



When I first started Wendy Wu Tours, my dream, my goal, was to provide Australian's the opportunity to discover different lands - see firsthand those incredible sights that seem difficult to access or perhaps only seen in a photograph. To experience different cultures and be welcomed by the humbling and gracious locals immensely proud to have visitors to their countries. To create incredible memories by bringing travel to life.

Those same dreams remain with me today. In fact, stronger than ever. We are facing a challenge that we have never experienced before. It is in these times of adversity that I am truly proud to be a part of an industry that bands together when times are tough. We are resilient and we will rise above this.

Our team has been working hard to deliver the best results for our customers and for you, our valued agents and industry partners, and we will continue to do so. Our commitment is to support you as best we can. Most important of all however, is our commitment to you to keep the travel dream alive and we are working on some exciting new initiatives to do just that.

We may not be able to travel today, next week or in the next month, however when the time is right, we will be here. In the meantime, we will continue to remind everyone of the incredible places that are waiting to be discovered and welcome us back with open arms.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Wendy Wu'.

Wendy Wu  
Founder, Wendy Wu Tours

## Sichuan goes direct

**WORLD** Aviation Systems is no longer acting as the GSA for Chinese carrier Sichuan Airlines.

The airline this morning advised its agent partners that "in view of the prevailing circumstances impacting on the global aviation industry and the suspension of direct operations between mainland China and Australia, Sichuan Airlines has taken steps towards the direct handling of their passenger reservations/ticketing/sales affairs".

Effective immediately Sichuan Airlines phone enquiries should be directed to 03 9620 4387, with the airline also contactable on [australiaoffice3U@yahoo.com](mailto:australiaoffice3U@yahoo.com).

World Aviation Systems had represented the carrier in Australia and NZ for almost seven years (*TD* 02 Aug 2013).

## FCTG cuts retail footprint

**FLIGHT** Centre this morning announced further radical action in response to the coronavirus crisis, including the planned closure of more than half of its leisure retail operations across the globe (*TD* breaking news).

Just two weeks ago the company flagged the closure of 35% of its shops worldwide (*TD* 26 Mar) including 30% of its Australian footprint - equating to 250 local outlets and the demise of the Universal Traveller brand.

Today's announcement expanded this to 50% globally including over 40% in Australia, with the ASX release indicating 428 stores across Australia will shut.

The company aims to reduce the occupancy costs of its remaining network by renegotiating rental agreements with landlords, with discussions to date proving positive in terms of rent-free periods and more flexible trading hours.

Flight Centre said it's aiming to save a whopping \$1.9 billion in annualised costs, with its anticipated monthly operating cash costs reduced to \$65 million by the end of Jul this year.

## V&T changes hands

**SIGNATURE** Media has confirmed the acquisition of *Vacations & Travel* magazine from its previous owners, US-based Morris Media Network.

Australia's longest-running travel magazine was established in 1983, with Morris purchasing it from former owner Anthony Gallagher five and a half years ago (*TD* 08 Oct 2014).

Signature Media CEO Cathy Wagstaff said the purchase would see the business expand from its current focus on family and high-end travel markets.

During the COVID-19 crisis Signature will "rest" the print title for two issues, planning to publish the first issue of *Vacations & Travel* under its new ownership in summer 2020.

However, to implement the measures one-off costs worth \$210 million will be incurred - the majority presumably relating to staff redundancies.

The cost saving measures were announced alongside news of a \$700 million equity capital raising, which will strengthen the Flight Centre balance sheet and "position it for further growth".

The company's bankers have also agreed to extend \$200 million in additional credit.

In addition the Federal Government's JobKeeper initiative is still being assessed, with Flight Centre saying it believes it will receive "material support, both in terms of payments and an ability to retain more staff".

MD Graham Turner said the COVID-19 shutdown was "without question the most challenging period we have encountered in over 30 years in business.

"It is inevitable that some businesses across our industry will fail, given the significant loss of revenue that they will be experiencing now and for at least the next few months.

"With this funding in place and additional liquidity, we are in a much stronger position and are well placed to weather a prolonged downturn, which currently seems the likely scenario, and then take advantage of the significant opportunities that will arise once conditions normalise," he said.

## Today's issue of *TD*

*Travel Daily* today has five pages of news and photos, plus a **cover page** from Wendy Wu Tours and an industry opinion piece on **page four**.

## Vale Michael Hall



**THE** Australian tourism and hospitality industry is this week mourning Michael Hall (pictured), who died last week aged 80.

For more than 20 years Hall, the consummate "mein host" was the country's leading hotel identity, and is remembered as the long-time GM of the famous Sebel Town House as well as the first chairman of Select Hotels & Resorts International and of the Blue Mountains Hotel School.

As the first Managing Director of Mirvac Hotels he helped launch the careers of many of Australia's most successful hoteliers.

He will be remembered at a small family-only funeral on Wed.

## Wendy's dreams

**WENDY** Wu Tours is inspiring the industry to keep dreaming on the cover page of today's *TD*.

## TRAVEL ON 'PAWS'?



## HAKUNA MATATA

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What has been the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on land and air operators? Read more in the April issue of *travelBulletin*.

**CLICK to read**  
**travelBulletin**

## The Travel Industry Hub Pub



**FRIDAY** night travel industry drinks are not a thing of the past despite coronavirus, with The Travel Industry Hub continuing its upbeat encouragement through a virtual gathering last week.

The online beverage session will take place every week, aimed at anyone from the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors who wants to join in and have a yarn.

It's one of many initiatives led by The Travel Industry Hub, which is also running more Survive and Revive sessions this week - for info see [thetravelindustryhub.com](http://thetravelindustryhub.com).

## COVID-19 on Greg

**A TOTAL** of 81 people aboard *Greg Mortimer*, anchored off the coast of Uruguay, have tested positive for COVID-19, with 90 more tests still pending.

An Aurora Expeditions spokesperson told *TD* that 126 passengers and crew were tested, based on those exhibiting vague symptoms, with 45 negative tests.

Two crew members and one passenger considered higher-risk have been disembarked in Montevideo and transported to a non-ICU facility.

96 Australians are believed to be on board - more in *Cruise Weekly* tomorrow.

## Phuket hotels shut

**HOTELS** in Phuket, Thailand have been ordered to close under a new Emergency Decree in response to COVID-19.

No new guests can be accepted, and properties must cease operating once current visitors check out, the order mandates.

## Ensemble leaving ANZ

**ENSEMBLE** Travel Group has confirmed the shutdown of its business in Australia and New Zealand (*TD* breaking news).

The closure, effective from 01 May, comes just over five years after Ensemble launched in the region (*TD* 28 Oct 2014).

The Australasian wing of the business is run from Sydney, and employs three people, with the decision by the company's New

York head office coming as a blow to the local staff and partners.

"As our goal is always to operate a profitable model for our members, due to the current difficulties our industry is facing globally we regretfully have had to make the difficult business decision to discontinue our operations in the market," CEO David Harris said.

He thanked the "44 member agencies who had engaged with our Ensemble programs," which included CT Partners, TravelManagers, Phil Hoffmann Travel, and Travel Advocates NZ, which had joined up just before Christmas (*TD* 19 Dec 2019).

"While we are disappointed to be leaving ANZ, we want to convey our sincere appreciation to the team who worked passionately to build the business," Harris said.

Ensemble GM Australia/NZ Katy Muyt said the organisation was currently working with its local network members "to manage a smooth transition during this difficult time".

## Discount cars for essential workers

**EAST** Coast Car Rentals is offering hundreds of its vehicles across Australia to essential service staff at heavily discounted rates of \$50 for the week, to ensure safe commutes.

All vehicles, including sedans and SUVs, are on offer to doctors, nurses, paramedics, midwives and more, as well as supermarket or grocery store workers.

The company's CEO Daniel Kearney said some of the vehicles would typically cost up to seven times the special rate.

"With our fleet of hundreds of vehicles on the ground and available for use, it just makes perfect sense for us to offer these to our fantastic essential service workers," he said.

For more information on the offer call 1800 327 826.

## NSW police probe

**THE** cruise industry continues to be heavily in focus in mainstream media, with NSW Police yesterday announcing a formal investigation into the circumstances leading up to the Sydney docking of *Ruby Princess* which has been identified as the source of a significant number of local coronavirus infections.

Tabloid-style reports on TV last night heavily attacked Carnival Australia, NSW Health and the Federal Border Force - more in today's issue of *Cruise Weekly*.

## AFTA webinars

**THE** Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) is holding two webinars this week to help agents prepare for the challenges ahead.

The web conferences will be designed to empower members with the tools necessary to navigate the current challenges.

Tomorrow at 11am AEST is the **Mental Health: Dealing with uncertainty and loss** webinar, hosted by psychologist Fairlie Morgan and CareerBuilders General Manager Linny Hursthouse, which aims to equip travel agents with the tools and techniques to make sure they are well-placed moving forward.

On Wed at 1pm AEST is an **American Express** webinar, with guest speakers such as Kevin Irlam, Elaine Caldwell, Padmaja Sukumaren and GG Vasanth, educating attendees on American Express' updates to chargeback policies to support travel agents.

In addition, AFTA Chief Executive Jayson Westbury will provide his weekly update on the COVID-19 situation on Thu.

More on the webinars **HERE**.

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## Government charters QF, VA

**THE** Australian Government has announced the establishment of an “international aviation network” to help repatriate Aussies stranded overseas due to the coronavirus crisis.

Announced on Fri evening by Foreign Minister, Marise Payne, the continuing network of flights will be operated by Qantas and Virgin Australia to London, Auckland, Hong Kong and Los Angeles over the next four weeks.

Deputy Prime Minister Michael McCormack said these locations were chosen based on providing accessibility to the largest possible number of overseas Australians.

“This assistance builds on the more than \$1 billion of support we have already committed

to the sector, showing the Government’s determination to sustain Australia’s aviation industry,” McCormack said.

However Payne added that Australians who have are able to get home commercially should not hesitate to do so.

“Many Australians will be able to get to one of these four destinations...they can do so knowing there will be an Australian airline to get them home,” Payne said.

“We recognise that, in some cases, this will not be possible... we will continue to work closely with airlines and our overseas consular assistance network in these situations.

“Where there are no commercial options available, the Government will consider supporting, on a case-by-case basis, non-scheduled services to other overseas destinations.”

Payne confirmed the Government was continuing discussions with Qantas and Virgin in relation to flights to less accessible destinations, including South America and the Pacific.



## Times are tough

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## Cathay helps out

**FIVE** Cathay Pacific passenger aircraft operating in a cargo-only configuration have started arriving in Australia to deliver essential medical supplies.

The flights begun to touch down in Brisbane on Sat, and are delivering personal protective equipment for doctors, nurses, staff and volunteers fighting COVID-19 on the front line.

## CINZ recovery plan

**CONFERENCES** and Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) has launched a new event, BE Reconnected, which is scheduled for later this year to help “kick start business recovery” post COVID-19.

The one day conference will be hosted at Auckland’s Vodafone Events Centre on 01 Dec, and will replace this year’s multi-day MEETINGS exhibition which had been originally due to take place this month.

“BE Reconnected will be a vital step in helping to secure business leads and super-charging the sector’s recovery,” said CINZ CEO Lisa Hopkins - more in tomorrow’s issue of **Business Events News**.

## THL drops Togo tech JV

**NEW** Zealand-listed Tourism Holdings Limited (THL) has announced a “managed exit” from its Togo Group technology joint venture (**TD** 16 Feb 2018), in favour of a “digital strategy focusing on New Zealand and Australia” and more closely aligned with its core RV rentals business.

THL had partnered with US-based Thor Industries in the 50/50 JV, but will now exit in return for a US\$6 million payment from Thor, a fixed annual dividend of US\$600,000 for the next four years, and retaining the rights to technology including Togo Fleet, Mighway and Togo Insights in Australia and NZ.

THL will also acquire Togo’s shareholding in the Outdoria

caravan and camping online marketplace (**TD** 16 Oct 2018).

CEO Grant Webster said the relationship with Thor remains very strong, with the change allowing both companies to “shift their digital strategies to become more aligned with their respective businesses”.

Webster also confirmed a range of COVID-19 mitigation measures within THL, confirming the closure of Kiwi Experience and the Waitomo Group in NZ, along with a 60% reduction in labour expenses through staff cuts.

He said THL’s rental businesses in Australia, NZ and the USA are deemed an “essential service” and “globally we continue to serve customers that are in lockdown situations in our vehicles”.

## Window Seat

**A SPANISH** amateur skier whose holiday was cancelled has inspired snow enthusiasts worldwide with a video made during home isolation.

Philipp Klein Herrero decided to re-create a snow experience from his Barcelona apartment.

The resulting “Freeride at home” video, shot from a GoPro attached to his ceiling, has now been viewed almost 400,000 times, showing him clambering to the top of a mountain before undertaking some extremely radical moves on the way down.

Check it out the freestyling at [traveldaily.com.au/videos](http://traveldaily.com.au/videos).



**AND** none of us are likely to be going there any time soon, but a tourist attraction in Canada’s remote northern Yukon is keeping the dream alive by announcing the winners of its annual Hair Freezing Contest.

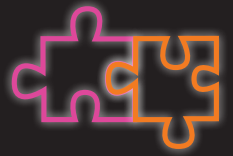
Takhini Hot Springs, about 20 minutes north of Whitehorse, received more than 200 entries this year, with the technique involving dipping your head under the warm water and then waiting for your hair to freeze.

It requires air temperature below -20°C, which apparently is not a problem in Yukon.

The winner of the People’s Choice Award - sponsored by Korean instant noodle maker Nongshim - is **pictured**.

See [haifreezingcontest.com](http://haifreezingcontest.com).





## Airline policies very unfair to passengers

### OPINION

Andy Allen is the owner of North Melbourne travel agency Travel Connections.

Got an opinion to share? Let us know at [feedback@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:feedback@traveldaily.com.au).



I HAVE a real problem with the credits being offered by most airlines in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

Most airline policies are very unfair to passengers and I am sure I'm not alone with many disgruntled clients expressing displeasure over the conditions being forced on them.

It beggars belief that most leading airlines are offering clients very poor terms when offering credits due to the changed circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Firstly, I would comment that I am not in disagreement over refusing refunds without the relevant penalties, but with the offering of a credit, it is simply unfair to cajole clients into rebooking their travel for completion by early 2021 to avoid additional reissue fees!

A huge volume of clients from Australia plan their travel for the period Apr to Oct to take in Northern Hemisphere spring/summer seasons; they simply don't wish to travel in the winter months!

What's happening globally is most certainly unprecedented and as an industry we are in uncharted waters, but it has now been going on long enough to know that a more sensible solution must be established amongst the airlines.

There is no doubt that this situation is going to affect most of 2020; I'd be surprised if international travel as we know it gets going much before August at the earliest.

COVID-19 is simply not going

to be resolved as early as most would like. There will be an end point to all this and as an industry, we all need to play our part to ensure the confidence and trust of the travelling public.

To this end, all the major airlines need to agree a standard – something along lines of all tickets to be used and travel completed by end 2022.

This is fair and equitable to

“  
It is simply unfair to cajole clients into rebooking their travel for completion by early 2021 to avoid additional reissue fees... let's get rid of the convoluted conditions and make life simple!”

paying customers and allows airlines to sit on the funds already in their coffers and offer something that's reasonably attractive.

The other reason for longer validity of redemption and travel is that many clients have lost their jobs and with mortgage stress and a whole lot of other issues, they simply won't be able to afford to travel in the next few months or in 2021.

At this point I'd say well done Emirates; by far the best and most sensible offering of all – 760

days to use the credit and then for travel post this timeframe within range; example, a ticket issued on 15 Sep 19 means reissue by 13 Oct 21 with travel in 2022 (within range meaning return early Sep 22).

I have already noticed a couple of negative articles on social media pertaining to airline credits and not refunding; as an industry we really don't need the negative press to add to the financial stress.

In all honesty airlines will need the agency distribution channel to have any chance of handling all the rebooking etc, as indeed travel agents need the airlines to be sensible with the rebooking headache. Let's get rid of the convoluted conditions and make life simple!

I hope the senior management at the major leading airlines can somehow communicate and adopt a standard. As an industry, let's get on the front foot and show customers that we really care with sensible solutions.

It is now we need to lock in customer loyalty and trust.

## Accor cuts dividend

ACCOR has withdrawn previous plans to pay out €280 million in dividends from last year, but will instead allocate 25% of the proposed payment to a COVID-19 support fund for staff.

The "ALL Heartist Fund" will have €70 million available to pay for employee coronavirus-related hospital expenses as well as help look after furloughed employees suffering great financial distress, on a case-by-case basis.

"This initiative reflects the ambition of the Group and its shareholders to provide a meaningful and significant contribution to global solidarity initiatives to address the current health crisis, while planning for future needs," Accor said.

## OZ SYD A350s

ASIANA Airlines is planning to deploy a new Airbus A350-900XWB aircraft on its Seoul-Sydney route from later this year.

GDS screens indicate the A350 operating from 01 Jul-11 Oct in place of a Boeing 777-200ER, expanding to a larger Airbus A380 effective from 12 Oct this year.



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Travel Daily

## Whose flag is this?



**THE** rising sun on a flag is most commonly associated with Japan's well-known standard, but it doesn't look like this.

So which country, once part of the Soviet Union would wave this flag proudly?  
Check tomorrow for the answer.

## Pub quiz

1. What is the capital of Fiji?
2. Which of Monaco's four quarters is best known for its casinos?
3. What country's flag was reversed to become the flag of the Red Cross?
4. What is Rio de Janeiro's most popular beach?
5. What sea does the Danube empty into?
6. Where is the busiest cruise port in the United States located?
7. Which city is home to Australia's oldest casino?
8. What did Chicago see America's first example of in 1884?
9. When did construction finish on the Sydney Tower?
10. Qantas is actually an acronym. What does it stand for?
11. What country does this collection of pictures spell out?



### ANSWERS 03 APR

Pub quiz: 1 Tenerife, 2 Luxembourg, 3 1.43 million, 4 St Basil's, 5 The Mojave, 6 Tanzania, 7 Reykjavik, Iceland, 8 Wellington, NZ, 9 Ian Fleming, 10 Springbok, 11 Uluru (ewe + LA + roo)

Where in the world: Reno, Nevada

Unscramble: dote, doth, ergot, GODMOTHER, goth, grot, hoot, hooted, hooter, method, metro, moot, mooted, mooter, mote, moth, mother, motor, motored, other, root, rooted, rote, term, them, therm, throe, toes, tome, tore, trod

## Meatball & Mince Monday



**WE'VE** all heard of Swedish meatballs, some of us may even have made them or had them for lunch at Ikea. I have been known to pop into Ikea and buy a few bags of frozen meatballs for parties or that easy Sunday night dinner.

Well the Viking Cruises team has given us their version of this Nordic favourite – Norwegian-style meatballs. Easy to make and delicious.

Give them a try!

Next week we head to Asia – I've got some great recipes still to come thanks to you, our faithful readers.

Keep sending them in to [meatballs@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:meatballs@traveldaily.com.au)

xx Jenny

Jenny Piper  
Owner,  
Business  
Publishing  
Group



### Norwegian-style Meatballs

Prep 6 min | Cook 25 min | Serves 6

#### INGREDIENTS

- 500g lean beef mince
- 200g pork mince
- 1 large egg
- ¾ cup panko breadcrumbs
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp pepper
- ¼ tsp nutmeg
- ¼ tsp ginger
- ½ tsp allspice
- ½ cup milk
- 1 cup brown onion, minced
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- 6 tbsp butter, divided
- ¼ cup plain flour
- 4 cups low sodium chicken stock
- ¼ cup red wine

#### METHOD

Combine beef, pork and egg in a large bowl; make a well in the centre and add breadcrumbs, salt, pepper, ginger, allspice and milk; let stand 2 minutes. Add onion and parsley and mix together with your hands until completely incorporated; form into 2cm balls.

Place 2 tbsp butter in a large skillet over medium high, and working in batches, brown meatballs on all sides until cooked through, about 8 minutes per batch.

Transfer to a serving bowl; cover loosely to keep warm.

Reduce heat to medium, place remaining butter in skillet, add flour and stir to form a thick paste. Cook, stirring constantly, 2 minutes; then whisk in stock and wine. Bring to a boil, reduce heat; simmer until thickened, about 7 minutes. Pour over meatballs, tossing to coat. Serve immediately.

## BROCHURES

WELCOME to Brochures of the Week, *Travel Daily's* Monday feature. If your firm is releasing a new brochure you'd like to make the industry aware of, send a brief description summarising its features and itineraries, including a PDF of the front cover, and contact details to [brochures@traveldaily.com.au](mailto:brochures@traveldaily.com.au).



**Viva Holidays - Vietnam, Laos & Cambodia**  
Viva Holidays has expanded its programs in Indochina for 2020-21 with a range of new packages including two- and three-night experiences of Saigon, Hoi An & Beyond, Historic Hue, Hanoi, Siem Reap Highlights and Phnom Penh. New accommodation includes the Caravelle Hotel in Saigon, while Viva has also added new Halong Bay cruises with Bhaya and The Au Co. For more info see [vivaholidays.com.au](http://vivaholidays.com.au).

## IATA cancels AGM

THE International Air Transport Association's (IATA) upcoming 76th Annual General Meeting and World Air Transport Summit has joined the long list of events cancelled due to COVID-19.

The IATA gathering had been scheduled to take place 22-23 Jun in Amsterdam, with IATA now anticipating it will take place in the late third or early fourth quarter of 2020 "when it is both safe and practicable".

## Dream, Star policy

GENTING Cruise Lines has extended its "Cruise As You Wish" assurance policy for Dream Cruises and Star Cruises sailings, valid for departures up to 30 Oct.

All new and existing bookings will have the flexibility to cancel up to 48 hours prior to sailing and receive 100% future cruise credit, redeemable on any Dream or Star voyage embarking up to 31 Mar 2021 - [dreamcruiseline.com](http://dreamcruiseline.com).

## Donate EY miles

ETIHAD Airways has launched a new campaign encouraging members of its frequent flyer program to donate their Etihad Guest Miles to support prevention and response efforts for COVID-19 in refugee camps.

The initiative is being conducted with the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Emirates Red Crescent in the Middle East, with the aim of supporting basic infection control and adequate containment measures for refugees and other forcibly displaced people.

"Coronavirus does not discriminate, and hits the most vulnerable the hardest," said Etihad Aviation Group Chief Commercial Officer, Robin Kamark.

Donated miles will be used to buy essential healthcare equipment including ventilators, gloves, masks and soap.

Miles can be donated via [rewards.etihadguest.com](http://rewards.etihadguest.com).

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## Giving COVID-19 the finger!



MELANIE Grigoratis from Bridge the World Travel & Cruise Centre in Sorrento, WA, sent in this photo proving that travel agents can still smile in the current coronavirus crisis.

She's pictured with David Van der Meer from Helloworld South Perth - aka Sebastian's Travel Gossip - sharing a bottle of wine "and surrendering to the situation in the only way we know how".

Grigoratis also gave a shout out



to a delightful client who showed they truly do "give a crap" about the industry (inset) by providing some precious toilet paper.

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