

Australia's favourite travel news magazine

Traveltalk

WWW.TRAVELTALKMAG.COM.AU SPECIAL EDITION - JUNE 2020

Competition

Win a five-day Aussie holiday!

EXCLUSIVE

How to protect the future of travel agents

DOMESTIC TRAVEL

New tours & itineraries

NEW ZEALAND

Backing for the bubble

We're all in this

Traveltalk
TOGETHER

Plus: Virtual tours and our fun travel quiz!

EDITORIAL

Jon Underwood
Managing Editor (print)
Email: jon@traveltalkmag.com.au

Gaya Avery
Managing Editor (digital)
Email: editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

Rebecca Lawson
Sub Editor

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS
Chad Carey, Cameron Holland, Mark Snoxell

ART DIRECTOR
Vanessa Pribil
Email: production@traveltalkmag.com.au

ADVERTISING
Sydney: **Mal Jenkins**
Advertising Sales Manager
Mobile: 0434 377 432
Email: mal@traveltalkmag.com.au

Sydney: **Jenny Rowland**
Mobile: 0414 746 146
Fax: (02) 9969 3390
Email: jenny@traveltalkmag.com.au

Perth: **Debbie Sproule**
Tel: (08) 6406 1358
Mobile: 0403 833 295
Email: debbie@traveltalkmag.com.au

DIRECTORS AND ASSOCIATE PUBLISHERS
Jenny Rowland (Sydney)
Debbie Sproule (Perth)
Perth Office:
PO Box 3104 Kingsley WA 6026

DISTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
Tel: (08) 6406 1358
Email: distribution@traveltalkmag.com.au

PUBLISHED BY
Pointer Publishing Pty Ltd
ABN 92 150 111 701
PO Box 3104 Kingsley WA 6026
Tel: (08) 6406 1358
Website: www.traveltalkmag.com.au



Annual CAB audited circulation average: 5,944. Ave G/A annual emag downloads 540.
TOTAL CIRC 6,484 PER ISSUE
Oct 2018 to March 2019



While every care and precaution has been taken in the preparation of Traveltalk, no liability can be accepted for errors or omissions herein. Information is published in good faith to stimulate independent investigation by the reader. Views and opinions expressed in Traveltalk do not necessarily reflect those of the management.

All articles are fully protected by copyright. To obtain written permission to reproduce any material please contact the managing editor on editorial@traveltalkmag.com.au

CONTENTS

- 4 AGENTtalk
- 10 BOOK IT NOW
- 13 INDUSTRYtalk
- 16 NEWStalk
- 18 CRUISEtalk
- 23 INTERVIEW
- 24 PROPERTYtalk
- 25 SKYtalk
- 26 DOMESTIC TRAVEL
- 29 COMPETITION
- 33 ANIMALtalk
- 34 SOUTH PACIFIC
- 39 SRI LANKA
- 40 NEW ZEALAND
- 41 JAPAN
- 42 HOME ENTERTAINMENT
- 44 TRAVELTEASE QUIZ



COVER IMAGE: Standley Chasm, NT.
Picture courtesy Tourism Australia/
Tourism NT.

A message from the Traveltalk team

AS TRAVEL restrictions across Australia start to be relaxed, we can finally see some light at the end of the COVID-19 tunnel.

Will the world ever be the same again? Probably not. Will we learn valuable lessons from the pandemic? Let's hope so.

Australia can certainly count itself fortunate that we didn't suffer the same devastating losses as other countries. A tick over 100 deaths is still extremely sad but it could have been much, much worse.

Our industry has borne the full brunt of the effects of corona virus. Travel agents have worked tirelessly to get their clients home or to recoup at least some of their hard-earned holiday money.

Yet despite their best efforts, agents have found themselves in the firing line, accused in some sections of the media of withholding customer funds. The allegations have added further insult to injury, with agents facing an almost total loss of income.

In this issue, we've tried hard to readdress the balance. We've got stories of agents going above and beyond for their clients, explaining just how hard it is to operate in such an unprecedented situation.

What's more, you'll hear from Chad Carey, co-Founder of Chimu Adventures, who vociferously goes in to bat for agents and suggests how they can ensure better relationships with clients' post-COVID-19.

Quite simply, it is the article that every travel agent in Australia should read.

With international travel looking unlikely until at least the beginning of next year, domestic travel is dominating recovery measures.

Not only have we dedicated several pages to the areas looking to welcome back visitors, we also have a fantastic competition for you to win a five-day Australian holiday (see page 29).

But with talk of travel 'bubbles' springing up, we can't forget our overseas neighbours so we take a look at potential holiday destinations in New Zealand and the South Pacific.

We know the past few months have been unimaginably tough for Australia's travel agent community. By bringing out these online-only issues and with our extensive digital presence, we've tried to keep you updated, informed and entertained during the dark days.

Your personal stories have been truly inspirational and we're extremely proud to be part of this resilient and remarkable industry.

Let us hope that a corner has been turned and we can all look forward to a travel boom with agents leading the way. After all, we're all in this together.



Cable Beach.
Photo courtesy
AAT Kings.

Fancy a free famil?

AGENTS ARE being offered the chance to receive gift cards and a spot on a future cruise in a new trade promotion.

Make a booking before July 31 with Regent Seven Seas Cruises (RSSC) and you'll receive a \$500 Visa gift card. To ensure agents can receive as many benefits as possible, RSSC has not limited the number of gift cards they can earn.

Agents who book any three suites between now and July 31 on any sailing departing in 2021 or 2022 will have the opportunity to cruise

free with Regent in their Sell and Sail incentive. The prize is one suite for a sailing departing through to December 31, 2022.

"We have been overwhelmed by the ongoing tenacity shown by our valued travel advisors during this challenging period and we are proud to work alongside them," said Lisa Pile, Vice President and General Manager, Australia & New Zealand for Regent Seven Seas Cruises.

In addition to the agent incentives, RSSC has also launched a consumer

initiative called Return with Regent.

Along with 10 per cent reduced deposits for extra flexibility, plus a \$US1,000 (approx. \$AU1,500) shipboard credit per suite, the offer includes 'Regent Reassurance', which allows guests to cancel their cruise for any reason up to 15 days before departure date and receive a 100 per cent future cruise credit.

Valid for new bookings made by July 31, Return with Regent is applicable to all sailings through 2022, expanding the line's 'cancel for any reason' policy to cover all possible destinations and voyages.

"Now we're starting to see a glimmer of recovery in the travel industry and consumer confidence in cruise is beginning to grow, we want to give our travel partners the vital tools they need to convert bookings and to reward them for their resilience and commitment to Regent Seven Seas Cruises."

■ rssc.com

Training supports cruise champions

A NEW online course has just been launched for travel agents to gain a greater understanding of the cruise industry and combat any misconceptions.

Entitled Cruise Champion, the initiative has been set up by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA).

The interactive program delves deeper into the workings of the global cruise sector and offers the knowledge for agents to become ambassadors for the industry.

"There are a lot of myths and misperceptions that circle the cruise industry and they can affect a travel agent's ability to cater to their clients," said Peter Kollar, CLIA Head of International Training.

"This course is designed to help them respond confidently to some of the issues that customers may raise."

CLIA travel agent members can access Cruise Champion via the new CLIA Member Hub at

■ cruising.org.au

How to sell your own country

TOURISM AUSTRALIA has launched a local version of its award-winning international Aussie Specialist Program.

The free online training resource has been designed to equip agents with relevant, up-to-date information and showcase new regions, destinations and experiences within Australia.

The program offers interactive training modules, itinerary suggestions, fact sheets, the latest industry news and monthly email updates covering what's new in Australian tourism.

Tourism Australia wants to help agents sell Australian tourism experiences during these challenging times and introduce domestic travellers to destinations and experiences they might be less familiar with.

"Domestic overnight travel is a major contributor to Australia's visitor economy, worth more than \$80 billion

annually and as travel restrictions are eased it will play an important role in helping tourism businesses and communities to get back on their feet before we can begin welcoming international visitors again," said Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director Tourism Australia.

"As domestic travel restrictions will be gradually lifted before international travel restrictions are, our focus will start with domestic travel, where we'll be strongly encouraging Australians to holiday here in Australia this year.

"We know that Australians also

spent almost \$65 billion in overseas trips last year so if we are able to encourage them to spend some of their holiday dollars in Australian instead, it will really help our tourism industry on its road to recovery – and travel agents will have an important role to play in this."

Agents are encouraged to register and qualify as Aussie Specialists by June 22. They can also win one of 20 Aussie care packs by emailing their favourite Australian holiday photo to aussiespecialist@tourism.australia.com

■ aussiespecialist.com/aussielaunch

FEEL THE BENEFIT OF REWARD SYSTEM

OUTRIGGER HAS launched a revitalised reward system that offers multiple benefits to Aussie agents for bookings at the company's hotels and resorts.

Agents can become an 'Outrigger Expert Advisor' by enrolling in an online course. Once completed, agents can earn unlimited reward points on Outrigger bookings through a wholesaler, GDS, phone or website, to redeem for accommodation at selected Outrigger properties.

Agents will receive an initial 500 reward points upon certification, 100 reward points for each night booked, plus extra reward points for completing additional educational courses.

There will be monthly exclusive booking bonus promotional offers to help earn points faster.

Other benefits include incentive opportunities with select airline carriers, reward points that will never expire and exclusive room rate discounts.

■ OutriggerAdvisor.com

Making a huge gesture

THE TRAVEL Concierge Sri Lanka is offering agents the facility to book future holidays without the need to pay a deposit.

To further help agents, the organisation has also created a selection of sample itineraries with customisable flyers and updated training, available from June 1.

"This is the second year in a row that Sri Lanka's tourism has literally been obliterated, so this is a huge gesture," said Mark Snoxell, ANZ representative for TTC SL.

"Most agents don't realise that when they are booking Sri Lanka, they are most likely not supporting a 100 per cent owned and operated Sri Lankan company. That means that money hasn't been getting to where it's needed the most; the local tourism industry and communities."

The no deposit offer is available only through travel agents and not available in conjunction with TTC SL's early bird offers. Payment for all holidays booked through TTC SL is due 30 days prior to arrival.

"With all of our existing bookings for this year being postponed to 2021, that means that when there's a surge of interest, there'll actually be less availability than normally this far in advance.

"Booking sooner than later without paying a deposit should give both agents and guests peace of mind and certainly something fabulous to look forward to."

Follow on Instagram @thetravelconciergesrilanka to go in to the draw for luxury Spa Ceylon ayurvedic packs.

■ tcsrillanka.com

YOUR TALES FROM THE FRONT LINE

We asked two agents from Travel Counsellors to share their stories and thoughts about the impact of COVID-19 on their work and home life.



Matt Schmitz, Gold Travel Counsellor

MATT SCHMITZ

GOLD TRAVEL COUNSELLOR BASED IN THE LATROBE VALLEY, VICTORIA.

Q: How has corona virus impacted both your business and personal life?

A: The pandemic has made me rethink my business and how I would like to run it when travel is fun again.

Obviously I have lost all of my current bookings but most people have chosen a credit, which is great for future business.

Personally, I have taken a step back. I have been more relaxed than ever. It's great to spend time with my wife and daughters. We are lucky to be in a country that has looked after the workforce, which has eased the financial blow.

Q: What reaction have you been getting from clients?

A: For the most part, my customers have been very understanding and sympathetic. There have been challenges with a couple of customers but all in all I have been extremely lucky to have such a fantastic client base.

Q: Do you think agents have been unfairly criticised over cancellation fees?

A: I think that the media has so much to answer for on this topic. We are all adhering to guidelines, policies and procedures but the media story has made our job that much harder in an awful situation.

At the end of the day, the travel industry has had to go into survival mode and I think the media is kicking us while we are down. At least they are getting paid!

Q: How will the travel industry recover from this crisis?

A: There will be a slow period, that's for sure, and some borders will stay closed to Australian travellers for longer. But... Aussies won't give up holidays. It may just curve where they travel and may even open up more options or different routings.

Q: Will the role of travel agents become even more important post-COVID?

A: Travel agents have evolved so much over the years and we may go through another evolution due to COVID-19,

although the role of an agent will still be extremely important.

We are the little guy at the other end of the phone who is actually there for the customers. We are the ones on the forefront for our customers and we take the stress out of it.

Q: Are there any positives at all that can be taken from this situation?

A: While we have more personal time to do the things we enjoy, the travel industry will have an overhaul.

I think we have noticed there are so many things that are still manual that should be automated. Systems will be improved and we'll get to know our clients more.

I think that not only for travel agents but many industries COVID-19 proves that working from home can be done and the need for a commercial office space may not be as necessary.

Q: Finally, how have you been passing the time in self-isolation?

A: Other than cancelling down a stack of holidays and working out different business strategies, I have been pottering around the house, doing things that should have been done ages ago, gardening, going for jogs and hanging with the family.

It's actually been enjoyable. I think that COVID-19 has actually made me reassess the important things in life and not take them for granted. Also appreciate what we have and how lucky we are.



Hayley Voll, Gold Travel Counsellor

HAYLEY VOLL

GOLD TRAVEL COUNSELLOR BASED IN BRISBANE, QUEENSLAND

Q: How has corona virus impacted both your business and personal life?

A: Like all in the Industry the virus has left us reeling and to be honest there is about a two-week period of my life that I don't remember! It was head down and do what was required to get clients home safe and sound with the least amount of stress to them.

Then it was the urgency to cancel and rearrange and keep up with the policy changes, etc. It has been exhausting and I definitely have many more wrinkles and grey hair! Not to mention the concern of trying to move forward with little to no business income.

It has also been difficult with my husband working from home, my son (a Uni student) and also my Year 10 daughter, who like everyone else is schooling from home.

Personally, well it has made me have to get outside and walk and make time for my sanity. It's hard not seeing friends and family but so many good clients and friends are checking in to see if I am okay as they understand the enormity of the situation, which has been so lovely.

Q: What reaction have you been getting from clients?

A: I am so, so lucky to have such a wonderful client base who are so understanding and when I have informed them about cancellations and fees, they have been supportive.

Each booking is so different and



I have been making sure I take the time to keep in touch and explain and keep them up to date with the latest progress and policies.

I have been very upfront with them too, and some have even offered to pay for me having to do extra hours on their bookings.

Q: Do you think agents have been unfairly criticised over cancellation fees?

A: Definitely! I think at times we all undervalue the service we provide but what we need to remember is that clients have to pay for any professional service they engage.

I think everyone is under major stress and shock and often it brings out the worst in people. I am not charging additional cancellation fees, however I have been protecting my commission and explaining this to clients.

Q: How will the travel industry recover from this crisis?

A: For me, most of my clients want to keep credits and travel in 2021, which is so heartening.

However, I think it will depend on the economy and whether people have the disposable income for travel into 2021/22. I have not seen any decrease in cruise uptake yet, as I have been making some new bookings.

There are so many aspects to

this question (obviously if there are restrictions for self-isolation on return, restrictions for clients with pre-existing conditions on cruises, etc) the recovery of the industry really depends on the medical advances they make with the virus too... quicker testing and vaccines etc.

Q: Will the role of travel agents become even more important post-COVID?

A: I think so: we are experts in our field and hopefully the public will respect that and all that we have done post COVID. Hopefully agents will also have more confidence to charge what they deserve too!

Q: Are there any positives at all that can be taken from this situation?

A: Yes, I have reclaimed some time for myself and spent some time thinking about the business and the clients I want moving forward. Also, I hope that this situation highlights and enforces all agents to update their schedule of fees.

Q: Finally, how have you been passing the time in self-isolation?

A: I have been "ISO" cleaning and rearranging! Also cooking, going for walks with family and playing board games too... something I have not done for a while.

■ travelcounsellors.com.au

Travel Counsellors have reached number one in a survey reviewing customers' experiences with travel companies during the corona virus pandemic.

The survey initiated by MoneySavingExpert.com, the finance and consumer affairs site founded by Martin Lewis, was completed by more than 27,000 people and names Travel Counsellors as the travel business that comes out on top.



Happier times: Kerry in San Francisco during a famil with fellow PTMs in 2017

How Kerry kept the dream alive

Helping clients achieve their holiday dreams is at the heart of what travel agents do. But how do you do that in the middle of a global pandemic? Kerry Cleasby used her skills to come up with a creative solution.

DURING THE early days of COVID-19, Kerry Cleasby was busy repatriating clients from Europe and elsewhere.

Borders were closing rapidly, flights were being cancelled unexpectedly and Kerry still had several 18-to 20-year olds in Europe that got caught out by the fast-moving situation.

Naturally, all the parents were concerned but Kerry, a South Brisbane based five-year veteran with TravelManagers, managed to get them onto the last remaining flights home.

Several teary mums joked that they had not realised that Kerry's job was to make lots of mothers' cry.

With all her clients safely home, borders closed and passports packed away, Kerry's business came to a halt. She was kept busy processing refunds

and issuing future travel credits for her remaining clients, who were (and still are) cancelling and postponing their travel.

Kerry was feeling very sombre about getting back to creating holidays when to her surprise she received an email from a client who had been booked to walk Spain's Camino de Santiago later this month.

Admitting to 'cabin fever', the client wanted Kerry to start planning a holiday which she could take quickly when the borders reopened.

"My client loves walking holidays and while an experienced overseas walker, she had not explored many of the opportunities available in Australia," said Kerry.

"She was about to Google what was available but recognised what a difficult time it was for the travel industry.

"So rather than jump online, research and book she wanted to support me and provide me with the opportunity to tailor her 'coming out of COVID' walking holiday."

Kerry started close to home, contacting Spicers Retreats, who she knew were about to launch an incredible five-day walk on the Scenic Rim.

"Spicers' Director of Sales gave me a

great update on all their Queensland products, which properties were open or due to reopen.

"I explored inclusions that I could add to the client's trip that she would not be able to get by booking online.

"Additionally, and with the help of Tourism Western Australia, I investigated an inspiring itinerary called 'Australia's most Instagrammable road trip' from Perth to Esperance and then added another great walk known as 'The Cape to Cape'.

"This was just what my client was seeking. She was thrilled and responded with a photo of the itinerary pinned to her vision board."

In undertaking her research Kerry tactfully explained to each operator that clients are now reluctant to put down money until government restrictions are lifted.

Kerry added that she wanted to assure her client that she could either rebook at no additional cost or obtain a full refund should travel restrictions be reintroduced.

"People are incredibly caring and generous in times of crisis. I have continued to be active on social media and by phone, staying connected and relevant to my clients and hoping to inspire their travel dreams.

"Most people really want to support small local businesses like me and I have been overwhelmed by messages of concern and offers of support.

"I cannot explain the feeling of elation when I was asked to do what I love most about my job, which is creating and designing holidays."

■ travelmanagers.com.au

AFTA CALLS FOR YOUR SUPPORT

AGENTS ARE being asked to back efforts by the Australian Federation of Travel Agents (AFTA) to persuade the Government to extend the JobKeeper program.

AFTA has been working closely with Government since the start of the pandemic to:

1. Highlight the economic hit travel agents have taken, the problems agents are facing and the unique situation agents are in
2. Reinforce the critical importance of travel agents to the tourism sector and the Australian economy
3. Push for Government support including financial assistance.

Agents are being asked to contribute to an AFTA sentiment survey, which will provide further reinforcement of its case to government of the need for additional support including the extension of the eligibility of JobKeeper.

"Treasury and Government have made it very clear that they need hard facts and data to determine the expansion of eligibility for JobKeeper," said Tom Manwaring, Chair of AFTA.

"We are fighting on multiple fronts and we want to make sure that our message does not get diluted or confused.

"Writing a letter to your MP might make you feel good but it may in fact be counter-productive to AFTA's efforts and may not assist with the process at this late stage."

■ surveymonkey.com/r/AFTAMAY2020

IN BRIEF///

EXPOSURE DOWNUNDER are offering agents a complimentary two-night stay in the Bay of Islands in New Zealand.

The complimentary package, valued at \$NZ626 (approx. \$AU584) includes two nights in a two bedroom Airbnb cottage in Kerikeri, bed and breakfast, wine tasting at Marsden Estate winery and a day pass to the Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

To register interest and find out about terms and conditions, email mark@exposuredownunder.com

Looking beyond Corona

BEYOND TRAVEL has launched a new campaign to support the industry and to assist agents looking for travel opportunities in 2021.

The 'Beyond Corona' campaign includes 15 per cent commission on select 2021 Croatian Cruise bookings during the promotional period until the end of August.

The company has released a snap offer on selected Cruise Croatia small ship itineraries for 2021, with savings of 20 per cent up to 75 per cent available on 2021 products.

Plus a bonus \$49 per person 'Risk Free' deposit offer, this deposit is fully refundable until the end of August should clients change their minds for any reason.

"We appreciate selling currently is challenging, but we want to reach out to our supportive agents and assist with some much needed additional cash flow through this difficult period," said Bryce Crampton, General Manager of Sales and Marketing.

"We are working hard to leverage our long standing relationships throughout our destinations to extend the 15 per cent commission offer, the deposit guarantees and further discounts on a range of 2021 services over the coming months and encourage agents to ensure they are signed up to our newsletter to receive alerts as more offers become available."

■ cruise-croatia.com.au/cruises/escape-to-2021



BOOK IT NOW



A Larapinta campfire. Picture courtesy Australian Walking Holidays

New safety practices keeping tours perfect

WORLD EXPEDITIONS has introduced a no deposit booking offer on its award-winning Australian and New Zealand trips in 2020 and 2021.

In addition to the offer, the company's domestic divisions have enhanced their robust operating procedures and practices, adding new measures around COVID-19 to ensure

travellers' safety and minimise the risk of spreading the virus.

The COVID-specific practices include new screening procedures for clients pre-departure, mandatory temperature taking on tour, rules to ensure all passengers travelling in group vehicles wear masks, deep cleaning of vehicles and equipment, along with new rules

governing food preparation.

"With the very real possibility of Australia and New Zealand opening the bubble for cross Tasman tourism, we expect to see strong demand from travellers keen to get out and enjoy the stunning natural environments," said Sue Badyari, CEO of World Expeditions.

"Adventure travel in the two countries will be hugely appealing to people who have done the right thing during this isolation period and are keen to travel again."

World Expeditions offers a range of self-guided and guided walking adventures as well as multi-activity active adventures in every state in Australia and in the Northern Territory.

Across the Tasman, trips include self-guided and guided cycling holidays, along with many Great Walks of New Zealand.

"We have operated trips in Australia and New Zealand, building infrastructure and supporting local tourism with our unique itineraries, for more than two decades.

"This experience will serve us very well as travellers are likely to have to holiday close to home in the short term."

■ worldexpeditions.com

Find more fun in Newfoundland



Fogo Island

AUSSIES SEEKING new horizons to explore in 2021 can circle Canada's wild island of Newfoundland as part of a new expedition voyage.

The 11-night 'Newfoundland Circumnavigation' package is being offered by Adventure Canada and Australian small ship specialists, Cruise Traveller.

The journey begins in St. John's in Canada on September 30, 2021, and includes one-night's pre-cruise accommodation. St. John's is a fishing village with its own brewery where you can taste 10 award-winning ales and lagers, or drop into the Plantation Village for handmade local crafts.

Guests then embark on a 10-night circumnavigation of Newfoundland – the world's 16th largest island. It is also home to three World Heritage sites – Gros Morne National Park, L'Anse aux Meadows and Red Bay National Historic Site – all of which are visited

on the cruise. Sailing is aboard the 198-passenger, eco-friendly *Ocean Endeavour*.

Highlights include a traditional welcome at Miawpukek First Nation Reserve and hiking at Gros Morne National Park, a geological phenomenon where the Earth's mantle protrudes through its crust.

The itinerary also features a visit to the restored, 1,000-year-old Norse settlement of L'Anse aux Meadows, the earliest evidence of European presence in North America.

Until October 31, Adventure Canada and Cruise Traveller are offering a 15 per cent discount for bookings, with fares now starting at \$US5,945 (approx. \$AU9,200) per person twin share.

Fares include all shipboard meals and Zodiac excursions. Flights from Australia are extra and relaxed booking conditions apply until June 30.

■ cruisetraveller.com.au



Making memories in the magical Maldives

TICK OFF three once-in-a-lifetime experiences all in the same place thanks to a new package from Anantara Kihavah Maldives Villas.

The six-night room package has been designed to commemorate the resort's reopening later this year.

Unique to the destination and also exclusively available at this Indian Ocean retreat, the experiences include snorkelling with manta rays, stargazing at the only over water observatory in the Maldives and fine dining underwater at SEA, one of the world's few oceanic restaurants.

The abundance of krill and plankton that accumulates in Hanifaru Bay during the months of May to November makes the resort the ideal place to witness manta rays up close. Curious and friendly, they often swim within centimetres of snorkellers.

Nestled within Anantara Kihavah's house reef, SEA houses more than 450

wine labels and vintages dating from 1795. Enjoy a gourmet three-course lunch carefully paired with fine wines handpicked by the resident expert, while enjoying panoramic views of marine life among the vibrant corals.

With its proximity to the equator, the Maldives is an astronomer's paradise and the resort offers views of both the southern and northern sky. Custom-built for such stargazing encounters, SKY is a unique cocktail bar and home to the most powerful telescope in the region.

The 'Best of Kihavah Experiences' package is priced for two adults with rates starting from \$US8,800 (approx. \$AU13,600). It includes a choice of beach pool villa or overwater villa and half board consisting of breakfast and dinner at three restaurants.

Guests must stay for a minimum of six nights or more and the package is valid until October 31, 2021.

■ kihavah-maldives.anantara.com

BOOK IT NOW



Discount deal for Derby day

IF YOU'VE ever fancied a trip to the Kentucky Derby then here's a special offer that might get you off and racing.

The American Queen Steamboat Company is offering savings of up to \$US800 (approx. \$AU1,200) per couple and a free beverage package on a nine-day 'Kentucky Derby Cruise' in 2021.

Starting on April 25, the eight-night journey begins with a hotel stay in Cincinnati before boarding the all-suite paddle wheeler *American Duchess*. From here you'll wind south-west to Indiana and into Kentucky, stopping at Brandenburg, Owensboro and Louisville.

Guests will also have the rare opportunity of competing in The Great American Steamboat Race, which runs prior to the Kentucky Derby. *American Duchess* will not only be participating, she will be looking to regain the Silver Antlers from her 2018 victory.

The package includes tickets to the race held annually on the first Saturday of May since 1875. Get dressed up and revel in one of America's greatest events, witnessing the sights, sounds, colours and tradition of the Derby.

Prices start from \$US4,597 (approx. \$AU7,123) per person twin share for an interior stateroom. The discount and package deal is valid for bookings made before June 30.

■ cruisetraveller.com.au



STAY ON YOUR OWN PRIVATE ISLAND

TOBERUA ISLAND Resort in Fiji is offering guests the opportunity to book the entire island – including its 16 beachfront bures – for their exclusive use.

Located in the middle of a lagoon and easily accessible from the east coast of Fiji's main island of Viti Levi, Toberua is a privately-owned island set on one-and-a-half hectares of tropical gardens.

Narelle Christoffersen-Langton, WRD Resort Marketing Manager, said the resort's Full Island Charter offer

is perfect for travellers who want to spend quality time with their family and friends in a secluded setting.

"Whether you're celebrating a milestone birthday, a special anniversary, renewal of vows, a wedding, or simply looking for an excuse to escape with your besties, now is the time to book the only destination befitting your wildest holiday imaginings."

This exclusive experience starts from \$NZ12,990 (approx. \$AU12,118) per group per night. It includes private

rental of the entire island and its 16 bures for up to 36 adults, meals for up to 36 adults and return transfers to and from Nausori Airport for every guest.

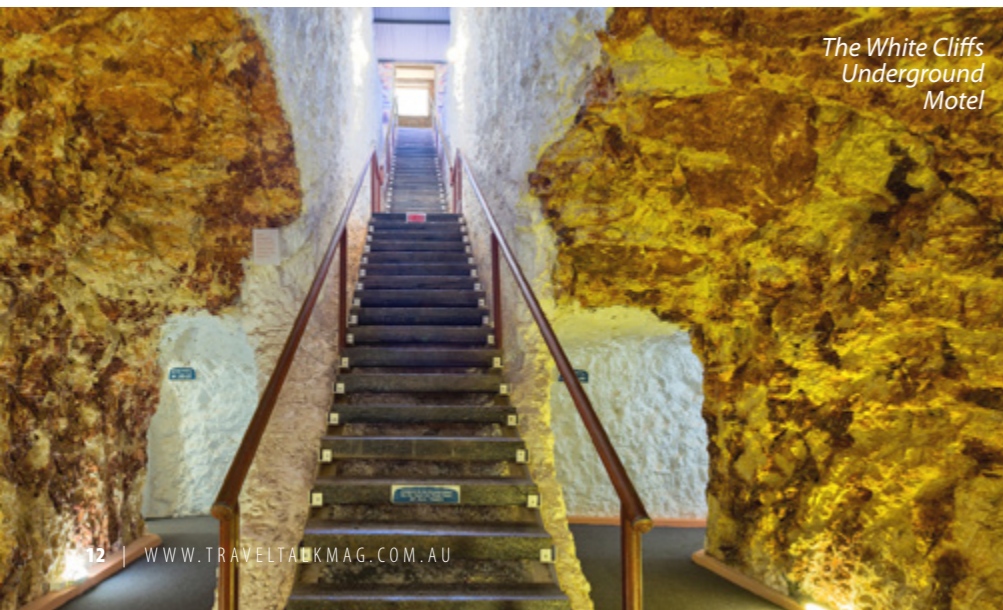
The offer is subject to availability and eligible for bookings of minimum three nights between now and March 31, 2022. Sales are available between now and November 30.

Toberua's Full Island Charter offer is also combinable with a complimentary Renewal of Vows or Sweet & Simple Wedding package. ■ toberua.com

Nothing ordinary about these offers

OUT OF the Ordinary Outback has released special accommodation offers to help travellers enjoy the sunshine and vast spaces of far west NSW.

The company's properties in Broken Hill and Wilcannia will re-open on June 1 and in White Cliffs from July 1 following a relaxation of travel restrictions in NSW.



The White Cliffs Underground Motel

NEW OFFERS:

✦ Stay at the world-renowned White Cliffs Underground Motel for one night for \$149 per room (including continental buffet breakfast) and stay a second night for half price when the property re-opens on July 1.

✦ Stay by a billabong at Warramong on the Darling near Wilcannia (cabins \$125 a night, caravan sites \$40) for one or more nights and then receive a \$40 discount at the White Cliffs Underground Motel one hour away (\$109 a night after the discount).

✦ Stay at more than one property in Out of the Ordinary Outback's portfolio and receive a five per cent discount at each property as part of your multi-property package.

✦ Stay at one of the Broken Hill properties and receive a discount off a day or multi-day tour with Tri State Safaris.

There is no deadline on the offers. ■ brokenhilloutbackresort.com.au



THE PATHWAY TO RECOVERY

In this exclusive article, CAMERON HOLLAND, CEO of Luxury Escapes, suggests how the travel industry can bounce back from corona virus.

WE'VE NEVER seen an impact on the travel industry like COVID-19, with significant travel bans, border closures and mandates not to travel taking a huge toll on Australia's tourism operators.

I particularly feel for local, small business ground operators who have gone from thriving to no travellers literally overnight, especially so soon after the bushfire tragedy in January, but in truth everyone in the tourism industry is hurting at the moment.

Having worked with hundreds of businesses across the Australian travel industry, I know our industry is resilient.

For travel operators to succeed in the months ahead, my advice is to focus on two key things: flexibility and emergent holiday formats.

REBUILDING TRAVEL WITH FLEXIBILITY AT THE CORE

Moving quickly to respond to a significant increase in customer enquiries and booking changes was key for all travel operators in the first weeks of the outbreak.

At Luxury Escapes, our team had to quickly go from changing around 1,000 bookings a month to more than 50,000 since March.

To make sure we could work 24/7 to answer calls, emails and social media queries we increased staffing in our contact centre and redeployed and



Cameron Holland, CEO of Luxury Escapes

retrained staff from other areas of the business to support during this time.

We didn't always get it right and the speed of the downturn put a lot of pressure on everyone, but in general we have been humbled by the patience and understanding of our customers and suppliers during this difficult time.

As the situation continues to stabilise and even improve in the coming months, as intrastate and then interstate travel returns, customers will continue to expect a level of flexibility.

Many customers will want to rebook or organise new dates for their trip once they are able, even if that is to a different destination.

Travel companies should be prepared to enable booking date changes online and revisit their policies in light of the current state.

We re-introduced a 'Buy Now, Decide Later' feature, where customers can choose the destination or deal they'd like to book, without having to select dates upfront. We expect features like this will remain popular for some time.

NEW WAYS TO TAKE AN AUSSIE HOLIDAY

We know Australians everywhere are keen to get out and see their own backyard, particularly after months of lockdown.

As we now begin to see an easing of restrictions across Australia, it's important for travel and tourism businesses to plan for the road ahead.

So far, our customer data has generally mirrored where the states are at in easing restrictions. Those that are further ahead in reducing travel restrictions are already seeing intrastate travel interest and bookings, and announcements in New South Wales and Victoria have helped to drive consumer confidence.

We can also expect the type of holidays Australians want to take will be shaped by the impact of COVID-19 as well as restrictions for some time ahead.

We'll see more driving holidays as people choose to see Australia in their own vehicle rather than on a flight and the earlier openings of national parks suggest camping, hiking and fishing holidays will bounce back quicker.

Historically, Aussies have chosen to take shorter and more frequent domestic trips compared with their overseas travel, but expect this to change with domestic travel likely to be our only form of travel for some time.

Some 8.5 million international travellers came to Australia last year, but Australians took more than 6.3 million overseas holidays last year (*).

While the road to recovery will take time, if enough Aussies get out there and see their own backyard this year, we'll be on our way to a stronger, more robust economy for travel operators of all sizes.

■ luxuryescapes.com

*Source: edition.cnn.com/travel/article/tourism-australia-live-from-au

PROTECTING THE FUTURE OF TRAVEL AGENTS

The travel industry has been one of the hardest hit during this pandemic and travel agents have often borne the brunt of consumer anger. In this passionate and thought-provoking article, CHAD CAREY, co-founder of Chimu Adventures, defends those at the front line and discusses why agents must be seen as a valuable part of the community.

COVID-19! I know we're all sick of hearing those words in the travel industry.

The financial impacts of the virus are obviously far reaching on the economy generally, but you'd be challenged to find an industry which has been impacted more than travel and tourism.

Travel was the hit first and, no doubt, will be the last to recover.

Like everyone, I'm very grateful for the Federal Government's JobKeeper program, which has allowed us to keep most of our staff in Australia, in at least some capacity.

But also, like everyone else in the travel industry, I'm aware that JobKeeper will expire in September. I think it's reasonably obvious that as a country, we're unlikely to be travelling internationally until at least 2021.

So we all sit and hope that the Federal Government will come up with a solution to help the industry

survive until borders reopen.

In the meantime, the disruption of this whole event has made me reflect on what we do at Chimu Adventures and more broadly the impact on the travel industry, including those outside Australia, without the luxury of JobKeeper.

Aside from the obvious financial challenges associated with this event, I feel that there have been some other, potentially more impactful outcomes that may end up having larger, longer term consequences.

In particular I'm talking about how people within the travel industry have been treated in the last few months.

Before I joined the travel industry, I was an engineer. Even at the time I was very cognisant of the fact that I made the move into travel because it was something I enjoyed.

I certainly didn't do it for the money! I took a pay cut from my reasonably secure engineering role to start Chimu



Chad Carey, co-Founder
Chimu Adventures

Adventures in the first place.

I made the move because I felt passionate about travel and the idea of helping others explore the world also excited me.

Over the years this feeling was only reinforced as we received letters from people explaining how their trips with Chimu had opened their minds and made them a different person.

I've also witnessed this firsthand while hosting many of our Antarctica departures. My guess is that this is the sort of thing that keeps many of us in the travel industry.

So what I have found disappointing in the past months is how I have seen some clients react to travel agents and travel companies more broadly.

Like anything, I feel that these people are a minority, but they have been a very loud and rather forceful minority.

Travel is a complicated financial transaction and I can understand the initial confusion, but it has astounded me that, once explained, people are still unsympathetic.

At Chimu, we had a lot of people travelling in March and April, when things started to go wrong. Obviously our first reaction was to try to get people home and we mostly did that.

Next, we looked at what was going to happen with those people who were travelling in March and April in particular, many of whom had not received all their services.

The issue was that many of the operators and hotels we were using still had all their overheads in this period and were very reluctant to give any kind of refund or credit.

A lot of our major operators were obviously facing concerns about their own viability and employment of their team members going forward.

I felt that we had a responsibility to all stakeholders in this situation. In short, we had to find a solution that got as much for our clients, while also assisting our tour operators and suppliers to survive for the longer term.

In the end we negotiated a credit arrangement which saw most of our clients get a full credit for future use, without needing our suppliers to provide refunds in the short term. I know many of our peers have come up with similar policies.

I'd also note that I'm personally in a similar situation with trips that I've booked. In fact I was supposed to be leaving for a surf trip to Indonesia recently.

Like so many others I have only been offered a credit from both the airline and tour operator, but knowing the impacts on the travel industry, I quickly agreed to these credits and just moved my trip back 12 months.

Most of our clients have also accepted the terms of our credit arrangement, which I'm most grateful for. However, there has certainly been a portion of clients who have not been happy.

We have tried to explain the logic of our system and how we're trying to get the balance right. But the complaints have kept coming and the venom behind some of them has made my eyes blink.

What I think strikes me most is how

“Let's try to find a way to get the community to see us all as a valuable service with real people, rather than allow populist current affairs programmes to just demonise us.”

the travel industry has been treated compared to some other areas of our community.

Restaurateurs and entertainers have been impacted severely too (although they weren't impacted as early as the travel industry) but communities seem to have rallied around these businesses.

I have numerous friends whose jobs haven't been impacted but have bought takeaway more regularly than they normally would to "help these restaurants out".

And I guess there is an element of this community spirit in the people who have willingly accepted travel credits and other solutions that travel companies have offered.

That aside, there still seems to be a lot of ill intent aimed at travel companies, as some of the recent stories throughout different media outlets have shown.

Your local, family-owned travel agency is just as much a part of the community as say, your local fish and chip shop. Why aren't people in the community upset about the impact on the travel industry? How can we make them aware and help them care

a little more?

I worry that, if we can't generate this community concern for the travel industry, we're going to lose many good people.

As I said at the start, I think most of us got into the travel industry because it was a passion for us.

Let's try to find a way to get the community to see us all as a valuable service with real people, rather than allow populist current affairs programmes to just demonise us.

One way I've tried to do this is to share the recent SBS *Dateline* story titled "What happens to Machu Picchu when all the tourists disappear?" to help consumers understand what the real world impacts are.

At Chimu we have also tried to find ways to help exactly the kind of people impacted by this story: hardworking people in the travel industry working on the ground in developing countries and without a safety net.

In a recent brainstorming session we organised, James McAlloon (*Chimu's relationship manager for Queensland*) brought up the hair-brained idea of walking across Australia to raise funds for people in the travel industry in Peru.

James has called this "Footsteps for Food" and we're also using this story to help educate consumers around the challenges for real people in these locations.

If we don't support all facets of the supply chain in travel then there will be no infrastructure for travellers to use for their own pleasure in the future. It is in everyone's best interest to protect the very leisure they love.

■ chimuadventures.com



Port Douglas



Indonesia

AUSSIES REVEAL THEIR HOME AND AWAY FAVES

A NEW survey has revealed the destinations both home and abroad that top the wish lists of Australians once travel restrictions are lifted.

America, the United Kingdom and Italy are still among the top 10 overseas destinations, showing Australians are not deterred from countries worst affected by corona virus.

With talk of a potential trans-Tasman bubble opening up later this month, New Zealand appears at number six on the international wish lists, while Indonesia tops the charts.

The findings from [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

also point to an increased presence of domestic properties featuring in our future travel plans.

Closer to home, the top domestic destinations included main centres such as Melbourne, Sydney, The Gold Coast, Brisbane and Perth, suggesting that travel for business and 'staycations' are at the forefront of travel imaginations.

Outside of the state capitals, the data showed that Aussies are eager to support their regional tourism hotspots including Cairns, Byron Bay and Port Douglas.

■ [Booking.com](https://www.booking.com)

Top international destinations wish listed by Aussies:

- | | |
|--------------|----------------|
| 1. INDONESIA | 6. NEW ZEALAND |
| 2. U.S.A | 7. ITALY |
| 3. THAILAND | 8. GREECE |
| 4. UK | 9. VIETNAM |
| 5. JAPAN | 10. FRANCE |

Top local destinations (excluding state capitals) wish listed:

- | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. GOLD COAST | 7. NEWCASTLE |
| 2. CAIRNS | 8. MOOLOOLABA |
| 3. BYRON BAY | 9. COFFS HARBOUR |
| 4. PORT DOUGLAS | 10. PORT MACQUARIE |
| 5. NOOSA HEADS | |
| 6. AIRLIE BEACH | |

Australia: in terms of visitor arrivals it is number two, just behind China and accounts for just under 13 million visitor nights. Kiwis also have a very high awareness of tourism products in Australia."

Other segments Australia could consider opening up our borders for include 'high yield – long term' strategic international visitors such as international students and working holiday makers. Both segments are able to stay in Australia for up to and more than a year.

Domestic travel is also hugely important and likely to be the first option available to Australians.

"Our domestic tourism sector was worth \$80 billion in 2019 and it's a great way to get the economy kick-started," added Dr Jarvis.

"If people can't travel to Europe, Asia, the U.S. etc, they'll likely opt to travel interstate, further boosting the economic recovery."

be a great way to boost both our tourism industries. There is also a great opportunity to include Pacific destinations such as Fiji, as tourism is a key economic pillar for them."

Some 1.3 million Kiwis visited Australia in 2019, contributing more than \$2.6 billion to the economy. Each NZ visitor spends more than \$2,000 in Australia.

"New Zealand is a key market for



OPENING UP a trans-Tasman bubble would be a great way to support the recovery phase of the travel industry.

"Travel bubbles are a hot topic globally, many destinations are currently considering them," said Dr Jeff Jarvis, Director, Graduate Tourism Program (Faculty of Arts), at Monash University.

"Executed safely, travel between Australia and New Zealand would

GET READY FOR A NEW GENERATION

THE TRAVEL industry will see the birth of a new generation of travellers post-COVID-19.

That's the prediction of a leading data firm who believe that 'Gen-C' won't be defined by traditional demographics such as age. They will also need reassurance and evidence that their overseas' experience will enhance their lives without putting their loved ones at risk.

"The impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry will be enduring," said Ben Cordwell, Travel & Tourism Analyst at GlobalData.

"The creation of a new type of clientele seems a totally feasible and likely outcome. Tourism companies need to take this into account while



formulating strategies post-COVID-19, as regular assurances will not be enough to attract customers."

Tourism companies need to have measures in place to ensure the highest standard of health and hygiene procedures. Contingency plans will also need to be clearly

outlined to customers, helping to restore some confidence that their safety is of the highest priority.

"Once this kind of procedure becomes the norm, customers may start to relax their need for reassurances."

■ [globaldata.com](https://www.globaldata.com)

A timetable for travel

AUSTRALIANS MAY be able to travel overseas as soon as next month if a new timetable created by the Tourism Restart Taskforce is accurate.

The schedule, which was approved at the last meeting of the group

on May 22, reveals that travel to New Zealand and the Pacific could commence from July 1, other nations considered "safe" from September 10 and all countries from December 15.

Travel could recommence with a

'proof of concept' flight between Canberra and Wellington, carrying government, media and business representatives.

"These two cities have had a very low incidence of COVID and several days and weeks with no cases, they are sister cities, capital cities and both hubs of business," said John Hart, Chairman of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Tourism.

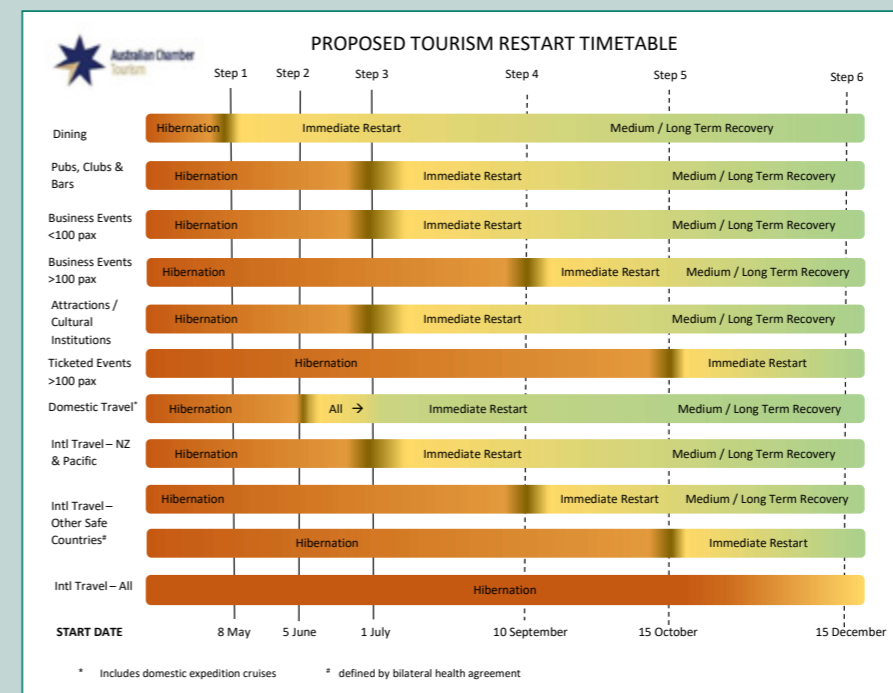
"We have done a lot of discussion with the NZ side and they are saying we are good to go."

Passengers would not need to be quarantined on arrival into New Zealand or when they return.

Hart said the Department of Health would ultimately decide when and which individual countries would be safe to travel to.

"It will be market by market – we just don't know where countries will be at with COVID when we get to that stage."

Despite the positive news, the International Association of Travel Agents predicts airlines will only be at 50 per cent pre-COVID capacity by the end of 2020 and may only return to pre-COVID capacity by the end of 2022.



Consumers keep the faith with agents

AUSSIERS ARE ready to travel again and the corona virus pandemic has done nothing to shake consumer faith in travel agents.

These were the major findings in a survey conducted by host agency Your Travel & Cruise.

The survey of 1,600 Australians, all clients of Your Travel & Cruise home-based travel agents, revealed that nine out of 10 would consider a cruise in the future on the proviso that there would be stricter health and hygiene measures in place.

"I feel the cruise industry needs to convince the travelling public that they have made significant changes to ensure passenger safety," commented one respondent.

"Cruise lines need to employ more doctors and nurses per ratio of passengers and crew," suggested another.

While the pandemic has left a negative impression of cruising on 28 per cent of those surveyed, 42 per cent still have a positive view of cruise holidays. The remaining 30 per cent were neutral.

Comments from respondents suggested that they would be more likely to try a small cruise ship and cruise locally at first, with travel insurance key to making them feel

confident about booking their next cruise holiday.

Les Farrar, Managing Director, Your Cruise & Travel, said he hoped the survey results would buoy the besieged cruise industry.

"The cruise industry has been among the hardest hit by the corona virus, with many questioning how it will bounce back.

"These results show that most Australians aren't giving up on cruising and have faith that cruise lines will make the necessary changes to ensure they can once again enjoy a holiday at sea.

"With nearly six per cent of the population taking a cruise each year, Australians are the most prolific cruisers in the world and these statistics underline the important role they will play in helping to revive the industry in the years to come."

In terms of eagerness to travel post-pandemic, around two-thirds of those surveyed (62 per cent) said they wanted to travel locally this year, while 85 per cent said they would be happy to holiday in the South Pacific region even before a COVID-19 vaccine was developed.

The only blip on the radar was long haul travel with 56 per cent of respondents saying they would not



Les Farrar, Managing Director, Your Cruise & Travel

travel to destinations such as Europe or the USA until there was a vaccine.

The survey found that most (71 per cent) Australians felt the same about booking a holiday through an agent as they did before the pandemic and only 15 per cent would be less likely to use an agent now.

While some (38 per cent) felt that agents' handling of the crisis had harmed their reputation, most (50 per cent) said their perception was unchanged.

The survey also revealed that 71 per cent of people were happy to receive travel marketing, paving the way for agents to open lines of communication with their clients now.

"This pandemic has had a widespread and devastating effect on our industry and a lot of people are doing it tough but this survey shows that travel is going to bounce back quickly and in a big way, starting with our backyard.

"Now is the time to talk to clients about taking that trip to Queensland or hopping across the Tasman to explore all that New Zealand has to offer because Australians' love of travel hasn't waned amid the pandemic and most of us are ready to pack our bags and go as soon as we have the green light."

■ yourtravelcentre.com.au

SEVEN STEPS TO SAFETY

AVALON WATERWAYS has developed a new program to safeguard the health and happiness of travellers throughout their river cruise.

The Avalon Assurance program features seven major categories and protocols that span across guest experience touch points.

"The world has changed but what remains certain is our steadfast commitment to our guests' safety, comfort and peace of mind," said Pam Hoffee, Managing Director of Avalon Waterways.

"To that end, we have established a global health and safety team dedicated to ensuring that the cleanliness of all operations exceeds today's standards from start to finish."

The seven initiatives include:

WELCOME ABOARD

Avalon has plans to unveil new embarkation procedures that provide travellers a safe start to their journey. Among the company's planned changes are mandatory health screenings, including touch-free temperature checks and luggage disinfection, prior to boarding.

FRESH AIR – INSIDE & OUT

Eighty per cent of Avalon Waterways' cabins are Panorama Suites, offering guests an open air experience on each ship.

In addition to open air staterooms, the air in Avalon's ships is not circulated between staterooms; only within an individual stateroom and mixed with fresh, outside air.

NEW TECHNOLOGY TO ENSURE CLEANLINESS

To further advance the new Assurance protocols, the company is also introducing top-of-the-line technologies including electrostatic cleaning systems and UV disinfecting systems.

TOUCHING HEARTS, NOT HANDS

There will also be more risk-free and hands-free services onboard, such as extra hand sanitiser stations throughout the ship (including all public areas); replacing buffet and self-serve stations with crew services and hourly disinfection (at a minimum) of all public areas.

BLENDING CULTURAL PROXIMITY WITH SOCIAL DISTANCE

River cruising affords guests an unparalleled opportunity to enjoy the world around them, docking in the heart of destinations.

Avalon will continue to deliver this, with more space for social distancing including reducing ship capacity and alternative dining venues as well as providing guests and crew masks for use, as needed or required.

COMMITMENT TO THE CLEANEST SHIPS

Avalon has an unwavering commitment to ship cleaning procedures. Some new steps that go above and beyond its already stringent policies include: deep-cleaning and disinfection of each stateroom during turnover – including

soft goods; disinfection of all dining areas between meals and disinfection of shared items such as bicycles or umbrellas after each use.

FOCUS ON CREW HEALTH AND EDUCATION

Ensuring a happy, healthy crew is also a priority. Standards include required medical screenings and certificates of health, new social distancing in crew living quarters and ongoing training in PPE use and hygiene.

In addition, Avalon is reviewing excursion standards and protocols with partners across the globe.

"We will continue to review and update our Assurance initiatives as we make the pivot back to the world's waterways," added Ms Hoffee.

"While we place a spotlight on guest safety and wellbeing, we will also deliver to our travellers a wonderful holiday. An escape that invites them to take part in the joy of discovering new places, new people and new cultures – everything they already expect from an Avalon Waterways cruise."

The company's global health and safety team is made up of experts from around the world. They adhere to – and build upon – the standards set by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) and United States Tour Operators Association (USTOA).

■ avalonwaterways.com.au/why-avalon/avalon-assurance



THE ORIGIN OF HOPE

A REMARKABLE tale of resilience and ingenuity has emerged as Silversea prepare to take delivery of their latest ship.

The De Hoop Shipyard in the Netherlands overcame unprecedented challenges during the construction of *Silver Origin*. In addition, the cruise line pushed the boundaries of engineering as the vessel neared completion.

Just four days after corona virus was declared a global pandemic, the Netherlands implemented a national

lockdown and the country ground to a halt.

The shipyard offered its employees the option to cease working but some 200 – mainly skilled carpenters – opted to continue, working tirelessly to apply their craftsmanship to the ship's guest suites.

In addition to rigorous protocols imposed by the Dutch health authority, De Hoop's professionals were protected by hygiene procedures developed by the shipyard itself.

They underwent daily temperature checks, enhanced cleaning procedures were established in the living quarters, the crew mess and throughout *Silver Origin*, and strict social distancing measures were implemented, including a 1.5m separation rule and a one-way system throughout the ship.

The shipyard fundamentally changed the way it operated to continue and complete the project. However, *Origin's* trials and tribulations weren't over yet.

January and February saw heavy rain across Western Europe, leading to unusually high water levels. This prevented *Silver Origin* from passing beneath the 12 bridges that separate De Hoop Shipyard from the sea for her sea trials.

Only in late March was a safe passage to Rotterdam accessible, more than a month later than originally planned.

Necessitated by the travel ban, which prevented sub-contractors from reaching the ship, *Origin's* sea trials included an historic world first.

During the dynamic positioning acceptance test (which tests the ship's ability to remain within 10cm of a fixed point without dropping anchor)

Origin's dynamic positioning system was remotely tuned and calibrated by a third party in St. Petersburg, Russia – more than 1,800km away.

A fast internet connection was set up onboard to enable near-instant communication between both parties and, using a headset and a camera, an operative from St. Petersburg completed manoeuvring tests. Meanwhile, the ship's Captain acted as his lookout from onboard.

"This was the first time such an operation has been completed remotely during a sea trial," said Fre Drenth, the Director of De Hoop Shipyard.

"It could potentially save a lot of travelling time for engineers in the future. I am enormously proud of my team for their work."

The finishing touches are now being applied to *Origin* ahead of the ship's delivery in the coming weeks. Currently docked in Pernis in the Netherlands, she will set sail for the Galapagos Islands after delivery to Silversea.

"*Silver Origin* looks magnificent. Our pioneering new ship represents the dawning of a new age of travel in the Galapagos Islands and we look forward to welcoming guests aboard when the time is right," said Roberto Martinoli, President and CEO, Silversea.

The cruise line is currently working on enhanced hygiene protocols across its fleet to ensure that all necessary precautions are in place to resume safe and healthy cruising when the time is right.

■ silversea.com



New policy changes aim to help agents

SILVERSEA HAVE unveiled some important policy updates to help support agents at this challenging time.

The changes have been introduced following direct company communication with agents, listening to their feedback and discussing new ideas.

Silversea will now pay commissions on cancelled voyages for all guests who have paid in full, regardless of whether they choose cash refunds or a future cruise credit. This is retroactive to the company's first cancellations in March.

This policy will remain active until Silversea is able to resume sailing, or until further notice.

For cruises departing prior to December 31, when a guest cancels under the Cruise with Confidence policy, if they have paid in full and take the Future Cruise Credit then agent commission is protected both on the cancelled booking and on the Future Cruise Credit when it is applied to a new booking.

When guests choose Silversea's enhanced 125 per cent Future Cruise Credit on a cancelled sailing, everyone benefits.

The guests get great value on a future voyage. Agent commission is fully protected on both the cancelled booking and the new booking when the Future Cruise Credit is fulfilled.

PROGRAM EXPANSION

To provide travellers with peace of mind when planning their

cruise, Silversea is also extending the previously announced Cruise with Confidence cancellation program to all voyages currently scheduled to depart before December 31.

Under the policy, guests may cancel their cruise for any reason up to 48 hours prior to sailing and receive a 100 per cent Future Cruise Credit for the amount paid, valid for two years from the date of issue.

When guests opt for Future Cruise Credit and have paid in full, the travel agent's commission is protected for both the cancelled booking and the future reservation on which the correlating Future Cruise Credit is applied.

REDUCED DEPOSIT

For any new booking made before June 30, Silversea has reduced its deposit requirement to \$1,500 per suite.

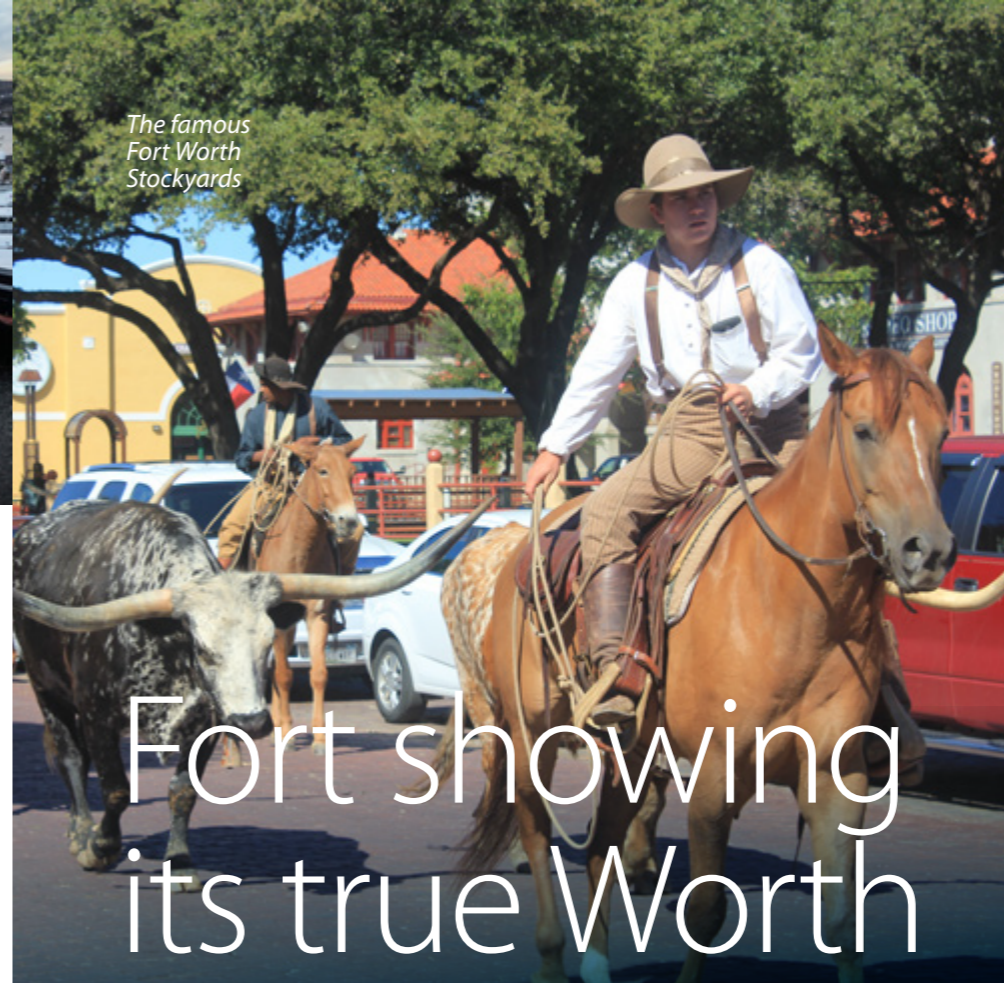
Guests who redeem this offer will also receive a \$US1,000 (approx. \$AU1,560) onboard spending credit per suite.

The reduced deposit offer applies to all Silversea voyages with the exception of full World Cruises and Grand Voyages. Guests in possession of Future Cruise Credit can also use their credit to take advantage of the offer.

Another option that's available is Silversea's Early Booking Bonus. If guests book a voyage from September 1 and beyond – and pay in full by June 30 – they'll receive an additional 10 per cent saving.



Left: Rodebay in Greenland. Above: Viking Star



Fort showing its true Worth



Mitch Whitten, Executive Vice President of Marketing at Visit Fort Worth

Make a date with a Viking

VIKING HAS unveiled a new departure date and attractive savings to be made on one of its most popular itineraries.

The 15-day 'In the Wake of the Vikings' voyage travels from Bergen in Norway to Montreal via Iceland and Greenland.

Departing September 1, 2021, the itinerary on *Viking Star* visits six countries and includes nine guided shore excursions. It is only offered once a year.

The itinerary traces the route of Icelandic Viking explorer Leif Eriksson, who discovered continental America

some 500 years before Christopher Columbus.

From the Norwegian mercantile city of Bergen, the voyage visits the rustic Shetland Islands in Scotland before sailing to the picturesque Faroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland.

After crossing the Labrador Sea, the ship calls on ancient Norse settlements at L'Anse aux Meadows in Newfoundland before sailing into Saguenay, Quebec City and cosmopolitan Montreal.

Priced from \$11,995 per person in a Veranda stateroom, the sailing includes

savings of \$1,000 per couple and is backed by Viking's Risk-Free Guarantee, delivering the freedom to change your cruise up to 24-hours prior to departure.

Agents can learn more about this cruise and some of the company's other popular voyages in the new interactive digital catalogue called 'Journeys Worth Planning', now available at Viking's Marketing Centre.

The Risk-Free Guarantee is valid for all bookings made before June 30. Savings per couple vary by itinerary; offer ends July 31.

■ vikingcruises.com.au/cruisedeals

A-ROSA BLOOMS ONCE AGAIN



PLANSTO restart selected departures on the Rhine and Danube this month have been revealed by A-Rosa River Cruises.

The move follows the relaxation of rules regarding the opening of hotels, restaurants, river and day cruises for tourists.

Further information relating to cruises in France and Portugal will be announced in due course.

"It goes without saying that our primary responsibility is for the welfare of our guests and crew," said Joerg Eichler, CEO of A-ROSA River Cruises.

"Therefore, we have put together a team of experts, consisting of both internal and external hygiene and health specialists."

The A-ROSA Care-Team has been working on a hygiene and health concept that embraces the current safety measures and distancing regulations for guests and crew.

"We know that the road to recovery will not be easy, but Aussies are very resilient travellers, eager to get going again," said Birgit Eisbrenner, Regional Director Australia and New Zealand.

"Coupled with the unmatched dedication displayed by travel agents in this part of the world, I am confident that we can welcome Australians back on our ships as soon as travel restrictions here get lifted."

■ arosa-cruises.com

IN BRIEF///

POSITIVE NEWS for the cruise industry with construction beginning on *Scenic Eclipse II* at a shipyard in Croatia.

The steel cutting of *Scenic Eclipse II* marks the start of five new custom-built vessels planned for the next six years across the group.

The new 228-guest ship will feature two six-guest helicopters, one six-guest submarine, 10 dining options, indoor and outdoor plunge pools.

Once complete, she will be the sister ship to *Scenic Eclipse*, following a successful first season sailing through destinations including the Arctic, Antarctica, Central and South America, and the Caribbean.

■ sceniceclipse.com

Mitch Whitten has been a regular visitor to Australia in his role as Executive Vice President of Marketing at Visit Fort Worth. Here, we ask him about living through corona virus in America and the effect the pandemic might have on tourism between our two countries.

Q: We've been extremely fortunate when compared to other countries. How have you found living in America during COVID-19?

A: Australia has done a great job. One of the remarkable things here, you're getting to see the heart of so many communities step up and take care of each other.

In both our countries, our tourism industries have been dealt a blow. We share a love for travel and are committed to the long road to reclaim our ability to roam.

Q: What effect will the pandemic have on your domestic and international travel?

A: Like most of the world, our recovery will begin with domestic road trips. Fort Worth is part of a seven million person "metroplex" and Austin, Houston and San Antonio are three to five hours away. People are already starting to move around, to get away for a weekend. But the recovery is just beginning.

International travel will certainly take years to get back to pre-COVID-19 levels. But we are very fortunate that our Dallas-Fort Worth Airport is one of the greatest in the world and well positioned to help lead the way forward.

Q: You've done a lot of work promoting Fort Worth Down Under. Are you worried that you'll be starting from scratch again post-corona virus?

A: Aussies have a great love for Texas... and the feeling is mutual. But we don't take this for granted. As soon as we are able, we will be back to share our hospitality and a big Texas welcome.

We are keeping ties, for now, with virtual content. Australians are among the international friends visiting our Kimbell Art Museum and listening to the Cliburn piano sessions online.

Q: So how will you promote FW once this is all over?

A: It's too early to tell exactly. But two

things are certain: DFW Airport and American Airlines, which is based in Fort Worth, will help set global standards in clean, safe arrivals. DFW has invested millions in innovation and will be at the forefront of the future.

Second, our hospitality will be as important as ever. Through this crisis you're seeing the character of each community. I'm so proud of the sacrifice and support in Fort Worth among business, music, restaurants and all the creative arts.

Q: Do you think the travel industry will recover from this crisis?

A: Humanity is social by nature and we are driven to discover. As Walt Disney once said, "We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths."

Will travel look different? Yes. Have we been set back? Yes. But people are already starting to explore again – even in their own cities. Our first visitors now are locals, finding new parts of their communities they did not know.

Q: Are there any positives at all that can be taken from this situation?

A: Yes. As tourism organisations we are asking how we can help our community rebuild? How can the visitor economy support our local goals? Preserving history. Celebrating creativity. Honouring local heroes.

Some describe this as community-based tourism. And it is a very exciting direction.

■ fortworth.com



ROOM FOR A FEED

THE SUCCESS of their 'Restaurant in Room' concept has forced Ovolo to expand and extend the program.

Initially launched at Ovolo Nishi Canberra with Monster Kitchen & Bar, the RinR scheme has been so popular the company has had to double the amount of bookings available.

They are now launching this in Sydney with Alibi Bar & Kitchen at Ovolo Woolloomooloo. RinR is an innovative dining concept which respects social distancing and allows people to have some R&R.

Australia's first 100 per cent plant-based hotel bar and restaurant, Alibi Bar & Kitchen offers a new side to plant-based dining within the walls of Woolloomooloo's Finger Wharf.

The property is now creating private dining rooms in hotel rooms on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights, or for something more special, an overnight stay.

Matthew Kenny's Kimchi dumplings and dishes created in collaboration with Alibi Head Chef Jordan Brogan, like the popular spicy udon and activated charcoal ravioli, are served while perched above the Woolloomooloo Wharf.

For a little extra pampering, guests can book the Ultraroo Suite which is kitted out with your very own bar, complete with socially distant bartender.

"We're all about adapting and evolving," said Vince Lombino, Group Food & Beverage Director.

"Canberra's had a taste of Ovolo's take on R in R, and they love it! We can't wait to see the same success with Alibi in Sydney."

A five-course dinner for two costs from \$130: with matching drinks from \$220. From an additional \$269, guests can enjoy an overnight stay in a Deluxaroo Loft, including Wi-Fi, in-room mini bar and breakfast.

■ ovolohotels.com



SAVE MONEY IF YOU LINGER MUCH LONGER

APARTMENT-HOTEL operator Nesuto has launched a special offer giving benefits to guests looking for an extended holiday.

The 'Stay Longer and Save' campaign targets stays of a minimum of 14 nights and delivers savings of 25 per cent off best flexible rates across the brand's Australasian properties.

With rates from \$110 a night (t&c's apply) offered, Stay Longer and Save is inclusive of once weekly housekeeping, parking for one car (at select properties) and unlimited Wi-Fi.

"Apartment hotels are ideal for longer stay guests as they offer many of the comforts of home," said Mark Ronfeldt, CEO Daiwa Living Nesuto.

"Our team members go above and beyond to ensure each guest has a personalised and memorable experience which provides them with the best apartment living, away from home stay, possible."

Nesuto's apartments offer a range of benefits for longer stay guests over traditional hotels including fully equipped kitchens, separate bedrooms, open plan living and dining spaces, as well as a place to work and internal laundry facilities.

The company's portfolio features public spaces with character and thoughtfully created guest apartments. Dedicated guest relations teams ensure stays are comfortable, personalised and memorable.

The group has a footprint of 1,100 keys in 14 properties over eight Australian and New Zealand locations.

■ nesuto.com



The return of the wing

ENCOURAGING SIGNS for our beleaguered travel industry with several major airlines resuming flights to Australia.

Emirates began operating scheduled flight services from May 21 to nine destinations, including Sydney and Melbourne. The airline is also offering connections in Dubai for customers travelling between the UK and Australia.

Travellers will only be accepted on these flights if they comply with the eligibility and entry criteria requirements of their destination countries.

"We are working closely with the authorities to plan the resumption of operations to additional destinations," said Al Redha, Emirates' Chief Operating Officer.

"We have implemented additional measures at the airport in coordination with the relevant authorities in respect to social distancing and sanitisation. The safety and wellbeing of our employees, customers and communities remain our top priority."

Qatar Airways has resumed services to Brisbane with three-weekly flights starting from May 20.

The flights are being operated by an Airbus A350-1000 offering 46 seats in business class and 281 seats in economy class with flights connecting through Hamad International Airport.

The airline is resuming services after previously receiving short-term approval to operate to Brisbane from late March to early April.

During this period Qatar Airways helped reunite more than 5,000 stranded travellers and transported more than 270 tonnes of cargo, including Australian agriculture exports.

"Our flights also provided Australians with an opportunity to come back home from various parts of the world including Europe, the Gulf and Middle East, Asia and others," said Mr. Akbar Al Baker, Group Chief Executive, Qatar Airways.

"We successfully completed this task, but now there are more travellers wanting to get home.

"With the resumption of these three-weekly flights, we are supporting critical passenger movements and aiming to alleviate

some of those anxieties."

Qatar Airways is now operating a total of 21 passenger flights per week to Australia: Brisbane (three), Perth (four), Melbourne and Sydney (both daily).

Ethihad Airways is operating a regular scheduled service from Melbourne to London Heathrow via Abu Dhabi and from May 21 has also introduced services from London Heathrow to Melbourne via Abu Dhabi.

The airline plans to maintain this link until it fully resumes its previous double daily connection between the two cities. Flights feature business and economy cabins.

■ emirates.com; qatarairways.com; etihad.com

EARLY XMAS GIFT FOR AUSSIES

AUSTRALIA'S DOMESTIC airline capacity could recover to 60 per cent of pre-corona virus levels by Christmas.

That's the prediction of the Centre for Aviation (CAPA), the world's most trusted source of market intelligence for the aviation and travel industry.

Based on a combination of analysis of government statements, airline projections and underlying demand, CAPA projects a slow, phased recovery in domestic air capacity in Australia through the remainder of 2020.

The organisation believes domestic capacity will reach 49 per cent of 2019 levels by the October school holidays and 60 per cent by mid-December.

"Australia is one of the best positioned countries globally to suppress the first wave of COVID-19 infection," said Peter Harbison, CAPA Chairman Emeritus.

"International will be hit harder and potentially take multiple years to recover. However this will be to the benefit of the domestic market – potentially also embracing Trans Tasman operations."

■ entreforaviation.com

WE WANT YOU BACK



Left: Jo Treasure, fifth generation farmer in Cowra. Above: Tom Ward cycling from Swinging Bridge. Below: Belinda Satterthwaite (right) from Tomolly store in Carcoar



Get your glamp on



AUSTRALIA'S FIRST 'glamping' retreat is reopening this month and is celebrating with a 30 per cent discount for Winter Escape weekends.

Paperbark Camp at Jervis Bay on the NSW South Coast is offering the special until August 29. It includes a saving on two nights' weekend accommodation in one of the elevated, luxurious glamping tents and dinner and breakfast in the camp's Gunyah Restaurant, nestled among the treetops.

First opened in 1999, the camp is a

luxury, eco retreat with elevated safari tents boasting polished hardwood flooring, double canvas roofs, outdoor deck seating and private open-air ensuites.

Guests will enjoy open campfires, luxury bedding, contemporary furnishings, free-standing bath tubs and hot showers overlooking the bush.

The raised tents are camouflaged among spotted gums and paperbark trees along the banks of Currumbene Creek just outside Huskisson. The camp is home to kangaroos, possums and colourful birdlife.

Located just a five-minute drive from the blue waters and white beaches of Jervis Bay, Paperbark is also a hub for adventure and relaxation, with several scenic walking trails and whales and dolphins in the surrounding waters.

Including the saving of 30 per cent, the new 'Winter Escape Weekend' package is available from \$995 per couple, including two nights' weekend accommodation, dinner each night and two cooked breakfasts.

■ paperbarkcamp.com.au

A NEW campaign encouraging Aussies to visit Central New South Wales has just been launched.

Entitled 'We want you back', the promotion features 27 local tourism personalities sharing their stories on what they love about their region with tips on things to see, do and taste now travel restrictions are lifted.

The campaign specifically targets the Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market which makes up 35 to 40 per cent of travellers within and across the region.

The \$30k initiative is a partnership between 10 local government areas, Orange360 and Central NSW Joint Organisation.

It features Orange, Blayney, Cabonne, Cowra, Bathurst, Oberon, Forbes, Lachlan, Weddin and Parkes.

"The aim of the 'We want you back' campaign is to create a personal connection between the locals and travellers we want to welcome back to help stimulate the economy," said Jenny Bennett, Executive Officer, Central NSW Joint Organisation.

"Friends and family will be some of the first to visit as they seek to spend time with loved ones and travel to a safe, familiar place.

"We need to make sure our region is at the top of everybody's must-visit list once they can travel to regional NSW again."

At the heart of the campaign is

the commissioning of storytelling by tourism heroes, including a series of video interviews (vox-pops), stills and memorable imagery.

The digital content was rolled out on June 1 across social media and digital channels and supported by a public relations and social media campaign. It was expedited in response to the Premier's announcement to allow travel from June 1.

The local heroes have been selected based on their unique tourism stories and contribution to the community.

They include Jeremy Norris of Byng Street Café in Orange, Fiona Schofield of Fiona Schofield Millinery and Fresh Fodder in Cabonne, Tom Ward of Swinging Bridge Wines in Canowindra and Chris Morgan from Abercrombie House in Bathurst.

Other tourism identities featured include Belinda Satterthwaite from Tomolly store in Carcoar, Wendy Muffet from Girra Girra retreat in Forbes, Tiffany Steel from the Parkes Elvis Festival, Kim Jones from the Railway Hotel Motel in Condobolin, Florist Skye Muddle from SM Style Design Create in Cowra and Meg Low from Oberon Farmers Markets.

"Central NSW is ideal to visit in the cooler months with its fresh country air, log fires, furry rugs, red wines and clear starry nights," added Ms Bennett.

"The tourism heroes will promote local food and wine experiences,

boutique shops, major attractions, art and culture, nature and historic villages."

An important part of the campaign is the Mayors of each region encouraging people to spend with local businesses. Travellers are reminded to maintain social distancing, good hygiene and book ahead for all travel to Central NSW.

Domestic VFR visitation accounts for 37 per cent of NSW domestic overnight visitors and spend is more than \$3.3 billion.

Accommodation may be hosted but they spend more in cafes, restaurants, attractions, shops, gifts and on local produce.

VFR visitor expenditure in NSW has grown 23.9 per cent, about twice holiday expenditure (12.5 per cent). With international travel not an option for the foreseeable future, the domestic VFR market is likely to be much higher.

■ visitcentralnsw.com.au;

#unearthcentralnsw; #ILoveNSW;

#wewantyouback

ENJOY A REAL GREEN SCENE

LAKE MACQUARIE is urging Aussies to ditch screen time for green time and discover the region's myriad attractions.

The area offers a number of spots for picnics, including Pelican Foreshore Reserve, Speers Point Park (featuring the 'Best Play Space in Australia' - the Lake Macquarie Variety Playground) and Rathmines Park (formerly the largest seaplane base in the southern hemisphere during the First World War).

For the more active, take a walk in Wallarah National Park, grab a helmet and saddle up for a horse ride through the Watagans Mountains, or hit the bike trails around Belmont Wetlands.

The Wallarah National Park is home to sugar gliders, echidnas and white-bellied sea eagles. This pocket of



coastal bush land also features several walking trails and panoramic views of the Pacific Ocean.

The Watagans National Park is home to waterfalls and rainforest gullies, or go bushwalking among Illawarra flame trees while admiring views of the Hunter Valley and coastline.

Belmont Wetlands State Park offers

walking, cycling and bird watching as it is home to a rich and varied natural environment. Encounter naturally diverse wetlands, tranquil native bushland and impressive sand dune systems.

Lake Macquarie is a 90-minute drive from Sydney.

■ visitlakemac.com.au

THE PRICE IS RIGHT

APT is releasing a selection of 2021 Outback and Kimberley itineraries at 2020 prices.

Popular APT tours are now available to book for 2021 at a limited release price for all bookings taken up to June 30.

Experiences include 4WD small group journeys around Australia, including the Kimberley and Cape York, to small ship expedition cruising off the remote Coral Coast and Kimberley Coast.

"Our Outback and Kimberley wilderness adventure itineraries have always been so important to our business, and close to our hearts since we started taking travellers there in the 1960s," said Chris Hall, Managing Director, APT.

The 15-day 'Kimberley Complete' tour takes guests on a 4WD adventure across the northerly part of Western Australia travelling in a small group of no more than 22 people. It is priced from \$9,195 per person.

Stay at the five-star Cable Beach Club Resort and Spa before setting off to explore the Gibb River Road, Bell Gorge, Drysdale River Station, Mitchell Plateau, Home Valley Station, El Questro Wilderness Park, Ord River, Lake Kununurra, the Bungle Bungle ranges and Fitzroy Crossing before returning to Broome.

Included are APT Signature Experiences such as a helicopter ride over Mitchell Falls, ancient rock art during a visit to Wandjina and Bradshaw (GwionGwion) rock art galleries and exploring the Bungle Bungle ranges.

Other itineraries on offer at 2020 prices include 'West Coast Explorer', 'Cooktown and Cape York', 'Central to South Australia with Kangaroo Island', and 'Tassie Explorer'.

■ aptouring.com.au



RECOVERY IS IN THE AIR

AUSTRALIANS ARE driving a resurgence in domestic tourism, with new data from Airbnb showing a surge in bookings, particularly in regional areas.

While it is early and the future remains highly uncertain, there are some strong early signs of economic recovery, with intrastate bookings in some regions exceeding those in the same period in 2019.

"These positive early signs of domestic travel getting ready to make a comeback is a welcome relief for the local families and communities who depend on Australia's tourism industry," said Susan Wheeldon, Airbnb's Country Manager for Australia.

"We're particularly seeing people searching for unique and affordable getaways that will give them a really authentic local experience."

Importantly, regional areas are set to welcome significant numbers of intrastate visitors, with 75 per cent of bookings for places outside of capital cities helping valuable tourism dollars to flow to local businesses across hard-hit communities.

"People are excited about being able to get back out there and immerse themselves in all the things that make Australia so great – including our nation's incredible natural beauty and famously friendly people."

■ airbnb.com.au



Cathedral Gorge, Kimberley



IT'S TIME TO GET OUT AND HIT THE HIGHWAY

LIVING LOCAL these past months has probably got your travel toes itching – it's certainly got ours.

So now's the time to scratch your travel itch, escape your four walls and hit the road on your next adventure.

With the diminished option of going overseas, it's time to visit those places you'd always dreamed of in Australia and a campervan trip is the best way to do this.

With freedom and flexibility, you can travel at your own pace, stop where you want and enjoy those hidden gems you discover along the way.

The itinerary, well that's the beautiful part, you can literally make it up as you go along.

Find somewhere you like – stay a bit longer – or keep moving. That's the best part.

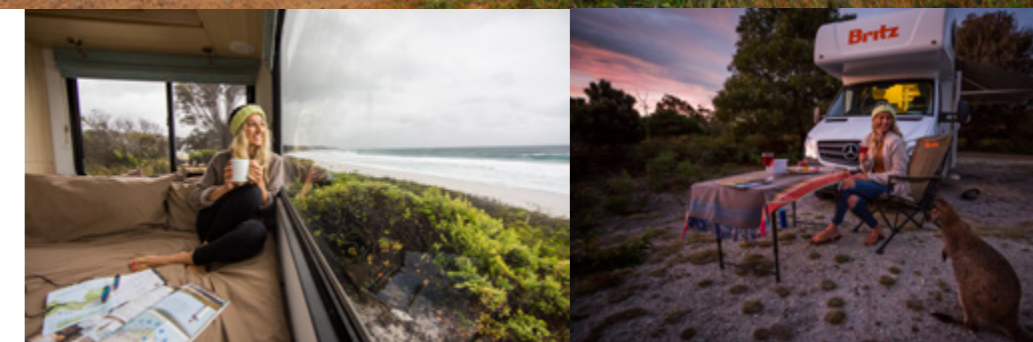
And you can be confident that your home away from home is COVID safe with all the practices and processes the team at Britz have put into place.

With the regional borders opening up, National Parks across the country, small townships and locations usually frequented mainly by tourists are calling our names to visit them.

And if you've ever opened up Instagram or read a travel mag you'll know what we're talking about.

We always tend to take "travel" too literally and feel we have to cover huge distances to get to a destination that will blow us away.

But there's so much on offer both within Australia and within your own



State that rival the cream of the crop overseas.

There's no need to travel far when you can travel locally and get an authentic adventure in your own backyard.

Imagine sitting at a mountain viewpoint or on a pristine beach watching the most beautiful sunset with just your nearest and dearest after a day of camel rides, or swimming in crystal clear water and long wine focused lunches?

Well that's the opportunity up for grabs right now – exploring your own back yard as you've always dreamed it. The only bit you've got to do is have the imagination to make it happen.

The best part? Well, as towns wake from their sleep and come back to life there will likely be some great travel and tourism deals to take advantage of – stuff you'd never have even thought you wanted to do will suddenly be available.

And because you're buying local and helping out the local economy, you'll probably get that lovely warm fuzzy feeling inside from doing your bit to help out.

So make your dream a reality and book a Britz Campervan adventure. Britz operates in 10 locations throughout Australia and have some great deals and savings to get you out on the roads.

■ Check out the deals at britz.com/au/en or talk to your travel agent.

NOW *Win* YOUR OWN AUSSIE ADVENTURE!

We are offering one lucky winner the chance to get out there and explore Australia.

Simply head to our website and tell us where you would like to go and why? The best entry will receive five days (four nights) in a Britz Frontier campervan, which sleeps up to six people, which means you can take family or friends on your trip.

Head to www.traveltalkmag.com.au to enter and for full terms and conditions.



Katherine Gorge Lookout

MULTIPLE CHOICE IN DOMESTIC OFFERING

THE TRAVEL Corporation (TTC) is planning to release an expanded domestic guided holidays range across its multiple brands.

Matthew Cameron-Smith, CEO of the AAT Kings Group, confirmed the company will be managing the ground handling services for its sister companies in Australia and New Zealand.

This includes Trafalgar, Insight Vacations and Luxury Gold; with Contiki also expanding its trip choices

with the additional option of rail in some areas.

The AAT Kings Group has redesigned and enhanced its operations to adhere to expected new government standards for an effective and seamless experience with traveller's wellbeing in mind.

This includes all staff partaking in COVID-19 training and ensuring its entire supply chain complies with updated travel policies and requirements.

The network and infrastructure are in place, with trips adapted to include experiences that celebrate the locals of the destination – connecting travellers to experiences they couldn't typically access themselves, giving agents an edge and the ability to genuinely add value to a domestic booking.

"Agents and guests will be able to redeem existing Future Travel Credits on available travel in Australia," said Cameron-Smith.

"We're showing our commitment to the domestic market and our agent network by expanding our footprint by introducing new trips and growing on our existing portfolio."

TTC hopes to launch the domestic touring range within the coming weeks in line with the easing of travel restrictions. In due course once Trans-Tasman flights resume, the brands will expand their New Zealand range for Australian travellers.

"We live and breathe these communities that we visit and strongly believe in tourism and the very positive role it plays in the economic recovery.

"Expanding our portfolio is the best way that we know how to help, as we work with the industry in supporting our fellow Australians to get back on their feet for the long-term and to help kick start domestic and then international tourism."

■ ttc.com



PORT IS TOP OF THE POPS

A WELCOME boost for Port Douglas Daintree with the region topping a list of tourism destinations globally for the second consecutive year.

The report by strategic consultants Destination Think! was based on millions of online chats from more than 500,000 sources, including media sites, forums, reviews and social media networks.

Tara Bennett, Chief Executive Officer of Tourism Port Douglas Daintree, said to be the top-scoring destination by consumers from 700 destinations globally validated the efforts of the industry to continue to innovate, expand and meet growing consumer demand for nature based eco-tourism experiences.

"We know our visitors have been going home happy and are posting their messages and photos online as enthusiastic word-of-mouth ambassadors for our region.

"This is great news for our operators who, this research tells us, deliver inspiring travel experiences and sustainable practices, and should give us confidence about life after COVID-19."

■ visitportdouglasdaintree.com

Walk a crooked Aussie mile

THE LAUNCH of Crooked Compass Australia sees the small group tour operator offering a collection of domestic itineraries for the first time.

While this creates a niche offering for Aussie travellers in the short term, the long term aim is to market internationally once borders re-open.

Domestic itineraries are now available for travel from November and throughout 2021 and 2022.

Experiences are immersive, culturally sensitive and promote sustainable practices. Less focus is placed on hotel star ratings and more emphasis on the exclusivity of the experiences offered.

Sample itineraries include 'Indigenous & Wild Queensland', which offers up soft adventure with a touch of indulgence for those looking



Indigenous cave paintings in Queensland

to experience the natural beauty of outback Australia in class.

Combine 4WD exploration, trekking, indigenous culture and rare wildlife encounters with rustic luxe accents – epicurean meals, sundowner drinks at sunset and sustainable, private glamping accommodation.

Food lovers can explore South Australia's Eyre Peninsula on the 'Wildlife, Culture and Seafood' itinerary.

Meet one of South Australia's top chefs, Tony Ford, for an interactive seafood and wine experience at Boston Bay Winery, the world's closest

vineyard to the ocean. The collection will eventually include all states and territories, with additional itineraries such as 'Torres Strait Islands & the Remote Reef' and the flagship luxury experience, 'Australia by Air', to be released in coming months.

Crooked Compass is offering peace of mind on 2020 bookings, honouring 2020 pricing and waiving change fees for bookings postponed to 2021 and 2022. Additional health and safety measures will be implemented on 2020 departures.

■ crooked-compass.com

Lock-downers sense a chance to escape

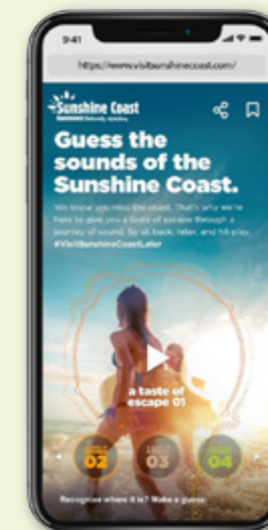
AN INNOVATIVE new campaign using sensory stimulation from one of Australia's most popular destinations has just been launched.

Visit Sunshine Coast hopes to inspire future travel to the region in anticipation of a significant relaxation of travel guidelines across Queensland after June 12.

Entitled 'A Taste of Escape', the campaign uses state-of-the-art Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response techniques.

These provide sensory sensations through a wide range of sounds, including beaches, everglades and wilderness, which capture the essence and richness of the Sunshine Coast's experiences and attractions.

"With travel restrictions currently in place our aim is to inspire people



by connecting with the region's rich tapestry of sounds and senses," said Simon Latchford, CEO Visit Sunshine Coast.

"The sensory element will help engage with people who are thinking about an escape after spending so much time in lock-down."

The campaign has been launched across the tourism organisation's Facebook and Instagram social media channels, enabling visitors to

experience and identify the distinctive sounds of the region.

A special microsite has been launched and the campaign has been fully adapted for smartphones.

From June 12, travellers will be able to visit the Sunshine Coast from a 250km radius, stretching from Bundaberg in the north, Toowoomba

in the west and the NSW border in the south. Until then, daytrips only are permitted within a distance of 150km.

"It's been an incredibly tough year for local tourism, but with the new campaign and the easing of travel restrictions, there is finally light at the end of the tunnel."

■ atateofescape.visitsunshinecoast.com

IN BRIEF///

ACCOM NOOSA is fuelling the post COVID-19 tourism revival, offering free petrol to travellers from within the Sunshine State.

"To celebrate our re-opening, we are offering one \$50 BP fuel gift voucher per booking to any new reservation made, travelling between June 13 and August 31," said Abbey Feutrill, Accom Noosa spokesperson.

■ accomnoosa.com.au



GETTING BACK TO BUSINESS

Girraween National Park (The First Pyramid). Photo courtesy Tourism and Events Queensland

TOURISM BUSINESSES in the Granite Belt in Queensland are eagerly awaiting the return of visitors following the easing of travel restrictions.

Travellers living within a 250 kilometre radius will be able to visit the area from June 12. The Granite Belt has open spaces with National Parks and country drives, which tourism leaders are touting will be in strong demand for post-isolation visitors.

Local tourism operators have received additional welcome news with the local tourist association, Granite Belt Wine & Tourism, offering a year's free membership in recognition of the hardships the region has faced.

"The free membership is our way of extending support to small businesses in our tourism industry who have really

had a tough run with the COVID-19 restrictions hitting hard, just at the time when the Granite Belt was poised to recover from the bushfire and drought-induced tourism downturn," said Martin Cooper, President of Granite Belt Wine & Tourism.

"There are positive signs that travellers will return to the Granite Belt when travel restrictions are eased, but it may not be at full capacity and it's going to take some time for businesses to recover."

Mr Cooper said his organisation had done plenty of work to be in a strong position to attract visitors back to the region. These included initiatives such as Granite Belt Delivered, encouraging people to order local products and drinks online.

"We didn't stop our activity during the COVID-19 travel restrictions, but we took on a new message, encouraging online purchases of Granite Belt products, plus encouraging visitors to remember the Granite Belt fondly, with imagery and stories about 'Granite Belt My Happy Place'.

"Initiatives such as Granite Belt Delivered have really helped businesses to generate some much needed cash flow during this time.

"We're even encouraging visitors to purchase vouchers and book ahead with our latest campaign 'Behind Closed Doors' where we're taking virtual tours through accommodation and attractions to whet the appetite to our target markets."

■ granitebeltwinecountry.com.au



Martin Cooper at Ridgeville Estate, Stanthorpe



The Queensland College of Wine Tourism. Photo courtesy Reuben Nutt



Chock at ChangChill. Picture courtesy Nick Axelrod for World Animal Protection

Protecting the forgotten victims

It can often be overlooked that animals are also affected in a major crisis. The downturn in world tourism has robbed many worthwhile facilities of the vital funds they need to care for our endangered species.

WORLD ANIMAL Protection has launched an urgent appeal to help more than 150 elephants affected by the downturn in Asia's tourism industry.

The appeal aims to provide 11 struggling, elephant-friendly venues in Thailand, Nepal, Cambodia and Laos with food, medicine and venue running costs in the short term.

"As the world is in lockdown and the tourism industry dries up, wild animals – that should never have been in captivity in the first place – could suffer most, left abandoned, neglected and starving," said Audrey Mealia, Global Head of Wildlife at World Animal Protection (WAP).

"Wild animals should not be the forgotten victims of this pandemic." Caring for captive elephants is a giant task as they can require about 10 per cent of their body weight in food every day – that's up to 400kg of grass, leaves, fruits and vegetables that need to be paid for and transported.

"While this is an extremely uncertain time for captive elephants in Asia, it also provides an opportunity for the tourism industry to rebuild

responsibly post-pandemic."

WAP has previously supported the transition of venues including Chang Chill and Following Giants in Thailand to become high welfare and elephant friendly – representing the potential for future responsible tourism.

The organisation is focused on keeping wild animals in the wild and shifting traveller demand towards animal-friendly experiences, such as observation-only elephant venues, and calling for better legislation surrounding animals used for entertainment.

"Now is the time for the tourism industry to take responsibility and clean up its act to end the exploitation of wild animals forever," added Ms Mealia.

WAP has just issued a joint letter along with more than 230 organisations calling on the United Nations World Tourism Organization to ensure the travel industry takes a lead in stopping the commercial exploitation of wild animals.

■ worldanimalprotection.org.au/keepthemwild



HELP TO PREVENT RANGER DANGER

AN EMERGENCY Fundrazr page has been launched to help finance tourism-dependent forest ranger patrols in Cambodia.

Since the COVID-19 shutdown, the patrols that were funded by the Golden Triangle Asian Elephant Foundation and Cardamom Tented Camp (CTC) are now in danger.

The temporary closure of CTC has meant that patrols by Wildlife Alliance rangers in Botum Sakor national park in southwest Cambodia may have to be suspended.

"We are extremely proud of the rangers' efforts over the last six years," said John Roberts, Director of Elephants and Conservation at GTAEF.

"They have all-but stamped out bush meat poaching, the illegal wildlife trade and land grabbing on the concession.

"However, we see from the rampant forest clearance in surrounding areas that the rangers' excellent work would almost immediately be reversed should patrolling stop in the next few weeks."

All monies donated will go to financing the rangers' income, materials and food so that they can continue wildlife protection patrols. CTC will offer donors giving \$US200 (approx. \$AU300) or more a free night on top of a two-night stay. Vouchers for the free night are valid until February 2022 and are transferable.

■ fundrazr.com/savethepangolins



The Rise Beyond the Reef food bank

Something inside so Bula strong

Despite being hit economically hard by international travel restrictions, the people of Fiji continue to show great humanity and kindness. Here we look at some examples of the famous 'Bula Spirit'.

IN FIJI, 'Bula' is more than just a greeting. It is a wish for happiness, good health and the energy of life.

Fijians are known for being rich with this spirit and their desire to help through acts of kindness and generosity.

The country is continuing to look after its sandbanks, rainforests, sand dunes, coral reefs, waterfalls, rivers and dense wildlife for the world to explore again when the time is right.

The international travel restrictions that have arisen from the COVID-19 pandemic have caused considerable

disruptions across Fiji and the tourism industry has been affected. Tourism is one of the country's most important economic drivers, making up nearly 40 per cent of Fiji's GDP.

Yet it is during these trying times that locals and communities are using the 'Bula Spirit' to work together and look after one another.

BETTER BARTERING

A Facebook group known as Barter for Better Fiji was started during the COVID-19 pandemic and has turned

into a nationwide humanitarian movement.

It is a way for Fijians who are now short on money to still collect items they need, with almost 15 per cent of the entire country using the platform. Unsurprisingly, Fijians have gone above and beyond in showing acts of kindness.

A single mother requesting tamarind to start a small baking business has received a brand new stove, a full cylinder of gas and bags of groceries. A former resort worker was in need of baby essentials and offered to trade in her school textbooks; the baby essentials were delivered and the textbooks were refused.

A taxi driver is offering free taxi rides for those doing good deeds – she recently gave multiple rides at her own expense to a group of locals organising donated goods to Lau.

A young woman is baking more than 30 dozen cupcakes a day in exchange for donated groceries that she will distribute to remote villages in Kadavu.

MARRIOTT GIVES IT BACK

Staff from five Marriott International Fiji Resorts have just delivered 200 food packs to a local village as part of the company's Solia Lesu initiative.

Solia Lesu (Fijian for "give back") is part of the hotel group's #givebackfiji foundation. The properties taking part are The Westin Denarau Fiji Resort & Spa, Sheraton Fiji Resort, Sheraton Denarau Villas, Sheraton Tokariki and Marriott Momi Bay Fiji.

The resorts are working together to provide meals to their staff and communities, giving interest free \$FJD100 (approx. \$AU69) per week loans to staff and donating mattresses and linen for mandated quarantine areas.

"At Marriott International, one of our core values and part of our culture is putting people first," said Neeraj Chadha, Multi Property Vice President, Fiji & Samoa – Marriott International and General Manager – Sheraton & Westin Resorts, Fiji, in an interview with the *Fiji Sun*.

"Our objective is to provide associates and their communities with 100 meals per day starting with three villages.

"We will continue to raise funds by extending our reach to our business

partners, family and friends of Fiji for donations, one of which is through our Facebook page-SOLIA LESU."

MASKS & BANKS

Rise Beyond the Reef is a non-profit organisation that helps Fijians become income earners through community made crafts (tote bags, rugs, jewellery, etc.)

Now Janet Lotawa, Co-Founder and Director of RBtR, has changed the focus to making affordable protective face shields for communities and organisations. They will also be distributed to families in need so that medical grade masks remain available for healthcare workers, as this supply is extremely limited.

With the support of the ANZ Bank Staff Foundation, Janet is also rolling out farm food banks, which create a communal space to raise seedlings and mass propagate a diverse range of root and vegetable crops for consumption.

Over time the farm food banks provide planting material to individual women and their households to help bolster food security.

A DARLING OF A DIVE

Steve and Nick Darling, two Kiwi brothers who run VoliVoli Beach Resort and Ra Divers on the Suncoast, have started a diving internship program to help shape the lives of locals in Rakiraki.

Once the locals are certified, they will be able to assist Ra Divers in important marine conservation work in the Bligh Water and continue their careers in this field of work.

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

The Pearl Pacific Resort is offering free accommodation for Police Special Response Units in the Pacific Harbour region during curfew and social distancing regulations.

This allows the officers to have a safe place to quarantine without putting their own families at risk. Staff at the resort are also spending their days distributing food packs to local communities.

■ *fiji.travel*



TOURISM MESSAGE MOVES TO THE NEXT STAGE

NEWS THAT domestic travel can resume has promoted Tourism Fiji to progress to stage two of their market re-entry plan.

Until now, the organisation has been focused on staying in the hearts and minds of consumers through its "Sota Tale" messaging.

Moving into stage two of the four stage action plan, the marketing message has now changed to "Our 'Bula Spirit' awaits you."

"It is an optimistic message that will rebuild consumer confidence and anticipation of a holiday to Fiji," said Matthew Stoeckel, CEO of Tourism Fiji.

"What I like about it the most is that it focuses on what makes Fiji

so special – which is our people." To drive this message, Tourism Fiji is launching a range of digital initiatives, which includes a 'Bula Series' that is airing across all social media channels. There's also their own positive news segment called "Happy Hour TV", both of which bring to life Fiji's "Bula Spirit" that the destination is known for.

"We are confident that our new message will resonate with our visitors, as it's genuine and real," added Stoeckel.

"Despite all the challenges being faced as a result of COVID-19, the "Bula Spirit" is alive and well and awaiting Australians on their next visit to Fiji."

■ *fiji.travel*



Solia Lesu by Marriott food parcels



THE NEW MAN WITH A PLAN

Tahiti is already on the starting blocks in preparation for the return of the tourists. Here, Jean-Marc Mocellin, the recently appointed CEO of Tahiti Tourisme, reveals what Aussie visitors can expect to find there and shares some of its lesser-known highlights.



Jean-Marc Mocellin, CEO of Tahiti Tourisme

Q: Where was the last place you travelled and where would you like to travel to next?

A: Besides my business trips, I have explored Asia quite extensively – and the last place I discovered there was Myanmar.

My other continent of predilection is South America and after visiting Peru, Chile, Argentina and Brazil several times, I am planning to visit Colombia.

Q: Besides your passport, what's one thing you never travel without?

A: Unfortunately – but like most people – I never go anywhere without my smartphone to keep in touch with my office.

Q: Why did you take up the role at Tahiti Tourisme?

A: Tahiti is home for me. I have lived and worked in Tahiti for 23 years – far more time than in all the other 11 countries I have worked in, including my native island New Caledonia, which I left after college.

While French Polynesia's tourism performances were booming before COVID-19, working for a destination where tourism is the main economic driver is rewarding as the government policies and orientations take our industry parameters into account.

It is a unique opportunity for me to contribute to developing a sustainable tourism sector, which is respectful of the environment and people.

Q: Tell us something people might not know about Tahiti?

A: When you arrive in Tahiti, you will be struck by the spontaneity and authenticity of the population, where the culture has remained very strong and alive.

The warm interactions you will have with the locals are not the result of efficient tourism industry training; it is in the nature of the Polynesians, which makes your vacation experiences very genuine and memorable.

Also, people don't realise the size and the diversity of the islands of Tahiti. Most travellers are familiar with the famous islands of Tahiti, Moorea, Raiatea, Huahine and Bora Bora that are indeed the most popular, but there is so much more to discover.

There are 118 islands that make up French Polynesia, which is spread over a territory as large as Europe and where remoteness has enabled each archipelago to keep its own identity.

In the centre, the Tuamotu group of atolls is a diverse paradise, with Rangiroa, the second largest atoll in the world, and Fakarava, where a multitude of marine species interact in their passages (manta ray, dolphin, hammerhead sharks, etc).

In the extreme south, we have the Australes archipelagos, whose climate is very cool, and which has one of the best spots in the world for whale watching – Rurutu.

And last but not least, in the far north, you have the Marquesas Islands, which are rich in culture and renowned for their Art of Tatau dance. Each of these archipelagos deserves to be discovered.

Q: Tell us one thing that's coming up for Tahiti that's got you excited.

A: Like everyone in tourism, we are eager to see this crisis end.

Our islands have been relatively spared from the pandemic and the government is taking all measures to keep Tahiti safe for its population and its visitors; we are therefore on the starting block to take action with all stakeholders locally and in each of our markets such as Australia and NZ to bring colours back to Tahiti Tourism... sunnier days ahead!

In the meantime, we invite people to keep dreaming about the Islands of Tahiti with our new video series, *Tahiti Comes To You*.

Q: What's your top travel tip?

A: Regardless of your style of travel, remain a humble and respectful traveller towards the local population. You will be amazed by how you will benefit in return and the experiences that will open up to you.

■ TahitiTourisme.org

Taking luxury to the max

THE FIRST Aussie visitors to Tahiti post-pandemic will have something extra special to enjoy at the Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora.

Just before the corona virus cancelled all international travel the resort debuted their new and enhanced overwater bungalow suites alongside their fresh retail experience, MoeMoea.

Six of the new suites feature infinity-edge plunge pools set on private decks, along with the addition of a further six plunge pools added to existing overwater suites.

Along with new builds to each of the resort's one- and two-bedroom overwater bungalow suites, the hotel has also unveiled MoeMoea, featuring a plethora of brands across active apparel, accessories and swimwear.

"We believe that life is better over water and now our overwater experience is better than ever," said Diego Stembert, General Manager of Four Seasons Resort Bora Bora.

■ fourseasons.com/borabora



After the successful launch

of its Sunnier Days Ahead campaign, Tahiti Tourisme has rolled out of the second phase of the initiative: Tahiti Comes To You.

Sharing an array of videos and imagery, the content focuses on experiences that transport travellers to The Islands of Tahiti from their own home.

Experiences featured include the rhythms of Tahitian dance, making monoi oil, diving with reef sharks and cooking a traditional Polynesian meal.



Win a trip to French heaven



NEW CALEDONIA Tourism has launched a new trade website and e-learning platform for travel agents.

Designed to grow agents' knowledge and understanding of New Caledonia, both the website and platform feature practical information to engage the industry with the South Pacific archipelago.

In addition to this and to celebrate the launch, agents who complete the e-learning platform will have the opportunity to win a spot on a family to New Caledonia.

The new trade website includes brochures, maps and imagery for agents as well as a dedicated section

on how to sell New Caledonia, containing itineraries and a list of wholesalers.

Key industry events will also be added once social distancing measures have been relaxed.

The training platform features interactive content like videos, images, mini games and quizzes for agents to acquire relevant information to better sell New Caledonia.

The platform includes one level with three modules, each taking approximately 20 minutes to complete.

The first module presents general information on New Caledonia, including its geography, history,

fauna, flora, climate and more.

The second module focuses on information travellers need before visiting the destination, including currency, entry requirements and cost of living.

The third and last module focuses on everyday life and culture in New Caledonia. Additional levels, including new modules, are set to be added throughout 2020 and beyond.

■ trade.newcaledonia.travel; trade.newcaledonia.travel/training

YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP TO ALL THINGS NEW CALEDONIA

FUN LEARNING **WIN PRIZES**

EARN POINTS

Visit our New Cal trade site and find inspiring itinerary ideas, product information, but more importantly, become a New Caledonia Specialist TODAY with our new e-learning platform for your chance to WIN a seat on an amazing familiarisation trip to New Caledonia!

Register today at trade.newcaledonia.travel/training

WIN
a seat on a
FAM to New
Caledonia!*

nouvelle calédonie
Pacific heart

*Terms & Conditions apply



Above: Kaema Sutra.
Right: Nana's



Colombo's best foodie feasts

In the second of his articles on the cuisine of Sri Lanka, MARK SNOXELL, founder of media and marketing agency Exposure Downunder, highlights his five favourite dining spots in Colombo.

NANA'S AT GALLE FACE GREEN

This is the place to get a fix of Sri Lankan street food classics, such as *isso wade*, *koththu rotti* and barbequed seafood. Grab a plastic chair, a local beer or two and enjoy watching the people wandering the waterfront.

Most of the stalls down here are good, though watch out for Nana's. The original no longer exists and there are now three (yes, there's a story in that, which I'm sure your tuk tuk driver will be happy to tell you!) and I'd go for the one named Nana's King. yamu.lk/place/rauf-nanas

THE GALLERY CAFÉ, PARADISE ROAD

This place is housed in the former offices of the late Geoffrey Bawa, the world-renowned Sri Lankan architect, who personally approved the take-over of his beloved property and it's conversion into a gallery and café.

It's a very pleasing and calm atmosphere (non AC) where one can choose from a variety of local and international cuisine (and a major dessert menu with a lot of chocolate).

The Gallery itself features

established and emerging local artists and the shop has some of the best quality souvenirs in the country. I highly recommend a visit for a relaxed afternoon in Colombo. paradiseroad.lk/gallery_cafe

NUGA GAMA

Set around a 200-year-old banyan tree at Cinnamon Grand, this is like being immersed back in a rustic village (complete with 'Nuga', their pet cow who was rescued from the butcher and moos in the background).

It is set right in the heart of the city and always proves to be a heart-warming experience with a splendid traditional Sri Lankan buffet, with plenty for all palates.

The friendly staff will be only too happy to talk about dishes and explain the ingredients and how they have been prepared.

Besides offering delicious and hearty meals, Nuga Gama claims to be Asia's first carbon neutral venue. This is wholesome Sri Lankan hospitality at its best. cinnamonhotels.com

KAEMA SUTRA

A joint venture between celebrity chef Darshan Munidara and

internationally acclaimed actor Jacqueline Fernandez, Kaema Sutra at the Shangri-La offers contemporary Sri Lankan cuisine in a luxury hotel environment.

It's certainly got the big city vibe, along the lines of a Neil Perry establishment. This is very much about being here and enjoying the ambiance, cocktails and company vs. the actual culinary experience. kaemasutra.com

RARE BAR + KITCHEN AT RESIDENCE BY UGA ESCAPES

I really have left the best to last! This is the ultimate experience I recommend to guests as their finale dinner in Sri Lanka.

Inspired by the flavours of the country, Rare Bar + Kitchen offers contemporary cuisine with an emphasis on fresh local ingredients. Many of these come directly from their own organic farms on the east coast and in the Cultural Triangle.

All dishes have a refreshing gastronomic flair which Blumenthal fans would appreciate and each is a conversation piece.

In an intimate environment, this is definitely a foodie's heaven where you know the team work passionately with precision, gusto and creativity. Don't leave the country until you have had the cinnamon smoked lobster.

■ ttcsrillanka.com; exposuredownunder.com

Mark is currently curating a Sri Lankan cookbook which will be published next year with all proceeds going to charity.



Coronet Peak

Kiwi mountains cleared for lift-off

PENDING GOVERNMENT approval, New Zealand has announced the opening of three of their mountains for the 2020 winter ski season.

“All of our mountains are dearly loved by visitors for different reasons, so we are stoked to say we plan to open all three,” said Paul Anderson, CEO of NZSki.

“They might look a little different

as some of our operations may have to be altered to make sure we can abide by new industry operating requirements under COVID Level 2, but we’ll make sure it’ll be an epic season ahead.”

Mt Hutt in Canterbury plans to be the first to open in mid-to-late June, operating three days a week to start with before scaling up in early July

to at least five days a week, including the weekend, weather and conditions allowing.

In Queenstown, Coronet Peak is planning to open daily from late June, a couple of weeks later than originally scheduled to catch up on maintenance that was on hold during lockdown.

The Remarkables is preparing to open daily from early July for the two weeks during the New Zealand school holidays and then on the weekends at a minimum.

“We are absolutely committed to being a responsible industry and keeping our staff and guests safe this season.”

The news comes as New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern claims her government is “actively considering” adding more public holidays to the Kiwi calendar to encourage domestic tourism.

In addition, a new promotional video entitled PURE has been released by Tourism New Zealand, sharing a message of hope, love and encouraging people to reflect on what’s important in life.

Apart from promoting the various attractions of the country, the video also reinforces deeply important values embedded in the New Zealand way of life from its Maori culture. You can view the video on YouTube.

■ newzealand.com



Andrew Waddel, General Manager Tourism New Zealand – Australia

where tourism is the country’s biggest export industry.

Here, New Zealanders make up around 15 per cent of our international visitors and about six per cent of the international visitor spend.

BACKING FOR THE BUBBLE

SENIOR INDUSTRY figures on both sides of the Tasman have been quick to back the establishment of a travel bubble.

“A trans-Tasman bubble would have a significant positive impact should it be able to go ahead safely for both countries,” said Andrew Waddel, General Manager Tourism New Zealand – Australia.

“Trans-Tasman travel would not only help kick-start tourism, but

also have a positive impact on trade and transport sectors other areas and enable families and friends to reunite.”

Australia was New Zealand’s biggest visitor market last year, representing about 1,550,683 visitors per annum from year end in February 2020. The largest proportion of these were holiday visitors (613,352) followed by those visiting friends and relatives (583,690).

Australian market spend is \$2.7billion per annum, split by holiday (\$1.32b) and visiting friends and relatives (\$731m).

Australians make up almost 40 per cent of international arrivals to New Zealand, and around 24 per cent international visitor spend. This is especially significant in New Zealand



The ruins of Funai Castle

Cherry oh baby

Sadly, Japan’s famous cherry blossom (sakura) season was only experienced virtually by Australians this year. But that gives us a great reason to start dreaming about a visit in 2021.

AUSSIES WHO start their Japanese itinerary in Oita to catch the first blooms of cherry blossom season will enjoy fewer crowds and potentially cheaper airfares.

In Oita city there are several places to experience sakura at its best. Built in the 16th century, the ruins of Funai Castle are around 15-minutes walk from the station and provide a glimpse into local history.

Approximately an hour away by car, the Oka Castle ruins to the south are officially listed as one of Japan’s top 100 cherry blossom viewing sites.

Oita’s coastal city of Beppu is worth a visit any time of the year to experience the onsen – or hot springs – but plan a visit for spring and you’ll get to experience cherry blossom, a bamboo forest and more than 650 pine trees in Beppu Park, 10 minutes’ walk from the main train station.

Lesser known but also spectacular are the Kawazu-zakura, which bloom

from the end of February through to early March. Visitors can admire these in Tsukumi city in Oita where the deep pink colour of the blossoms contrasts with the vivid blues of the Inland Sea.

Viewing the annual cherry blossom season (hanami) is an extremely important time of the year culturally in Japan, with families and friends gathering for themed events.

The sakura festival is celebrated with a range of food. People often bring hanami bean to eat under the trees. In Oita, this ranges from the contemporary – bento boxes can be purchased at convenience stores – through to homemade local specialties such as karaage (fried chicken bites) and toriten (tender chicken tempura).

To follow the progress of the cherry blossom, visit: japan-guide.com/sakura

For more information on Oita: discover-oita.com/en/whats-on

WHAT ELSE TO DO

Known as Japan’s hot springs capital thanks to its abundance of onsen or thermal spring wells, Oita Prefecture is renowned among the Japanese as the place for restoration and recovery.

Located on the island of Kyushu in southwestern Japan, the coastal region of Oita Prefecture also offers great scenery, its own culinary specialties and numerous historical attractions.

Oita is easily accessible with direct flights from Tokyo, Osaka and Nagoya and the Shinkansen (bullet train) into nearby Fukuoka making it a perfect stopover on a Japan itinerary.

HOTEL NEWS

Tokyo is preparing for the return of international travel with a number of new hotels set to open their doors in 2020.

✦ **Four Seasons Hotel Tokyo** at Otemachi will offer expansive Imperial Palace views, gourmet meals on the rooftop terrace and social events.

✦ **Kimpton Shinjuku** combines a style and ethos inspired by New York’s arts scene with exquisitely-detailed Japanese handcrafted artisanal traditions.

✦ **Tokyo Bay Shiomi Prince Hotel** is a 605-bedroom property promising to marry inspiring modern art accented décor with practicality.

Irish hearts are filling

TOURISM IRELAND has launched a new 'Fill Your Heart With Ireland' webinar series to educate Australian travel partners about the island of Ireland.

Through this new format travel agents will have the opportunity to hear directly from Irish attraction, accommodation and experience providers, and engage with them through live Q&A sessions.

The first webinar was held on June 3 with a focus on Northern Ireland and featured guest industry speakers

from Tourism Northern Ireland, Titanic Belfast, Hastings Hotels and Dalriada Kingdom Tours.

Subsequent webinars will highlight key regions and themes such as the Wild Atlantic Way, Ireland's Ancient East and Ireland's Hidden Heartlands. There will also be sessions dedicated to Ireland's burgeoning food and drink scene, and luxury travel.

■ <https://bit.ly/2ZyRf6x>

GOING GREEN

BRITAIN IS renowned for the quality of its gardens and now you can take a wander among the blooms without leaving the lounge.

Enjoy the scenes from one of Britain's most famous horticultural hotspots with a virtual tour of Kew Gardens. The tour gives you a bird's-eye view of Kew's glasshouse, pagoda and outdoor spaces. kew.org

For relaxing birdsong and uplifting floral scenes, immerse yourself in a trip through some of Britain's bluebell woods, many of which are maintained by the National Trust.

Classic places that showcase blooming springtime bluebells include The Wyne in Hampshire, Sheffield Park and Garden in East Sussex and Hardcastle Crags, West Yorkshire.

Enjoy a virtual mosey around Gloucestershire's Hidcote Manor Gardens, one of the best know arts and crafts gardens in Britain. With scenes that range from the poppy-filled red borders to the climbing plants in the plant house and a pond complete with delicate lily pads, there's plenty to explore. nationaltrust.org.uk



Bluebell woods. Picture courtesy VisitBritain

Built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild for the sole purpose of hosting extravagant parties, Waddeson Manor and gardens in Buckinghamshire has a history of marvelling visitors that dates back to the 1880s.

If you want to step into Rothschild's world, the grand manor house, tropical bird aviary and blissful gardens can now be explored online, while a tour of the grand house's interior can also be enjoyed. waddeson.org.uk

Experience a taste of royal life on a virtual tour of Highgrove Gardens, the grounds of Prince Charles' private residence. Offering a chance to see the mosaic water feature, blossoming wisteria and the stumpery, the tour

reveals a virtual world of horticultural elegance.

Nestled in the Welsh Marshes, Gorsty House has a charming one-hectare garden that comes to life each spring, blooming with a bright carpet of yellow daffodils.

The National Garden Scheme has created a virtual tour and video interview with the garden owner to give daffodil fans the chance to stroll through this tranquil space and learn more about their growth. ngs.org.uk

Being the national flower of Wales, there are also plenty of additional places to see these charming flowers each spring, with many being kept by the National Trust.

■ visitbritain.com

CAN DO IN CANADA

QUEBEC CITY has a number of virtual tours offering guests the chance to explore this fascinating destination.

Take a tour of four permanent exhibitions in the Gérard-Morisset Pavilion at the Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, a major fine arts museum. Each is curated according to a specific theme: Feeling, Imagining, Becoming and Believing. mnbaq.org

The virtual tour of Montmorency Waterfalls Park gets you so close to the action you'll feel like they're in your living room!

Take the cable car, visit Montmorency Manor, stop at the Baroness' Lookout, cross the suspension bridge, explore an orchard and walk down the 487 steps to the base of the falls. sepaq.com

Catch *Féria – L'attraction*, the phenomenal outdoor circus show that ran in Québec City last year. Invite the acrobats into your home with the full performances of both *Féria – L'attraction* and *Crépuscule* now available online. flipfabrique.com

Contemplate the city in real time from 221 metres above sea level at the Observatoire de la Capitale, or discover hidden treasures on virtual tours of sites that are lesser known or closed to the public. observatoire-capitale.com; ville.quebec.qc.ca/en

Several times a week, the London Jack comes alive with performances by talented musicians that are streamed live on Facebook.

It's a fun time and a great way to give, since you can tip the musicians online. So pull up a stool, support the artists and enjoy the show! facebook.com/LondonJackQc

Sunny Tour Guide offers an interactive virtual tour of Old Québec through pre-recorded videos, behind the scene stories and interactive games. At the end of the experience, you can ask questions about Québec City.

This online experience is designed for individuals, families, or student groups who want to explore and connect. sunnytourguide.com

■ quebec-cite.com



Montmorency Waterfalls Park. Picture courtesy Yves Tessier, Tessima



The sea salt chocolate chip cookies at Caputo's

Cooking up a storm

THE UTAH Office of Tourism has created a host of recipes to enjoy at home, including signature chef's dishes, local classics and cocktails.

Hub and Spoke Diner in Salt Lake City is a small family-owned business committed to preserving the American diner legacy through forward thinking culinary excellence.

It serves creative riffs on classic diner food through high quality ingredients sourced from local farmers and artisans.

Their Francesinha (Portuguese breakfast) features ham, sausage and short rib on toasted sourdough with Swiss cheese, sunny side up egg and tomato beer sauce.

The Navajo staff at Goulding's Stagecoach Restaurant have revealed the fried bread recipes that have been handed down through the generations. Located in Goulding's Lodge in Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park, the restaurant serves the best fried bread Navajo tacos.

Utah is the craft chocolate capital of America and home to eight bean-to-bar chocolate makers. Try baking one of Salt Lake City's favourite chocolate chip cookies: sea salt chocolate chip cookies by Marian McKenney of Caputo's Market & Deli.

The business and craft of distilling has been booming in Utah ever since High West Distillery opened its doors in Park City in 2006. Try making My Favourite Redhead by Harp and Hound gastropub located in Ogden in Utah's north.

■ visitutah.com; #UtahFromHome



HOW SMART ARE YOU?

Our popular *Traveltease* quiz runs every week on our website, but we thought we'd give everyone a chance to see how much they know about travel. Can you get the correct answers without Google?

1. Where was the singer Bono born?

- a. London
- b. Dublin
- c. Los Angeles
- d. Sydney

2. Which two colours feature on the flag of Switzerland?

- a. Red and white
- b. Green and white
- c. Blue and white
- d. Black and white

3. The Bears are an American Football team based in which city?

- a. Miami
- b. New York
- c. Chicago
- d. Los Angeles

4



4. A small family of cats lives in the attic of the Louvre in Paris.

- a. True
- b. False

5. What is the longest river in New Zealand?

- a. Clutha
- b. Whanganui
- c. Clarence
- d. Waikato

6. On which continent will you find the anaconda?

- a. South America
- b. Africa
- c. Asia
- d. North America

7. Wat Phra Kaew or Temple of the Emerald Buddha can be found where?

- a. Vietnam
- b. Cambodia
- c. Thailand
- d. Malaysia



Elizabeth River, NT.
Photo courtesy Great Southern Rail.

8. Which of these is the longest river in Europe?

- a. Thames
- b. Volga
- c. Danube
- d. Rhine

9. Where can you see Gainsborough's famous painting, The Blue Boy?

- a. Paris
- b. California
- c. Abu Dhabi
- d. London

10. Where would you find the city of Differdange?

- a. Belgium
- b. The Netherlands
- c. Hungary
- d. Luxembourg

11. Wensleydale cheese comes from which English county?

- a. Yorkshire
- b. Northumberland
- c. Somerset
- d. Cheshire

12. In which country is the world's longest through arch bridge?

- a. China
- b. India
- c. America
- d. South Africa

13. The Tamaki Maori Village is located in which New Zealand city?

- a. Hamilton
- b. Rotorua
- c. Nelson
- d. Tauranga

14. Name the train that runs between Adelaide and Darwin.

- a. The Bran
- b. The Chan
- c. The Dhan
- d. The Ghan

15. The Highlanders are a rugby union team based in which New Zealand city?

- a. Dunedin
- b. Christchurch
- c. Auckland
- d. Wellington

For more quiz action, head to our website www.traveltalkmag.com.au or look out for *Traveltease* every Thursday.

Answers: 1b; 2a; 3c; 4b; 5d; 6a; 7c; 8b; 9b; 10d; 11a; 12a; 13b; 14d; 15a

We're all in this
Traveltalk
TOGETHER



Northern Territory. Photo courtesy Tourism Australia.