

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest industry news including our **Sustainability** page, plus a full page from **Oceania Cruises**.

Bonza delays again

BONZA has again pushed back the launch of its Gold Coast-Darwin service, which was due to take off today but has now been delayed until 19 Mar (*TD* 05 Dec).

CEO Tim Jordan said the "difficult decision" was made in order to prevent straining the low-cost airline's current capacity.

Meanwhile, Bonza delivered more than 650,000 customers to 21 destinations across the country in 2023, in more positive news for the airline.

More than 1.5m Aussies also downloaded the Fly Bonza app, "We look forward to delivering more game-changing positive effects to the domestic aviation market as we grow," Jordan said.

LTC fills gap in luxury industry

EXCLUSIVE

THE Luxury Travel Collection's (LTC) new Member Portfolio (*TD* 04 Dec), which was launched just under a month ago, fills a market gap the way only Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) can, General Manager Nikki Glading enthused.

The new network is focused on building and growing alongside its members, as FCTG Independent booms as one of the company's most productive divisions.

The Member Portfolio is also the only agency network which specialises in luxury leisure, which adds to the power of the concept, Glading told *Travel Daily*.

"Independent is going so well for us, and we love being able to contribute to this community of agents and use the Flight Centre buying power and the luxury ecosystem that exists because of Travel Associates," she explained.

"Nobody else has luxury leisure, so [we're] able to go to

these luxury leisure agencies who remain wholly owned and independent and say, you have a brand that we celebrate and we want our names to be associated with, you've got a great reputation, we've got a great reputation, let's build something together and grow together."

FCTG Independent was not attracting as strongly in the luxury space before the establishment of the Member Portfolio, Glading shared, however the LTC now offers an attractive proposition for new potential partners.

"If you look at the member agencies that we have, most of them have been in business between 25 and 50 years, they had brands in their own right within the luxury travel industry.

"What we are grateful for is people of such calibre and experience are joining the network so that we can learn from each other and grow." MS

APT turns new leaf

TRAVEL Daily Editor Adam Bishop recently sat down to talk to Rob McGeary and Lou Tandy, the new driving force behind APT Travel Group (*TD* 22 Dec 2023).

The upcoming leaders have taken the reins from their father, Geoff McGeary, who announced his retirement last month after six decades at the helm.

McGeary and Tandy divulge plans for the business going forward, including details on the two new APT ships due in 2025 - which *TD* exclusively revealed last year (*TD* 22 Aug 2023).

Read the full interview **HERE** over at *travelBulletin*.

Oceania's big offer

OCEANIA Cruises is kicking off the new year with a huge sale which offers up to 50% off select sailings, such as 10-day Monte Carlo to Athens cruise.

Head over to the **back page** for more information.



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Intrepid's record-breaking year

INTREPID marked a record-breaking year in 2023, which saw the strongest financial performance in the company's 34-year history.

After a record-breaking month of \$70 million in bookings in Nov, the operator is set to exceed its FY23 revenue and profit goals when it releases its final results in Mar.

Last year, Intrepid also raised more than \$2.4 million for more than 40 NGO partners through the Intrepid Foundation.

"A massive thank you to our team, leaders, shareholders, industry partners and customers who have helped Intrepid Travel achieve its best results ever in 2023," CEO James Thornton said.



Staybridge expands

IHG Hotels & Resorts has announced the expansion of Staybridge Suites, with the opening of the brand's second hotel in Asia Pacific.

Designed to meet the needs of extended-stay travellers, Staybridge Suites Bangkok Sukhumvit features 411 suites between 28-70m², a fitness centre, an onsite shop called The Pantry, and a golf simulator.

The new hotel is positioned close to shopping malls such as Emporium, Em Quartier and the new Marche, lifestyle spaces like 72 Courtyard and Benjasiri Park, and an abundance of entertainment options.

The property's opening follows the launch of Staybridge Suites Bangkok Thonglor, the brand's inaugural hotel in the Thai capital, last year.

Trip.com reveals '24 predictions



CHINESE travellers, theme parks and music festivals, and sustainability will be the cornerstones of travel for 2024 according to data revealed by Trip.com Group.

With the opening of Chinese borders, the group is predicting a surge in travel from Chinese citizens with a desire to make up for lost time.

It suggests the trend is especially prominent during holiday periods, such as the eight-day Golden Week in Oct, which witnessed an eightfold surge in outbound travel in 2023.

The top five destinations for Chinese travellers in 2023 were Thailand, Japan, South

Korea, Singapore and Malaysia, according to the group's data.

Trip.com is also predicting that music festivals and theme parks are becoming even more popular, with a 65% increase in bookings in 2023 compared to 2019 levels.

Hong Kong Disneyland, Universal Studios Japan, Ocean Park Hong Kong, Universal Studios Singapore and Tokyo Disneyland were the most popular in 2023.

Meanwhile, sustainable travel has been outlined again as an area of growth, with Trip.com's latest ESG report indicating that more than 16 million customers have opted for low-carbon travel options, signalling a rising interest in eco-friendly exploration.

Last year Trip.com Group's low-carbon hotel standard initiative was launched, with over 1,500 partners shortlisted as low-carbon hotels. *DF*

Aniko's \$2b project

A NEW hotel is set to be part of Queensland-based real estate firm Aniko Group's \$2 billion four-tower project at Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast.

The mixed-use project, named 'The Landmark', is located on the Gold Coast Highway, and will be one of the largest developments ever initiated in the city.

The hotel will be located in a 53-storey tower, which will also include hotel-branded residences.

Ambient Dive Travel

NEW Zealand-based industry stalwart Jared Simcox has founded Ambient Dive Travel, a new small group tour operator for "fish nerds, divers, ocean lovers and adventure seekers".

Simcox said the new company will "craft small group tours and bespoke packages to some of the most iconic destinations around the world".

MEL milestone

MELBOURNE Airport ended 2023 on a high, with a record number of international airlines now flying to the hub.

Last week, Asiana Airlines became the 38th carrier to serve Melbourne Airport, as it kicked off seasonal services to Seoul.

The South Korean airline will operate two direct flights per week using Airbus A350 aircraft.

"These direct services will mean pax and Victorian exporters can avoid the cost and inconvenience of transiting through another city to reach South Korea," Melbourne Airport Chief of Aviation Jim Parashos said.

HLO cinches ETG

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited (HLO) has finalised its acquisition of Express Travel Group (ETG) today, after completing the Tranche 2 consideration (*TD* 14 Aug 2023).

In an update published on the ASX, HLO announced it has issued more than 1.8 million fully paid ordinary shares and final cash settlement of \$14.2 million.

The company also revealed it will release its first half results on 21 Feb.

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New Jetstar China flights

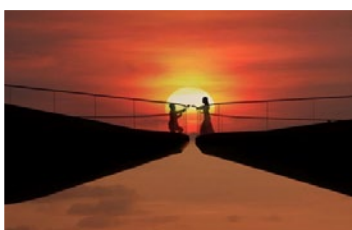


JETSTAR Asia's inaugural Singapore to Wuxi service has taken off, marking the start of 3K's second route to China. The flight departed from Singapore on 28 Dec, operated by Jetstar's expanding fleet of Airbus A320s, marking the only route between the two cities. The two weekly return flights will increase to four from 15 Jan to meet growing demand, with the airline offering more than 70,000 low fare seats between the two destinations. Chief Exec Barathan Pasupathi said the launch was a great way to wrap up what has been an exciting 2023 for Jetstar Asia.

"This year has seen us increase our fleet, expand our network and grow our Jetstar family, so launching a brand-new route to such an important destination is a fitting way to end the year. "China is a critical market for Jetstar and our customers, so it's great to start flying to Wuxi, our second Chinese port following the successful launch of flights to Haikou early this year. "We've seen strong demand for this route since we announced it in Oct, especially as borders are open and COVID travel restrictions have been removed," he added. *MS*

Kiss me I'm a Bridge

KISS Bridge (pictured), a new iconic destination in Vietnam, has just opened, with intent to steal the hearts of the world this year. The landmark, located on Phu Quoc's aptly named Sunset Town, is anticipated to emulate the Golden Bridge in Da Nang as a modern man-made wonder and iconic destination.



Ho Chi Minh bites into food campaign

HO CHI Minh City Tourism has unveiled its top street food havens for "unforgettable culinary delights", as part of an international media campaign to showcase its cuisine. The campaign includes a video titled "All You Can Eat", and has been prominently featured on networks such as CNN Asia, Discovery, as well as the Asian Food Network. There is also a Heritage Guide showcasing Ho Chi Minh City's cuisine, which will be extensively distributed on all Vietnam Airlines international and domestic flights.

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AI's A350 arrives

AIR India has revealed the interiors of its Airbus A350 aircraft (pictured), which landed in New Delhi on 23 Dec.

The aircraft, which will soon enter commercial operations, offers 28 Business class suites, 24 Premium Economy seats, and 264 Economy class seats.

Air India also offers the latest-generation Panasonic eX3 in-flight entertainment system and HD screens for all seats.

"As a symbol of the new age of flying, the A350 promises a world-class, long-haul travel experience on our non-stop routes, providing an unparalleled level of comfort," Chief Executive Officer Campbell Wilson said.

"Its excellent flight economics and state-of-the-art technology underscore our dedication to commercially successful operations and to achieving our sustainability goals."

Air India ordered 250 new aircraft from Airbus last year, including 40 of the A350 model (TD 21 Jun).



Window Seat

ATLANTIS, The Palm has rung in 2024 with English musician Sting (pictured), who performed during Dubai's ultimate New Year's Eve party.

The famous Gala Dinner, hosted annually by Atlantis on 31 Dec, was serenaded by the former frontman of The Police, whose 60-minute set reportedly "brought the house down".

The 72-year-old rocker belted out a number of his classics, including *Every Breath You Take* and *Englishman in New York*.

Adding to the night's excitement, Atlantis lit up the skies in a myriad of colours during one of Dubai's largest and most stunning fireworks, drone, and pyro displays.

More than 4,000 guests, including Dubai residents and revellers from around the world, rang in the new year on a custom-built deck overlooking the Palm Islands and the city's skyline.

The event also featured a fantastic 30-piece band from France, free-flowing champagne, and a lavish buffet serving a multitude of dishes, including 50kg of caviar, two tonnes of lobster, 300kg of Alaskan king crab and 6,000 oysters.

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LUFTHANSA SIGNS LANDMARK SAF DEAL

LUFTHANSA Group and Singaporean company LGE Travel have forged a groundbreaking sustainability partnership, which will see the tour operator commit to investing in sustainable aviation fuel.

The milestone is the largest bulk SAF deal for Lufthansa in the Asia-Pacific region, and is the first deal of its kind for the airline group in Singapore.

“Partnering with LGE Travel is a testament to our shared commitment to promoting sustainability within the aviation industry,” General Manager Singapore Malaysia Brunei Philipp Bonkatz remarked.

“This deal not only marks a significant achievement in our sustainability endeavours but also paves the way for future collaborations aimed at redefining the aviation landscape, both globally and more specifically in the Asia Pacific region.”

LGE Managing Director Benny



Ho added, “we are proud and honoured to be the first travel agency in Singapore to be part of the committee driving towards more sustainable travel with Lufthansa Group.”

The airline aims to halve its net CO2 emissions compared to 2019 by the end of the decade, and is aiming for a neutral balance by 2050.

Lufthansa pax are able to offset

their CO2 emissions immediately through SAF or via long-term climate protection projects, which have been certified according to the highest standards.

The company is also entering around 200 new, more sustainable aircraft into service by the end of the decade, which will reduce fuel consumption and thus CO2-emissions by up to 30% on every flight. *MS*

Venice group ban

VENICE is set to ban large tourist groups and loudspeakers, in a bid to ease the impact of mass tourism.

Groups of more than 25 people will no longer be allowed from Jun, nor will the use of loudspeakers, which can “generate confusion and disturbances”, according to the city.

Overtourism is widely recognised as an urgent issue for Venice, which in Sep approved the trial of a €5 day trippers fee (*TD* 19 Jul 2022).

Venice is just 7.6km², but hosted almost 13 million tourists in 2019, according to the Italian National Institute of Statistics.

Numbers of visitors are expected to exceed pre-pandemic levels in the coming years.

Delta set to introduce eco-friendly cups

DELTA Air Lines is eliminating around three million kilograms of single-use plastic on board its aircraft with its new paper cups.

DL has begun final testing of the new vessels on board flights last month, which will be rolled out throughout the airline’s network, if successful.

Delta has already removed more than 2 million kilograms

of single-use plastics annually since 2022 on its journey to deliver a more sustainable travel experience.

“These cups are a great example of how Delta is working to address our impact through what we can control today,” Chief Sustainability Officer Amelia DeLuca explained.

Sofitel Mel award

SOFITEL Melbourne On Collins has been awarded a Green Globe Certification in recognition of its commitment to implementing and maintaining sustainable operations and procedures.

Sustainability is one of the most important parts of the guest journey, the hotel said.

ANA charges up

ALL Nippon Airways (ANA) has installed ABB fast chargers for its electric vehicles at Haneda Airport.

The fast charger is compatible with three domestic and international standards, as well as with vehicles that will be introduced in the future.

The initiative will contribute to ANA’s climate strategies to reduce its carbon footprint from operations.

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MONEY

WELCOME to Money, *TD's* Tue feature on what the Australian dollar is doing.

AU\$1 = US\$0.682

AS WE enter the first trading day of 2024, many anticipate Australia's sharemarket will be dragged behind by the closure of other sharemarkets worldwide, as well as a slight setback on Wall Street as it closed ahead of the holidays.

The AUD has also been rough, as it dropped close to one cent against the Japanese yen and dipped AU\$0.016 against the Swiss franc.

Wholesale rates this morning.

US	\$0.682
UK	£0.536
NZ	\$1.085
Euro	€0.617
Japan	¥96.07
Thailand	฿23.43
China	¥4.830
South Africa	12.50
Canada	\$0.900
Crude oil	US\$78.42

MH learn on the go

MALAYSIA Airlines has added "Education on the Go" content to its in-flight entertainment collection, in partnership with Universiti Malaya Centre for Continuing Education.

Passengers travelling onboard Malaysia Airlines flights can now enjoy educational content covering a wide range of topics, including lifestyle courses and business modules, as part of the carrier's effort to expand its entertainment selection.

A&K's new Melbourne digs



ABERCROMBIE & Kent (A&K) has relocated to new headquarters in downtown Melbourne, following its recent acquisition of Crystal Cruises, and its ongoing recruitment push (*TD* 13 Sep).

The expansive new Collins Street office, which has views of downtown, and is close to galleries, theatres, restaurants, luxury retail brands, parks, and gardens, is expected to provide A&K's Melbourne team with "an enhanced level of comfort, facilities and wellbeing".

The building is also a sustainable workplace, focused on minimising waste, increasing energy efficiency, and reducing environmental impact.

"This is an exciting new chapter for A&K," Managing Director Deb Fox said, pointing out the company has now grown to over 130 employees in Australia alone.

"Hand in hand with Crystal, our DMC and Akorn, we are currently recruiting for a number of positions, and will continue to expand in 2024 and beyond." *JM*

A Turkish Odyssey

PETER Sommer Travels has announced a raft of new tours and gulet cruises for 2024, including 'A Turkish Odyssey: Archaeology, Food & Wine', which will depart 15 Sep.

Initially designed as a private itinerary for previous guests, the 15-day gulet cruise will run as a scheduled trip for first time after receiving "fabulous feedback".

The journey begins in the ancient city of Halicarnassus, and takes in the rustic village of Etrim, Stratonikeia, the Greek and Roman city of Knidos, the tiny inlet of Serce Liman, the ancient city of Kaunos, small islands such as Kedreai, and much more.

Guests will enjoy a range of activities, including trips to wineries, learning to prepare classic Turkish dishes, swimming opportunities, scenic drives, incredible dining experiences, and free time to explore.

To see the full range of Peter Sommer Travels' escorted tours in Europe and Asia, **CLICK HERE**.

SriLankan boosts fleet after delays

SRILANKAN Airlines has issued an apology to its customers following a number of flight cancellations and delays over the Christmas period due to a "severely depleted" fleet.

The disruptions occurred after one of the carrier's planes experienced a burst tyre in Paris, as well as being forced to ground two of its A330 aircraft for several days, with one requiring an extended check and another awaiting a spare part.

The oneworld airline said it expects the situation to improve quickly, with the two grounded aircraft to return to service later this week with replaced engines.

SriLankan Airlines has also bolstered its fleet with a newly leased A320 aircraft, as well as a backup A330 from Air Belgium, both of which it received over the past week.

Octopus Gardens

THE Australian National Maritime Museum has announced the launch of Octopus Gardens, a new interactive experience aimed at families.

Part of the museum's summer program, which runs until 04 Feb, the digital playground allows visitors of all ages to learn about the elusive ocean creature.

"Octopus Garden provides a cool, interactive play space for families during summer," CEO and Director Daryl Karp said.

"We have created, with the digital skills of Junior Major and the creative brain of InkHunter, a space that not only is fun but highlights the abilities of the remarkable octopus."

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