Travel Daily

First with the news

Wednesday 8th May 2024

See it all in the NT

AAT Kings is highlighting the top five unique experiences on offer in Top End, including the Mataranka Thermal Pools.

Travellers can currently save up to 15% on selected guided holidays in the NT - see **page nine** for more details.

FCTG TTV soars ahead

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group's (FCTG) Total Transaction Value (TTV) is on track to eclipse pre-pandemic volumes despite losing many of its bricks and mortar stores during the pandemic.

In an update provided to the ASX this morning, FCTG figures showed TTV is expected to surpass the $23.7 billion achieved in 2019, buoyed in part by improving revenue margins and favourable market conditions.

FCTG's operating performance across air has also been improved through a deal recently forged with Qantas, which relates to airfares sold via the carrier's QDP NDC channel, as well as new revenue streams from airlines using its TPConnects tech.

While there were plenty of positive takeaways, FCTG is continuing to review some underperforming arms of the business, including Mexico-based DMC Discova Americas, which made a full-year trading loss of $1.4 million for 2023.

Also under the microscope is student travel marketplace, StudentUniverse, with FCTG now exploring synergies between the loss-making brand ($6.9 million in 2023), BYOJet and Aunt Betty.

In further news, the company also confirmed its new travel insurance contract with Europ Assistance will become active from "late this calendar year".

Europ Assistance will offer insurance to FCTG leisure customers in Australia, ending a 33-year deal with Zurich's Australian insurer Cover-More. *AB*

Today's issue of *TD*

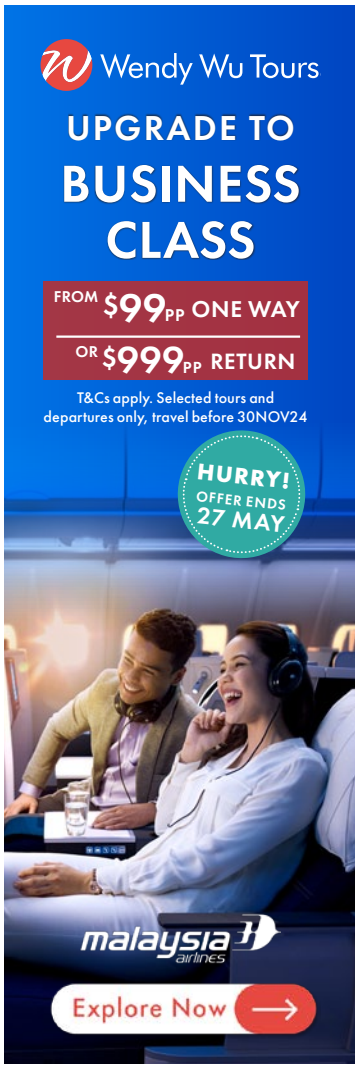
Travel Daily today features eight pages of the latest news including our **Luxury page**, plus full pages from:

- **AAT Kings**
- **Tourism NT**

Brush up on the NT

TRAVEL agents can be in the running to win a trip to the Northern Territory when they join Tourism NT's upcoming webinar.

Participants will learn about the destination's unique Aboriginal experiences on offer - see the **back page** to register.



Travel Daily

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Travel Daily
ON LOCATION

LOS ANGELES

Today's issue of *TD* is coming to you from the IPW conference.

THE work hard all day, play hard all night theme continues at IPW as the mammoth conference winds up.

Those who make it out of their rooms after a big IPW Pride Celebration can attend informative sessions from Tennessee, Massachusetts, San Antonio and Chicago.

IPW wraps up by taking over Universal Studios tonight in a mammoth send-off, as LA hands over to Chicago for 2025.

Visit Vic budget burned

VICTORIA has made the decision to drastically slash the budget of the state's peak destination marketing body.

In budget papers handed down by the Victorian Government this morning, funding support for Visit Victoria has been reduced from $32.5 million annually, to just $32.5 million over four years.

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council CEO, Felicia Mariani, said news of the shredded visitor economy funding "is incredibly hard to come to terms with".

"This is a significant body blow in an environment where we are trying to overtake Queensland in the number two spot for total tourism spend, a position we forfeited during COVID," she said.

While Visit Victoria deals with a punctured budget, at least one winner was the state's regional tourism, which remains a priority with the allocation of roughly $5 million over the 2024-25 period to support the transition from regional tourism boards to visitor economy partnerships.

A budget boost was also awarded to Victoria's business events sector, which saw $85 million allocated to the Major Events Fund, topped up from a budgeted $62m (more details to come in ***BEN*** tomorrow).

Meanwhile, Victoria's budget also dealt a major blow to airport infrastructure, with the highly publicised Melbourne Airport rail project delayed by four years.

"This is a critical piece of infrastructure in cementing our position as a global destination, and we need to see some movement toward compromise and resolution," Mariani said. *AB*

Travel24 is coming!

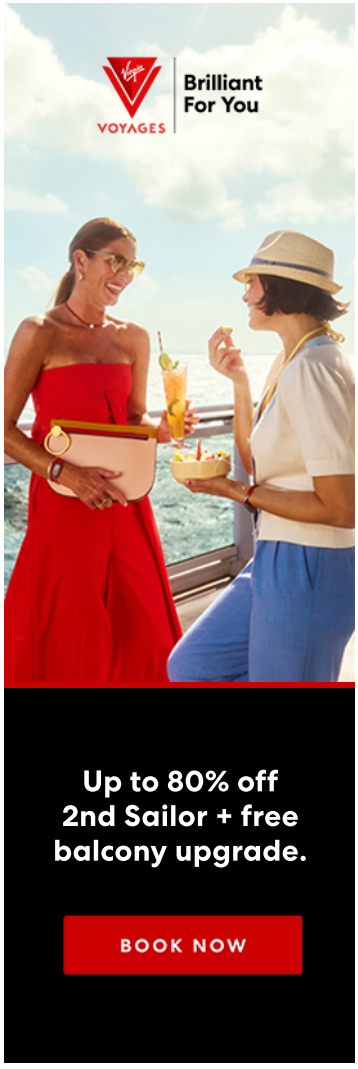
TRAVEL Daily is set to run a brand-new conference in Sydney that promises to shake up the travel and tourism industry.

To be held on 08 Aug, Travel24 will focus on the next 24 months in the industry across a wide variety of areas and will provide a new spin on travel conference content through the mouths of trusted industry professionals.

The event has been designed to inspire, share positivity, and deliver usable information that will put delegates in a great position for the near future.

Joining the conference as its first global keynote speaker is a DEI expert, TED speaker and a Grammy considered recording artist, Azure Antoinette.

To propose a session or enquire about sponsorship, email **HERE**.



Rail Europe

Unlock European Trains with Grant Robertson

Booking Success

Booking Horizons: Booking horizons vary from carrier to carrier, so best refer to this page for an overview of the different policies by country, operator and more. Watch this video to learn the quickest way to navigate to the information you need.

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Travel Daily

Wednesday 8th May 2024

TruTravels' cheeky ambition

AGENTS can expect to see and hear the name 'TruTravels' in their supplier circles as the youth tour operator launches an all-out assault on the Aussie market.

The aggressive push into the trade comes following TruTravels acquisition by G Adventures six years ago (***TD*** 05 Dec 2018).

Buoyed by the established market strength the association with G Adventures brings, the British tour operator is planning to utilise this experience in an ultimate plan to expand globally.

Speaking to ***Travel Daily***, TruTravels Head of Commercial AU/NZ, Sophie Whiteing, said that while the two brands will trade and operate independently, G Adventures will act as something of a big brother role.

"We obviously have very similar values and missions that align with adventure travel, along with big sustainability projects, so it's a way to move in the same

direction under one umbrella."

Whiteing said G Adventures was also looking to capitalise on TruTravels' strength in social media marketing, with the brand specialising in "cheeky" content that resonates with young guests.

TruTravels said its key difference is its 'young at heart' preference over a defined age bracket.

"But we do promote the fact that we are fun, fast paced, we're lively, the guys want to go out in the evenings and have some drinks and things like that.

"So the average age is around 23 to 25, based on our demographics and culture on board." Whiteing said. *ML*

Beyond Borders tix

THE Australian Travel Industry Association (ATIA) has announced tickets are now on sale for its Beyond Borders Travel Summit, which takes place on 25 Oct at the ICC Sydney.

Hosted the day before the National Travel Industry Awards (NTIAs), the summit will discuss the travel industry's resurgence and the upcoming trends anticipated for 2025.

Flight Centre's chief Graham "Skroo" Turner is among several confirmed speakers, as well as Royal Caribbean's Gavin Smith.

Members can take advantage of special ticket prices starting at $210 plus GST, with discounts available for group bookings.

Qualifying non-members can also enjoy the same rate, with 12 months of individual membership included, when they purchase their ticket during May.

For the public and non-members, tickets are priced at $420 - grab your ticket **HERE**.

Signing in the sky

TO MARK the beginning of New Zealand Sign Language Week, which runs 06-12 May, Air New Zealand operated a flight on Mon where cabin crew used sign language to communicate with customers, including signing the in-flight announcements and onboard service offerings.

Customers were given illustration cards depicting signs for popular in-flight items like "water" so that they could try out their hand at sign language.

Bonza still grounded

BONZA has announced all flights originally scheduled from today through to 14 May have been cancelled and staff will remain stood down as the carrier continues to scramble for a new deal with aircraft lenders.

The airline insists that every effort to return to the sky is being made, despite the current loss of its fleet.

Travel Daily

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EK expands retrofit prog

EMIRATES will retrofit a further 71 Airbus A380s and Boeing 777s in its fleet as the carrier continues its bid to improve passenger services across all routes.

Part of a mammoth $2 billion fleet upgrade announcement made in 2022 (***TD*** 11 Aug 2022), Emirates will move beyond the initially flagged 120 aircraft to include 43 extra A380s and 28 more Boeing 777s - bringing the program's total to 191 planes.

Among the improvements on board the B777s include enhanced first class cabins, all-new business class seating, and the premium economy.

Once upgraded, Emirates' B777 planes will offer an updated 1-2-1 seating configuration featuring eight first, 40 business, 24 premium economy, and 260 economy class seats.

The design shift will see 50 economy class seats removed.

Meanwhile, the airline's A380s will see 56 premium economy seats installed, as well as new leather upholstery and finishings in first and business class.

"The addition of more aircraft fitted with our newest generation seats, updated cabins and a contemporary colour palette, marks a significant step in ensuring more customers can consistently experience our premium products across both aircraft types," Emirates President, Tim Clark observed.

Emirates currently operates refurbished A380s on services from Sydney, Auckland, Christchurch, and Melbourne, with updated planes to service Osaka routes from early Jun. *AB*

Blitz across Europe

DRIVEAWAY is inspiring travellers to discover destinations across Europe throughout May and Jun as part of its latest campaign, 'Brit-Euro Blitz'.

The campaign includes the self-drive holiday provider introducing an interactive 'Which Road Trip Are You? UK, Europe & Ireland Edition' questionnaire, along with exclusive deals and the chance for agents to win prizes.

CLICK HERE for more info.

Slojourn adds two

SLOJOURN Studio has welcomed two new luxury properties to its client roster - The Rox Hobart, which boasts a prime waterfront location, and Elements of Byron, nestled on the shores of Byron Bay in NSW.

The global PR agency will handle both properties' PR, marketing and representation, working to elevate both brands in the worldwide travel landscape.

Bite our Big Apple

OUTGOING President & CEO of the New York City Tourism Board, Fred Dixon, has unveiled a new immersive tourism campaign, 'Founded by NYC', at IPW in LA.

The trade push will launch later this year while the consumer element will be activated in 2025.

"Today marks the start of the trade opportunity to craft those unique thematic activities that cater directly to travellers with these passions that want to explore," Dixon explained.

New tools and information will be available to the trade on the New York City Tourism Board website, while the campaign will run through events, content, promos & community initiatives.

Meanwhile, Dixon revealed that New York City welcomed 62.2 million visitors last year "recovering 93% of our record 2019 visitation", which made a US$74 billion economic impact.

Australia is the eighth largest market for NYC tourists.

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Travel Daily

Wednesday 8th May 2024

Travel Daily
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Window Seat

IF YOU thought it was hard finding a parking spot in Sydney, try parking in the Netherlands, where a single car space could you cost you as much as a house.

An indoor parking spot located in PC Hooftstraat next to Amsterdam's famous Vondelpark was recently listed for a whopping half-a-million euros - which equates to more than A$800,000.

While it's not unusual to see parking spaces for sale in the Netherlands, which is one of Europe's most densely populated countries, this particular spot certainly takes the cake for most expensive.

The ad noted the closed-in 18m^2 space is "well suited for wider cars" with "enough space for the chauffeur and passengers to step out", for those premium travellers.

If you can't quite shell out the asking price, you can rent the spot for A$1,225 per month - thank god for Uber.

Airports profitable again

SERVICE quality at Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth Airports has been collectively graded as 'good', according to the ACCC's *Airport Monitoring Report* for the 2022-23 financial year.

The result was measured via passenger and airline surveys, which were collected for the first time following the pandemic.

A score of 'good' is second from the highest level of 'excellent', the ACCC's ratings metrics showed.

All four airports returned to profit in the first full year after travel restrictions were lifted, despite passenger volumes down on pre-pandemic levels.

Collectively, the airports saw 100.7 million travellers pass through the doors, a result up 127.4% on the prior year.

Perth was the most profitable, reporting an operating margin of 34.6% for the year, ahead of Sydney (29.1%), Brisbane (28.8%) and Melbourne (22.9%).

Only the Western Australia capital's result was higher than 2018-19 - the last full financial year before COVID-19 struck.

The four airports spent $559 million on aeronautical operations in 2022-23, while they also reaped $337 million on car parking fees, a massive 168% increase on the previous year, as well as a combined 60% margin on profit.

"The airports stayed open during the pandemic and continued to incur some aeronautical expenses, without

their usual level of accompanying revenues," said ACCC Commissioner Anna Brakey.

"As passengers returned in 2022-23, aeronautical revenues increased more than expenses, which lifted profit margins closer to pre-pandemic levels." *ML*

Renaissance 2024

RENAISSANCE Tours is taking travellers off the beaten track with its 2024 tour program, which includes a raft of unique and hard-to-access experiences.

In Sep, travellers can join archaeologist Iain Shearer for his 19-day 'A Road Less Travelled' tour, which explores rich culture and history of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.

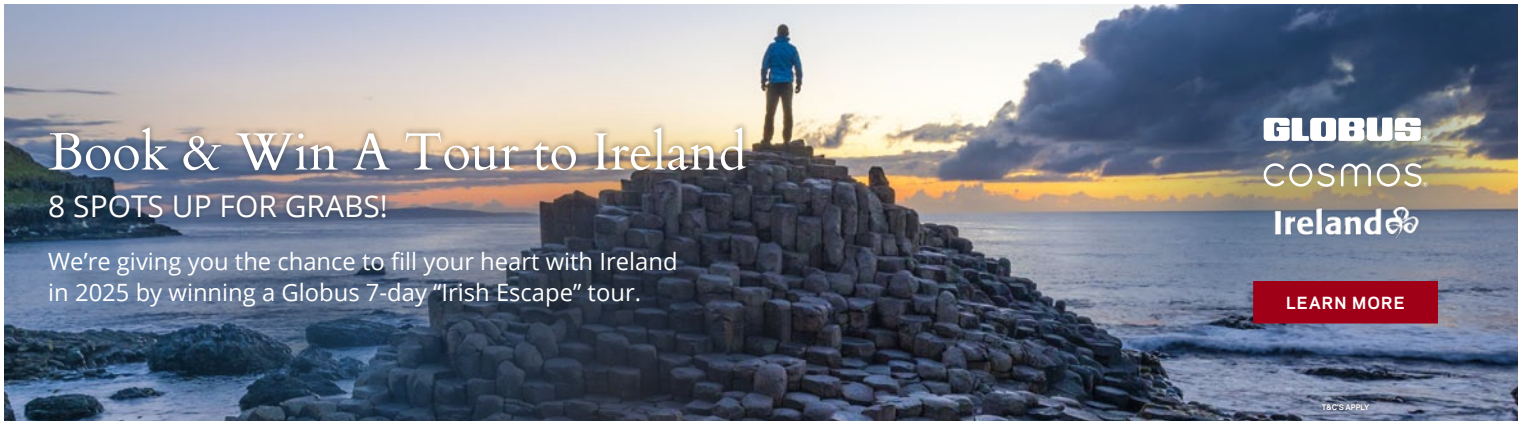
There's also the chance to sink into the hot springs in Daisetsuzan National Park and see Tokyo's most prized garden-scapes during the 15-day 'Autumn Gardens of Japan' itinerary, and learn about Indigenous culture and heritage at the Mungo and Mutawintji National Parks as part of the seven-day 'Ancient Landscapes and Sacred Sites' tour.

See the full program **HERE**.

Wu treats agents

WENDY Wu Tours is preparing to take 100 agents from Australia, NZ and the UK to China on its first megafam program this month.

Founder Wendy Wu will join the trip, which will include a boat ride on the Baofeng Lake and a zipline adventure in Zhangjiajie.



A new day dawns for Uluru resort

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AYERS Rock Resort celebrated its 40th birthday last week, with travel partners and media kicking up their heels at events in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane with a curated menu of native flavours and premium Australian wines.

Voyages CEO, Matt Cameron-Smith, took to the stage to share the resort's story from construction in 1984 to today, and looking ahead to the future.

Guests were also treated to an exclusive sneak preview of a brand-new documentary set to air exclusively on Qantas flights from Jul.

'An Ancient Story Takes Flight' takes viewers behind the scenes of the making of Wintjiri Wiru - Uluru's award-winning drone show and cultural storytelling experience.

Cameron-Smith then unveiled two brand-new culturally immersive experiences launching at Uluru from 01 Aug 2024: Sunrise Journeys - **HERE**, and Australian Native High Tea - **HERE**.

Sunrise Journeys is an all-new early morning cultural and sensory immersion which brings a beautiful Indigenous painting to life, using Uluru's desert landscape as a canvas.

At Australian Native High Tea, guests will enjoy sampling handmade sweet petit fours and savoury bites together with fine tea, coffee and sparkling wine.

NEALE Herridge, ATS Pacific; Birgit Bourne, Insight Australia; Kathy Georgiou, ATS Pacific; David Thomas, Grand Circle; Roger Clulow, Collette; and Narelle and Peter from Voyages.

JANE Christensen and Peter Graham from Voyages with Japanese trade partners from Goway, IOS, HIS, JTB, and NTA.

SARA Giner-Sarib, Qantas; Matt Cameron-Smith, Voyages; and Valerie Smith, Tourism Northern Territory.

PHILIP Cox of Cox Architects (who designed Ayers Rock Resort) and Tonia Wilson, Virgin Australia.

ROBIN Mack and Pip Harrison of TA with Matt Cameron-Smith.

PIP Harrison, Tourism Australia and Dana Ronan, Voyages board member.

VOYAGES team of Karen Prideaux, Matt Cameron-Smith, Ana Sofia Ayala, Peter Graham and Narelle Ross.

MEMBERS from the Tourism Northern Territory team enjoying the view at Sydney Harbour.

THE AAT Kings team.

More with Seabourn

SEABOURN is offering two limited-time promotions for travellers who are seeking their next ultra-luxury voyage in 2024 or 2025.

The 'A Sail to Remember' offers discounted fares on most of the line's ocean and expedition sailings in Oct 2024 and beyond, such as the 12-day Canary Islands & Cape Verde itinerary.

Cruisers can opt for the 'More Moments on Us' deal to enjoy a US$2,200 credit per suite, which be spent on shore excursions, spa services, and more, on select mid to late 2024 voyages.

Learn more about the first promo **HERE**, and the second one **HERE** - both end 25 Jun.

Branson ups the luxury

VIRGIN Limited Edition, Sir Richard Branson's collection of ultra-luxury retreats, has welcomed the addition of Finch Hattons Luxury Safari Camp.

Nestled in the scenic Chyulu Hills in Kenya's Tsavo National Park, the camp comprises of 17 luxury tented suites, including an exclusive Finch Hattons Suite with a private plunge pool.

Each tent offers views of the nearby natural springs and forests, with guests able to enjoy game drives to witness the park's incredible wildlife, enjoy authentic African cuisine, and much more.

LIVE LA DOLCE VITA WITH RAILBOOKERS

RAILBOOKERS has partnered with La Dolce Vita Orient Express to launch a new range for luxury Italian itineraries for 2025, allowing travellers to experience the new train while discovering the sights of Italy.

Each itinerary features one or two nights on board the La Dolce Vita Orient Express train in luxury accommodations, along with food, beverage and offboard experiences throughout Italy.

The fare also includes all transfers from airport, hotel and train stations, along with sightseeing and tours in destinations such as Rome, Montalcino, Venice, and more.

Travellers will enjoy experiences such as a hands-on cooking class in Palermo, a food night tour of Rome, an exploration of ancient cave dwellings in Matera, and much more.

"We're excited to bring our expertise and wide product collection to travellers who want to experience the new La Dolce Vita Orient Express beginning next year," said Gareth Jones, Director of Product Development.

"Customers and travel agents who are looking to blend a luxury train holiday with all that Italy has to offer will find the perfect solution with Railbookers."

Departures featuring the La Dolce Vita Orient Express begin 04 Apr 2025.

For more information about Railbookers' new collection, **CLICK HERE**. *JM*

Regent Seven Seas Cruises unleashes savings on its new 'Exotics Edition'

DISCERNING travellers can save up to 45%, or $4,500, per person on 2024/25 voyages in Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) newly launched 'The Exotics Edition'.

Additionally, guests will also enjoy an included three-night pre- or post-cruise land program, allowing them to spend more time in-destination.

The offer applies to select suite categories on almost 30 voyages ranging from 10 to 24 nights, to destinations spanning Asia, Africa & Arabia, the South Pacific, Australia & New Zealand, and South America.

Exploring the Winelands in Cape Town, delving into Brazil's rich history, and witnessing the natural wonder of Seychelles are just some of the experiences on offer in The Exotics Edition.

"Our newest The Exotic Edition booking incentive offers our trusted travel advisors the opportunity to generate additional earnings this spring

with sensational voyages across the world's most incredible destinations," said Lisa Pile, Vice President Sales & General Manager, Asia Pacific, RSSC.

The offer is available for bookings made before 30 Jun - for details, **CLICK HERE**. *JM*

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ACCOMMODATION

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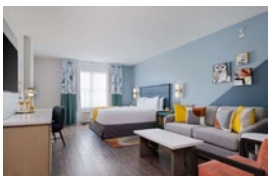
Mercure Brisbane Spring Hill, previously known as the Pacific Hotel Brisbane, has received a comprehensive makeover throughout its guestrooms, conference rooms, and swimming pool area. Guests will now enjoy new bed heads, lounge chairs, carpets and large-scale artwork, along with refreshed greenery and furniture in the lobby, and colourful murals, new umbrellas, and sun lounges in the pool area.

Hilton has announced a new all-day cafe concept across two Tempo By Hilton properties, in partnership with Bluestone Lane. **Tempo By Hilton Louisville Downtown NuLu** and **Tempo by Hilton Raleigh Downtown** will soon debut Moonsong Bar + Cafe, where guests can experience premium food and drink from dawn to dusk. At the same time, the cafe concept offers Tempo owners an efficient, customisable food and beverage solution.

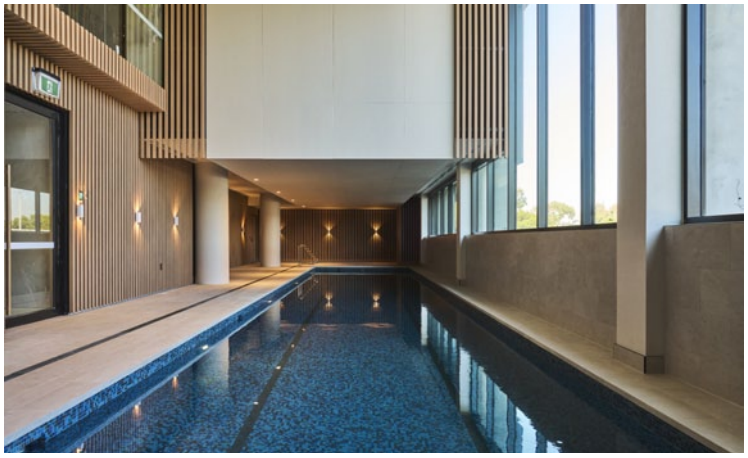


IHG has recently announced the opening of **voco Sarasota,** following a rebrand and renovation. The 95-key property, situated in the vibrant city of Sarasota on Florida's Gulf Coast, now offers a new dining concept, Offshore Tapas and Wine Bar, which serves fresh seafood, bar snacks, and beverages. Guests can also relax in the outdoor pool, work up a sweat in the 24/7 fitness centre, and enjoy pet-friendly accommodations with premium, plant-based amenities.

Located in the heart of downtown Atlanta, **Omni Atlanta Hotel at Centennial Park** has opened after a refresh. The project has resulted in the refurbishment of the 600 rooms in the North Tower, which now feature new aesthetics. The property has also introduced a new collection of signature suites that draw inspiration from the city's iconic attractions and landmarks.

New gaming offerings as well as several other major upgrades have landed at **The Venetian Las Vegas,** as part of the property's US$1.5 billion 25th anniversary revitalisation. The resort has also redesigned its suites, introduced new chef-led culinary concepts, and revamped its convention centre, which now features an elegant new colour palette and updated technology.

MEL hotel ready for take-off



THE dual-branded Novotel & ibis Styles Melbourne Airport is preparing to welcome guests from 01 Jul, marking the first new-build internationally branded hotel to open at the airport in over two decades.

Located within walking distance of Terminal 4, the $230 million hotel features 464 guest rooms split across Novotel (248 rooms) and ibis Styles (216 rooms).

Travellers can dine at three venues within the property, including a cafe, Italian restaurant, and a modern pub.

As part of the HIVE precinct at Melbourne Airport, the hotel will also provide business travellers with access to three conference and events spaces including a ballroom, as well as a hotel-serviced co-working space spread across two floors.

"We're excited to bring these new hotels to Melbourne Airport and give more choice to travellers and airport workers alike," said Stuart Verrier, the airport's Head of Property Development and Asset Development.

"Given that passenger numbers will only continue to increase over the coming years, these properties are a much-needed addition to Melbourne's tourism industry and are set to bring huge economic and social benefits not only to Melbourne, but also to the state of Victoria." *JM*

Hong's Hong Kong

HONG Kong's lively street food scene will soon be on full display in a new series on SBS Food and SBS on Demand.

Airing on 03 Jun at 7.30pm, *The Streets Hong Kong* will follow Australian executive chef, author, and presenter Dan Hong as he discovers the city's most authentic flavours.

Hong will delve behind-the-scenes into Hong Kong's best restaurants, learning the secrets of talented local chefs before returning home to put his own spin on the region's classic dishes.

"From pigs roasting in an underground wood-fired oven, to wonton noodles and one of the very last handmade fish ball factories, this culinary trip was life-changing for me and I can't wait to show you," Hong enthused.

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Editor - Adam Bishop
Deputy Editor - Matt Lennon
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Journalists - Janie Medbury, Matthew Wai
Editor-at-large - Bruce Piper
Publisher - Damian Francis
Associate Publisher - Jo-Anne Hui-Miller

ADVERTISING & MARKETING
Head of Sales & Marketing - Sean Harrigan
Advertising - Sharad Goodfella & Dante Muranty
advertising@traveldaily.com.au

Head of Operations & Contributing Editor - Anna Piper

ACCOUNTS
accounts@traveldaily.com.au

Suite 1, Level 2, 64 Talavera Rd
Macquarie Park NSW 2113 Australia
Tel: 1300 799 220 (+61 2 8007 6760

info@traveldaily.com.au

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Only four sites in Australia appear on the World Heritage List for both their natural and cultural significance and Kakadu is one of them. On the **Top End Highlights** 6-day tour, you'll cruise Kakadu's Yellow Water Billabong spotting an endless array of wildlife.

3.

Mataranka Thermal Pools

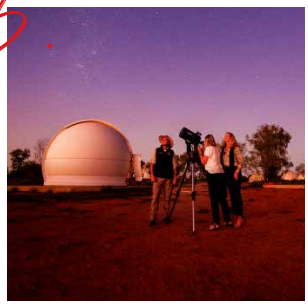
You'll never, never find a place as beautiful as Mataranka. Explore, or soak in the palm-fringed thermal springs before heading up to Katherine on the 11-day **Outback Safari** tour.

4.

Tiwi Islands

The Wurrumiyanga Aboriginal community will take you on an unforgettable journey through a rich history and culture. Discover bush tucker, world-class art and their love for footy, on the **Kakadu, Nitmiluk (Katherine) Gorge & Tiwi Islands Explorer** 4-day tour.

5.



Earth Sanctuary

Become a guest of an astronomer's family on the **Outback Adventure** 15-day tour. The Alice Springs night sky will not disappoint, as the Falzon brothers entertain you with an outback barbecue and campfire sing-along while the Milky Way slowly appears.

Become a Northern Territory expert

Win a trip to the NT*

Join our live webinar to learn more about the NT and the unique Aboriginal experiences on offer in the Territory.

Tuesday 14 May	11.00am (AEST) | 10.30am (ACST) | 1.00pm (NZST)
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