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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features seven pages of the latest news including **Business Events News**, a photo page from **A&K's Crystal Cruises**, plus a cover wrap from **Tourism New Zealand** and a full page from **Inspiring Vacations**.

Brooklet incentive

THE Brooklet in the Byron Bay hinterland has released a new travel advisor incentive in conjunction with the property's special 'Stay 3/Pay 2' promotion for clients.

Advisors who make three or more individual reservations by 30 Jun for stays until 22 Dec will earn three complimentary nights at The Brooklet - contact katey@uniquetourism.com for details.

Aussie Easter travel rush

AIRPORTS around Australia are bracing for the Easter holiday rush, with a 9% increase in travel for the period year-on-year.

Qantas and Jetstar are expecting to fly more than 670,000 customers over the Easter long weekend, almost a 10% increase on the 2023 Easter holidays, with popular international destinations including Auckland, Singapore, Bali and Tokyo.

Brisbane Airport is gearing up for a lively Easter holiday period, with the number of international passengers set to be 32% higher than the same period last year.

Today is expected to be the airport's busiest day, with 56,100 passengers to pass through the Domestic Terminal.

Routes between Brisbane and Japan have seen the biggest growth since Easter 2023, with 18 departures per week this holiday period compared to three per week last year.

"The number of passengers will be at 200% of pre-COVID levels, by far the biggest recovery of any

market," BNE spokesperson, Peter Doherty, said.

Trans-Tasman travel has also picked up this holiday period, with the number of flights from New Zealand rising from 75% this time last year to 87%.

Doherty explained, "this equates to over 18,600 seats available in each direction weekly, marking a 23% increase compared to last year".

Melbourne Airport is also bracing for a chock-a-block weekend, with more than 1.7 million passengers forecast to pass through its terminals this Easter travel period - up 9% from 2023.

International traveller numbers are projected to be 21% higher, while domestic traveller numbers are expected to rise by 4%.

MEANWHILE, Air New Zealand is welcoming the Easter Bunny early this year, with 54,000 customers set to hop onboard today, making it the airline's busiest day this holiday period. *JM*

Travelmarvel opens up South America

BOOKINGS for Travelmarvel's 2025 South America tours are now open for sale, with a number of favourites returning.

The operator confirmed its 'Highlights of South America' is one of the itineraries remaining next year, an escorted tour covering four countries in 20 days, from Chile's capital Santiago to Lima in Peru.

Travelmarvel is also offering a significant saving of \$1,800 per couple on the tour, with prices leading in from \$12,295pp.

Also returning is the 33-day 'Highlights of South America & Chilean Fjords Cruise', which links South America's best spots from east to west via a Holland America Line circumnavigating sailing of its southernmost tip.

Call 1300 205 408 for details.

Dream with TNZ

TOURISM New Zealand (TNZ) is inviting travel agents to apply for its Explore New Zealand Discount Programme, which offers access to discounted flights, accommodation and experiences so they can curate their dream self-famil - see the **cover page** for further details.

TD is out for Easter

TRAVEL Daily will be taking a break over the Easter long weekend to get our fill of chocolate eggs, and will return on Tue 02 Apr with all the latest travel industry news.

Twice the earnings

AGENTS can enjoy twice the normal commission rate on select Inspiring Vacations holidays when booked by 31 Mar.

See the **last page** of today's edition for the full details.

Travel Daily
ON LOCATION



LISBON

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you courtesy of Avalon Waterways, who are hosting us on an inaugural cruise aboard *Avalon Alegria* this week.

TODAY, guests are exploring Lisbon with a local guide, part of Avalon's 'Classic' tour offering.

The day will include a visit to all of Lisbon's must-see sites, including Belem Tower, the Monument to the Discoveries, and, of course, a taste of some authentic Portuguese tarts.

On Sat, we will make our way to Porto to step aboard *Alegria*.

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Rocking Apr special

ROCKY Mountaineer has unveiled its 2024 April Feature Package Promotion for all new bookings taken next month. The rail adventure company is offering Australian travellers up to \$1,180 per couple in discounts on selected Rocky Mountaineer Canadian trips. Passengers can also save up to \$1,580 per couple on its Rockies to The Red Rocks Rail journeys. The sale period runs from 01-30 Apr and conditions apply.

LA Tourism teases Tinseltown



TEN lucky agents from Australia and New Zealand were recently whisked off to the home of Hollywood, enjoying five days of excitement in Los Angeles. The famil was a reward for the top sellers in a BedsOnline incentive, which challenged agents to combine a stay in an eligible Los Angeles hotel with tickets to Universal Studios. Supporting and hosting the trip was LA Tourism, with flights provided by Delta Air Lines. In addition to many of the iconic sights, the group also ventured off the beaten track for an eye-opening look at some of the lesser-frequented LA neighbourhoods including Hermosa Beach, Redondo Pier, Mid-City and Venice Canals. A particular treat for the group was the chance to enjoy dinner and a show at the ultra-exclusive Magic Castle Club - a hotspot where you're odds on to catch a glimpse of a celebrity any night

of the week. The group also enjoyed a Sony Pictures Studio Tour, shopping time at Citadel Outlets and VIP entry to Universal Studios Hollywood, including a look at the recently opened Super Nintendo Land (TD 08 Jun 2022). A behind-the-scenes tour of the dazzling SoFi Stadium, which hosted Super Bowl LVI in 2022, also left the group spellbound. The group, pictured above, was hosted by Kathleen Brown from LA Tourism and included Rebecca Mason, Mr Chocolate's Travel; Jamie Currin, Simply Travel NZ; Inez Teni, Fuzion Travel; Julie Woodall, Helloworld Nowra; Elizabeth Galysa, Helloworld Blacktown; Carmen Ward, Helloworld Gladstone; Jacqui Halliday, Helloworld Sandgate; Marina Conte, Minna Travel; Kalpana Naran, RAC Travel Joondalup; Loretta Viola, BedsOnline and Francois Guion, Lifestyle Holidays.

The eagle has landed

LUXURY private rail operator Golden Eagle has appointed Megan Bardsley to be its Sales Specialist for the Australia and New Zealand markets. Bardsley previously worked with the brand in the early 2000s as its Marketing Director, with her latest brief as the new local sales recruit to lift the profile of the brand Down Under and across the Tasman, highlighting Golden Eagle's season starting in Apr across Europe and India.

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TTC Tours tracks F1 action



TTC Tour Brands hosted trade guests to its annual Grand Prix networking event on Sun, which was held at its Melbourne office. Under perfect blue skies and sunshine, attendees gathered on the CBD building's rooftop, where they could take in all the high-octane Formula One action happening below on the Albert Park Circuit race track.

Guests enjoyed refreshing alcoholic beverages, nibbles and lunch while catching up with one another - all while the thrilling sound of turbocharged F1 engines filled the air. *JM*

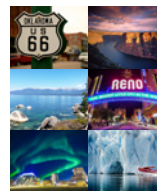
Pictured: Jen Pagett, Key Account Manager at Uniworld; Tammy Vanexan, National Groups Sales Manager at TTC Tour Brands; and Andrew Young, General Manager Sales Oceania at TTC Tour Brands.

JQ links BNE & AVV

JETSTAR has celebrated 20 years of operations by announcing the launch of its 100th domestic route, with flights between Brisbane and Avalon to take off from 28 Jun.

The latest service will provide direct access from Brisbane to Victoria's famous surf coast region and Great Ocean Road.

"The new service will provide another option for SE Queensland residents to explore The Great Ocean Road and Surf Coast region, as well as access Geelong and many regional Victorian destinations," Brisbane Airport CEO, Gert-Jan de Graaff, said.



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App-only plan scrapped

LONG-PROMOTED as an app-only airline, Bonza has abandoned one of its unique selling points by launching a traditional website for bookings.

Going live yesterday afternoon, the new Bonza website offers flight bookings and holiday bundle options, such as add-ons like baggage, accommodation, and travel insurance, as well as airport transfers.

Bonza made a big splash when it launched in Australia in Jan last year, at the time positioning itself as "the first airline globally to lead with an app-first approach".

To date, Bonza has recorded more than 1.8 million downloads of the Fly Bonza app, but even with that solid traction, Chief Executive Officer Tim Jordan said his airline was forced to listen to the reactions from travellers.

"We've listened to our customers and their feedback was that not everyone wants to book via the app, so we've created a user-friendly website," he said.

"We're still encouraging customers to download and use the Fly Bonza app as it's still the only way to check in, retrieve your boarding pass, buy food and drink from our menu.

"But we understand that some customers prefer to book online, so introducing this easy-to-use website as a digital companion to our Fly Bonza app allows us to reach many more travellers who have yet to experience Bonza."

The website is also home to

Bonza's group bookings arm, its digital chat function, and the travel agent portal - the latter of which has more than 1,400 registered travel agents on board.

Activities and attractions will also be added to the website soon - **CLICK HERE** to visit. *AB*

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Egg-spensive travel data

AUSTRALIANS are preparing to shell out a collective \$4.4 billion on Easter celebrations this year, with a significant portion of that coin going towards travel plans over the long weekend.

New survey results from Finder, which gathered the responses of more than 1,000 Aussies, show that one in six (16%) are going away for the Easter weekend, forking out \$660 on average for flights and accommodation - up 40% from last year.

When it comes to picking a holiday destination for the Easter

period, regional beach hideaways are proving popular this year, according to new search data from Expedia Group.

The Gold Coast topped the list as the most-searched regional destination in Australia, while other Queensland hotspots included the Sunshine Coast, Cairns, and Whitsundays.

Those seeking an Easter getaway in NSW favoured Port Stephens, while Shoalhaven, the Central Coast, Coffs Harbour and Newcastle were also top picks.

Surf Coast was number one most-searched travel spot in Victoria, in front of East Gippsland and Geelong.

"It is really encouraging to see that Aussie families are choosing to explore their own backyards these Easter holidays," Expedia Group VP Market Management APAC Michael Dykes said.

"These iconic regional destinations offer more than just a sunlit getaway.

"It's an opportunity for local hoteliers to grow their reach during what is typically the quiet shoulder season and do everything they can to capture this uptick in demand." *JM*

Mannix eyes return

WELL-KNOWN travel executive Cameron Mannix has declared his willingness to return to the cruise/travel sector after taking a six-month break.

"Over the summer I enjoyed a fantastic break travelling and spending time with loved ones, and I am now ready to get back to the industry that I love," Mannix posted on LinkedIn.

"So far I have had positive conversations, but until the next role is confirmed, I am open to opportunities," he added.

Mannix was previously the Director of Sales for Celebrity Cruises before a restructure precipitated his departure from the business (*TD* 15 Sep 2023).

"The last 20 years in the industry has been so rewarding and such a joy, and I am excited for my next adventure," Mannix said, adding that he brings a depth of leadership experience across sales, marketing, operations, and finance.



NSW breaks through \$50 billion mark

THE NSW visitor economy has surpassed \$50 billion in expenditure for the first time in history, new data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) shows.

Figures from the report indicate international travellers to the state contributed a massive \$51.4 billion to the state's visitor economy for the year ending Dec 2023, with NSW also leading the pack ahead of any other state or territory for the year.

International visitor numbers increased by 1.8 million on the previous year in 2022, while nights stayed were also up by 42.8 million.

While Australia and its states and territories are still vying to

return to pre-pandemic volumes, overseas arrivals in NSW showed a healthy surge towards recovery, reaching 78% of 2019.

In terms of pushing aside the shadow of the pandemic, the state is creeping close along some key criteria, including international visitor nights, which is now 90% recovered, as well as expenditure at 96%.

The United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom remained NSW's top international source markets in 2023, with China encouragingly showing strong recovery to move up the list to fourth spot.

Meanwhile, South Korea saw the fastest visitor growth, while



Indonesia excelled in both nights spent and expenditure.

Sydney cemented its position as the undisputed visitor economy leader among Australian capital cities in 2023, attracting 53% of all international visitors to Australian capitals.

Last year, Western Sydney also lured in more domestic travellers, accounting for one in five domestic overnight visitors to the city. *AB*

RCI offers a wigglin' good time



ROYAL Caribbean has teamed up with children's entertainment group The Wiggles to offer "the ultimate family holiday" during the 2025/26 summer season.

Australians will be among the first to be able to secure a spot on the cruise line's exclusive Wiggles Sailings, with the new line-up to be fully revealed and bookings to open on 10 Apr.

Wiggles fans can expect to encounter their favourite characters on board, including Captain Feathersword, Dorothy the Dinosaur, Henry the Octopus, Wags the Dog and Shirley Shawn

the Unicorn.

Kids and their families will enjoy character events, live concerts, exclusive Royal Caribbean x The Wiggles merchandise and more, as they island hop from Sydney and Brisbane.

"We're extremely proud of this exclusive partnership, which sees two iconic brands loved and trusted by families across the globe coming together to enrich the holiday experience for the whole family," said Kathryn Lock, Royal Caribbean International Senior Marketing Director of Australia and New Zealand. *JM*

Sea-rious praise for *Crystal Serenity*

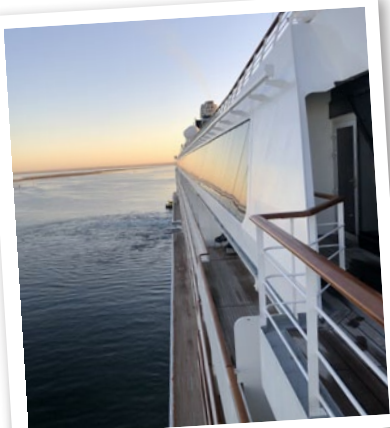
"THE ship is stunning", "there are so many entertainment options", "the standard of service is truly impressive", "the crew are so attentive" and "the restaurants are next level" were just some of the remarks from over 200 agents who came aboard *Crystal Serenity* as it hosted famils and inspections in Auckland, Tauranga, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth.

The melding of expertise from Crystal and Abercrombie & Kent signals a new era for luxury cruising, where the land experiences are as luxe as the ship itself.

Agents dished out big praise for the advanced range of treatments at the brand-new Aurora Spa, which offers everything ranging from acupuncture to IV treatments.

Another hit was the ship's eight restaurants, three of which are fine-dining, including the only Nobu at sea.

Agents certainly left with the impression that Crystal is exceptional at sea.



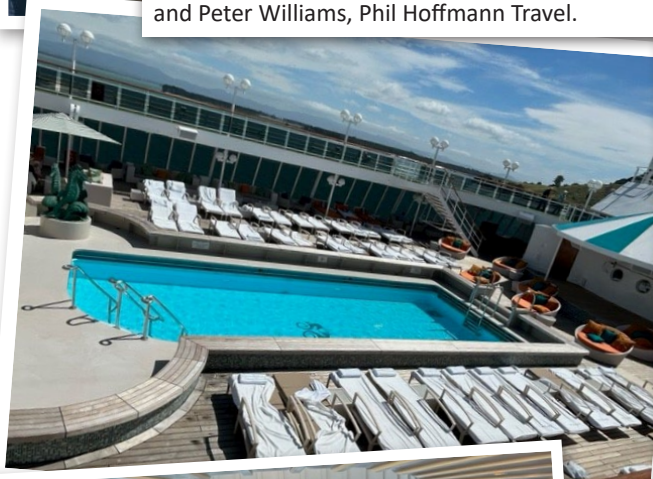
KIRSTY Morris, Phil Hoffmann Travel; Patrick Clementson, A&K; Mary-Anne Guest, Phil Hoffmann Travel.



TONY McLeod & Kyle Duffield, Home Travel Company; Deb Fox, A&K & Crystal; Darian Foot and Peter Williams, Phil Hoffmann Travel.



ANN-MARIE Chapman, A&K; Jenni Triffitt, Travel Associates; Jacqui Tufala, Crystal; Patrick Clementson, A&K; and Lisa Clarke, Travel Associates.



INGA Ehvart, guest; Rebecca Clifton, Travel Associates; and Phil Hoffmann, Phil Hoffmann Travel.



SUSAN Haberle, A&K and Patricia Fromentin, Phil Hoffmann Travel.



STEPHEN Green, Travel Experts; Niall Wilson, Crystal; Mark Trim, Complex Travel; and David Singfield, Crystal.



KYLE Duffield & Tony McLeod, Home Travel Company; Mark Trim, Complex Travel; Sophie Ullin, guest; Jacqui Tufala, Crystal; and Roland Kautzky, Travel Associates at Home.





BIZ EVENTS VALUE IS REVEALED

BUSINESS events generated a whopping \$20.9 billion for the Australian economy in 2023, new data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) has revealed.

From 01 Jan to 31 Dec 2023, international visitors travelling for business events spent \$2.6 billion in Australia, while the remaining \$18.3 billion of spend included \$16.9 billion from domestic overnight travel and \$1.4 billion through domestic day trips.

Food, drink and accommodation was the biggest expenditure category for all business events visitors, equating to 62% of the overall spend, followed by domestic airfares (26%), transportation (16%) and international airfares (10%).

The newly launched business events data delivers on a government commitment to provide improved statistics on the sector, and will be updated



quarterly, accessible via the TRA website in an online dashboard.

“We’ve long known that business events generate significant economic activity,” Minister for Trade and Tourism, Don Farrell, said.

“The development of this new business events data dashboard will better measure that contribution and help identify opportunities for the industry.”

The Australian Business Events Association (ABEA) has welcomed

the new data, with CEO Melissa Brown stating “this is something the business events industry has been working towards”.

“The new data will enable the industry to better articulate its value in driving long-term growth for the economy.

“The collation of the right data to validate the value of the business events activity is critical to the success of the industry and the economy at large.” JM

See the biz events stats [HERE](#).

Festival ditched

NSW Minister for Music and Nighttime Economy John Graham said he is “deeply worried about the health of the festival scene here in NSW” following the sudden cancellation of Splendour in the Grass 2024.

Event organisers confirmed the decision yesterday to cancel the popular music festival, which was due to take place in Jul in Byron Bay, due to “unexpected events”.

“The NSW Government offered financial support to help the event proceed this year,” Graham pointed out.

“We will continue to work with them and hope to see them return next year.”

The line-up for this year’s now-cancelled festival included the likes of Kylie Minogue and Tones and I.

NT events wins

THE NT has enjoyed success at the recent Australian Tourism Awards, with a number of the Territory’s business events organisations being recognised.

Highlights included Katherine Outback Experience and the Darwin Convention Centre winning gold in the ‘Tourist Attraction’ and ‘Business Event Venue’ sections.

Full cost of Vic’s Games scrap revealed

THE full cost of the cancellation of Victoria’s 2026 Commonwealth Games has come to light (**TD** 31 Aug 2023), with a report by the state’s Auditor-General’s office revealing \$589 million was spent on the failed attempt.

The Victorian Government had allocated \$2.6 billion towards the costs of hosting the Games, meaning the state shelled out more than 22% of

anticipated costs to not host the event.

Victoria’s then-premier Daniel Andrews said hosting costs had soared to as high as \$7 billion at the time of the cancellation.

The report flags failings and missed opportunities at various points of the event bidding and planning process, including a missed opportunity to create a more accurate business case for hosting the Games.

ICC recruits more

INTERNATIONAL Convention Centre (ICC) Sydney has recruited the highest-ever number of audio visual professionals for the fifth round of its AV Graduate Program.

Seven recruits will take part in the year-long program, which will see them gain experience across all areas of the venue’s AV and production services.

ICC Sydney Chief Executive Geoff Donaghy said the program, which has produced 29 AV professionals so far, helps “future proof events of tomorrow”.

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Extending her tenure at **Accor**, **Naomi Hammond** has been promoted to the position of Director of PR & Communications, Pacific. Moving on from her previous role of Communication Manager in the same region, she was also the PR Manager of the Mantra Group, as well as the Corporate Affairs Communications Executive at The Star Entertainment Group in Queensland. Hammond will bring more than 15 years of public relations, corporate affairs and marketing experience to the fold.

InterContinental Fiji Golf Resort & Spa has invited the Aussie personality and pastry chef, **Kirsten Tibballs**, to provide culinary delicacy throughout the month of Apr. Exclusive to the resort's residents, Tibballs will infuse her signature style to craft exquisite delights inspired by Fijian's local ingredients and flavour. She will contribute to the resort's Club High Tea, in preparing an unforgettable journey with her unique artistry of pastry and chocolate.

Tourism Holdings Limited (thl) has announced the appointment of **Cameron Mathewson** to the role of Chief Financial Officer, effective 01 Jul. Mathewson boasts an abundance of senior executive roles in his career, currently at the helm of Scott Technology as its CFO. Based in New Zealand, the addition of the finance professional will bolster thl's financial and commercial operations.

In a move to deliver the foremost authority in Northern Lights experience, **Hurtigruten** has welcomed **Tom Kress** to the role of the world's first Chief Aurora Chaser. Kress is an experienced expert in the field of astronomy and the Northern Lights, with this unprecedented move to further strengthen the cruise line's tours surrounding the phenomenon. The appointment coincides with Hurtigruten's extended period of Northern Lights guarantee.

Mandarin Oriental has welcomed **Alex Schellenberger** as its latest Vice President, Brand, with the move to support the strategic direction of the hotelier. Schellenberger arrives with more than two decades of experience in global luxury branding, storytelling, and brand experience roles. He has spent valuable time with renowned luxury brands around the globe, such as Hugo Boss, Coty and Swarovski, and was most recently the Global Chief Marketing Officer for Accor.

Remi Van Peteghem has been appointed as Culinary Director at **Sofitel Legend Metropole Hanoi**. Van Peteghem brings over 30 years of culinary experience, including various stints with numerous Michelin-starred restaurants around the world. The addition of the French national comes after the relaunch of the hotel's historic Metropole Heritage Wing, following an extensive renovation.

Tourist ban proposal

TOURISTS could be banned from entering Australia if the Federal Government is successful in passing proposed new migration laws designed to quell rising political concerns over its asylum seeker policies.

Under the draft reform, government would be given new powers to ban nationals from making a visa application in cases where a country has been deemed uncooperative in accepting the return of their own citizens.

"This amendment is necessary because, regrettably, some countries will not allow their nationals to return to their home country," Federal Minister for Immigration, Andrew Giles, said.

"The main objective of this designation is to gain the cooperation of that country in accepting and facilitating the removal from Australia of their citizens and the power to designate a country of removal concern is an appropriate and proportionate measure."

While the blunt instrument approach has raised many eyebrows, Giles said the proposed law change will take into account "sensitive matters of bilateral concern" that may need to be considered before designation of a removal country of concern.

"This is why the legislation provides that the minister must consult with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs prior to making such a designation," he argued.

Exemptions will include allowing visa applications from close family relatives of Australian citizens and eligible permanent residents.

The idea will be heard in Apr.



Window Seat

CHICAGO has been crowned the best city in the United States to stage a stag or hens do, aside from Vegas.

A new ranking system created by digital marketers Searchbloom found that the city famed for its deep dish pizza was the best place for travellers who want to have some fun before their big wedding day.

Rankings were determined by examining entertainment value, social scene, and accommodation options, and seeing how they compare to the average daily cost of a trip.

The marketing team found Chicago performed well in terms of entertainment value based on visitor reviews and ratings for top attractions.

Searchbloom also looked at 'stereotypical activities' desired for a pre-wedding shindig, such as wine tasting, spa visits, live shows, beer tours, and golf courses.

The social scene criteria investigated the visitor ratings of fine dining establishments, bars, and clubs in each city, while accommodation scores were evaluated on the basis of the number of Airbnbs and hotels available for a weekly stay in the summer months.



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