

## Qantas agency hours

**QANTAS** Agency Connect has advised its office will be closed from 25 to 26 Dec over the Christmas holiday period, as well as on New Year's Day.

The division will be contactable during normal operating hours between 27-29 Dec and from 02 Jan onwards.

## Regent Elevates agents

**REGENT** Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) has outlined the details of its new travel agent partner program, Regent Elevate, in a partner session aboard the all-new *Seven Seas Grandeur*.

The program features three pillars to assist agents in selling RSSC products - elevated insights, support and growth.

In particular, Regent SVP of Sales, Shawn Tubman, highlighted the value of the insights that they can offer agents.

"What works for us should work for you and that's what we want to do, share," he told attendees.

"We want to share with you everything we know about our customers, our guests, our prospects - we did a global study about a year-and-a-half ago now, so we have fantastic data to share with you to help you prospect to identify the right kind of prospects," Tubman added.

Regent Elevate also offers agent partners specific marketing collateral that is fine-tuned to integrate the insights the line has on specific markets, such as its nurturing email series.

"It's a series of five emails and it takes prospects down the funnel to a purchase decision and it

works well," Tubman explained.

"So we craft the emails and you just send them out and we tell you the cadence when to send them out - it works for us, and if you adopt it, it'll help you."

Tubman concluded the meeting by urging agents to take advantage of the material.

**MEANWHILE** RSSC also announced plans for six new test itineraries in 2024/25 with an overnight in every port.

Their insights have shown guests are increasingly seeking more immersive experiences, a need the cruise line hopes to meet with the new 10-day, four port itineraries. *AP*

## Airnorth goes south

**REGIONAL** carrier Airnorth will commence its first-ever route from Alice Springs to Perth from 25 Mar 2024, ahead of the Easter and school holidays.

The flights mark the first time since Jun 2022 that Alice Springs will be connected with a non-stop air service to Perth - a route previously operated by Qantas (*TD* 17 Jun 2022).

Flying three times a week, the service will offer travellers an additional 23,000 seats over the next 12 months, with tickets available to book now.

The new route was secured by the recently launched Territory Aviation Attraction Scheme, which aims to attract accessible and affordable air services.

## Wyndham goes again

**CHOICE** Hotels is not taking no for an answer, overnight launching yet another hostile takeover bid for Wyndham Hotels & Resorts after previous attempts to reach a deal with the hotel chain failed (*TD* 18 Oct).

The latest offer values Wyndham at around US\$8 billion.

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**Today's issue of TD**

*Travel Daily* today features eight pages of the latest news including our **Luxury** feature page plus a full page from **A Force For Good Hub**.

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## Air NZ downgrades forecast

**FOLLOWING** a soft booking period over the last two months, Air NZ has been forced to revise its first half 2024 financial year guidance to be at “the bottom end” of previous predictions.

In an update to the ASX posted this morning, the Kiwi carrier pointed to a weaker-than-expected performance in corporate and government travel as doing the most damage to the bottom line, with earnings now expected to be around NZ\$180 million for the full year 2024, down from a possible NZ\$230m.

Softer leisure travel demand was also confirmed across the Tasman and domestically, while North American routes “remained solid” in the face of increased competition from a growing number of US carriers.

Further exacerbating its poorer financial performance was the ongoing impacts of its Pratt & Whitney engine dramas,



which most recently forced Air New Zealand’s flights between Auckland and Seoul to be paused from Apr 2024 (**TD 07 Nov**) and the axing of Auckland-Hobart services (**TD 06 Nov**).

The carrier also noted the lower NZ\$180 million guidance incorporates NZ\$45 million worth of COVID credits that it said are “highly unlikely to be redeemed by the extended expiry date”.

**MEANWHILE** Air NZ has confirmed plans to roll out Starlink internet technology on its domestic fleet by 2025.

The carrier will trial the tech on one plane initially next year, and if the pilot is successful, will install the higher speed and lower latency wi-fi on its wider fleet. **AB**

## QF braces for Chrissy

**QANTAS** and Jetstar are preparing to fly more than 8.5 million customers throughout Dec and Jan - the most they’ve served since the same period in pre-pandemic 2019/20.

The airlines have announced several measures to ensure they can cater to the summer peak, including making a significant boost to the number of reserve staff who can be called upon if there is unexpected sick leave.

The Qantas Group carriers have also recruited almost 3,300 additional operational employees over the past 12 months, and are working with industry partners to have extra staff during peak periods, including additional ground handlers on standby and airport security screeners.

Maintenance has been brought forward on Qantas and Jetstar aircraft as well, while up to 13 jet aircraft, including an Airbus A380 will be on standby as “operational spares” in case of disruptions.

**Travel Daily**  
ON LOCATION

**THE BAHAMAS**

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of **Regent Seven Seas Cruises**, which is this week hosting guests on board **Seven Seas Grandeur**.

**SEVEN Seas Grandeur** is calling at Freeport in the Bahamas today, giving guests the opportunity to experience a range of shore excursions, all part of the all-inclusive commitment of the brand.

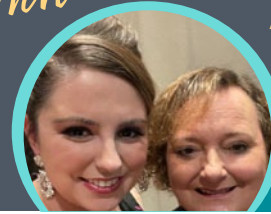
With a shore excursion for every traveller available, some guests are relaxing in the famous crystal clear waters of the Bahamas, while others are exploring the town and markets of Freeport, and the more adventurous are swimming with pigs or snorkelling in the reefs.



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## TTC returns to ATIA board

**THE** Travel Corporation's (TTC) local CEO David Hosking (**pictured**) has been appointed to the board of the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) (*TD* breaking news).

The appointment fills a casual vacancy on the ATIA board and was formally approved at the final meeting of the year for the industry body in Sydney today.

Hosking's recruitment as an ATIA Director marks a return to the executive ranks for TTC, which previously had representation in the form of former Contiki/Trafalgar chief Katrina Barry, who was elected to the ATIA board in 2021 (*TD* 13 Jul 2021).

Barry stepped down five months later however to pursue a career outside of travel (*TD* 11 Jan 2022), effectively putting an end to TTC representation at ATIA.

Reflecting on Hosking joining ATIA, Chair Tom Manwaring said he was "delighted" to welcome a



Director of Hosking's calibre.

"We have always been dedicated to mirroring the diversity of the travel industry at board level to ensure we support the broad membership base," Manwaring said, adding its change to become the Australian Travel Industry Association in Aug underscored its commitment to inclusivity and comprehensive sector representation.

Hosking's impressive record includes overseeing Contiki's global expansion, establishing the TTC Geneva office in 1996, and setting up TTC's TreadRight Foundation in 2009.

More from ATIA on **page six**. *AB*

## Cairns shuts down

**THE** approach of Cyclone Jasper has caused major chaos in the air around Cairns, with Cairns Airport shutting down all operations from 8pm last night and for the remainder of today.

The decision has impacted many flights, with Bonza, VA and Qantas all forced to cancel services.

Bonza sent SMS messages and emails to customers informing them of the cancellations of flights AB583 and AB584 today, with all pax eligible for refunds.

Meanwhile VA said it is offering "additional flexibility" to support customers impacted by cancelled flights, with guests who booked to travel to or from Cairns between 12 and 17 Dec now able to move flights to another date within the next two weeks at no extra cost.

VA customers who cannot find a suitable recovery option can request a refund or travel credit for the price they paid for their impacted flight.

Travel Daily  
ON LOCATION



AUCKLAND

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of *Celebrity Cruises*, aboard *Celebrity Edge* as she cruises in Australasian waters for the first time.

**WELLNESS** is one of the key brand pillars for *Celebrity Cruises*, with *Celebrity Edge* featuring extensive spa and fitness facilities.

There's also an Aussie connection, with Melbourne-founded skincare brand Grown Alchemist featuring in a range of onboard therapies.

As well as massages, facials and manicures, *Edge* offers Elemis oxygen and light therapy, acupuncture, a salt and crystal room and much more - a perfect complement to the ship's other relaxing options.

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## "House-like" Byron hotel on way



**HOLIDAYMAKERS** heading to NSW's idyllic Byron Bay will soon have a new place to stay, with a brand-new boutique hotel set to open in Autumn 2024.

Operated by locally based Jeremy & Jones, the 32-room "house-like" Basque hotel will feature a distinct indoor-outdoor aesthetic with flowing communal spaces, including a reception area that doubles as a bar.

The property will also offer an expansive speakeasy-style lounge room and a library with floor-to-ceiling bookcases, sofas and a large open fireplace.

Guests can recline by the swimming pool on cabanas and sun lounges, and head to the rooftop for yoga, meditation and personal training during the day, or sunset drinks at night.

The hotel will also house a multi-level wellness destination, complete with infrared saunas, ice plunges, flotation tanks, massages and more.

As for guest rooms, they will feature high ceilings and a soft colour palette, with some overlooking the pool while others will offer views of Marvel Street or Fletcher Lane. *JM*

## Flight Centre embraces AI

**FLIGHT** Centre Travel Group (FCTG) has launched an 'AI Centre of Excellence', a new global division which aims to promote, adopt, and integrate artificial intelligence technologies into the company's corporate divisions.

The new arm will be led by Greece-based Adrian Lopez (pictured), who will immediately step into the newly created role of Head of AI for Corporate.

He is tasked with managing a team of technical experts to "strategically harness the power of AI to revolutionise FCTG's flagship business travel divisions Corporate Traveller and FCM".

The new Centre will implement best practices and provide research, support, and training around AI, with a focus on improving customer experiences as well as enhancing productivity.

Lopez, who was most recently Global Chief Technology Officer for FCM Digital, boasts over a



decade of industry experience and is the co-founder of corporate travel tool Sam, a mobile AI-powered app that operates as a 24/7 virtual travel assistant.

FCTG fully acquired SAM in 2019, as well as welcoming Lopez to the team, where he helped integrate the AI solution across its various corporate travel products.

"In today's ever-changing digital world, we recognise the tremendous potential with AI and ways it can transform our work," Global Chief Experience Officer for FCTG's Corporate Brands, John Morhous, commented. *JM*

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## Garden Inn hits 1k

**HILTON** has opened its 1,000th Hilton Garden Inn property at San Jose Airport City Mall in Costa Rica, with the brand continuing to grow in key locations throughout the Asia Pacific region.

“The launch of our new regional prototype and the ramp up of franchising in markets such as China, Thailand and Australia... [are] setting new benchmarks for guest satisfaction and owner value in this dynamic region,” Clarence Tan, SVP of Development enthused.

Heading into 2024, the brand will continue to expand with over 150 properties on the pipeline, including the soon-to-open Hilton Garden Inn Busselton in Western Australia (*TD* 22 Dec 2022).

## Slojourn into Europe

**MARKING** its expansion into the European market, Aussie agency Slojourn Studio has been appointed as the dedicated sales and marketing agency for Gundari Resort, which is set to open in Greece in May 2024.

Located on the secluded island of Folegandros, Gundari will comprise 27 ocean-view suites & villas, and promises to offer “raw, chic luxury” and “an untouched, authentic experience”.

Slojourn Studio will provide trade sales and representation for the upcoming resort, as well as handling partnerships and collaborations, marketing, public relations, and brand placement opportunities.

## Agents explore The Beehive State



**THREE** lucky agents have just returned from a whirlwind trip in Utah, after winning the fifth and final ‘Sell Your Way to the USA’ 2023 incentive program.

Hosted by the Utah Office of Tourism in partnership with American Airlines, Lara Mann from Infinity Holidays, Melanie Mitchell from Flight Centre Silverdale, and Becs O’Neale from xtravel enjoyed a week of adventuring around the scenic US state.

Itinerary highlights included a Beehive Bites and Sites guided walking tour of Salt Lake City, horseback adventuring through the Utah Dixie National Forest courtesy of Rising K Ranch, and exploring ancient rock art at the Parowan Gap Petroglyphs.

The group was also treated to favourite local restaurants such as the White Horse Spirits & Kitchen in Salt Lake City.

“Australia and New Zealand are such important markets for our destination considering their travel habits of longer overall stays, an active adventurer mentality,

familiarity with exploring the US, and dispersion of visitation to our less busy winter seasons,” Utah Office of Tourism’s Global Markets Specialist Zach Fyne said.

Mann, Mitchell & O’Neale are **pictured** basking in Utah at the Canyon Overlook Trail in Zion National Park. *JM*

## SYD outdoor pitch

**THE** media account to handle ad space across Sydney Airport’s car parks, roadways and billboards has been put out to pitch.

According to *Mumbrella*, the pitch process will wrap up in Feb next year and will be decided in preparation for the expiry of the hub’s current out-of-home ad contract with JCDcaux in Jun.

JCDcaux assumed the exclusive advertising rights across Sydney Airport’s three terminals in 2019 after acquiring APN Outdoor.

Around 44 million sets of eyeballs see SYD’s outdoor ads every year, equating to 44% of Australia’s inbound int’l pax.



## Window Seat

**THE** travel and tourism sector has, regrettably, been dragged into what seems to still be the number one debate among hardcore conspiracy theorists: “is the earth flat?”

A professor at the University of Tasmania has been forced to refute claims that The Antarctic Treaty of 1959 bans civilian people from travelling to the icy continent, which flat earthers are citing as evidence that world powers are covering up proof about the earth’s true shape.

In response to a recent and popular TikTok video which perpetuates the highly dubious theory, Associate Professor Jeffrey McGee, who is an expert on Antarctic governance, pointed out that tourism is thriving in the chilly destination, which attracts more than 100,000 visitors each season.

“There is also a lot of travel taking scientists and support staff to and from the various Antarctic research stations,” he added, highlighting that only some regions are off-limits to civilians, due to environmental and scientific reasons.

Antarctic travel bans are often used to back certain conspiracy theories, with other hare-brained social media users also claiming the continent hides secret jungles and advanced civilisations - chill out peeps!



## China Airlines Anniversary

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## ATIA advocacy adds up

**HEADLINED** by the naming of David Hosking as a new addition to its board this morning (see **page three**), the Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) wrapped up its final executive meeting of the year today.

The meeting heard in detail about the high volume of advocacy work carried out in the last quarter alone by the industry body, with ATIA's Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, Ingrid Fraser, called out for her efforts in ensuring the travel sector has

a seat at the table at several important policy forums.

Key items on the agenda over the last couple of months have included the economic importance of the travel industry to the Australian economy, healthy aviation competition, calling out unfair conduct, price parity arrangements and bolstering skills and training.

Contribution highlights included informing decision-makers about Fiji, Indonesia and Malaysia Air Services Arrangements, the Aviation Green Paper and unfair trading practices in the sector.

"Engagements in the last quarter have included key ministers and senators and their offices...and a number of opposition shadow ministers," ATIA said. *AB*

## House full for ships

**BUSINESS** Sydney Executive Director Paul Nicolaou has renewed calls for the NSW and Federal governments to create an extra cruise port east of the Harbour Bridge in Sydney.

The plea for a new cruise terminal to be set up at Garden Island during the peak summer cruise season followed a need this week for *Carnival Luminosa* passengers to be ferried to shore using lifeboat tender vessels.

"Cruise ship passengers getting to shore using a ship's lifeboats is something you would expect to see at Pacific Island destinations but not in Sydney Harbour," Nicolaou argued.

"For the second time in a week, the 'house full' sign was up in Sydney because of berthing challenges for larger cruise ships east of the [Harbour Bridge]."

## AA inks PAL c'share

**AMERICAN** Airlines and Philippine Airlines have announced a new codeshare partnership, which will result in the first marketed flights by a Philippine carrier to several destinations in the United States.

The collaboration will also allow American Airlines customers to travel to the Pearl of the Orient, Manila and Cebu.

Philippine Airlines has placed its 'PR' code on American Airlines' flights between Los Angeles and seven US cities, including Atlanta, Denver, Houston and Las Vegas.

## Currumbin adds outback appeal



**CURRUMBIN** Wildlife Sanctuary on the Gold Coast has begun welcoming guests again following the biggest expansion in its 75-year history.

The new attraction, Outback Springs (**pictured**), is a recreation of a traditional outback Queensland cattle station, complete with gemstone panning, billy tea demonstrations, and outback animal displays.

Between 9am and 3pm every day, visitors can interact with new farmyard friends, including lop-eared rabbits, miniature goats, guinea pigs and chickens, and get up close with reptiles and insects.

"This coming year we will welcome over half a million guests to the Sanctuary from all over the world and we want them to be able to experience life in the Queensland outback without having to leave the Gold Coast," GM Travis Couch said.

"This has been a long time coming and we're thrilled to

welcome members and guests of all ages to this new precinct just in time for the busy holiday season," he added - learn more about Outback Springs **HERE**.

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary recently took home the Qld Tourism Industry Council 'Major Tourist Attraction' award for the third year in a row. *MW*

## WA backpacker cap

**TOURISM** Council WA said it is "critical" that backpackers be allowed to stay in Australia for more than one year, following calls for Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visas to be capped as part of the Federal Government's new Migration Strategy (**TD** yesterday).

Tourism Council WA CEO Evan Hall said that most backpackers start on the east coast and would not make it to Western Australia on a one-year visa.

"A one-year cap would limit backpackers' ability to travel to WA and work across seasonal tourism towns such as Exmouth, Broome and Margaret River."

Hall also pointed out that WA, which is still down 40% on international visitors compared to pre-COVID, is more reliant than other states on the backpacker workforce during busy periods.

"They fill vacancies, serve Western Australians turning up for a holiday and provide respite to operators who would otherwise work for months on end without a break."

## Robson in the Gong

**EXPERIENCE** Co's Head of Marketing Brooke Robson has joined Destination Wollongong's new board of directors.

Boasting 12 years of marketing expertise and a background in tourism, Robson's appointment comes at a pivotal time for Wollongong's visitor economy, with significant developments in the pipeline, including the region's first five-star hotel.

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### High-end travellers more eco-conscious

**LUXURY-SEEKING** travellers Down Under are adapting the way they travel to offset the effects of climate change, according to new findings from Virtuoso.

The 2024 *Luxe Report*, which surveyed around 2,000 travel advisors from more than 50 countries, showed 82% of the network's advisors in Australia and New Zealand said their clients are visiting destinations during off-peak times when weather conditions are typically better.

Additionally, 71% said clients are choosing destinations where weather conditions are less extreme, and 30% said their clients are travelling more sustainably to reduce their carbon footprint.

"Virtuoso has long been a proud advocate of sustainable tourism," Virtuoso's Vice President, Sustainability Javier Arredondo said.

"With a goal of making sustainability a greater factor in consumer choice, it's inspiring to see more clients taking it into account.

"[This is] thanks in large part to our travel advisors, who are creating a dialogue on selecting destinations, hotels, cruise lines, tour operators and other partners that share the same commitment," Arredondo concluded.

## GRECOTEL GRACES AUSTRALIA & NZ

**LA COLLECTION**, the Sydney- and Melbourne-based representatives specialising in luxury hotels and resorts, has expanded its Greek portfolio with three exceptional new properties from Grecotel.

The Dolli at Acropolis (pictured) and Cape Sounio Boutique Resort, both in Athens, as well as Corfu Imperial Beach Luxe Resort will be represented in the Australian and New Zealand markets by La Collection.

Featuring 46 rooms and suites designed to provide the ultimate in comfort and relaxation, The Dolli at Acropolis offers breathtaking views of the vibrant city, as well as bespoke amenities and personalised service.

The Cape Sounio property is set on the Athenian Riviera, and consists of 150 bungalows and villas scattered village-style, each with their own private balcony or terrace, while the 300-key Corfu



resort features sandy beaches, private bays and fine dining in 16 seafront restaurants.

La Collection's Director of Sales, Craig Farrell, said "we are delighted to welcome these three incredible properties from Greece's largest and most successful hotel group, Grecotel".

"Grecotel's amazing locations and high standards of quality and service distinguish the Group internationally, and through our careful vetting process it became clear that these properties

aligned perfectly with La Collection's values.

"We are delighted to now have a presence in Athens Old Town, Athens Riviera and Corfu, bringing real diversity to our Greek portfolio," Farrell said.

The new additions join the luxury rep's already-impressive Greek portfolio, which includes Empiria Group's Mystique, Vedema and Cosme on Santorini and Paros, Blue Palace on Crete, and Myconian Collection's Mykonos offering. JM

### Sneak peek of Tokyo's latest luxury EDITION

**THE** second EDITION property in Tokyo Japan has opened for guest preview this week, ahead of its highly anticipated launch early next year.

Featuring 86 spacious rooms and suites, The Tokyo EDITION Ginza houses a modern brasserie and several innovative bar concepts, including a punch-focused cocktail bar and Ginza's first natural wine bar.

The double-height, street-level lobby offers guests a sense of grandeur, with floor-to-ceiling windows, a gold-coloured bar, and a sculptural, head-turning staircase cast from white metal.

Travellers staying at the boutique hotel will be well positioned to explore Ginza's dining offerings, including 34 Michelin-starred restaurants.

### SeaDream connected

**LUXURY** boutique cruise line SeaDream Yacht Club has announced it will upgrade its entire fleet with shorepower connectivity to enable zero emissions in ports.

*SeaDream II* has already successfully undergone the installation of the green technology, while identical sister ship *SeaDream I* will be upgraded in Apr 2024.

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**Melbourne Marriott Hotel** has undertaken a \$3.1m refurbishment over the last 18 months, resulting in a revamp of its ground floor spaces and guestrooms, as well as technology upgrades across the property, including new Chromecast TVs and USB

charging stations. Guests are also now welcomed with new carpets and a grey and brown colour palette. The next phase of the renovation will include a refresh of the guestrooms' furniture and styling.



Accor has announced the addition of **Mantra Tonsley Adelaide** to its portfolio. The 88-room property opened earlier this year as a new-build hotel, situated in the Tonsley Innovation Precinct. The four-star, contemporary hotel is located only a

12-minute drive from Adelaide's CBD and features a restaurant and a bar along with two state-of-the-art conference rooms, and caters for both business and leisure travellers.



**Sofitel Sydney Wentworth** will undergo a multi-million dollar refurbishment, with the completion of the revamp to see its 436 rooms and suites, corridors, club lounge and lobby areas transformed. A key focus of the refurbishment will be to elevate the

venue's dining precinct, including the introduction of new restaurants and bars. The makeover is slated for completion by spring 2024, with works to begin early next year.



Guests are now welcomed with reimagined guestrooms and suites, lobby, signature restaurants, spa, golf course, and event spaces at **Waldorf Astoria Orlando** after a property-wide renovation. The 502-room urban getaway now offers a sense of luxury

in the arrival area, which features marble floors, and the refreshed restaurant Bull & Bear, serves as a classic steakhouse.



**Hotel Paradox, Autograph Collection** in California has completed an extensive transformation to elevate guest experiences. Upgrades include an enhanced lobby design with tree trunks incorporated in the area, a refurbishment of the 740m<sup>2</sup>

indoor and outdoor event spaces, as well as the introduction of a premier dining experience at Solaire Restaurant + Bar.

## Moran's taste for the Queen



**MATT Moran**, famous TV personality, restaurateur and author, will be back aboard Cunard's *Queen Elizabeth* to host the Great Australian Culinary Voyage in early 2025.

He was aboard the ship earlier this year to headline the inaugural Great Australian

Culinary Voyage (*TD* 16 Jan).

The well-known chef will share his stories through interactive Q&A sessions with guests on the five-night round-trip, which departs from Sydney to Tasmania on 06 Feb 2025.

"I'm excited to be partnering with Cunard again to create memorable dishes that will surprise and delight...in a truly beautiful setting on a luxurious Cunard Queen," he enthused.

Prices for a Balcony stateroom start from \$2,019ppts - for more information, see **HERE**. *JM*

## London hotspot gets even hotter

**TOWER Bridge**, the iconic London landmark, has seen its highest-ever number of summer 2023 visitors on record.

London & Partners has revealed that over 113,800 people visited the beloved historic site in the month of Aug, representing a 33% increase year-on-year.

The tourism provider also noted the three months to date from Aug have seen 100,000 visitors, which has only occurred five times in history, and exceeds pre-COVID numbers.

## Indigo in Malaysia

**IHG Hotels & Resorts** has announced the opening of Hotel Indigo Kuala Lumpur on the Park, marking the boutique brand's debut in Malaysia.

Coinciding with the hotelier's 150th anniversary, the new hotel boasts 180 rooms and offers views of tropical rainforest Bukit Nanas and the KL Forest Eco Park.

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