

Luxury Fiji resort

THE preliminary planning phase for a new A\$200 million luxury seven-star resort on Fiji's Nacula Island in Yasawa has commenced this week, local sources reveal.

Doubloon Investment is spearheading the sizable resort development, which will include 50 ultra-luxury villas, 12-15 branded residential villas, five eateries, a luxury spa, a gym, an outdoor pool, water sport activities, and a beach club.

TC enjoys strong recovery

THE first in-person Travellers Choice Annual General Meeting in three years took place in Melbourne over the weekend, with a higher-than-anticipated 200 delegates in attendance.

Taking place under the theme 'Never Normal', Managing Director Christian Hunter told **TD** he was "really pleased with the numbers", emphasising how important physically reconnecting has been for members after the traumatic COVID period.

On the business front, Hunter noted that Travellers Choice was starting to see strong signs of sales and bookings recovery.

"We're seeing our weekly BSP figures now averaging around 90% of our pre-COVID levels, and this is with slightly fewer

locations, so members are really pumping the business out and securing sales," he said.

"I was a bit concerned that when you see these numbers come through you ask 'is this just a one off? Is it just a busy week or a busy month?', but these numbers are consistent, so it's been really pleasing to see."

While Hunter conceded that member numbers had "reduced a little bit" in recent years, primarily due to fast-tracked retirement, Travellers Choice had welcomed nine new members as well, spurred on by a new three-tier membership model launched in Jul this year (**TD** 13 Jul).

"Feedback on the structure from members has been amazing," he said, adding that while the vast majority of interest had so far been for its middle full-service option, there are opportunities in the other tiers, and the company would be working to bolster those over the next period.

More news on Travellers Choice on **page three** and **page five**.

Air NZ Aussie chief

AIR New Zealand has announced the appointment of Kathryn O'Brien as its new General Manager Australia.

O'Brien brings with her over 20 years of sales and marketing experience within the tourism and hospitality industry, particularly within the hotel sector, and more recently with activities and experiences.

She joins the Kiwi carrier from adventure tourism company Experience Co, where she had worked since 2019 in the role of Chief Revenue Officer and then, most recently, as Chief Commercial Officer.

Commencing her new role on 13 Feb, O'Brien takes over from Michael Zorbas, who led the region in the capacity of Acting General Manager.

Win a Canada famil

AGENTS who complete Destination Canada's free online training program will have the chance to win a winter famil to Vancouver and Whistler.

The program includes exclusive selling tools and itineraries - for more details, see the **back page**.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of news including a photo page from **Travellers Choice** plus a full page from **Destination Canada**.

Travel Daily on location in Louisville Kentucky

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of **Gate 7**, where the **Travel South USA International Showcase** is on.

THE event is held each year following Thanksgiving, promoting visitation of Travel South USA's 12 member states that comprise of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

This year's location of Louisville, home of bourbon and Muhammad Ali, also calls itself the 'horse capital of the world', hosting the Kentucky Derby in May each year.

Delegates from 16 countries that represent over 100 companies are in attendance at the Omni Hotel Louisville, where amongst other activities they'll spend Mon and Tue in appointments connecting and reconnecting with over 250 travel suppliers.

On Sun, delegates were offered a choice of five tours, whilst **TD** was taken on a 'Bourbon, Biscuits and Blenheim Forest' tour that included Heaven Hill Distillery followed by lunch at the home of Jim Beam, located in Clermont.

Australia is making its presence felt with a number of attendees, and **Travel Daily** will be tracking them down over the course of this week on an event that concludes with the Y'all Ball on Wed.

Travel Daily

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Profitability in sight for Rex

REX Airlines (REX) believes its regional Saab operations will return to monthly profitability by Q3 of the 2023 financial year.

A recent announcement on the ASX revealed the airline's regional Saab operations are still currently making a loss, which the carrier blames on Qantas' "predatory actions", while more encouragingly, the carrier posted a \$1 million EBITDAR for Oct.

Overall, the Rex Group recorded an after-tax loss of \$46 million, which it attributed to the lingering effects of COVID-19, higher-than-ever fuel costs, and the suspension of domestic services and reduced frequency on regional NSW routes.

Taking into account the world economic environment, the Rex Board said it is "cautiously optimistic" that the company will reach overall profitability in FY23, citing a rise in domestic jet network passenger numbers for

the first four months of 1H FY23, and strong domestic revenue growth during the same period.

Looking ahead, Rex said it expects its Pel-Air FIFO charter business to show even more robust signs of growth, increased revenue flows spurred on by additional aircraft added to the fleet, and injections from contracts with NSW Ambulance.

In other updates for the airline, John Sharp was re-elected as the Independent Director at Regional Express Holding's Annual General Meeting last Fri.

Air NZ redeems \$\$

AIR New Zealand has redeemed the remaining NZ\$200 million of redeemable shares on issue to the country's government.

The airline first issued NZ\$600 million in redeemable shares in Apr and May, electing to redeem two-thirds of that in Jun and Aug.

Back-Road Greece

A NEW Back-Roads Touring Co itinerary, 'Greece: Legends & Landscapes', has launched.

The 12-day tour is priced from \$5,799 per person, and travels round trip from Athens.

It will take visitors off-the-beaten-track to explore the Peloponnese and Naxos regions.

There will be seven scheduled departures of the tour between May and Oct 2023 - **CLICK HERE**.

Jayride funds growth

A \$4.1 million placement has been announced by Jayride, to support the company's ongoing global growth strategy.

The brand has also launched a share placement plan to raise up to \$1 million on the same terms as the placement, for a total of up to \$5.12 million in funds.

Jayride's FY2022 was a record result for the shuttle company, which at the time announced aggressive expansion plans.



Window Seat

AMERICAN football player Odell Beckham was removed from a flight earlier today, after he was the subject of a so-called "medical emergency".

The wide receiver, who is currently in discussions with a number of NFL teams regarding a return to the sport, was removed from an flight from Miami to California.

Police confirmed Beckham was not detained nor cited, but was 'deplaned' after refusing to leave the aircraft.

The emergency response was initiated when the flight crew grew concerned for Beckham's safety, after he appeared to drift in and out of consciousness when asked by airline cabin crew to fasten his seat belt.

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Chimu's South Pole adventure



TWO hundred Australians had the rare opportunity to see the South Pole thanks to the first-ever commercial scenic day flight to the Antarctic region, hosted by Chimu Adventures on an exclusively chartered Qantas Dreamliner.

The travellers flew to the South Pole directly from Melbourne and back in one day on Sun, enjoying jaw-dropping views of the continent rarely seen by humans.

The flight took in the sights of Cape Adare, Mount Melbourne, Mount Erebus and Mount Terror, and also went over the Ross Ice Shelf, the Beardmore Glacier and the Trans Antarctic mountains,

TNZ webinar 16 Dec

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) is hosting a webinar on Fri 16 Dec, where Chief Executive Rene de Monchy will discuss TNZ's recent activity and performance, as well as future plans - **CLICK** to register.

as well as the Scott Amundsen research station several times.

During the once-in-a-lifetime journey, passengers were treated to talks from Antarctic specialists and connected via live satellite call with the Antarctica 2023 team on the ground below.

Chimu's next South Pole Adventure will depart in Dec 2023 - **CLICK HERE** to learn more.

Pictured: The Chimu Adventures crew cheers-ing to the trip.

Europe agent tips

ORMINA Tours has launched a free downloadable guide for agents with tips on planning family travel in Europe.

The guide covers advice on choosing accommodation style, activities and experiences across Europe, tips on building itineraries to suit family needs, and more - **CLICK HERE** to download the guide.

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MyTours

TC One adds tours/cruise

TRAVELLERS Choice will further enhance its TC One online booking platform for members, incorporating touring options from 31 Dec and fully-integrated cruise bookings from Jun next year (**TD** breaking news).

"This is the next phase of the plan to move to a fully integrated online, offline solution," Managing Director Christian Hunter announced on stage at the company's AGM on Sat.

"Our members will be able to walk themselves through a B2B channel, that their customers can go to their own website to book their cruising, book their tours, & book their accommodation they decide on," he added.

Speaking with **Travel Daily** about the news, Hunter said that having a single booking platform was always part of the plan when it launched just prior to the pandemic in 2019, and for obvious reasons, the timeline was knocked back a bit as a result.

"We would have been in a much different position but it was always about having a single booking platform that members could use to access all of our preferred product," he said.

"The touring and the cruising are big-ticket items, and I think this will really transform the usage of the platform... members will be able to make bookings directly through their own discrete channel, but every member will have that content live for their customers to book through their own website - it's not through some hybrid domain, it's their own," Hunter added.

The Travellers Choice chief also noted that going to a single system would also provide the company with a great amount of important market intelligence.

Back in May, Travellers Choice expanded its TC One booking system to include wider access to car rental locations, activities and transfers (**TD** 18 May).

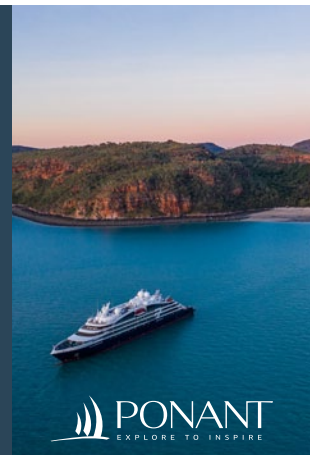
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A golden trip to the Silver State



CANUCKIWI'S third 'Sell Your Way to the USA' incentive trip wrapped up recently with the winning Australia and New Zealand agents fortunate enough to have enjoyed some unforgettable experiences during their week in Nevada.

The group was taken on the 'Neon to Nature' itinerary, starting with a visit to the Las Vegas Meow Wolf Exhibit followed by a Las Vegas strip tour at night, courtesy of Maverick Helicopter tours.

Next, advisors took to the open roads, combining three of the Nevada Road Trips with visits to Valley of Fire State Park, Cathedral Gorge State Park, and the Great Basin National Park.

The agents were also treated to a Downtown 'Lip Smacking Foodie Tour', KAMU Ultra Karaoke, and tours out to Boulder Dam as well as the LINQ

Hotel & Experience.

Canuckiwi has two more incentive trips in the pipeline planned over the next few months for seven other Sell Your Way winners, including one to Grapevine and Oklahoma, and one to Alaska.

Pictured: The group enjoying the strange sites along the famous ET Highway, the unofficial UFO Capital of the World.

FJ lands Vancouver

FIJI Airways has formally launched its direct service from Nadi to Vancouver, announced in Jul (**TD** 08 Jul) as part of plans to become "the new gateway to Canada for Aussies".

The inaugural flight took off from Nadi International on 25 Nov, with CEO Andre Viljoen confirming the flight was 88% filled, testament to solid demand.



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Travel Daily

Sheldon takes shelter

A NSW Senator who labelled Qantas "mongrels" and "big corporate gorillas" who "hoard all the bananas", has been slapped down by the carrier today, which issued a fierce rebuke of the characterisations made regarding a proposal to move some of its workers off enterprise bargaining agreements in exchange for individual contracts.

Last week, NSW Labor Senator Tony Sheldon told reporters that Qantas is trying to strip 1,300 white collar workers of entitlements and "throw them on the unpaid overtime scrapheap".

In response, the airline said Sheldon's rhetoric, which coincided with Qantas issuing a profit upgrade (**TD** 23 Nov), appeared to "borrow heavily" from his time as head of the Transport Workers Union.

"A lot of his comments are similar to what he was saying

about Qantas a decade ago - the difference is he's now a Senator in the Australian Parliament elected to represent the people of New South Wales and not focus disproportionately on a single company," Qantas said.

The carrier also pushed back on claims wages of short-haul cabin crew would be by cut by 20-40%, insisting the proposal would lead to a 3% annual pay increase, overtime of up to 300% on longer shifts, and the opportunity to secure cash bonuses of \$7,000.

Qantas also labelled Sheldon's claim that it is not investing in its fleet as false, citing the arrival of new A321LRs for Jetstar and three Boeing Dreamliners in the first half of next year for Qantas.

Indo denies Cunard

A RECENT Cunard Line cruise was forced to make changes to an Indonesia itinerary, as the ship experienced "elevated levels" of COVID cases on board.

Queen Elizabeth had to skip its scheduled call into Bali, and will instead sail directly into Fremantle, Cunard told **TD**.

CVFR appoints

CVFR Consolidation Services has added a new State Sales Manager - NSW/ACT, with Suzanne Ng coming on board this week.

Ng has a strong professional background in the consolidation space and brings a wealth of experience, CVFR said.

Her previous roles included being Sales Manager at Air Tickets and Express Ticketing, and she officially starts her role on 05 Dec, where she will report to Head of Sales Denise Gabreal.

Intrepid record day

INTREPID Travel has recorded its biggest global bookings day in its 33-year history.

The bumper day occurred last Tue during Intrepid's annual Cyber Sale, with travellers rushing to save up to 25% on selected small-group adventures.

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Travel is Never Normal for TC

TRAVELLERS Choice showed the travel industry how 'not to be normal' when it held its latest Annual General Meeting in Melbourne over the weekend.

The independent travel agency network celebrated the first in-person gathering in three years in style, hosting a conference at the Crown and various entertainment nights at the famous Eureka Tower skyscraper. The group is enjoying a comeback in the market and had plenty of exciting announcements to make.



TRAVELLERS Choice recognising its long-standing members who have notched up milestones of five, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years with the network.



CHAIRMAN Trent Bartlett and MD Christian Hunter on the eve of the conference in Melbourne.



CHRISTIAN Hunter congratulating Georgina Finn from Celtic Travel Services, who celebrated 25 years with Travellers Choice this year.



HUNTER strums his stuff at the closing celebration event at Eureka 89.



AFTA CEO Dean Long with TravelPay CEO Andrea Slark and BDM Leigh Holmes at the Eureka Skydeck.



EVERYWHERE Travel's Demi Borich and Claire Van Dongen from Carnarvon in WA enjoy the view on the opening night.



VIRGIN Voyages' Justin Southern gearing up to meet with agents at the busy exhibition hall.



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BROCHURES

WELCOME to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to brochures@traveldaily.com.au.



Bunnik Tours - Europe 2023

Small group tour experts Bunnik Tours has launched its first print regional brochure since 2019, featuring tours across Europe including in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The glossy pages detail three new itineraries, including the 20-day Italy on a Plate small group tour - ideal for foodies and those seeking an active holiday. Bunnik Tours has also unveiled the new 11-day Georgia on a Plate itinerary - a land-only tour that includes masterclasses, cooking at local family homes and winery visits. Another new adventure is the 22-day Helsinki to Prague tour.



Viva Holidays - USA 2023

Travellers looking to holiday in the USA will find everything they need within Viva Holiday's newly released 2023/24 brochure, which features accommodation and touring options in America's most popular cities - think Broadway shows, theme park favourites, and scenic flights over the Grand Canyon. Check out the Mountain States & National Parks section, which highlights Rocky Mountaineer's new Rockies to Red Rocks rail

journeys, as well as small group tours which explore iconic national parks in Utah, Nevada and California.

Cocky Guides lead the way



ACCESSIBLE tour operator Cocky Guides took home the Silver honour in the 2022 NSW Tourism Awards, held at Luna Park Sydney last Thu.

The award marks the second consecutive win for Cocky Guides in the Accessible Tourism category, after scoring the Bronze accolade last year.

Cocky Guides run tactile and sensory group adventures at over 60 destinations across Australia for more than 1,000 blind and low-vision Australians.

Cocky Guides Founder and General Manager James (Buck) McFarlane believes that "businesses that make

accessibility a priority will naturally improve the overall experience for every guest".

McFarlane went on to suggest that travel businesses should look at accessible tourism as "an ongoing journey of continual service excellence improvement".

Pictured: McFarlane holding the Silver award with Trip Leaders Kellie and Donna on either side.

A Brilliant floating

BRILLIANT *Lady*, the fourth cruise ship for Virgin Voyages, has reached a key milestone after floating out at the Fincantieri shipyard in Italy last week.

The newbuild will now undergo the final stages of her construction, in preparation for her maiden voyage on 24 Dec 2023 - a five-night Brilliant Caribbean Holidays cruise.

From 30 Dec, *Brilliant Lady* will homeport in San Juan, Puerto Rico, and will offer seven-night cruises to the Southern and Eastern Caribbean.

US regional cuts

ALTHOUGH domestic air travel is rebounding in the US, regional flight demand is lagging behind, causing several airlines to cut services to smaller cities.

With 100 regional jets out of service due to a pilot shortage, American Airlines has scrapped services to 15 cities, while United Airlines has also reduced its regional network, particularly in Virginia and West Virginia.

Additionally, Delta Air Lines stopped servicing a number of smaller airports in 2020, and has still not returned to 10 of them.

BNE owns tech issue

PASSENGERS travelling through Brisbane Airport's Domestic Terminal yesterday faced flight delays due to an issue which led to travellers needing to be rescreened by security.

Brisbane Airport Corporation (BAC) confirmed there was no threat to security, and issued an apology for the inconvenience caused to travellers.

BAC credited the "swift response" by Airport Security, which meant the impacts on flight schedules were contained to the southern end of the terminal (Virgin Australia end).

A cup of Langham

THE Langham Sydney has partnered with Chatime Australia to bring a self-service Bubble Tea Bar to its Kitchens on Kent dining buffet from 04 Dec.

Restaurant patrons will be able to enjoy three Chatime flavours, seven days a week during lunch and dinner service.

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