

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six pages of the latest travel industry news including **Business Events News**, plus a full page from **Canuckiwi**.

Disney Uni is open

DISNEYLAND Resort's global training program, Disney University, is now welcoming applications from Aussie travel agents who have been in the industry for less than four years. Participants will receive intensive training on the world-favourite attraction, with the top 10 graduates to enjoy a famil to Pixar Fest in Apr, and flights provided by United Airlines.

Applications close on Mon 04 Mar at 5pm AEDT - complete the registration form **HERE**.



Air NZ inks SIA until '29

AIR New Zealand and Singapore Airlines have been granted regulatory approval by the NZ Government to extend their joint venture alliance until 2029.

First authorised in 2014, the extended cooperative agreement will see the carriers operate up to four daily seasonal services between Auckland and Singapore from 27 Oct to 29 Mar 2025.

Benefits for travellers under the extended pact also include reciprocal frequent flyer schemes and greater access to a wider global network of destinations in the coming years.

"Since the alliance was launched the two flag carriers have together carried over 4.6 million passengers," Air NZ Chief Transformation and Alliances Officer, Mike Williams, said.

"Together we can continue to stimulate trade and tourism, and provide customers with greater choice and connectivity."

The two carriers will jointly operate 38 return services weekly between New Zealand and Singapore during peak months under the latest deal, accounting for 893,000 seats annually.

During the 10-year partnership, Air New Zealand and Singapore Airlines have grown the seat capacity between the two countries by nearly 50%. *AB*

2023 the "best ever"

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) has reported last year to the "best ever" for airline safety across key criteria.

Last year saw one accident occur for every 1.26m flights, the lowest rate in a decade, while fatality risk also improved from a 142 yearly average over the last five years to just 72 in 2023.

"Aviation places its priority on safety and that shows in the 2023 performance," IATA said.

Bonza's Bruce Bewty

IT MAY have taken over a year but low-cost carrier Bonza has listened to the people and named its newest aircraft after esteemed **TD** Editor-at-large Bruce Piper.

After a concerted campaign by **TD**, which included petitioning then-Bonza CCO Carly Povey (**TD** 02 Nov 2022), the carrier yesterday revealed 'Bruce' as the name of its newest Boeing 737.

While it wasn't the airline's third plane - which was named Sheila instead - the overall result is still no less satisfactory.

"I feel every Aussie knows a Bruce and we're proud to have our very own Bruce join Bonza's fleet," said Bonza CEO Tim Jordan.

Okay, so it may have been named after the Qld highway, but we'll claim it anyway.

Bonza's new Bruce aircraft will be re-registered in Australia after the airline said it will convert its wet lease from Canadian partner Flair into a dry lease, now flying using Gold Coast-based crew.

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FCTG says No No to GOGO

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) recent decision to close its loss-making US wholesaler GOGO Vacations comes as it prepares to capitalise on new opportunities in leisure and corporate travel.

In a statement issued by its US office, FCTG will transition some long-term leisure partnerships distributed through GOGO into its new independent brand Envoyage unveiled this week (**TD 27 Feb**).

GOGO Vacations lost US\$7.3 million in the first half of the 2023/24 financial year alone, however the company said the division had never been consistently profitable since it was acquired in 2007.

"It was a difficult, but logical decision to close GOGO," Flight Centre Travel Group Americas President, Charlene Leiss, said.

"With the wholesale model struggling in recent years, it has become increasingly difficult to justify the high costs of maintaining this brand.

"With that said, a transition team will remain in the business to service the existing GOGO bookings and support our customers throughout this period

with the complete backing of Flight Centre Travel Group."

On the retail front separate to the rollout of Envoyage, FCTG will maintain its Liberty Travel and Student Universe retail brands.

In addition, further growth in the corporate sector will come in the form of a new regional structure for Corporate Traveller, with hubs in Boston, Chicago and Southern California. **ML**

More from FCTG on **page three**.

Arizona links to Oz

LINKD Tourism is now representing the Arizona Office of Tourism in the Australia and New Zealand market.

"We're looking forward to working with Linkd Tourism as a critical partner in sharing the absolute best of the Grand Canyon State," said Lisa Urias, CEO of Arizona Office of Tourism.

Linkd Tourism Account Director Millie Browne will lead with Jack Curtis as Trade Account Manager.

PR Director Trina Shepherd and PR Account Managers Jennifer Plahm and Ben Urquhart will also be part of the team.

NANNETTE GLEDHILL
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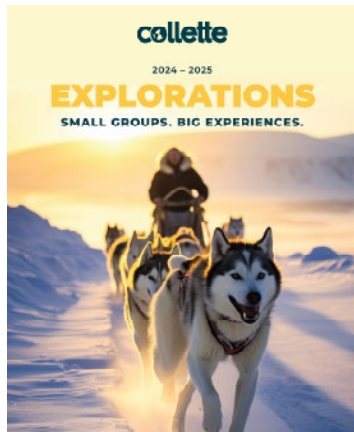
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Collette explores

COLLETTE has unveiled its 2024 *Explorations* brochure, showcasing 41 small group tours encompassing destinations across six continents.

Comprised of a maximum of 24 travellers, Explorations tours are Collette's top-rated product, with some of the most popular itineraries including the 'Mediterranean Coastal Journey', 'Old World Sicily & Malta', 'Treasures of Turkey', and more. See the new guide online [HERE](#).



Whitsundays for all

TOURISM Whitsundays has invested \$450k on a new tourism campaign targeting Aussies in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, the Gold Coast, Newcastle, and the Sunshine Coast.

The marketing push seeks to reaffirm the destination's appeal as a winter holiday spot, as well as to dispel myths about being only for luxury & youth travellers.

Parry off to Tokyo

REBECCA Parry from Barrow & Bear Travel in Queensland has been named the winner of Tokyo Tourism's recent agent incentive.

For successfully completing the Tokyo Tourism Expert e-learning course, Parry has won flights to Tokyo and a four-night stay at Mimaru Apartment Hotel.

Susan Jones from Spencer Travel won the Gold Prize of a two-night stay at Cerulean Tower Hotel.

Three other winners will take home a matcha tea set, with \$1,300 in prizes still to be won.

Choice for FCTG agents

MEMBERS and new sign-ups to FCTG Independent will have the option to take on as much or as little of the division's new Envoyage brand as they see fit, the company told *Travel Daily*.

Responding to questions about its new brand, Flight Centre Travel Group Global Managing Director of Luxury and Independent Brands, Danielle Galloway, said agents can continue trading under their own brands if they choose.

"Over the years we have built and acquired a number of international businesses and nurtured the tremendous potential we see in the independent travel space," Galloway said.

"Now, we're taking the opportunity to reset and commit to the future of our independent business through Envoyage."

Galloway added the new brand will replace FCTG Independent as the parent operation division, but sub-brands including Travel

Partners, Travel Associates at Home and Travel Managers NZ will remain operating as they are.

"While Envoyage will replace FCTG Independent as our principal brand, we recognise and understand the importance of individuality among our independent businesses; therefore, the adoption of Envoyage is optional for those who already operate under their own brand," she said. *ML*

VA passes staff deal

VIRGIN Australia's latest *Cabin Crew Enterprise Agreement* has received provisional approval after 90% of its cabin crew voted in favour of the proposal.

The deal brings 14% salary increases for domestic cabin crew over three years, as well as improved allowances, overtime, and lifestyle benefits.

It is the first time such a deal has been ticked on the first ballot.

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GC's new Uber zone

GOLD Coast Airport has introduced a new Uber pickup zone, as well as a dedicated waiting lounge for Uber riders in the arrivals area of the terminal.

Queensland Airports Limited's COO, Marion Charlton, said "Uber is now the largest commercial transportation service at Gold Coast Airport, so this is about making it more convenient for our customers when making their onward travel journeys".

The Gold Coast hub has also relocated the taxi zone, which now offers more space, to the front of the Southern Terminal Expansion, as well as installed additional ramps and a dedicated accessible pickup bay at the front of the terminal.

United jacks up fees

UNITED Airlines has raised its checked bag fees for the first time in more than five years, with the airline adding US\$5 to the price.

First checked bags on all UA domestic flights in the United States will now cost US\$40 and US\$45 for a second if paid in advance, or US\$50 per bag if paid for at the airport.

United MileagePlus Premier members will continue to receive their first checked bag for free, as will travellers in first class.

The increase comes two days after rival carriers JetBlue and American Airlines raised their own baggage fees, with Delta Air Lines now the only major US airline yet to make a change.

Paying for experiences

DOMESTIC and international travellers are more than willing to spend money on attractions and experiences, even without government incentives, albeit less frequently than they once did.

This was one of the key findings from Big Red Group's *Spring/Summer 2024 Seasonal Experiences Index* report, which was released this week.

Drawing on market sentiment data by Westpac, NAB and Commonwealth Bank, the Big Red report found Australians are still prioritising travel and entertainment while tightening their belts in other life aspects.

Big Red reiterated recent data from Tourism Research Australia which forecast int'l arrivals to return to pre-pandemic levels by 2025, while domestic day trips will take until 2026 to follow suit.

The report said the meteoric pace of recovery seen in 2022 will continue to normalise in 2024.

Curiously, Aussies were turning more everyday activities into tourism experiences, with Big Red seeing a 23.5% jump in its 'Gourmet Picnics' category, despite trends showing Aussies cutting back on eating out.

Theme parks, reef cruises, and whale and dolphin watching also appeared in the top five top-selling categories in Spring 2023.

Big Red Group CEO and co-founder, David Anderson, said the experiences industry reflected cost-of-living pressures being felt



across the country.

"However, data from our latest *Seasonal Experiences Index* has shown us that bright spots are emerging in each and every corner of the industry, and we remain optimistic about Australia's ability to recover, albeit at a potentially stabilised rate," Anderson said. *ML*

The biggest Pullman

ACCOR will expand its branded residences network in the Philippines, signing on to manage a new 1,100-key property in the idyllic beachside enclave of Cebu under its five-star Pullman brand.

The upcoming beach property will begin construction in 2025 and feature 200 guest rooms and 900 residences, all of which will be managed by Pullman Hotels.

The 1,100 rooms and residences will be split across three towers, with a palatial penthouse sitting atop all three.

Pullman Mactan Cebu Hotel & Residences will welcome its first guests and residents from 2028.



Window Seat

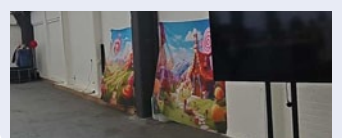
CREATING a fun experience for kids inspired by Willy Wonka should be like taking candy from a baby, but at least one operator has failed the sweet brief, says a group of disgruntled Scottish parents.

A company ominously called House of Illuminati has come under fire for holding a Wonka-themed event in Glasgow that offered little in the way of chocolate and lollies or colourful props.

One parent said many of the kids left in tears after having to play on a "sad bouncy castle" and miss out on advertised attractions, like an enchanted garden and an ironically titled imagination lab.

"Underwhelming was an understatement," one unhappy customer posted on social media, adding "embarrassing doesn't even cut it. I paid for Willy Wonka and got Billy Bonkers".

Perhaps the worst part of the controversy was the hefty price tag for what turned out to be a 10-minute long experience, with organisers bilking punters to the tune of A\$68 (£35) per person.



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A MICE Sanctuary

EVENT and audiovisual supplier AVPartners has expanded its footprint in the luxury resort sector after signing a new agreement with InterContinental Sanctuary Cove Resort.

From 01 Jun, AVPartners will install new tech in the Queensland hotel's event spaces, including an LED screen, AI tracking production cameras, and creative lighting solutions.

MEANWHILE, the property has also launched a new MICE promotion, offering event organisers who book an event or conference before 31 May a bonus luxury leisure or corporate retreat at InterContinental Hayman Island Resort.

The retreat is valued at \$15k - more info [HERE](#).

VANCOUVER KEEN TO SEE MICE FLY

EXCLUSIVE

VANCOUVER is eager to see Australia's MICE market return to its previous heights, off the back of steadily growing seat capacity and flight frequencies from Air Canada and Qantas.

Speaking to **TD** at an event in Sydney last week, Destination Vancouver International Meeting Sales Manager, Luke Snyder, said the major barriers for the city's MICE offerings in this market included companies working with pre-COVID budgets when everything is more expensive.

Snyder spent last week in Australia meeting with specialist MICE agents (**pictured**) to push Vancouver as a premier conference destination and learn more about the local market.

"In some cases, we're hearing [businesses] are just reducing the group size in order to fit the



budget," Snyder said.

"That means they have to change where they're going or what type of experiences they can enjoy," she added.

For businesses more capable of working with a larger budget, Snyder proudly said Vancouver was uniquely placed to offer some "seriously impressive" and unique experiences to delegates and incentive visitors.

"If you're looking for something

really exclusive, you can take a helicopter tour that lands on a glacier and have a private picnic set up next to a glacier lake."

Despite these hurdles, Snyder added the Australian market presented some great potential for Canada's MICE market.

"There's a lot of promising potential business coming straight out of the conversations we've had with possible groups coming up," Snyder added. *ML*

NZICC appoints

THE New Zealand International Convention Centre (NZICC) has expanded its leadership team with the appointment of Ian Love as the Director of Operations, and Robert Cullen as Executive Chef.

Beginning the role on 04 Mar, Love will leverage his 30 years of event and venue management expertise to ensure seamless experiences for clients and guests.

Cullen, who is a Michelin-starred chef, has worked in kitchens across the UK, Russia, and Southeast Asia, and will also join the NZICC on 04 Mar.

Laissez expands

LAISSEZ-FAIRE Catering has widened its portfolio with three new Sydney-based venue partners, including Luna Park's 'Big Top' venue.

The company has also been named the exclusive in-house management partner for Urban Winery Sydney, as well as signing on as the food caterers at Machine Hall, a brand-new industrial-style space in the CBD.

BET's new poddy

BUSINESS Events Tasmania (BET) has introduced a new podcast designed to inspire the state's event organisers.

Called *BET Visionary Spotlight*, the new production will feature industry leaders, researchers, teachers and entrepreneurs providing key hosting advice.

The first episode dropped last week and is available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

Cliftons' winner

CLIFTONS Melbourne Head Chef Daniel Townsend has come out on top out at the Asia Pacific IACC Copper Skillet Chef of the Year Competition (**TD** 15 Feb).

Townsend, who created the delicious winning dish from a mystery basket of ingredients within just 90 minutes, will now represent Asia-Pacific during the finals in New Jersey in Apr.

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APPOINTMENTS

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Expedia Group has announced two new appointments to its newly formed operating divisions. **Alfonso Paredes** has been appointed as President of Private Label Solutions, while **Greg Schulze** has taken on the role of President of Travel Partners and Media. Paredes has been in the company for 14 years and was instrumental in the growth of Expedia's Private Label Solutions business. Meanwhile Schulze brings nearly 20 years of experience to his new role, where he will spearhead and accelerate the growth of the company's advertising business.

Brisbane Airport Corporation has welcomed **Kirsty Lucas** as its SVP Aviation Marketing & Partnerships. Lucas has held several senior roles in the industry, including a five-year tenure at Scoot as General Manager, Australia, before relocating to Destination Gold Coast to take on the role of International Manager. In her new role, Lucas will further strengthen the relationships with the hub's existing and potential partners.

Relocating from his 12-year post at Fitzroy Island Resort, **Glen Macdonald** has been appointed as the new General Manager of **Cairns Harbourside Hotel**. Macdonald, a long-term resident of Cairns, also served as a board member of the Association of Marine Park Tourism Operators for nearly four years, where he played a key role in helping to position the city, and the wider Far North Queensland region, as a renowned tropical resort destination.

Eunica Pineda has been promoted to the role of Marketing & Online Sales Manager at **Air Canada**. She first joined the carrier in 2018 as Revenue & Sales Optimisation Coordinator, before working her way up to Sales & Marketing Specialist at the end of 2021. Her prior experience includes a nearly three-year stint at Singapore Airlines, where she was the Sales Officer - Groups, Admin & Reporting, as well as roles at Wotif Group and the Tourism Industry Council NSW.

Bringing more than two decades of expertise into the fold, **Paul Andarakis** has joined **Softel Hotels and Resorts** to help bolster the hotelier's commercial operations. Appointed as the new Commercial Director of the company's flagship property in Australia, Softel Sydney Darling Harbour, Andarakis will lead the development and implementation of the overall commercial strategy, alongside other major objectives. He was most recently the Global Account Director at Marriott International.

Succeeding the soon-to- retire Michael D'Ambrose, **Uma Amuluru** has been appointed as **Boeing's** Chief Human Resources Officer, as well as its Executive Vice President, effective 01 Apr. In her new role, Amuluru will be responsible for the plane manufacturer's talent planning, acquisition, development, compensation, and employee and labour relations. She is currently the Vice President and Assistant General Counsel for Boeing's Defense, Space & Security department.

MTA's wild Queenstown ride



PULSES raced and knuckles turned white as MTA Travel treated 60 of its Platinum Travel Advisors to an action-packed weekend in Queenstown.

Together, the group engaged in some of the Kiwi city's most famous attractions including a thrilling jetboat ride, while others ascended Bob's Peak to enjoy the exciting Skyline Luge.

Some agents were even lucky enough to take in a bird's eye view over Milford Sound on a scenic flight, while a more serene experience was enjoyed on board

the *TSS Earnslaw* steamship for a peaceful lunchtime cruise along the lake.

MTA Travel Managing Director, Karen Merricks, said she was thrilled to reward top sellers with the New Zealand adventure.

"We're immensely grateful for their dedication and hard work; their exceptional business skills continue to drive our success," Merricks said. *ML*

The group is **pictured** above in front of Lake Wakatipu.

Cunard shows taste

CUNARD has revealed the four Australian culinary experts set to join celebrity chef and restaurateur Matt Moran aboard the third edition of its Great Australian Culinary Voyage.

Departing Sydney on 06 Feb 2025, the five-night cruise will see *MasterChef Australia's* inaugural season winner Julie Goodwin take on the role of MC.

Torres Strait Island chef Nornie Bero and *Great Australian Bake Off* host Darren Purchase will round out the impressive line-up.

Fares start from \$1,349ppts.

Four Seasons Cabo

BOOKINGS are now open for Four Seasons' new resort in Mexico, which will begin welcoming guests from 01 May in the Los Cabos Golden Corridor.

Located within a Riviera-style village, Four Seasons Resort and Residences Cabo San Lucas at Cabo Del Sol offers 96 spacious guest rooms, small wooden cabins, suites and villas, as well as 61 residences, all with views of the Sea of Cortez.

Guests will also have easy access to a beach, three pools, three restaurants and five bars, as well as an art studio, spa and fitness centre.



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