

travelBulletin

DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016

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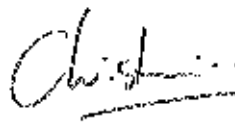

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Christian Hunter
Managing Director

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2016 ... A ROLLERCOASTER YEAR AHEAD?

FOOD & WINE
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PHILIPPINES
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APARTMENTS



Australian owned and operated, representing the largest group of independent travel agencies in Australia. We pride ourselves on providing members with the best tools available:



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Express Travel Group's latest product '**Book Safe Agent**' will be available from January 2016.

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www.etg.travel





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2016: A rollercoaster ride

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From the managing editor Bruce Piper

THE industry was stunned early this month when The Travel Corporation announced the closure of Creative Holidays, with the news breaking just as this issue of *travelBulletin* goes to print. The move, which has impacted about 100 staff, is seen as a reflection of the heavy pressures being placed on the traditional wholesale model.

As reported in the November issue of *travelBulletin*, things have certainly been changing within Creative Holidays. Managing director James Gaskell outlined the disruption in the sector, which was previously an exercise in “buying power, destination knowledge and brochure racks”. Now consumers have the power to investigate all manner of travel options via the internet, and despite a major revamp of the Creative Holidays website to provide a consumer-like booking experience for travel consultants – which was touted as resulting in a big spike in sales activity – the Travel Corporation’s newly minted CEO John Veitch has bitten the bullet and made the difficult decision to shut down the business effective from 31 December after a long-running “exhaustive review” of the Creative Holidays operations.

“The fiercely competitive environment in which we now operate has made for a difficult business proposition for a mass generalist FIT independent wholesaler such as Creative Holidays,” Veitch said.

It’s the end of an era for Creative which has undergone several shifts in direction in recent years, including an abortive attempt to relaunch as a consumer-facing business under former MD Paul McGrath. Observers will also note that the move gives Infinity Holidays free reign, with Creative the only other generalist wholesaler preferred with the various Flight Centre brands. And similarly the Qantas Holidays/Viva! Holidays in-house wholesale operation within Helloworld will receive a significant leg-up from the Creative closure.

The Travel Corporation is adamant that no other parts of the business are affected, “We see immense growth opportunity in cruising and niche specialist FIT operations, so our aim is to redeploy as many of the Creative Holidays team as possible into Creative Cruising and Adventure World, as well as other areas of TTC,” Veitch said.

However the company has finally admitted the closure of New Horizons Holidays, despite claiming it was “very much business as usual” within the WA-based wholesaler just three months ago.

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travelBulletin

www.travelbulletin.com.au

Travel Bulletin is part of the
Travel Daily family of publications



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Ian McMahon's perspective

JOHN BORGHETTI: THE GAME CHANGER

'TIS the season for composing lists of books for summer holiday reading. I recommend *Game Changer – how John Borghetti changed the face of aviation in Australia* by Doug Nancarrow.

The first half tells the tale of a migrant lad who joined Qantas as the lowliest of mail boys and, by dint of hard work, climbed to the upper management echelons only to be denied the top job when it was seemingly within his grasp.

Long before I met the man in Melbourne in the 1970s, I knew of him through travel agents who would tell me: "If you've got a problem you need solved at Qantas you get in touch with John Borghetti." Nancarrow captures those times, vividly recounting how Borghetti's "can do" attitude, under mentors such as Mario Borg and Ron Rosalky, saw him stand out from contemporaries.

The book also tells of Borghetti's talent for managing people and forging relationships and his crucial role in forging Qantas' alliance with the then ethnic Italian-based consolidator, Concorde Travel (now Air Tickets). It will warm the hearts of many travel agents to read Nancarrow's account of Borghetti championing their cause when airlines generally were abandoning them. Nancarrow quotes former AFTA chief executive Mike Hatton: "At a time when a lot

of the world was talking about the demise of travel agents, he (Borghetti) could see that there would still be a place for them."

Hatton speaks warmly of the relationship he forged with the "principled" and "loyal" Borghetti. Those who were around at the time will contrast this with Hatton's disgust with the treatment he received from Alan Joyce's team when Jetstar started up (although Nancarrow does not report this.)

Joyce, of course, was the man who pipped Borghetti for the top job at Qantas and the second half of the book deals with Borghetti's subsequent move to Virgin Blue (now Virgin Australia). It depicts a strategically brilliant Borghetti transforming the former budget airline with limited growth prospects into a formidable full-service international and domestic rival to Qantas. Qantas executives, once confident that Virgin would run out of cash, have been forced to retreat from their 65 per cent "line in the sand".

But the battle is not yet over. As Nancarrow's account makes clear, Borghetti still faces the challenge of turning a healthy profit from the millions invested in the carrier. And the providers of those millions, the major overseas airlines with directors on Virgin Australia's board, have their own potentially conflicting agendas. This could be a ticking time-bomb.

France under attack

THE entire travel industry was quick to band together in support of Atout France following the horrific murder of several hundred innocents in Paris by terrorists last month. The attacks in the 'city of light' seemed to bring awareness of the situation to a new level, with many agents reporting their clients were particularly affected at seeing somewhere they had travelled to so often, with such affection, impacted by such an atrocity.

Atout France director for Australia, Patrick Benhamou, thanked the trade for its support, saying "we are hopeful that the city of Paris will remain the favourite city in the world for Australian travellers". By all accounts his wish will come true, with the impact of the violence on travel patterns thus far seemingly short-lived.

\$1 million incentive

THE Travel Corporation is putting its money where its mouth is, with the launch last month of the "TTC Great Giveaway". A prize pool worth \$1 million in total will see the company's largesse reward hundreds of travel consultants for their sales across the various Travel Corporation brands, with the overall winner to receive \$50,000 in cash. Brands covered include Trafalgar, Contiki, Insight, Uniworld, AAT Kings, Inspiring Journeys, Adventure World and Busabout – and as well as the \$50k major prize there are other levels of rewards including three "tier 2" \$25,000 payments and 15 "tier 3" winners each of whom will receive \$10,000.

There will also be random draws for two bonus prizes of \$10,000 each month during the incentive period, and there are 21 \$50,000 prizes, 50 prizes of \$2,000 and a

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, September 2015

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Aug 15/ Sep 15	Trend Sep 14/ Sep 15
	000	000	000	%	%
Indonesia	90.0	91.3	109.6	-0.5	-3.0
USA	84.2	82.1	107.8	+0.3	+3.8
New Zealand	105.3	105.8	105.9	-0.1	+5.3
UK	49.7	50.2	70.1	+1.3	+7.6
Thailand	47.7	46.6	50.8	+0.4	+5.9
China	34.7	34.3	45.7	-1.3	+5.8
Singapore	30.9	30.6	35.4	+0.9	+1.9
Fiji	28.1	28.1	33.5	-0.5	+2.9
Japan	25.5	25.8	30.6	+1.5	+22.2
Italy	15.0	14.6	28.9	-1.1	+2.3
All outbound	780.2	775.3	921.1	+0.0	+3.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, September 2015

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Aug 15/ Sep 15	Trend Sep 14/ Sep 15
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	110.7	110.0	121.0	+0.1	+7.3
China	89.6	94.6	76.6	+2.3	+19.7
UK	56.7	56.9	43.3	-0.3	+5.0
USA	49.7	50.8	39.5	+0.5	+6.5
Malaysia	31.0	33.8	32.8	+2.0	+10.2
Singapore	33.9	34.7	32.2	+1.4	+9.2
Japan	28.6	29.1	29.0	+1.4	+5.9
India	19.5	19.7	16.0	+1.2	+14.6
South Korea	17.2	17.4	15.5	-0.7	-0.6
Hong Kong	19.1	18.9	15.2	-0.1	+14.1
All inbound	624.6	637.1	571.5	+0.7	+7.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at September 2015

City pair	Passengers YE Sep 14 (000)	Passengers YE Sep 15 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,268.7	8,532.2	+3.2
Brisbane-Sydney	4,473.9	4,432.8	-0.9
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,291.8	3,338.4	+1.4
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,587.3	2,602.4	+0.6
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,256.2	2,293.7	+1.7
Melbourne-Perth	2,156.7	2,136.9	-0.9
Adelaide-Sydney	1,794.9	1,822.0	+1.5
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,740.8	1,789.3	+2.8
Perth-Sydney	1,797.5	1,773.9	-1.3
Hobart-Melbourne	1,387.0	1,468.7	+5.9

Source: BITRE

whopping 400 \$1000 prizes. By all accounts the incentive is having an impact across the industry, and is being seen as another example of a smart promotion by the Travel Corporation to build market share during what is a cyclically lean period for the industry.

Value World Travel goes under

IT WAS intriguing to watch the mainstream media coverage of the collapse of Sydney-based Value World Travel last month. The company, which specialised in Indian VFR travel, reportedly left about 2,000 passengers in limbo – but reports on Channel 7 in particular highlighted the lavish lifestyle of the company’s owners – complete with footage of a wild birthday party they held some years previously – rather than focusing on the distress of affected travellers.

The truth about the collapse is yet to emerge, and a “back of the envelope” calculation estimated around \$3 million in losses to the travelling public. However it appears from many of the comments on social media that most of those affected paid by credit card and were confident of receiving charge-backs, but were upset that they were no longer able to secure the bargain-basement – and clearly unsustainable – fares offered by Value World Travel. There were also some wild claims about the impact of the collapse on the consolidator involved which have not been substantiated.

Skills shortage

SOME in the industry have for years sounded the alarm about the ongoing skills shortage in travel and tourism – and a new report from Tourism Research Australia has again highlighted the urgent need for more workers

AVIS SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



TASMANIAN travel agent Belinda van Tholen last joined an illustrious line-up of consultants after being named the 19th winner of the Avis Travel Agent Scholarship of Excellence.

The MTA Mobile Travel Agents member topped the finals which were also contested by Kim Hall of American Express Global Business Travel, Debbie Andrews also of MTA, Barbara Baron from Southside

World Travel and Jill Rimmer from Phil Hoffmann Travel. The \$45,000 prize includes two return business class flights to New York courtesy of Qantas along with six nights in Manhattan, a tour of Avis world headquarters and a scholarship from Southern Cross University – not to mention CLIA training modules and membership plus tickets to the 2016 National Travel Industry Awards courtesy of AFTA.

in the sector. The 2015 Australian Tourism Labour Force Report estimates that an additional 123,000 staff will be required in tourism and hospitality by 2020 as the sector rapidly expands.

Almost half of these employees will be in skilled positions, the report estimates, meaning a major increase in local recruitment and training is also required. To remedy the situation TRA has urged a

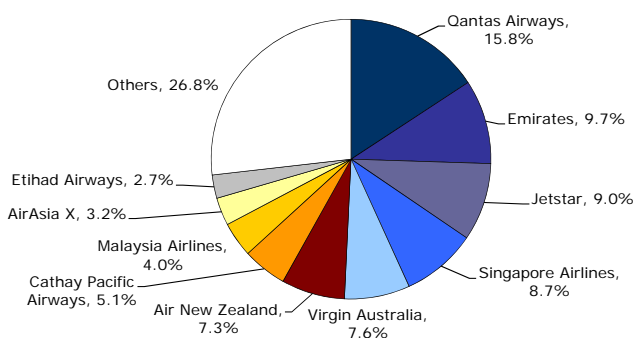
relaxation in temporary skilled migration provisions such as 457 visas and working holidaymaker visas “to ensure Australian tourism businesses have enough skilled workers to meet demands”. All states and territories will be impacted, with the Northern Territory and Western Australia said to be “particularly vulnerable”.

Continues over page

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended September 2015



Source: BITRE

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – September 2015

	Sep 14	Sep 15	Growth (%)	Yr to Sep 14	Yr to Sep 15	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.85m	4.90m	+0.9	57.59m	57.32m	-0.5
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.75bn	5.81bn	+1.1	67.94bn	67.61bn	-0.5
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.52bn	7.56bn	+0.5	89.29bn	88.48bn	-0.9
Load factor (%)	76.5	76.9	+0.4*	76.1	76.4	+0.3*
Aircraft trips (000)	54.0	54.2	+0.3	637.4	636.3	-0.2

Source: BITRE * Percentage points

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – October 2015

	Departures on Time		Arrivals on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	5,572	76.9	5,816	80.2	127	1.7
Qantas	8,579	89.1	8,503	88.3	98	1.0
QantasLink	9,103	88.7	8,921	86.9	215	2.1
REX	5,601	90.7	5,427	87.9	10	0.2
Virgin Australia	10,287	91.0	10,154	89.8	125	1.1
All Airlines	43,186	87.6	42,783	86.8	622	1.2

Source: BITRE

CATO strategic plan

DENNIS Bunnik from Bunnik Tours has wasted no time since being appointed as the new chairman of the Council of Australian Tour Operators, with the organisation launching a strategic plan last month. The four-pronged approach includes increasing professionalism, advocating on behalf of CATO members, minimising business risk and marketing to build the group's profile. Another initiative will see CATO members each given a unique registration number, which will be added to their in-store logo with the aim of informing discussion among agents and consumers about the benefits of booking through a local operator.

Bunnik told *travelBulletin* the new plan was a response to the changing industry environment and the demise of the TCF which means "it's time for us to stand up". CATO membership criteria now mandates ATAS participation, while the new direction of the organisation will also see it host a series of education forums kicking off with a session in March 2016 on crisis management.

Travelport boosts Locomote stake

TRAVELPORT has further expanded its shareholding in Melbourne-based Locomote, with its now 55% investment making it the majority shareholder. At the same time the company has appointed Sanrda McLeod as its new CEO, while founder and former CEO Philip Weinman is transitioning to become Vice Chairman. Locomote is one of Australia's fastest growing technology businesses and services a wide range of major corporates with its system which

EURAIL 2016 DEVELOPMENTS



AUSTRALIANS travelling to Europe next year can look forward to added benefits when booking with Eurail.

During a recent visit to Australia, Eurail Group sales and marketing manager, Silvia Görlach hinted at some big improvements to be introduced from 1 January 2016.

While she remained tight-lipped as to exactly what these developments will be, it's understood there is going to be a wider variety of options for Aussie travellers that will "fill in the gaps".

Australians contribute to more than 10% of the 300,000 passengers that travel with

Eurail each year, making it the third largest market behind North America and Asia.

"The Pacific is a very important market for us and we want to encourage more Aussies to use Eurail, particularly because they spend a lot more time travelling around Europe," said Görlach.

The multi-country Global and Select Passes are the most popular among Australians.

Pictured above at Cockle Bay in Sydney is Silvia Görlach with Rail Europe manager Australasia Ingrid Kocijan and Eurail Group market manager North & South America, Clarissa Mattos.

enables them to manage all aspects of their business travel including policy and preference management, bookings, duty of care, authorisation, budgets and expenses from any device anywhere in the world.

Travelport initially invested in Locomote in 2013, with global CEO Gordon Wilson saying

the move to a majority stake is consistent with the company's ongoing drive to develop new digital services and mobile capabilities for the travel industry. "Locomote, which approached the market with a clean slate and a fresh approach, is a key part of how we envision the future," he said.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

November 2015

Rank	Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
10	Websites	Nov 15	Oct to Nov	Oct 15
1	Webjet Australia	16.07%	-0.55%	1
2	Expedia Australia	9.87%	-0.10%	2
3	Wotif.com	9.03%	-0.29%	3
4	Flight Centre	7.56%	0.37%	4
5	Skyscanner Australia	6.90%	0.07%	5
6	Lastminute.com.au	3.58%	0.36%	6
7	Velocity Frequent Flyer	3.08%	0.25%	7
8	Cheap Flights Aust & NZ	1.56%	0.03%	8
9	CheapOair	1.42%	0.11%	*
10	Helloworld.com.au	1.40%	-0.0032%	9

* Not in top 10

Source: Experian Marketing Services' Hitwise - www.experian.com.au/hitwise

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at September 2015)

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Sep 14	YE Sep 15	total	14/15
Auckland-Sydney	1,461,172	1,524,463	4.4	+4.3
Singapore-Sydney	1,371,147	1,428,741	4.2	+4.2
Singapore-Melbourne	1,135,078	1,181,200	3.4	+4.1
Auckland-Melbourne	1,015,813	1,128,122	3.3	+11.1
Singapore-Perth	1,057,947	1,029,660	3.0	-2.7
Auckland-Brisbane	892,792	962,389	2.8	+7.8
Hong Kong-Sydney	939,269	942,975	2.8	+0.4
Los Angeles-Sydney	890,857	907,392	2.6	+1.9
Denpasar-Perth	893,878	893,207	2.6	-0.1
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	913,105	844,224	2.5	-7.5
Top 10 city pairs	10,571,058	10,842,373	31.6	+2.6
Other city pairs	22,212,919	23,433,574	68.4	+5.5
ALL CITY PAIRS	32,783,977	34,275,947	100.0	+4.6

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

3 December 2015

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$36.42
Helloworld (HLO)	\$0.40
Webjet (WEB)	\$5.60
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.03
Qantas (QAN)	\$3.73
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.45
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.435
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$2.51
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$4.75
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.385
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$11.15
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$2.27
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.92
Sealink (SLK)	\$3.68

Drip pricing pressure

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's successful prosecution of several airlines and online travel agents for so-called "drip pricing" is clearly intended to send a warning shot across the bow of all businesses selling online. Jetstar, Virgin Australia and OTA eDreams were among several companies cited for not fully disclosing all aspects of their pricing at the start of the booking process, instead drip-feeding additions as users completed their purchase making the final price higher than expected.

The ACCC was particularly concerned about a failure to adequately disclose the controversial "booking and service fee" charged on bookings made using most credit cards – which has also been the subject of a Senate enquiry in the last month. It appears that the high profile prosecutions are having the desired effect, with ACCC chairman Rod Sims noting that "it is encouraging that a number of businesses in the travel, accommodation and ticketing industries have adjusted their online pricing practices to improve disclosure of fees and charges since the ACCC began its work on drip pricing".

Norwegian call centre live

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line is now operating its new Sydney call centre, meaning that for the first time it's able to service enquiries locally. Following four weeks of intensive training

the centre is staffed by five full-time cruise consultants under the charge of Operations/Contact Centre Manager, Elizabeth Krstevski. The new arrangement will also see all Australasian email communications channelled through the Australian team.

Steve Odell, who's leading the Norwegian Cruise Line

‘Jetstar, Virgin Australia & OTA eDreams were among several companies cited for not fully disclosing all aspects of their pricing...’

Holdings business in Australasia, and recently had his role expanded to cover all of Asia Pacific, said "establishing a local call centre to deliver enhanced service and assistance to local trade was a top

priority" when setting up the business here. The call centre will operate 8am-6.30pm AEST Monday to Friday and 8.30am-1pm on Saturday, with Norwegian Cruise Line also committed to providing a response the next business day to any enquiries lodged outside these hours.

At this stage the call centre will only service Norwegian Cruise Line enquiries, with Oceania and Regent Seven Seas to be handled off shore until they switch over to the Sydney office down the track.

VA/EY alliance re-authorised

THE ACCC has re-authorised the alliance between Virgin Australian and Etihad, allowing the carriers to continue to coordinate their fares and schedules.

Interestingly the renewal was for a five year period - half the ten years requested by the airlines, with the ACCC saying the "considerable growth of traffic to and through the Middle East underscores the dynamic nature of the aviation industry".

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 2 Nov** Flight Centre charter buy
- 2 Nov** Consular 'State of Play' launches
- 3 Nov** \$1m TTC agent incentive
- 3 Nov** Tourism Ireland reveals strategy
- 4 Nov** QF defends credit card fee
- 4 Nov** Jetstar Vietnam JV on track
- 5 Nov** Virgin on track for black
- 5 Nov** St Giles debuts in Australia
- 6 Nov** Expedia to acquire Stayz
- 6 Nov** Qantas set for Bali boost
- 09 Nov** Hainan to fly Xi'an-Sydney
- 09 Nov** Virgin Aust targets SMEs
- 10 Nov** Value World Travel collapse
- 10 Nov** Domestic tourism "limbo"
- 11 Nov** AA confirms Auckland-Los Angeles flights
- 11 Nov** AOT, Helloworld in talks
- 11 Nov** Webjet continues to fire
- 12 Nov** NZ approval for QF/AA
- 12 Nov** SIA tie-up with Lufthansa
- 13 Nov** AFTA to promote ATAS on TV
- 13 Nov** ITG launches 'Book Safe'
- 13 Nov** AFTA slam agent fraud
- 16 Nov** FC purchases Malaysian corporate travel business
- 16 Nov** Trade unites behind France
- 16 Nov** Express adds dashboard
- 17 Nov** QF rejigs USA, Asia flights
- 17 Nov** Marriott buys Starwood
- 18 Nov** Air NZ, Flight Centre deal
- 18 Nov** Virgin Tasman, Fiji boost
- 19 Nov** NTIA 2016 timetable revealed
- 19 Nov** WTAA pushes IATA on web
- 19 Nov** NZ targets AU HNL traffic
- 20 Nov** Helloworld to merge with AOT Group
- 20 Nov** Burnes to lead Helloworld
- 20 Nov** Indonesia via changes
- 23 Nov** TC newbies opt for brand
- 23 Nov** Gap year compensation
- 24 Nov** Hunter promoted to MD
- 24 Nov** ACCC 'drip pricing' sweep
- 25 Nov** Goldman expands again
- 25 Nov** P&O makes cruise history
- 26 Nov** QR recruiting for Sydney
- 26 Nov** CATO: terrorism vs tourism
- 27 Nov** Fiji jacking up tourism tax
- 27 Nov** QF/AA set for jv renewal
- 30 Nov** Burnes fires first FC shot
- 30 Nov** easyway becomes Tango

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passenger through Australia's major international airports – September 2015

Airport	Passengers YE Sep 14	Passengers YE Sep 15	% of total	% change 15/14
Sydney	13,243,877	13,684,840	39.9	+3.3
Melbourne	7,836,249	8,600,644	25.1	+9.8
Brisbane	4,881,265	5,182,754	15.1	+6.2
Perth	4,163,014	4,184,470	12.2	+0.5
Gold Coast	883,468	908,052	2.6	+2.8
Adelaide	957,009	895,304	2.6	-6.4
Cairns	464,800	515,047	1.5	+10.8
Darwin	333,569	275,015	0.8	-17.6
Sunshine Coast*	9,222	12,092	0.0	+31.1
Norfolk Island	11,504	11,681	0.0	+1.5
Port Hedland~	n/a	3,239	0.0	n/a
All Airports	32,783,977	34,275,947	100.0	+4.6

* Operated scheduled service from July 2012 to September 2012, June 2013 to October 2013 and June 2014 to October 2014. ~Scheduled services recommenced April 2015

ATAS ACCREDITED LOCATIONS

3 December 2015

New South Wales	1,029
Victoria	746
Queensland	665
Western Australia	327
South Australia	232
Australian Capital Territory	50
Tasmania	39
Northern Territory	23
TOTAL	3,111

Got something to say?

We're all ears, so share your thoughts at haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au



Steve Jones' Say

ASSUMING terms of the merger between Helloworld and AOT are not bettered by a third party – and it's hard to see anyone else stepping in to the fray – Andrew Burnes will soon become the new CEO of Helloworld, its fourth in a little over three years.

And he has already made it abundantly clear what he thinks of the business, last month slamming its “poor track record of under-performance”.

Welcome, Helloworld staff, to your new straight-talking boss.

With the HLO share price still languishing, it is inconceivable to think Burnes won't take strong and immediate action to improve its position, with cost cutting at a senior level likely to be among his first tasks.

Burnes knows the travel industry intimately, and, particularly since investing in the business, will be well aware of who adds value and who doesn't within those well-remunerated leadership positions.

Several will rightly be nervous heading into the new year and can expect to

pay the price for that “track record of under-performance”.

That said, I suspect more than a few may be ready to leave such has been the relentless and unsettling amount of change.

I understand there is a feeling of fatigue in a business that has rather limped along for the past three years without much in the way of positive, energetic and confidence-building leadership.

Burnes will need to bring all this to the table to restore a sense of purpose and unity.

And what of agents, the life blood of the organisation? They too must be weary of constant change whether it be the merging of brands, new ownership or a new CEO.

Furthermore, there is speculation the HLO relationship with American Express has become strained, something Burnes will need to quickly address. Agents aligned with Amex put much faith in the blue box.

All things considered, I wouldn't be all that surprised if the AOT deal tips some of the affiliates and associates over

the edge and sparks the creation of a breakaway group, much like Magellan in 2008, a network that continues to plough fertile ground.

While Helloworld branded agents are unlikely to jump ship – they have invested too heavily to move on at this relatively early stage - affiliates and associates, with their flexible contracts, are less committed.

They have not invested in the brand either financially or emotionally, and could potentially be ripe for change, particularly if the Amex arrangement went south.

The first 90 days will be pivotal for Burnes. How he adapts to handling a listed company, with all the transparency that brings, after years of operating a private family business will be interesting, as will his style of management.

As his previous remarks about Helloworld will testify, he is certain to tell it like it is.

He is also not without character. And he'll need bucket loads of that to restore value to the business.



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GOLDMAN CELEBRATES A BIG 2015

GOLDMAN Group last month hosted key industry partners at a lavish event at The Langham, Sydney to celebrate the company's continued growth. 2015 has been a huge year for Goldman Travel which was founded 32 years ago by industry icon Tom Goldman OAM. Now employing more than 60 staff the group encompasses four brands: Goldman Travel, Travelcall, Travelphase and the new home-based Smartflyer Australia business which recently merged with Riche Travel.

This year alone Goldman has received several accolades including winning Best Travel Agency – Corporate Single Location at the National Travel Industry Awards as well as being named as the Top Australia/NZ Virtuoso Production Agency.

Tom Goldman, now executive chairman, hailed the group's suppliers. "We wouldn't be able to look after our clients if it weren't for you. Our business is built on relationships – relationships with our clients and relationships with you, our partners. This is what continues to differentiate us from the faceless online players," he said.

Some of the Goldman team are pictured at the event, above from left: Tom Goldman OAM, David Goldman, Chris Cheyne and Anthony Goldman.

AA launches Aussie flights

AMERICAN AIRLINES is upping the ante on its international service offering in conjunction with the launch of its new non-stop flights between Sydney and Los Angeles which debut this month - seeing the carrier return to Australian skies for the first time in 23 years.

AA's Australian 777-300ER flights will see pyjamas provided for business class passengers, while the airline is also revamping its AAdvantage loyalty scheme to make it based on the fare paid rather than mileage-based.

On a visit to Sydney last month to launch the new route AA CEO Doug Parker said the carrier was making a massive investment to satisfy the Australian market.

"Every seat on the aircraft features personal, in-seat, on-demand HD entertainment screens," he said.

AA will also offer in-flight internet connectivity on its new Pacific route - a development QF will be watching with interest.



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

THE YEAR THAT WAS

2015 will go down as a tough year - not so much in terms of the travel market, but more that the world has once again thrown so much at us all. With ash clouds and terrorism taking centre stage it has been a year of challenges. Global leaders must be furious at how random acts can bring so much harm and pain to the law abiding citizens of this world. As we look forward into 2016 I hope that some of the despicable people that take the actions they do are hunted down and brought to account.

For the Australian travel industry, regardless of all of these troubles I remain confident that Aussies will travel in numbers in 2016. A Federal election is likely to be held in September or October (that is a prediction only), and this brings with it a certain feeling amongst the electorate. But hopefully the 2016 campaign will be based on positive messages from both sides and continue to drive the confidence that we have seen rebound.

‘For the Australian travel industry, regardless of all these troubles I remain confident that Aussies will travel’

There are many other challenges ahead for the travel industry, none the least of which is the challenge of credit card surcharging which is

bound to make the news over the holiday break. Then there are the possible changes to GST that might come about in 2016 - who knows what impact that might have. Remember GST does not apply to services delivered overseas, which means that any increase in the GST makes holidaying at home more expensive.

The exchange rate may also be a factor, as the dollar settles around the USD\$0.70 mark. It appears unlikely to fall too much further unless we see another financial shock, but more likely as the economy settles around the world and some of this unrest hits home, we may well see a rise in the good old Aussie dollar.

That would be a double whammy for the inbound industry if the government(s) also agrees to increase the GST. So plenty to watch out for next year and plenty going on that will have an impact on the travel industry one way or another.

For AFTA, 2016 will see us really hit the ball out of the park with ATAS. There is much more advertising to be done with consumers and a continued push to bring home the positive messages about using an ATAS accredited travel agents.

And then of course there will be NTIA 2016. With a swathe of changes announced in December, a new MC, more seats in a venue that nobody thought possible and the return of the after party, NTIA 2016 tickets will be as hot as they have ever been.

To finish, I strongly believe that we are looking at a strong year for travel in 2016. I hope that everyone, no matter what role they play in the industry, gets the success they deserve. I am forecasting that by 2018 we will see over 10 million international departures and to get to my prediction 2016 has to be a big year.

Best of luck to all.

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TRAVELLERS CHOICE SURGES AHEAD



ALMOST six months on, the Travellers Choice team is still basking in the glow of the group's inaugural "Best Travel Agency Group" 2015 National Travel Industry Awards win back in July. The energy and excitement at the network's recent conference was palpable, and *travelBulletin* spoke to managing director Christian Hunter about the latest developments within the organisation.

Customer experience is a key driver for Travellers Choice, according to Hunter – and those customers include traveller clients as well as the group's member-shareholders across Australia. Hunter, who was recently promoted from ceo to Travellers Choice managing director, said the conference saw the launch of four key initiatives which aim to help members ensure their clients have the very best experience they can.

The first of these is a "digital managed services" offering, which allows agencies

to fully outsource their website, social media, database management and email communications. "We know for many members their time is best spent selling, and dealing with the increased traffic that comes through an enhanced online presence," Hunter said. As small business owners many agents find it difficult to be across all of the latest developments in this area and the managed service option solves this problem for them.

In conjunction with this there's a new website solution for Travellers Choice members. The group's corporate site has been revamped and redesigned to reflect the latest cross-platform protocols meaning it works on any device from a desktop to a tablet and a smartphone. It includes a new 'meet an agent' function, social media integration and a better structure to provide a more intuitive user experience. Based

on this, the Travellers Choice site builder platform now also offers each store its own responsive website – and other key digital moves include a Facebook application which allows consumers to search for their nearest Travellers Choice agent, using "location services," without leaving the social media platform.

Training is also central for Travellers Choice, with the group now housing all training materials and tools from its preferred suppliers in a eLearning Library portal on the in-house Extranet. And finally there's a new HR partnership which offers members assistance with human resources within their businesses. Developed in response to member feedback, the new HR toolkit includes contract templates, checklists for occupational health and safety and more to help agents ensure they are meeting all legal requirements. Created in partnership with Australian Business Consulting & Solutions, the new HR resources are available to all members at no additional cost.

‘We are operating in a growing market sector, with a growing customer base’

Hunter said the conference theme of "Leading the Way" was particularly appropriate, with Travellers Choice continuing to enhance its offering for members. He said the initiatives launched during the conference significantly boost the Travellers Choice value proposition for independent travel agents, citing a "virtuous circle" in which supporting and training member agencies leads to higher sales of preferred products which in turn makes more resources available for the company's head office to support members – at the same time providing "amazing returns to members".

Despite the challenges of increased competition and digital disruption "we are also entering a time of opportunity," Hunter said. More and more Australians have passports, there is plenty of airline capacity and outbound travel is forecast to increase significantly over the next decade. "We are operating in a growing market sector, with a growing customer base," he said, with all indicators pointing to a strong future for the group.

HODGES TAKES UP NEW ROLE WITH DRIVEAWAY HOLIDAYS

THE acquisition of Renault Eurodrive by DriveAway Holidays (*travelBulletin* November 2015) has seen long-time Renault Eurodrive MD Paul Hodges take up a new position as DriveAway's General Manager – Leasing, while other Renault Eurodrive staff have also joined the team at DriveAway in North Sydney.

What hasn't changed is the company's commitment to European car rental leasing, with Hodges highlighting the benefits of selecting a lease vehicle when holidaying in Europe from 21 days up to six months. Drivers minimum age starts at 18 with no upper limit, all vehicle are brand new and come with factory fitted European GPS systems at no additional cost, and fully comprehensive insurance with no excess is also included. An earlybird offer valid for bookings confirmed by 31 December is available on 17 different models including the new 2016 Renault Megane Berline, with seven free days and 50% discount on delivery and return fees outside of France.

DriveAway Holidays managing director Chris Hamill has been driving significant

growth across the business too. He told *travelBulletin* the company's sales presence in the NZ outbound market had increased, with additional NZ travel agent partners on board "which has put us on track for an 18% increase in sales from NZ for 2015". Expansion in Asia is also on the agenda, with DriveAway now working with several agencies in Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia.

And on a global basis DriveAway's parent company Auto Europe has entered into an agreement with Ireland-based travel technology company Mobacar, which will allow the business to grow its "B2B2C" online operations. The partnership connects the Auto Europe global supply network across Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia and North & South America with Mobacar's "science-driven intelligent car rental distribution platform". Mobacar's technology links OTAs and their customers to a global network of transportation options in real-time.

"This is something that we will piggy back and benefit from and enable us to service online travel agency partners," Hamill said.



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Journeys of Inspiration

ON THE EXPRESS TO SUCCESS

THE annual Independent Travel Group Business Forum in Singapore last month saw the debut of a number of initiatives which were enthusiastically embraced by members, with the fast-growing Express Travel network now comprising more than 600 agencies across the ITG, Select and italktravel brands.

One of the major launches was a comprehensive new insurance policy, which covers participating members for agency insolvency and end supplier failure. Dubbed 'Book Safe Agent,' Express Travel Group CEO Tom Manwaring told delegates it was time the industry embraced a professional solution – particularly in the light of recent agency collapses. Carrying distinctive branding (pictured below) which will be used on all collateral by those who take out the policy, Book Safe Agent will require ATAS membership or the provision of audited financials. All of the group's branded italktravel stores will automatically qualify for the cover as part of their franchise agreement, and although the policy costs \$4,200 per annum the Express Travel Group will subsidise this to reduce the cost to \$3,600 per location.

Book Safe Agent covers passengers for airline and preferred supplier failure as well as agency insolvency, and ITG members who have the coverage will be "recognised as premium agents within the network," Manwaring said. He said it was one example of how Express Travel Group gives its members an "unfair advantage" – alongside the company's extensive investment in IT solutions, ticketing and marketing.

When it comes to IT, Express Travel Group continues to evolve its offering for members. Another major announcement during the Forum was the launch of a new "Express Performance" travel agency dashboard. Revealed by executive general manager Ari Magoutis, Express Performance presents a



transparent view of sales data to members, allowing them to produce an extensive range of reports on productivity and profitability. Set to roll out in early 2016, the company is currently populating the system with sales data for the last two years, with the dashboard giving owners the ability to report on gross consultant sales versus commission, product sales by category and supplier along with detailed historical comparisons.

With the extensive suite of solutions offered by Express Travel Group, the company has also launched a centralised knowledge base called "Express Wiki". It gathers all of the information and instructions for using the array of products into a single online portal.

Training is also key for the group, and ITG is taking the bull by the horns with the evolution of its Express Academy to offer various levels

of qualifications. These include a Certificate 1, 2 and 3 in travel with the top tier being the "Masters in Travel". The certificates are achieved by completing various modules available on the Express Academy portal, and the group says as well as improving the knowledge and expertise of consultants the initiative will help nurture staff and retain them in the industry. The training content is provided by preferred partners, tourist boards and destinations and airlines, while other modules cover office productivity suites and CLIA cruise training. Qantas is set to link its learning hub to the academy, while Air New Zealand and Virgin Australia will also go live in the next few months.

A key element in the content is "closing the loop" so ITG knows when consultants have completed a particular module and can electronically record the achievement. Express Travel Group general manager Jonathan Nelson said increased product knowledge was likely to boost sales as well as loyalty to preferred partners. He told delegates to the conference the Express Academy qualifications would denote agency staff as "becoming the best of the best".



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QUIET ACHIEVER OF CONSOLIDATION

CVFR Travel Group is continuing to make inroads into the mainstream consolidation market, branching out from its traditional roots servicing the VFR market. In 2008 the company began targeting general consolidation among leisure agents, starting off with just three clients in NSW. Now the company deals with travel agencies in every major state of Australia covering all markets including VFR, leisure, independent, branded, corporate, online and even home based agents. The growth will continue early next year with the planned commencement of operations across the Tasman from a new Auckland office.

Owner Ram Chhabra told *travelBulletin* the business has also branched out into other areas, in 2013 creating three independent companies under the CVFR Travel Group banner. These are CVFR Consolidation Services, Visa Rep Services which provides outsourcing of back office processing for governments and currently handles the Canada Visa Application Centre, and a GSA business called Airline Rep Services which represents Kuala Lumpur-based Malindo Air.

Chhabra said the company has a basic

focus to keep things simple, providing personalised service and investing in service and technology – rather than on “logos and rebranding”. “We are proud of our history as a VFR consolidator, not running away from it or hiding it,” he said. “CVFR is positioned as a boutique consolidation business, and not driven simply to be the biggest”.

CVFR isn’t chasing scale for the sake of it. “We don’t set targets on what turnover

we want in a few years – we believe in putting the customer/agent first and the business will grow itself,” Chhabra added, stressing that the company also keeps its costs tight allowing it to pass more onto its agent partners.

“We are a genuine alternative and a genuine strong consolidation partner,” he claimed, adding: “our technology and service is second to none”.



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ACCI VIEW

Kate Carnell AO, CEO of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

A NEW ERA FOR TOURISM ADVOCACY WITH THE NTC

WITH vigorous policy debates underway on tax reform, free trade, border controls, labour market and infrastructure there has never been a more important time for tourism to have a strong voice representing its interests at the national level.

That's why the National Tourism Council, a part of the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, is such a vital new voice for tourism businesses. The formation of the NTC followed a decision in 2015 by the National Tourism Alliance to have its lobbying and representative roles undertaken by a new body within the Australian Chamber. To ensure continuity, the NTC is chaired by John Hart, the former chair of the NTA and current CEO of Restaurant and Catering Australia. We are thrilled to have recruited Steve Whan, a former NSW Cabinet minister, as its manager.

The NTC intends to involve state tourism industry councils, industry groups and prominent tourism and hospitality businesses in order to gain a broad and balanced input into policy development.

As Australia's largest and most representative business organisation the Australian Chamber has a natural fit with the nation's 266,000 tourism businesses. The new structure will give those tourism businesses the benefit of the Australian Chamber's leadership on many issues of common interest, but with the flexibility to develop, and lobby for, specific tourism policy.

The Australian Chamber has significant policy and research capacity and leads national debate in areas such as tax reform, workplace relations and trade.

‘The NTA will continue the NTA's work on other key tax issues impacting tourism’

That in-house skill will add great value to the new NTC and the tourism sector as it engages with the Federal Government

on key issues such as the forthcoming tax reform Green Paper.

The tourism sector shares with other business a desire for a tax system that raises the revenue Australia needs in a fair and simple way, without unnecessary burden or regulation on the industry. In that sense, tourism business will directly benefit from the Australian Chamber's profile and efforts to be part of a constructive national debate on tax reform. This will ensure that areas of potential tax reform that directly impact tourism businesses get the attention they deserve during the process.

The NTC will continue the NTA's work on other key tax issues impacting tourism, including the Tourist Refund Scheme and passenger movement charges. It will also pursue priorities previously outlined by the NTA, including lobbying to restore the real value of Tourism Australia funding, reform of visas and entry procedures, a commitment to research and the labour force issues.

The tourism sector has tremendous opportunities on the horizon, and the Australian Chamber looks forward to working with stakeholders to make those a reality.



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WILL NEW AIRLINE MODEL CHANGE THE WAY WE FLY?



By Craig Sinclair

EMERGING airline group, Malindo Air is ruffling the airline industry with an innovative product and pricing model that is slashing ticket prices for premium airline services.

Under current airline modelling, many carriers are distinctly positioned as ‘full service’ or ‘low cost’, but Malindo Air is forging a new path by providing premium airline services within a value for money framework.

The success of the hybrid model has seen the airline grow from a fleet of two aircraft to 25 in two and a half years, with an extensive network throughout Malaysia, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia, Nepal and Singapore.

The airline has now spread its wings into Australia with its inaugural flight into Perth on 19 November, 2015.

Malindo Air chief executive, Chandran Rama Muthy, said the airline’s success lay in its commitment to exceed customer expectations.



Business class



Nidhi Menroy, director CVFR Travel Group; Ram Chhabra, group managing director CVFR Travel Group; Luke Sawyer, head of sales and marketing: Airline Rep Services; Roheena Gidwani, product and marketing manager, Airline Rep Services

“Our customers want premium services without paying too much, so we have developed our operating model to deliver on this.

“We have a great advantage in that we are a new airline, with a new operating model, new staff and new aircraft, so we aren’t burdened by legacy debts or inefficient aircraft.

“Our management team offers decades of aviation experience gained through a mix of low cost and full service airlines, so we understand the importance of customer service and premium quality flying, but we also know how to manage the margins,” Chandran said.

At the heart of the airline is its all-new fleet of aircraft which have an average age of just over a year.

“The all-new aircraft fleet ensures we have the highest efficiency engines and economics, as well as the latest inflight entertainment and a true business class cabin,” he added.

Economy passengers enjoy an oversized seat pitch of 32 inches (81cm) along with a

30 kilo baggage allowance (up to 2-piece), seat selection (optional), inflight entertainment and meals and refreshments included.

Business class passengers enjoy a 45-inch

“The all-new fleet ensures we have the highest efficiency engines and economics, as well as the latest inflight entertainment”

Chandran Rama Muthy,
Malindo Air chief executive

(114cm) seat pitch and receive airport lounge access, a 40 kilo baggage allowance, seat selection (optional), refreshments, inflight entertainment and a large 6-inch recline cradle seat.

Inflight wi-fi is also available on every aircraft.

“Malindo Air is a premium airline – first and foremost. We know how to keep costs low, but we also understand the importance of delivering a premium customer experience,” he said.

Perth flights commence from 19 November using a brand new 180-seat Boeing 737-900.

“Perth is a great launch city as it already carries a lot of passenger and cargo traffic in both directions, but we are keen to explore Sydney and Melbourne as soon as we secure the right deal for the right aircraft.

“Aviation is a tough industry but we are enjoying excellent growth in what is a challenging market for most airlines and see great opportunities with our new flights into Australia,” Chandran said.

BURNES LAUNCHES NEW ERA FOR HELLOWORLD

LAST month's Helloworld Owner-Managers conference took place in Wellington, New Zealand just a week after the company's merger with AOT Holidays was announced. CEO-designate Andrew Burnes made the most of the timely opportunity to provide a hands-on update about the deal and what it means for both Helloworld and AOT. He laid down the gauntlet to attendees at the event, saying the Helloworld service proposition was what would set it apart from rivals including "fierce competitor" Flight Centre and other disruptive influences such as OTAs, airline loyalty programs and niche "deals" packages.

He warned delegates to be aware of "those who are taking away the travel consumer from your stores. Away from your phones, and away from your portals and onto their own". While it's early days yet, and the merger is yet to be approved at an Extraordinary General Meeting expected to take place in January 2016, Burnes flagged a number of other possibilities including growing Helloworld's presence into AOT's overseas offices. Currently AOT operates on the ground in London, Milan, Munich, Paris, Seattle, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore, Jakarta, Mumbai, Bali and Rarotonga, primarily servicing inbound customers to

‘It will be a goal to enable more members to have a slice in the successful transformation of the company’

Australia. However potentially these offices could also "enhance the service proposition that our franchisees have," Burnes suggested, with Helloworld customers able to access the in-destination local service centres which he said would probably be co-branded as Helloworld.

Burnes, who together with his wife Cinzia will hold 40% of the merged company, also highlighted the key advantages of ownership to the Owner Manager Conference attendees, flagging that travel agent members and franchisees of the group will be offered a chance to become shareholders in the business. "It will be a goal to enable more members to have a slice in the successful transformation of the company," he said, with further details to be provided in the coming weeks. "I believe these initiatives will help

to align our mutual efforts to continue to grow and develop our franchise network in Australia and New Zealand. To attract our franchisees to invest in the master business, I think is a good thing," he told *travelBulletin*.

Other changes could see some Helloworld stores having extended opening hours, particularly in shopping centres. Burnes said he had sometimes seen customers "six deep at the counter" at Flight Centre stores, "and then you walk over to the helloworld branded or associate store and it's shut". Traditional bricks-and-mortar agencies ultimately need to have a 24/7 presence to compete with online giants such as Expedia, Burnes said. "The bottom line is we need to be open when our customers want to book and that is not always the case."

PRODUCT IS KEY

DURING the conference there were a number of announcements about helloworld product, including the planned development of fully branded helloworld domestic and international brochures. New documentation compendiums are being phased in by Qantas Holidays and Viva! Holidays and again for helloworld branded agencies these will be available in the company's distinctive blue colour.

Qantas Holidays/Viva! is also set to relaunch its former easyway booking platform under a new name. Dubbed Tango, the revamped Calypso front end will offer significantly more flexibility according to Helloworld wholesale head of sales, Fiona Dalton. New features will include a search widget which displays all flights, hotels, cars, transfers and activities at once, and it will no longer be necessary for holiday components to be added in a particular order which she said would reduce the number of



steps required to finalise a quote or booking. Tango will also enable consultants to adjust end user prices up or down while the net cost to the agency remains unchanged. There will be a "passenger view" option to hide commission details, interactive maps, itineraries-on-demand and a field to show supplier comments.

Along with the technology upgrade QHV will standardise deposits for international and domestic bookings, with the figure reduced to a modest \$55 effective immediately. Deposits associated with cancelled bookings will also now be held in suspense for six months – less supplier cancellation fees – rather than being non-refundable.

"This change will give you a streamlined, cost-effective solution on deposits that recognises the value of allotments," Dalton said. She also confirmed that the Global Achievers gala event for 2016 will take place in Honolulu, in conjunction with Hawaii Tourism and Starwood.





A ROLLERCOASTER RIDE

Predicting the future is never an exact science, and with all that is going on in the world, it's even more difficult. Steve Jones investigates what 2016 might bring for travel agents.

WHEN the dust literally and metaphorically settled on the most recent series of terrorist atrocities – assuming it ever really does settle after such traumatic episodes – travel companies the world over were again left reflecting on what the impact may be for the industry.

It always seems crass and insensitive to talk of a potential booking downturn amid such human tragedy. Yet once the initial shock subsides our attention is inevitably drawn to the wider ramifications as the resilience of the industry, and the travelling

public is once again put to the test. Such events, and the rising concern of repeat terrorism activity, is one of the unknown factors facing retail leaders as the industry heads into 2016.

As Travellers Choice managing director Christian Hunter told *travelBulletin*: “We have built our budgets around double digit percentage growth in 2016 and early indications are positive...but there is so much in travel that we have absolutely no control over that can derail the industry in a heartbeat.

“We are beholden to others in some regard so we are maximising the opportunities where we can.”



FOR 2016

‘There is so much in travel that we have absolutely no control over that can derail the industry in a heartbeat’

Initial reaction to the indiscriminate Paris attacks, the downing of a Russian aircraft over the Sinai, the bombings in Beirut and the hotel attack in Mali – the latter a rarely visited destination by Australians and maybe less psychologically damaging as a result – suggest

no major downturn and, to some extent, a renewed determination not to be cowed.

But there was a mixed reaction from retail leaders about its impact on travel.

In the UK, Thomas Cook chief executive Peter Fankhauser warned the industry is facing the greatest turmoil in decades such as the “disruption in so many markets”.

“In my 30 years in the industry I have never seen anything like it,” he said, before adding the more positive observation that consumer confidence tends to rebound relatively quickly.

Hunter also predicted the events will have little long term effect although he conceded some consumers may rethink their plans.

“It may make some people question where and when they go but it doesn’t mean they will cancel their travel plans altogether,” he said. “It’s tragic what is happening and to be honest I think we’ll see more of it, certainly in the short term, but I don’t see it having a major impact like SARS did. Australians are resilient when it comes to this sort of thing.”

Express Travel Group chief executive Tom Manwaring agreed that even if consumers are delaying their plans, they will “reappear in two or three months”.

“I don’t believe they are saying ‘we are not going to travel’,” he said.

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But Steve Labroski, chief executive of itravel, painted a more cautionary picture, warning it was not so much the attacks themselves that may deter holidaymakers heading into 2016 but the relentless threats emanating from Europe in particular.

Asked if he was hopeful of a solid year ahead, Labroski said: "I was until all these things started to happen. This is the time of year when everyone focuses on earlybirds so what do we do if something else happens?"

"I agree that people are resilient but every time you turn on the TV there is another threat and that is going to be the problem. It's non-stop and a new headache every day.

"The saga is continuing and that's where we all struggle. We just have to look at new ways of encouraging people to travel."

TravelManagers chairman Barry Mayo was also more circumspect, admitting many of the group's agents are amending European itineraries amid heightened nervousness.

He predicted a shift to closer to home destinations in the wake of the Paris attacks, with the weakening dollar "also a concern".

Helloworld, meanwhile, reported a reluctance of consumers to commit in the immediate aftermath of recent events, with those in the booking and quoting stage holding back.

"Christmas bookings remained positive," acting chief executive Jenny Macdonald added.

Despite the ongoing uncertainty over what the next few months may hold, Flight Centre boss Graham Turner

told *travelBulletin* he expected a "reasonably solid" year, while acknowledging 2016 would be "nothing spectacular".

Subdued consumer confidence due to domestic economic headwinds could dampen demand although competitive airfares will help "keep people travelling".

"It won't be a booming market, it's likely to be pretty placid but it could be worse," he said.

‘I agree that people are resilient but every time you turn on the TV there is another threat and that is going to be the problem’

The sentiment was echoed by Hunter who said broader economic issues surrounding job security and interest rates may impact decision-making more than terrorist activity.

Nevertheless, early indications were promising despite the virtual absence of any discernible booking pattern.

"It will be a tough year but we are optimistic. Despite what might seem to be uncertain economic times our forward bookings are ahead of last year," he said.

"But it is unpredictable. There are peaks and troughs and it varies state to state.

"We'd all like more predictable traditional booking patterns but that's the way it is."

Demand will be driven by increased capacity in both the airline and cruise sectors, he added, the latter of which is showing no sign of slowing.

"Competition drives competitive pricing. More seats and cabins need to be filled which means suppliers need to be sharp with their pricing," Hunter said. "Consumers will be able to find good deals in 2016."

Helloworld noted a rising trend for people to take "shorter breaks more often" and highlighted river cruising and domestic holidays as growth areas.

A common ambition among retail leaders over the next 12 months is to further customise product for a consumer armed with more knowledge than ever and who is seeking travel experiences, not just a holiday.

While the trend is not new, retailers were united in a belief that demand for such product will accelerate in 2016 and place agents under further pressure to deliver.

Today's consumer wants to be recognised as an "individual with a specific, unique and personal set of wants and needs", Magellan Travel Group chief executive Andrew Macfarlane said.

"Travel to experience new places, new people and new cultures has become a cultural imperative and they want product and services tailored to their personal preferences," he said, arguing that central to such personalisation is face-to-face contact with experienced consultants who can add value.

"Consumers are spoilt for choice but what they really need is a curated selection of choices tested and recommended by an experienced travel professional," Macfarlane said.

Like Hunter, he predicted a strong 2016 for the industry as additional airline and cruise capacity "makes travel even more affordable".

Manwaring urged the industry to step up its training of agents and insisted the most effective way of developing knowledge is to experience the product. And if that meant paying for airfares and hotel rooms rather than relying on industry partners to fund famils then so be it.

"The airfares and hotel beds don't have to be free. Pay for them and view it as an investment," he said.



"It should be like any other industry. If you want to learn how to be a plumber you pay for it and it has to be accepted as a cost.

"But some people still view travel as a part time cottage industry and that is wrong."

He added: "If you exceed the consumer's expectations then you become unbeatable and that is what we must all aim for. When the customer can save \$10 booking it next door then you won't see them again.

"Consumers spend hours researching and know the destination. And if you just sit there with a blank face and are learning off the customer then you are in trouble. That is where the big squeeze is going to happen. If we lose our relevance we become obsolete. We have to accept this as a major challenge.

"The professionalism of travel agents needs to come through over the next few years so we demonstrate real added value."

Hunter, who unveiled a new training portal called TC Exell at the group's recent conference which gives members access to preferred suppliers' training material, said it was more important than ever to demonstrate value.

"If we don't, we lose the transaction," he warned, revealing a renewed push within Travellers Choice to put the customer "at the heart" of every decision.

Turner said Flight Centre had ambitions to

“Consumers are spoilt for choice but what they really need is a curated selection of choices tested and recommended by a travel professional”

sell more "commoditised low margin product" online and focus on providing the key baby boomer market with customised product.

"This market is going to grow over the next 20 years but they don't necessarily want to go on holiday, they want to travel and have experiences rather than sit on a beach in Bali," he said. "We want to give the baby boomer a better experience with relatively unique product. A small proportion will be our own product but a lot will be from suppliers that we can make different with add ons."

The retail giant also reiterated its intention to forge closer relationships with low cost carriers to grow leisure sales, a strategy Turner flagged at its annual general meeting.

The commercial terms were not "excitingly generous" but it's a product that people want, he said.

"It's good the low cost carriers have recognised the distribution system and it's important for us to be able to supply the product and make some money out of it," Turner told *travelBulletin*.

And what of the retail landscape

itself? Will there be further movement as groups look to grow their membership?

Manwaring likened the movement to the San Andreas fault – "it keeps shuddering away" – but there was a general consensus of a relatively stable year, despite further management and ownership upheaval at Helloworld. "I'm sure there will be movement as there always is but I don't think we'll see

“Some people still view travel as a part time cottage industry and that is wrong”

the level we saw a couple of years ago," Manwaring said.

"And to be honest it's good to have a fluid market because it ensures groups have a strong value proposition and are doing the right thing by their members.

"We are focused on our value proposition to make sure we are in a position to pick up any agents who are out there looking for a new arrangement."

However, Mayo suggested – perhaps unsurprisingly – that the home based model will continue to grow at the expense of bricks and mortar stores.

The shift will accelerate, should margins continue to tighten, he said.

"The simpler business model with its reduction in overheads and cutback of non-revenue producing activities will be an important factor in the decision process of choosing to continue as bricks and mortar or adapt to the low cost home-based model," he said.

Macfarlane added that agents are increasingly holding their franchisors to account, a self-appointed empowerment that will continue.

"Agents now demand their group is transparent, efficient and cost effective and add value for their business," he said. "If they don't get that, they walk."

Whatever the next 12 months holds for the retail sector, 2016 is certain to be another challenging year, yet one that will throw up many opportunities for growth. For the time being however, particularly in light of recent events, industry leaders are holding their breath.



EXCITING TIMES AHEAD FOR SABRE

Sabre Travel Network's recent acquisition of Singapore-based Abacus has seen the company's global operations unified under a single brand. **BRUCE PIPER** spoke to regional senior vice president **Roshan Mendis** about what this means for Australia.

SABRE'S Australian operations are poised for significant growth, if Roshan Mendis has anything to say about it. Fundamentals for the business are ideal, and after some years of shifting ownership having everything under the single Sabre brand signifies the strong global proposition offered by the company.

Mendis was recently appointed to lead Sabre in the Asia-Pacific region, and one of his first acts on taking up his new role was to establish a new divisional structure, with Australia, New Zealand and Indonesia now headed up by Sabre veteran Richard Morgan. Other divisions include North Asia, South Asia and South-East Asia.

Mendis said Sabre had long wanted to "play directly in this region," with Asia-Pacific leading the globe in terms of growth - and Australia, alongside India, one of the strongest performing countries. He plans to highlight the dominant position held by Sabre in other markets - in particular the GDS firm's global strength in corporate and online - to make a bigger impact locally.

"We're the largest player in these segments, and will continue to be," he told *travelBulletin*. "We now have one owner, one agenda, one purpose - to equip our partners to thrive and win in the marketplace".

Sabre staff have been enthusiastic about the new ownership which will also potentially provide career opportunities for them on a global scale. "The energy is palpable," Mendis said.



"We now have one owner, one agenda, one purpose - to equip our partners to thrive and win in the marketplace"

Roshan Mendis, Senior Vice President
Sabre Travel Network Asia Pacific

The new ownership structure is also likely to see the local region have a strong influence on the Sabre product roadmap. "Asia Pacific is now a mainstay in our portfolio," Mendis said. However despite the rapid evolution of technology, Sabre still has its eyes firmly fixed on its basic purpose, which is to "always deliver the best fares between point A and B - that's our fundamental bread and butter".

Having said that, Sabre also has its finger on the pulse of technology, with online growing much faster than other areas and the system required to respond effectively to very high shopping intensity. "We're seeing strong growth in search traffic, metasearch and mobile - we are able to cater to that user and traveller behaviour."

Another focus for Sabre is the mountain of data it has at its fingertips due to the massive volume of transactions it is constantly processing on a global basis. "We can leverage what we have for the benefit of our agency and supplier partners to serve customers better," Mendis said.

Key to the platform is the Sabre Red Workspace, which is highly geared towards enabling merchandising and selling. The app-like environment provides the "best of both worlds," with a command-line interface

for experienced users complemented by a graphical user interface - all aggregated at the desktop level with easy expansion to incorporate other content such as low-cost carriers, cruise, rail, user-generated content and direct XML connections to suppliers.

Mendis is very bullish on the prospects for Sabre's operations in Australia. The big VFR market here is very suited to GDS distribution, he said, while there's also a big and growing corporate market. Sabre already has a significant number of "marquee global customers" who may expand in Australia, while locally there are sophisticated corporate and leisure buyers who want to be able to offer their clients the best schedules, rates and availability.

He said the high cost of labour in Australia is also a key driver for the efficiencies that Sabre can offer. "For travel agencies to scale they need tools, automation, flexible back and mid office solutions," Mendis said.

The fact that a number of Australian travel agency groups are growing strongly on a global scale - such as Flight Centre, Corporate Travel Management and Webjet - means Sabre's new worldwide proposition presents "our best chance of winning them".

"It's an exciting place to do business," he concluded.

CUSTOMER ACQUISITION WITH METASEARCH

The OTA segment is developing into an exciting and dynamic growth driver in the Asia Pacific region. Travelport's MING FOONG encourages us to all "Think Borderless" if we really want OTAs to take off in this region.

FOR a large part of Asia Pacific, the online space is still very much in development. Most regions are dominated by one or two leading home grown OTA brands, with one or two more international players in the mix.

However we are now seeing price comparison engines (also known as travel metasearch engines) growing their presence, establishing themselves as the first point of contact for travel booking and as a mandatory channel for B2C online agencies to acquire customers. The price comparison function provided by metasearch engines also attracts customers who are already further down the purchase funnel, potentially lifting conversion.

The shift towards metasearch can also help to reduce market entry costs, because a new OTA can effectively target traffic from another region. Consumers are now less

concerned whether the OTA they purchased from is a known brand within their local market. In the past 18 months, we have observed a number of global OTAs appearing on metasearch engines in Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong, outside of their home country and region.

However the growth of metasearch is still somewhat hampered by a limited supplier and seller base. To participate in metasearch,

‘Consumers are now less concerned where the OTA brand they purchased from is a known brand within their local market’

agents need to have an API (application programming interface) connection as well as transaction capabilities. Travelport is assisting agencies with limited technical resources to participate and acquire customers through metasearch engines by being the conduit between all parties.

Another key trend is fulfillment with O2O - Online to Offline. We have seen many success stories from pure online businesses in the travel industry across the Pacific, such as Webjet. However, in regions such as Japan and South Korea, the larger online players are successful subsidiaries of diversifying traditional offline agencies.

Large players like Flight Centre and Helloworld already have their own O2O strategy and focus. "helloworld.com.au's clear focus from the beginning has been on capturing a share of the rapidly growing online market in the Asia-Pacific region, driving online customers offline to helloworld agents' businesses," says Jeremy Reitman, CEO of Helloworld.com.au.

In the past, online operators were seen as competition, disrupting traditional models. This will change. Outside of travel, there are some interesting success stories, particularly in retail. In Japan, bricks-and-mortar retailers are focused on providing product experience to consumers, who then complete the purchase online or on a mobile device.

This is perhaps a model that would work in high involvement purchases like cruise or tour packages.

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- Offer your customers more travel choices and convert every sales opportunity
- Sell more airline products and services more often
- Less time training, more time selling



Agency user - improved workflow to sell more easily

- Book full service airlines and low cost carriers side by side
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ALOHA HAWAI'I

THE abundant natural beauty of Hawai'i offers a picturesque backdrop to meetings and conferences,

few places in the world can rival.

Its unique melting pot of American, Japanese and Hawaiian culture inspires an exciting multi-ethnic culinary experience, suited perfectly to the palettes of both the seasoned foodie and the downright picky.

Beautiful all-year round, Hawai'i offers a range of exciting outdoor team-building activities such as whale watching, golfing, zip-lining, island-hopping and snorkelling.

With its white sand beaches, tranquil blue waters and world-class facilities; Hawai'i is a haven that seamlessly blends business with pleasure, making it an ultimate destination for company getaways and events.

Hawai'i's six main islands each offer their own distinct character, providing six very different meeting experiences.



Kaua'i

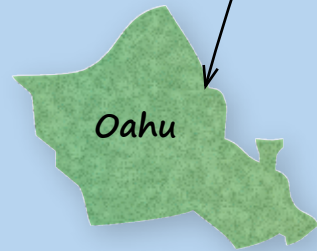
KAUAI - THE GARDEN ISLE

Known also as the Island of Discovery, the paradise of Kaua'i offers a rejuvenating experience that helps to revive the body and spirit.

Surrounded by a bounty of scenic wonders, sculpted from centuries of growth, Kaua'i presents a variety of exciting outdoor adventures.

From tree-top zip-lining to river kayaking; mud buggy adventures through to helicopter tours, all are perfect as corporate challenges to bond your team.

Home to the spectacular Waimea Canyon, known also as the Grand Canyon of the Pacific; Kaua'i features some of the best hiking tracks in the world, showcasing a mecca of panoramic trails and walks suited to every level of ability.



Oahu

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[^]Schedule correct as at 05/10/15 and is subject to change.



OAHU - THE GATHERING PLACE

The third largest of the Hawaiian Islands, dubbed lovingly The Gathering Place, Oahu is the ultimate destination to meet business colleagues from all around the world.

Surrounded by world-class hotels, state-of-the-art meeting facilities and a plethora of exquisite dining options, the capital Honolulu is a diverse international city only a step away from breath-taking beaches.

Combining famed Hawaiian hospitality with cutting-edge technology, the award-winning Hawai'i Convention Centre presents the perfect setting for hosting meetings and events.

Offering 47 meeting rooms - ten with views of the terrace, courtyard and mountain valleys; a large ballroom; and a 13,000 seater theatre-style auditorium, the convention centre is a versatile space suited for conferences and meetings of all sizes.

Afterwards, relax on the shores of Waikiki beach just before sunset to witness a brilliant green flash along the horizon, as the sun descends into the ocean.

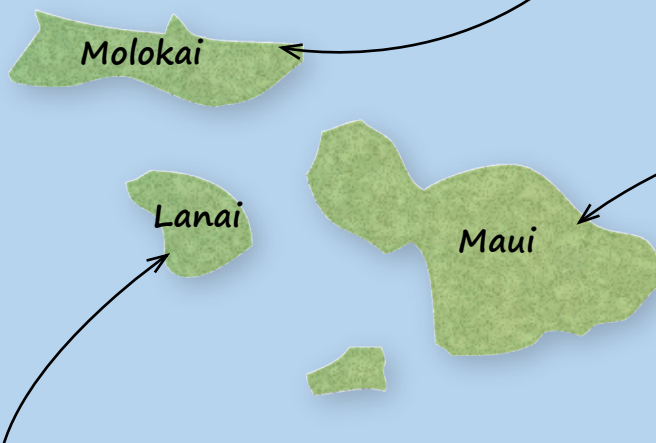
MOLOKAI - THE FRIENDLY ISLE

Live as the locals do, in captivating Molokai, an island of untouched beaches and dramatic sea cliffs.

Located near the centre of the Hawaiian island chain, Molokai offers an authentically Hawaiian experience, giving visitors the chance to learn more about the country's fascinating traditions.

Whether you're exploring the eastern sea cliffs of Molokai on the back of a mule, snorkelling the ocean's captivating reefs, or playing a slow, relaxing game of golf at Iron hills - you're in for a truly unforgettable experience.

Other team bonding favourites here include cycling, hiking, mountain biking and whale watching.



MAUI - THE VALLEY ISLE

The awe-inspiring island of Maui is a popular choice when hosting meetings and conferences, due to its spectacular landscaping, exceptional amenities and extraordinary culinary scene.

Transform group functions into unforgettable memories with group activities such as kite surfing, sports fishing, golfing, spa therapies, winery tours and snorkelling.

The second largest of the Hawaiian Islands, the beaches of Maui have repeatedly been voted among the best in the world.

LANAI - THE PINEAPPLE ISLE

Tranquil Lanai makes for the perfect location for groups looking for a secluded spot to escape the hustle and bustle of business life.

Situated just 14 kilometres from Maui, Lanai offers two luxurious beachfront resorts perfect for hosting small to medium conferences or events.

As the smallest inhabited island of Hawai'i, Lanai has a lot to offer. With only 48 kilometres of paved road, the rest of Lanai's rugged terrain can only be accessed by 4-wheel drive.

An absolute oasis of calm, spinner dolphins are often spotted bounding through the pristine waters of Hulopoe Bay, with humpback whales visiting the area during winter months.



HAWAI'I ISLAND - THE BIG ISLAND

By far the largest in the chain of Islands, Hawai'i Island is home to some of the most diverse and unique microcosms on earth.

A popular meeting destination for those who want to embrace adventure, Hawai'i Island offers visitors the chance to explore an active volcano, snorkel with manta rays and indulge in sports fishing.

JETSTAR TOP CHOICE FOR GROUPS TO HAWAII

JETSTAR makes flying to Hawaii trouble free with 13 return flights to Honolulu each week from three major Australian cities.

There are six services from Sydney, four from Melbourne and three from Brisbane, with Jetstar the only airline offering a direct route between Melbourne and Honolulu.

All flights to and from Hawai'i are operated by the company's state of the art Boeing Dreamliner 787.

The upgraded aircraft features better cabin pressure to reduce jetlag, and has a lower cabin altitude filling the plane with more oxygen, helping you to arrive at your destination feeling refreshed.

On board the *Dreamliner* there is a Business class cabin featuring wide leather seating, extra legroom and an all-inclusive food and beverage offering. Business customers have access to priority boarding and check-in. Business Max customers can also enter the Qantas Club lounges in Australia and at destination airports where available.

Those flying economy class in the *Dreamliner* are also in for a pleasant trip, with passengers having full access to



in-flight entertainment in every seat, larger cabin windows and an enhanced customer experience on board.

Jetstar currently operates 11 industry-leading Boeing 787s on all long haul services from Australia.

The low-cost carrier is one of the fastest growing low fares airlines in the world, a testament to customer satisfaction.

Jetstar first took to the skies in 2004 with just 14 aircraft and today Jetstar airlines operate a fleet of 119 aircraft to more than 70 destinations in 17 countries and territories across Asia Pacific.

Most recently Jetstar has introduced a new group sales selling platform to help improve the process of group enquiries.

This is achieved by automating group fare pricing, with the majority of quotes emailed to customers within minutes of their enquiry, instead of up to 24 hours later.

Email communications have also been automated for the collection of deposits, passenger names and final payments.


The airline recognises and understands the unique needs of group travel and has developed methods to block seats, share baggage allowance and make name changes.



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cievents expands into Canada

FLIGHT Centre's cievents event management business now has a footprint in seven countries, having opened a new office in Toronto Canada at the start of this month. To be headed up by Flight Centre veteran Sasha Mazzuca, the operation complements existing offices in Australia, New Zealand, the UK, the USA, South Africa and Hong Kong. Further expansion is planned for next year with a Singapore office set to open early in 2016.

"This global expansion allows us to continue to offer our customers a truly global solution to their event management, event production, reward and recognition, digital and design requirements," said cievents global general manager Natalie Simmons. Mazzuca is no stranger to launching new businesses for Flight Centre in Canada, having kicked off FCM Groups & Incentives there in 2007 and then in 2011 opening Stage & Screen to target the sports and entertainment industries.

Reed partners with oneworld

A NEW agreement between Reed Travel Exhibitions and the oneworld airline alliance is set to benefit visitors to AIME, which takes place in February next year at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. Under the pact oneworld is designated as the exclusive airline alliance partner for 19 global Reed shows in 2016 including ibtm events in Barcelona, Africa, America, China and Latin America plus London's World Travel Market.

Under the pact visitors to the show are able to access discounted fares for themselves and a companion, flying on any oneworld member airline, by making flight reservations via a dedicated portal at

www.oneworld.com/events, with booking codes for AIME via oneworld to be made available on the AIME website this month.

MEA Event Show returns

THE Event Show, which debuted earlier this year courtesy of Meetings and Events Australia, will once again take place in 2016 at Sydney's Royal Randwick Racecourse. In what's being described as a "bold move" it will take place on Thursday and Friday 25th and 26th of August, with MEA CEO Linda Gaunt saying "having the show at the end of the working week will help us to maximise visitation which will, in turn, provide more opportunities for our exhibitors".

Gaunt said feedback from this year's inaugural Event Show was extremely positive.



BES VIEW

Lyn Lewis-Smith, chief executive
Business Events Sydney

MEETINGS BUILD A STRONG FUTURE

IT'S exciting to see the shift in the way business events are viewed and valued globally.

There's a next-generation groundswell of advocacy and support for our sector as a key driver of thriving knowledge economies – broad recognition of its contributions to developing the skills needed for the workforce of tomorrow, building strong global communities, driving innovation and discovery, and solving challenges.

Today, convention bureaux don't simply market destinations. We are a vital conduit for connecting industry, academia, government and the private sector; aiding global talent acquisition and skilled migration, research and development, trade and investment, and creativity and innovation.

In Sydney, we're serious about creating a better future through collaboration – with clients, business, government and academia – to achieve the best results for our clients, our city and our people.

By strategically aligning the events we secure with key national and state priorities, we are making notable contributions to both our visitor and knowledge economies.

In Sydney last year, the 105th Rotary International Convention raised worldwide attention for its End Polio Now campaign and funds that will immunise 240,000 kids against the disease. And, we are one step closer to easing the burden of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease – some of the leading causes of death, disability and reduced quality of life around the world – with the creation of the Charles Perkins Centre at the University of Sydney. This \$385 million research facility,

which opened last year, was established as a direct result of profile generated by the 10th International Congress on Obesity held in Sydney in 2006.

These are examples of some fantastic social outcomes that are directly attributable to hosting international business events in Sydney.

We can only imagine what will come from the events we have secured for the future.

For example, last month, we announced that Sydney had won the right to host the RoboCup International Symposium and World Championship in 2019, which celebrates artificial intelligence (AI) and advanced manufacturing. STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills have been identified as essential

‘We're serious about creating a better future through collaboration... to achieve the best results for our clients...’

for our knowledge economy future and robotics is a fun way to attract and engage a younger generation of scientific leaders – an area that is struggling to attract enough students to meet the demands of the future.

There are plenty of examples of how conferences, conventions and professional meetings make a positive contribution to our economies, communities and futures.

This is why cities and businesses invest in this industry – it's about creating impact and change for a better tomorrow.



business events news

- 02 Nov** AMEX forecasts M&E growth
- 05 Nov** iVvy partners with Dimmi
- 09 Nov** Melbourne stem cell win
- 12 Nov** New BESydney China site
- 16 Nov** China events worth \$110b

Headlines November

- 19 Nov** Reed partners with oneworld
- 19 Nov** Wilkinson vows Walkabout
- 23 Nov** Sydney's ATP sold to Mirvac
- 23 Nov** EEA forum details released
- 30 Nov** MEA scholarship applications



APT's new Antarctica Luxury Expedition Cruising brochure is now on agency shelves, showcasing the chance to explore the Antarctic peninsula on the ship, *Le Boreal*, which is fully equipped for glacial waters. A 10-day cruise aboard *Le Boreal* features on 12 itineraries in the brochure and includes the opportunity to ride through towering glaciers on a Zodiac as well view an astounding amount of wildlife including penguins, seals, and whales. The popular 13-day Classic Antarctica is priced from \$12,795 per person.



TOPDECK has announced its first foray into Asia. The new brochure includes 11 new itineraries from the youth holidays company, exploring Japan, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and Bali. The 7-day Bali Island Hopper leads in at \$713 per person. Staying in 3-4 star hotels the whole way, the trip starts and finishes in Seminyak, and includes water sports on Lembongan Island, and time on Gili Trawangan and in Ubud. Savings of 25% are available on all trips departing before 30 Jun 2016, if paid in full by 15 Jan 2016.



NEW ZEALAND is as popular as ever with Australian travellers and the new expanded Qantas Holidays' New Zealand brochure reflects this. Additions include a range of outdoor adventures including iconic walks and cycling trails. The 2-day self guided Otago Central Rail Trail is priced from \$362 per person, including bike hire and baggage transfer. New also are packages including Wanaka and Hawke's Bay. The brochure also includes detailed driving distance maps to assist travellers wanting to roadtrip.



ISLAND ESCAPE CRUISES has released its new 2016 Tahitian Affairs brochure, detailing the schedule of seven and 10 night small boutique ship lagoon cruises. Itineraries depart from Papeete and Bora Bora between May

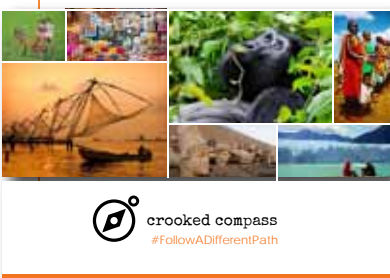
and October 2016. Prices for the 7-day cruise lead in at \$6457, with 12% commission paid on the whole cruise fare. Exclusive shore excursions, village visits, use of kayaks, tenders, snorkel and fishing equipment are all included.



FREESTYLE HOLIDAYS' new UK, Europe & Arabian Peninsula 2016/17 brochure is out now. The expanded brochure now includes more regional touring in England, Ireland and Scotland. There is also an increased focus on the Arabian Peninsula, for those wanting to make the most of their stopover. There are suggested self-drive itineraries in Scotland and Ireland, plus a range of accommodation options across Europe that cater for those travelling with friends and family, as well as those looking for pure luxury.

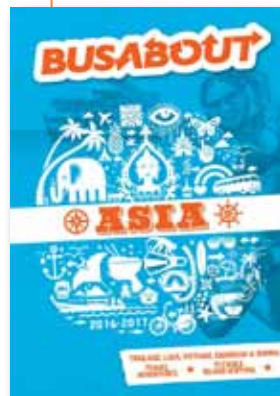


ABERCROMBIE & KENT'S new India & the Orient brochure is hot off the presses with a range of private and small group journeys for 2016. There are a number of new itineraries including a two week luxury rail trip on Maharajah's Express, a luxury small group journey with a Ganges River trip, as well as new accommodation options in Sri Lanka. In Asia, highlights include a week-long trip through Mongolia, staying in a traditional *ger*, and a hosted journey that traces the ancient trade routes of Central Asia.



CROOKED COMPASS had released its very first brochure detailing the unique range of off the beaten track tours. These small group adventures venture into Oman, Peru, India, Egypt, Nepal, Kenya, Tanzania, Madagascar and

Myanmar. The 16-day Snow Leopard Tracking trip, priced at \$6417 per person, takes travellers to Hemis National Park in Ladakh, India to trek through the Himalayas and have the chance to spot these rare creatures in their natural environment.



AFTER the success of Busabout's first year in Asia, the brand has launched a new brochure with expanded travel options across the region. New for 2016 is the five-day Thailand Intro which explores some of the lesser known parts of the country including Chumphon, and Khao Sok National Park as well as Bangkok, priced from \$979 per person. All the tours are designed to link up, either via direct flight or public transport, allowing travellers to easily build their own adventure.

TARGETING NEW CUSTOMERS



By Simon Bernardi

NEVER before has there been more competition and opportunity in the Australian Travel Industry.

A Rapidly Changing Industry

In the past two years the industry has seen the introduction of a deregulated environment, lowering the barriers to entry for new travel businesses to set up. As a consequence of deregulation all travel agents no longer hold consumer protection policies leading to the risk of consumers being out of pocket when booking through unscrupulous operators who enter the industry.

The demise of branded networks such as Harvey World Travel (currently Australia's second most unprompted recognised retail travel brand), Jetset, and others has created a brand vacuum which has strengthened the wholly owned Flight Centre brand to fill the void for both brand recognition as well as consumer trust.

For individual travel agents this means they cannot rely on branded buying groups alone to generate customers and leads. In a recent ATAB survey 50% of travel agency owners said they received no lead generation from their buying group. In addition, these agents said that their number one business "headache" was how to grow their customer base.

The demand for travel continues to grow globally as does the choice of different channels through which customers can book travel. Travel agents must be proactive and focused on growing their business in order to capture this growth. The key to prospering is having a strong online/mobile presence, a good database, and constant marketing/PR activity to attract new customers.

An important objective is to have a good marketing plan for future growth that covers initiatives in all of these areas. If you are not confident doing it yourself, there are professionals who can assist in designing a strategy for your business.

Databases

It is surprising how many agents don't actively use their databases. It is more effective than putting advertisements in the newspapers (then again most things are), it's free, targeted and grows the relationship between you and your customers.

By using products such as MailChimp you can measure responses and impact instantly and it gives a quick idea of what works and what doesn't, across up to 2000 subscribers.

Social Media

Social media, in particular Instagram and Facebook, can be integrated into your marketing campaigns as well by uploading your existing contact list into your business Facebook account. Social media gives you great targeting capability enabling you to seek new customers eg. people who like river cruising etc. Travel businesses can be active on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn at little or no cost and the good news is travel and food perform better than most on social media due to their strong visual aspects.

Public Relations

PR is a form of free or "earned" promotion. Many agents do this well through supporting local events and clubs. However if you want to work this channel even more sign up for "Source Bottle" at www.sourcebottle.com.au. This is a website used by the PR industry. You will get daily opportunities to promote your business through writing articles, providing prizes or being interviewed for media.

Have an exceptional online presence

Without a good online and mobile presence it's difficult to present well to consumers. Australia has the second largest mobile phone uptake in the world and over 47% of consumer's research travel on it.

A good consumer-facing site with a

competitive booking engine is imperative. Your pricing needs to be competitive with OTA's (Online Travel Agents), as well as supplier sites, in particular Low Cost Carriers if you are targeting leisure. Failure of your site to offer competitive relevant rates can act as a deterrent for consumers to book not only on the site but with the agency generally.

Your site is where to direct your marketing activity for consumers to either book or to contact you. As this is essentially your "call to action" it must be treated the same as your office for consumers to visit you. In particular it needs to be up to date, appealing and look good on a smart phone.

You can have the best website in the world but if you don't promote through your customer database and the other areas I have mentioned you will end up with a great site and no traffic.

Travel agents need to be marketers and show customers their point of difference through the experience they can add to the raw product. Through promotion agents can also inspire consumers to travel.

Simon Bernardi is Principal at Simon Bernardi Consulting incorporating The Australian Travel Agent Barometer (ATAB)



CAREER IN FOCUS

CAMPBELL HARRIS

Founder and MD of Global Journeys
and Relaxing Journeys

1. What does your role involve and how long have you been in your current position?

I'm the founder & Managing Director of both Global Journeys – an OTA specialising in guided touring and river cruises, and Relaxing Journeys – an inbounder specialising in touring around New Zealand.

2. How did you start out in your career?

Were you always destined to work in the travel industry?

I fell into the travel industry through my skills as a web coder. In fact, when I launched Global Journeys in Australia five years ago I didn't even know what a GDS was. There were serious gaps in my industry knowledge. Those that know me, also know that I'm a bit of a homebody and don't even particularly like the "hassle" of travelling! But I do like business.

3. Did you complete formal qualifications, and do you think they are important?

When I started my Bachelor of Commerce degree, I didn't really know what I wanted to do. I was 17 and three years later when I finished, I still didn't know what I wanted to do. From a young age I always imagined I'd run my own business – something I think I got from my Dad. I do think attaining formal qualifications is important in teaching self-discipline and a good work ethic and they obviously provide a base on which to build the next levels of learning that you receive "on the job".

4. What do you love about your job?

The opportunities, and to be in a position to be able to act on them. I found that as an employee, I always had an opinion and I always thought there were better ways to do things – many managers don't like hearing that sort of thing from an employee. Now, while there are things I do on a daily basis that I don't like doing, I have the choice to



occasionally ignore them and to do things I love doing – like looking for gaps and creating solutions to grow and improve our business.

5. What were some of the greatest challenges you've had in your career?

I've been lucky. I worked hard and did my time working up from the bottom and I have learnt something valuable from every business and industry that I have worked in. More importantly, I have taken opportunities when they have presented themselves. Expanding my business from NZ to Australia wasn't easy. I thought that the markets would be the same, but they weren't and it wasn't until I literally threw away a year's work and pivoted to create Global Journeys that the gamble started to pay off. Winning AFTA's "Best Online Travel Agency" in Australia this year was the icing on the cake for myself and my team!

6. What factors were central to your success?

Two things. Firstly, I'm an information and industry gossip junkie. I love it. There is not much happening in the online travel space that I don't know about. Staying a step ahead of our competition and the changing travel landscape is paramount to success in the online arena. Secondly, I'm a "jack of all

trades, master of none" type of guy. I can code, I can design, I can sell, I can manage and I can even do the accounts if I need to. This has allowed me to create a fantastic

‘The key to good business is having a skilled team, being able to adapt quickly, to spot the gaps and give it a go’

team that excel in their roles. I understand their individual needs and requirements because at some point in the past, their job was part of my job!

8. What are the keys to good business?

We all know the travel industry is in a state of disruption. The key to good business now is having a skilled tech team, being able to adapt quickly, to spot the gaps and to give it a go. Traditional travel models are still very opposed to change but you need to be forward thinking to succeed in the long run. The consumer is now in the driving seat – they decide what they want, and you need to be adaptable enough to give it to them. There is no point in spending time & resources to convince them that what you do now is the best way – if it's not working.

9. What advice would you give to others in the industry who would like to follow in your footsteps?

I love reading about start-ups in the travel industry who often, like myself at that stage, don't fully understand how the industry works. I think that can be a good thing because as they learn, they challenge the way things have always been done. However, while starting or shifting online seems relatively easy, it's actually hard to make money. As the margins are so low in travel the industry is moving to be one that is volume based. There are plenty of opportunities out there, but it helps if you have a "jack of all trades" on your team!

BOUNCING BACK FROM DISMISSAL

By Helene Taylor, managing director of jito.

GETTING dismissed is one of those things you think will never happen to you. In reality, it could happen to anyone. If you do lose your job, it's important to understand what comes next.

Pick yourself up. It's going to take some time to recover from the shock of being fired or dismissed. You'll probably spend a few days asking yourself, "Why me?" and "Where did I go wrong?" It's OK to do this. Just don't let those days turn into months/years of unemployment.

You can secretly hold yourself responsible for the career setback, whether you are or not, and get caught in a psychological web of your own making, unable to move beyond the position you no longer hold.

Find a self-esteem booster. Exercise, go out with friends, and motivate yourself. Positivity is essential for moving forward.

You have been handed an opportunity to decide what you actually want your career to look like. Often the worst things that happen in life actually push you in the direction of the best things in life.



You need to recover and jump back into the job hunt. This is a good time to reflect on what you're passionate about and make sure your next step aligns with that. When you are happy you can perform at your peak.

In the meantime, landing your next job may take some time. It's important to remain positive as you continue to recover from your loss. Don't let the job hunt take over your life. Spend some time doing other activities to benefit your life and your career.

Start by letting the people in your network know you're looking for a new job. Seek out

new contacts who can help you land your ideal job. Leverage any connections you can to land the position you want. Make sure you set up job alerts on jito.co and update your resume and LinkedIn profile.

Discussing it in the interview. Now comes the tricky part. In your next job interview, you will almost definitely have to explain yourself. Employers will often ask why you left your last job. When this happens, you absolutely need to be honest. Don't go into elaborate detail. Keep your answer brief and move the conversation towards what you've learned from the experience. Don't fall into the trap of talk negatively about your previous job, company, co-workers, or boss.

If you were let go for reasons unrelated to performance, make that very clear. These days, most candidates have survived a layoff or two. Interviewers won't look down on you for being let go as a result of downsizing or reorganization, especially if you weren't the only one affected.

Just remember everything happens for a reason and five years from now will it really matter?

travel counsellors



Does the idea of working from home appeal to you?

Do you love selling travel but are frustrated with the limitations that come from working in a retail store?

There's a way to continue working in travel and have more freedom and flexibility in your life - and it's just one phone call away...



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With us...it's personal

FIVE-SHIP SPECTACULAR MAKES HISTORY



P&O Cruises has made history in Sydney by staging an unprecedented five-ship spectacular on the harbour to celebrate the arrival of its two latest cruise ships.

ON November 25 P&O's newly expanded fleet met for the first time at sunrise off the Sydney coastline, creating a V formation before sailing abreast in one line towards the city.

More than 12,000 guests and crew were on board the five ships for the celebrations, with the display marking the highest number of ships from a single cruise line to be in Sydney Harbour at once.

The spectacle was watched by thousands of Sydneysiders who gathered on the foreshore and on small boats.

The eye-catching event saw an official naming ceremony take place for the two newest ships *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden*.

The vessels were simultaneously christened by Australian singer Jessica Mauboy and actress Kate Ritchie. In a twist on a traditional naming ceremony the stars both sent out a tweet to declare the ships named before Jessica Mauboy sang the

national anthem.

In a nod to maritime tradition, a bottle of champagne was smashed on the bow of each ship as they reached Fort Denison, with all five ships sounding their whistles to mark the nation's first dual cruise ship christening.

‘The addition of *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden* represents a 50 per cent expansion in our guest capacity and heralds a new look and feel for our cruise line’

Ann Sherry, CEO of Carnival Australia which operates P&O Cruises, said the event marked a new era for P&O, Australia's only homegrown cruise line, which has increased its fleet to five ships in response to increasing demand for cruise holidays.

“P&O Cruises has been sailing from Australia for more than 80 years so we are thrilled to be able to celebrate the

expansion of our fleet with so many Sydneysiders,” she said.

“The addition of *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden* represents a 50 per cent expansion in our guest capacity and heralds a new look and feel for our cruise line, inspired by modern Australia.”

The five ships remained on Sydney Harbour all day, with guests on board enjoying a series of live concerts from more than 25 music acts during the afternoon and evening, including performances by Jessica Mauboy, The Veronicas, Justice Crew, Samantha Jade and Stan Walker.

To celebrate the historic moment, a firework finale lit up the night sky above the cruise cavalcade.

Designed to be game changers for the Australian cruise industry, both new ships offer a relaxed vibe in a contemporary and stylish setting.

The Fort Denison naming ceremony was attended by key cruise industry members and two special guests – Sydney sisters 8-year-old Aria and 3-year-old Eden Mulligan, invited by P&O to perform the role of “junior godmothers” for the sister ships which coincidentally share their names.

P&O Cruises now operates all five ships in their fleet year round in Australian waters.

Taste

THE FINEST CUISINE AT SEA

While every aspect of the Oceania Cruises experience is a study in gracious understatement, our passion for serving the finest cuisine at sea is anything but. We wouldn't make such an immodest assertion if not for the culinary artistry of the legendary Master Chef Jacques Pepin.

As our Executive Culinary Director, Chef Pepin inspires our culinary team to perform feats of gastronomic wizardry. Memorable dining begins with open seating as it allows you to dine when you are ready, with whomever you choose without additional dining charges.

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*Fares listed are from prices in AUD, per person twin share based on lowest available category as at 23 November 15 and are subject to change & include non commissionable port taxes, government fees and onboard gratuities. Voyages departing November 2015 to October 2016. Fares displayed reflect all promotional savings. Valid for new bookings, subject to availability, not combinable with other offers, are capacity controlled and may be withdrawn without prior notice. Oceania Cruises reserves the right to correct error or omissions. Further terms and conditions can be found at www.OceaniaCruises.com

Australia: highlight of cruise growth

CRUISE Lines International Association's 2016 *State of the Cruise Industry Outlook* has cited the breakneck growth of the Australian cruise industry as one of 13 key trends driving the sector globally. The report shows that worldwide cruise travel is "continuing to grow and evolve at a record pace" – and shows no sign of slowing down with almost 24 million passengers expected to sail in 2016.

The expansion of the industry has come along with massive capacity growth, with the report confirming that CLIA member cruise lines will next year debut a total of 27 ocean, river and specialty vessels. "Travel agents are also experiencing a higher demand for cruise travel," the report concludes, with 80% of US-based CLIA member agencies forecasting increased cruise sales in 2016.

The CLIA report estimates that the global cruise industry supports 939,232 full time equivalent employees, with other key growth drivers including river cruising, the rise of Asia, connectivity at sea, a drive for luxury and the fact that in many cases "ships are the destination".



SEEING DOUBLE IN SYDNEY

NO longer just passing ships in the night, Australia's biggest twin sisters – *Explorer of the Seas* and *Voyager of the Seas* – met for the first time in November at a historical rendezvous in Sydney Harbour.

Guests celebrated the milestones by partying on board and surfing the deck on newly installed FlowRider surf simulators.

With over 10,000 passengers and crew on board the two ships, the meeting injected almost \$1.6 million into the Sydney economy in passenger spend on one day alone.

The date also marked the maiden call of Royal Caribbean's newest ship *Explorer*

of the Seas, welcoming her to her new home-port.

As the larger of the two, *Explorer of the Seas* weighs in at 138,194 tons and measures 311 metres in length and 38 metres in width, but both mega-liners sit between two to three times larger than conventional ships based in Australia, and have the capacity to carry almost 5,200 passengers and crew.

During her five month season *Explorer of the Seas* will operate 17 cruises and is expected to bring in around \$45 million into the Australian economy.

ELEGANT NEW SUITES



OCEANIA Cruises has announced a major transformation of the accommodation on its newest ship, *Sirena*, as part of a \$40 million refurbishment.

The six Owner's Suites which span nearly 1000 square feet have been re-designed and furnished in a fresh, contemporary style with plush custom-made furnishings, a newly renovated master bath, oversized shower, half-bath for guests and a private veranda with views over the horizon.

The four revamped Vista Suites feature a marble-infused master bath, an expansive shower, guest bath and private veranda.

There will be new two new specialty restaurants, Tuscan Steak and Red Ginger, as well as Jacques Bistro featuring some of renowned chef Jacques Pépin's signature dishes.

Sirena will feature more recent additions to the Oceania Cruises fleet such as baristas and the cook-to-order grill at Terrace Café.

Oceania Cruises will take delivery of *Sirena* in March of 2016 before it undergoes a 35 day, \$40 million dry dock in Marseille.

The 684-guest ship will take its first trip in April 2016 with a 14 night cruise from Barcelona to Venice.



CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, commercial director
CLIA Australasia

BRIGHT FUTURE FOR CLIA MEMBERS

AS the cruise industry has evolved over the last decade, the role of the industry's body has also changed significantly.

We know that cruising is a global industry – this has been the way for many years, although recently there has been a big shift. Fifteen years ago, 90 per cent of the world's cruise passengers were sourced from North America. Today that's fallen to 50 per cent, while other markets around the world, including Australia, continue to increase their share of the global passenger numbers.

This is a positive scenario for our region, which is reinforced at this time of year with a flotilla of international liners arriving on our shore.

With a global industry that offers a global product, it falls to the industry body to evolve to meet global needs.

Two years ago the former International Cruise Council Australasia (ICCA) joined 13 other cruise industry associations around the world to become one – Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia.

Since the globalisation of CLIA, we have been working tirelessly behind the scenes on how best to leverage this global connection to deliver a greater value proposition to our Australasian based members.

It goes without saying that there is power in numbers so the more members that join an industry association the stronger it gets, which in turn allows for the generation of higher quality resources. This is to everyone's collective benefit – both cruise lines and retailers.

Being a member of any industry association demonstrates your support and commitment to that particular industry. It's a move which reinforces credibility and displays confidence and is an indication to your current and potential future customers that you take your business seriously.

With this in mind, CLIA is close to announcing a major change to the current membership offering. This is being done primarily with our travel agent membership as the core beneficiary.

‘With a global industry that offers a global product, it falls to the industry body to evolve...’

Without giving too much away just yet, we can share a teaser of what CLIA members will see in 2016 that has the potential to save hundreds – even thousands – of dollars over the course of the year.

We're working on a mechanism which would be used to unlock a wide range of member benefits to our members in Australia and NZ.

But it doesn't stop at CLIA benefits.

CLIA Australasia has also partnered with Australia's leading member benefit provider to ensure there are flow on benefits and rewards in the community.

Stay tuned for more on this exciting member development in the coming weeks and months.

COMMUNIQUÉ FROM...

KAREN CHRISTENSEN

General Manager & Director
Sales/Marketing, Australasia

JOURNEY TO EUROPE'S LEGENDARY PLAYGROUNDS

Now is the time to start planning your clients' 2016 European encounter. On voyages departing from April, Silversea will explore the jewels of both the Mediterranean and Northern Europe in luxurious style. Easily navigating the tiny islands and endless coastline, guests aboard our intimate, all-inclusive ships will step onto Greece's sunbaked shores steeped in myth and legend, wind along historic French Riviera coastline and marvel at Norway's breathtaking fjordlands.

We look forward to welcoming your clients on a journey to the farthest corners of Europe.

Select from combinable voyages of 7 to 17 days departing from April to November. Silver Privilege fares from **AU\$3,750pp**.



2016 Small-Ship European Voyages

For a copy of Silversea's 2016 Voyages brochure, visit tifs.com.au. For more information or to book call **1300 306 872**.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

HEADLINES NOVEMBER 2015

- 03 Nov** Crystal river ships in 2016
- 03 Nov** Pacific Dawn sails up the Yarra
- 05 Nov** G Adventures river cruises
- 05 Nov** Fifth Quantum ship ordered
- 10 Nov** P&O to PNG archipelago
- 12 Nov** Genting's third cruise line
- 17 Nov** Frier takes Cruise1st stake

- 17 Nov** Cruise driving air demand
- 19 Nov** Explorer of the Seas in MEL
- 19 Nov** Seabourn north to Alaska
- 24 Nov** Odell's role expands to Asia
- 24 Nov** Pacific Eden hops into KI
- 26 Nov** P&O celebrates five ships
- 26 Nov** RCCL kicks sustainability goals

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



These lucky agents experienced just some of what Mexico has to offer on a recent Infinity Holidays famil. They visited Cancun, the ancient Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza and Kantenhah Natural Reserve.



This group of lucky agents scored an invitation to an exclusive classical concert at the City Palace in Vienna during a recent APT trip on *MS AmaVerde*, between Budapest and Nuremberg.



These agents enjoyed an adventure-filled famil in South Africa, after winning the South Africa Specialist competition. They explored the Garden Route from Cape Town, and participated in a Rhino Conservation Safari.



Ecuador's Ministry of Tourism recently hosted a group of agents, showing them the highlights that this diverse country has to offer, from the Andes, to the Amazon and the Galapagos.



These travel consultants experienced the luxury of South America with Scenic recently. They started in Santiago, then travelled to the Sacred Valley of the Incas including a visit to Hacienda Huayocari for a traditional Andean lunch. After a scenic rail journey to Machu Picchu they headed to Cuzco and then wound up their travels in Lima.

DECEMBER 2015/JANUARY 2016



Vanuatu was the spot for a recent Infinity wholesale consultants trip. They got to see more than just the beautiful beaches with off road buggy rides, snorkelling and canoeing scenic rivers.



Scenic rewarded its top 20 agents from Australia and New Zealand with a South of France river cruise, visiting Lyon, Avignon, La Camargue National Park, Chateauf-du-Pape wine region and Arles.



These helloworld for Business agents had a once in a lifetime experience when they travelled to Russia on a British Airways & Four Seasons Hotels famil. Highlights were walking tours of the Kremlin and St Basil's Cathedral and a rare behind the scenes tour of the Bolshoi ballet.



Wendy Wu Tours and Air China recently hosted a group of NSW helloworld agents on their first trip to China. The itinerary was a combination of Shanghai, Beijing, Guilin and Yangshuo.



These lucky agents were recently treated to an all-inclusive experience at Club Med Bintan Island in Indonesia. Highlights included water and beach sports plus learning new skills such as archery and flying trapeze.



These consultants enjoyed a nine-day famil to Hakone, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima and Tokyo hosted by the Japan National Tourism Organization Office. Here they are at Hiroshima Peace Memorial.



THE RISE OF GLUTTOURISM



AUSTRALIANS take their food seriously. We are becoming a nation of 'foodies', inspired by popular cooking shows and our diverse multicultural backgrounds. We are food savvy, with many seeing good food as one of life's passions. So it shouldn't be surprising that when Aussies travel overseas it is natural to want to indulge that passion for food. Hence the rise in food related tours and travel experiences.

These days many travellers are choosing destinations based on what food experience they can have, with places such as France and Italy renowned for their cuisine, being high on our wish list. But these are not the only places where Aussies can get a great food experience – and here are just a few examples experienced by the *travelBulletin* team.

Las Vegas

LAS Vegas has become a foodie haven – with the opportunity to eat at the restaurants of many of the world's most famous or infamous chefs, along with many cutting edge eateries following global food trends. A warning - be prepared for large portions!

One of the hottest new eateries on the Las Vegas Strip is Guy Fieri's Vegas Kitchen and Bar. Fieri is a celebrity chef who has made his name by creating unique twists on traditional American dishes. Think delectable steak nachos, massive burgers and fries, unique appetisers and desserts all in a sports-bar atmosphere at the eatery in the new Linq Hotel. To wash it down there are 16 craft beers, an extensive wine selection and a "frozen tap" shot bar which dispenses eight different shots straight out of an iced



dispenser. Very Vegas indeed.

For something different, a delectable blend of cultures to tickle the tastebuds is on offer at Las Vegas' "Sushi Samba" restaurant, located in the Palazzo Hotel and Casino, just off the Las Vegas Boulevard. The fusion of

‘There’s not a lot of English spoken, but the language of food is universal’

Brazilian, Peruvian and Japanese cuisines is not one often thought of when looking for a place to eat, however it provides the best of South American colour and spice, with the customs and flavours of traditional Japanese food. The walls are plastered with images that subvert classic Japanese art and mix it with contemporary South American street

scenes – creating a unique atmosphere and an unforgettable dining experience.

Vienna

A COOKING class in Vienna is a great way to gain insight into Austria's culinary scene. Learn how to make some traditional Austrian dishes, including some influenced by delicacies of the Hapsburg empire at the "Wrenkh" restaurant in the centre of the city. Located in a quiet side street, Wrenkh runs a variety of cooking classes in the adjacent Wiener-Kochsalon where participants can roll up their sleeves and learn how to make a traditional Viennese Apple Strudel, or Wiener Schnitzel as part of the 'Franz's favourites Viennese Cuisine' class. One of Wrenkh's chefs assigns each of the participants a task and you work together to make the various dishes. And once all the hard work is done you get to sit down together and enjoy the fruits of your labour with an open bar - always appealing to Aussies!

Turkey

THE 'Be my Guest' experiences offered as part of Trafalgar guided holidays often include a food component. One of the most intriguing offerings is on some of Trafalgar's tours in Turkey where guests are taken off the beaten tourist track to a small village in the hinterland of Pamukkale. Upon arrival the locals – who spend most of their time farming pine nuts – emerge in traditional dress and the group is welcomed into their rustic homes for lunch in groups of five or six. There's not a lot of English spoken, but the language of food is universal – not to mention sampling the breathtaking local beverages which are created in the communal village winepress.



TOURISM BODIES TAKE FOOD TO HEART

Gone are the days when a food baby and stretchy pants were something to hide, as more tourists seek out food and wine as a highlight of their holiday - and tourism marketers around the world are making the most of it, as JASMINE O'DONOGHUE reports.

FOR many, eating and drinking goes hand in hand with a holiday.

'Great food and wine' is now a defining factor in holiday decision making, with Tourism Australia finding it ranked in the top three priorities for travellers. In response the national tourism marketing body launched its 'Restaurant Australia' campaign last year.

TA managing director John O'Sullivan said drawing attention to the "people, produce and places that lie behind our country's exceptional food and wine experiences has been a major focus...and pleasingly we're seeing the benefits of this work clearly reflected in the latest tourism figures".

O'Sullivan said one in five

tourism dollars is now spent by international visitors to Australia on food and wine. One word which rapidly caught the attention of diners is "Noma," with the foodie community stirred into action when the Copenhagen-based restaurant announced a ten week Sydney residency from January 2016. All 5,500 available seats were snapped up within minutes of the booking website going live - despite a \$485 per person price tag that excludes drinks. While the menu has yet to be revealed, chef Rene Redzepi is renowned for serving up indigenous flavours - such as live ants.

Tourism Ireland is also jumping on the food and drink campaign

trail, with the organisation's recently appointed manager for Australia and New Zealand, Sofia Hansson, declaring 2016 as "the year for food and drink in Northern Ireland".

It doesn't hurt that celebrity chef Colin Fassnidge, star of Channel 7 blockbuster *My Kitchen Rules*, happens to be Irish. He's been enlisted to promote the Tourism Ireland culinary message, and recently told *travelBulletin* that the food movement in Ireland has "just got clever".

"It's not about how much food is on the plate, it's 'oh my god it tasted good' and I think

that's what was missing for years," he said. Before Fassnidge left his homeland a good meal was defined by its quantity, not where it came from or the quality. "Now there's a new excitement about farming and cooking," he said.

When it comes to food and wine the French certainly have a strong reputation - something that Atout France chief Patrick Benhamou isn't shy about taking advantage of. Benhamou is well known across the industry for his lavish culinary presentations showcasing various regions in the country.

At a recent luncheon in Sydney industry guests were plied with Champagne, authentic foie gras and a tasting plate of imported mustard - from Dijon, of course.

Italy's food and wine are also strong contributing factors to Australian visitation. Italy is consistently a top performing outbound market for Aussies, with a particularly high repeat factor as people explore the various regions of the country.

Trafalgar is one of the operators capitalising on this, offering a 'Flavours of Italy' guided holiday. The ten day "foodie trip" ventures from Rome to Venice.

A highlight is a 'Be My Guest' cooking class with a Florence chef where guests shop in the local market for ingredients they will need to provide lunch later in the day.

"Food is such an important part of a destination's culture and is one of the key decision drivers for our guests," said Trafalgar MD Matthew Cameron-Smith.



Coffee & Wine Flavours and Aromas of South America



CONTOURS TRAVEL

Tour Operator to Latin America since 1975

‘One in five tourism dollars is now spent by international visitors to Australia on food and wine’

BACK ROADS TO CULINARY JOY

WHEN it comes to taste-driven holidays that are guaranteed to appeal to even the fussiest of taste buds, there is no better destination in Europe than the diverse, flavour filled regions of Italy.

With access to fresh, local produce, Italy's flourishing food scene is a 'must' for the bucket lists of people who want to combine their love of food and travel on their next holiday.

Back-Roads Touring Brand Manager Hugh Houston suggests foodies look into guided small group touring with a leader who can show you the most authentic paddock to plate experience, minus any tourist traps. "If you want to eat where the locals eat and break bread with the local residents, then I recommend booking a tour like our 'Slow Food Tour of Puglia' package, that guarantees an authentic experience on the road," he said.

On the Back-Roads 'Slow Food tour of Puglia', you will have the unique chance to sample several Slow Food Presidia products – high-quality, traditional foods at the risk of 'extinction' – and other local delicacies from quality producers. Alongside the tasting experience you will also discover a region of overwhelming beauty and history. "This particular tour was created on a very simple concept - everyone should have access to, and enjoy, food that is good for them, good for those who grow it and good for the planet - it's really that simple," Houston said.



Starting in Bari, the five night tour will see clients dining in traditional restaurants from the Osterie d'Italia Slow Food guide, as well as exploring the amazing stalactites, stalagmites, huge caverns and hidden pools of the Castellana caves.

The fine Italian cuisine offered on the trip will be topped off with wine from Puglia's Salento region, as well as cheese tasting at Masseria Ferri, with Houston saying the product enjoys a strong repeat factor.

Visit www.backroadstouring.com.au.

SOUTH AMERICAN FOOD TANTALISES AUSSIES

AUSTRALIAN travellers don't just visit South America for the adventure and nature. More and more they are exploring the continent through food and wine. according to Contours Travel MD Ted Dziadkiewicz.

Two of Contours Travel's best selling culinary tours are seven-day 'Ecuador Gastronomic Tour' and the seven-day 'Chilean Wine Valleys' package. The Ecuadorian tour exposes travellers to traditional Andean cuisine, where recipes date back centuries - featuring dishes such as roasted guinea pig in Chaltura and Choclo Cancha (a corn based snack).

The Chilean tour, on the other hand, covers the largest, oldest and most beautiful wineries including the Errázuriz and Matetic Wineries as well as vineyards in Colchagua and Maipo Wine Valleys. Tour participants also get to taste wines from the famed Aconcagua Wine Valley.

"With such diversity in taste and dishes, we believe South America is the next foodie destination for Australian travellers," Ted said - 1300 135 391.

Experience The Road Less Travelled

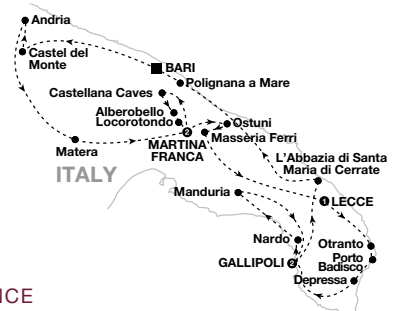
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- » Partake in a cheese-making demonstration
- » See the UNESCO World Heritage 'Trulli' rural homes in Alberobello

☎ **1300 100 410** or visit www.backroadstouring.com



5 FINGER LICKIN' GOOD TOURS, CRUISES AND EXPERIENCES

From cruises to excursions, we've put together a list of sure-fire ways to quench any foodie's hunger for adventure.

APT – WINE AMBASSADORS

FOR the wine connoisseurs, APT has crafted a Wine Ambassador Series hosted by vitners from Australia's leading wineries. The series sails through Central Europe, France and Portugal, hosted by a viticulture expert or producer who will be on hand to explain the winemaking process, lead tastings and guide guests through local wineries and vineyards. Enjoy special tastings, presentations and wine-pairing dinners with the likes of Bruce Tyrrell of Tyrrell's Wines, Cherry Stowman of Taylors Wines and Winemaker of the Year, Nick Haselgrove, of The Old Faithful.



SCENIC – DINE IN THE POPE'S PALACE OF AVIGNON

AFTER the doors close to the general public, the Pope's Palace of Avignon invites Scenic river cruisers in for an exclusive gala dinner and classical concert in the grandiose Grand Tinel room. The palace is among the most visited sites in France and dates back to the 14th century. The Scenic Enrich experience is offered on river cruises passing through Avignon.

TRAFALGAR – NAPA VALLEY EXCURSION

WHY just drink any old wine, when you can create one to perfectly suit your palate? Trafalgar's Napa Valley Excursion on the seven-day 'San Francisco and Wine Country Delights' tour stops off at a private blending lab at Ravenswood Winery. Guests then create a combination of Carignane, Petite Sirah and Zinfandel to suit their palate, which is then bottled by the local specialist to take home.



ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL – JAMIE AT SEA

RENOWNED chef Jamie Oliver will open his first restaurant at sea on *Ovation of the Seas*. Sticking with Jamie's relaxed and family-friendly style, the restaurant will offer a selection of antipasti planks and plates, starters, mains and sides, as well as a kid's menu and fresh pastas made on-site every day.

HURTIGRUTEN'S A LA CARTE MENU

CRAVING a little reindeer or cloudberries? Hurtigruten guests have the option to upgrade to the a la Carte menu, which features items delivered along the route from local suppliers. The menu changes seasonally, but a highlight is the scallops hand-picked by divers off the coast of Helgeland and delivered to while they are still alive. Two-, three-, four- and five-course dinners are available.



AIRFRANCE



FRANCE IS IN THE AIR



ROOM FOR MY LEGS!

Premium Economy: 40% more space for your legs in a private cabin located in the front section on our aircraft.

Wine time in *New Zealand*

There is so much to do in New Zealand, it can be a struggle to narrow things down to fit into a manageable itinerary. CAROLINE GLADSTONE does the hard yards and checks it out.

DESPITE New Zealand's diminutive size, there's plenty to see. I like to think of our neighbour across the Tasman as a pocket continent, with its snow-capped mountains, extinct volcanoes, hills and rolling valleys, vineyards, beaches, fiords and geothermal hot-spots.

A perennial favourite with the drive market, New Zealand also makes an ideal cruise holiday. There are few more spectacular experiences than cruising through the glacial fiords on a huge ocean liner.

With so much to see, and many a winding road to navigate, especially in alpine areas, it's best to have a plan. If you like a tipple, I suggest following a wine route that also has a wealth of other attractions to explore beyond the cellar door.

The New Zealand Classic Wine Trail is a five-day drive from Napier in the North Island to Blenheim in the South; a distance of 486 kms and home to three wine regions where Syrah, Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc reign supreme.

New Zealand has ten official wine regions, stretching from Northland at the very tip to Central Otago 1600 km away in the south, and any number of memorable itineraries can be pieced together. Here's a taste to whet the appetite.

NORTHLAND

Northland is home to the Bay of Islands and peninsulas with tongue-twisting names. I drove the 382 km, 4.5-hour journey from Auckland to the KariKari Peninsula and discovered an area of wild beauty – beaches that stretch for ever – and great wine. Sipping a tasting flight of five wines and nibbling on delicious cheeses at KariKari Estate, I could see all the way to North Cape, the country's northern point. KariKari Peninsula is surrounded by three bays, whose main town is Manganui, a former whaling and trading centre, now morphed into a funky village with cafes and boutiques. Heading back south, call into Russell, the centre of the

Bay of Islands. Named for the 150 islands and rock formations that dot the various bays, this is New Zealand's boating, dolphin-watching, kayaking and fishing nirvana. A ferry connects Russell with Paihai, and the 45-minute walking trail to Waitangi, the site of the historic treaty between Maori chiefs and British Lieutenant Governor signed there in 1840. The nearby Omata Estate produces excellent Syrah, Pinot Gris and Chardonnay.

AUCKLAND

Few may know that New Zealand's largest city is at the centre of a huge basaltic volcanic field. Climb to any of the city's lookouts to see the extinct volcanic cones and hills that ring the expansive harbour. For a memorable day, take the 30-minute ferry to Waiheke Island and mooch around the vineyards. The island's 13 wineries have cafes or restaurants and several operators run tours for those who want to relax as someone else does the driving.



Waiheke Island, Tourism NZ/Julian Apse

HAWKES BAY

Several hours south is Hawkes Bay, one of my favourite haunts. My soft spot for this sunny corner of the east coast is not solely due to the wine or the dramatic scenery of sheer cliffs, beaches and snow-capped mountains. I love the architectural nostalgia. In 1931 Napier was flattened by a devastating earthquake that reduced an average-looking town to ash and rubble. Within two years, however, the city was rebuilt in the Art Deco style of the day, emerging as a gem loved by residents and visitors alike. Each February thousands flock up like extras from *The Great Gatsby* to shimmy and shake during the city's

‘Sipping a tasting flight of five wines and nibbling on delicious cheeses at KariKari Estate, I could see all the way to North Cape’

acclaimed Art Deco Festival. Wine-lovers have reason to rejoice as well. Among the dozen wineries is the historic Mission Estate, established by French missionaries in 1851, and the oldest in the region.

WAIRARAPA

Just north of Wellington is Wairarapa, the Pinot capital of the country. A region of charming towns brimming with gourmet emporiums, craft shops, B&Bs and galleries, it is the favourite weekend escape for the capital's residents. Stroll along Greytown's Main Street to see the most complete collection of historic timber buildings in the land. A little further south, Martinborough is equally as quaint. Laid out in the shape of a Union Jack, the streets are named after exotic places such as Suez, Venice and Panama, which were visited by the town's founder Johnny Martin in the late 1880s. To try all the wines at one place, head to the Martinborough Wine Centre across the main square.

MARLBOROUGH

What could be more convenient than putting your car on the ferry and crossing the Cook Strait to Picton? From there it's an easy drive to Blenheim and the Marlborough wine region, long considered to produce the best Sauvignon Blanc in the world. The area is also treasured for its superb waterways – the Marlborough Sounds – and the town of Nelson, the undisputed centre of arts in New Zealand.

CENTRAL OTAGO

This neck of the woods, squeezed between Dunedin on the east coast and Queenstown in the west, is a new favourite. It's a landscape of mountains and rivers and a region steeped in old gold rush legend. The towns of Clyde and Cromwell have a Wild West look with buildings hewn from the grey flintstones of the hills. The wines are naturally cool climate (Chardonnay, Riesling, Pinot Noir) and the views from Mount Difficulty winery across the valley to the mountains beyond are superb.

AGENT KNOW-HOW

Tourism NZ gives their top tips for selling New Zealand and explains how agents can swot up on their product knowledge.

New Zealand is such a diverse place. Which destinations are best suited to families, couples, adventure or romance?

Queenstown, New Zealand's adventure capital, covers all three. In the winter months families can hit the slopes on the nearby Coronet Peak, or head to Cardrona, The Remarkables or Treble Cone for a day of skiing and fun in the snow. A cruise on Lake Wakatipu aboard the iconic steamship the *TSS Earnslaw* is undoubtedly one of the best ways to experience Queenstown's famed scenic beauty. For adventurers the list is endless. Be it bungy jumping, skydiving, canyoning, jet boating, paragliding, lugging or ziplining there is something to get the adrenalin going. A tour with Queenstown Wine Trail is a great way to spend a day sampling some of the best drops the region offers.

Any recommendations for first time travellers?

In New Zealand nothing is far away. Don't underestimate how easy it is to get around. Make sure you plan for a diverse range of experiences. It is entirely possible to go from a major city, to a secluded beach and then to a top winery all in the space of one day. Make the time to experience Maori culture which is celebrated across the country. Try things. New Zealand has some of the best wine and food in the world. If someone offers you a fresh bluff oyster, give it a go!

What makes New Zealand a unique destination?

A cultural experience, adventure activity and great food and wine can be experienced in one day in New Zealand and often they are all in the same vicinity as one another. The opportunities are endless and travelling around is easy.

How can travel agents improve their product knowledge for New Zealand?

Tourism New Zealand has excellent online training via traveltrade.newzealand.com. There are sample itineraries, calculators and online training modules. Tourism New Zealand also offers the 100% Pure New Zealand Specialist Programme where you can become an accredited specialist for two years. You will get access to exclusive training events, famils and more... and don't forget the goody bag you get with your certificate!

And finally, how can agents join a famil to New Zealand?

The best way to be invited on a New Zealand famil is to keep selling New Zealand holidays to your clients and to be on the lookout for announcements in your inbox and

■ traveltrade.newzealand.com.

Additionally, agents can go on a self-famil with our Explore New Zealand Programme.



GPT partners with Celebrity

THE Kiwi coach touring segment continues to evolve, with New Zealand luxury touring specialist Grand Pacific Tours embracing cruise by taking a fully hosted allocation on board *Celebrity Solstice* in conjunction with its upmarket land content.

GPT claims the move is "ground-breaking" because it's the only NZ touring operator that pre-books all of its staterooms on board, meaning clients are guaranteed a Deluxe Cabin on *Solstice's* Vista Deck 8. "We also have our tour guide with the group from day one and throughout the tour, which helps the group mesh from the start and not feel like any other cruise passenger," a spokesperson told *travelBulletin*.

The company says it believes its fully inclusive offering, along with the guaranteed cabins makes it unique in the NZ market. "The client does not need to worry about a thing on either the cruise or coach section," said managing director Peter Harding, with the product covered in a dedicated brochure offering either a 19-day New Zealand Southern Explorer & Cruise itinerary, or the 23-day Best of New Zealand by Cruise & Luxury Coast which starts with a 12-night trans-Tasman voyage ex Sydney.

The cruise portion also includes Celebrity's earlybird booking bonuses worth up to US\$1720 per couple for trips booked before 31 December 2015.

■ www.grandpacifictours.com



NZ FOUR WAYS

By road

Australians love a good road trip, and New Zealand is an ideal place to do one. As New Zealand is a relatively small country, you can make many drives in less than half a day, leaving plenty of time to explore each destination, and take plenty of pictures along the way.

HOW TO DO IT

There are a number of rental companies in New Zealand, offering a range of cars and campervans. Hertz has over 40 locations around the country where you can pick up and drop off vehicles.

■ www.hertz.com.au



Tourism NZ/Camilla Stoddart

On foot

Soak up New Zealand's scenery on foot. There are a number of trails all across the country including the Great Walks. See some of the most jaw-dropping vistas on the Routeburn Track in Fiordland, which can be walked independently or with a guide.

HOW TO DO IT

Walk the track with Ultimate Hikes from \$1,325 per person including transport, accommodation, all meals, snacks, backpacks, rain jackets and an expert guide.

■ www.ultimatehikes.co.nz/en



Tourism NZ/Miles Holden

By bike

New Zealand is currently experiencing a cycling boom, with trails across the country, ranging in difficulty. The Great Taste Trail (graded easy) from Nelson is a four day ride, but you can easily do just a section or two, passing through cafes, vineyards and breweries.

HOW TO DO IT

Trail Journeys offers their 'Two Day Classic' tour for \$299 per person from Nelson to Kaiteriteri, including B&B accommodation, bike hire and all baggage transfers.

■ www.trailjourneysnelson.co.nz



Tourism NZ/Dean McKenzie

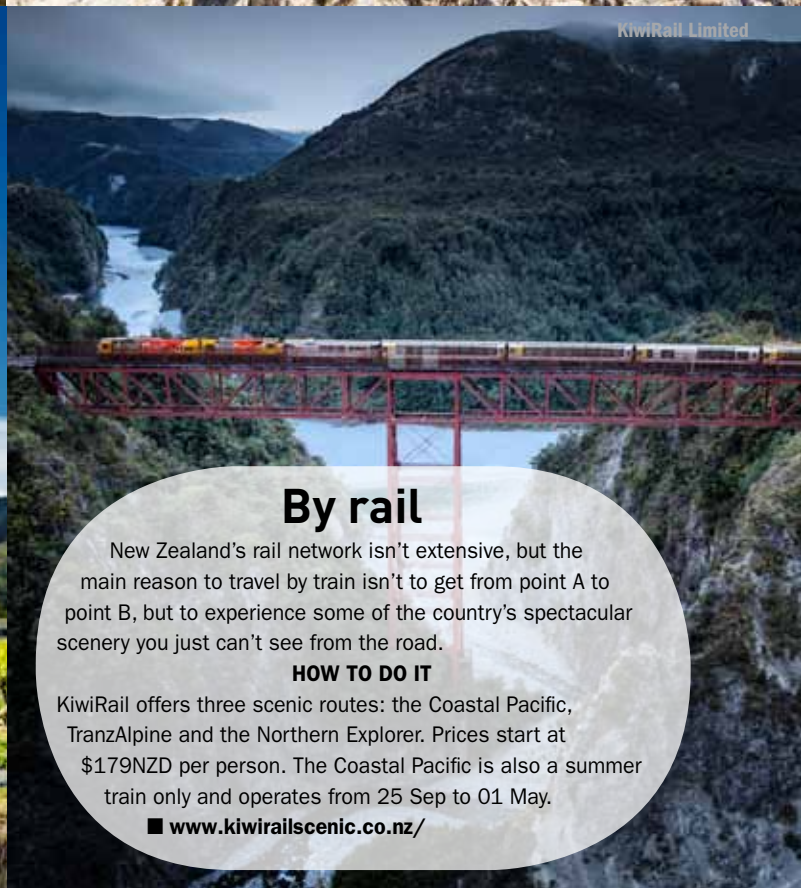
By rail

New Zealand's rail network isn't extensive, but the main reason to travel by train isn't to get from point A to point B, but to experience some of the country's spectacular scenery you just can't see from the road.

HOW TO DO IT

KiwiRail offers three scenic routes: the Coastal Pacific, TranzAlpine and the Northern Explorer. Prices start at \$179NZD per person. The Coastal Pacific is also a summer train only and operates from 25 Sep to 01 May.

■ www.kiwirailscenic.co.nz/



KiwiRail Limited



Imran Ahmad Bin Rayat Ahmad



Jerome Kim - School of Jacks, Balicasag

BUM NOTES BANCAS AND BUBBLES IN BOHOL

Soft adventurer **RODERICK EIME**, delights in the simple pleasures of Bohol in the Philippines.



Imran Ahmad Bin Rayat Ahmad



Imran Ahmad Bin Rayat Ahmad

THE morning sun begins to bathe us in a balmy warmth as the clunky old diesel engine throbs a steady beat somewhere beneath the planks on the deck. Our skipper squints into the distance while the deckhands snooze on piled rags.

We're heading out to into the Bohol Sea from our swank digs at Amorita Resort aboard a local 'banca' boat in search of wild dolphins. These boats have been the staple maritime transport for Filipinos for centuries, adapted and modernised as new technology - like internal combustion engines - became available. Travelling among more than 7,000 islands of the archipelago required easily-maintained, lightweight vessels able to be handled by just a few men and range in size from basic 4m fishing canoes to large passenger ferries up to 50m.

The men crewing our vessel come from the tiny island of Pamilcan, about 12km offshore from the larger resort island

of Bohol where we meet some of the families who exist on subsistence fishing supplemented by taking tourists like us on day cruises. My guide tells me the population is around 1,000 people living in some 300 households in an almost circular landmass about a kilometre in diameter.

Their village sits in the shadow of a massive 200-something year old stone structure that dates back to the Spanish occupation which, I'm told, was part of a network of five similar watchtowers used by the colonial occupiers to warn against pirates who would raid from Mindanao just to the south.

These families provide labour to the many banca boat operators in the region as well as operating their own tiny fleet for these dolphin and whale watching tours. In days past, the islanders would hunt whales and manta rays whereas today they maintain a marine sanctuary and manage nearby dive sites like Cervera Shoal, known for sea snakes, eels and massive bucket sponges.

In fact, many of the attractions of the area

lie beneath the waves, with regions like Bohol in Northern Mindanao playing host to some of the best scuba diving in the Pacific, if not the world. Now before you reel back with the boastfulness of that assertion, know that I consulted many experts in this matter before going to press. One such expert whose every word I ended up hanging off was the doyenne of diving here in the Philippines, Lynn Funkhouser.

"After checking out the diving in many great places, my favorite place in the whole world is the Philippines," said Lynn, "I've followed my heart and spent two months here every

‘The Philippines has the richest species diversification in the world’

year since 1976. Because it lies in the Coral Triangle (along with parts of Indonesia and New Guinea), it missed an ice age 18,000



Imran Ahmad Bin Rayat Ahmad



Diving at Bohol, David Hinkel



NEED TO KNOW

Getting there

Qantas, Philippine Airlines and Cebu Pacific all fly to the Philippines from Sydney or Melbourne on a regular basis. Flight time is around 8.5 hours. Bohol is served by Tagbilaran Airport (TAG) where PAL Express, Cebu Pacific and AirAsia Zest operate regular scheduled flights.

When to go

It's best to go between September and May, during the dry season.

Currency

The Philippines uses Pesos, with \$1AUD getting you around \$34PHP at the time of going to print.

Languages

There are two official languages for the Philippines: Filipino and English, and almost everyone can speak English, which makes life easy.

years ago. This explains why the Philippines has the richest species diversification in the world and I love seeing new critters almost every dive."

Not satisfied with her word, I spent several hours beneath the waves checking this out for myself and found the reefs and underwater nooks and crannies just full of colourful and exotic fish, molluscs and wriggly things. My dive pal, Dave Hinkel, has come all the way from San Diego where he runs Blue Abyss Photo, specialising in fancy gear for underwater photographers. Before every dive, Dave manhandles a massive contraption which looks more like a robot moose head than a camera outfit, but his images are masterful. Giant clams, vivid coral, dazzling shrimps and even minute, flamboyant nudibranchs are rendered in superb colour. Places like nearby Balicasag Island is clearly where serious underwater photographers come to bolster their macro libraries. And such is the way all over the Philippines.

In between dives, we jump aboard a bus

to visit the famous Chocolate Hills, a curious geological formation of rolling 'haycock' hills that look a lot like the long forgotten ruins of some ancient civilisation. But no, they are entirely naturally created by the action of wind and rain on limestone over the millennia. So impressive are they, UNESCO listed them as a natural wonder. While I can only see a few dozen from the top of one of the highest, I'm told there are 1,776 mounds of the same general shape. During the dry season the grassy hills turn chocolate brown.

In conjunction with any visit to the Chocolate Hills, tours will stop at the Tarsier sanctuary where we see these impossibly cute, wide-eyed prosimians cowering beneath broad leaves in the managed jungle canopy. A fun banquet and karaoke cruise along the Loboc River is another signature activity for visitors to Bohol. Our dining barge ambles lazily between towering palm trees to a waterfall as we sample local cuisine in between renditions of Glen Campbell and Burt Bacharach.

Even as I chuckle at the bum notes we

strike along the river, this amusing mix of scenic beauty, great food, a respect for history and tradition, and an irrepressible sense of fun sums up the Philippines through and through. And it's a formula that just works.



AGENT KNOW-HOW

How can agents improve their product knowledge for the Philippines?

Agents should keep on reading about the Philippines. www.tourismphilippines.com.au covers our top island destinations and things you can do on each, as well as adventure activities such as diving, trekking, surfing, and backpacking. Nothing beats an actual visit to the country though. You really cannot convincingly sell what you have not experienced.

What kind of training is available for Australian agents wanting to sell the Philippines, and how can they sign up?

We have a Philippines Specialist program designed to enhance the agents' knowledge and selling capabilities for travel to the Philippines. Once a registered member, agents can be first to hear our news and interesting updates on the Philippines, given priority access to Philippine training sessions, given priority familiarisation trips to the Philippines and even win a trip here. Register at www.tourismphilippines.com.au/PHSpecialists.

Which destinations in the Philippines are most appealing to Australians and why?

With more than 250,000 Australians traveling to the Philippines and increasing every year, the destinations which they repeatedly visit are Palawan, Boracay, Manila, Cebu and Bohol. Palawan is every travel enthusiast's dream island. Palawan's natural wonder is one of the longest underground rivers in the world where visitors can travel five miles through a subterranean cave system. Boracay, is the country's top beach destination. Stretching 7 kilometers of white pristine sand, it's regarded by many as possibly the most beautiful beach in Asia. Being the international gateway and the biggest city in the Philippines, Manila has a lot to offer to Australians. Its rich history, culture, local cuisine, night life, world-class hotels and shopping malls beckon. Cebu is the second largest city in the country. As the first Spanish settlement in the Philippines, it has some of the country's most iconic heritage spots. Hills that looks like perfect mounds of chocolate. Primates so small, they fit comfortably in the palm of your hand. Restaurants that float gently down a river. That's how Australians would discover Bohol.

Any recommendations for first time travellers to the Philippines?

The Philippines is one of the easiest countries in the world to enter without a visa, but it can be quite daunting. Don't expect things to be like they are at home. Travel with your eyes wide open. Be open to learn new things. Expect friendly and hospitable people. Almost everyone speaks English so moving around is a breeze.

What are your top selling tips for travel agents hoping to sell the Philippines?

For agents wanting to convince a client, just show them the beautiful pictures and videos of our top island destinations and move from there. Follow it up with clear information of the country, what to expect and what they can do in each island. Have ready list of possible hotels, costing and the exciting activities they can do while on the island.

HOT PRODUCT

Immerse yourself in Filipino culture on **INTREPID'S** 11 day Philippine Discovery trip. Visit lively Manila, the breathtaking Banaue terraces, trek through rice paddies and hike to the summit of Mt Pinatubo. Prices start from \$2,220 including accommodation, guided 3-day trek with local guide and transport around the country.

ADVENTURE WORLD'S 10 day Northern Philippines tour explores the best of the north. Highlights include a jeepney tour around Manila, stunning rice terraces at Banaue, often referred to as the 'Eighth Wonder of the World', and a visit to the UNESCO listed heritage town of Vigan, one of the few remaining 16th century Hispanic towns in the Philippines. Prices start at \$4375.

G ADVENTURE'S nine-day small group Southern Philippines Palawan Adventure, priced from \$1614, takes travellers all around the southern Philippines including visits to the two-tiered Puerto Princesa Subterranean River and the Palawan province. There are plenty of opportunities for swimming, snorkelling and soaking it all up on the beautiful beaches.

Experience all that the Philippines has to offer with the 10 day Philippines Mountains & Beaches private tour from **INTERASIA**. Explore Manila, venture through the rice terraces of the Hapao Valley and relax on the beaches of Boracay.



Boracay white beach sunset, Deortiz, bit.ly/1I9kDTI



Andrew & Annemarie, bit.ly/1TdwFwi

Q&A

The Philippines is one of the less well known destinations in Asia, but there is so much in this country to keep every traveller happy. Rose Delos Santos from G'Day Philippines gives *travelBulletin* the low down on this fascinating country.



How popular is the Philippines among Australians?

Despite the 26% surge of Australians visiting the Philippines in 2012 (and steadily growing), this destination seems to be underestimated by Australian tourists in favour of its neighbours (Thailand, Vietnam and Bali).

What are the most popular attractions for Australians?

The UNESCO World Heritage-listed rice terraces of Banaue and Batad. The Boracay Island's White Beach of powdery sand and heavenly sunsets. The unspoilt Palawan, with limestone cliffs, pristine beaches, and crystal lagoons. Manila's shopping Malls and Markets. Diving in Coron, where more than a dozen Japanese ships were sunk during World War II. Coral-rich reefs teeming with tropical fish, turtles, sharks and dugongs. A nightlife that never ends until the crack of dawn.

What distinguishes the Philippines from other destinations in Asia?

Affordable food, activities and entertainment. Unlike other Asian countries, there are many developed

areas in the Philippines set on beautiful beaches where there are hardly any foreigners, which is appealing to a lot of people. English is a widely spoken language amongst Filipinos.

What should an agent consider when selling the Philippines?

Climate – the Philippines has 2 seasons, wet and dry. The rainy season is from 01 June to 31 October, sometimes with annual onslaught of dangerous storms. Travellers are generally safe in and outside the cities. Like in any other parts of the world, caution and common sense must be exercised at all times.

What kind of travellers are heading to the Philippines?

Adventure seekers (surfing, diving), weddings and honeymooners, family holidays and schoolies (they are starting to seek Boracay as an alternative destination to Bali).

What activities would you include on a first-time visitor's itinerary?

Depending on the travellers, if they are after an island with lots of activities and entertainment, I would recommend Boracay.

White Beach is Boracay's most developed stretch of shore, lined with resorts, hotels, bars, restaurants and even a shopping mall. There's ample of watersports, too. For first time travellers who prefer laidback holidays, the island of Palawan is a heavenly island with nature paradise and calm atmosphere, a perfect place to relax because of its beautiful beaches, waterfalls and hot springs. A stopover for a couple of nights in Manila on the way home is highly recommended to experience its world-class amenities.

Is the Philippines considered an expensive destination, and is cost a significant factor for Australians?

Food, shopping and activities are very affordable. Accommodation cost varies but with 4 to 5 star hotels and resorts, it tends to be slightly more compared to similar properties in Thailand and Indonesia. Although cost is a factor for Australians, packages can still be put together to suit their budget.

CEBU PACIFIC ADDING GUAM



CEBU Pacific, which operates non-stop flights between Sydney and Manila, has announced its first US destination with flights to Guam set to launch in March 2016. The airline will be the only carrier on the route, and the addition means there are even more options for Australian travellers to explore Asia with Cebu Pacific.

The carrier is also making the most of the

latest Visit the Philippines Again campaign with a series of promotional fares to encourage Australians to make the journey – and to explore the country's relatively undiscovered island destinations. The bargain seats are available for travel between 1 March 2016 and 10 December 2016, in a period which is traditionally quieter for tourists visiting the country.



P: 1300 482 213
E: info@gdayphilippines.com

The New Noosa



Back in the 80s and 90s, attracting tourists was plain sailing for Noosa but following the global financial crisis in 2008, this Sunshine Coast destination was forced to change tack. The result: a “new” Noosa with a brand new attitude. CHRISTINE RETSCHLAG reports.

SHE'S long been the darling of Australia's beach holiday destinations, seemingly able to click her manicured fingers and visitors would arrive at her beck and call. And for a long time, this certainly rang true for Noosa with its protected Main Beach, glorious resorts, Hastings Street shopping strip and beachfront dining galore. But the relative ease with which this Sunshine Coast destination attracted tourists also bred a certain arrogance, with some tourism operators content to rest on their laurels and deliver below par service, knowing the next luxury convertible full of holidaymakers was just around the corner.

This all changed in 2008 when the Global Financial Crisis hit the tourism industry like a tsunami. Overnight, holidays became valuable commodities and destinations such as Noosa, which were also hit with several summers of heavy rain and floods, were left shaken and stirred. But rather than consider the past seven years as bad luck, Noosa decided to take a good, hard look at itself and has reinvented itself as a role model for other destinations around the country.

More than two years ago, Tourism Noosa developed the Welcome to Noosa online customer service training program, aimed at revitalising customer service in Noosa. So successful is this initiative, that Tourism Noosa has since rolled it out to 1,700 tourism operators and the Queensland Department of Tourism has now acquired the intellectual property rights to be able to roll it out to other regions in the state.

Tourism Noosa general manager Steve McPharlin, who is also the Area Manager of Peppers Noosa Resort & Villas, describes the past seven years as “sobering” for the region.

“You struggle through and you look around and there are some good people that have got through to the end. We appreciate how terrible it was and are really grateful for how things have turned,” he says.

“There was a time in the last seven years when we had a lot of empty shop fronts and resorts and restaurants were closing down and not doing very well. Luckily we had a few businesses who chose to reinvest and start the ball rolling. It encouraged other businesses to say ‘times have been tough but we are on the way out of that now’ and to start putting a positive foot forward.

“We got some pretty damning feedback about our customer service so we designed Welcome to Noosa and that went a long way. More than ever, Noosa has something for everyone now.”

Tourism and Events Queensland CEO Leanne Coddington says Noosa provides a stylish coastal lifestyle and enviable year-round climate that appeals to travellers from around Australia and the world.

“Noosa has in recent years further enhanced its vibrant beachfront living, natural attractions, and retail and dining precincts in creating an ideal getaway for travellers,” she says.

Indeed, these days you'll find a cooler Noosa, which has dropped its airs and graces. While the creators of Australian hit television show Kath and Kim would be relieved to know their Noosa snobs Prue and Trude still exist, you're also bound to bump into the likes of Kath and Kim as well. There's still plenty of style, as evidenced in Sri Lankan celebrity chef Peter Kuruvita's Noosa Beach House at the Sheraton Noosa Resort, or the Noosa Boathouse along the Noosa River, but minus the toffy attitudes.

“These days you'll find a cooler Noosa, which has dropped its airs and graces”

The same palates which are likely to feast at the absolute beachfront restaurant Seasons for breakfast, will be found a few hours later out at the earthy Eumundi Markets, haggling for a bargain. The same people who stay at the luxury Peppers Noosa Resort and Villas will be gladly indulging in the resort's \$5 Happy Hour...and bragging about it to their mates. And you're just as likely to find someone on an ancient Noosa Ferry on their way to explore the rustic Noosa North Shore, as they are on a private boat ride to Sir Richard Branson's private Makepeace Island.

Locals, too, are enjoying this laidback vibe and are more than happy to share their secret spots such as the casual bar Village Bicycle at Noosa Junction which, from time-to-time, offers Good Karma Kegs where patrons receive a beer in return for a donation which is shared with a good cause.

Back on Hastings Street, meet Clandestino Roasters award-winning barista Al Claridge. “Kiwi Al” is likely to have just finished his morning surf when he turns up at this establishment which sells 6,000 coffees a week and is considered one of the best training organisations in Australia. Not that you'd know it from talking to Kiwi Al who confesses he's just all about surfing, good coffee, and being happy.

And the same could be said about Noosa herself.

BEST IN STATE

With the Australian dollar continuing to perform poorly against a lot of international currencies, now is the perfect time for Australians check out our own lucky country. We spoke to the various state tourism boards to get the inside scoop on what are the hot spots for next year.



TAS

Tourism Australia

Launceston

Located in the north of Tasmania, Launceston, gateway to the Tamar Valley, is a city bursting with collector's shops, restaurants and cool cafe's. Drive the 170 kilometres that make up the Tamar Valley Wine Route or get your local produce direct from the grower at a farm gate market. Amber tickets provide the ultimate beer lovers tasting experience at the local brewery. Descend into Cataract Gorge, pass wallabies grazing on the lawns and traverse the gorge on a chairlift then head to the Design Centre of Tasmania to browse artists works. Finish your visit with a meal in a restaurant housed in a 1830's riverside mill.

Fremantle

Recently ranked seventh by Lonely Planet in their Top 10 Cities to visit in 2016, Fremantle is an eclectic and multicultural city located a short drive away from Perth in Western Australia. Established in 1829 as a port for the Swan River colony, Fremantle has a fascinating history. It's also home to world class beaches, heritage architecture and a flourishing food scene. There are cafes and bars and boutique breweries, alongside some of the best preserved 19th century port streetscapes in the world. Check out the Fremantle markets, visit Fishing Boat Harbour for some fresh seafood to suit a range of budgets, and enjoy some live music and a pint in one of the local bars.



WA

Tourism Western Australia



QLD

Tourism Australia

Newcastle

Newcastle, only two hours north of Sydney is coming into its own once again. The once industrial city has been reborn and is now home to a plethora of trendy cafes, restaurants, pubs and small bars run by a variety of passionate locals. From health-conscious breakfast menus to ocean-front dining and speakeasy small bars, there's something to appease all appetites. Check out Restaurant Mason for your fine dining, one of two hatted restaurants in Newcastle, with British and French flavours. Check out Darby Street also with its galleries and secondhand shops among small, individual cafes and restaurants.

Bundaberg

Bundaberg and its surrounding area, called the Southern Great Barrier Reef, is a great spot to visit. Compared to the Tropical North, this is a reef within reach. From many of the tropical islands around here (like Lady Elliot and Heron Island), you can step off the shore and begin to snorkel on a true coral cay. The fauna that can be seen off the reefs here is remarkable, including loggerhead turtles, with which you are virtually guaranteed to swim between November and March. Bundaberg has a great low key vibe, kind of like holidaying back in the 80s, and very friendly. And of course no visit would be complete without dropping into the Bundaberg Barrel, home of Bundaberg Brewed Drinks.



NSW

Daniel Boud/Destination NSW

Litchfield

Litchfield National Park is a lush landscape with woodlands, spectacular waterfalls, plunge pools and tall termite mounds. It's only a two hour drive from Darwin making it easy to day trip, though there is plenty to keep you occupied for longer. The main attractions of Litchfield are Buley Rockhole, with its series of natural spas and whirlpools, and the dramatic Florence, Tolmer and Wangi falls which are all easily accessible from the main sealed road. Swim in the plunge pool at Wangi Falls or check out the tombstone-like field of giant termite mounds, many of which are more than 2m tall. Venture off the beaten track and 4WD to the weathered sandstone domes of the Lost City or the historic Blythe Homestead Ruins.



Eyre Peninsula

With 2,300km of coastline, it's hardly surprising that Eyre Peninsula is emerging as a unique culinary destination with world class seafood. The waters around the peninsula are teeming with sea life including giant cuttlefish, lightning speed tuna, playful sea lions, bottlenose dolphins and Southern Right Whales with opportunities to experience these animals in the ocean first hand. Along the coast there are perfect spots for surfing, fishing, sailing, and thriving regional cities like Port Lincoln and Whyalla. Don't miss the farmer's and fisherman's markets held across the region during the year, and be sure to check out Port Lincoln's hotly contested tuna tossing competitions as part of its annual Tunarama Festival in late January.



Bendigo

Put on the map by the gold rush 150 years ago, Bendigo is now a vibrant contemporary city. Located 90 minutes from Melbourne, Bendigo boasts wide streets lined by opulent heritage buildings, as well as great food, wine and shopping experiences. Explore a gold mine, or the local farmers market. There is always something happening in Bendigo, from car rallies, food and wine events, to the fascinatingly oriental Bendigo Easter Festival. From March to July next year, Bendigo Art Gallery will play host to a Marilyn Monroe exhibition featuring authentic artefacts, clothing and costumes from her films. Never before seen in Australia, it's a great reason to check out everything Bendigo has to offer.

Namadgi

Namadgi National Park, at the northern end of the Australian Alps, is only 45 minutes drive from Canberra, yet this wilderness feels a world away. Namadgi landscapes range from the highest peak of Mount Bimberri to grassy front hollow valleys, alpine meadows and snow gum woodlands. Venture through granite ridge tops with tors, boulders and spectacular outcrops. There are plenty of cliffs great for rock climbers. Walk, hike, bike or horse ride through the national park. For day visitors, take the walks to Square Rock, Booroomba Rocks, Gibraltar Falls or Yankee Hat rock art site in Gudgenby Valley. Experienced hikers can explore the 650km Australian Alps Walking Track whose northernmost section winds through Namadgi.

NT HONOURS GEOFF MCGEARY



APT Group owner Geoff McGeary was recognised for his “outstanding commitment and dedication to the Northern Territory tourism industry” at the 2015 Brolga Awards, receiving the *Tourism Ministers Perpetual Trophy* in an announcement made at the awards ceremony in Alice Springs by NT Chief Minister Adam Giles.

McGeary has been a true pioneer for the NT, inspired by a 1964 trip to Central Australia when he took a group of students on a camping trip as a school bus driver. That led to the launch of tours, the opening of overseas

offices bringing visitors from New Zealand, the UK, the USA and Canada and later the development of infrastructure including the Alice Pacific Resort, Hawk Dreaming Lodge in Kakadu and the Kings Canyon Wilderness Lodge.

Five decades on APT is now a global business and one of the leading travel companies in Australia, offering more than 100 different holidays to every corner of the world.

Accepting the award, McGeary said he felt incredibly honoured by the accolade. “It was early on in my business career that I realised what an important asset the Northern Territory is to the Australian tourism industry as a whole. It’s hard not to be captivated. So I set about staking my claim to a little part of it for APT in the hope that I could share this incredible part of Australia with our wonderful guests.”



Sunshine Coast Bindi boom?

BINDI Irwin, daughter of Australia Zoo founder the late Steve Irwin, has achieved a marketing coup in the USA after winning the American version of *Dancing with the Stars*. 17-year-old Bindi and her dancing partner Derek Hough took home the coveted Mirror Ball Trophy in the Los Angeles finals – and the Sunshine Coast featured heavily in her appearances.

Sunshine Coast Destination CEO Simon Ambrose said that with millions of viewers, Bindi’s success is likely to have a very positive effect for US tourism to Australia and the Sunshine Coast. “We will be working hard with Australia Zoo to translate her high profile into attracting new visitors,” he said.

Q&A

Many Australians can be accused of seeing more of international destinations that their own country, but now is a great time to rectify that. Melanie Whyte, Personal Travel Manager from Devonport, Tasmania gives her top tips for selling Australia to Australians.



How popular are domestic holidays among Australians?

Not as popular as they once were but I think it’s mainly a price point – often you can do a week at an international destination cheaper than you can for somewhere popular like the Gold Coast. Being a Tasmanian based agent also increases the price quite markedly.

What are the main drawcards for domestic holidays?

Perceived safety. With everything going on in the world, many people are staying close to home. No need for passports, visas, currency exchange, no language barriers – and our country really is amazing!

Are there any impediments to selling Australia?

Price, especially in comparison to the closer international destinations.

What are the most popular destinations?

Queensland is always a popular market but over the years it has moved from the Gold Coast to other places like the Whitsundays and Sunshine Coast. Northern Territory is gaining popularity now, although you need to be careful with the seasonality. Health retreats are also increasingly popular with people wanting to combine their interest in holistic health and holidays.



Are FIT holidays or all-inclusive packaged options more popular with travellers?

FIT for sure, most people organise the basics of a package with flights and accommodation but prefer the flexibility of organising the rest as they go.

What should an agent consider when selling domestic holidays?

Different ways to obtain product. Many hotels in particular are offering better deals for agents to work with them directly rather than through wholesalers. The other thing is offering the options of the add-on products – such as theme parks, bus transfers, and day tours. Constructing an all inclusive package, and explaining the benefits of such a package might be enough to convince passengers to pre-pay more of their holiday.

Compromise should never be an option.



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CARLSON REZIDOR EYES HUGE AUSTRALASIA EXPANSION



COUNTRY
INN & SUITES
BY CARLSON

Australia's hotels continue to grow, with increases in both room numbers and occupancy over 2014-15, meaning that there is plenty of scope for international brands such as Carlson Rezidor to expand here. GUY DUNDAS investigates.

ADMITTING its presence in the Australasia market needs propping up, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group is poised to introduce three new brands in the region as part of an earmarked growth strategy.

Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group's portfolio of hotels is vast. Segmented across seven brands means the group caters for

virtually all markets. In the luxury field is the relatively new Quorvus Collection with two properties in Europe, one in Kuwait and another opening soon in Oman. In the upper upscale tier is Radisson Blu with 393 hotels (and the bulk of rooms) in operation or under development. Within the upscale status is Radisson (191), Park Plaza (54) and the 'select service' Radisson Red, projected to span 60 hotels by 2020.

Dropping down an echelon and within the upper midscale band is Park Inn by Radisson (197 in operation or under development) and the 'limited service' Country Inn & Suites brand where Carlson Rezidor has its greatest span – 515 properties in operation and under development primarily in North America and India.

Headquartered in Brussels and with regional offices in Singapore, Delhi, Jakarta and Shanghai, the hotel group has over 1,370 properties, with 220,000 rooms in 110 countries and territories. However current room inventory in Australia is limited - extremely limited. There's Radisson Blu Plaza Hotel and Radisson Hotel & Suites in Sydney and Radisson on Flagstaff Gardens in Melbourne – but that's it, for now.

Speaking exclusively to *travelBulletin* recently, Carlson Rezidor's President for Asia Pacific, Thorsten Kirschke says the low tally in Australia is a concern and is a key focus going forward.

"Clearly, the low count is what makes me say we have huge potential. We are very committed to Australia. We have been here



Radisson Red Studio

travelBulletin: “We are currently evaluating another opportunity with an existing owner here in Sydney and our primary choice would have been Red. For other reasons, I don’t think it would become a Red, but I absolutely see Sydney as a fantastic market for Radisson Red.

“Rolling out Radisson Red is front and centre of our strategy, in addition to expanding our anchor properties, Radisson Blu. And then we are looking at a third angle of how to exploit the growth potential we see in regional cities - secondary tier markets

‘The low count is what makes me say we have huge potential’

for 17 years and at one point in time we almost had 10 properties in operation. For reasons I don’t know, there wasn’t the same intensity around exploring the potential for Australia in previous years.

“I only took office 18 months ago, so we are now looking at it with a fresh pair of eyes and we have put together and assembled a whole new development team. We are now putting boots on the ground and establishing a development office in Sydney, so as one thing comes to another, I think we’ll see the pieces come together.”

Those ‘pieces’ include the potential introduction of the Radisson Red brand in Brisbane and Melbourne where “advanced deal discussions” are underway. Sydney is also on the radar, with Kirschke telling

along the coastlines of both west and east Australia, but probably mostly on the eastbound side.

“So that could be good potential for a brand such as Country Inn & Suites, which is very niche in the United States and India already. I think Australia is a suitable market for the brand.”

Kirschke said the mid-scale Country Inn & Suites brand would suit locations outside major city hubs along the coastline and into some hinterland regions. “I see development of tourism driving the exploration of the country further and embracing more than just the beaches.” He named Rockhampton and Bundaberg in Queensland as potential locations.

The family friendly brand typically offers

between 50-150 rooms per property in the US and 80-100 in India. “I think for Australia we would also target the ‘sweet spot’ of around 100 units.”

Questioned if five to ten years was a reasonable time to expect Country Inn & Suites to launch here, Kirschke said “we are not going to wait five years”.

“I think the story is good and the business case is strong enough so that we don’t have to wait five years. In five years if you ask me, I will hope that we have north of 100 hotels of Country Inn & Suites across all of Australia. The potential is certainly there.”

Outside Australia, but still in Australasia, Kirschke revealed Carlson Rezidor has “good leads” and is eyeing “several opportunities” in New Zealand, where the group currently has no representation across any of its seven brands. Although unable to divulge specific details, he said there are two promising leads, possibly for Radisson Blu in Auckland and Christchurch.

A third new hotel brand for this zone – joining Radisson Red and Country Inn & Suites – is Park Inn by Radisson. Through a partnership with iTaukei Trust Fund, Carlson Rezidor has confirmed it will debut the midscale brand in Fiji, with the Next-Gen Park Inn by Radisson Fiji, Suva to open in February of 2018.

Quizzed by *travelBulletin* if the upscale Radisson brand could adopt a similar colour themed name to its other brands - such as those that distinguish sister hotels Radisson Red and Radisson Blu - Kirschke said “watch this space”. Pressed, he hinted the green ‘shadow’ beneath the existing Radisson branding could be of significance.

Inside Guide to Culinary Delights

INTERCONTINENTAL Hotels Group has just released an insider guide for food to help guests pinpoint the best culinary delights while travelling across Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

The Insider Guide to Travelling for Culinary Exploration is a celebration of gastronomy with exclusive insights and expert recommendations on dining.

Within the guide readers can find in-depth knowledge and tips from specialists in the food and beverage industry, including renowned chefs and award-winning IHG Culinary Ambassadors.

Director of Brand Marketing, IHG, Asia, Middle East & Africa, Bruce Ryde, said the group considered food one of the best ways to explore a new culture.

"We've tapped into the wealth of knowledge we have to bring food lovers insights into some of the best dining experiences from this diverse region," he said.

The latest edition covers top dishes from the region as well as practical information such as food photography tips and a schedule of enticing food festivals.

The Insider Guides are available at InterContinental Hotels and Resorts across Asia, Middle East and Africa, and can also be read online at

■ www.ihg.com/intercontinental



BUBBLES FLOW AT TANK STREAM

SYDNEY'S newest hotel opened last month with the Australian debut of the St Giles group's new Tank Stream Hotel. Located at 97-99 Pitt street in the CBD, the 280 room property is within easy walking distance of landmarks such as Circular Quay, the Opera House and Sydney Harbour Bridge.

The Tank Stream Hotel, named for Sydney's original water source which flows beneath it, is the latest development of Malaysia-based IGB Corporation Berhad, with CEO Tan Boon Lee saying "Sydney is a key destination in Australia and we believe that it will continue to enjoy growth in business and tourism. With the opening of The Tank Stream Hotel we hope to be a part of Sydney's vibrant cityscape and share with the world the rich culture and history that the city has to offer."

Offering guests an all-inclusive concept, the Tank Stream Hotel provides a wide range of amenities including a complimentary non-alcoholic mini-bar and wi-fi internet access. As well as the on-site casual French restaurant there's a deli where guests can enjoy sandwiches, coffees and light snacks.

In-room technology extends further to feature a wide selection of complimentary movies streamed to a 42 inch high definition IPTV, along with a personal coffee machine.

The new four-star Sydney St Giles property joins other hotels under the brand in London, New York, Manila and Kuala Lumpur.

Pictured pouring the plonk at the opening are Director of Rooms, Ezio Russa with Carole Giuseppi from Tourism Accommodation Australia and Mr Tan Boon Lee.



SAGE HOTEL FOR BRISBANE

SILVERNEEDLE Hospitality has announced the launch of the new Sage Hotel James Street in Brisbane's Fortitude Valley. The newbuild property will offer 93 rooms across four levels, along with a coffee shop, restaurant and boutique wine cellar.

It will be part of the Queens Arms pub redevelopment, with the adjoining iconic drinking house revitalised with a "substantial makeover" at the same time, under the oversight of property developer Pacifica.

"After an extensive operator selection process, Sage Hotels was chosen as the winning brand," said Pacifica managing director Russell McCart. "The team at SilverNeedle have an entrepreneur mind-set with a business philosophy and vision of understanding cohesive integration of smart technology that can enhance the accommodation experience. These fundamentals are best aligned with our vision for the future," he added.

Technology will be a strong feature of the hotel which will offer guests complimentary in-room wi-fi as well as mini bar offerings comparable to those available in local convenience stores and laundry services at "street pricing".

The development is scheduled for completion in the second quarter of 2017.

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CANADA has a lot to offer visitors, from spectacular mountains and lakes, cosmopolitan cities and incredible skiing. But if those aren't reason enough for your clients to want to visit, then there is always the annual Pumpkin Regatta. Held in Windsor, Nova Scotia, annually in October, the event involves a half-mile paddle from start to finish, featuring brightly colored giant pumpkins as the sole means of flotation. There are 3 classes — motor, experimental and paddling — the latter being best known and most popular in terms of entries.

SURVIVAL KIT IN A CAN

MCGYVER eat your heart out. This little tin, about the same size as one which normally contains sardines, includes almost everything you could need to survive whatever circumstances come your way. Although it's obviously not going to have enough of everything to last you months in the wilderness, it does have all your bases covered for a day or two stranded on a desert island. Inside is:

- a compass
- 2 cubes of fire starter
- 3m multi-use cord
- 1 survival/first aid information card
- 91cm multi-use wire
- 4 waterproof matches
- 31m of fishing line/ sewing thread
- 1 bouillon soup packet
- 1 tea bag
- 1 sugar packet
- 1 match book
- 2 antiseptic swabs
- 1 razor blade
- 3 twist ties
- 30cm of duct tape
- 1 signal mirror
- 1 zip-lock bag
- 2 adhesive bandages



As well as nails, safety pins, fish hooks, a signal whistle, chewing gum, a sewing needle, notepaper and a pencil. There's really nothing that you could want that's missing (except maybe for an inflatable raft to get off that desert island).

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6x	100x		3÷		2÷
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	3x		1-		
72x		9+		2÷	2-

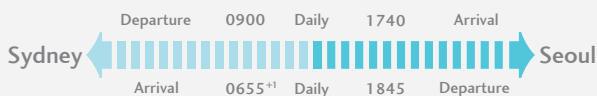
Fill the grids with numbers without repeating any number in any row or column, and so that the numbers within each heavily outlined box will produce the target number shown by using addition, subtraction, multiplication or division (as indicated in the box). A 6x6 grid uses 1-6.

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