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MTA Advisor Susan Plos

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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features eight pages of news, plus a cover page from **Journey Beyond** and a photo page from **Outback Spirit**.

Go beyond in The Red Centre

JOURNEY Beyond is today showcasing its **Outback Spirit** product, with its range of "extraordinary small group 4WD expeditions" in remote Australia.

The eco-certified **Outback Spirit** has been in operation for 22 years now, taking guests deep into regions across the country such as the Red Centre, the Kimberley, outback Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia and more.

As well as dedicated bases, expert guides and specialised vehicles, the **Outback Spirit** experience features unique remote accommodation at camps and lodges such as Seven Spirit Bay, Arnhem Land Barrumundi Lodge, Nguawudu Safari Camp, Moreton Wilderness Lodge, Murwangi Safari Camp and Bungle Bungle Savannah Lodge.

For details, see the **cover page**.

We're back in the black

FLIGHT Centre has indicated that strong global sales momentum has seen the company reach profitability on an underlying EBITDA basis in Mar.

The announcement was made during a quarterly update presented at the Macquarie Conference, with **Flight Centre** revealing an \$8 million underlying EBITDA for the month, as well as solid strides towards breaking even across its corporate and leisure businesses.

Mar also saw Total Transaction Value (TTV) triple the volumes the business recorded in the doldrums of Mar 2021, reaching 59% of pre-COVID gross levels, while corporate TTV alone made ground to reach 76% of pre-COVID gross levels.

Flight Centre predicts its overall TTV to eclipse record 2019 levels at some stage during 2023, when it believes the broader market will recover to 70% of its value.

In Australia, leisure TTV in Mar reached half of pre-COVID volumes, while corporate has recovered even faster, standing at 74% of pre-pandemic levels,

while across the ditch in New Zealand, leisure has recovered to very similar levels, however corporate is lagging behind Australia, only achieving 39% of where the market was in 2019.

Flight Centre made special mention of the upside potential of the North American market, stating that many of its customers in this region were already resuming travel programs, while a large pipeline of account wins are in the process of being implemented but are yet to trade.

The business also noted it would be recruiting more consultants to keep up with a rising demand.

Joel Victoria back at Hurtigruten

HURTIGRUTEN Cruises has appointed Joel Victoria to the newly created role of Marketing Director for APAC.

Victoria took some time away from the company during the lean COVID-19 period (**TD** 10 Jun 2021), with MD Damian Perry saying "he was a key player in our local business".

"He now re-enters the company in an even more pivotal role as we move towards phase two of our ambitious growth strategy."

Melbourne-based Victoria will be responsible for bringing on an expanded marketing team across the region as well as being "deeply involved in our global brand and communication strategies," Perry added.

VA Velocity bonus

VIRGIN Australia has launched a new promotion offering up to 30% bonus Velocity points for loyalty program members who transfer points from credit cards or other loyalty schemes from brand such as Citibank, Accor, Amex and Flybuys.



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Travel Daily
on location in
Barcelona, Spain
Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of **Royal Caribbean International**, with the new *Wonder of the Seas* about to make her debut in the **Mediterranean**.

WONDER of the Seas is the world's biggest & newest cruise ship. The fifth vessel in Royal Caribbean's popular Oasis class, *Wonder* is ever so slightly larger than her sister ships, with room for 6,988 guests at full capacity.

There are 2,300 crew, 24 guest elevators and more than 20 restaurants, bars and lounges spread across 18 decks.

Wonder of the Seas has eight distinct "neighbourhoods" including the new Suite Neighbourhood, an enclave for premium passenger who can enjoy a private Suite Sun Deck, the Coastal Kitchen exclusive restaurant, the Suite Lounge and accommodations such as the Ultimate Family Suite with room for a group of 10.

While the ship will be visiting various ports across the Med, it's a destination in itself with a host of activities and entertainment options including the famed FlowRider surf simulator, The Ultimate Abyss slide, a 10-storey high zip line and rock climbing walls.

Stay tuned to **Cruise Weekly** for all of the exciting onboard action to come.

TTC unveils super team

THE Travel Corporation (TTC) has established a new centralised digital and marketing hub for its touring brands in Alexandria, Sydney, with the new expert team charged with meeting a rising demand for detailed information from agents and travellers.

Headed up by Chief Marketing & Digital Officer, AAT Kings Group and Adventure World Travel, Bridie Commerford, the newly assembled team of specialists will aim to support the global growth of established and emerging

brands such as AAT Kings, Adventure World Travel, Inspiring Journeys, Down Under Tours, and SEIT Outback Australia.

Expertise within the hub will include brand and trade marketing, digital marketing, as well as web and design, with Commerford confident that bringing such specialist knowledge under one roof for TTC would ultimately accelerate the company's international growth prospects.

"The unification of AAT Kings, Adventure World Travel and specialist brands Inspiring Journeys, Down Under Tours and SEIT provides an exceptional platform for growth," she said.

"This will be an exciting and dynamic environment - where we combine our strengths, innovate, and ensure each brand retains its unique personality and appeal."

The move follows a strong period of change for TTC, which announced a number of restructures in its executive ranks in recent months (**TD 22 Mar**), (**TD 25 Mar**), decisions which saw the exits of long-time Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold Head of Sales, David Farrar, and Insight MD Karen Deveson.

The expert hub will also support existing Adventure World Travel partners Lindblad Expeditions, Explore Worldwide and Star Clippers, with TTC currently on the hunt to bolster the team's ranks across several positions - more details **HERE**.

Samoa reopening

THE Government of Samoa has announced the reopening of the Pacific island enclave's borders to international travellers effective from Aug or Sep this year, after a sustained period of closure due to COVID concerns.

Yesterday the country's Prime Minister Fiame Naomi Mata'afa confirmed the country would welcome arrivals of Samoan citizens and foreign contractors from May, with the rest of the world to be able to visit in a few month's time subject to Samoa's vaccination progress.

IATA pax survey

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has launched its annual Global Passenger Survey in a bid to help shape the aviation experience of the future.

Open until 30 Jun, the survey can be completed by **CLICKING HERE**.

Air NZ trading halt

AIR New Zealand has entered into a trading halt this morning, which the carrier said could last until tomorrow morning, pending it releasing a big announcement.

The update to the ASX followed the closing of its two for one renounceable rights offer.

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Disney deal for The Travel Junction

ONLINE wholesaler The Travel Junction has announced a new agreement to offer Disneyland Resort in California park tickets to the Australian travel trade.

Available now to book via the HELiO platform, travel advisors can access multi-day tickets covering both Disneyland and the Disney California Adventure Park.

The Travel Junction MD James Whiting said the pact was an exclusive for an Australian owned wholesaler, with the offering including the recently introduced Disney Genie service and "Genie+", which offers Lightning Lane access at selected attractions.

Disney product can also be packaged with air, transfers and Disney 'Good Neighbour' hotels to help agents optimise their share of wallet.

Register for HELiO at thetraveljunction.com.au.

Seeking the Magi touch

A COMPANY charged with helping more businesses adopt cleaner energy has enlisted the help of accommodation veteran Greg Magi as it seeks to target the Aussie tourism sector.

Ecovantage formally announced its onboarding of Magi this week as its Tourism Sustainability Lead, where he will be responsible for helping the company better understand and target tourism businesses which have a desire to decrease their carbon footprint.

"Our partnership with Greg and his tourism industry expertise is invaluable given his more than 30 years' experience and understanding of the industry's challenges now and into the future," Ecovantage CEO Bruce Easton said.

"We want to extend our expertise to this important sector to benefit the environment whilst delivering positive long-term reputational, compliance and

commercial outcomes for our clients," he added.

Commenting on his new brief, Magi said travellers are more conscious now than ever before of minimising their environmental impact while on trips, an area tourism operators will need to be increasingly aware of if they want to capture more bookings.

"Guests' choice is at a tipping point and is being more swayed by a property's real environmental practices rather than just convenience, price and or positive online reviews," Magi said, adding that "guests now want their carbon 'travel' footprint to be as minimal as possible, so operators need to deliver on this as much as exceptional guest experiences."

Ecovantage argues that with so many operators located in eco-sensitive places, meaningful, cost-effective ways to become more sustainable is "big business".



Window Seat

WHILE Tourism Australia is embarking on a global mission to promote the virtues of Australian tourism, there is at least one famous female unlikely to say g'day to the country any time soon.

According to *The Palace Papers* by Tina Brown, Meghan Markle hated every second of her Australian tour in 2018, allegedly telling people around her that she thought the trip Down Under was "pointless".

Brown suggests the Duchess of Sussex found the outpouring of adulation from the Australian public particularly galling, associating the enthusiastic crowds with a reverence with the Monarchy and not her, at one point asking her aids, "what is the purpose of all of this"?

IT'S TIME FOR YOUR CLIENTS TO WANDER OUT YONDER IN WA

To a place where they can explore the otherworldly landscapes of the Kimberley, swim with gentle whale sharks in Ningaloo Reef, explore the otherworldly landscapes of the Kimberley or sip their way through Australia's most premium wine country in the Margaret River Region.

FIND OUT MORE

HORIZONTAL FALLS / GARAANGADDIM

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Cycling to Sunshine

WORLD Expeditions offshoot Australian Cycle Tours has announced the addition of three new itineraries in Queensland.

The six-day Townsville and Magnetic Island Cycle, the four-day Brisbane Valley Rail Trail Self Guided Cycle and the eight-day Brisbane Valley and Kilkivan Rail Trail Combined Cycle have "been crafted to deliver hassle-free active holidays," the company said, with pricing including accommodation, bike hire, transfers, route notes, maps and more - details on 02 8270 7400.

New Globus hires

THE Globus Family of Brands has appointed Kiyhan Williams as BDM Queensland North; Angela Li as Speciality Market Sales & Groups Consultant; and Jamie Osborne as Sales Consultant, with all three aiming to drive sales growth across the Globus, Cosmos and Avalon brands.

Holiday dialysis?

CLIENTS needing kidney dialysis while travelling can now access a new booking engine providing medical services across the Diaverum network of clinics in 24 countries worldwide.

Dubbed "d.HOLIDAY" the portal features a travel guide, tips on how to plan holidays around dialysis treatment, and guidance regarding documentation and medication requirements.

As well as being part of Diaverum's push towards digitalisation, the rollout of the new platform also takes into account the difficulties posed by the pandemic for patients, who have had to consider complexities around treatment plans such as vulnerability to COVID-19 complications.

Diaverum Chief Business Officer, Kirsty Bashforth, said d.HOLIDAY would "empower more patients to be mobile and live out their dreams of travel" - access the platform by **CLICKING HERE**.

Close-to-home roaring hot

OCEANIA Cruises Senior VP & MD Asia Pacific Steve Odell and local VP Jason Worth told **TD** yesterday that its Australian sailings are "selling hotly", in place of more traditionally popular markets, as booking patterns change post-pandemic.

Prior to COVID-19, Oceania seldom sold close-to-home sailings, but as booking behaviours of their target market has changed in recent years, the line changed its focus.

"We normally sell a majority of our product to Europe, so Europe is our main focus, but since the last couple of years, our local product has been more interesting to people in Australia," Worth (pictured) explained.

Where Australians used to look overseas, they are now looking regionally, with trans-Tasman and Tahiti sailings proving most popular for the brand.

Also well-received of late has been the Asian market, which Oceania is having an easier time selling than some of the world's largest cruise lines.

"It's been interesting to see some companies pull out of Asia, but we believe in sticking with it, because while there might be some problems, particularly in Hong Kong & Chinese ports, Asia



is open for tourism," Worth said.

"Even Thailand's test & go programs from 01 May, the ports are open; Singapore is open; Malaysia is open; I think very soon Japan will open, so we're not taking a knee-jerk reaction approach to that.

"I think the challenge for those companies is they're trying to bring 3,000-4,000 people per ship from Europe and North America, and bringing that kind of volume in the current environment is probably a challenge, where we don't have that volume.

"I think the other challenge is still airlift into Asia, a lot of the airlines haven't come back fully, so when you're trying to move 4,000 people to a big ship cruise, I think it's much more challenging.

"We think there's going to be a very solid market for Asia, it'll come back," Worth added.

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Insurance now a safer bet

EXCLUSIVE

FOUR in five Australians now consider travel insurance a “high priority” when it comes to planning an international trip, new research commissioned by Southern Cross Travel Insurance (SCTI) has revealed.

The same report showed that not even domestic travel is immune from the fear of things going wrong while travelling, with 65% of Aussies flagging travel insurance to be a high priority.

Conclusions drawn in the study claim the rise in the appetite for travel insurance has a direct relationship with the pandemic, with Australians’ attitudes towards health risk evolving to be considerably more cautious over the course of the last two years.

One data point illustrating this trend is the 89% of Australian travellers who claim a destination’s COVID-19 track record will impact their decision whether or not to travel there at all, while 75% of those planning an overseas trip in the next two years will be more concerned about health and safety when

travelling now, compared to before the pandemic.

“It’s no surprise that people are more cautious about travel since the onset of COVID-19, but what is interesting to see is the extent that these concerns are having on decisions across all areas of our travel behaviour - beginning before we’ve left for our holidays and continuing right through to the travelling experience,” Southern Cross Travel Insurance CEO Jo McCauley said.

“COVID-19 has impacted the way we approach travel, including our method of planning our holidays, it has made us more aware now than ever of the things that could potentially go wrong during our travels and the importance in planning for these unforeseen circumstances as much as we can,” she added.

Interestingly, close to 40% of Aussies aged between 18 to 24 did not believe travel insurance to be a priority when booking.

Another trend noted was the move away from big city holidays towards more relaxed, nature-based getaways.

ATG GIVES THE WORLD A SHOT



SINCE Oct 2021, the APT Travel Group’s charitable fund OneTomorrow has been supporting UNICEF’s Give the World a Shot Campaign to promote vaccine equality around the world.

On 28 Apr at ATG’s VIP Sales event in Sydney, ATG Director, Rob McGear was delighted to hand over a cheque for \$120,000, a result of a number of initiatives, including matching every ATG guest donation over \$50 dollar-for-dollar and donating \$20 on behalf of every vaccinated ATG staff member.

“It was terrific to be at our Sydney Sales event and hand over this great contribution to UNICEF to support the fantastic work they do in bringing vaccines to those who cannot afford them. It also gave us an opportunity to talk to our travellers about the work that OneTomorrow is undertaking across the globe. Philanthropy has always been such an important part of the APT business and we are pleased to be supporting those in need, and connecting our travellers with local causes” said Rob McGear.

TOP: Rob McGear and Libby Hodgson, Chief Marketing Officer, UNICEF.

MIDDLE & BOTTOM: The APT Travel Group Sales Event in Sydney saw 300 guests and agents in attendance. Including a VIP breakfast event with Rob McGear for 70 special guests.



EVENTS in FOCUS is our feature showcasing some of the photos from recent industry events. If you want your event to be featured, email advertising@traveldaily.com.au.

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Virgin has its Oprah moment



VIRGIN Voyages last night hosted the final date of its first Australian roadshow since COVID.

Held at Event Cinemas George Street in Sydney, the whistle-stop trade tour aimed to differ greatly from the usual "roadshow slideshow" format.

Frequent audience participation was a highlight of the night, as was the showcasing of product in new and innovative ways; however, the undoubted climax was when all attendees found out they had won a Virgin Mediterranean cruise in a Sea Terrace stateroom, to be used later in the year.

Pictured are Virgin VP International Sales Shane Riley; Sharon Hando, Head of Sales at Virgin's General Sales Agent

Feel the Burns

FORMER GM of the Fullerton Hotel Sydney, Mark Burns, has been named as the new General Manager of Accor's Pullman Cairns International Hotel.

Burns takes on the property as it moves into the final phase of a major refurbishment, with upcoming works include the full reinvention of the Pullman's food and beverage venues.

At the Fullerton he oversaw the hotel's complete conversion and rebranding from The Westin Sydney in 2019.

Travel The World; Virgin Global Training Manager Luke Day; and Travel The World Chair Andrew Millmore & Chief Executive Andrew Zhang.

Accommodation merger update

THE ongoing merger of the Accommodation Association and Tourism Accommodation Australia has marked another important step, with the combined entity to be known as Accommodation Australia.

First flagged in 2020 in a bid to strengthen the voice of the accommodation sector (**TD 11 Sep 2020**), the amalgamation is on track to be completed by the end of this year, with Leanne Harwood to lead the group as President, while Sean Hunt has been elected Vice President and Bruce Copland Treasurer.

"The name 'Accommodation Australia' is a powerful and appropriate reflection of our sector's national footprint and economic significance," the newly elected Harwood claims.

"This year is a hallmark year as we unite to ensure our impact and influence is maximised and work together to overcome the challenges including those created during the last two years," she added.

AFTA UPDATE

from Dean Long, CEO



THIS week's announcement of the direct long-haul flights by Qantas does represent a watershed moment for

Australians and specifically our corporate travellers.

The proposed layout of the new Qantas A350-1000 aircraft is clearly focused on delivering for corporate travellers where efficiency is a key factor of travelling.

As a country we have always faced the tyranny of distance, and for many multinationals, a decision to place regional headquarters in places that don't require a stopover will be removed.

While for some this comment will be viewed somewhat as a stretch, connectivity of people will always be a key consideration and this announcement is a quantum leap towards a fix for

this long-standing issue.

When these planes take to the sky in 2025, they will also change the game for many for our corporate travel agents with this type of product innovation making it easier for our clients to travel with less stopover risk.

MEANWHILE, for AFTA this is also the final week for submissions on our three yearly review of ATAS.

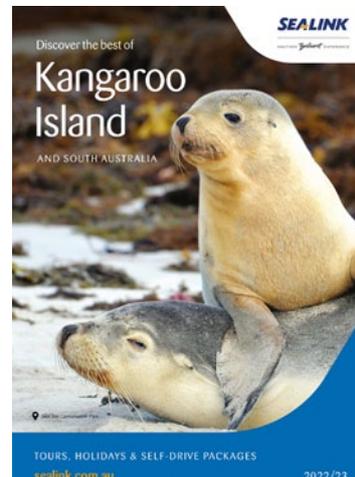
This is a critical review of the sector's largest and most representative accreditation program.

While open submissions can still be out forward, we have also created a short survey that seeks feedback on some of the key innovations members and the broader industry have been speaking to us about in the last three years.

If you haven't already, I would highly encourage you to complete this short survey so we can ensure ATAS continues to be relevant, inclusive and trusted.

Take the ATAS Charter Review survey by **CLICKING HERE**.

SeaLink KI brochure



SEALINK'S new Kangaroo Island brochure 2022-2023 showcases the company's day and overnight coach tours, as well as the two-day Sights & Gourmet Delights 4x4 Kangaroo Island Odysseys tour (**CLICK HERE** to view).

The popular collection of self-drive holidays are ready-made for travellers, and include ferry transfers and accommodation.

Packages range from three to six days, and are themed for food and wine lovers, romantics, wildlife enthusiasts, families or for those simply wanting to relax.

Rotty adds diversity

ROTTNEST Island is calling for new recreational and Aboriginal cultural tourism businesses to increase and diversify offerings and experiences on the island.

The expression of interest includes specific calls for a focus on increasing the appreciation of Aboriginal culture via new tourism ventures, recreational leisure activities & experiences, as well as pop-up food and beverage businesses during the upcoming summer.

There will also be a new retail lease opportunity within the iconic Salt Store in the heart of the main settlement.

"Visitors are looking for cultural experiences that acknowledge the significance of the island," declared Western Australia's Minister for Tourism Roger Cook.

"Expanding the range of recreational, tourism and retail offerings this summer will help the island to remain an exciting and interesting destination for visitors," he added.

Rottneest Island has been undergoing a series of major upgrades, including a \$62 million state budget commitment



Embracing the Outback Spirit

THIS lucky group of industry folk have just spent a few days discovering the charms of remote Arnhem Land at Outback Spirit's Seven Spirit Bay Wilderness Lodge, located on the Cobourg Peninsula.

Arriving by private plane, the group spent the time enjoying the various experiences and adventures on offer for guests, ranging from fishing and nature walks to 4WD safaris.

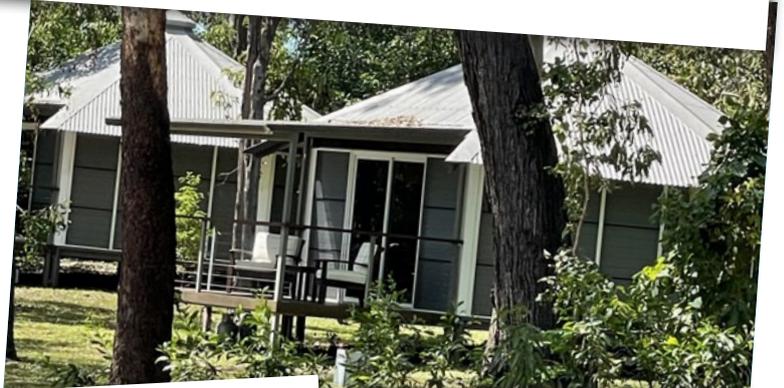
When not out and about there was time to enjoy the delicious meals, with an abundance of local fish, and relax by the pool.

The luxury villas are nestled amongst the native tropical forest with private decks to enjoy the sounds of the surrounding wilderness or to soak in the pristine water views of Coral Bay.

MARC Leopold, Journey Beyond; Russell Brown and Fiona Axford from BKB Holidays; Dominic Mehling, Tourism Australia; Mel Truman, Journey Beyond; Janet Kizan of Geelong Travel; Cassandra Boland from Luxury Escapes and Tourism NT's Monika Tonkin.



DELICIOUS meals.



LUXURY villas with rainforest or bay views.



ONE of the experiences is hiking through the different ecosystems on property with its diverse flora and fauna.



JANET is delighted with her catch.

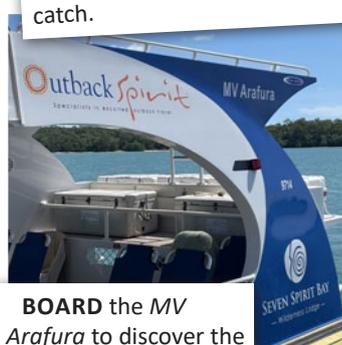


ABOVE: Mel celebrating her haul with a salty smoothie.

BELOW: Fiona and Russell on their 4WD safari to Rainbow Beach.



LUXURIOUSLY appointed villa accommodation.



BOARD the MV Arafura to discover the surrounding turquoise waters.



CASSANDRA landed the biggest fish of the day.





Loyal to the Budget

BUDGET Australia is claiming a major victory after being named Australia's Most Trusted Brand in the Car Rental category in the 2022 Reader's Digest Trusted Brands survey.

The annual independent survey is conducted by Catalyst Research, with Avis Budget Group Managing Director Tom Mooney saying the win was "testament to how we continue to strive to offer a faster, safer and more service-driven experience".

Key Kiwi recruits

PRO-INVEST Hotels has made a number of key appointments in New Zealand, as anticipation builds around the launch of Holiday Inn Express Auckland City Centre, an IHG Hotel and voco Auckland City Centre.

Fraser McKenzie has been appointed Area General Manager New Zealand and Sunny Goo as Hotel Manager for both of the new properties.

The two landmark hotels are set to open their doors this month.

Digging in around Adelaide



IHG Hotels & Resorts announced plans to open the Holiday Inn & Suites Mawson Lakes in Adelaide during a special sod-turning ceremony yesterday.

To be constructed in partnership with the Pelligra Group, the property's public announcement was attended by new SA Premier Peter Malinauskas (pictured fourth from the left), with IHG revealing the hotel will offer guests 130 rooms, an all-day dining restaurant and lobby bar, multiple conferencing facilities and a gymnasium.

"What's incredibly pleasing is to be here in Adelaide, building on the stellar hotel portfolio IHG already has in this fantastic city," IHG's SVP Managing Director Japan, Australasia and Pacific Holiday Inn & Suites Leanne

Harwood (pictured on the far right) said.

"We have a shared vision of creating world-class, cutting-edge hotels and the Pelligra Group clearly has an affinity for our brands," she added.

The upcoming hotel in Mawson Lakes will open in late 2023, a deadline that will also see Holiday Inn Melbourne Richmond, Crowne Plaza Melbourne Carlton and Holiday Inn Dandenong all open around Australia.

Mawson Lakes will join IHG's existing hotels in the city, including the InterContinental Adelaide, Crowne Plaza Adelaide, Hotel Indigo Adelaide and Holiday Inn Express Adelaide City Centre.

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.



Holiday Inn Express Port Moresby has reopened for guests as of this month. The much-loved hotel closed operations in Apr 2020 following the first travel border closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hotel remained partially open to support the community with accommodation as required, in partnership with its sister hotel, Holiday Inn & Suites Port Moresby. Two years on, the hotel's 199 rooms have reopened to guests.



After three years in the making, a new luxe wellness escape, **Finniss River Lodge**, has opened in the NT. Located within 200m² of working cattle property at the resort's namesake station, it is located just 90 minutes drive southwest of Darwin. The

property is billed as "an ombre tapestry of verdant grazing lands morphing into remnant paperbark forests and coastal mangroves". It promises relaxation, adventure, and an "intimate dalliance with nature".



Dusit Thani Hua Hin has officially opened the doors of its unique beachside dining opportunity, 'Nomada'. The vibrant new bar & grill aims to demonstrate Dusit's "commitment to engaging multi-generational guests". The restaurant's

opening is the latest development in a line of significant enhancements at the resort, including a complete renovation of all guest rooms and suites, the opening of an organic, on-site farm, and more.

Flocking to the UK

THE number of Australians travelling to the United Kingdom eclipsed pre-COVID booking volumes by mid-Mar, according to new figures from VisitBritain.

The organisation's latest consumer sentiment research also showed that Britain retained its position as the most preferred destination within Europe for Aussie travellers.

Oceania was also the strongest inbound UK market for Mar.

No mask, no worries

ADVENTURE World has advised masks will no longer be required for travellers taking part in game drives at the Sabi Sabi Private Game Reserve in South Africa.

Masks will however still need to be worn in public indoor spaces, and on public transport in South Africa, but will not be required in outdoor areas.