



Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of news including our **Luxury** feature page, plus full pages from:

- Silversea
- Hurtigruten

Swiss appointment

SWITZERLAND Tourism (ST) has announced the appointment of Sandra Babey as its new Market Manager for Australia and New Zealand, effective 01 Oct.

Babey, who previously headed up the DMO's marketing for Spain and Portugal, will take over from Livio Goetz, who is relocating to ST's Dubai office.

"With her creativity and in-depth knowledge of Switzerland, she will get our partners & guests Down Under enthusiastic about Switzerland," ST Head of Markets East Simon Bosshart said.

Prior to COVID, Australia & NZ visitors generated 398,000 hotel overnight stays in Switzerland.

QF offers Tasman savings

THE Flying Kangaroo has announced the extension of its Qantas Distribution Platform (QDP) trade incentive program, revealing that trans-Tasman fares will be discounted to levels below all other booking systems.

From 29 Aug, the carrier said that Australian and New Zealand-based travel agents will be able to access cheaper trans-Tasman fares by up to 5% when they use the QDP, an attempt to lure more travel sellers to its own airfares booking ecosystem.

Qantas Executive Manager of Global Sales and Distribution, Igor Kwiatkowski, said the latest announcement is also aimed at rewarding agents using the QDP.

"We've continued to invest in and modernise our distribution capabilities to the highest industry standards and we're committed to providing agents with richer content so they can better serve our mutual

customers," Kwiatkowski said.

Since its launch, Qantas said it has continued to invest in the capabilities of the QDP, including the release of special offers to reward travel agents.

MEANWHILE, Qantas has announced senior management team changes (**TD** breaking news), including Markus Svensson as its new CEO of Domestic, who will take over from Andrew David when he retires in Sep, as well as Catriona Larritt to the Chief Customer & Digital Officer role.

Rob Marcolina will fill the CFO position, while newly-created roles include a dedicated Chief People Officer, which is yet to be filled, as well as a new Chief Risk Officer position, which has been handed to current Qantas Executive, Andrew Monaghan.

An executive search is also underway to fill the QantasLink CEO role, with veteran John Gissing to retire in Nov.

APT hits \$500,000!

APT Travel Group has hit a major milestone in its revamped VIP agent rewards program (**TD** 13 Feb), recording more than \$500k in bonuses in the first six months of the initiative.

"Many of our top agencies have earned over a thousand in partnership fund dollars and many more have climbed the VIP tiers and will await their first partner funds at the end of the current quarter," APT Travel Group's GM Sales Scott Ellis said, adding that RAA Travel Mile End has seen its sales increase so much that it has moved from Silver status, to Gold status, and on to Platinum status in the first half of the year.

APT said feedback from agents suggests its 100 famil places, rewards paid on deposits rather than departures, priority reservations, prizes, discounted travel, and partnership funding were among the top compliments for the rewards program.

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Travel Daily

Wednesday 28th Jun 2023

VA maxes out on new 737



VIRGIN Australia has welcomed its first game-changing Boeing 737-8 aircraft today, in line with its fleet growth and renewal program (**TD 14 Jun**).

Named 'Monkey Mia', the new plane was accepted by a specialist VA flight crew in Seattle, who will fly the aircraft home to Brisbane.

The delivery marks the first of 33 MAX family aircraft the carrier is set to receive over the next five years, bringing the airline closer to its sustainability targets while improving the pax experience.

The latest generation of the Boeing 737 MAX family is 40% quieter and at least 15% more fuel-efficient per flight compared to the 737-800 NG fleet, and features seats with device holders and in-seat power.

"These new aircraft will allow us to grow capacity and support more efficient jet services," Virgin Australia Chief Operations Officer Stuart Aggs said.

"They will reduce emissions by at least 15% per flight compared to the 737-800 NG fleet, supporting our commitment to targeting net zero emissions by 2050."

Marking the milestone, VA will use a fuel load blended with 30% sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) for the Seattle to Hawaii leg of the

delivery flight to Brisbane.

The new aircraft will enter service at the end of Jul on VA's new nonstop Cairns to Tokyo (Haneda) route, which launches today using one of the airline's 737-700 aircraft (**TD 15 May**).

Pictured at the ribbon-cutting ceremony in Seattle: Luis Ayala; Erika Pearson, Boeing VP Commercial Sales and Marketing, Southeast Asia & Oceania; Stuart Aggs; and Ed Clark.

TTJ New Cal pact

THE Travel Junction (TTJ) has partnered with New Caledonia and Aircalin on a new trade campaign, with four "meticulously crafted" holiday and self-drive packages allowing travellers to experience Noumea, Ile des Pins and Grand Terre.

Individual HELiO package codes allow advisors to instantly access the offers which start at just \$1,549 per person including return Aircalin flights.

TTJ's Global Sales Director, Kevin Looney, said he was delighted to announce the partnership, which also features wholesale Aircalin fares with no ticketing or credit card fees - for itinerary details see thetraveljunction.com.au.

Remembering Bev Cohen

THE Australian travel industry is this week mourning the death of Bev Cohen, who passed away last Fri at the age of 76 after a long journey with cancer.

Cohen commenced her career in travel as a Qantas hostess before going on to found Wentworth Travel in 1985, a boutique leisure agency located in Sydney's Double Bay with 18 staff.

Other feathers in her cap included serving on the board of AFTA, being a founding member of CT Partners, as well as serving on the advisory board of Virtuoso in addition to being a prominent member of the luxury network.

Cohen's contributions to Virtuoso were so immense that she was bestowed with Virtuoso's Most Admired Advisor award in 2013, an accolade that later sat beside being the inaugural recipient of the Virtuoso Southern Cross Award in 2019.

"Her dedication, passion, and unwavering commitment to providing outstanding service



to Wentworth Travel and the Australian travel industry will be a hallmark of how she is remembered," her daughter and MD of Wentworth Travel, Anna McMurtrie, reflected.

Cohen's memorial service will be on Thu 06 Jul, at 11am at St. Marks Church, Darling Point in Sydney, as well as live streamed via the following link **HERE**.

In lieu of flowers, the family is requesting a donation to WomenCan, which funds cancer research - donate **HERE**.

SIA hangs up phone

FROM 01 Jul, Singapore Airlines (SIA) will require a number of service requests from agents to be submitted exclusively via its Service Request Form (SRF), available on its AGENT 360 service platform.

These administration requests include the: Refund Fee Waiver Form, Reissuance Fee Waiver Form, Name Error Correction Form, Extend Ticketing Time Limit Form, & the Dispute ADM Form.

Requests received by phone or email for these services will not be processed by Sales Operations.

Rail Europe adds Berner Oberland

RAIL Europe has added Switzerland's Berner Oberland Pass to its B2B website and API, offering unlimited travel within the Bernese Oberland region.

The regional pass complements the Swiss Travel Pass, with options ranging from three, four, six, eight to 10 consecutive days between 01 Apr and 31 Oct.

The new addition includes access to more than 25 mountain excursions and cable car rides and up to 50% discount on numerous other mountain railways in the region - **CLICK HERE** for details.



Booking smarter

BOOKING.COM has launched AI Trip Planner, a new smart tool to help travellers plan their trips.

Powered by large language model (LLM) technology from OpenAI's ChatGPT API, the platform can provide personalised travel recommendations in a fast and conversational manner, including a visual list of destinations and properties, with pricing information and links to view more details.

Travellers can also ask the AI Trip Planner bot general or specific questions to support any stage of the trip planning process, including destination and accommodation suggestions.

AI Trip Planner will roll out from today to a growing number of Booking.com Genius members in the US over the coming weeks.

The launch follows a similar move by Expedia earlier this year, with the OTA trialling a new in-app travel planning tool powered by ChatGPT (**TD 05 Apr**).

Travellers Choice to shine

TRAVELLERS Choice will pull out all stops at its upcoming annual conference on the Gold Coast to ensure its members "outshine the competition" in the months and years ahead.

This week the agency network revealed the speakers who will appear at the 10-12 Nov gathering, include UK-based customer service visionary Geoff Ramm, the author of *Celebrity Service Superstars* and a "noted thinker in the space" who has worked with brands like Warner Brothers and McDonalds on enhancing their customer service.

The conference, themed "Shine", will also feature interactive workshops, networking sessions, a preferred supplier exhibition, as well as the return of the group's National Awards Gala Dinner, at which members will be encouraged to embrace "a new level of luminance".

A new emcee will also be on

stage, with broadcaster and travel presenter Christina Morrissy taking on the gig this year.

MD Christian Hunter said the conference program reflected the travel industry "entering a new and enlightened era".

"Not only are we seeing incredibly strong and sustained demand for travel, but consumers are now more aware than ever of the unrivalled expertise and enormous value that travel professionals deliver," he said.

AS flies to Mexico

ALASKA Airlines has announced new international flights from Las Vegas, with seasonal flights to Los Cabos and Puerto Vallarta using Embraer E175 aircraft.

The Oneworld member carrier will operate the services between Dec this year and Apr 2024, four times weekly to each destination, according to GDS screens.

Oceania rejigs value-add offers

OCEANIA Cruises has unveiled details of its new "simply MORE" program, packaging up a beverage package and up to US\$1,600 of shore excursion credit per stateroom for all new reservations effective from 01 Jul on sailings departing from 01 Oct this year.

Hinted at during the recent landmark christening of the new ship *Vista (TD 09 May)*, the new price offers replace the former OLife menu of value-adds.

The expanded offering builds on other always-included amenities such as gourmet dining with no reservation fee or cover charge at specialty restaurants, unlimited wi-fi, and 24-hour room service.

Frank Del Rio Jr, Oceania President, said simply MORE is the result of feedback from travel partners and guests who wanted "simplicity, choice and value" - more in today's *Cruise Weekly*.

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AFTA opens NTIA noms

THE introduction of the seven NTIA Custodians (*TD* 21 Mar) has led to significant changes in the way this year's National Travel Industry Awards are structured, with nominations opening this morning (*TD* breaking news).

This year only peer nominations are being accepted, with nominators needing to be a representative of any travel industry business.

Only one nomination is required prior to the closure deadline of 5pm AEST on 14 Jul.

Most Outstanding individual categories will be offered for:

- Mobile/Home Based advisor
 - Travel Agency Manager
 - Travel Consultant Corporate
 - Travel Consultant Leisure
 - Rookie of the Year
 - Sales Executive - Air
 - Sales Executive - Cruise
 - Sales Executive - Land Supply
- ATAS Accredited Businesses can nominate in 16 judged Most Outstanding categories for:
- Employee Engagement and Recruitment Program
 - Online Travel Agency
 - Hybrid Online Travel Agency
 - Business Events Travel Agency
 - National TMC
 - Multinational TMC
 - Leisure Agency - single location
 - Leisure Agency - multi location
 - Sustainability Award - Business
 - Mobile Advisor Network
 - Travel Agency Group
 - Non Branded Agency Group
 - Tour Operator - Specialised
 - Tour Operator - Global

- Wholesaler - Product/Service
- Wholesaler - Destination/ Experience

A total of 10 non-ATAS supplier awards will also be made, some decided by industry voting:

- Tourism Office
- Accommodation Group/Chain
- Airline - Online
- Airline - Offline
- Ocean Cruise Operator
- River Cruise Operator
- Car Rental Operator
- Travel Industry Training Institution
- Sustainability Award - Supplier
- Innovation in Travel Support Services

For the first time ever there will also be two People's Choice awards, for **Australia's Favourite Travel Agency** and **Australia's Favourite Travel Brand**, to be decided by consumer-facing competitions in partnership with News Corp's *ESCAPE* in Sep.

Nominations can be made online now at afta.com.au.

AFTA CEO Dean Long said the collaboration with the NTIA Custodians aimed to preserve the awards' strong legacy of integrity and excellence, while continuing to evolve the process of recognising excellence.

"As the pre-eminent awards for our industry and given the significant value that corporate and consumer Australia places on the NTIAs, these changes will serve to enhance the reputation of our finalists and winners as the very best in class for 2023."

Aussie left out of Vietnam visa change

THE Vietnam Govt has agreed to extend tourist e-visas from 30 to 90 days for a range of countries from 15 Aug, however Australia has been excluded from the list, along with Canada and the USA.

Asian and European countries make up the bulk of the 25 e-visa sanctioned nations whose citizens will be able to enter and depart Vietnam multiple times within 90 days without having to re-apply.

Currently, Vietnam's e-visas only permit foreigners to use the electronic system once.

Culture vultures in Oz

TOURISTS from Japan and Singapore have listed cultural experiences as their number one priority when it comes to booking a trip to Australia, according to a new survey from Agoda.

Agoda's Oceania Director, Zsuzsanna Janos, said the trends show Australia's tourist appeal has moved beyond "sun and sand", as international travellers increasingly bundle cultural experiences with travel bookings.

PwC not involved

THE Federal Department of Finance has confirmed that PricewaterhouseCoopers was not in any way involved in the tender process for the Whole of Australian Government Travel Management Services Arrangement (*TD* yesterday).

TD apologises for this error.



Window Seat

A MAN has been accused of conning his way into a free two-year stay at a luxury hotel in India, accruing a bill in excess of \$100,000.

Ironically, the alleged accommodation thief initially booked for just one night in May 2019 at the Roseate House near Delhi Airport, with reports suggesting the guest ended up staying 603 nights, finally vacating without paying the large tab almost two years later, in Jan 2021.

So how did the man supposedly get away with this extended luxury stay?

An official complaint by the hotel published in *The Indian Express* accuses its staff of perpetrating an inside job.

The help at the hotel allegedly "forged, deleted, added and falsified a large number of entries in the account of said guest," the hotel's complaint stated.

Investigators are checking whether they did this in response to bribery from the miscreant, who appears to have simply slipped away after his extended stay.

Perhaps the real question in the aftermath of the alleged hotel crime is if the man ended up accruing 603 tiny shampoo bottles and sachets of tea and coffee?

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Capital cities make return

DOMESTIC holiday travel to capital cities rose by 41% (1.2 million trips) in the first quarter of this year when compared to the same period in 2022, according to a new report from Tourism Research Australia.

During the same time-frame, business travel to the big smoke across the country also spiked by 523,000 trips.

Australians took a combined 44.2 million trips to capital cities across leisure, business and VFR for the 12 months to 31 Mar.

In the longer 12-month period, Aussies were also found to have spent close to \$50 billion on trips to big cities, representing a 113% increase in outlay on the year ending Mar 2022.

When contrasted with 2020, the latest figures did show a 6% decrease in overnight trips however, but on the plus side, a 29% increase in spend.

Meanwhile, travel to regional areas also performed well, with the report noting a 25% increase in overnight trips and a 46% increase in spend when compared to the year ending Mar 2022, with Aussies taking 72.9 million trips and spending \$59b.

In total, the Mar quarter saw 27.3 billion in spend and 28.3 million trips taken.

Innstant Centara

INSTANT Travel has added Centara Hotels' chain to its preferred contracts portfolio.

"With its strong presence in South Asia and the Middle East, we are delighted to be expanding our network and offering our agents around the world new options at very attractive rates," Innstant Chief Executive Officer Darryl Ismail said.

Centara Hotels are available to book now on Innstant's platform.

RM with Jacobs

ROCKY Mountaineer's new Rockies to the Red Rocks route between Utah and Colorado in the USA is featuring on Channel 10's *Studio 10* this week.

Presenter Stevie Jacobs made the journey, with the first episode from the trip screening on this morning's show.



LAST week a host of key industry partners turned out to support itravel at a special "Long Lunch" held at Sydney's The Butler in Potts Point.

Members from across the network were represented including mobile, franchise, affiliate and LUXE by itravel businesses, alongside many of the group's head office team.

Presentations (and plenty of prizes) were given by representatives from suppliers (pictured above) including Club Med's Lisa Bacon and Laura Gabrel, Martine Nunes from Oceania Cruises, Back-Roads Touring's Aaron Dodkin, Ingrid Berthelsen from Evolution Travel Collective representing Pelikin and Explore Worldwide, Rshelle Thompson from APT Travel Group, Bronwyn Knight from MSC Cruises and Bunnik Tours' Walter Delorie & Zoe Francis.

NZ holiday ready!

MORE than half a million Kiwis are set to take flight with Air New Zealand (NZ) throughout the busy school holiday period in Jul.

The New Zealand's flag carrier will operate more than 580,000 seats across 6,500 flights across its domestic routes alone, as well as more than 1,300 overseas services in the same period.

NZ Chief Customer Officer, Leanne Geraghty, noted the carrier had added 45,000 seats across nearly 500 flights to cater for the strong demand.

The ramped up services include routes between Christchurch and Rotorua/Tauranga, as well as Auckland and Blenheim.



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andBeyondappoints

CONSERVATION-FOCUSED luxury travel operator, andBeyond, has announced The Mint Partners as its PR rep in the Australian and New Zealand markets, working closely with Norman Harper Representation.

The Sydney-based agency will promote andBeyond's lodges and high-end bespoke tours across Africa, Asia and South America, highlighting a "new era of luxury travel".

Mint will also oversee the launch of the Punakha River Lodge, set to open in Bhutan in late 2023, and PR activity of the Phinda Forest Lodge in the Phinda Private Game Reserve in South Africa.

Oceania tops it up

OCEANIA Cruises has launched a new premium wine collection across its entire fleet.

Featuring 80 new labels from the world's top vineyards, guests are invited to try these newly featured wines at all restaurants on board Oceania's seven ships, including the recently launched *Vista*.

Guests also have the opportunity to join sommelier-led programs, including a special two-hour curated luncheon option.

AURIGA SPA TO DEBUT AT CAPELLA

CAPELLA Sydney is inviting visitors to experience its highly anticipated spa (**pictured**), operating under the hotel group's house label Auriga Spa.

The space is located on the sixth floor of the recently opened hotel, which has taken up residence in the former Dept of Education building.

The retreat comprises ambient spa treatment rooms, a 20-metre heated swimming pool, a gym, a sauna, steam facilities, and experiential showers.

Auriga offers treatments for the face and body, showcasing prestige products with Australian connections, such as a custom-made range of skincare products by Byron Bay brand Synthesis Organics.

The spa's treatment menu features signature massages informed by the new and full moons, aimed at increasing blood circulation, relieving physical and emotional tension, as well as



balancing chakras.

Body Alchemy packages provide exfoliation, detoxifying masks, and enzyme peel wraps.

The Facial Alchemy includes treatments which restore balance to the skin with precious oils and bioactives, combined with LED light therapy.

Leading the direction of Auriga is Dianne April Dayagbil, who has extensive experience

in the beauty and wellness space including long-running residencies at hotels in Bhutan and the Maldives.

To celebrate the official unveiling of Auriga, Capella is offering a special package, which includes a \$200 spa credit per room, overnight accommodation, fully daily breakfast for two, non-alcoholic in-room refreshments, and more - **CLICK HERE**.

Dorchester rooftop returns later this month

THE Dorchester Rooftop is returning this year at the five-star luxury hotel on London's Park Lane.

Opening from 29 Jun to 03 Sep, the pop-up will be inspired by an English secret garden, and will serve a brunch-style sharing menu including caviar and oysters.

Dishes come accompanied

by a captivating cocktail menu, featuring an array of refreshing drinks infused with herbs and botanicals such as the 'Endless Summer' and the 'Prairie Breeze'.

Desserts include summer berry cheesecake and The Dorchester's signature 68% chocolate parfait.

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Earn 15% on Palm

AGENTS can currently earn 15% commission on a limited time opening offer with the luxury Cheval Maison - The Palm Dubai.

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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.



A new Spa by JW is set to open on 12 Jul inside the **JW Marriott Gold Coast Resort & Spa**, offering balance and tranquility to guests. Spanning more than 2,500m², the new spa facility has a range of relaxation zones for individual and group experiences, complemented by the facility's six treatment rooms, wellness saunas, steam experience showers, relaxation pods and an outdoor relaxation area. Multiple culinary and tea services are also on offer.



Cozzet Victoria Bhubaneswar has opened its doors in India, the latest addition to the Cygnett Hotels & Resorts' growing portfolio. The hotel offers affordable rates, and at the same time positions itself as a premium MICE facility for formal and casual events. The hotel also houses a quick-service restaurant and an all-day diner, and is situated in close proximity to popular attractions such as Chika Lakem Udayagiri, Dhauli and more.



The 152-room **Thompson Seattle** has unveiled its new penthouse suites, along with a refreshed look for the rooftop bar & lounge, Nest. The pair of new penthouse suites each span more than 90m² at the top of the 12-storey property, where guests can overlook the Puget Sound and scenic Olympic Mountains. Each suite also offers a fully equipped kitchen, spacious dining area, a 65-inch LED TV and a spa-like bathroom.

TNZ focus areas

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) has revealed three new focus areas for 2024 it believes will best support the recovery of its battered visitor economy.

In a strategy update published this week, the Kiwi tourism body said it would look to increase the proportion of 'high-quality' visitors, actively shape the high-quality visitor mix through more focused activity, and influence the choices visitors make that give back to culture and nature.

Final call to arms

MAT McLachlan Battlefield Tours has issued a final reminder for travellers to take advantage of its earlybird deals to the Western Front and Gallipoli in 2024.

Its first four-day Explorer tours for both Gallipoli and the Western Front will depart on 01 May from Istanbul and Paris respectively, scheduled to tail its 10-day Anzac Day on the Western Front and Anzac Day at Gallipoli commemorative tours, which both conclude on 27 Apr 2024.

South Australia's tower of charm



THE South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) recently wrapped up its international roadshow in Europe, travelling through Manchester, London, Munich, Milan and Paris to promote the state to more than 400 travel trade representatives across 10 days.

Keeping things fresh in each city, the SATC opted to theme each stop to reflect a different South Australian region or experience, teaming them up with a range of interactive activities, one-on-one appointments, dinners and other networking opportunities.

According to the SATC, the latest roadshow has rekindled existing relationships with buyers, forged new partnerships and allowed new tourism operators "to enter these priority markets".

The events were run to strengthen South Australia's position in these key source markets, which before the pandemic struck, were worth \$182 million a year to the state's visitor economy.

The European Roadshow followed a North American Roadshow in Mar, which saw 24 operators meet with more than 200 key travel wholesale partners and retail travel agents across eight days in New York, Dallas and Los Angeles.

Pictured: The South Australian contingent breathe in the French air on the Paris leg of the journey.

Blue Mts refresh

BLUE Mountains Tourism has unveiled a new campaign push and website relaunch as part of the playful 'Been There Done That' campaign, which targets both domestic and international visitors to the region.

Canyoning, apple picking, horseback riding, ice skating, and art galleries are called out in the push, along with favourites like the Three Sisters, as well as a range of hidden gems.

Sabre + WhatsApp

SABRE has integrated its Nuvola hotel management software with messaging platform WhatsApp.

Hotels can now choose between SMS messaging or WhatsApp to power real-time chat with guests.

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