



ACCC acts against APT, Travelmarvel

ACTION from the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC) has seen APT Travel Group (ATG) commit to increasing refunds for guests affected by cancellations.

Following months of ACCC engagement, ATG's APT and Travelmarvel brands have agreed to stop deducting both marketing and overhead costs from refunds, and to reimburse clients who had previously had the costs imposed.

ATG said it would be contacting all impacted clients by 31 Mar, with those who have previously received a refund quote to be provided with a revised offer.

Where a refund is sought (as opposed to a credit), APT will continue to deduct a one-off \$400 per passenger administration fee to cover reasonable losses it has not been able to recover, as well as any third-party costs, and any fees relating to administration

costs in arranging the refunds.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission said it was alerted to concerns about APT's deduction practices, as well as its representation to consumers that it was entitled to deduct greater amounts than actually permitted.

"The costs that APT deducted for marketing and overheads amounted to 15% of the booking price and, with many holidays costing over \$20,000, this meant a significant amount was withheld from the refunds given to consumers," ACCC Commissioner Sarah Court said.

"The ACCC considered that APT was not entitled to deduct these marketing and overhead costs as they were incurred before the booking was made and they would have been incurred regardless of whether a booking was made...we are pleased that thousands of customers will now

receive additional refunds and that this commitment will provide faster redress for consumers than court action, which would have been our next step."

Australian Pacific Holdings (APH) Managing Director Chris Hall said, despite the ACCC's "different interpretation" of the company's refund terms & conditions, the two parties had reached a mutually agreed position.

"The APT Travel Group has made constructive steps of its own volition to provide greater scope and clarity around the issue of refund processing," he said.

Hall added that APH had also been looking after individual customers on a case-by-case basis, providing a full refund to any consumers who can prove they are experiencing hardship such as medical or financial arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cruise Weekly today

Cruise Weekly today features three pages of all the latest cruise industry news.

Lindblad acquires

LINDBLAD Expeditions has announced the purchase of majority stakes in DuVine Cycling + Adventure Co and Off the Beaten Park LLC.

Both businesses specialise in active travel, with DuVine described as a "leading luxury cycling and adventure travel company," while Off the Beaten Path focuses on stays in American national parks.

The company said the deals "further broaden and deepen Lindblad's platform of high-quality experiential product offerings in robust adventure travel sectors, including the rapidly growing cycling tourism and domestic expedition market".

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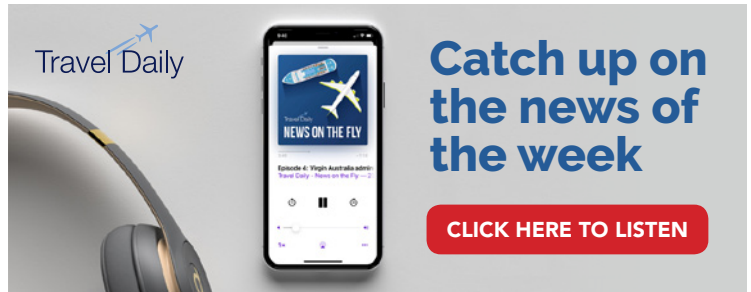
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Travel Daily

NEWS ON THE FLY

Episode 4: Virgin Australia admits 'New Day' means on the fly

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Lizzy's extended season

CUNARD Line has revealed its *Queen Elizabeth* will undertake her first circumnavigation of Australia as part of a newly unveiled homeport season scheduled for 2022/23.

The record local deployment

will span from Nov 2022 to Mar 2023, and visit 15 Australian ports, including Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, Hobart, Burnie, Fremantle, Cairns, and Darwin, offering sailings ranging between two and 31 nights.

Commercial Director Australia Katrina McAlpine said the return of *Queen Elizabeth* for her longest stay yet was a great opportunity for both experienced and new-to-Cunard sailors to undertake a cruise Down Under.

"We couldn't be more excited about *Queen Elizabeth's* inaugural circumnavigations of Australia, and we know our guests have been longing for this extraordinary voyage," she said.

"Cunard has a special place in the hearts of Australians, and this was never more apparent than when *Queen Mary 2* brought Sydney to a standstill on her maiden call in 2007."

Queen Elizabeth's circumnavigations include calls to Port Douglas, Airlie Beach, Esperance, Eden and Kangaroo Island, with the 25-day voyage departing Fremantle on 07 Nov 2022, leading in from \$8,299 per person twin share.

A 28-day round-Australia sailing departing Sydney on 15 Nov 2022 is priced from \$9,299 per person twin share.

The 2022/23 season will also see the ship voyage to New Zealand, to destinations such as the Fiordland National Park.

Aurora-ingly successful visit



SOME of the movers and shakers from Aurora Expeditions came to *Cruise Weekly's* global headquarters yesterday to brief the team on the company's recently released Australian program (**CW 04 Mar**).

Director of Sales Asia Pacific Steve McLaughlin, Chief Executive Officer Monique Ponfoort and Trade Marketing Executive Ayla Rowe (**pictured**) all made their way to Macquarie Park - a first-time adventure for McLaughlin - to discuss Aurora's Antarctic Ross Sea & Commonwealth Bay voyages, as well as its Kimberley season.

Aurora's activity program for the season, running from Jun to Mar, includes sea kayaking, clearbottom kayaking, scuba and shark diving, climbing, helicopter rides, and snorkelling with sea lions in Hopkins Island,

& dolphins in Kangaroo Island.

The season begins in northern Australia, with a Kimberley in Depth itinerary, which will sail Darwin to Broome between 08 Jul and the end of Aug.

However the trio also noted the possibility of some Darwin round trip departures which might be able to operate sooner depending on current discussions with Federal, State and Territory authorities about what will be required to enable an expedition cruise restart.

Aurora has implemented extensive COVID-19 safety protocols, including the installation of on-board PCR testing equipment, and like the rest of the sector is hoping that expedition voyages could pave the way for a wider restart.

More details on the trips at auroraexpeditions.com.au.

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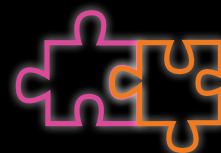


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Travel Daily

Cruise sales off the chart



EXCLUSIVE

IT'S now almost exactly 12 months since the start of *Travel Daily's* weekly consumer travel spending report in partnership with News Corp (*TD* 17 Mar 2020) - and for once, this week's figures show some rare good news for the cruise sector.

Compiled from credit card spending data, the cruise category, has been described as a "showstopper" by News Corp Head of Travel, Dwayne Birtles - so much so that he had to undertake additional checking to ensure the figures were correct.

"We can report that it is indeed correct, with a week-on-week improvement of 12 points," he told *Cruise Weekly* yesterday.

Before popping the champagne he noted that the overall spending on cruise is still down 74% year-on-year - but the jump is significant given that the category has not been above minus 80% since COVID hit.

"We dove a little deeper into the spend behaviours, and it appears this improvement in consumer spend has been on larger transaction amounts for more high-end cruise businesses," Birtles said.

"With many more cruise and touring businesses announcing their higher end cruise experiences in Australia over the past few weeks, there's no surprise here that those less affected financially by COVID are spending big on these amazing experiences," he said.

The full weekly News Corp report, which also covers spending on air, touring, travel agents and accommodation, is featured in today's issue of *Travel Daily*.

SeaLink SA tours

SEALINK Travel Group has launched new Flinders Ranges, Kangaroo Island and Murray River packages.

The tourism company has added a nine-day Flinders Ranges & Murray River Cruise package, and a 12-day Flinders Ranges, Kangaroo Island & Murray River Cruise package.

The nine-day package includes two-nights' accommodation at the Majestic Roof Garden Hotel in Adelaide, a three-day Flinders Ranges Outback Tour, and a four-night Outback Heritage Cruise on *Murray Princess*.



A PENGUIN has escaped a pod of hungry killer whales by leaping onto a boat full of tourists, in a situation eerily similar to one explored in porthole last year (*CW* 05 Aug 2020).

In a video posted by adventure travel blog Expert Vagabond, the orcas can be seen pursuing the penguin, which managed to fling itself headfirst into a Zodiac full of spectators.

At first, the penguin hits the side of the boat, with onlookers fearing the worst for the flightless bird.

Luckily, with a little help from the cheering tourists on the boat, the penguin's second attempt is successful, with the creature staving off its fate as a bigger animal's lunch for another day.

The situation took place in Antarctica, in the Gerlache Strait, in a video that can be viewed by [CLICKING HERE](#).

New Fred program for 2022/23

FRED. Olsen Cruise Line has unveiled a new program of cruising for 2022/23, including a range of new regional departures from Belfast and London.

A total of 126 new voyages have been announced in 82 countries, including close-to-home excursions for Brits around the British Isles - [HERE](#).



Light at the end of the tunnel?

TWO weeks ago things were improving, and the light at the end of the tunnel was slightly more than a flicker.

Auckland's community COVID issues looked like being under control, and New Zealand was back at Level One.

Then, out of nowhere, on a Sat night, the Prime Minister announced that once again COVID was back, and Auckland would be isolated from the rest of the country in Level Three.

We've come out of that again, but not before millions of dollars in damage has been inflicted on our economy, with hospitality again bearing the brunt.

But we re-group and try to find a way forward, to give us hope that there will be light ahead, and there is.

Vaccination is already well under way within our frontline border workers.

Many of us have friends that have had the first jab, and we heard yesterday that this year most of us will be vaccinated.

It's one of the major factors that means we can now believe that the tunnel is not so gloomy, and New Zealand will cruise again in safety.