



Intrepid adds 80!

INTREPID Travel has added over 80 new tours, locations and activities for 2023, including more ethical wildlife adventures and more activities supporting First Nations communities and female-run businesses.

The 15-day Pakistan Expedition and eight-day Best of Costa Rica itineraries are just a couple of the new offerings.

Intrepid has also removed two experiences from its wildlife tours in line with its Animal Welfare Policy (**TD** 18 Aug 2020).

These include the Pereyas Private Reserve experience on the 'Madagascar Adventure' and 'Madagascar in Depth' trips, and the Tasmanian Devil Unzoo experience on the 'Walk the Tasman Peninsula' tour.

Travel still way down on '19

THE Australian travel and tourism sector is dealing with a surge in demand, but Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) figures released today confirm that both inbound and outbound activity are still significantly below pre-pandemic levels.

During Dec 2022, there were 529,980 short-term outbound trips recorded - a tenfold increase on the corresponding month of the previous year - but still 29.3% lower than Dec 2019 figures.

Similarly for international visitor arrivals, during Dec 2022 there were 648,980 short-term trips - a huge increase year-on-year, but still almost 40% down on the results before COVID-19.

For the calendar year 2022 there were 3,694,380 visitor arrivals into Australia, more than 15 times the previous year when the country's borders were closed until 01 Nov 2021.

Almost 48% of incoming visitors

were visiting friends and relatives, and the median duration of stay in Australia was 18 days, down from 30 days in 2021.

Outbound travel for the full 2022 calendar year also saw a surge, with a total of 5,225,640 resident returns - an increase of more than 17-fold on 2021.

The most popular reason for overseas travel by Australians during 2022 was for holidays, and NZ continued to be the leading outbound destination for Aussies, accounting for 707,990 trips.

Other popular destinations included Indonesia, which saw 612,450 Aussie trips - up from just 2,370 in 2021.

The USA came in third spot with 462,570 trips from Australia, followed by the UK with 416,260, and then India in fifth with 329,220 just ahead of Fiji at 318,760.

Designer incentive

DESIGNER Journeys is offering travel advisors a \$25 gift card for the first 250 qualified enquiries submitted in Feb and Mar.

Agents simply need to send a sample itinerary and a rough budget for the company's travel designers to work with, to curate a fully branded itinerary which can then be presented to clients.

Designer Journeys offers tailored trips in over 70 countries - see designerjourneys.com.

NTIA takes Crown

THE venue for the National Travel Industry Awards' (NTIA) return to Melbourne for the first time in nearly two decades has been revealed (**TD** breaking news), with the prestigious celebration of travel's best and brightest to take place in The Palladium at Crown Melbourne on 18 Nov.

AFTA CEO Dean Long said his team was now "working behind the scenes to weave another unforgettable night into the rich tapestry that makes up our travel community heritage."

"As part of our planning this year, we're maintaining our focus on breaking new ground, connecting with and amplifying the voices of our diverse membership," he said.

Shaun D'Cruz, Executive General Manager Crown Hotels Melbourne, added that "we look forward to showcasing our exceptional hospitality experiences alongside the passion ...of our fantastic team".

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features six news pages including **BEN**, plus a full page from **Collette**.

Travel Daily on location aboard Oceania Regatta

Today's issue of **TD** is coming to you courtesy of **Oceania Cruises**, aboard **Regatta** on her current trans-Tasman sailing.

LOUNGING by the pool, playing trivia, cards or bingo and of course luxuriating in the exquisite onboard cuisine are all on the agenda today, as **Regatta** turns east across the Tasman Sea for a crossing to New Zealand.

The 650-odd passengers are spoilt for choice, with many also taking the opportunity to indulge in a spa treatment, massage or simply a workout in the gym or a session walking the deck.

It's good to keep a little active, because all restaurants onboard are included in the cruise fare without a surcharge, and those who have reservations for either the Polo Grill or Toscana this evening are assured of an amazing culinary experience.

More relaxed dining options include the Terrace Cafe and the Waves Grill, while the exquisite Grand Dining Room also offers a fabulous epicurean adventure.

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Experience swings ahead

DESPITE major headwinds facing the international visitor market to Australia, adventure tourism operator Experience Co has managed to record a 250% increase in revenue for the second half of 2022.

Enjoying its strongest trading volumes since the pandemic, fuelled mainly by robust demand from Australian and Kiwi travellers, Experience Co increased revenue from \$19.2 million to \$51.5 million in the second half of last year, while the business also managed to grow its Underlying EBITDA by \$2.7 million to \$5.8 million.

While the figures are clearly encouraging for Experience Co after a very lean period, Chief Executive John O'Sullivan said the company was now anticipating an even larger boost driven by visitors from China, UK, USA and Japan as they start to return to Australia in greater numbers.

"We have domestic tourists to thank for the strong rebound in our revenues in the first half and are confident that returning international guests will continue the positive trend," he said.

"We believe the China market will be the leading inbound market for Australia and New Zealand by 2026 in terms of volume and value, and also grow on pre-pandemic levels."

Among the top performing assets for the business was Bamurru Plains in the Northern Territory, part of the Wild Bush Luxury business, which achieved a record season in 2022, and with expansion of accommodation underway, is predicted to pull in even more revenue from Q4.

MEANWHILE Experience Co's Treetops business is now the preferred operator of a guided zipline tour in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area west of the Blue Mountains.

Swan joins CLIA

SWAN Hellenic has partnered with Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia to further support its commitment to the local Australian market.

The cruise line is now a CLIA Regional Cruise Line in Australia, which will bring Swan Hellenic into the Association's wider cruise community within the country, made up of cruise lines from around the world, as well as agents from across the nation.

reConnecting is here

DMS reConnect is set to take the company's DMC partners, as well as travel advisors from across Australia, on an educational journey at two events in Melbourne and Sydney.

ReConnect will head to Melbourne on 28 Feb, taking place at the Crown Melbourne, before heading to Crown Sydney on 02 Mar - **CLICK HERE** to register and attend.



Window Seat

THOSE wacky quipsters at the US Transportation Security Administration (TSA) are at it again, after officers spotted a stowaway frog during screening of a passenger's carry-on bag at Pennsylvania's Harrisburg International Airport recently.

A post on the official TSA Twitter account noted that "this little creature was toadally surprised when he was spotted, and he asked for 'frog-giveness'".

"This find by TSA officers won't be easily frog-gotten," it added - missing other golden opportunities to note that passengers in the queue were perhaps hopping mad, or that the surprise guest would have likely croaked during the flight.

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IHG restructures for growth

IHG Hotels & Resorts has made several senior local appointments that it believes will further drive operational performance in Australia and the Pacific.

The move is part of a regional restructure that will see key areas of performance now split up across luxury & lifestyle, premium & essentials, and franchise, migrating away from a single-person model managing more than 100 hotels across all brands.

Appointments include Emma Hynes, who has joined as Director of Operations - Australasia & Pacific, who will be charged with leading the bulk of IHG's premium & essentials estates, including the Crowne Plaza, voco and Holiday

Inn brands, while Joel Gordon will also join the team as Director of Operations, Franchised, Australasia & Pacific from 20 Feb.

Meanwhile in the luxury space, James Young has been appointed Director of Operations, Luxury & Lifestyle, where he will look after brands like the InterContinental, Kimpton, and Vignette, and completing the restructure is Sam Swaffield, whose new role of Director of Performance - JAPAC will serve as a key conduit between IHG and the three new directors of operations.

Outside of operations roles, IHG has also recently recruited Cameron Burke as Director, Development Australasia & Pacific, where he will help the execution of IHG's portfolio growth strategy for the region, with all recruits reporting to Managing Director - Asia Pacific Matt Tripolone.

Shangri-La benefits

SHANGRI-LA is offering new welcome privileges to customers who join Circle, its complimentary frequent stay program.

Members will enjoy 25% off buffets; complimentary breakfast for two during the member's first stay; as well as a free room upgrade during a member's second stay at any participating Shangri-La property.

The program also allows members to use cash, points, or a mix without blackout dates, and redeem points for Shangri-La experiences and products at a fixed redemption value of 15 points per US\$1 spent.

CLICK HERE for more info.

Nordic update & win

50 DEGREES North has revealed its revenue and staffing levels have now recovered to 2019 levels, with 2023 expected to break all prior company records.

The Nordic tour operator is also giving travel agents in Australia and New Zealand the chance to win a six-day Norwegian coastal voyage when they complete a new destination webinar on 21 Feb - **CLICK HERE** for info.

Greg gets close to nature



TRAVELLERS Choice member and founder of Live the Dream Travel, Greg Close (**pictured**), has announced the introduction of a new local carbon offset initiative called Trees for Travellers.

The program will see Close's Adelaide-based travel agency buy and plant a tree for every holiday booking made, and is so far on track to plant 50 new saplings in its first month alone.

Close said he was inspired to start the initiative during the recent Travellers Choice Conference in Melbourne, after seeing how suppliers were taking it upon themselves to prioritise sustainability.

"Afterwards, when I thought about it, I couldn't see any reason why our small business couldn't also contribute on a local level," he explained.

"We looked at the carbon emissions an individual customer

might typically generate on a holiday, then started investigating different native trees and their capacities to absorb carbon."

After consulting with experts at State Flora, Close decided to plant Eucalyptus torquata, or Coral Gum, which can grow up to 11 metres tall.

Close said his agency is now aiming to plant more than 1,000 trees this year, while also exploring additional ways to create a more sustainable planet through local efforts.

Lost opportunities

A LACK of accessibility in the accommodation sector is costing the travel industry millions of dollars in lost revenue, Spinal Cord Injuries Australia (SCIA) and Accessible Accommodation claim.

The organisations stated that there are now 4.2 million Australians with disabilities, accounting for almost 20% of the nation's population, and making up around 17% of the total tourism revenue in Australia.

There is also a "huge business opportunity" for baby boomers, who hold 53% of the nation's wealth, with many seeking safe and accessible accommodation.

The SCIA has created a new Inclusion Services Training Program to help accommodation providers improve their offerings - view the program **HERE**.

Fiji removes the rest

FIJI has dropped its final COVID-19 rules, allowing visitors to enter the country without proof of vaccination or travel insurance, which all travellers aged over 16 had been required to produce until now.

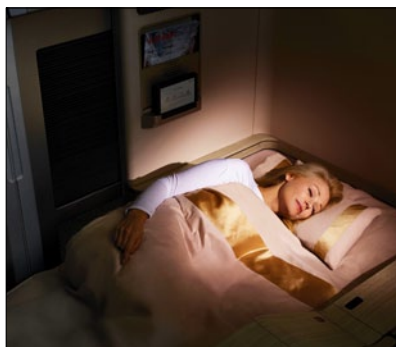
Following low COVID-19 hospitalisation rates, the Fijian Govt will now focus on socio-economic recovery and growing its visitor economy.

Travel to Korea in the hotel in the sky.

Asiana A380 is now offering the 1st class suite at the business class rate for the return flights to Seoul.

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Thursday 16th Feb 2023

Machu Picchu back

MACHU Picchu has reopened today after it was temporarily closed to visitors late last month.

Peru's Ministry of Culture is also reinforcing that tourist attractions in the north and east zones of the country, as well as the circuit of northern beaches, are fully open, and unimpacted by the 2022-2023 protests.

Domestic airports are working regularly, except for the Inca Manco Capac International, which has suspended operations as a precaution.

Oceania adds Alaska

OCEANIA Cruises will showcase the natural wonders of Alaska's Last Frontier, on a season of seven- to 20-day sailings between May and Sep this year, voyaging from Los Angeles, Seattle, and Vancouver.

Travellers looking to go beyond the typical tourist sights and discover unique perspectives on local cultures and cuisines have 14 departures to choose from aboard the 656-guest *Regatta*, which will become the first cruise ship to visit Klawock this season.

Nib's got you covered



CHRISTINA Tunnah, the General Manager Americas and Global Marketing and Brands at nib Group, was in town this week to meet with travel media and devise better strategies to ensure all Australian travellers are aware of the importance of taking out travel insurance.

She was joined yesterday in Sydney by Chief Executive nib Travel Anna Gladman, where the pair updated the media on how the brand is tracking and why storytelling has become more important in communicating the essential utility of insurance.

The meeting revealed that more than 50% of travel policies in Australia are sold by travel agents, demonstrating that the trade continues to be a vital channel of transaction for the travel insurance sector.

Travel advisors are also viewed by travellers as increasingly important reference points for buying insurance because following the pandemic, they have been in the front line helping out clients when they have faced trouble overseas.

"Particularly over the last few years and following COVID and other natural disasters, people have learned that agents who helped organise your trip in the first place will help solve your problem for things like flights or changing your hotel arrangements," Tunnah said.

Nib will be releasing its next financial results to the ASX in a couple of week's time, with the last update showing a considerable growth in travel insurance sales.

Pictured: Tunnah & Gladman.

Thomas Cook reunion



TWENTY former Thomas Cook Victoria colleagues gathered for a reunion over the weekend to reconnect and discover what each other has been up to over the last 30 years.

Greg Joseph, Lisa Wells, Debbie Reilly and Chriss Perry were responsible for organising the event, and labelled the night a great success.

The group exchanged stories about the Lauda Air night with John Farnham, the green lights at Bobby McGee's, and the Continental Airlines farewell party, and enjoyed discussions about re-val stickers, FFAs, OAGs

and typewriters.

Everyone was particularly delighted when retired industry stalwart George Ingles made a surprise appearance.

Pictured catching up over champagne: Robyn Edgcombe, Helen Johnson, Robyn Buteyn, Debbie Reilly, and Lisa Wells.

Ponant bolsters

A NEW Maritime Operations & Logistics Department and the expansion of its Expedition & Destination Development have been revealed by luxury cruise line Ponant this morning.

Asia Pacific Chair Sarina Bratton said Ponant is committed to the region, as its local partnerships continue to strengthen, and with newly appointed CEO Chris Hall at the helm, the line plans to accelerate the range of experiences across the APAC - more info in *Cruise Weekly*.

Operator fined

TOUR operator Huckleberry Australia, which specialises in the Japanese inbound market, has been hit with a \$250,000 fine after pleading guilty to failing to comply with health and safety duties on K'gari (Fraser Island).

The case follows the 2019 drownings of two 16-year-old boys from Kanagawa University High School in Yokohama, near Tokyo, while they were on a guided group tour, as part of an overseas exchange program which included a visit to the island's Lake McKenzie.

The Qld Office of the Work Health and Safety Prosecutor said the court had noted that the business operator "should have understood the dangers associated with swimming in the lake, and that it did not reasonably search for, detect or eliminate risks".

Huckleberry Australia had previously pleaded guilty to the charge at a Nov hearing.

MEL Airport boom

HUGE spikes of traffic were shown in Melbourne Airport passenger performance for Jan in contrast to the previous year.

A total of 2,706,962 travellers passed through the airport, representing an impressive growth of 118%.

Domestic travellers accounted for 1,888,390 of the total traffic (+72% on last year), while 818,572 international travellers were also recorded (+456%).

"Most international flights into Melbourne have been arriving close to full, which suggests int'l students are returning alongside tourists and family visitors," CEO Lorie Argus said.



Mixi by Saxton

AUSTRALIAN-OWNED speakers' bureau Saxton Group has launched a new event management agency called Mixi by Saxton.

The new agency will offer event management of business events including conference and meeting management, creative and production for special events and corporate parties, incentive events, as well as consulting services including event strategy.

"It became evident that there was a need for this service...after many of our corporate clients downsized or completely removed their events team during or post-COVID," Saxton Group CEO Annie Jamieson said.

Saxton by Mixi will be led by General Manager, Events, Maggie Benjamin.

AIME CONCLUDES ITS 30TH EVENT

THE Asia Pacific Incentives and Meetings Event (AIME) has wrapped up its 30th anniversary event, after hosting more than 400 hosted buyers, over 350 exhibitors and 2,000 visitors at the Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC).

The event opened on Mon with an official press conference at THE LUME, Melbourne, attended by several government and industry leaders, including Minister for Tourism, Sport and Major Events Steve Dimopoulos.

"International business events like AIME bring thousands of visitors to Melbourne, providing a boost to local hotels, restaurants and shops, while also showcasing our city's strength as a world-class events destination," Dimopoulos said.

The first day also included the Knowledge Program, featuring an address from Australian tennis star, Jelena Dokic, and concluded



with a special Welcome Event at Marvel Stadium (**TD** 14 Feb).

For the first time, attendees were able to enjoy The Accor Hosted Buyers Lounge, a 'Tech' area, and a Wellness Cafe, as well as 'touches of Australia' like a special anniversary lanyard featuring First Nations' artwork.

MEANWHILE, this week at AIME, Club Med showcased its first-ever MICE incentive program, Advantage by Club Med Meetings & Events, for event bookings in Australia and New Zealand.

The program offers a range of benefits, including complimentary

room nights, welcome cocktail parties, and access to eco-activities and initiatives for Diamond members.

Companies and meeting planners can earn incentives through the tiered status structure, which is based on the total value of each group booking on Club Med land packages.

Pictured at the press conference: Talk2 Media & Events CEO Matt Pearce; Steve Dimopoulos; MCEC CEO Natalie O'Brien; Melbourne Convention Bureau CEO Julia Swanson; & Tourism Australia MD Phillipa Harrison.

Noosa targets NZ

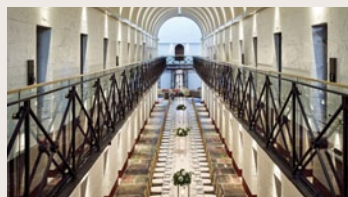
BUSINESS Events Noosa is inviting meeting organisers in New Zealand to 'Meet in green spaces, breathe in fresh thinking' in its latest campaign.

Videos showcasing Noosa's wellness options, sustainable pursuits, corporate local gifts, nature escapes and cultural experiences will be rolled out until May across *Meeting Newz* and paid socials - see the campaign landing page **HERE**.

Melbourne's newest events destination

A NEW events space has opened in Victoria's Pentridge entertainment and dining precinct - Chapter Place, which is being touted as "a destination for unconventional and extraordinary events".

Chapter Place features nine indoor and alfresco event spaces plus high-end conference facilities, and is situated close to the new 106-



key Adina Apartment Hotel Pentridge, and Olivine wine bar.

Chapter Place Delegate Day Packages start from \$95pp - download the events kit **HERE**.

Regional boost

DESTINATION NSW is providing a \$750,000 funding boost for the state's regional business events sector.

Grants of between \$15,000 and \$100,000 are on offer for the creation, attraction and support of a business event within a regional destination, as well as for small-medium scale infrastructure projects - **CLICK HERE**.

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APPOINTMENTS

WELCOME to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

Corporate Travel Management has appointed **David Crawford** as its new Operational Team Manager. Crawford has over 20 years of experience within the industry and was previously employed as a corporate travel consultant with the company.

Javier Arredondo has been appointed as the new Vice President, Sustainability with **Virtuoso**, where he will be charged with advancing the brand's mission to make sustainability a greater factor in consumer choice when planning travel. Before the promotion, Arredondo was previously Virtuoso's General Manager, Latin America & The Caribbean for two years.

ASM Global Asia Pacific has welcomed **Beverley Parker** as its new Director of Marketing. Parker joins ASM with over 30 years of experience in tourism, events and hospitality. Her latest position was with the ICC Sydney as Director of Business Development.

Kylie Wilson has begun her new role with **Helloworld Travel** as its new Account Manager NSW/ACT. Wilson arrives with 30 years of experience in the travel industry, including a previous stint with TravelManagers Australia as Business Partnerships Manager.

Rethink Turkey

DFAT has issued an update to advise Australians to reconsider travelling to regions in Turkey affected by the recent earthquake disaster.

Ten of the country's provinces, including Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, Hatay, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye and Sanliurfa, are currently under emergency status, with only aid vehicles allowed to enter.

Transportation towards these areas is extremely limited despite the reopening of Hatay and Gaziantep Airports.

There are also rising threats of terrorists targeting places populated with westerners, with DFAT strongly advising to avoid places of worship.

Darwin bomb tour

INSPIRED to reflect on the bombing that occurred on 19 Feb 1942 at the Top End of Australia, the annual of the Bombing of Darwin tour returns in 2024 and is available for booking now.

Attendees will be able to learn exclusive war history led by expert historians, visit the Darwin Military Museum, as well as take a Sea Darwin Bombing of Darwin Cruise, taking in Darwin's WWII maritime sites and a walk through the WWII Oil Tunnels.

There is also the opportunity to take part in unique behind-the-scene experiences.

The tour is currently available for \$2,099ppts for a five-day journey in Darwin from 16 Feb.

For more information, phone 1300 880 340 or **CLICK HERE**.

Geelong travel hit \$1 million!



ATG VIP Diamond Agency, Geelong Travel, recently celebrated the achievement of being the first agency to hit \$1 million in sales of ATG products.

The team, led by Stuart Coffield, can now enjoy the benefits of the refreshed ATG Agent VIP Program (**TD** 13 Feb), such as guaranteed famil invites and partnership funds, as this accomplishment has secured their Diamond status for all of 2024.

Pictured: Rita and Helen from Geelong Travel with their giant diamond ring and diamond celebration cake.

SIA figures strong

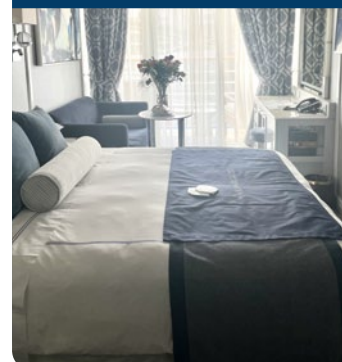
SINGAPORE Airlines Group (SIA) has continued to see strong passenger traffic and load factors across all routes and global regions last month.

The robust demand for air travel was boosted by the year-end peak return traffic and the Lunar New Year holiday season.

SIA passenger capacity in Jan remained at 80% of pre-COVID-19 levels, similar to Dec 2022.

Singapore Airlines and Scoot also carried a combined 2.6 million passengers in total.

Travel Daily On Board: Oceania Regatta



Veranda Stateroom

The redesigned Veranda Staterooms aboard *Regatta* feature everything cruisers need for a relaxing holiday aboard. The exclusive Tranquility Bed is complemented with plenty of thoughtfully designed storage and a private teak veranda.

A modern colour palette of designer fabrics is the backdrop for modern furnishings and original art, along with mod cons like USB ports.

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**NEW SOUTH WALES (SOUTH)
& ACT**

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