Travel Daily

First with the news

Wednesday 24th February 2021



Velocity Flybuys link

VIRGIN Australia's Velocity frequent flyer program has announced an enhanced partnership with the Colesbacked Flybuys scheme, including an Auto Transfer feature.

Members will have the option of having their Flybuys points automatically converted into Velocity points, with the earning rate also boosted by almost 15% so that 1,000 Flybuys points now equates to 500 Velocity points.

Customers who link their accounts can also earn Velocity Status Credits when they scan their Flybuys card on eligible purchases with participating Flybuys partners.

Currently the rate is one Status Credit per \$100 in monthly spending across Coles-affiliated retailers, capped at 10 per month.



Helloworld "largely intact"

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited has hailed the "enormous perseverance and effort" of its travel agency network members in Australia and New Zealand, saying as a result the retail groups remained "largely intact as at the end of Dec 2020".

This morning's six-month results announcement (*TD* breaking news) confirmed the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Helloworld's businesses, noting that many agencies were running on skeleton staff levels to service refunds, domestic bookings and enquiries for travel in 2022 and beyond.

The update provided a breakdown of numbers in each retail network, with 500 Helloworld branded and associate members in Australia as at 30 Sep 2020 now reduced to 430 retail agencies, along with a further 52 which have shifted to operate from home.

Magellan Travel has gone from 121 members to 105, while the My Travel Group has declined from 776 to 568, with a further 205 home-based agencies.

The 63 members of the Helloworld Business Travel network in Australia are all open and continue to service corporate clients as required.

MTA Travel has grown slightly,

ACCC targets travel

SALES practices in the domestic travel sector will be closely monitored by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in the coming year, with ACCC Chair Rod Sims yesterday confirming travel and aviation would be among the organisation's "key enforcement priorities" for 2021.

Today's issue of TD

Travel Daily today has six pages of news including our PUZZLES plus a full page from Northern France Training.

adding seven members since Sep 2020 to now comprise 438 advisors, with the overall HLO Australian networks now comprising 1,116 agencies and 695 home-based businesses.

In New Zealand there are now a total of 167 agencies and 246 home-based members, making a total of 413 in the HLO networks.

"Over the last six months a number of multi-agency owners have consolidated some of their outlets, while other agencies have 'hibernated' their businesses until such time as international travel resumes, and are operating from home," the investor update confirmed.

"It should be noted that agencies who have chosen to stop trading have done so in an orderly and professional manner...they continue to manage, retrieve and distribute their clients refunds and any other outstanding customer entitlements such as future travel credits," Helloworld added.

The company reported an 87.8% decline in TTV to \$433 million, with revenue down 85% to 429.6 million and an overall \$21.6 million loss for the six months.

Despite the pandemic, HLO is optimistic about the future, saying "we are working with our agency networks to ensure we emerge from this ordeal with a vibrant network of agents ready to serve their communities."

More from HLO on page four.

Experience counts

Experience Co Limited has reported a significantly improved financial result for the six months to 31 Dec 2020, with an overall loss of just \$200,000 - compared to a \$7.1 million loss for the previous corresponding period.

CEO John O'Sullivan noted that all core operations had recommenced by the end of the period, with encouraging peak season trading volumes in Australia for Dec 20 and Jan 21.

"Our business has seen resilient consumer demand, despite the pandemic and uncertainty of interstate borders," he said.

The turnaround has come alongside a simplification of the Experience Co business and significant debt reduction, with the sale of Cairns-based Raging Thunder Whitewater Rafting and Hot Air Ballooning assets, while the company's new Great Barrier Reef pontoon build is progressing to schedule.

"The improved stability of domestic borders and vaccine rollouts are also positive for the business," O'Sullivan said.

"This has been a challenging time for the industry and our business, in particular our workforce at all levels in all locations," he added.

"I cannot be more proud of their commitment and energy in delivering experiences to our customers," O'Sullivan said, also thanking governments across the country for their support.





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FC offers COVID services

FLIGHT Centre Travel Group has forged an agreement with healthcare provider Healius Limited to become a distribution partner of its COVID-19-related travel testing solutions.

The deal will see Flight Centre clients gain access to the health company's suite of medical resources, including a raft of pathology testing solutions and reporting services offered at its laboratories located throughout the country.

Pathology brands under the Healius umbrella include Laverty, Dorevitch, QML, Western Diagnostic and Abbott, with the health provider indicating it was well placed to provide Flight Centre's leisure and corporate customers with "high-quality COVID-19 testing and reporting".

Flight Centre Travel Group Australia Managing Director James Kavanagh said the agreement was just another step towards restoring the confidence of Australian travellers to start booking their next holiday.

"This innovative new partnership with Healius is one of the many ways Flight Centre is assisting customers to get back into the skies safely," he said.

"It gives our customers peace of mind and confidence, knowing they can easily get the right tests and reports that they need for their destination.

"Healius is one of Australia's leading pathology businesses and an excellent partner for us and our customers in this industryleading arrangement."

Healius CEO Pathology John McKechnie conceded the tie-up was an "unlikely collaboration" under normal circumstances, but nonetheless it was key to continuing its support of travel.

Flight Centre is expected to announce its first half year financial results tomorrow.



Avis out of contact

AVIS has introduced contactless technology for clients using its online dealer vehicle purchasing.

The new service, Avis Direct, provides a single point-of-access to all vehicles in Avis' Australian fleet available for purchase, offering dealers the ability to buy vehicles at any time.

Avis Direct includes detailed vehicle descriptions, multiple photos, and live stock updates.

Outrigger revamp

OUTRIGGER Reef Waikiki Beach Resort in Hawaii has unveiled its recent US\$80 million transformation.

Located directly on Waikiki Beach, the hotel's investment focuses on wellness and "unmatched hospitality", with enhancements including upscale residential-style rooms & suites, poolside experiences, and a fully reimagined Kani Ka Pila Grille stage restaurant.



Window Seat

SOME people hate paying excess baggage fees so much it's like ascorbic acid in their mouths, just take the four men who recently devoured 30kg of oranges in under 30 mins in a bid to avoid additional charges.

The fruit loop foursome were trying to board a flight out of Kunming in Southwest China's Yunnan Province when the airline told them their oranges would cost ¥300 (A\$60) to take with them, kicking off an unsightly citrus feast.

The result? A cheaper flight and a cluster of painful mouth ulcers for their troubles.



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14-DAY SOUTH PACIFIC: FIJI, BORA BORA & MOOREA TO PAPEETE

FROM SYDNEY 23 APR 2022

BORA BORA RAIATEA DRAVUNI MYSTERY ISLAND

12-DAY SOUTH PACIFIC: BORA BORA, KAUAI & MAUI TO HONOLULU

FROM PAPEETE 7, 31 MAY & 14 NOV 2022



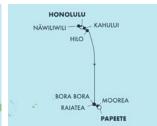
7-DAY SOUTH PACIFIC: BORA 12-DAY SOUTH PACIFIC: **BORA, MOOREA & RAIATEA**

ROUND-TRIP PAPEETE 31 OCT & 7 NOV 2022

PAPEETE MOOREA **

BORA BORA, KAUAI & MAUI TO PAPEETE

FROM HONOLULU 19 MAY, 19 OCT & 26 NOV 2022



TO REGISTER FOR OUR WEBINAR AND DOWNLOAD OUR TOOLKIT CLICK HERE.



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Catch up on the February issue of *travelBulletin*, with stories on the vaccine debate, government grants and more.

CLICK to read

travelBulletin

WA calls for help

TOURISM Council WA is calling for a \$50 million support package from the state government to insulate WA's tourism businesses and jobs from the effects of the recent lockdown.

The industry group said recent industry surveying showed the Western Australian tourism industry had already lost at least \$130 million during the recent lockdown and associated travel restrictions enacted by the McGowan Government.

"Across the industry, the recent lockdown and regional travel restrictions have cost WA tourism businesses an average of \$39,000 each, with small businesses such as sole traders losing \$6,700 each," said Tourism Council WA CEO Evan Hall.

"We are calling on the state government and opposition to commit to a \$50 million support package ahead of the state election, which could include the waiving of land taxes, water rates, national park and transport licence fees, as well as providing direct financial support to the most affected businesses."

Singapore added

GULF Air has revealed Singapore as a new destination, beginning in the second quarter of the year.

The national carrier of Bahrain will begin with one weekly flight starting in Apr, operated via a Boeing 787-9.

Australia "ripe" for Pass

THE International Air Transport Association (IATA) believes Australia would be receptive to rebooting international travel sooner if the country embraced its digital Travel Pass technology.

Speaking via an online media briefing yesterday, IATA's Regional Director Airport, Passenger, Cargo & External Relations - Asia Pacific Vinoop Goel said Australia was an especially good candidate to support the Travel Pass because of its cautious stance toward international borders.

"Australia has adopted what we would classify as a more conservative approach towards reopening borders, so what we hope is that the IATA Travel Pass will give the government the confidence that the border can be opened using a tool like this which will ensure that anyone coming in will have the right level of vaccination or testing," he said.

Goel added that Australia, unlike many countries in the developing world, was "ripe" to adopt the tool because it was a digitally advanced nation with government processes already based around digital identities.

IATA's Regional Vice President, APAC Conrad Clifford also noted that the one-way Australia/New Zealand travel bubble, which has oscillated between being open and closed following various COVID clusters, represented a great example of how the Travel Pass could make such green lanes easier to operate.

"We're talking about confidence here, it would have been enormously useful for passengers to have had access to the NZ app which could have told them, what are the new requirements and where could they get certification done in line with the new govt requirements," Clifford said.

"And on the government side it would have been great to have had a simple and secure process to tell them that a passenger had met the requirements."

The IATA Travel Pass, which will be available on both Android and iOS for a "minimal price", will officially go live next month following a successful trial with Singapore Airlines, with IATA also confirming "a number of carriers" had already signed up for the tech, including Etihad, Emirates, Qatar and Air New Zealand.

A house of cards?

THE Vic Govt will establish a Royal Commission into Crown Melbourne's suitability to hold its Victorian casino licence, following a scathing report handed down by the NSW Independent Liquor and Gaming Authority earlier this month (*TD* 10 Feb).

"This is about making sure that those who hold a casino licence in Vic uphold the highest standard of...integrity and they're accountable for their actions," said Vic Premier Daniel Andrews.

Indigenous funding

A \$40 million Indigenous
Tourism Fund has been unveiled
by the Federal Government to
assist the sector's economic
recovery, with up to \$17 million
to be made available for states
and territories to co-invest on
indigenous tourism projects.

Up to \$12 million will be available via the Indigenous Business Program to help develop new products and purchase equipment, \$10 million will go towards a National Indigenous Tourism Mentoring Program to offer businesses individualised support, while \$1 million will be provided for the establishment of a National Indigenous Tourism Advisory Group consisting of successful Indigenous experts from a variety of fields to advise on priorities for the sector.

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) welcomed news of the fund, stating Indigenous tourism accounts for around \$505 million in visitor expenditure in Queensland and supports 2,500 full-time jobs.

Bend it like Qatar

QATAR Airways has announced it is now the official airline sponsor for the 2020 UEFA European Football Championship.

Taking place from 11 Jun to 11 Jul, the 24-team tournament will be hosted in 12 cities, including Amsterdam, Baku, Bilbao, Bucharest, Budapest, Copenhagen and more.



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With a huge range of options, from globes to Star Wars characters you're sure to find one you love.

All Robotime kits with code TRAVEL21 at checkout*

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* Famil includes an amazing experience on The Ghan. Terms and conditions apply

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A Quark-er of a win!



QUARK Expeditions is on the front foot when it comes to marketing polar voyages, but this week took that passion in a new direction in the sporting arena.

Quark's Director of Sales Asia-Pacific, Jarrod Zurvas, posted the above pic on social media, saying "last night was another first for Quark Expeditions, and although this first may not go down quite as memorable as the first time we took passengers to the geographic North Pole or the first time we circumnavigated

Antarctica, I have always said to my team, we celebrate all wins regardless of how big or small they may be."

The inaugural Quark Expeditions Touch Rugby league team took out the Senior Men's comp in Brisbane's Shaw Rd Kedron with a nail-biting 4-3 win.

Zurvas paid special tribute to the team's mascot - the only one on the field to "happily wear a Jacket designed for the polar regions in the tropical Queensland heat!"

65 more go at HLO

ANOTHER 65 Helloworld staff have been retrenched since 04 Jan, according to the HLO results announcement today (page one).

The headcount reduction, in line with an ongoing focus on "reshaping and resizing the business so that it functions at appropriate levels for the foreseeable future," incurred a cost of \$1.1 million, HLO said.

STA Academic deal

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited will take full ownership of the former STA Academic business, under a Deed of Company Arrangement entered into on 16 Dec 2020 with the administrators of the collapsed STA Travel Ltd.

The deal is set to be finalised in May 2021, the company said.

\$1 for Inspire

HELLOWORLD has finally confirmed its 100% acquisition of Inspire Travel Management from In Travel Group's Dwayne Good (TD 16 Feb), with this morning's HLO update noting the purchase took place last Oct with just \$1 changing hands.

Travel Daily's revelations of the deal saw a hasty revision of the Inspire Travel Management website which had previously proudly claimed its credentials as "Australia's only majority Indigenous-owned large market travel management company".

Other acquisition details revealed in the HLO figures included the \$174,000 net purchase price for Cruiseco, along with \$145,000 in "deferred consideration" - more details in today's issue of Cruise Weekly.

AFTA UPDATE

from the Australian Federation of Travel Agents

OF TRAVEL AGENTS

THE focus of working with the Australian Competition and **Consumer Commission** (ACCC) over the past few months makes our upcoming webinar a

must-attend. This will take place next Tue

o2 Mar at 3.3opm (AEDT) and in the session we will hear directly from special quest Delia Rickard, Deputy Chair of the ACCC, on how they are approaching COVID related issues and their plans for a travel recovery.

Places are limited so please register HERE.

Thank you to everyone who completed the AFTA Survey last week. We received a tremendous response rate with over 1,500 small to medium size businesses completing the survey.

The results are powerful and will be used as the basis of ministerial briefings, party room briefings and strategic media as we continue to fight for ongoing financial assistance including an extension of JobKeeper or alike until international travel resumes.

The survey confirms what we know, that international border closures have had a devastating impact on travel agencies, tour operators and wholesalers. 94% of travel businesses have experienced a revenue decline exceeding 90%, and 99% of businesses have seen a decline in revenue of 70% or more.

The survey highlighted that for small to medium size businesses there will be an 82% decline in the number of staff employed if JobKeeper is not extended, forcing a significant

proportion of staff from travel agents, tour operator and wholesale businesses out of business (32%) and forcing well-trained and **AUSTRALIAN FEDERATION** experienced travel agent staff into unemployment.

> A further 52% are unsure about their business' future should JobKeeper not be extended. Currently, 81% of all travel businesses' work is assisting customers with COVID impacted travel. Of that, 71% of that work is related to outstanding international bookings and the remaining 29% is assisting customers with domestic related bookings from state government border closures.

The important question we are proposing to government is who will look after these existing bookings if travel businesses cease to operate?

We want you to know that the AFTA team is deeply entrenched in the complex task of converting the tremendous groundswell of political awareness of the plight of our sector into financial support at all levels of government.

We are perhaps guilty of not articulating the depth and breadth of our workings but you need to know that you are not alone and that your industry body is fighting, in collaboration with CATO, CLIA and wider organisations like Tourism and Transport Forum, the Business Council of Australia and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry for your survival.

Free HLO shares

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited gave 800,000 shares to a number of its staff on 18 Dec 2020.

All the recipients have been working reduced days since last Mar, with the shares issued for "nil consideration".

The only condition is that the staff in question must remain HLO employees until the vesting date of 01 Jul 2021.

Athena due in Jul

THE ReadyRooms wholesale platform operated by Helloworld is set for a major upgrade, with the planned Jul 2021 launch of a new "Athena" platform.

The system is understood to be an evolution of the Excite Holidays platform which Helloworld purchased from Excite's receivers just over 12 months ago (TD 17 Feb 2020).



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Pub quiz

- 1. The Cascadia independence movement supposes the secession and then unification of what three regions, to form a sole independent country?
- 2. In which New York City borough is John F. Kennedy International Airport located?
- 3. Mumbai was formerly known as what?
- 4. Which famous travel industry company built the luxury resort on Hayman Island?
- 5. What modern-day Sydney suburb was the first point in Australia James Cook landed at?
- 6. The Adelaide Hills are located in what ranges?
- 7. What is the capital of California?
- 8. What percentage of Sea Life Sydney Aquarium's visitors annually come from overseas?
 - a) 5%
 - b) 15%
 - c) 55%
- 9. The Dambovita River runs through what major European capital?
- 10. You would find the Rijksmuseum in what city?

Sudoku

TRICKY

THE aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Numbers can only be used once in each row, column, and 3×3 box.

7	8				5			
			2	6	8			
	2	6						
					4	5	9	7
4				7				3
5	6	7	3					
						6	2	
			7	4	1			
			9				7	5

Seen it at the movies



GLENDALE and North Hollywood in California were the primary locations for shooting this entwined cult crime drama starring Samuel L Jackson and Uma Thurman.

Normally an allure for travellers wanting to check out the global

headquarters of celebrity, the streets of Hollywood in this film seem far less inviting, as the ensemble cast find themselves inadvertently drawn into each other's crime webs, leaving a few dead bodies in their wake.

Can you name the movie?

Funnies Flashback



WE'VE trawled through the *TD* Window Seat archives to give you a blast from the past. Here's some gems from 27 Jun 2014:

MANY hotels have some sort of celebrity story entwined in its history, and online travel deals site Travelzoo has compiled its Top 10 Most Scandalous Hotels.

Headed by The Standard Hotel in New York, notable as the site where American rapper Jay-Z was attacked by his sister-in-law Solange Knowles, the list also includes Australia's own QT Gold Coast as the site of Justin Bieber's graffiti spray last year.

Recent times aside, the list also includes stories from rock music folklore, with the Holiday Inn Flint in Michigan the site where The Who drummer Keith Moon blew up a toilet during 21st birthday celebrations in 1967.

The list also includes the Adlon Hotel in Berlin, the scene of the late Michael Jackson's famous 'baby-dangling incident, and The Mercer in New York, known for Russell Crowe's phonethrowing indiscretion of 2005.

Prince Harry, One Direction, Britney Spears, Lindsay Lohan and even John F Kennedy also feature in the list for discretions committed either by them or for which they took responsibility.

ANSWERS 23 FEB

Celebrity faces: Eyes - Amy Adams, Nose - Owen Wilson, Mouth - Steve Odell, Regent Seven Seas & Oceania Cruises

Unscramble: acne, cane, careen, cavern, clan, clean, cleaner, crane, reaven, crenel, earn, elan, elevan, enclave, enlace, even, lance, lancer, lane, lean, leaner, learn, leaven, nacre, narc, nave, navel, near, nerve, neve, never, ranee, raven, RELEVANCE, renal, valence, vane, vena, venal, veneer, venereal, vernal

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HK Disneyland open

HONG Kong Disneyland park has reopened to visitors in line with the latest regulations and guidance from health authorities.

The resort has implemented and will maintain a number of health measures to keep the park safely open, including testing staff for COVID every 14 days, as well as offering QR codes for all guests in order to contact trace infections.

Visitors are also required to make a health declaration as part of the reservation process.

VA unveils lounge

VIRGIN Australia has lifted the lid on the top secret revamp of its Adelaide Airport Lounge, formally opening the 283-seat facility featuring a coffee bar, a cellar door and separate dining areas.

The carrier flagged the ADL lounge would have a "new look" earlier this month (TD 11 Feb), with CEO Jayne Hrdlicka stating VA would "make significant investment in our lounges over the next few years" in order to write a "new chapter" for guests.

ACCOMMODATION

WELCOME to Accommodation Updates, Travel Daily's Wed feature. If your property has undergone some recent changes you would like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description with an image to accomupdates@traveldaily.com.au.



Marking Marriott entry into the Caribbean coastal town of **Aloft Tulum** has debuted. with the company hoping to "usher in a new era of hospitality" to the city. Branded as "boho-chic" and managed by Highgate Hotels, Aloft Tulum opened last week near

the city's downtown district and its white-sand beaches. The four-floor property features 140 loft-like quest rooms & suites, as well as a variety of vibrant spaces for social activities.



Twenty14 Holdings has signed a deal with Accor to open the **Pullman Downtown** Dubai, located in the highly sought-after financial district of Business Bay. The hotel offers stunning views of the Dubai Water Canal, the Dubai Skyline, the Burj Khalifa,

the Dubai International Financial Centre, and the Dubai International Convention & Exhibition Centre. The hotel features 353 rooms and suites, as well as a ballroom, two meeting rooms, and a boardroom.



Sofitel Cebu City, which was signed into life earlier this month, will see Accor expand its presence in the Philippines, with the 195-room luxury hotel to debut in 2025. The hotel's entertainment amenities will include two restaurants, a lobby lounge, an

executive floor lounge, a rooftop bar and a range of ballrooms. Business travellers will also be able to benefit from a business centre, a fitness centre, a swimming pool, a spa, and a selection of meeting rooms.

Outback event just the ticket



THE Outback Queensland Tourism Association's major relaunch event held this week in Brisbane saw a number of travel agents revel in the atmosphere of renewed positivity for the impacted travel sector.

Among the throng of optimistic advisors and travel professionals catching up with key Qld suppliers was a team from TravelManagers (pictured), led by Business Partnerships Manager Karen Dowling.

"Thank you so much Outback Queensland Travel Trade, from TravelManagers Australia and to

IHG profits tumble

IHG Hotels & Resorts has reported a US\$153 million loss for the 2020 fiscal year, compared to a profit of US\$630 million in 2019.

The hospitality company also saw total group revenues fall from US\$4.6 billion in 2019 to US\$2.4 billion last year, with Chief **Executive Officer Keith Barr calling** 2020 "the most challenging year in our history".

IHG also recorded a 53.2% decline in global RevPAR for the fourth quarter and 52.5% for the 12-month period.

Among the company's better performers was Greater China, which only saw a year-on-year decline of 18.2% in RevPAR for the last three months of the year.

our fabulous outback queens, Janis McDonald and Michelle Nickelson, for all your support and an amazing Brisbane trade event," Dowling enthused.

"So great to meet all the wonderful suppliers in person.

"We will look forward to the clients of our Personal Travel Managers experiencing all you have to offer."

The outback event was designed to kickstart a major resurgence in bookings for the many rural tourism regions in the state, with a special drive guide also launched this week to celebrate the event (TD 23 Feb).

Dowling can be seen pictured third from the left sporting the trendy Akubra hat.

Airlines trace back

SOME American carriers have agreed to voluntarily opt into a program designed to speed up contract-tracing efforts.

Seven US airlines last week stated they would begin collecting information from international passengers to help health officials more quickly warn travellers if they have been exposed to coronavirus on a flight.

Alaska Airlines, American Airlines, Delta Air Lines, Hawaiian Airlines, jetBlue Airways, Southwest Airlines and United Airlines will all be involved.



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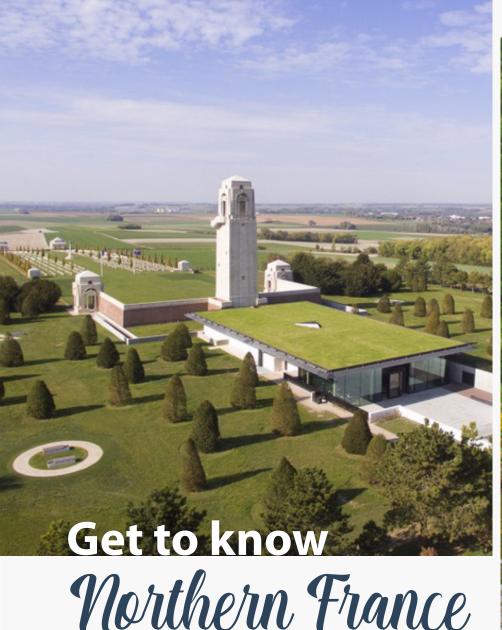
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Discover the hidden treasures of Northern France along with all there is to offer along **the Australian Remembrance Trail** and become a trained expert for all your clients.

Complete a module for a chance to win a superb wine pack from de Beaurepaire wines and a Sir John Monash Centre book.

Complete all 8 modules to go in the draw to win **the ultimate Western Front Explorer Tour** with Mat MacLachlan Battlefield Tours.

Register now at <u>www.northernfrancetraining.com</u>





