

travelBulletin

MAY 2022

With more major players in Australian aviation than ever before, the competition to fill seats is heating up.

WILL THEY GET BUMS ON SEATS?

PLUS SYDNEY'S
NEWEST
FLOATING VENUE



Welcome back to the Kimberley!

After more than two years, our small luxury expedition ships *Le Soléal* and *Le Lapérouse* are finally back in Australia! With departures filling fast, now is the time to book your clients' 2022 Kimberley expedition. And, we have two new departures available this year on 28 May and 7 June. They won't last!

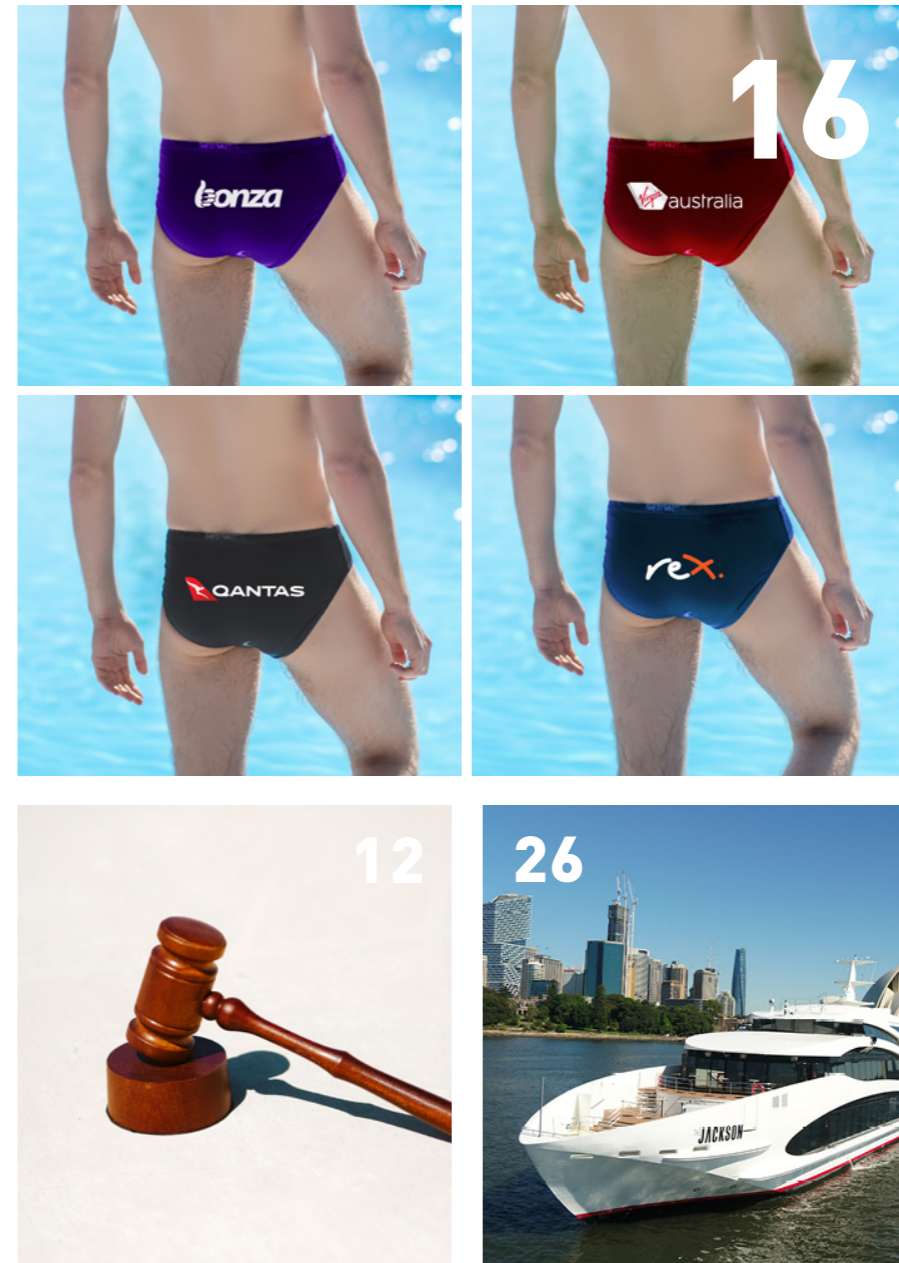
DISCOVER



AUSTRALIA'S ICONIC KIMBERLEY
Broome to Darwin / Darwin to Broome*
 10 nights aboard *Le Lapérouse* & *Le Soléal*

April to September 2022
Two new departures on 28 May & 7 June!
 April to October 2023 also available

From \$10,060 per person*



COVER STORY

16 Will they get bums on seats?
 With Rex now operating jet services on the "golden triangle" and Bonza entering the market later in 2022, the Australian aviation sector will have more major players than ever before. But can the Aussie market sustain four carriers, and when push comes to shove, who will succeed in filling seats? Adam Bishop investigates.

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This month's contributors

Dean Long, Brett Jardine, Joel Katz, Tim Hoopmann

Bottom right: *The Jackson* in Sydney Harbour ©Sealink



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From the publisher

Bruce Piper



I'M CURRENTLY in Europe, and having been fortunate enough to take my first long-haul flight in more than two years I can unequivocally say that travel is well and truly back.

I've flown through Dubai, London and Barcelona so far, and given the level of activity, the general consensus must be "pandemic? what pandemic?"

Airports are very busy, hotels are full, restaurants and visitor attractions appear to be packed out and given the amount of traffic on the roads there is a lot of economic activity.

Certainly a few things have changed. Wearing a mask all the way from Sydney to London (except when eating and drinking) is a minor inconvenience, and having a current vaccination certificate at your fingertips is now as important as a passport, but by and large there seems to be little concern anywhere over here about the pandemic.

It's vital to be aware of the ever-shifting entry requirements of each destination; curiously entering Spain requires a special procedure for Australians because, unlike those from perennially locked down New Zealand, our

vaccination certificates are not recognised there. But it's all a matter of completing a simple online form, and having to be aware of such quirks certainly provides new opportunities for savvy travel agents to show their value to their clients.

I've been cruising - so far on *Celebrity Beyond* and *Azamara Onward*, while in the upcoming days will also experience the leviathan new *Wonder of the Seas* from Royal Caribbean - three very different products which by the way absolutely reinforce the adage that "there is a cruise for everyone".

Currently cruising is the only sector that seems to be concerned about COVID in any way at all, with all three cruise lines enforcing various protocols regarding testing - requiring a negative RAT or PCR test within two days of boarding.

It all seems so unnecessary given that the rest of the world seems to have moved on and is every day more and more "living with COVID", but reinforces the fact that the beaten and battered but perennially resilient cruising sector continues to ensure it's actually a much safer way to holiday than anything else.

quarter of \$419 million, with that figure including TTV related to the company's corporate businesses which were sold to Corporate Travel Management on 31 March.

Based on booking levels across the first quarter of 2022 "we expect a rapid improvement in revenues across the coming months," the company predicted.

Project Sunrise is a go

ALAN Joyce's cherished ambition to launch non-stop flights between Sydney and London looks likely to come to fruition, with the airline confirming an order for ultra long-range Airbus A350-1000s to operate the route.

With the ability to also fly non-stop to New York from both Sydney and Melbourne, the aircraft are likely to be a game-changer, with the decision likely driven by strong demand and yields on QF's direct flights to the UK via Perth and Darwin.

The game-changing order has come alongside a huge plan for overall fleet renewal, with Airbus A320s and A220s to become the backbone of its domestic fleet over the next two decades.

Fox in the henhouse

THE appointment of the highly respected Debra Fox to lead Abercrombie & Kent's outbound touring business in Australia is certain to have ruffled feathers among some of the company's competitors. Fox, who was made redundant from her longstanding 2IC role at APT Travel Group about 18

“
 Deb Fox brings with her an enviable record of leadership, business growth and organisational success. I look forward to working closely with her to ensure the continued growth of A&K Australia”.

”
 Kerry Golds, Abercrombie & Kent Group Managing Director for UK and Australia.

TIME FOR SOME SMILING FACES



THE first face-to-face gathering for the NSW chapter of the Travel Industry Mentor Experience (TIME) gave attendees plenty of reasons to smile. As well as welcoming a new intake of mentees, graduates from Programs 41, 42 and 43 were congratulated, while everyone revelled in the ability to gather in person once again after such a long time.

The event also included a presentation from AFTA CEO Dean Long, with TIME founder Penny Spencer saying "it was a great evening and without doubt one of the best we've had especially following a very difficult period for the industry". Pictured enjoying the conviviality are Angela Middleton, Norwegian Cruise Line; Mari Rasanen, 50 Degrees North; Trish Shepherd, Black Sheep Consulting; Jen Pagett, Virtuoso; and Isabel Lim, Globus Family of Brands.

months ago, is highly experienced and with the strong platform afforded by A&K's global DMC operations is likely to be able to significantly boost the company's market share at the expense of other players.

Kerry Golds, A&K Group MD for UK and Australia, said she was delighted to welcome Fox to the team. "Deb brings with her an enviable record of leadership, business growth and organisational success. I look forward to

working closely with her to ensure the continued growth of A&K Australia".

Pothole for THL Apollo acquisition

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has outlined a series of "preliminary competition concerns" about the proposed merger between listed motorhome rental operators THL and Apollo, saying the acquisition

Continues over page

IN BRIEF

Helloworld counts the cost

HELLOWORLD Travel Limited has pointed to strong demand and increases in sales following the reopening of borders and the easing of restrictions, but has nevertheless reported a 21% decline in the number of its retail outlets in Australia across the branded, associate and affiliate networks - from 1,323 in Mar 2020 to 1,039 in March this year.

That was partly offset by an uplift in home-based businesses, which grew by 25% to 714. Across the Tasman the total size of the Helloworld network has declined by about 30%, with bricks and mortar outlets halving from 210 to just 104 over the last two years, while NZ home-based agency numbers also declined by 26% to 213.

The company recorded a 60% increase in Total Transaction Value for the March 2022

Continues from previous page

will remove THL's closest and largest competitor for motorised RV rentals in Australia. Both companies are significantly bigger than any other operators, with industry responses sought by the ACCC confirming that other RV rental suppliers lack the scale to replace the competition lost through the deal.

"As a result of market feedback so far, we are concerned that consumers may end up paying more to rent RVs, or receive lower quality and service, as a result of the proposed acquisition," said ACCC Commissioner, Stephen Ridgeway. Similar misgivings were expressed by the NZ Commerce Commission, with both regulators now seeking further submissions from the companies and other interested parties.

Final decisions on the merger are expected to be made by 30 June.

eRoam Sabre pact

AUSTRALIAN travel technology innovator eRoam is likely to gain huge global exposure through a new partnership with Sabre. eRoam has become a so-called Gold-Level Developer Partner as part of the Sabre ecosystem, which allows Sabre-connected travel agencies, tour operators and DMCs to find solutions which support their specific business needs.

"Through the partnership, eRoam is broadening Sabre's partner ecosystem by providing an AI-enabled leisure travel platform to Sabre's network," the companies said. eRoam's platform enables agencies to create their own tailor-made packages quickly and efficiently, at the same time identifying additional tour and activity add-ons. Martin Cowley, eRoam Chairman, said the next-generation solution would enable

“As a result of market feedback so far, we are concerned that consumers may end up paying more to rent RVs, or receive lower quality and service, as a result of the proposed acquisition [of Apollo by THL]”

Stephen Ridgeway, Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Commissioner.

Sabre-connected agencies to "create a compelling traveller experience helping to position them for growth".

Rex, Delta cuddle up

DELTA Air Lines has confirmed plans to link with Regional Express, with the carriers signing a Letter of Intent indicating they expect to begin providing reciprocal interline ticketing and baggage services during the third quarter of 2022.

The move will provide a new Australian partner for DL, which has been displaced by United Airlines in a new agreement Virgin Australia. The airlines said Rex passengers would be able to connect seamlessly on Delta's daily non-stop flights between Sydney and Los Angeles, and then onwards to almost 50 destinations across the US.

Delta also plans to lift its trans-Pacific frequencies to 10 weekly from 18 December.

DATA ROOM

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs, February 2022

City pair	Passengers YE Feb 21 (000)	Passengers YE Feb 22 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	980.6	2,584.5	163.3
Brisbane-Sydney	741.2	1,250.3	68.7
Brisbane-Cairns	671.8	1,001.7	49.1
Gold Coast-Melbourne	355.9	952.4	167.6
Gold Coast-Sydney	314.0	947.0	201.6
Brisbane-Melbourne	523.5	945.6	80.6
Adelaide-Melbourne	322.2	724.6	124.9
Brisbane-Townsville	457.5	681.6	49.0
Adelaide-Sydney	349.6	603.5	72.6
Brisbane-Mackay	347.1	534.7	54.0
ALL CITY PAIRS	13,256.9	25,234.9	90.4

Source: BITRE

VISITOR ARRIVALS

Top 10 destinations, February 2022

Country of residence	Feb 2019	Feb 2021	Feb 2022	change - original Jan 22/ Feb 22
UK	85,330	630	13,440	+4,120
India	32,420	320	9,380	+2,990
USA	84,210	670	6,590	+1,830
Singapore	32,180	210	5,190	+2,150
China	206,280	250	5,050	+2,450
New Zealand	92,290	1,570	4,650	+2,470
Canada	24,100	90	2,590	+1,020
Germany	26,230	110	2,040	+790
France	14,280	120	1,810	+330
Korea, South	30,930	70	1,620	+260
All visitors arrivals	927,240	6,260	80,760	+26,880

Source: ABS

RESIDENT RETURNS

Top 10 destinations, February 2022

Country of stay	Feb 2019	Feb 2021	Feb 2022	change - original Jan 22/ Feb 22
Fiji	57,030	670	20,400	+2,690
USA	57,470	490	12,760	-7,250
India	23,210	600	8,150	-7,940
UK	6,350	230	7,470	+2,230
Singapore	14,230	70	7,350	-13,040
Thailand	27,100	290	5,160	-930
Pakistan	35,870	110	3,900	-2,180
Canada	5,110	160	3,320	-700
Unit Arab Emir	12,960	120	3,150	-1,460
Sri Lanka	3,230	60	3,100	+480
All resident returns	746,080	8,390	116,860	-34,620

Source: ABS

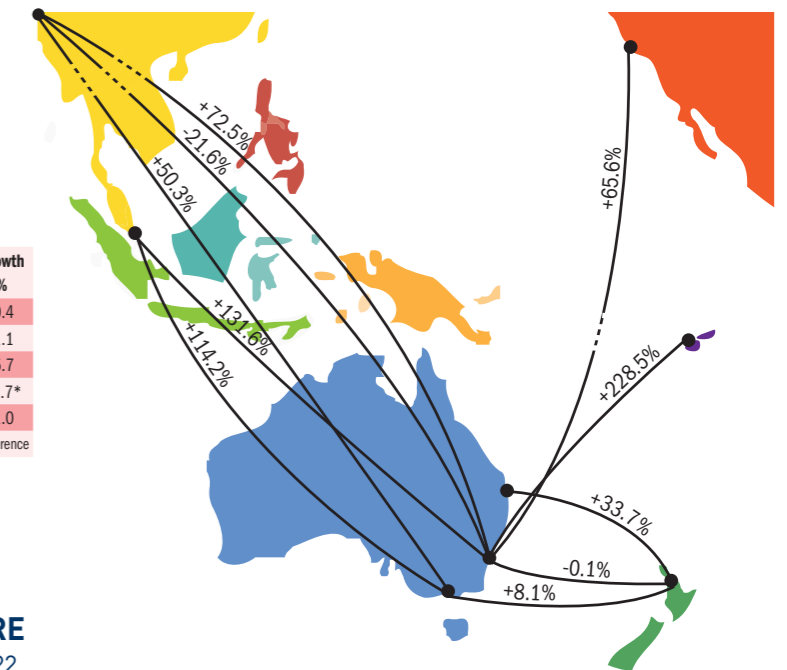
DOMESTIC AIR MARKET

February 2022

	Feb 21	Feb 22	Growth %	Year end Feb 21	Year end Feb 22	Growth %
Total pax carried	1.62m	2.44m	+49.9	13.26m	25.23m	+90.4
Revenue pax km (RPK)	1.72bn	2.50bn	+45.3	15.07bn	28.80bn	+91.1
Available seat kms (ASK)	2.92bn	3.65bn	+25.0	25.27bn	46.92bn	+85.7
Load factor (%)	58.9	68.4	+9.5*	59.7	61.4	+1.7*
Aircraft trips (000)	26.2	32.3	+23.3	236.1	380.0	+61.0

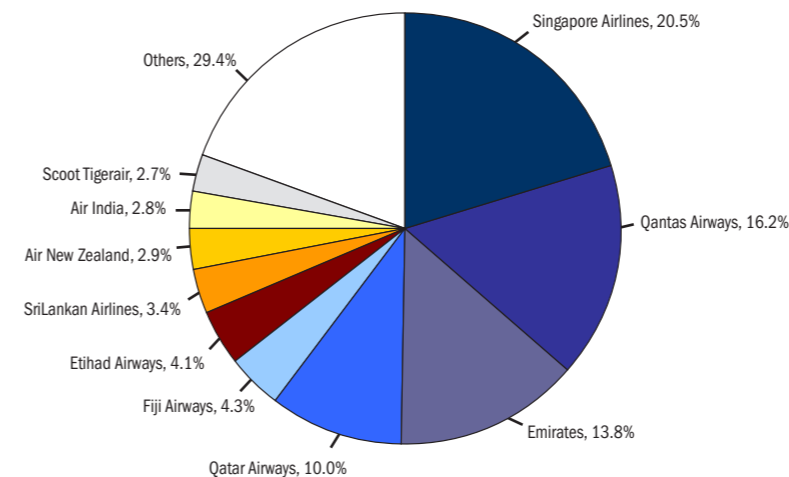
*Percentage points difference

Source: BITRE



INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

Share of passengers carried – February 2022



Source: BITRE

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs, year end February 2022

City pair	Passengers YE Feb 21	Passengers YE Feb 22	% of total 22/21	% change 22/21
Singapore-Sydney	81,081	187,768	8.1%	131.6%
Singapore-Melbourne	73,589	157,652	6.8%	114.2%
Auckland-Sydney	119,463	119,382	5.2%	-0.1%
Dubai-Sydney	64,720	111,620	4.8%	72.5%
Los Angeles-Sydney	64,401	106,675	4.6%	65.6%
Auckland-Brisbane	71,938	96,203	4.2%	33.7%
Auckland-Melbourne	86,992	94,036	4.1%	8.1%
Dubai-Melbourne	52,957	79,604	3.4%	50.3%
Doha-Sydney	101,047	79,214	3.4%	-21.6%
Nadi-Sydney	22,695	74,563	3.2%	228.5%
Top 10 City Pairs	738,883	1,106,717	47.8%	49.8%
Other City Pairs	1,722,926	1,208,501	52.2%	-29.9%
ALL CITY PAIRS	2,461,809	2,315,218	100%	-6.0%

Source: BITRE

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 01 Apr Hurtigruten 2030 target
- 01 Apr British Airways cuts comm
- 04 Apr Waldorf Astoria to Sydney
- 05 Apr VA seeks 33% market share
- 07 Apr TA Virtuoso double-down
- 07 Apr Qantas wait time apology
- 08 Apr QF adds Bengaluru, Seoul
- 08 Apr VA invitation-only Beyond
- 11 Apr AFTA plays both sides
- 11 Apr QF adds new NDC partner

- 12 Apr India top Feb destination
- 13 Apr HOT OTA crosses Tasman
- 14 Apr EK's Dubai Experience
- 14 Apr Thai Airways commission backflip
- 15 Apr "Major failure" judge rules
- 20 Apr QF promises refund relief?
- 20 Apr QF takes four more E190s
- 21 Apr Qatar's biggest push yet
- 22 Apr Trivago hit with \$45m fine
- 26 Apr Wade to chair Travalyst



AFTA VIEW

Dean Long, Chief Executive Officer,
Australian Federation of Travel Agents

AS WE enter the recovery phase of the pandemic, we continue to face significant challenges that rival those of the last two years but in significantly different ways. As we seek to recapitalise our businesses and rehire and rebuild our teams, the reality that we have lost many to our sector hits home. Most businesses are now creating a clear plan to adjust to the different income structures and identifying which products and services they are going to offer in the coming year.

AFTA is doing the same. After over 24 months of industry support and dedicated daily advocacy which has supported the over 5,000 travel businesses across all three rounds, we are also resetting what we do and how we do it. Our success has come not only from this daily effort but also from our ongoing significant financial investment in policy, political donations and one on one business mentoring.

AFTA waived all fees for members for the first 12 months. The AFTA Board rightly decided that maintaining support for members through advocacy, engagement and mentoring was critical to get as many members as possible through the challenges of COVID.

But that does come with ramifications and I can confirm that AFTA will operate at a loss for FY2022. Hardly surprising but, as all of the services of AFTA and ATAS are restored and we seek new ways to deliver membership value through our ATAS and Constitutional reviews, we are sure to see membership growth and a strengthened financial position.

Our new fee structure, which will be fairer and more transparent, will have most members paying similar or less than in 2019. Increases will however occur for those businesses with a TTV over \$100m. As we rebuild AFTA and our Sector we must create a sustainable framework that supports all agencies large and small which is sustainable. AFTA's commitment to a diverse travel sector delivering for our employees, businesses and clients remains a core principle that drives all we do.

BUSINESS FLYER LIFTS OFF



VIRGIN Australia Chief Executive Officer Jayne Hrdlicka last month launched the Virgin Australia Business Flyer rewards program, a loyalty plan providing Velocity Points for both businesses and individuals simultaneously.

After joining for free, Business Flyer members will be able to double-dip on points wherever they fly, with Virgin committing to "significantly grow" its market share to 33% domestically among small and medium-sized enterprises.

Business Flyer members will be able to immediately access additional discounts up to 6% off base published fares, while two Velocity Pilot Gold memberships will be gifted to Business Flyer members who join and spend at least \$2,000 on flights in the first three months of participation.

Velocity Points earned by a business can also be transferred to any personal Velocity account to use for flights, upgrades, hotels, car hire, and through partners.

To help achieve market share goals, Virgin announced a return of service frequencies on key business routes to pre-pandemic levels, including the Sydney-Melbourne-Brisbane triangle.

Virgin also reopened its invitation-only premium lounges (formerly known as The Club) late last month.



AUSSIE
SPECIALIST
PROGRAM

EXPLORE INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCES

You're invited!

To celebrate our new Aussie Specialist Indigenous Australia training course, please join us for an immersive event.

When: Friday 3 June, 9.30am - 12pm

Where: Spirits of the Red Sand,
205 Main Street, Beenleigh, QLD, 4207

Following a short presentation, experience the Spirits of the Red Sand's welcome ceremony and cultural activities, plus morning tea. Some exciting prizes are also available to win.

Places are limited. Further dates and locations around Australia will follow.

REGISTER HERE

QANTAS' NEW ROUTES

QANTAS Group is expanding its Sydney gateway, with new direct flights to India and South Korea.

A new express Qantas Airways route between Sydney and Bengaluru will launch from 14 September, as part of a codeshare agreement with India's largest domestic carrier IndiGo.

The deal will provide Australians direct connections to 50 Indian cities, with relations between the two countries expected to strengthen following the recent announcement of a free trade agreement.

Using its widebody Airbus A330 aircraft, the flights will cut almost three hours off the current fastest travel time from Sydney to Bengaluru.

Qantas is also launching new direct flights between Sydney and Seoul, along with its sister airline Jetstar Airways.

The low-cost carrier will become the only airline of its kind to fly directly to South Korea from Sydney, when its Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner flights begin operating from 2 November, three times per week.

Qantas will then join Jetstar flying between Sydney and Seoul from 10 December with its A330 aircraft, marking the airline's first scheduled service to Seoul since January 2008.



CATO VIEW

Brett Jardine, Managing Director,
Council of Australian Tour Operators

PATIENCE IS A NECESSITY WITH FUTURE TRAVEL CREDITS

AS THE world of travel and tourism reopens, challenges continue to present themselves as we begin to rebuild.

The 'new normal' is far from here, and there are a new wave of obstacles for travellers to navigate.

With a seemingly never-ending list of travel credits to be redeemed, many travellers are becoming frustrated at being unable to use their credits due to lack of availability, confusion around T&Cs and difficulty being able to redeem them, due to reduced staff on the other end.

The rest of the world reopened long before Australia did, and has left Australian travellers with itchy feet, having to wait just that bit longer.

The US market for example, has snapped up a lot of 2022 and 2023 capacity whilst Aussie travellers scramble to find a seat on a tour or cabin on a cruise.

The simple message we all need to share with those holding future travel credits, is to plan ahead and book early. Have several options up your sleeve if plan a, b or even c is not possible.

Some operators will be increasingly flexible with their travel credit terms whilst others may be forced to stand firm, due to contracts with end suppliers.

Labour shortages and experience has left our industry dry. It is resulting in lengthy phone wait times, 'green' service levels and until international workers return to our shores and cash reserves are replenished, it will take time to re-build.

A phrase used so repetitively at the start of COVID, 'we are all in this together' was a mutual understanding across the wider industry of the staffing and service challenges faced – a message that we all need to adopt and share with budding travellers so that people on both sides of the fence understand the complexity of travel credits and frustrations felt by consumers.



EXPEDIA TAAAP EXCLUSIVE



Be the Top Expedia TAAAP Bookers for **The Londoner** in April and in May for the chance to win **THREE complimentary nights accommodation at the World's First super boutique hotel.**

Booking Dates: 1st April - 31st May 2022

Travel Dates: 1st April - 31st December 2022

Prize: 3 nights accommodation at The Londoner for 2 people in a King room (VAT included) for the top booking agent in April and the top booking agent in May (two prize winners)

Terms & Conditions: Prize consists of three (3) nights accommodation for two (2) people in a King room (VAT included) at The Londoner hotel in Soho. Airfares not included. Prize valid for 12 months from date of issue. Black Out dates will apply. Winners will be the top selling agents of Room Nights booked through Expedia TAAAP at The Londoner in April and in May. One winner each month of the promotion. If the top selling agent is the same for both April and May, the next top selling agent will be selected so that each month of the promotion has a different prize winner. Bookings must be made between 1st April to 31st May 2022. Stay dates up until the 31st December 2022. Expedia recommends booking a package with no cancellation fees in case plans change. Always check government advisories before booking and travelling.

ENJOY TODAY
www.expedia.com.au/taap



BOOK THROWN AT BOOKER

ALTHOUGH it wasn't the \$90 million fine the ACCC was asking for, last month the Federal Court handed down the hefty penalty of \$44.7 million to the Expedia-owned Trivago for making misleading representations to Aussies about hotel room rates.

The decision draws to a close legal proceedings against the company that have bubbled along for years, with

Trivago admitting that between December 2016 and September 2019 it earned close to \$60 million in fraudulent revenue, a result of misrepresenting offers that earned the company the biggest margins as being the cheapest hotel rooms on the market.

Trivago also misled consumers by using strike-through prices which gave consumers the false impression that its rates represented a saving when in fact they often compared a standard room with a luxury room at the same hotel.

"Trivago's conduct took advantage of consumers' desire to find the best deal, and the Court's decision to order such a significant penalty reflects the seriousness of Trivago's conduct," the ACCC observed after the decision was handed down.

"One of the ACCC's key priorities is to hold online businesses accountable for their representations to consumers and to ensure consumers are fully aware of the way these supposedly

“
Trivago's conduct took advantage of consumers' desire to find the best deal, and the Court's decision to order such a significant penalty reflects the seriousness of Trivago's conduct
”

ACCC

free services actually work and what influences the prices they display."

The case, which was brought forward by the consumer watchdog, is part of a wider offensive by the ACCC to clamp down on digital platforms taking advantage of consumers, with Uber the latest company to face court for allegedly misleading travellers about fare rates and cancellation fees.



An OTA HOT off the press

A NEW online travel agency from across the ditch launched in Australia last month, with House of Travel (HOT) introducing its Mix & Match brand to the local market.

Chasing what it believes to be a "significant pent-up demand", Mix & Match's CEO Tim Paulson said his company's combination of a wide product range and excellent customer service will strike a successful chord in Australia.

"We'll be offering consumers the freedom to search and book an extensive range of great priced

flights, hotels and other products launching soon, all with the reassurance of a professional call centre when in-person support is needed," he said.

In addition to the website, Mix & Match also offers consumers smartphone apps, exclusive deals, as well as buy now pay later options.

HOT is certainly no stranger to the Aussie market, having already launched its TravelManagers home-based travel agency and package specialist Hoot Holidays successfully Down Under.

CUTTING CARBON KEY TO QF'S FUTURE



QANTAS last month laid out an accelerated plan to reduce its carbon footprint, including a new interim target to reduce its overall emissions by 25% over the next seven years. The ambitious milestone is part of a new Qantas Group Climate Action Plan, with CEO Alan Joyce saying that with Australia's reliance on aviation "having a clear plan to decarbonise Qantas and Jetstar so we can keep delivering these services in the decades ahead is absolutely key to our future".

The overall strategy envisions an increasing use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) within the group's fuel mix, with a 10% target for 2030 rising to about 60% by 2050. Waste reduction strategies will see zero single-use plastics within the group's operations by 2027, and zero general waste to landfill by 2030.

The carrier aims to increase fuel efficiency by 1.5% each year through to 2030, achieved through fleet renewal and more efficient flight planning. Qantas will also continue research into new technologies such as hydrogen and battery power, while carbon offsets, particularly through

investment into key Australian projects, will also be key to achieving the goals.

"We've had a zero net emissions goal for several years, so [the new] interim targets are about accelerating our progress and cutting emissions as quickly as technology allows," Joyce said. "Hydrogen or electric powered aircraft are several decades away, particularly for the length of most flights, so our plan is focused on the technology that is within reach today," he added.

The Qantas Group has committed an initial \$50 million towards the establishment of an Australia-based SAF industry, and is calling on all levels of government to also lend support so that biofuel supply can be from local production. The company is already using SAF sourced from overseas, including on flights from London and California.

The release of the Qantas Climate Action Plan came alongside a new Memorandum of Understanding with ANZ Bank and energy company Inpex for a "major integrated reforestation and carbon farming project in Western Australia's wheatbelt region. The project will

see marginal farming land replanted with sustainable, drought-resistant native plant species with the aim of improving the environment and generating Australian carbon credits to help offset future carbon footprints. Longer term the project may also provide a potential source for SAF production using cut back mallee trees.

Effective immediately climate change considerations are being integrated into the Qantas Group's financial framework, with performance-based targets linked to executive remuneration from the 2022/23 financial year onwards.



LIVN LARGE WITH GOOGLE'S THINGS TO DO

TOUR and activities tech platform Livn is “responding in force” to a surge in interest from experience operators across the globe in the new Google Things To Do (GTTD) program. After becoming an early partner in the ecosystem, Livn has already onboarded hundreds of suppliers from across the globe, and is ramping up its capacity by launching a new dedicated website at go.livn.world, supported by a Facebook page and expanded team to meet demand.

Livn’s consultative approach aims to help travel businesses to understand GTTD and get maximum exposure on Google search to allow them to attract direct bookings, rather than through intermediaries like Booking.com and Expedia which traditionally took a 30% commission. Livn CEO Mark Rizzuto said “by expanding, we’re giving operators the resources to understand there is another way,” with GTTD giving them significantly greater control of their distribution and pricing strategy.

The new dedicated website caters to two core audiences: attractions and ticket businesses such as zoos, aquariums and stadiums; and tours and activities operators offering products like wine tasting, guided tours or sightseeing. Livn’s model

eliminates commissions or transaction fees, in favour of a monthly publishing plan suited to each individual business.

Currently Livn is offering the first month free, with GTTD set to allow even the smallest operator to increase their discoverability to publish products with direct booking links.



Wade takes Travalyst chair

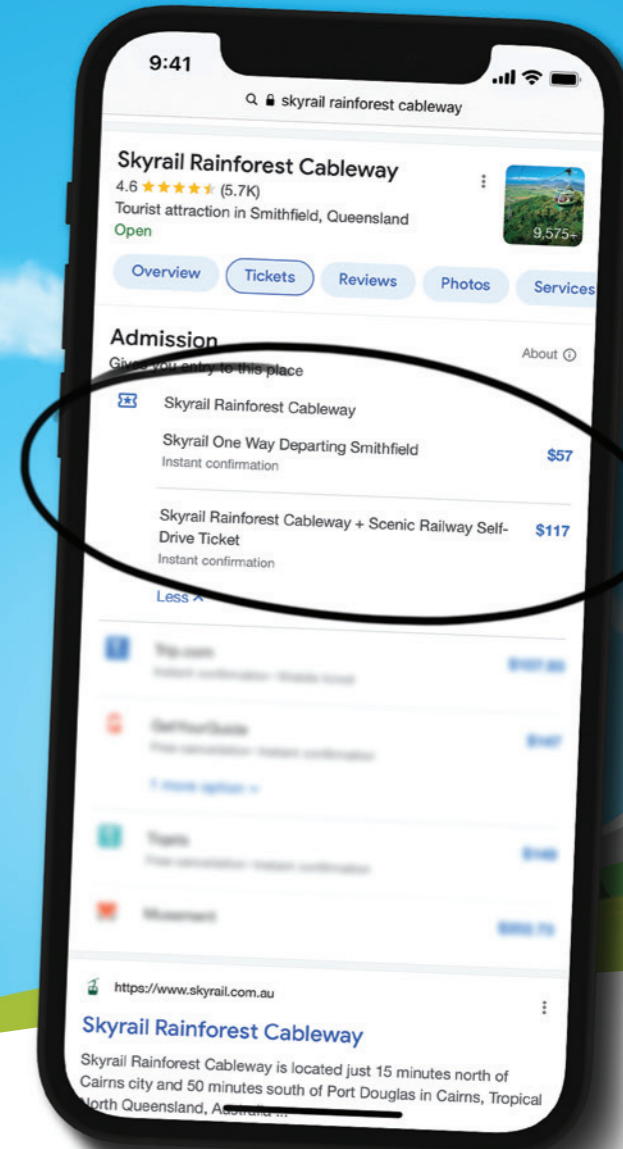


INTREPID Travel co-founder Darrell Wade (**pictured**) has deepened his involvement with The Travalyst Coalition, a sustainable travel organisation founded in 2017 by Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex. Comprising major partners such as Booking.com, Google, Expedia Group, Trip.com, Tripadvisor and Skyscanner, the coalition’s mission is “to make it easier for travellers and travel providers to make sustainable choices” with the development of a consistent, uniform, industry-wide

sustainability framework. “Our shared goal is to make sustainability reporting - and eventually supply scoring/ indexing - a core part of the consumer experience; where consistent information is published globally across all travel platforms,” according to the Travalyst website. Wade’s involvement complements his longstanding participation in sustainability and climate change forums, including being Vice-Chair of Sustainability for the World Travel and Tourism Council.

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MENTAL HEALTH SPOTLIGHT

MINDFULNESS & MENTAL HEALTH

By Tim Hoopmann

MINDFULNESS is the human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Mindfulness can help you feel better and reduce stress. It is a useful technique that can help you deal with difficult emotions and situations.

Mindfulness is paying full attention to what is going on in you and outside you, moment by moment, without judgement. It means you observe your thoughts, feelings, and the sensations of taste, touch, smell, sight, and sound. You are also fully aware of your surroundings.

For me mindfulness is a time when I can disconnect from the busy world in which I live and work. Switch off, refocus and be at one with myself.

I love sport, especially swimming and running. Here are two activities I thoroughly enjoy. Swimming disconnects me from my busy life and allows me to relax, centre myself and practice mindfulness. The same applies to running. I am at one with nature and I make sure I am present for every stroke or every stride. In these activities I find I can relax and be present with my surroundings. This was a great revelation for me. I could continue to do activities I love and practice mindfulness at the same time.

While holidaying in Florida a few years ago I went paddle-boarding. After a few days and a few hours of paddling I discovered this was another activity where I could easily switch off and disconnect. The stillness of the lake or bay and the peacefulness of the surroundings

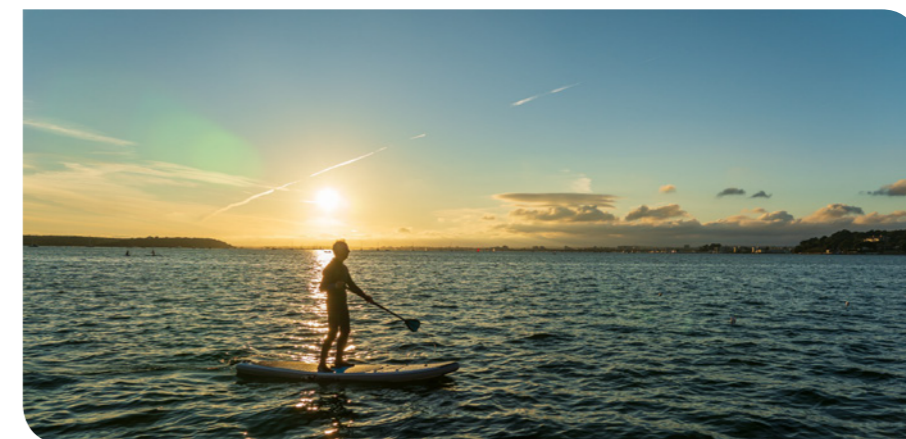
was a great way to unwind. I continue to paddle board on a regular basis. An early morning paddle really calms me and sets my day up for success.

To bake takes concentration and focus to ensure all the ingredients come together with the correct amount of heat. To some this can be quite stressful. I have baked for many years and find it relaxing and joyous to prepare treats for friends and family. It gives me great comfort and joy. When I thought further about it, I discovered it was another mindfulness activity that suited me perfectly.

All these activities provide relaxation and a complete disconnect from my everyday life

and work. They are activities I love, and therefore makes it easier to practice mindfulness. It provides a different sense of purpose and achievement. It is my time to slow down and switch off.

The activities I have mentioned work for me. I recommend to friends and family they find the activities that are best suited to their personality. Perhaps sitting listening to calm music could be your mindfulness activity. It may take time to try different activities and assess the impact on your stress levels. With determination you will find the ones that provide the best result for you. If not, then keep trying. Once you find the right activities the results are amazing.



Tim Hoopmann is a speaker, mentor and coach, with a passion for growing small business through using technology to increase productivity and reduce costs. He is also a volunteer speaker for Beyond Blue, working to raise awareness of anxiety and depression, reduce the associated stigma and encourage people to get help.



WILL THEY GET BUMS ON SEATS?

With Rex now operating jet services on the “golden triangle” and Bonza entering the market later in 2022, the Australian aviation sector will have more major players than ever before. But can the Aussie market sustain four carriers, and when push comes to shove, who will succeed in filling seats? ADAM BISHOP investigates.

AUSTRALIA'S cut-throat aviation sector is preparing to welcome a new player later in the year, pending final regulatory approvals of course, and it's probably fair to say that most aviation pundits have expressed strong doubts about the viability of four airlines competing for the Aussie travel dollar in a market that has already seen its fair share of bloodshed. Carriers like Tiger, Ansett and Compass have all

fallen over in the last 30 years, but despite this, the soon-to-launch US-backed, low-cost carrier Bonza is extremely confident it can buck history and operate a viable business model Down Under.

Speaking with *travelBulletin* about the airline's launch strategy, the globetrotting CEO of Bonza, Tim Jordan, paints a rosy picture of how the business plans to achieve commercial success, and he is very keen to make clear that its entry need

not be at the expense of existing carriers in the market.

“We are not a ‘me too airline’,” Jordan explains.

“We are about creating new demand on unserved and under-served markets, the vast majority of our routes are not served by other airlines and in cases where they are, we are simply offering a lower-cost alternative.

“What’s missing in the Australian market is a low-cost product and we are wholly focussed on the leisure market, and while there are great carriers already in Australia who focus heavily on the big percentage of the market – that is not us,” Jordan insists.

Bonza’s big pitch to the industry is that it is not here to compete for any other airlines’ lunch, and if its Aussie-centric marketing efforts are any guide, the airline appears very much prepared to march to the beat of its own drum. Whether it’s the plan to sell Bonza-branded budgie smugglers on board its flights or line dancing through the kiosks of Sunshine Coast Airport to mark its latest Tamworth route, clearly Bonza intends to stand out from the crowd

one way or another.

However not everyone is entirely convinced of the carrier’s business logic, and one of those people raising questions is the Deputy Chairman of Bonza’s impending competitor Rex Airlines, John Sharp, who concedes “maybe [Bonza] will be proven right” in time, but for now he certainly has doubts about the viability of charging an average ticket price of \$50 in the face of a fee-happy sector, still recovering from COVID.

“Don’t forget that 10% of that ticket goes to GST, and most airports, once you get past the honeymoon period, will be charging between \$10 to \$20 per passenger movement,” Sharp argues.

“Then you have to pay the on-route charge, so it really doesn’t leave you with a lot of money to pay for the fuel, the leasing of the aircraft, the crew, and all of the marketing and overheads, but I’ll be fascinated to see how it works, I wish [Bonza] good luck and I hope they succeed but it’s hard to see how it will work at that price.

“It could work at a much higher price, but I think at that average ticket price of \$50 they are going to find it

“
Whilst the population of Australia continues to grow, the GDP of Australia continues to grow, whilst there is growth in regional Australia, nothing has changed from a low-cost perspective
 ”

Tim Jordan,
 CEO,
 Bonza

hard to make the sums work.”

But despite doubts expressed by observers and competitors, Bonza is adamant that raising ticket prices will not be one of the ways it shores up its margins after it launches later in the year.

“You can’t just say you’re a low-cost carrier, you have to deliver on that promise too,” Jordan says.

“So yes, we do firmly believe that if a passenger flies for an hour, it shouldn’t cost them much more than 50 bucks - which is game-changing for the industry.”

Another factor providing Jordan with cause for optimism is the profile of the Australian market itself. He believes that while Australia’s population has continued to grow, including in major regional catchment areas, the number of low-cost routes has remained stagnant.

“There’s probably a degree of hesitancy amongst certain carriers and we know we’re not going to get everything right, but we also believe there are many, many route opportunities in Australia,” Jordan enthuses.

“The reason I’ve got so much confidence in that is because back in 2010, there were 58 low-cost routes operated in Australia by Tiger and Jetstar collectively, and by 2019, there were 58 routes operated by low-cost carriers in Australia, in other words there has been no change in all that time.

“Whilst the population of Australia continues to grow, the GDP of Australia continues to grow, whilst there is growth in regional Australia, nothing has changed from a low-cost perspective.

“When looking at the largest 15 domestic aviation markets in the world, of which Australia is the eighth largest, up until our announcement Australia was the only one which had no independent low-cost operator, Australia was the only one with just one low-cost carrier, every one of the other top 15 markets had at least two or more low-cost operators. So, Australia has this perception of being highly competitive and very much full, but the reality is it’s not when compared to its peers of market sizes around the world,”

Jordan argues.

The notion of the Australian domestic market being underserved by low-cost carriers is an interesting one when viewed from the vantage point of Virgin Australia, who abandoned the space when Bain Capital acquired the business, swiftly axing the Tiger brand from its stable in August 2020 at the expense of around 3,000 jobs. Many observers at the time viewed the move as a pretext for VA to reposition itself as a low-cost carrier with a focus on the local market, despite repeated denials by the airline’s new owners that this was ever going to be its intention. Instead, VA continues to insist that it is working towards operating a successful hybrid model straddling the space between budget and mid-market services.

Speaking at the CAPA Australia Pacific Aviation Summit late last year, VA’s CEO Jayne Hrdlicka repeated the airline’s pragmatic position regarding low-cost operations, restating that the



Bonza CEO, Tim Jordan is confident the airline will not step on the toes of existing carriers, but will fill a hole in the Australian aviation sector.



Virgin Australia CEO Jayne Hrdlicka reports that while there is a gap in the market left by Tiger, VA does not plan to reclaim the entirety of that market.



Rex is confident they will continue to grow in the post-Covid era.

flagship brand had no intentions to move downmarket and gobble up all of Tiger's previous slice of the market.

"There's a gap left by Tiger pulling out of the marketplace and we're taking only part of that gap and leaving the rest of it because we think it's more appropriate for others," Hrdlicka said.

"We'll take about a third of Tiger's marketshare, which were guests who are more appropriate for us than for Tiger and that balances everything all out.

"We're very clear about who we appeal to and we're very confident about where we can succeed so we're not looking to clip anyone's lunch, about 33% of the market seems about right to us," she added.

Part of this hybrid approach also saw Virgin Australia overhaul its Economy fare structure in August last year, unveiling a new

Economy Lite fare type which raised many eyebrows at the time considering the airline's pledge to stay away from the budget carrier space. The new category doesn't offer customers checked baggage or seat selection (unless purchased at an extra cost), a move VA said was merely driven by an internal review which found around a third of its customers don't bring a checked bag with them when they travel.

It's important to note that Virgin Australia also left the door open when it cut the Tiger brand in 2020 to relaunch a budget replacement at some stage, stating in a business update at the time it would retain the defunct carrier's Air Operator Certificate to provide an option to launch a low-cost carrier when the "market recovers" to sustain one.

Rex Airlines Deputy Chairman John Sharp believes "it's possible"

VA could change its mind down the track and relaunch a new low-cost carrier of their own but cautioned they would want to make sure they know why Tiger failed in the past and why a new brand would not follow the same fate.

"I'd want to be convinced that having failed to make Tiger work over 10 or so years, what's changed? What would make the current Virgin capable of running a new Tiger when the old Virgin couldn't make work? What's the difference? We all know that VA was very badly burned by Tiger, it never performed and it always lost money and it cost Virgin a lot, so I think that memory is still very much etched into the minds of people at Virgin that would make them very careful about talk of creating another low-cost carrier," Sharp believes.

"You also have to remember that Virgin has changed its strategy

since Tiger was closed down and the strategy is to be more mid-market or hybrid, whatever term you want to use as they keep using different terms to describe their market position, but it's certainly not full service.

"My guess is that what they are trying to do is sit halfway between where they were as a full-service airline under John Borghetti's administration and Tiger," Sharp rationalises.

While most airlines have been somewhat conciliatory and watchful in their approach to the prospect of Bonza entering the fray, the same can't necessarily be said for Qantas boss Alan Joyce, whose more pugilistic approach to competition has been noticeable through various public comments about his carrier's plan to rigorously "defend its turf" in a marketplace he describes as "the most competitive in the world".

Speaking at last year's CAPA conference in Sydney, Joyce said he was sceptical of Bonza's claim of uncovering many underserved regional routes in Australia, especially in light of Qantas significantly expanding its domestic network over the last couple of years.

"We've started nearly 50 new domestic routes so I would have thought we have most of them covered, but maybe we don't, so if [Bonza] can find a unique value proposition that they can make money on, fantastic, fill your boots up on it," Joyce observed.

The Flying Kangaroo's chief has also hinted the carrier was prepared to do everything it can within the rules to maintain its edge against any new player, which some have taken to mean competing on any new route with Bonza directly, a tactic that has

“We’re very clear about who we appeal to and we’re very confident about where we can succeed so we’re not looking to clip anyone’s lunch, about 33% of the market seems about right to us”

Jayne Hrdlicka,
CEO,
Virgin Australia

previously ruffled the feathers of Rex Airlines. So outraged by Qantas encroaching on its exclusive route territory, Rex even enlisted the services of law firm Clayton Utz earlier this year to "explore all legal avenues" to stop Qantas from what it alleged was "abusing its market position in order to hurt its competitors through anti-competitive behaviour in the form of capacity dumping and predatory practices".

"Since Rex's announcement in June 2020 to launch domestic routes, Qantas has tried to intimidate Rex by commencing services on nine regional routes in competition against Rex. The routes are marginal for one carrier and certainly too small for two airline operators," Rex argued back in February.

While competing on routes is



Top: Qantas CEO Alan Joyce has been vocal in his scepticism that Bonza will succeed.

Bottom: VA appears to have left the door open for a low cost carrier, retaining the Air Operator Certificate for Tiger after its closure in August 2020.





Hon John Sharp AM, Deputy Chairman of Rex Airlines

“...they’ve been able to take slots...there’s less competition for Virgin and there’s less competition for Qantas, which is a deliberate move by both of them to try and reduce competitive pressure so they can put all their prices up”

John Sharp,
Deputy Chairman,
Rex Airlines

above board, the rub occurs when an airline does so at below cost for the express purpose of running a competitor out of the route, a tactic Joyce emphatically denies Qantas has ever deployed.

Nonetheless, the ACCC preemptively stated in March this year that it would be looking at the Australian domestic market “very carefully” to ensure new players are not denied the chance of competing with the more established brands.

“Obviously, aviation has had a shocking time and Australia desperately needs a competitive aviation sector, given our landmass and the fact that we’re basically a whole lot of city states,” ACCC Chair Rod Sims said.

Of particular concern to the consumer watchdog has been access to Sydney Airport, from which Bonza will notably not be initially flying from when it launches, given the steep costs involved and a scarcity of landing slots.

“We’ve got the prospect of more competition from Rex on city routes and Bonza who will target unserved routes, whatever the chances those companies have at success, they must not fail simply because they can’t get slots at our airports,” the ACCC’s Rod Sims argued.

While Sydney is not on Bonza’s map just yet, Jordan has stated that the NSW capital is very much part of its longer-term strategy.

“We believe there are opportunities in Sydney to do something different,” Jordan said. “We want the 20% of the population who call Sydney home to benefit from Bonza fares in the future.”

Rex Airlines’ John Sharp has also been a very vocal critic of how airlines like Virgin Australia and Qantas have effectively been “squatting” on slot capacity at Sydney Airport, taking advantage

of the Federal Government’s decision to waive the “use it or lose it” rule during the lean period of the travel shutdown.

Sharp argues that Virgin and Qantas have been gaming the system to keep challenger brands from competing and allowing higher fare prices to be maintained.

“Virgin has more slots at Sydney Airport today than it had pre-COVID and it has got exactly half the fleet, you do the maths on that,” Sharp says.

“If you’ve got half the fleet, theoretically, you should have half the slots, and they’ve got more slots than they had before COVID so it’s kind of a weird aberration.”

“Virgin has been able to play the game and they’ve been able to take slots, the purpose of which is to stop anyone else from having a slot so there’s less competition for Virgin and there’s less competition for Qantas, which is a deliberate move by both of them to try and reduce competitive pressure so they can put all their prices up,” Sharp concludes.

Despite his qualms though, Sharp is very confident that Rex will be able to continue its growth trajectory during the post-COVID era, built on a foundation of quality and affordability.

“We are a genuinely full-service airline that operates at really affordable low prices, we have the best on-time performance numbers of any airline...we offer the same cabin experience as Qantas does, and we offer prices that are in some cases lower than Virgin’s fares,” Sharp enthuses.

And while Rex’s Deputy Chair believes his airline’s travel experience is at the very least comparable to the Qantas experience for example, he admits that the perception of the carrier in the minds of Aussies does not

yet match that reality, flagging more work to be done to improve that misconception.

“I think we’ve still got a long way to go before people have had the opportunity to experience our product and weigh up the experience on our flights, so we’ve got more to do there,” Sharp admits.

“Habit is also another big factor, for a lot of Australians travelling with a particular airline is a habit and they just like Qantas, despite the fact that Qantas may be three times the price of Rex and going to exactly the same place.”

“Price obviously is another big factor, but it’s not the most important one because if it was there’d be a hell of a lot of people getting off Qantas and jumping on a Rex flight because the price differential is enormous.”

While there has been a lot of commentary around the viability

“We will absolutely be putting our arms around travel agents and welcoming them to work with us because the most important thing to us is that someone is sitting on a seat on our aircraft...”

Tim Jordan,
CEO,
Bonza

of four carriers operating in a recovering and supposedly cluttered market, Bonza’s chief is quick to point out that airlines have not been the exclusive victim of the travel shutdown, with all quarters of the travel sector hurting as a result of the pandemic.

“The last two years have been torrid for all of us, and when I say the industry I mean tour operators, travel agents, airports, everybody, and we all need to work together to recover as quickly as possible,” Jordan believes.

“We will absolutely be putting our arms around travel agents and welcoming them to work with us because the most important thing to us is that someone is sitting on a seat on our aircraft and they have hopefully paid us a little bit of money for it. The worst thing in the world for the industry is an empty airline seat,” Jordan says.



Bonza plans to transport Aussies to destinations currently unserved by other carriers. ©Bonza



THE JACKSON STUNS IN SYDNEY

SYDNEY'S newest multi-million-dollar floating event venue, *The Jackson*, has landed in the city's Harbour. A "reimagined superyacht", *The Jackson* is named after Sydney Harbour's ria, Port Jackson.

The Jackson is licensed to host up to 700 guests "cocktail-style" and aims to embody "the beauty and elegance that exemplifies Sydney's magnificent Harbour," according to Sealink, owner and operator of the vessel.

The \$15 million venue invites guests in through the Main Deck, which features floor-to-ceiling windows and superb views of

Sydney from every angle. The space can host up to 300 guests banquet-style, or 400 guests cocktail-style, making it ideal for corporate events, international & domestic incentive and team-building events, conference dinners, and more.

Guests will also be wowed by designer decor, luxury furnishings, a dedicated bar, and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment, including a five-metre built-in LED screen. The Main Deck also provides direct access to the front outdoor deck to sip champagne, capture special moments against the backdrop of the Harbour, and

marvel at the sights of Sydney.

Just off the Main Deck, a grand spiral staircase takes guests to the Mid-Deck of the vessel, where they will find elevated views of the Harbour and intimate private rooms, ideal for smaller corporate and private events. This deck can host 110 guests banquet style or 150-plus cocktail style, and guests can also command The Quarters – a private balcony with an operable wall, dividing the room into two spaces of 20, or one space of 40.

One level farther up, The Jackson Bar offers a rooftop like none other in Sydney: simultaneously floating among the city's skyscrapers,

while floating in the Harbour. Complete with luxe lounge seating both indoors and out, and a retractable rooftop, The Jackson Bar also contains the only authentic pizza oven on the Harbour.

The Jackson's menu focuses on high-quality, sustainable seafood and premium Australian seasonal produce, and is enhanced by some of the country's best wines. The general public can experience *The Jackson's* restaurant and bar from spring, when Sydneysiders will be able to enjoy a calendar of special events. *The Jackson* will also incorporate a sister vessel, *The Jackson Flyer*, a luxury 60-person tender vessel, allowing guests to board from almost all wharves in Sydney, even private marinas, the main two pickup locations being King Street Wharf, and Wharf 6 Circular Quay.

"Sydney absolutely shines from the water, and *The Jackson* brings the best event venue experiences with the Harbour and city as its backdrop," said the vessel's General Manager Nick Lester. "To date, we've hosted over 60 site inspections, from Australia's MICE market and corporate sector event organisers, all keen to view Sydney's newest luxury event venue, resulting in exciting bookings for the year ahead," he said.

Lester said it's been great to hear the very positive feedback about *The Jackson* elevating the Harbour venue experience to a whole new level, with people keen to take advantage of Sydney's newest premium event venue." *The Jackson* is now available for private event charters and site inspections by contacting the vessel's management directly.



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CELEBRITY TAKE CRUISING BEYOND



The Magic Carpet on board *Celebrity Beyond* ©Celebrity Cruises

THE post-pandemic timing for the launch of Celebrity Cruises' new *Celebrity Beyond* could not have been more appropriate, according to the line's President & CEO, Lisa Lutoff-Perlo. Speaking during a shakedown cruise out of Southampton, UK last month, Lutoff-Perlo said the name of the new ship was particularly apt because it symbolises how the whole travel industry is now moving "beyond" the last two torrid years of the pandemic.

Lutoff-Perlo has a laser-sharp vision for the Celebrity cruises brand, with its focus on relaxed luxury, wellness, cuisine and design part of her aspiration to leave a legacy which is to "stop people saying 'cruising is not for me'". And expanding Celebrity's appeal beyond traditional cruisers is clearly part of the plan, with the pre-inaugural voyage packed with influencers and media from across a wide variety of sectors such as fashion, health, retail, design and more.

Beyond is the third vessel in Celebrity's Edge-class series, and like sister ships *Celebrity Edge* and *Celebrity Apex* she boasts the "flying carpet" - a tangerine

technological masterpiece which moves up and down the side of the ship to create different spaces with spectacular 270-degree views across the ocean. But appropriately *Beyond* has also been further enhanced, with the addition of an extra deck and a 20-metre stretch which has allowed even more versatility in terms of public spaces and staterooms.

Enhancements include a larger outward-facing pool deck, a redesigned Sunset Bar at the rear of the ship almost twice the size as on *Beyond's* predecessors, adjacent to a gorgeous Rooftop Garden which includes new cantilevered float pools hanging over the water's edge. World renowned chef Daniel Boulud - Celebrity's Global Culinary Ambassador - has created *Le Voyage*, his first signature restaurant at sea, while the three-storey Eden venue boasts a bar, cafe and terraces wrapped around the spectacular Eden Restaurant.

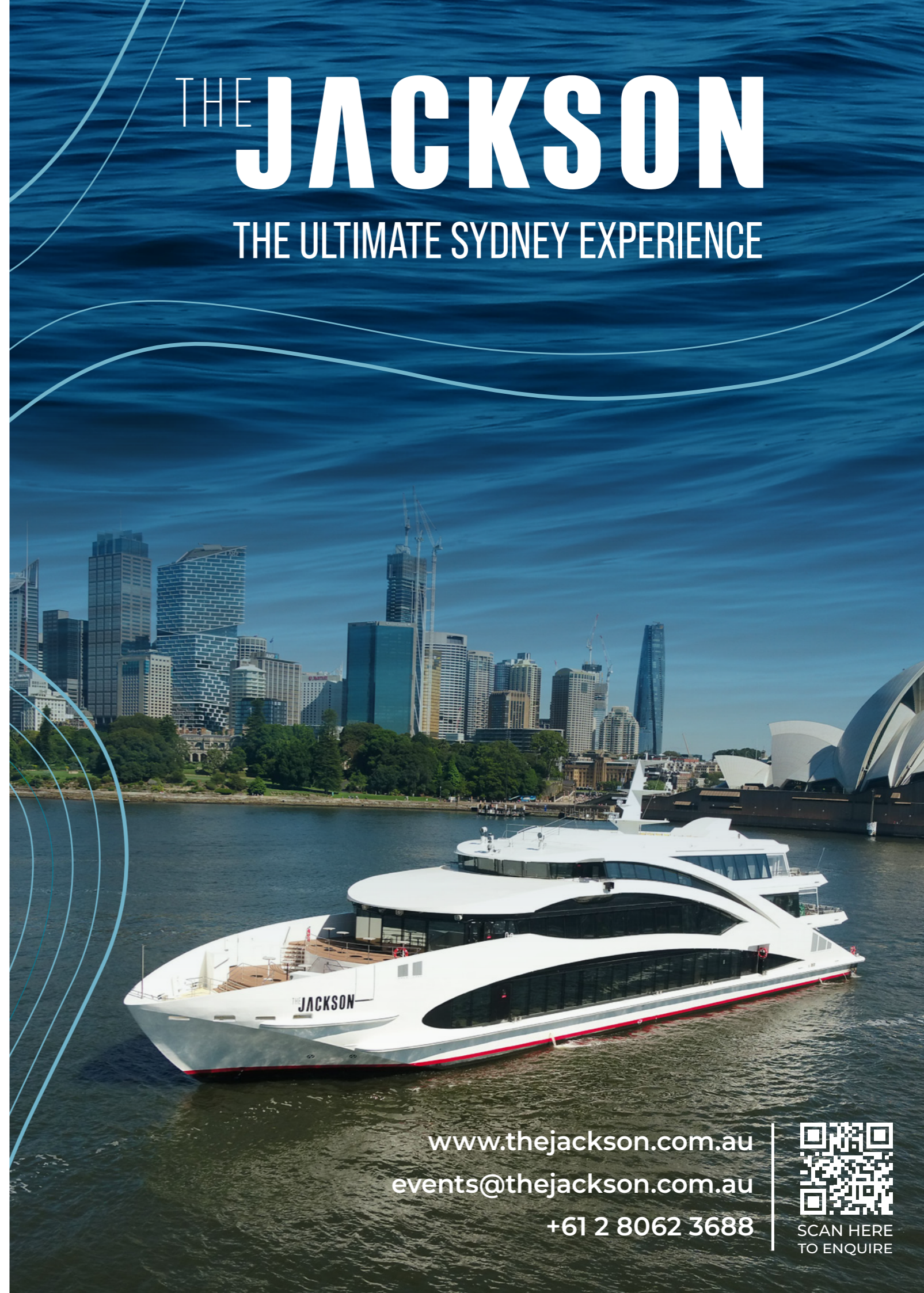
Celebrity's focus on wellness has also been enhanced on *Beyond*, which introduces new F45 fitness classes alongside the line's

Women in Wellness program, an ongoing partnership with movie star Gwyneth Paltrow's goop lifestyle brand and a massive spa offering every treatment imaginable. Accommodation on board features a wide variety of options, including the two-storey Edge villas with a private plunge pool along with the Iconic Suite which promises "a view as good as the Captain's". And speaking of the Captain, *Beyond* is helmed by social media sensation Kate McCue, who spent more than 300 days on board during the pandemic - passing the time by entertaining her hundreds of thousands of Instagram and TikTok followers. McCue's appointment as Captain reflects Celebrity's huge focus on diversity, with the cruise line keen to showcase maritime careers as an inspirational option for girls to consider.

Australians can experience *Celebrity Beyond* and her sister ships *Edge* and *Apex* in the Mediterranean over the coming months, while the cruise line is eagerly anticipating the first deployment of *Celebrity Edge* in Australasian waters in the 2023/24 summer season.

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AZAMARA ADDS ITS FOURTH SHIP

AZAMARA Cruises has formally named the new *Azamara Onward*, in a glittering ceremony in Monte Carlo attended by key industry partners and media from around the world. The addition of a fourth ship to the fleet marks a key milestone for the newly independent company, which was sold by Royal Caribbean Group to private equity firm Sycamore Partners less than 18 months ago. CEO and President Carol Cabezas and her team have wasted no time in forging a new future for the line, with *Onward* joining sister ships *Azamara Pursuit*, *Azamara Quest* and *Azamara Journey* as the foundation for its operations.

However it sounds like that may be just the beginning, with Cabezas telling *travelBulletin* that the long term strategy for Azamara is “to grow the fleet... our investors are extremely supportive and they are absolutely focused on growing our brand”. Like the other three Azamara ships, *Onward* offers an intimate experience, with capacity for 684 passengers and a size which allows it to cruise along scenic waterways and dock at locations that larger vessels can’t access. The ship formerly sailed as *Pacific Princess*, and has undergone a major US\$50 million upgrade and rebranding as it joins the Azamara fleet. The classic vessel boasts a large gymnasium and the Sanctum spa facility, nightly entertainment, retail outlets and more.

The new ship’s name is particularly appropriate, symbolising both the brand’s forward movement under its new ownership, and also the state



Azamara Onward off the coast of Monaco ©Tim Faircloth



The new Atlas bar on board ©Azamara



Azamara Onward at sea ©Azamara

of the entire cruise industry as it emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, evoking feelings of “resilience, positivity and the endless possibilities of the future”. Azamara intends to continue its longstanding focus on destination immersion, with *Onward’s* itineraries including a wide range of so-called “country intensive” voyages as well as a 2024 World Voyage sailing from Fort Lauderdale to Barcelona.

Azamara’s ships are pitched as boutique hotels at sea, with each offering similar culinary experiences and restaurants. New to *Onward* is the sleek Atlas bar, a sumptuous specialty venue featuring a wide range of cocktails and light bites perfect for a pleasant evening with friends. There’s also an additional Chef’s Table experience available at the Aqualina specialty restaurant, taking guests on a culinary journey through a seven course degustation.

The ship was named by US-based Beth Santos, an inspirational entrepreneur, speaker and founder of the “Wanderful” global travel community and lifestyle brand which boasts a global community of more than 45,000 travelling females. Her vision aligns with that of Azamara, which aims to help its customers engage deeply with the destinations and cultures it visits. Key itinerary features include more overnight stays in port as well as late night departures to give opportunities for dining and activities on shore - including Azamara’s signature AzAmazing Evenings which are included on every itinerary more than seven days in length.



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JAMIE'S ITALIAN BY JAMIE OLIVER

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Health and safety protocols, guest conduct rules, and regional travel restrictions vary by ship and destination, and are subject to change without notice. Due to evolving health protocols, imagery and messaging may not accurately reflect onboard and destination experiences, offerings, features, or itineraries. These may not be available during your voyage, may vary by ship and destination, and may be subject to change without notice. *Cruise from \$949 per person is in AUD, based on Quantum of the Seas 8 night sailing departing 7 February 2023 or 15 February 2023. Price is for the cruise only, based on double-occupancy, is subject to availability, includes all applicable discounts and is correct as of 3 May 2022. General terms: \$100 AUD per person service fee applies to changes to NRD (Non-refundable deposit) bookings. Deposits made toward Guarantees and Suites are non-refundable and are subject to NRD Booking Terms. Offers apply to new, individual and named group bookings confirmed at prevailing rates. Changes to the booking may result in removal of the offer. Prices and offers are subject to availability and change without notice, capacity controlled, and may be withdrawn at any time. Royal Caribbean International reserves the right to correct any errors, inaccuracies or omissions and to change or update fares, fees and surcharges at any time without prior notice. Refer to <http://www.royalcaribbean.com/aus> for complete terms and conditions. ©2022 Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd. Ships' registry: Bahamas

EXPLORER'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN



P&O CRUISES Australia's *Pacific Explorer* returned to Sydney to a stunning welcome last month, after a two-year absence from local waters.

The cruise line's flagship was welcomed with a ceremonial water cannon salute, marking the formal restart of the \$5 billion per year Australian cruise industry.

Explorer passed through Sydney Heads at about 9.30am on the 18 April, before gliding into Circular Quay mid-morning, escorted by a number of official and private vessels.

Her arrival marked a 28-day voyage from Europe, where she had been paused for much of the past two years waiting to come home to Australia.

Carnival Corporation President Australia Marguerite Fitzgerald, who was present aboard a P&O-chartered vessel, told **travelBulletin**

“...what's really important about today is that it's a real signal that this isn't a false start... this is really the cruise industry resuming”

Marguerite Fitzgerald, President Australia, Carnival Corporation

the phones at the cruise line's local call centres had been “overwhelmed”.

“I think what's really important about today is that it's a real signal that this isn't a false start... this is really the cruise industry resuming,” she said.

“Even though it's the three eastern states who announced the protocols, all the states

are in conversation with us about what it would look like to resume cruising.

“We continue to expect to see guests coming back.”



Sarina Bratton AM Chairman for PONANT Asia Pacific with Captain Xavier Rutten in Darwin.

Kimberley cruising is back

PONANT'S *Le Laperouse* was welcomed into Darwin late last month, as the cruise line resumed sailing in Australia as the first international brand to do so.

Following *Le Laperouse's* two-year standby in Noumea, the cruise ship returned to Australian waters last month, before resuming sailings on 28 April.

Le Laperouse will be accompanied later this month in the Kimberley by fleetmate *Le Soleal*, with the two to offer guests the chance to explore the beautiful landscapes of the Kimberley, including the Hunter River, the King George River, and Twin Falls.

“We celebrate the restart of cruising in Australia, and specifically expedition cruising in the North West region of Australia,” said Chair Asia Pacific Sarina Bratton.

“I am personally thrilled that Ponant's *Le Laperouse* will be the first international ship to return to operations in Australia and the first international expedition ship to commence the 2022 Kimberley season.”

Heath to head Aurora

AURORA Expeditions has confirmed the appointment of Michael Heath as its new Chief Executive Officer, with the former Surf Hardware International head joining the cruise line from this month.

In addition to eight years as the boss of the surfing hardware company, he has also previously held leadership and top management positions for global active outdoor brands including O'Neill, Hurley, and Nike.

Vic sets cruise protocols

ALL passengers cruising to and from Victoria over the age of 12 must obtain a negative COVID test before embarking and must have received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine, under new restrictions implemented by the state's government last month.

Anyone with a valid medical exemption can travel (plus unvaccinated children under the age of 12), but this demographic must not make up more than 5% of the ship's passengers, the state government said.

Eden expands

THE Eden community is being encouraged to have its say on the future of the town's cruise industry, after the release of a proposal to transform its port into a destination for some of the world's largest ships.

Proposed modifications at Eden Cruise Wharf include an increase to the current limit of 60 vessels a year and allowing vessels up to 370 metres long to berth, up from the current 325 metres.



CLIA VIEW
Joel Katz, Managing Director
CLIA Australasia

A SPECTACULAR RETURN FOR CRUISING

THE sight of *Pacific Explorer* entering Sydney Harbour last month at the end of Australia's cruise suspension was an incredible moment for an industry that has fought so hard for revival.

Flanked by tugs spraying water cannons into the air, the P&O Australia flagship gave us just the spectacle we needed to signal cruising's return to local waters and the opportunity to rebuild a sector previously worth more than \$5 billion a year to the Australian economy.

Pacific Explorer's arrival on the east coast was followed a week later by the return of Ponant's *Le Laperouse* in the north-west, where it became the first international vessel to join local operators sailing the Kimberley coast between Darwin and Broome.

Other ships will return ahead of the summer season, and remaining states like South Australia and Tasmania are expected to announce soon how they'll join other jurisdictions in allowing a careful resumption of cruising.

Worldwide, more than 80% of the CLIA ocean cruise fleet is back in service and we expect this number to reach 95% by the end of July.

More than 7.5 million people have sailed since cruising began its return in late 2020 and the number of countries where ships can now sail is approaching 100.

Importantly, the success of the cruise industry's protocols against Covid-19 has brought increasing confidence among consumers.

CLIA's latest global research shows the portion of past cruisers who say they want to sail again in coming years has risen to 84% – a level higher than before the pandemic.

There's no doubt cruising's revival in our region has been fuelled by the fantastic support we've received from our travel agents, our industry supporters and our cruise line members.

We're incredibly grateful for your backing and look forward to joining you at sea in the near future.



HEADLINES APRIL 2022

- 03 Apr** WA confirms Kimberley go-ahead
- 05 Apr** Cover-More to add cruise coverage
- 07 Apr** Lindblad debuts *National Geographic II*
- 21 Apr** RCG execs reap rewards

The Fake News

Some very abstract disruption

with Adam Bishop

FOR once Mark Zuckerberg has been outfoxed, with his much-hyped Metaverse creation already labelled an anachronism by the tech industry only months after launching, following a superior and more cutting-edge product being introduced by a competitor.

The synthetic digital world which promised to be a boon to all industries, including travel, by offering consumers a virtual reality world to try products before they buy is already winding down operations, with Founder Zuckerberg conceding a new rival, Meta-Metaverse Inc, has a far more interesting product.

“What I created was a world that aped real life, all embedded in an incredibly intuitive and detailed synthetic existence,” Zuckerberg explains.

“If you wanted to travel to France for example but weren’t sure about visiting The Louvre or if you should climb the Eiffel Tower, you could do this digitally before jetting off, all without the need to leave your armchair.

“But what these guys [Meta-Metaverse Inc] have done is create a perfectly accurate digital world based on my original digital world, needless to say I did not see this kind of meta disruption

coming,” the world’s foremost super nerd conceded.

The Meta-Metaverse claims to offer users a perfectly true to life experience of what life would be like as the creator of the original Metaverse, providing a seamless experience of life inside Zuckerberg’s head, even allowing users to feel what it would be like to invent the very product they are already immersed in.

“Outside of the increased risk of a brain aneurysm brought on by an acute existential crisis, we are very proud of the new Meta-Metaverse,” the company’s Founder Chip Valley said.

SUDOKU

The aim of Sudoku is to complete the entire grid using the numbers 1-9. Each number can only be used once in each row, column, and 3x3 box. Give this one a go!

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



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