuket provides the ultimate in family entertainment but with its comprehensive range of facilities, is also a perfect relaxation and play space for couples, groups and solo travellers.



Rydges Auckland is set to reopen from May following a refurbishment. Guests will enjoy refreshed rooms with new furniture including 50-inch Smart TVs, and updated soft furnishings creating peaceful, comfortable spaces in the middle of the city.

The jewel in the crown is the iconic Rooftop Terrace, which will burst back onto Auckland's nightlife scene boasting a brand new look.