



MTA RENEE MCLENNAN

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features nine pages of news, a photo page from **Norwegian Cruise Lines**, a product update from **MW Tours** plus full pages from:

- **Abercrombie & Kent**
- **CAPA**

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EUROPE RIVER CRUISING

2023 Earlybirds
Ending



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VA undercutting its rivals

VIRGIN Australia corporate airfares are consistently about a third cheaper than Qantas and also lower than Rex Airlines on Australia's key domestic capital city routes, according to a new analysis from corporate travel industry consultant Tony O'Connor from Butler Caroye.

Figures presented yesterday at the 22nd annual BTTB conference in Sydney highlighted the significant difference between the key domestic carriers, with Virgin Australia consistently about 34% cheaper than Qantas on the "golden triangle" between Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney.

O'Connor's analysis, which factors in discounts and availability of seats in each fare booking class, shows Qantas has started to reduce fares this year, tracking VA's reductions pathway which started six months ago.

"However Virgin has continued to reduce fares at about the same rate, maintaining the 34% fare

gap," O'Connor noted.

Interestingly Rex Airlines, which is ramping up its capital city jet operations, has average fares "bang in the middle" between Qantas and Virgin Australia.

Availabilities are a major factor in determining the average fare levels, with Qantas making far fewer tickets available at the lower end booking classes than its domestic rivals.

There's an even bigger gap when it comes to business class, the analysis shows, with VA 56% cheaper than Qantas when it comes to seats up the front.

More from BTTB on **page five**.

Munro leaves AAoA

RICHARD Munro will leave the Accommodation Association of Australia on 30 Sep, wrapping up his contract as interim CEO which has seen him play a key role in the proposed amalgamation with Tourism Accommodation Australia.

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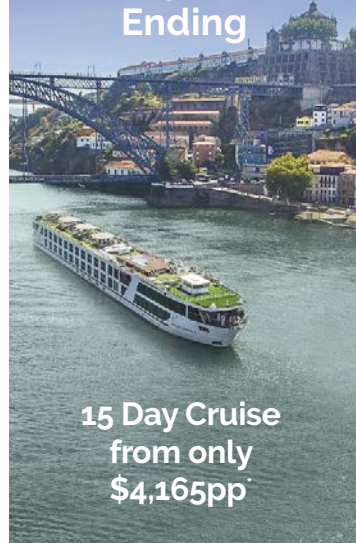
ABERCROMBIE & Kent is today showcasing its range of 2023 luxury expedition cruises, including departures to the polar regions and exotic Indian Ocean destinations.

Further details on **page 10**, with lots more luxury travel news on **page eight** of today's *TD*.

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CENTARA
HOTELS & RESORTS

Domestic tix prices surge

DOMESTIC Economy airfares in Australia increased by 56% between Apr and Aug, a new report from the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) has shown.

While Apr represented an 11-year low price for Economy tickets, the sharp spike over the next four months was driven by a combination of rising fuel prices, strong demand, as well as temporary capacity reductions.

The report also showed that discount Economy airfares rose to be at their highest point in Aug in close two years, with the ACCC suggesting healthy airline competition is now more crucial than ever before to maintain pressure on ticket prices and service levels across the industry.

Lamentably for travellers, this upward trend is anticipated to last until at least Oct due to reduced capacity amid ongoing workforce challenges.

Meanwhile, Jul saw around 4.7 million passengers fly domestically, the highest number since the start of the pandemic, and constituting 89% of the

passenger volume in Jul 2019, with travel to Queensland proving particularly popular with Aussies.

Passengers flying between Canberra and the Gold Coast almost doubled compared to Jul 2019, while travel between the Gold Coast and Melbourne and Adelaide also surpassed pre-pandemic demand.

"Pent-up demand for leisure travel, particularly from people in the colder southern states, continues to drive the recovery in passenger numbers," ACCC Chair Gina Cass-Gottlieb explained.

"Demand on routes between Canberra, Melbourne and Sydney has lagged behind, in part due to the slower recovery of corporate and business travel," she added.

Commentary in the quarterly release also predicted that airlines will be more likely to be "honest and proactive" in communicating the reasons why a flight is delayed or cancelled, and what compensation travellers are entitled to.

The report also showed that Business airfares rose by 17% between Jun and Aug.

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Light up corporate travel

VIRGIN Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka and Rex Airlines Deputy Chairman John Sharp have been named among the line-up of speakers for Flight Centre's corporate travel event, Illuminate.

To be held in person for the first time in three years at Alexandria's The Venue in Sydney on 20 Oct, the major gathering will focus on the theme of 'Focus Forward - Bigger, Better, Stronger', and will aim to provide insights into how the corporate travel sector can recover from the pandemic.

Also speaking at Illuminate will be HSBC Chief Economist Paul Bloxham, Ernst & Young Partner, Climate Change and Sustainability Services Adam Carrel, and Sir David Attenborough's right-hand-man Dr Chadden Hunter, who will join Flight Centre's top brass on stage including CEO Graham 'Skroo' Turner, Flight Centre Corporate MD ANZ Melissa Elf, Corporate Traveller Global MD

Tom Walley, and the company's new Global Sustainability Officer Michelle Degenhardt (**TD** 18 Jan).

The event will be hosted as a hybrid event collectively by FCM, Corporate Traveller, Flight Centre Business Travel, Stage and Screen, and FCM Meetings and Events, with Elf stating the schedule would focus on growth opportunities and sustainability.

"Our speakers will focus forward on how we can return bigger, better, and stronger, including exploring the path forward for businesses, the industry post-pandemic, and how we can do this together sustainably," she said - register to attend **HERE**.

MW Tours brochure

LEARN more about what tours are on offer for southern & eastern Africa, India and Sri Lanka with MW Tours' new e-brochure.

See the **back page** for more info.

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TM pulls together

TRAVELMANAGERS is gearing up for its 2022 annual national conference, which kicks off tomorrow morning at the Sydney Masonic Centre.

Under the theme 'together', the two-day event will bring personal travel managers (PTMs), National Partnership Office (NPO) team and partner suppliers together for the first time in three years.

Attendees will hear from Amanda Stevens, a renowned thought leader on customer experience; Gavin Smith, Vice President & Managing Director of Royal Caribbean Cruises for Australia and New Zealand; and 2021 Sports Hall of Fame inductee, Jana Pittman.

The speaker line-up also includes NPO duo Sandra Leslie and Sandra Reucker, and four PTMs, with attendees to be given the opportunity to attend workshops, a supplier trade show, and an open-forum discussion.



Window Seat

MAN, I hope that's not my bag!

If ever there was to be a perfect visual representation of Qantas' current woes around delayed flights and lost baggage, then perhaps this is that photo.

Country music singer Fanny Lumsden was the first person to spot the rogue piece of luggage on Sydney Airport's tarmac, who alerted Qantas staff immediately, triggering three workers to rush out and retrieve the misplaced bag.

Talk about packing for an unexpected road trip!



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INDEPENDENT HOLIDAY PACKAGE EXPERTS

Very cool savings

G ADVENTURES is offering 20% savings on its upcoming 2022/23 Antarctic season to celebrate the return of *G Expedition*.

Bookings need to be made by 29 Sep for travel between 22 Oct 2022 and 13 Mar 2023, and includes trips such as the 11-day Antarctica Classic expedition, usually priced from \$11,399ppts but is now on offer from \$9,119 per person, twin share.

Former Mary Rossi house burns down

A \$24 million dollar Sydney property, which was once owned by the late luxury travel agency owner Mary Rossi, burnt to the ground in a suspicious fire last Sat, NSW Police has stated.

The 107-year-old heritage waterfront mansion in Northwood was purchased by prominent fund manager Owen Chen and his wife, Xiao Hong Li, in Dec last year.

Rydges Sydney rebooted

CRYSTALBROOK Group has acquired The Rydges Sydney Harbour hotel, located in the city's historic Rocks precinct, which up until now had been owned by New Landmark Hotels since 2003.

The 176-room hotel is spread across two buildings, including an eight-storey heritage building and a six-storey 1980s development, and features a rooftop pool with panoramic views of the Sydney Harbour Bridge and the Sydney Opera House.

It is believed that Crystalbrook Group purchased the property for around \$100 million, with CEO Geoff York noting, "our group has been seeking a Sydney flagship property to complement our growing portfolio".

"The prime location, coupled with an ability to reposition the property to our demanding design standards, made this an ideal acquisition for us."

The property will continue to be operated by Event Hotels and Resorts under the Rydges brand until Crystalbrook Group reinvents the hotel.

Speaking on New Landmark Hotels' decision to sell the property, one of the company's partners, Chandru Tolani, said it felt like the right time "to pass the baton onto a new group, who can re-imagine the future for this special property".

Tweet, Travco deal

TWEET World Travel will add the full range of Travco's Nile River cruise fleet in its inventory thanks to a new partnership between the two companies, strengthening Tweet World Travel's river cruising market presence in Australia.

In celebration of the deal, trade partners can join a special webinar on the Egypt product on Thu 28 Sep - [CLICK HERE](#).

QR/VA deal takes off

YESTERDAY marked the formal beginning of a new strategic partnership between Qatar Airways and Virgin Australia, spanning 49 markets across Australia, Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Announced in May (**TD 11 May**), the partnership opens travel to over 150 countries across the extensive Qatar Airways and Virgin Australia networks, including popular destinations such as London, Paris, Rome and Athens, with flights now available to book on each airline's website for travel from 12 Sep.

From today, members of Privilege Club will be able to earn Avios and QPoints on flights operated by Virgin Australia, and Velocity Frequent Flyer members can now earn Velocity Points and Status Credits for flights operated by Qatar Airways.

The partnership will provide a vital trade and tourism boost for both Australia and Qatar, VA said.



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Why Vic #Tourismmatters

THE Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is calling on the major parties ahead of the state election in Nov to commit to its five-point plan to help resurrect Victoria's tourism economy.

The body has put together a strategy document that includes ways to tackle the employment and skills crisis in tourism, improve infrastructure, leverage the Commonwealth Games, invest in the changing consumer profile of travellers, as well as a 10-year blueprint to revitalise prospects for Greater Melbourne.

Central to the platform is the need for regional areas of the state to accelerate tourism projects so that full advantage can be taken of the upcoming Commonwealth Games in 2026.

"There is no doubt that Regional Victoria will shine on the global stage during the 2026 Victoria Commonwealth Games," VTIC CEO Felicia Mariani said.

"There's a lot of work to do however before our regions can provide the quality accommodation, servicing and transport needed to manage up to 40,000 visitors that are expected to travel to each of the four regions," she added.

The latest campaign will be supported by the hashtag #tourismmatters, and will also call for a review of Crown Land leases to encourage more infrastructure development, a dedicated business events strategy, free TAFE tourism & travel courses, and a cap on the number of days properties can be listed on short-stay websites each year.

Greater Melbourne is viewed as another crucial pillar of recovery, with the VTIC stating the city had undergone a "definitive change to its rhythm" following lockdowns, with government now needing to invest in ways to adapt to the change in travellers' needs.

Corporate travel in focus



THIS week several hundred delegates gathered at Sydney's Randwick Racecourse for the 22nd BTTB Annual Travel Conference & Awards.

The gathering includes an exhibition where suppliers and TMCs such as United Airlines, Virgin Australia, Uber for Business, World Travel Protection, Zeno by Serko, Air Canada and Butler Caroye are taking part, alongside several TMCs targeting the high profile corporate travel buyers in the room.

Key topics in focus include the ongoing radical changes in the travel supply chain, the elevated importance of traveller safety and risk management, the drive for sustainability within corporate travel programs, and

the evolution and increasing importance of travel technology.

The rise of NDC and its impact on travel buyers and providers has also been repeatedly raised during the conference, while later today the gathering will wrap up with a presentation from Corporate Travel Management MD Jamie Pherous.

An informative session yesterday led by Serko's Murray Warner (**pictured** second from right) allowed some of the travel management companies to provide their own perspective on the evolution of the industry, including, from left: Samantha Wagland from CWT, CT Connections' Andrew Frederick and David Goldman from Goldman Travel Corporation.



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WA dreams with QF

TOURISM WA has partnered with Qantas to celebrate its new global tourism brand (**TD** 06 Sep), encouraging interstate travellers to 'Walk On A Dream' and explore the state's "wondrous, dreamlike" destinations.

The carrier is offering special \$175 interstate airfares to Perth from all capital cities when purchasing a return ticket, from today until Thu 15 Sep (unless sold out prior), for travel between Oct 2022 to Jun 2023.

"Incentives like this make it more affordable for our visitors and will help support accommodation providers, tourism operators and local hospitality businesses, and provide a boost to the Western Australia economy," enthused Western Australia Premier Mark McGowan.

The special airfares will be promoted via digital channels and social media using creative imagery from the 'Walking On A Dream' brand campaign.

Radisson pay deal

RADISSON Hotel Group has partnered with CellPoint Digital to utilise its full payment orchestration platform, which will organise transactions across regions and payment methods, resulting in reduced costs, increased acceptance rates, and improved customer experience.

Porter House rules

THE Porter House Hotel Sydney - MGallery is set to open its doors on Castlereagh Street on Tue 13 Sep, becoming Sydney's newest boutique hotel.

The multi-million dollar luxury property occupies the first 10 floors of a 36-storey mixed-use restored heritage-listed tower in the Porter House precinct.

Guests who book two nights or more before 31 Oct for stays between 13 Sep and 22 Dec can save up to 17% on room rates and receive a \$50 food and beverage credit - **CLICK HERE** to book.

Phuket makes a big splash



A NEW \$190 million dollar water park and leisure complex has opened in Thailand, following the country's recent call to fully reopen its borders to international travellers.

Positioned in the growing Kathu district of Phuket between the popular tourist hubs of Phuket Town and Patong Beach, the park is the latest venture by the Proud Group, one of Thailand's leading developers of hospitality and leisure projects.

Andamanda Phuket covers 9.3 hectares of land and is comprised of a Thai heritage-themed water park with five separate zones and two dining areas, as well as large several entertainment spaces and retail outlets.

The park allows travellers to immerse themselves in a world of Thai mythology and legend, while providing action-packed aquatic adventures for all ages.

Guests can enjoy a collection of slides and rides, including a 550-metre-long lazy river, the longest in Asia, and a huge wave pool, as well as kick back at the tropical beachfront restaurant or one of the swim-up bars.

There is also a floating market with traditional boats, local arts and crafts, food and beverage outlets, and a stage for cultural performances.

To celebrate the return of travel, Andamanda Phuket is offering earlybird ticket prices of \$34 for adults, normally priced at \$60.

Airfare, ticketing & ground arrangements specialist

Australia's leading small ship specialist, Cruise Traveller, based on the Gold Coast is looking to expand its team with the addition of a permanent part time airfare & ticketing specialist.

The position is the equivalent of 2 full days per week and flexibility is available to the right candidate.

You must have extensive GDS experience (Sabre preferred) and be able to deliver a high level of customer service in support of the main cruise reservations specialist team.

The role involves making air bookings, understanding how to price and ticket and/or reissue domestic and international fares (liaising with our consolidator where required) and managing queues. You would also be involved in booking land arrangements and other administration tasks as required.

You would be an important part of a friendly professional family owned & operated business with a huge focus on service quality in keeping with the premium travel products that we represent.

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NORWEGIAN Cruise Line's Australian travel partners have headed home from Amsterdam after enjoying the *Norwegian Prima* christening cruise in Europe last week.

The newbuild was welcomed into its central CBD dock in the Dutch city with a water cannon salute (**pictured right**), before guests enjoyed a final evening of entertainment in the Prima Theatre with "Queen of Funk" Chaka Khan herself.

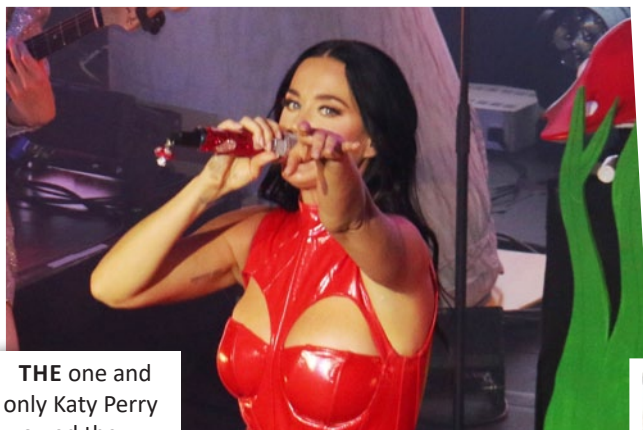
Having been formally named by megastar Katy Perry, the revolutionary vessel is now on her first revenue voyage, with a brief Northern European season to be followed by a transatlantic crossing to the USA before returning to Northern Europe in 2023 once again.



NCL is currently offering savings of up to 40% off published fares, along with five bonus offers under the popular "Free at Sea" promotion on *Norwegian Prima* departures as well as a wide selection of the line's worldwide voyages, including Greek Island cruises on sister ship *Norwegian Viva* which will arrive in 2023.



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line CEO Harry Sommer with Ben Angell, Angela Middleton and Damian Borg from the NCL Australia/NZ team.



THE one and only Katy Perry wowed the crowd with a special onboard performance after christening the ship.



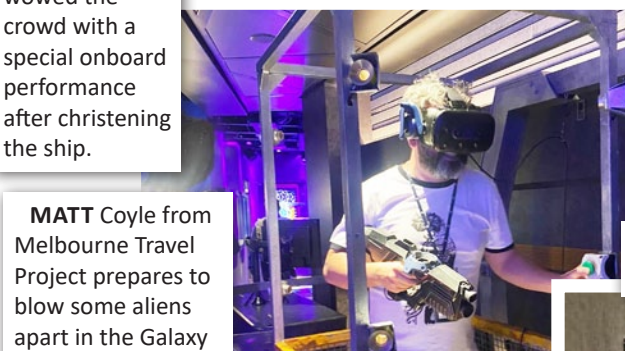
RANDALL Deer from Ignite Travel Group with NCL's Damian Borg.



LISA Borowick from Goldman Travel feels the need for speed on the Prima Speedway.



JEN Pagett from Virtuoso, Platinum Travel's Sarah Szubanski and NCL's Angela Middleton prepare to take The Drop high speed slide.



MATT Coyle from Melbourne Travel Project prepares to blow some aliens apart in the Galaxy Pavilion.



THE majestic *Norwegian Prima* with her distinctive hull art created by Peeta.



SOME of the Aussie contingent enjoying one of the many specialty restaurants on board *Norwegian Prima*.

TRAVEL ADVISORS KEY FOR LUXURY

UPMARKET travellers are happy to pay premiums of up to 25% for travel advisors to create personalised itineraries, according to new research highlighted this week in Singapore at International Luxury Travel Market (ILTM).

The gathering has seen a number of Australian suppliers and advisors in attendance, many relishing the opportunity for their first post-pandemic catchup.

Delegates at the opening forum heard that among affluent clients, 92% plan to use a travel agent for their next trip, while about two thirds said the advice, expertise and knowledge of their advisor is the prime influence in helping them to choose what they do and where they go.

Key trends post-COVID include less frequent but longer trips, an ongoing push for family and



multi-generational trips, and a desire for authentic experiences.

Relaxing/slow holidays are now strongly preferred, while health and wellness are key factors in travel planning, alongside a priority for hygiene and safety.

Revenge travel is seeing clients "make up for lost time - and

doing so lavishly," attendees heard, with almost half of clients already planning to spend more on travel than prior to COVID-19.

Pictured at the event are Robyn Sinfield from Home Travel Company with Chris Austin and Nicole Costantin of Explora Journeys.

Maldives Zuma

WALDORF Astoria Maldives Ithaafushi has announced the first Zuma restaurant in the Maldives, bringing the London-founded Japanese concept eatery to its 20th global destination.

Zuma Maldives is the 11th distinctive culinary experience available at the property, with the restaurant housed in a distinctive building with a roof shaped like a giant samurai hat.

Dorchester expands to Middle East

DORCHESTER Collection will expand to a total of ten luxury properties across the globe in the first half of 2023, with the addition of its first hotel in the Middle East.

The Lana, Dorchester Collection in Dubai will feature 225 guest rooms and suites, located in the Emirates' Business Bay sector on the Dubai Creek waterfront overlooking the vibrant Downtown area.

The Lana will form part of a new 30-storey tower designed by famed UK architects Foster + Partners, with a wide selection of restaurants and lounges including a patisserie and a rooftop pool and bar - dorchestercollection.com.

Ormina earlybird

ORMINA Tours has launched its 2023 Small Group Tour departures with a limited time special offering savings of up to \$400 per couple for bookings confirmed by the end of Sep.

The program limits numbers to a maximum of 10 per tour, with itineraries in Italy, Croatia, Slovenia, Portugal, Spain and more and deposits of \$150pp to secure a spot - orminatours.com.

Baillie Lodges opens the "new look Louise"

GUESTS are once again being welcomed at the reopened The Louise in South Australia's Barossa Valley, after a \$3 million "glamover" conducted by the property's new owners, Baillie Lodges (**TD** 19 Jul 2021).

The update to the culinary luxury lodge showcases drinks and dining, with a stylish contemporary look throughout and a revitalised experience including large windows on the famed Appellation restaurant,

the charming new Contour eatery, formerly known as three75 and a spectacular "wine lantern" holding 800 bottles of Barossa delights.

The Louise's 15 suites have also undergone a makeover with contemporary furnishings, king beds, luxury bathrooms and private courtyards opening to sweeping vineyard views.

Reservations are now available, with more details at baillielodges.com.au.



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RSSC busts record

REGENT Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has outdone its single-day booking record for the third year in a row, following the launch of its 2024/25 Voyage Collection, which recently went on sale.

Exotic locations were the most sought-after, with Africa & South America comprising around 70% of the top 10 itineraries booked.

There was also an increase in the number of reservations made by travel partners compared to the previous year's launch.

Galapagos webinar

LINDBLAD Expeditions- National Geographic is inviting travel agents to learn all about its brand-new vessel, *National Geographic Islander II*, which set sail on its maiden voyage on 19 Aug to the Galapagos.

The webinar, which will also cover details on the brand's limited time 'Free Air Offer', will be recorded for those can't make the live on Wed 15 Sep at 7am AEST - **CLICK HERE** to register to attend.

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 Sydney Airport has unveiled the results of its \$15 million refurbishment, which saw all 252 of its rooms receive a new look. Featuring warm and inviting earthy tones, including bronze light fixtures and leather headboards, each room is now fitted out with a Nespresso station, digital menus, mounted slim televisions plus views of Mascot and Sydney Airport. The bathrooms have also been upgraded with spacious showers and soft lighting.



Guests staying at **Melbourne Marriott Hotel** can now relax at the new M Bar and M Club lounge, thanks to the property's recent lobby refurbishment. The M Bar offers a range of 40 top-shelf whiskeys, three signature cocktails and non-alcoholic options along with a bar menu, while the M Club serves complimentary breakfast, all-day nibbles and evening canapes and premium beverages from 6am to 10pm daily to Marriott Bonvoy members.



Koh Samui's luxury hotel, **The Tongsai Bai**, is heralding a new era with the first phase of its renovation now complete. The property's suites and cottages feature new eco-friendly furnishings, including coffee tables and outdoor chairs made from recycled wood, as well as improved wi-fi connectivity, headboard lighting control for better ambience and convenience, and nature-inspired artworks and rugs made out of yarn spun from recycled fast fashion clothing.



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Namaste to new Intrepid office



THE Intrepid Travel team over in India was excited to return to the office and settle into hybrid work, happy to once again be able to mingle with colleagues.

"The flexible working policy is a great initiative as it helps maintain a good work-life balance," says Rama Mahendru, Intrepid Travel's GM in India.

"It's fun to be among people, and we can do a lot of engagement and team building that we couldn't do at home".

The team also celebrated the new office signage, holding an informal session where everyone was invited to answer: "what does it mean to be Intrepid?"

"It was so interesting to learn how people associate this change with a sense of homecoming... and we heard things like 'Intrepid is not just a brand; it is a feeling,'" Mahendru added.

Pictured: Intrepid Travel's India team in the new-look office.

Adventure in Sydney

P&O Cruises' Pacific Adventure is set to sail into Sydney Harbour this Fri, where she will take up residence for year-round cruising.

The ship not only marks the return of P&O's complete fleet to Australia, but will also become one of the tallest ships ever to sail under the Sydney Harbour Bridge on Sat when she moves from the Overseas Passenger Terminal to White Bay.

The Grand-class vessel is the P&O's newest and biggest cruise ship after joining the fleet in 2021, with a 2,636-guest capacity, multiple dining options, water slides, a dedicated indoor/outdoor family space and more.

Malaysia + Sabre

MALAYSIA Airlines has expanded its long-standing Sabre relationship with a full suite of network planning and optimisation products.

MH will utilise Sabre's technology to help schedule, reduce costs, and more.

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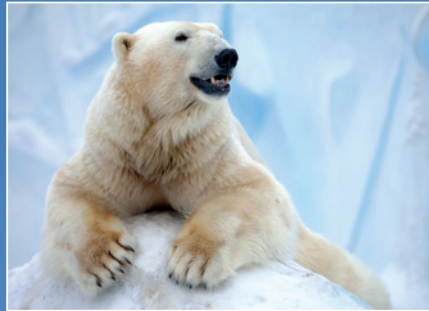
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