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Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today features five pages of the latest travel industry news including our **Luxury** page, plus a full page from **Infinity Holidays**.

TAG expands team

LAUREN Gainey has joined TAG as its Commercial Director of APAC, a newly created role which will see her focus on growing the company's success in the region.

Gainey brings more than two decades of experience in the tourism and aviation sectors, including stints at Flight Centre, IHG and Qantas.

The appointment follows a strong start to the year for TAG, with the company recently clinching several new acquisitions, including CCM and APEX Travel in Australia.

NCL details Europe '24

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line (NCL) has gone live with its 2024 Europe summer season, which will see it deploy a total of nine ships in the region, including its newest vessels, *Norwegian Prima* and *Norwegian Viva*.

The cruise line will offer 101 itineraries including 38 roundtrips and 63 open-jaw sailings, exploring a range of destinations across Northern Europe, the Mediterranean, Greek Isles, and the Atlantic Coast.

Voyages will be departing from 13 home ports, including three brand-new options - New York City; Le Havre (Paris), France; and Oslo, Norway.

Guests can immerse themselves in highlight destinations such as Istanbul, Turkiye; Florence (Livorno), Italy and Reykjavik,



Iceland, with select itineraries offering overnight calls.

"Europe continues to be in huge demand for Australian and New Zealand travellers and our offering is unparalleled," said Ben Angell, NCL's Vice President and Managing Director for APAC.

"As we return to Europe this season, our goal remains the same - curating unmatched experiences for our guests in Europe's most iconic and sought-after destinations."

Travellers can enhance their cruises with a variety of shore excursions, including gourmet tours, excursions that explore a destination's customs of life, and pre- and post-cruise options.

NCL's European voyages on sale now through to Dec 2025. *JM*

Hello, Hong Kong

INFINITY Holidays is showcasing its Hong Kong packages, which start from \$619pp for four nights including a 'Symphony of Lights Cruise', with the top-selling agent by 31 May to win their own Hong Kong holiday - see **p6** for details.

Truman is on track

MELANIE Truman has been promoted to the role of Marketing Manager - Rail at Journey Beyond.

Truman has been with the company for over 10 years and was most recently in the position of Senior Marketing Executive between Jun 2022 and Apr 2024.

Wendy Wu Tours.

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ANA-AI codeshare

ALL Nippon Airways and Air India have inked a codeshare deal that will see the carriers collaborate on flights between India and Japan from 23 May. The two Star Alliance members will allow pax to combine flights on one ticket and access shared lounges and priority boarding.

Airlines spur skiplagging

THE World Travel Agents Associations Alliance (WTAAA) has called on airlines around the world to stop penalising travel agents for the practice of 'skiplagging' by clients.

For the uninitiated, skiplagging is the act of booking cheaper flights with a layover at the final destination, with the intention of deliberately missing the last leg.

The phenomenon has gained traction in recent months due to the high price of fares and various social media influencers advocating for the idea.

WTAAA Executive Director, Otto de Vries (pictured), said that while airlines struggle to take legal action against passengers, they regularly issue Agency Debit Memos (ADMs) to travel agents.

"We do the right thing by booking as per the published fares, but the practice of holding the agent financially responsible when the client breaks airline rules remains a major concern,"



De Vries claimed.

"It's time airlines play a straight game on pricing without huge markups for hub-to-hub tickets versus to final destinations, which would diminish the incentive for skiplagging," he added.

The industry body believes that a collaborative approach is needed between airlines and agents to protect consumers and ensure a fairer business environment, rather than punitive measures against sellers.

While skiplagging is a violation of airline terms, a 2019 court case in Berlin dismissed Lufthansa's attempt to sue a passenger for over US\$2,300 in fees. AB

Anzac earlybirds

EARLYBIRD prices are on offer for Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours' 2025 Anzac Day tours.

Included in the discounted mix is the eight-day Anzac Day at Gallipoli trip, down to \$3,699ppts from the standard \$3,849ppts.

Reduced rates are available when booked by 30 Jun 2024.



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Bonza defends GC

BONZA'S recent decision to reduce capacity on most Gold Coast routes (**TD** 23 Apr) was in line with standard practice as the carrier seeks to "right-size supply with demand" from 01 May, the carrier reaffirmed this morning.

"No current Bonza routes are being cancelled but as we've always said...as with most industries, a route/product needs to reflect the market demand and as such, we're adjusting our current capacity out of the GC," a spokesperson told **Travel Daily**.

"Acknowledging the Gold Coast had a challenging start, it's very promising to see the routes we fly are wanted by customers, especially given eight of the eleven routes are brand new to the market."

The impacted routes from the Gold Coast include: Launceston, from three to twice weekly; Melbourne (Tullamarine), from four to once a week; Mackay, from three to twice a week; Melbourne (Avalon), from three to twice a week; Cairns, from five to three times a week; Mildura, from two to once a week; Townsville, from five to three times a week; Mount Isa, from two to once a week; and Whitsunday Coast, from three to twice a week.

On a more positive note, Bonza also revealed the Melbourne-Sunshine Coast route will increase from four services per week to five from May.



Qantas scrapped the most

QANTAS cancelled more domestic services than any of its competitors in Mar, the latest figures from BITRE have shown.

The Flying Kangaroo was forced to scrap 3.9% of all domestic flights during the period, behind Bonza (3.5%), Virgin Australia (2.8%), subsidiary Jetstar (1.5%) and Rex Airlines, which led the pack for major players with just 0.8% of cancelled services.

The average cancellation rate for Mar across all domestic carriers was 2.8%, higher than the long-term average of 2.2%.

While the number of canned flights is faring worse than historical norms, the industry is at least improving on recent efforts, with the data showing a lift on the 3.6% of services scrapped in Mar last year.

Of the smaller players in domestic aviation, Cairns-based operator Skytrans recorded



the highest percentage of cancellations, with a whopping 11.2% of all flights dropped.

While not stated in the BITRE report, the poor showing coincided with well-documented severe weather disruptions in Queensland - especially in its northern regions in Mar. **AB**

Princess Sanctuary

PRINCESS Cruises has announced it will introduce its own 'ship within a ship' concept to its growing Sphere-class fleet of ships, with the line overnight unveiling the 'Sanctuary Collection' suite category and exclusive onboard hideaway (**CW** breaking news).

For details, see **Cruise Weekly**.

We are back on Fri

ANZAC Day commemorations are taking place tomorrow, so **TD** will not be published as the nation observes a public holiday.

However, our team of writers will return with all of the latest news on Fri.

MU signs Amadeus

CHINA Eastern Airlines has become the first mainland Chinese carrier to sign with Amadeus for NDC distribution.

The deal with the SkyTeam Alliance members applies to distribution globally, allowing sellers easier access to its extensive domestic network connecting Beijing and Shanghai, as well as its growing list of international ports.

China Eastern inked a c'share with Virgin Atlantic in Jan.

Garuda duty free

GARUDA International passengers will soon be able to access a range of exclusive duty free deals through the SkyBuys app, after the two companies this week inked a strategic deal.

From May, Garuda's partner program, Boarding Pass True Value, will promote SkyBuys duty free deals on offer at major airports and downtown stores across the APAC region.

Garuda pax will be able to browse and purchase items using the SkyBuys app and collect upon landing at their destination.

EY A380 on NYC

ETIHAD Airways has confirmed its A380 aircraft has commenced double-decker services between New York JFK and Abu Dhabi.

The carrier is offering two daily flights to New York from its UAE hub, with one served by the larger A380 plane and the other remaining via a B787-9.

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A&K sets a standard

IN WHAT it claims is a new standard for the travel industry, A&K Travel Group has announced a new paid parental leave policy.

The new scheme provides a minimum 18 weeks of paid leave for all new parents as part of its commitment to greater equality and employee wellbeing.

"We are incredibly proud to be at the forefront of the travel industry in offering this progressive parental leave package," the company's CEO, Cristina Levis, said.

"By providing equal opportunities for parents to bond with their new children, we are not only investing in the well-being of our employees but also taking a significant step towards levelling the playing field for all of our employees."

MEANWHILE, A&K Travel Group has also announced it is expanding its network of destination management companies to Mexico later this year.

The operator told *Travel Daily* the DMC will be led by an "A&K veteran", who is set to be revealed soon.

The company said it is also preparing to open its first beach property in Mexico, marking an important milestone in its growth strategy for Latin America.

SONEVA REVEALS ITS ISLAND SECRET

THE first Soneva Secret resort has opened in the Maldives to offer the ultimate in seclusion and personalised hospitality (*TD* 27 Sep 2023).

Featuring 14 overwater and island villas, Soneva Secret marks the first resort in the Haa Dhaalu Atoll, which comprises 40 islands in the north of the Maldives.

Whether discerning travellers opt for a lagoon Crusoe Villa, accessible only by boat, or the Castaway floating villa, all will enjoy huge master suites with retractable roofs for stargazing.

Each villa also offers adjoining children's rooms, and comes with a dedicated team of three, including a 'Barefoot Guardian' for 24/7 butler service, a 'Barefoot Assistant', and a dedicated chef, to ensure each



stay is completely customised.

Guests can utilise the in-villa gyms and spa treatment rooms, and indulge in a refined selection of culinary experiences across the resort, including wine pairings and limited-edition menus.

There are several dining options available, including 'Out of This World', a castaway dining tower, observatory and wine cellar in the

lagoon, reachable only by zipline.

There is also a firepit dining experience at So Primitive, and a casual dining and lounge venue called The Living Room, which is also home to a library, boutique, and Soneva's ice cream, chocolate, and cheese and charcuterie rooms.

Rates start from US\$3,300 per night - find out more **HERE**. *JM*

Mudgee resort opens luxurious eco-chic tents

PARKLANDS Resort Mudgee has introduced 15 eco-chic tents, featuring luxe amenities, four-poster king beds, ensuites, and a private outdoor deck.

Located 3.5 hours from Sydney, the Mudgee Retreats offer couples and solo travellers an ideal base from which to explore the wine region.

The pet-friendly glamping tents are positioned on 30 acres of countryside, close to a private tennis court, indoor pool, fitness centre and spa.

Guests staying in the new



tents will enjoy a selection of Mudgee region gourmet treats and a breakfast hamper delivered to their door.

Priced from \$698 per night, the new accommodations are energy efficient and have been built with sustainable materials.

A blend of luxury

FOUR Seasons Resort Mauritius at Anahita has partnered with luxe skincare brand MyBlend to offer its products to guests staying at the waterside resort.

The eco-conscious products are now featured on the resort's spa treatment menu, which includes 30-minute 'Express' treatments, as well as longer 'Essential' and 'Signature' treatments.

MyBlend products uses highly concentrated, anti-ageing ingredients.

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Club Wyndham Perth is set to undergo significant room and common area refurbishment later this month. Situated in the heart of the WA capital, the building will be updated with new designs inspired by the city's urban surroundings. All

apartments and common spaces will also be repainted, and guests will enjoy new carpets, soft furnishings and modifications across the property's bathrooms once it reopens in late Jun or early Jul.



Formerly the Sierra Nevada Resort, **Outbound Mammoth** has opened its doors after revitalising its guest rooms and amenities with 10 new free-standing cabins. Guests can indulge in 179 freshly redesigned rooms while enjoying the

reimagined lobby, dining concept and wine bar. The property has also introduced a new heated pool, two spa tubs, and an outdoor garden with communal fire pits.



Estancia La Jolla Hotel & Spa has celebrated its 20th anniversary with a US\$26 million renovation. The multi-phase renovation will blend modern designs with historic touches across the property's guestrooms and suites. Guests will also be

welcomed by a new lobby and pool complex, as well as upgraded facilities at its meeting and group spaces, which consist of indoor and outdoor areas that span over 4,000m².



In a transformation to join the JdV by Hyatt brand in the coming months, **The Bentley Hotel Southhampton** in New York is currently in the midst of an extensive renovation. The all-suite property comprises 40 rooms, encompassing the

opulent pink, mauve and neutral accents throughout. These implementations will also extend to its dining scenes and workspaces.



Carmel Valley Ranch, set in the foothills of California's Central Coast, has recently announced the completion of a multi-million dollar renovation project. Visitors will enjoy significant enhancements, including the signature Valley Kitchen restaurant, the meeting venue and River Ranch, the resort's hub for sports and family-friendly entertainment.

Building the brand

HOLIDAY Inn recently teamed up with hit Nine Network TV show *Lego Masters Australia* to offer the young-at-heart fun experiences across the country.

Think brick-building workshops, sip-and-bricks over cappuccinos and even 'Holiday Inn-spiration' sessions with *Lego Masters Australia* winners, Henry Pinto and Cade Franklin (**pictured**).

Taking place in Apr and May, the sessions will feature workshops for kids to create their own build, guided by tips from the *Lego Masters* themselves.

The hotel chain will also offer the Green Brick hunt, where guests will have the chance to find one of 10 Lego bricks hidden inside Holiday Inn guestrooms across Australia - and hand it in to win their next stay free at any IHG property around the world.

"Being the first hotel brand to partner with *LEGO Masters Australia* offers our guests unforgettable and inimitable access to these creative experiences, while the broader partnership will take us directly into the lounge room of generations of Australians," said Dean Jones, Vice President Commercial, East Asia & Pacific, IHG Hotels & Resorts.



Window Seat

IN WHAT may prove to be a major blow for lovers of genuine Italian gelato everywhere, lawmakers in Milan are proposing to ban ice cream consumption after midnight to protect the "tranquillity" of residents.

Long considered a drawcard for tourists, Milan's late-night gelato street vendors would be forced to roll up the shutters of their stores if the controversial law is approved.

This is just the latest chapter in Milan's ice cream wars, with former Mayor, Giuliano Pisapia, attempting a similar ban in 2013, a move he ultimately backed away from after a fierce backlash.

The passionate protests at the time included the 'Occupy Gelato' movement, which sprinkled too much pressure for the idea to push forward.

"People can eat ice cream day and night, anywhere they like," Pisapia conceded.

The latest push relates to many of the city's most popular nightlife and tourist districts, and is also looking to prohibit the late-night sale of pizza so that queues of tourists on the streets are dispersed sooner.





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