



MTAs Amanda Washington & Kim Newton

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news including a photo page from **APT** and our **Luxury** feature page, plus a full page from **Entire Travel Group**.

Qatar rescue flight

QATAR Airways has touched down ahead of Qantas in repatriating desperate Aussies who were stranded in Israel.

The first dedicated rescue flight landed at Sydney Airport last night carrying 222 passengers, which was organised through the Federal Government and Qatar Airways' local partner airline Virgin Australia.

Pelikin adds two

PELIKIN Travel Money has added luxury travel agency Nicole Beasley Travel and independent mobile travel agency Red Skies Travel to its preferred partnership with itravel.

FCTG's Independence Day

INDEPENDENT travel agency owners and mobile advisors from across Australia and New Zealand will be among the attendees at Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) Independent's first global conference detailed this morning.

To be held in Santiago, Chile in May next year, around 500 travel advisors and sponsors will gather for the inaugural event to celebrate the growing division, with the agenda including country days and a supplier expo.

"As the only truly global independent network, we believe the opportunity to bring everyone together is too special to pass up," Global Managing Director, FCTG Independent and Luxury Divisions Danielle Galloway (pictured) enthused.

"There is so much that the travel entrepreneurs in our network can gain from connecting with their peers in other nations, and having one conference



for all markets also opens new opportunities for our valued supplier partners," she added.

The news follows other big announcements from the FCTG arm in the events space, which is already gearing up for a Uniworld cruise from Budapest to Vienna to reward its top 10 performing agencies as part of its inaugural Independent Icons trip in Nov.

FCTG is hoping to make the newly-minted global conference concept an annual event for its international community, which boasts travel advisors from countries such as the United States, Canada and South Africa.

View the teaser video made public this morning **HERE**. *AB*

Wyndham chooses to reject Choice

CHOICE Hotels International has failed in its bid to purchase rival Wyndham Hotels & Resorts for around \$8 billion, as part of a hostile takeover plan.

The rejection is the latest chapter in ongoing efforts by Choice to snap up Wyndham's portfolio of properties and brands, with multiple discussions being held between the two companies over the last six months without agreement.

"We have long respected Wyndham's business and are confident [our purchase] would significantly accelerate both Choice's and Wyndham's long-term organic growth strategy," Choice Hotels CEO Patrick Pacious told the market yesterday.

However, Wyndham's shareholders rejected the proposal overnight, labelling it "underwhelming" and citing regulatory risks involved.



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No agreement yet

DESPITE media reports to the contrary, Perth Airport and Qantas have both been forced to deny any deal has been reached regarding a long-running dispute about passenger processing charges and a Qantas relocation to the eastern side of the airport.

Expedia now, pay later

FRESH from inking a deal with TripADeal yesterday (TD 17 Oct), Expedia Group has announced another major agreement in the Aussie market today, launching a co-branded app with deferred payment company Afterpay.

Launching this month, the OTA's collaboration with the market-leading buy now, pay later company allows Aussies to book travel through a co-branded experience in the Afterpay app, using four instalments.

Afterpay's new 'Pay in 4' product is powered by Expedia's specialist Strategic Partnerships and Affiliate technology, offering Afterpay users the choice of browsing more than three million properties around the world.

"This collaboration reaffirms our commitment to growing and enhancing the traveller experience through cutting-edge technologies, empowering our partners to deliver great experiences to their customers and drive customer loyalty," Expedia's Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Affiliates, Clayton Nelson said.

From Afterpay's perspective, the new tie-up is being viewed as a "substantial stride" towards offering its Australian customers the option of transacting higher-priced purchases like travel.

"As the nation's peak travel period fast approaches, we are excited to provide an easy and flexible service that will allow travellers to book their preferred

afterpay

accommodations and pay in four manageable instalments," Afterpay Country Manager ANZ Katrina Konstas said.

While Afterpay spruiks its payment services as being "interest free", a significant portion of its revenue is accrued through late fees, with the entire deferred payment segment attracting regulation scrutiny in recent months.

By the end of the year, buy now, pay later services will be considered akin to credit card products under changes made by the Minister of Financial Services in May. *AB*

A Rocky incentive

ENTIRE Travel Group (ETG) is offering agents up to \$13,000 in prizes as part of its latest sales incentive for 2024 bookings made on the Rocky Mountaineer.

The prize is for two people and includes return Air Canada flights, three nights' accommodation at Sheraton Vancouver Wall Centre, and two GoldLeaf seats on a Rocky Mountaineer journey departing 26 Apr 2024.

To enter, agents can email canada@entiretravel.com.au with their ETG booking number and the associated Air Canada reference number.

See p8 for further details.

Virgin IPO clouded

VIRGIN Australia's mooted plan to re-list on the ASX is less clear this morning after the man heading up the plan resigned.

The carrier's Chief Development Officer David Marr has stepped down, with parent Bain's CFO Race Strauss assuming IPO plans.



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G'day to group bookings



BONZA has launched a new group bookings arm called G'day Groups, targeting event planners with a bespoke planning process for 10 or more travellers.

The bolstered Group Travel Champions team at Bonza are now on hand to handle group booking requests, with each quote including 23kg of checked baggage, 8kg of hand luggage, as well as seat selection so everyone can stay together on board.

Bonza said planners will be required to pay a 25% deposit within seven days, and final names and payment will be due 30 days prior to departure.

However, the airline noted that names on bookings can be changed "at no extra charge" up until two days before wheels up, with payments able to be made via bank transfer or credit card to provide added flexibility.

"We have seen healthy demand for group bookings as more people are choosing to travel to regional locations for business events," CEO Tim Jordan said.

"There's also a very healthy appetite...for sporting events, and in fact, one of our first-ever bookings when we first went on sale in Jan was for 550 netball

players travelling to Townsville (pictured)," he added.

To celebrate the launch of the new division, Bonza is offering 20% off more than 300,000 flights across Nov to Mar by quoting the promo code "TAKEOFF20".

The offer applies to travel periods: 10 Nov-13 Dec; 16 Jan-06 Mar; and 13-27 Mar. *AB*

ATIA's capital push

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) is in Canberra this week to prosecute several key issues with the government currently impacting the travel and tourism sectors.

Among the stops for CEO Dean Long will be an appearance before the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, where he will provide evidence in support of ATIA's submission filed earlier in the year to the Inquiry into Australia's tourism and international education sectors.

The submission asked the Inquiry to build on previous commitments to expand the visitor economy, as set out in the Govt's THRIVE 2030 Strategy.

ATIA's Director of Advocacy and Public Policy Ingrid Fraser will join Long for a number of other meetings, including discussions with Minister for Transport Catherine King; Minister for Trade and Tourism Don Farrell; as well as Minister for Skills and Training Brendan O'Connor.

TokyoTokyo Old meets New

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PEPR appoints

TRAVEL and tourism public relations specialist PEPR Agency has announced the appointment of former P&O Australia Head of Communications, Lyndsey Gordon, to the newly created role of Associate Director.

The expansion comes as long-time PEPR Agency partner and director Anna Mansfield departs the company later this month for a new venture after a stellar 12 year-plus career at the business.

Founder Philip Engelberts said the senior team changes marked a new era for the company which earlier this month celebrated its twentieth anniversary.

Crown refurbishment

CROWN Melbourne has been listed as one of the targets of a global refurbishment plan for the Crown Resorts brand.

Parent group Blackstone's Global Head of Real Estate Kathleen McCarthy revealed the plan this week while visiting Australia, which will also see hundreds of millions spent on upgrading brand's global portfolio of properties and casinos.

Beyond the Crown brand, McCarthy also suggested Blackstone was on the hunt for high-quality real estate asset acquisitions Down Under that would suit its investment profile.

Questions were also directed her way about the chances of Blackstone buying the ailing Star Entertainment business (*TD* 26 Sep), but declined to comment.

Travelmarvel adds

SIX new extensions and stopovers across Vietnam and Cambodia in 2024/25 have been added by Travelmarvel.

Highlights include a seven-night river cruise on the Mekong and new beach-break options.

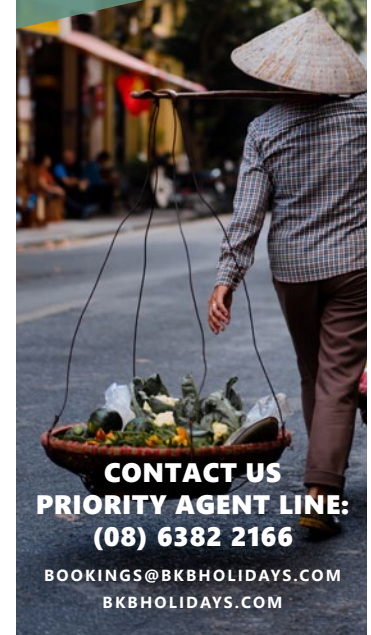
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NCL walkers really flat out

WHEN you're trying to do at least 10,000 steps a day, sometimes you just need a bit of a lie-down - or so it seems from this pic posted by Clinton Griffiths from Globus as part of this year's Norwegian Cruise Line Walk for Wellness.

This week participants were asked to snap photos of local spots that remind them of an NCL destination, and Griffiths' journey clearly led him to ports in Asia.

During his lunchtime walk in Sydney he took a quick nap (pictured), and he's of course asking "can you spot the real Buddha?"

For his effort he has won a \$50 spot prize from the NCL team.

Other winners this week include Flight Centre's Peter Heslop who uncovered some "international destinations" around Brisbane, while TravelManagers' Amy Ferguson created a unique NCL European itinerary in Melbourne.

This week's Walk for Wellness challenge asks participants to Think International Cuisine by snapping photos of the favourite NCL-inspired eateries in their local neighbourhoods.

The world record attempt is also stepping things up with a special live Zumba class hosted by one of Norwegian's Australian contact centre team tomorrow at 7pm AEDT - **REGISTER HERE**.



Flat tyre for Skroo's bike investment

PEDAL Group, the cycling company 47% owned by Flight Centre, has reported deflated results as Aussies move beyond the lockdown boom back to other forms of transport.

The parent company of 99 Bikes posted a loss of \$12.4 million for the 2023 financial year, down from handy profits posted during the pandemic, according to the *Financial Review*.

Flight Centre CEO Graham Turner also holds 22% of the company, while his son Matt, who is Pedal Group Chairman, owns 15% of the business.

Matt Turner said supply chain problems that required orders with long lead-in times had impacted the results.

Another Rex 737

REX Airlines today confirmed it has signed a formal Letter of Intent to lease another Boeing 737-800NG aircraft.

Following the delivery of two 737s in Jul and Sep, the additional plane will bring the Rex jet fleet to a total of 10.

The extra aircraft is currently in Arizona undergoing scheduled maintenance checks, and is expected to arrive in Australia next month before entering service before the year-end peak travel period.

Rex Deputy Chairman John Sharp said the move was part of the carrier's ongoing network expansion, inviting "all cities that want to be part of the unparalleled Rex experience to contact us immediately".

Ponant includes Japan flights

PONANT has expanded its all-inclusive offering beyond the Kimberley to now include packages for its 2024 expedition cruises in Japan.

Deals on offer for the Australian and NZ markets include return Economy class flights from all major Australian cities, as well as AKL, CHC and WLG on six unique itineraries exploring Kyushu's western islands and southern Japan's subtropical destinations.

Business class upgrades are also available for \$2,999pp plus taxes, with details at au.ponant.com.

More information in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.



Window Seat

WE'RE not certain if this was done in protest or by accident but it appears an unfortunate defecation incident has rocked yet another flight, only weeks after a similar incident in the air.

An easyJet plane scheduled to depart the Spanish island of Tenerife was cancelled and its passengers forced to hastily disembark after a traveller apparently missed the toilet with a smelly number two.

Curiously characterising the incident as being rife with both "suspense and anger", one passenger told UK media that "it was just a very uncomfortable experience for everyone".

"Obviously, the plane was in an unsanitary state, so they had to get external cleaners out from the airport to clean it," passenger Aaran Gedhu said.

"No one was happy about this situation," he added, indicating that most people on board believed the incident to be an "accident" and not a brazen act of poo-related terrorism.



ATG Diamond VIP partners shine bright into 2024

APT Travel Group has celebrated a number of its travel agencies achieving or requalifying for Diamond status in the company's VIP program, a testament to the power of collaboration within its sales team.

Some mark this return as a triumphant comeback post-COVID-19, while others celebrate this achievement for the first time, signifying exceptional growth in partnership with APT.

Diamond status in ATG's VIP program grants Diamond partners a range of exclusive benefits, including substantial partnership funds, consultant rewards, a priority customer service line, and top-tier access to hosted and self famils.

Each agency in this exclusive group has proven an invaluable partner in 2023 and, for many, over several years.

Bicton Travel expressed their excitement, stating "APT has consistently offered invaluable support to Bicton Travel.

"With such a diverse and exceptional product range, we eagerly anticipate the future of our partnership."

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OUR Vacation Centre.



PHIL Hoffmann Travel Glenelg Leisure.



Multi-island resort

CROWN & Champa Resorts is set to expand its portfolio with the addition of a new luxury resort in the Maldives.

Jawakara Islands Maldives encompasses two islands, Mabin and Dheru, which are connected by an over-sea walkway and located 40 minutes via seaplane from Male International Airport.

Opening 22 Oct, the five-star getaway offers 290 villas - 202 in Mabin and 88 in Dheru, with the latter also home to five three-bedroom beach pool villas, which sleep up to eight guests.

The family-friendly resort will provide surfing equipment and lessons, as well as other water activities like guided snorkelling, plus a kids program featuring mini golf, sushi making, and more.

THE WORLD'S FIRST SPA IN SPACE

CARBON-NEUTRAL spaceflight experience company, Space Perspective, has unveiled images for its custom-designed restroom, billed by the operator as the first-ever 'Space Spa'.

While the bathroom facilities rarely make the news coverage for commercial space tourism, the company revealed that having cutting-edge toilet facilities are in fact a key part of its sales proposition for travellers.

"One of the most consistent questions we receive when people learn that our spaceflight lasts six hours is if there will be a loo," co-CEO of Space Perspective Jane Poynter said.

"The answer is always, of course, yes, and there is no need for a vacuum toilet like astronauts contend with or a diaper.

"Having a proper and beautifully designed restroom contributes



significantly to the accessible and unique experience we are offering," Poynter added.

Tucked into one side of the capsule interior, the Space Lounge, the Space Spa is being promoted as surpassing facilities travellers will find in a First class aircraft cabin and "serve as a solo

oasis during spaceflight".

In Jul, Space Perspective said the business had sold more than 1,600 tickets, more than any other space tourism company, and representing more than US\$200 million in sales.

Tickets on board will set travellers back A\$200,000. AB

Amora renovation

THE Amora Beach Resort Phuket in Thailand has received extensive refurbishment costing around US\$14 million as part of its repositioning into a five-star modern lifestyle resort.

Changes will include renovated rooms and suites across 13 categories, a new-concept Nora Beach Club, revamped Amora Wellness Center with massage and fitness facilities, a refitted Isla restaurant, as well as a kids' club, and two pools.

The resort will reopen in Dec.

Capella Cup opens

LUXURY hotel Capella Sydney has opened bookings for 2023 Melbourne Cup celebrations in Aperture, its seafood venue, and Brasserie 1930, which is offering a bespoke three-course menu.

Guests can also book a private dining experience in the hotel's heritage event spaces, which feature in-built screens to televise the race - call 02 9071 500 for info.

Tassie expedition vessel joins Luxury Lodges

LUXURY Lodges of Australia has welcomed its latest member, *Odalisque III* by On Board, Tasmania's exclusive expedition vessel.

Launched earlier this year (TD 24 Jan), the intimate ship can cater to a maximum of 12 guests in seven cabins, with the ability to reach some of the most remote locations of the state's UNESCO World Heritage-listed wilderness.

The vessel's signature experience is a five-day discovery of Port Davey.

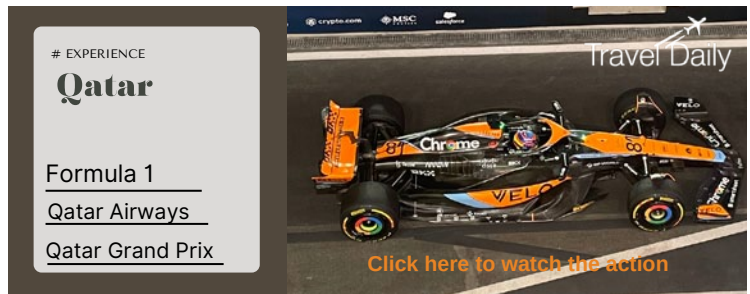
"On Board's carefully considered itineraries crafted and led by expert local guides with decades of experience along this coastline offer guests the kind of uniquely Australian experience that aligns perfectly with the Luxury Lodges of Australia DNA," Executive Chair, Penny Rafferty commented.

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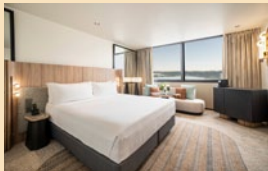


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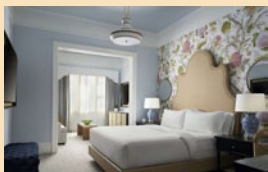
Parkroyal Melbourne Airport has unveiled an extensive multi-million dollar refurb to elevate guest experiences for domestic and international travellers. All of the hub's guest rooms, the lobby, restaurants, cafes, and bars, as well as the meeting and events floor, will all receive a makeover. Slated for a completion by Dec, guests can also enjoy an in-room movie session, a gym workout, or a splash at the pool while transiting at the airport.



Western Australia's **Pan Pacific Perth** has revealed the details of a refurbishment under a \$50 million transformation plan. To be completed by mid-late 2024, the resort will receive a new look for its 392 guest rooms and suites, 96 Pacific Club rooms and suites, ballrooms and meeting rooms, as well as the lobby and the Pacific Club lounge on level seven. The first batch of the newly refurbished rooms are now available for booking.



Renowned world-class and Michelin-starred chef Gordon Ramsay has opened his first restaurant in Macao at **The Londoner Macao**. Gordon Ramsay Pub & Grill will provide authentic British food for its guests, with interior designs drawing inspiration from 1830s industrial revolution architecture. Guests can savour the celebrity chef's signature dishes of beef wellington, fish & chips, sticky toffee pudding and much more at the venue.



After a more-than US\$160 million injection to its major development plan, **Hotel del Coronado** in California is set to restore all of its 681 guest rooms, suites and event spaces by 2025. The property started its renovation journey in 2018, and has since revamped its Ocean Concierge Club, fitness centre, and Vista Terrace for up to 900 guests.



The 515-room **Salt Lake Marriott Downtown at City Creek** has announced the completion of the first phase of a multi-million dollar transformation. The resort has upgraded its guest rooms with new furniture, bedding, vinyl tile flooring and wallpaper, as well as adding expanded bathroom doorways with new barn-style frames. The second phase will be finished by 2024.

Travellers Choice SA growth



INFLIGHT Travel from Adelaide's North Brighton is the latest addition to the Travellers Choice network, with owner Rosalie Stott saying she was attracted by the group's extensive marketing tools and support giving her independent agency a welcome "springboard for long-

term growth".

Stott, who is pictured with Travellers Choice National BDM Tim Bolton, said she also welcomed the opportunity to become a shareholder in Travellers Choice, "a group owned entirely by its members".

"I also want to enjoy the transparency and empowerment that comes from being part of a group that exists solely to serve its members," she said. *BP*

QF to Port Hedland

QANTAS will relaunch weekly flights between Brisbane and Port Hedland next month, with GDS screens indicating the 737-800 flights will return on 07 Nov after being suspended in Apr 2020.

Popping up, again

THE hotel Clicquot has returned to Australia following a successful pop-up debut last year.

The brand gives travellers a taste of culinary cuisine prepared by Chris Hemsworth's private chef, as well as sunrise yoga sessions and luxury packages.

Steam rooms and infinity pools are also on offer, with guests able to book three-night stays until 28 Oct - more info **HERE**.

Maningrida gets a lift

THE Maningrida Progress Association (MPA) in the Northern Territory has received a \$63,000 community support grant to install a wheelchair lifter at Maningrida Airport.

The new facility will provide safe access for passengers boarding aircraft and make it easier for people living with disability to embark on travel plans.

"Maningrida community members living with a disability or who are elderly cannot access aviation services without a wheelchair lifter," the airport's CEO Ian McLay said.



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All Rocky Mountaineer 2024 Bookings, which include Air Canada (agent can book air themselves) made with Entire Travel Group from 1 October 2023 to 28 February 2024 will go into the draw to win a dream trip to Canada for you and your companion. Every booking goes into the draw, the more bookings you make more chances you have of winning.*

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