

# travelBulletin

APRIL 2016



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# travelBulletin

APRIL 2016

SPECIAL  
CRUISE  
ISSUE

WESTERN  
AUSTRALIA

NORTHERN  
TERRITORY

SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA

NEW SOUTH  
WALES

## The state of domestic tourism

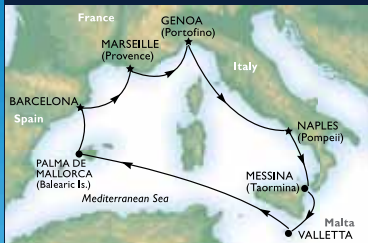
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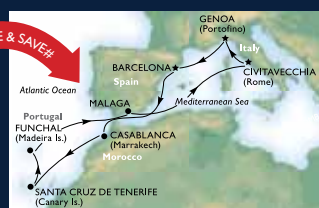
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## COVER STORY 16

### The state of domestic tourism

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## From the managing editor Bruce Piper

RICHARD Colbeck, Federal Minister for Tourism and International Education, certainly seems to have grasped the nettle of his portfolio which he has taken up with exquisite timing, just as the economy turns from its resource boom to focus on other areas including tourism. The Tasmanian senator spoke about the transformation at last month's Destination Australia conference in Sydney, confirming that the government now recognises tourism as one of five "super growth" areas in the Australian economy.

That was further underlined, he said, by the minutes of a recent Reserve Bank board meeting held on 1 March which noted that "the scope for Chinese household incomes to rise over time created long-run potential for Australia to increase exports of rural produce and services, including tourism, to China". Colbeck seized on these comments, saying when financial markets begin talking about tourism it is clear that the sector's potential is firmly on the radar both for governments, big business and investors across the country.

That also extends to attitudes about travel and tourism industry careers, with Colbeck strongly urging a rethink. "Our understanding that this is a strong and a positive career path needs to be very much stronger as part of the message we portray to the broader community... these are real, good and solid careers," he said.

However like some of his predecessors it appears Colbeck also needs some education about the importance of the outbound market, and the thousands of Australian travel agents, tour operators, airline staff and other suppliers in the travel sector. AFTA, which did such a good job of informing previous officials that tourism and travel isn't just about inbound visitation, clearly needs to have a word in Colbeck's ear based on some of his comments about the overall industry during his speech.

Unveiling growth of more than 10% in domestic overnight expenditure, Colbeck claimed this showed a shift to domestic travel in preference to overseas holidays which he said is "good news for everyone". While outbound numbers also continue to grow, the Minister's delight at the prospect of slowing numbers of overseas holidays clearly showed he didn't understand the impact this would have on all of the Australians employed in the outbound travel industry.

MEANWHILE we hope you enjoy this special cruise-focused edition of *travelBulletin*. For the first time we have some "editor's cruise picks" and even an origami activity in the centre of the magazine. Don't miss it!

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## Ian McMahon's perspective

### CRUISING CONTINUES TO DRIVE INDUSTRY

THERE can be few better ways of taking the pulse of the Australian cruise industry than to attend a Cruisecco conference where the cream of the country's cruise agents mingle with key cruise principals.

The recent Cruisecco conference showed that the industry currently has a very healthy pulse indeed.

Of course, local infrastructure needs still need treatment. And for agents, there are a couple of minor blips on the pulse rate chart but the conference heard re-assuring words about these.

The blips for agents are the seemingly inexorable growth of NCFs (non-commissionable fees), and the "ridiculous prices" which cruise lines, from time to time, feel compelled to offer to achieve desired occupancy levels.

In the case of NCFs, perception, it seems, is everything. Many agents see NCFs increasing and are convinced they form a growing proportion of total fares.

Not so, according to Dominic Paul who addressed the conference – and took questions from agents – via video link from his UK office.

Paul, senior vice president international for Royal Caribbean International, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises, did not deny what is readily apparent – that governments and port authorities are hiking

charges. (The extent to which this is a legitimate means of funding infrastructure for a growing industry as opposed to exploiting that growth in a grab for revenue is a topic for another day.)

But Paul also maintained that the amount of commission his company is paying to agents is increasing and, crucially, this growth is outstripping NCF growth.

Meanwhile a number of principals, and Cruisecco itself, reported booking lead times for 2016 are longer than they have been for a number of years. That is a promising portent that the cruise lines will be under less pressure to release last-minute "fire sale" prices to clear unsold berths.

Lengthening cruise booking leadtimes were just part of the optimistic picture that emerged during the Cruisecco conference.

Delegates heard 2016 is poised to be the single biggest year of growth for the Australian industry. A country which was once the dumping ground for "remnant tonnage" is now attracting new-builds.

And the industry can even take in its stride negatives beyond our shores, such as war and terrorism which are seeing cruise lines shift capacity from Turkey and elsewhere in the Eastern Mediterranean, at the same time creating new opportunities for agents in the Western Mediterranean and Northern Europe.

### Bestjet's ATAS court action

THE growing importance of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) was underlined late last month when online travel agency Bestjet took the seemingly extreme action of initiating a Supreme Court injunction against AFTA when the Federation decided not to renew Bestjet's ATAS membership. The culmination of a long-running process, AFTA stated that the OTA had not been able to satisfy the criteria of the ATAS Charter, in particular section 2.5 which stipulates that applicants and their 'Close Associates' "must be a fit and proper person to become, and remain a Participant".

As this issue of *travelBulletin* goes to press the matter is yet to be resolved, with the injunction giving Bestjet a week's deferral of the ATAS decision. Bestjet's determination to have its day in court is also set to force AFTA to outlay significant legal costs defending the matter. The online agency, which claims to have sold 180,000 tickets last year, is run by Rachel James, whose husband Michael was banned from being involved in the management of any businesses in 2012 after he presided over the spectacular collapse of Air Australia, to the tune of \$97 million and with the loss of 300 jobs.

### Virgin Australia digs deep

VIRGIN Australia has tapped its deep-pocketed shareholders on the shoulder, with Etihad, Singapore Airlines, Air New Zealand and Virgin Group to provide a new \$425 million loan. The 12 month facility is on "arm's length commercial terms" and aims to provide the carrier with "additional flexibility in the short term". The funds will bolster Virgin Australia's financial position, with the

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, January 2016

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Dec 15/ Jan 16	Trend Jan 15/ Jan 16
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	109.9	109.5	118.8	+1.0	+5.7
Indonesia	100.1	102.4	101.0	+1.8	+7.9
USA	87.3	89.7	73.3	+0.7	+5.4
Japan	28.9	27.4	44.2	+0.8	+27.4
Thailand	43.3	43.3	40.2	-2.1	-6.3
India	26.4	26.5	36.0	+3.2	+13.8
China	36.5	35.9	32.2	+0.9	+7.1
Singapore	31.0	31.1	30.3	+0.1	+2.5
Fiji	31.2	31.7	27.4	+1.9	+11.6
Vietnam	20.5	20.2	25.6	-0.3	+5.8
All outbound	818.5	821.5	744.5	+0.7	+6.4

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, January 2016

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Dec 15/ Jan 16	Trend Jan 15/ Jan 16
	000	000	000	%	%
China	102.7	102.7	114.3	+2.1	+35.1
New Zealand	112.8	116.2	89.1	+0.8	+6.4
UK	59.0	59.1	71.8	+0.8	+6.1
USA	55.4	54.6	51.8	+1.3	+14.0
South Korea	22.6	21.5	28.6	+3.0	+23.8
Japan	31.1	31.6	24.6	+1.6	+18.3
Germany	16.3	16.5	17.7	+0.1	+2.9
India	19.4	19.3	15.9	-0.1	+1.4
Singapore	35.0	34.4	15.7	+0.2	+13.7
Canada	12.1	12.6	15.6	+1.7	-0.6
All inbound	659.6	659.1	620.5	+0.9	+11.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

### MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at December 2015

City pair	Passengers YE Dec 14 (000)	Passengers YE Dec 15 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,316.9	8,613.4	+3.6
Brisbane-Sydney	4,448.1	4,476.2	+0.6
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,317.1	3,353.8	+1.1
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,595.2	2,618.3	+0.9
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,272.0	2,311.0	+1.7
Melbourne-Perth	2,160.7	2,138.9	-1.0
Adelaide-Sydney	1,813.0	1,831.5	+1.0
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,754.0	1,812.3	+3.3
Perth-Sydney	1,798.9	1,760.9	-2.1
Hobart-Melbourne	1,400.1	1,493.6	+6.7

Source: BITRE

company yet to see the full benefits of its ongoing Virgin Vision transformation program.

It's not the first time Virgin has sought additional working capital, with a \$350 million rights issue in 2013 fully supported by the major shareholders. VA chief executive officer John Borghetti said the new \$425 million facility would give space for a review to ensure the group has a "capital structure that supports its strategic objectives". Analysts say the cash requirements of the business are in part a reflection of its hedging policies which have seen Virgin Australia unable to fully participate in the massive decline in fuel prices.

### Helloworld affiliates together

THE new broom at Helloworld continues to see changes, including the launch of a new affiliate group which incorporates the former Concorde Agency Network. Dubbed My Travel Group, it's an evolution of the existing Helloworld affiliate model with the combined group claiming some 800-odd members and in excess of \$1 billion in TTV.

New Helloworld ceo Andrew Burnes said it was the outcome of a year-long consultation with members as to what they wanted in an independent buying group network. As well as offering the benefits of buying power and supplier deals, My Travel Group offers a dedicated online portal giving access to SmartFares, SmartTickets and preferred partner information and flyers.

David Padman, Head of Corporate, Associate and Affiliate Networks said the program was being embraced by members. "This is about Helloworld boosting the support we provide to our independent agency network... My Travel Group is an affiliation brand which supports our agents'

## NEW CAL TRAVEL CONNECTION



THE Entire Travel Connection has expanded its portfolio with the launch last month of the New Caledonia Travel Connection, which will operate alongside the existing French Travel Connection, Tahiti Travel Connection and Spain & Portugal Travel Connection brands. The team are pictured at the official launch.

individual brands and identities. It allows our agents to be recognised as part of a network, especially by our suppliers," he said.

### NTIA voting now open

A FRENZY of activity around the opening of voting for the National Travel Industry Awards means the 2016 NTIA looks set to once again be bigger and better than ever. More than

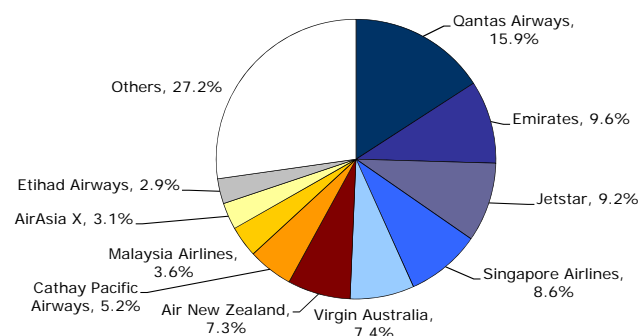
800 nominations were received across the award categories and there has been heavy lobbying for votes in the supplier and agent categories, with voting to wrap up on Friday 8th April. The finalists will be announced on 27th April prior to the judging process which

*Continues over page*

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended December 2015



Source: BITRE

### DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – December 2015

	Dec 14	Dec 15	Growth (%)	Yr to Dec 14	Yr to Dec 15	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.93m	5.05m	+2.5	57.51m	57.49m	+0.0
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.85bn	6.01bn	+2.7	67.86bn	67.85bn	+0.0
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.56bn	7.68bn	+1.6	88.97bn	88.70bn	-0.3
Load factor (%)	77.4	78.2	+0.8*	76.3	76.5	+0.2*
Aircraft trips (000)	53.1	53.1	+0.1	635.5	636.8	+0.2

Source: BITRE \* Percentage points

### DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – February 2016

	Departures on Time		Arrivals on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	5,253	84.0	5,026	80.3	56	0.9
Qantas	8,382	93.3	8,414	93.7	68	2.6
QantasLink	8,587	89.1	8,598	89.2	262	2.6
REX	5,008	87.2	5,179	90.2	24	0.4
Virgin Australia	11,122	93.3	11,141	93.5	149	1.2
All Airlines	40,856	90.3	40,888	90.3	574	1.3

Source: BITRE

Continues from previous page

will decide the ultimate winners who will receive their awards on the industry night of nights, Saturday 16th July, 2016.

However due to yet another incident of diary confusion the NTIA has this year once again been scheduled on the same weekend as the annual Flight Centre Global Ball. The unfortunate clash will mean many suppliers are torn as to which event they will send their most senior executives to, while some at Flight Centre will have to miss the Ball in order to attend the NTIA. It will be a busy week for all, with the Travel Industry Exhibition (and the Travel Daily Christmas in July) also taking place in Melbourne on the Monday and Tuesday prior to the NTIA (11-12 July), and then in Sydney the following week on Monday and Tuesday 18 and 19 July.

## Flight Centre court case

FLIGHT Centre has resolved to vigorously defend itself yet again from allegations of price fixing, with the long-running case brought by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission set for a further hearing. The ACCC was granted special leave by the High Court to appeal the former decision of the Full Court of the Federal Court, which last July found in favour of Flight Centre and overturned a previous judgement including the refund of a fine of \$11 million levied against the company.

ACCC chairman Rod Sims says there is an important legal principle at stake, particularly with the growth of suppliers which sell both directly online and through intermediaries. The case will go to a full hearing of the High Court later this year, with Flight Centre managing director Graham Turner saying he

was disappointed the Commission continues to pursue the matter, following the previous "clear and unanimous" judgement.

"We are not in the business of attempting to make airfares more expensive and we will continue to fight to be able to seek access to all fares to ensure the millions of customers that we serve are not forced to pay more for their flights," Turner promised.

## International Sunlover

HELLOWORLD wholesale looks set for a shakeup, with the revelation last month that the AOT Group's Sunlover Holidays operation has launched a new range of international product. Previously domestically-focused, Sunlover's 2016/17 range includes new brochures featuring New Zealand, Fiji, the Cook Islands and the Pacific, with the move described as an "exciting new direction for Sunlover Holidays [which] will provide its retail agency partners an extensive range of product to choose".

Also new for Sunlover is the launch of distribution in the New Zealand market, with the full range of 16 brochures now available to agents across the Tasman. Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes hasn't indicated his intentions for the existing Qantas Holidays/Viva! Holidays operations and whether there will be integration with Sunlover, but this latest move by AOT shows he clearly has a strong belief in travel wholesaling.

## Dalton to join Uniworld

NEW Travel Corporation chief John Veitch has wasted no time putting his stamp on the organisation, with high level changes in several of the company's brands over the last few months. One of the biggest changes is an

increased focus on the Uniworld brand, with the general manager role vacated by John Molinaro upgraded to become a managing director and the well-respected Qantas Holidays national sales manager Fiona Dalton appointed to the role.

Dalton, who has driven Helloworld wholesale through much evolution over the past five years, will become Uniworld Boutique River Cruise Collection managing director early next month, with Qantas Holidays chief Peter Egglestone describing it as a "significant opportunity to advance her career". Other senior changes implemented by Veitch include the departure of James Gaskell following the closure of Creative Holidays, as well as the appointment of former Virgin Australia staffer Alex O'Connor as managing director of Insight Vacations, replacing Joost Timmer. The reshuffles mean Trafalgar managing director Matthew Cameron-Smith is now the Travel Corporation Australia's longest-serving managing director.

## Voyages Field of Light

THE launch of the new Field of Light interactive art installation at Ayers Rock looks set to create strong demand for visitation to Australia's Red Centre. The piece involves a massive total of 50,000 solar-powered lights spread across the desert, providing an intriguing new experience for both domestic and international visitors alike. That's not to mention business events, with Uluru conference organisers expected to make the most of the stunning setting.

Field of Light is the brainchild of UK-based Bruce Munro, who has created the artwork in a number of settings around the world. He came up with the idea following a visit to Uluru in 1992 and so it's very fitting that it

## BUSINESS MONITOR

### INTERNET AGENCY MARKETSHARE

February 2016, compared with January 2016

Rank Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Websites	Feb 16	Feb to Jan	Jan 16
1 Webjet Australia	15.32	-0.96	1
2 Expedia Australia	10.59	-3.30	2
3 Wotif.com	8.34	-10.11	3
4 Skyscanner Australia	7.82	+10.52	5
5 Flight Centre	7.05	-3.36	4
6 Lastminute.com.au	3.03	-16.91	6
7 Velocity Frequent Flyer	2.22	+13.30	7
8 Luxury Escapes	1.76	+26.55	10
9 Cheapflights Aus & NZ	1.71	+16.71	8
10 Helloworld	1.31	-8.74	9

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

### INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs [at December 2015]

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Dec 14	YE Dec 15	total	14/15
Auckland-Sydney	1,483,183	1,540,790	4.4	+3.9
Singapore-Sydney	1,363,727	1,461,382	4.2	+7.2
Singapore-Melbourne	1,146,575	1,214,169	3.5	+5.9
Auckland-Melbourne	1,040,922	1,149,693	3.3	+10.4
Singapore-Perth	1,047,892	1,061,213	3.0	+1.3
Hong Kong-Sydney	925,337	993,075	2.8	+7.3
Auckland-Brisbane	913,165	968,140	2.8	+6.0
Los Angeles-Sydney	895,393	909,663	2.6	+1.6
Denpasar-Perth	913,399	857,009	2.5	-6.2
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	899,054	825,195	2.4	-8.2
Top 10 city pairs	10,628,647	10,980,329	31.5	+3.3
Other city pairs	22,504,441	23,886,121	68.5	+6.1
ALL CITY PAIRS	33,133,088	34,866,450	100.0	+5.2

Source: BITRE

### SHARE PRICES

at 22 March, 2016

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$43.25
Helloworld (HLO)	\$2.09
Webjet (WEB)	\$6.13
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.02
Qantas (QAN)	\$4.07
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.385
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.18
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$2.59
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$5.87
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.56
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$13.27
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.56
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.78
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.35



## CATO CRISIS MANAGEMENT FORUM



THE Council of Australian Tour Operators inaugural Crisis Management Forum held in Sydney last month included a fascinating panel discussion with some CATO members about their real life crisis experiences. The panel included Wildlife Safari MD Trevor Fernandes, who was in Kenya during several events including post-election violence in 2007 and the Westgate Plaza shootings in 2013.

Key take-outs included the importance of having a crisis management plan and clearly defined roles for key personnel;

the importance of having a senior member of the operations team on the ground as soon as possible after an incident; and the importance of relying on contacts on the ground rather than just sensationalised media reports.

**Pictured** above after some of the morning sessions are, from left: David Beirman of UTS; Rose Romeo from the Qantas Group Business Resilience department; CATO chairman Dennis Bunnik; and Kirsty McNeill, DFAT's director of crisis management and contingency planning.



## HEADLINES

- 18 Feb** Webjet's TTV jumps 28%
- 19 Feb** Mantra profit jumps 11%
- 19 Feb** Cover-More FC renewal
- 22 Feb** FC boosting BYOjet stake
- 23 Feb** HLO exec team shake up
- 23 Feb** Qantas pre-tax profit nudges \$1b
- 24 Feb** Flight Centre TTV up 13%
- 24 Feb** HLO loses \$1m in 1HFY16
- 25 Feb** Air NZ 1HFY16 profit skyrockets
- 25 Feb** ACCC renews QF/AA alliance
- 25 Feb** HA undermine QF/AA jv
- 26 Feb** CTM 1H NPAT spikes 36%
- 29 Feb** Helloworld product push
- 01 Mar** Qantas ratings upgraded
- 01 Mar** Virgin revamps Velocity
- 02 Mar** Fiji urges visitors to come
- 03 Mar** QR A380s coming to Syd
- 03 Mar** New Caledonia specialist
- 04 Mar** Jetstar long-haul revamp
- 04 Mar** HLO wholesale restructure
- 04 Mar** P&O to farewell *Pacific Pearl*
- 04 Mar** Fiona Dalton to leave Qantas Hols
- 07 Mar** Sunlover adds new int'l range
- 07 Mar** MTA quality agent focus
- 07 Mar** Dalton to be Uniworld MD
- 08 Mar** Another NT agent charged
- 08 Mar** JetBlue disrupt QF/AA jv
- 09 Mar** No change in complaints
- 10 Mar** Railbookers goes off track
- 11 Mar** Air NZ, United rev share
- 11 Mar** Helloworld IT restructure
- 11 Mar** ACCC to appeal Flight Centre judgment again
- 14 Mar** Flight Centre expands in Europe
- 14 Mar** NT agent guilty of fraud
- 15 Mar** DFAT highlights insurance
- 15 Mar** Starwood mull new buyer
- 16 Mar** Colbeck tourism career push
- 16 Mar** NTIA 2016 nominees revealed
- 17 Mar** Scoot, Tiger integration
- 18 Mar** Royal Caribbean promotes Gavin Smith
- 18 Mar** Strong 2015 result for SYD
- 21 Mar** Virgin borrowing \$425m
- 21 Mar** Qantas adding US flights
- 22 Mar** HLO launches My Travel Group
- 22 Mar** Bestjet takes AFTA to court

has finally been installed at the place which inspired it in the first place. Field of Light opens to the public this month and will run for the next year, with Tourism Australia

managing director John O'Sullivan telling *travelBulletin* it will be "one of the most talked about Australian attractions around the world".

### AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passenger through Australia's major international airports - December 2015

Airport	Passengers YE Dec 14	Passengers YE Dec 15	% of total	% change 15/14
Sydney	13,315,835	13,911,228	39.9	+4.5
Melbourne	8,022,466	8,859,316	25.4	+10.4
Brisbane	4,964,981	5,238,274	15.0	+5.5
Perth	4,180,407	4,192,833	12.0	+0.3
Gold Coast	880,971	942,967	2.7	+7.0
Adelaide	967,265	871,388	2.5	-9.9
Cairns	460,910	545,782	1.6	+18.4
Darwin	318,670	262,787	0.8	-17.5
Sunshine Coast*	10,248	13,598	0.0	+32.7
Norfolk Island	11,335	11,841	0.0	+4.5
Townsville^	n/a	11,123	0.0	n/a
Port Hedland~	n/a	5,313	0.0	n/a
All Airports	33,133,088	34,866,450	100.0	+5.2

\* Operated scheduled service from Jul 2012 to Sept 2012, June 2013 to Oct 2013 and Jun 2014 to Oct 2014. ~Scheduled services recommenced Apr 2015. ^Scheduled services recommenced Sept 2015.

### ACREDITED AGENTS

3 December 2015

New South Wales	1012
Victoria	735
Queensland	657
Western Australia	322
South Australia	231
Australian Capital Territory	50
Tasmania	40
Northern Territory	23
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>3070</b>

Got something to say?

We're all ears, so share your thoughts at [haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au](mailto:haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au)



## Steve Jones' Say

TRAVELBULLETIN'S Q&A with Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes last month made for interesting reading.

He clearly has a vision for the business, something not immediately apparent under his predecessor, and is certainly bullish about its potential. But then you'd expect nothing less.

I had to chuckle though at Burnes' assertion - some might call it spin - that Helloworld doesn't need "turning around", a phrase justifiably used in a question posed by this publication. Call me picky but I'd have thought any business with deepening financial losses - \$1 million for the first six months of the year - needed turning around.

Be that as it may, you knew where Burnes was coming from when he said the "hard yards" of the rebranding have been completed and now was the time to "reap the benefits" of that work.

What particularly caught my attention was Burnes' plan to launch more Helloworld product.

His rationale is unclear but it's a promise he has already delivered on with the launch of New Zealand and Pacific Islands product for Sunlover Holidays, a significant strategic shift for a brand synonymous with domestic breaks.

But it's a slightly curious move given those destinations are well catered for through Qantas Holidays and Viva! Holidays, and no doubt preferred partners of Helloworld. There is nothing wrong with a little internal competition of course, but there is surely a risk of cannibalising sales here.

It remains to be seen what other product will emerge. But reports suggest it will be Helloworld-branded, raising the question of whether the company is eyeing a more vertically integrated approach to its business.

Flight Centre has become the master of keeping it in the family - the growth of Infinity Holidays is testament to that - and maybe Burnes is attempting to play Skroo Turner at his own game.

Such a game, however, is far easier

when you own the stores, as Flight Centre does. It can, and does, instruct consultants what to sell in a way Helloworld simply is unable to given the independent nature of its retail members.

That said, if Helloworld's fully branded, associate and affiliate members are truly buying into the brand at a retail level then widespread support for Helloworld-badged product may follow.

Speaking of Flight Centre, Burnes was riled recently by his rivals' attempt to lure agents to a new partnership program. Burnes' description of Flight Centre in the *travelBulletin* interview as "our friendly competitors in Brisbane" was comical in its insincerity, and deliberately so I have no doubt.

Frankly, it was good to see Helloworld come out swinging as Burnes did when he described the Flight Centre initiative as "disingenuous".

A more objective view might suggest it was a smart move by FLT to secure more sales. And that, after all, is what it's all about.

# Alison joined because she's a mumpreneur at heart

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SIX years after initially announcing it would launch flights to Sydney, Qatar Airways finally touched down with non-stop services from Doha to the NSW Capital in early March.

Sydney is the first of two new Australian destinations added to the Gulf carrier's global route network in the first half of 2016, with a new daily Adelaide service due to debut in May, joining existing operations to Melbourne and Perth, which launched in 2009 & 2012 respectively.

Speaking at a press conference in Sydney, Qatar Airways Group CEO Akbar Al Baker flagged further expansion down under, with a possible fifth destination on the radar - likely to be Brisbane. Al Baker remained tight-lipped on the specific destination to protect QR's interest from rival airlines, quipping "you never know, it could be Darwin".

A fifth Australian gateway will require a renewed bilateral agreement between Qatar and Australia, with Al Baker stating the current Australian government is "very receptive to giving additional traffic rights to promote tourism".

**‘The reason it fell off our radar six years ago is because we could not afford to leave our aircraft on the ground during the curfew period’**

Operating on a daily basis to Sydney using its flagship Boeing 777-300ER aircraft, the service will contribute \$240 million annually to the Australian economy and generate an estimated 3,000 jobs in NSW.

The Doha-Sydney service was originally slated to debut shortly after Qatar Airways commenced its Melbourne

operation but slipped off the radar due to Sydney Airport's flight curfew, which would have meant parking its aircraft on the ground overnight.

Al Baker explained to *travelBulletin* the difference between 2010 and now was Qatar Airways' schedule and access to a third bank of slots - times when flights come in and depart so they connect - at Doha's Hamad International Airport. "We were operating only two times at Doha at the time. Now we have started the third bank we are able to take the aircraft out of Sydney before the curfew time.

"The reason it fell off our radar six years ago is because we could not afford to leave our aircraft on the ground during the curfew period. If we took the aircraft immediately back [to Doha] we wouldn't give the seamless connection, the minimum connecting time we can now provide passengers from Sydney," Al Baker told *travelBulletin*.

Advanced demand for the new Sydney route has been so high Qatar Airways will deploy its high-density Airbus A380 on the route over "peak periods" from June, Al Baker revealed at the event.

Quizzed if the demand for Qatar Airways' service would warrant additional slots at Sydney Airport, Al Baker said "maybe in the future, yes, but for the time being we are just going to stay with seven".



## AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

### THE IMPACT OF TERRORISM

AS I type this month's column for *travelBulletin* I find it almost impossible to comprehend why any person who resides on this planet would take the lives of innocent people in the way terrorists have in Brussels. What a cowardly act and a disgraceful indictment on the human race that some people believe they gain something from this type of human atrocity.

For the travel industry across the globe this incident once again brings home so quickly how situations like this can have an immediate impact on travellers and their future intentions.

Indeed, here in Australia I am sure we will see an effect. As we all had just stated to recover from the events in Paris, now a more direct hit on travellers in Brussels. Security will I am sure tighten around the globe for a good long period of time. While it will cause some inconvenience, I am sure that in the end we would all like to feel safer.

I will be travelling to Europe myself in April for the WTAAA board meeting and further meetings with IATA on a range of subjects including the new generation of BSP and progress on the new distribution capability.

Of course it plays on my mind that I will be so close to what has gone on, but if we all stop travelling then the terrorists win. As clients ask the question of travel agents "should I travel to Europe" it is always difficult to decide how best to respond. A reminder to keep a keen eye on the [www.smartraveller.gov.au](http://www.smartraveller.gov.au) website for updates about Belgium and more broadly Europe as the situation unfolds and more information and intelligence becomes available.

My advice is that we all need to continue to travel as we would have. Disruption of society and the breaking of the freedoms that we enjoy in this modern world is what the terrorists want. There is nothing the terrorist would like more than for the world to stop doing what they do best - live a normal life.

These situations are not new to us and while each tragic event comes with the loss of so many lives which impact on families and countries, the travel industry and the travelling public will always be the ones that find a way to support and go on with life to the extent that they can in a normal way. I am sure everyone in the Australian travel industry is thinking of the people of Belgium at this grave time of loss.

To finish this month and on a brighter note, I wish all the nominees in the NTIA this year all the very best of luck as we move into the finalist stage and of course for those that will appear before the judges the very best of luck with their presentations. I remind all the finalists when announced to keep an eye out for the information sessions that AFTA will be running via webinars to help give them every opportunity to be successful for NTIA 2016.

**‘This incident once again brings home so quickly how situations like this can have an immediate impact on travellers’**

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# MTA'S 2016 CONFERENCE, THE BEST YET

By Nathalie Craig

MOBILE Travel Agents (MTA) enjoyed its largest annual conference to date in March with close to 400 members, suppliers and guests coming together at The Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort on the Gold Coast.

Themed 'Power of Community', the aim of the conference was to inspire and educate MTA members, providing them with valuable takeaways to weave into their day-to-day work as travel agents.

"Our members want to learn because they know it's going to change the way they do business," managing director and co-founder of MTA, Karen Merricks said.

Karen and her husband Roy Merricks, who founded the business in the early 1990s, said the 2016 national conference was "perhaps the most important event" in company history. This stems from the timing, with the event taking place after 12 months of hard work producing new systems to enhance the MTA business model.

Agents learned about two new products during the three day event: an itinerary building mobile app and a global fares tool.

The itinerary app will allow members to build luxury, quality itineraries which are downloadable to their customers' phones via an MTA app.

"This will allow our members to deliver customised and bespoke itineraries to their clients," MTA CEO Don Beattie told *travelBulletin*.

He said the new app allows their agents to build up a suite of information for customers to access via their smartphone as well as giving delivering real time updates.

In addition a global fares tool was also announced which will allow members to see all airfare prices, including low cost carriers, all in the one place from any GDS. It's set to be put into place within the next few months.

"At one search I can have all these things delivered. It's just amazing," Beattie said. Before this fares were kept in spreadsheets or the system but the new tool will present the whole lot together.

These initiatives build on the "hundreds of thousands of dollars" the company puts towards developing new technologies for their members each year.

"We see this as a way to help our members to improve their productivity and their professionalism to their customers".

As well as learning about new technology, agents were entertained and inspired by a line-up of stellar keynote speakers throughout the weekend.



The event was emceed by ABC Gruen Planet regular Dan Gregory while inspirational key note speaker and best-selling author Li Cunxin wowed the audience with his life story which highlighted the rewards of hard work and passion.

This was followed by motivational talks from leading Australian business and life coach Shannah Kennedy and award-winning small business expert Sophie Andrews.

MTA members took part in peer-to-peer breakout sessions and workshops while the company's support team worked behind the scenes to be on call for clients.

Suppliers attending updated agents on their offerings throughout the weekend while 54 prizes including cruises, flights and accommodation were picked up by members.

To relax, attendees enjoyed a pool party on the Friday night, followed by a gala dinner on the Saturday evening.

The conference wrapped up with a family fun barbeque on Sunday hosted by celebrity

Fijian chef Lance Seeto together with MTA ambassador and sailing star Jessica Watson.

When speaking about the business model during the conference, Beattie told *travelBulletin* his focus for this year was retaining their existing 350 members as well as selecting highly skilled agents.

"Is our business model going to grow? Absolutely, but our focus is on making sure our members are skilled," he said.

Three new roles have been created this year with a cruise specialist, a social media manager and events person – to support our members' growth.

When looking forward to sales in 2016, Beattie said the company does not set sales targets – a focus that would be "incorrect" for the group's business model.

"Our central focus is on education," he said.

"It's about quality, it's about expertise and it's about support. We encourage people to go and learn, because once they learn they will come back as experts".

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# THAI CELEBRATES 45 YEARS

THIS month THAI airways celebrates 45 years of flights between Australia and Thailand.

It was April 1 1971, THAI launched its first intercontinental route, flying from Bangkok via Singapore to Sydney once a week on a DC8-62 aircraft. At the time this was the world's most advanced long range jetliner. THAI operated a single weekly service every Friday from Sydney to Bangkok.

In 1979, non-stop flights to Europe were launched with thanks to the capacity of new Boeing 747-200 Jumbo Jets. THAI continued to expand its operations in Australia with the introduction of flights to Melbourne in 1980. A total of two flights linked with Sydney using a McDonnell Douglas DC-10 aircraft. Brisbane services were next with a weekly service that also linked Sydney.

The 80s saw many firsts for THAI including the introduction of its Royal Executive Class in 1983 - setting new levels for inflight business class service standards.

Australia welcomed its first Jumbo Jet in 1984 which replaced the DC-10 on the Sydney/Brisbane route. A year later THAI introduced a weekly flight to Perth.

In 1993 THAI's award-winning frequent flyer programme, Royal Orchid Plus, was launched.

Today, THAI flies 39 times a week from four on-line cities in Australia – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth – non-stop to Thailand. There are now 11 flights a week

between Sydney and Bangkok; double daily flights to/from Melbourne; daily flights from Brisbane and seven flights a week from Perth.

As a brand THAI has become recognised for its traditional Thai hospitality with the airline continuing to cater to every passenger's needs. This includes special pre-order meal selections for religious and dietary requirements, special care services at Suvarnabhumi Bangkok International Airport, frequent flyer miles awarded to in all classes of travel and generous baggage allowance in all classes of travel.

‘It was April 1 1971, THAI launched its first intercontinental route, flying from Bangkok via Singapore to Sydney’

THAI has also received many awards such as “Best Economy Class”, by Airlineratings.com 2015, “Best Economy Class Catering” and “Best Lounge Spa Facility” Skytrax 2015.

The timeless tradition of gracious Thai hospitality is as much a hallmark of THAI as it is of the Kingdom of Thailand itself.

When you step on board a THAI aircraft you will be greeted with a warm ‘Sawasdee’ (welcome). THAI's award-winning service anticipates every need and delivers hospitality with a unique touch, from check-in to your final destination.

THAI Airways International, one of South-east Asia's largest airlines, flies non-stop from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth to Thailand with connections through world-class hub airport, Suvarnabhumi Bangkok International Airport, to over 65 destinations across the globe. The route network stretches from the heart of Asia to include 11 major European cities, over 40 destinations throughout domestic Thailand (in conjunction with subsidiary ‘THAI Smile), Asia, the Indian Subcontinent and the Middle East.

Over the last few years THAI has continually added the latest and most modern aircraft to our fleet including the Airbus A380, Boeing 777-300ER and Dreamliner 787 aircraft. These aircraft offer lie-flat beds, latest audio visual on demand with even more entertainment choice and an overall enhanced customer flying experience.

THAI's existing fleet has undergone a major retro-fit with new First Class suites now available on some Boeing 747-400's and all new entertainment systems throughout all classes of travel.





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# AVIS BENEFITS TASSIE MTA MEMBER

**The latest Avis Travel Agent Scholarship winner Belinda van Tholen talks to NATHALIE CRAIG about how this prestigious award is giving a regional Tassie travel agent incredible industry exposure.**

LAUNCESTON-BASED MTA consultant Belinda van Tholen was “blown away” when her name was called as the winner of the 2015 Avis Travel Agent Scholarship in November last year.

“There’s an incredible photo of me with my head in my hands which just explains everything I felt in that moment,” she told *travelBulletin* when speaking about scooping the sought-after prize valued at \$45,000.

Van Tholen received two return Qantas business class tickets to New York with six nights in Manhattan, a tour of the Avis World Headquarters and a scholarship from Southern Cross University together with 12 months professional coaching from Polonious Resources and more perks from CLIA Australasia and AFTA.

The award is given to an outstanding travel agent who is selected through a detailed written application before answering questions in front of a panel of judges about the way they run their business and deal with their clients.

“To have the backing of that award means people recognise my name,” van Tholen smiles. “It’s a conversation starter and an amazing leg up”.

For her, one of the most exciting aspects is serving on the board of Avis this year with “industry greats”.

The board discusses the big issues affecting both Avis and the travel industry as a whole.

“It’s my first experience on a corporate board and it’s just amazing to see how it works at that level,” she says.



rising star has received recently either. She was also selected as a finalist for Virtuoso Most Innovative Advisor worldwide in 2015.

“In July I wasn’t even going to Virtuoso Travel Week but the nomination landed in my inbox in June and it was in August. Suddenly I’m going to Vegas,” she recalls.

“A little girl from Tassie doesn’t have those connections without these sort of industry

‘A little girl from Tassie doesn’t have those connections without these sort of industry supporting awards’

Belinda van Tholen, MTA  
Avis Travel Agent Scholarship winner

Van Tholen said the opportunity wouldn’t have been possible without the backing of her company MTA which provides her with the support to work from her home in Tasmania.

“I’d never even heard of the scholarship in my previous agency. It’s just a very forward thinking agency”.

The award isn’t the only major accolade the

supporting awards.”

“You don’t usually get the opportunity to make these connections living rurally”.

She says the recognition really feels like “the start of something” and is using the opportunities it brings to further her knowledge, connect, build relationships and see where it lands her.

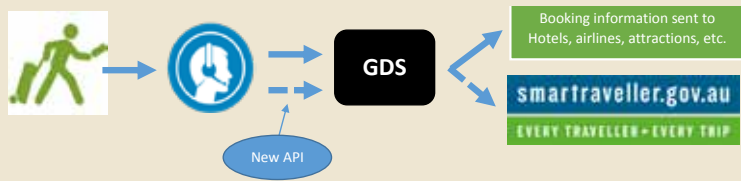
## AUTOMATIC SMARTRAVELLER REGISTRATION?

AFTA has proposed a bold plan to the federal government, suggesting the development of an electronic interface which would see the travel plans of people who book through ATAS accredited agencies automatically linked to the Smartraveller registration system which allows the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to ascertain the whereabouts of Aussies abroad in the event of a major incident.

The proposal is part of AFTA’s budget submission, with the Federation urging it be adopted as part of the government’s “Innovation Agenda”. “A traveller who uses a travel agent should be able to opt in to have their contact

details and itinerary automatically uploaded into Smartraveller... this would alleviate the need for the traveller having to manually enter the data themselves, and ensure a much higher level of Smartraveller registration,” the submission suggests.

The proposed Application Programming Interface (API) would allow the details to be submitted to Smartraveller via GDS as the itinerary is finalised with suppliers. The process would mean there is “little or no impact for travel agents and it will be compatible with both online and offline travel agents” while also vastly increasing the uptake of Smartraveller registration.





## Connections at Networking Night

LAST month's *Travel Daily*/JITO networking night in Sydney was a roaring success, with 300 travel, tourism and hospitality people packing the Ivy Bar for a delightful evening of conviviality.

The Hawaii-themed night saw Bonnie Caine from ETM take home tickets for two to Honolulu courtesy of Hawaiian Airlines, while the evening also saw the launch of JITO Connected, a new smartphone app tailored expressly for the needs of the travel industry to maintain and nurture networks.

Guests used the app to take and share selfies, as well as making more than 1,250 new connections during the evening - along with registering for other upcoming events including the Travel Industry Exhibition in July and the next *TD*/JITO networking night which will take place in Melbourne on 1 June.



Domestic tourism is playing a large part in reaching the government's 2020 goal of \$115 billion in overnight visitor spending. And clearly there are some big dollars at play, so how are bricks and mortar agents going at capturing their share? STEVE JONES investigates.

WESTERN  
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# The state of domestic tourism



# QUEENSLAND

# NEW SOUTH WALES

# VICTORIA

# TASMANIA

**I**N THE 12 months to December 2015 – the latest figures available at time of publication – Australians took 87 million domestic trips and spent almost 322 million nights away from home. In the process they parted company with \$57 billion, half of that forked out by holidaymakers and a quarter by business travellers.

They are significant numbers. Compare that to the \$36 billion generated by 248m international visitor nights and it starts to become clear how critical a role domestic tourism is playing in achieving the government's target of generating at least \$11.5b in overnight spend by 2020. It is a role often overlooked in the higher profile pursuit of the overseas tourism dollar.

What is less clear is the role bricks and mortar travel agents are playing in the sale of domestic product.

While we can all agree – at least to a point – that a sizeable percentage of international travel will continue to be booked through traditional retailers, the same cannot be said with the same level of confidence for domestic holidays.

Such a conclusion is supported by Roy Morgan Research which found travel agents are continuing to be a pivotal seller of overseas holidays but “are not so necessary” for Australia-based breaks.

In its study from late 2014, Roy Morgan found only 8% of consumers who last holidayed in Australia used a bricks and mortar agent, with online agencies only marginally ahead on 10%. Airlines meanwhile captured 18% of bookings while 34% bypassed them all and booked direct with their hotel.

Furthermore, in a ‘state of the nation’ report on travel, Roy Morgan chief executive Michele Levine observed: “Travel agents are being usurped by anything online except where there is a level of complexity like international travel.”

She reiterated the widely held and oft-cited view that travel agents excel if they add value and provide unique product, something they can perhaps more easily demonstrate when booking international travel.

*Continues over page*

Continues from previous page

Simon Latchford, head of marketing and strategic partnerships at Visit Sunshine Coast, agreed with the Roy Morgan findings by explaining Gen Y consumers in particular are cutting out both bricks and mortar and online retailers on straightforward domestic transactions.

“What is happening increasingly is consumers are finding a price, contacting the property and saying ‘can you better this rate if I do business with you directly’.

“Nine times out of 10 the hotelier will say yes because they don’t have to pay commission. Even if it’s the offer of a bottle of champagne or a box of chocolates it’s enough to get the consumer over the line.”

Yet while acknowledging that trend is unlikely to change, and in all probability will accelerate, Latchford said the Sunshine Coast will continue to work directly with travel agents to cater for an older, less digitally savvy demographic who will simply never book online.

He highlighted a campaign with Flight Centre last year which saw the Sunshine Coast heavily promoted through 750 stores. The marketing activity coincided with the first of three back to back periods of record visitation for the destination.

“What you need to remember is these campaigns are not necessarily about conversions,” Latchford explained. “Even though that is the end game, part of it is about destination awareness. People can’t buy what they don’t know exists so it’s about raising awareness of the Sunshine Coast and getting into the mindset of consumers.”

The shift to booking domestic travel online and, increasingly, direct with properties was recognised by some state and regional tourism bodies whose sole concern is driving visitation, no matter where the booking originates from.

Tourism Western Australia said booking habits have evolved since 2010.

“In the past people would use traditional travel agents to make their travel arrangements including booking flights, tours and accommodation,” a spokeswoman said. “Now we’re seeing more people preferring to book their domestic holidays themselves online.”

Nevertheless, Tourism WA recognised that some consumers still prefer to use a travel agent to book domestic travel, citing “older people and those booking more complex and expensive itineraries”.

“So we ensure agents are part of our domestic marketing strategy through webinar training opportunities, famil programs and marketing in trade publications,” the spokeswoman said.



Camel Ride, Cable Beach WA ©Tourism Australia

Gold Coast Tourism also said the “consumption of travel has certainly shifted to the adoption of new technology and media”.

“However, there remains a portion of the market that looks for a person to person interaction via a traditional travel agency shop front,” a spokeswoman said.

But such a view is at odds with data from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) which

**‘Now we’re seeing more people preferring to book their domestic holidays themselves online’**

suggests agents have been used sparingly by consumers booking domestic breaks for at least a decade.

Figures from TRA show agents were used as an “information source” in only 2.1% of domestic overnight trips in 2007, a figure which dipped to 1.1% in 2014.

The internet meanwhile was used in 31% of trips in 2007, rising to 34.4% in 2014.

Despite the general trends, retailers remain typically bullish about the future of domestic bookings and, far from being dispirited, claim they are experiencing a resurgence in sales of Australian product.

Travellers Choice admitted it saw a “fairly significant” dip in domestic business but is now witnessing “strong double digit growth” that began last financial year and has continued into 2015/16.

Managing director Christian Hunter told *travelBulletin* a number of factors lay behind the upturn.

“Consumers are realising that playing the role of a travel agent themselves is not always as it seems,” he suggested. “Yes you

can jump online and book a flight and a hotel but it’s not always that easy.

“There are a lot of different sites and as the online space gets more competitive it becomes more confusing for people to find what they think is the best deal.

“We are seeing consumers are moving away from the concept of ‘do it yourself’ to one of ‘do it for me’. They know where they want to go and are saying ‘just organise it for me’.”

Hunter added that the way domestic tourism is being promoted has also evolved which has played to the strengths of traditional retailers. Rather than focusing on the sale of basic flight and accommodation packages, more add-ons are being included that are not so easy for a consumer to book.

“We are not spending a lot of time promoting flights and hotel packages, it’s more around unique product around events or sports or theatre tickets where we can package a deal with flights, hotels and some value added items,” he said. “Those sorts of packages have been really popular and it has helped stimulate business.”

TravelManagers chairman Barry Mayo also claimed domestic business has shown a sharp year-on-year improvement.

Sales climbed 14% in 2014 and are a further 21% ahead in the first seven months of the current financial year, he said.

But in figures which illustrate the dominance of international product, domestic product still only represents 6.7% of TravelManagers total revenue, a 0.6 percentage point rise on the previous year.

“It is a small overall percentage but it’s still a significant amount in dollar value,” Mayo said. “It is impressive growth which I put down to a mix of potential reasons. It’s partly driven by the weakening dollar, partly a result of terrorism and partly even down to the recent health threat of Zika. They are all

possible factors, but it's hard to be specific."

Asked what value a travel agent could bring to a simple package to the Gold Coast, Mayo responded: "It may not always be so simple. Where it becomes more complicated for consumers is if it's a family holiday and involves infants and cots or multiple uses of a room, or adjoining rooms. They are not always easy to book.

"Consumers will often turn to agents when there is anything that might make it a more complicated transaction."

Another factor contributing to the upturn in domestic sales has been the "change in mindset of agents", according to Hunter.

"There was a view that there was little margin in domestic bookings but that has changed," he said. "There has been a realisation that there is money to be made and you ignore it at your peril.

"If you look at what the domestic product would compete against, such as the South Pacific or Bali or Thailand, there's often not a lot of margin in those products these days.

"Agents have embraced the philosophy that domestic is a viable and worthwhile product to sell."

While some tourism bodies such as WA and the Sunshine Coast openly acknowledge the swing towards online, all predictably insist bricks and mortar agents and wholesalers remain important partners.

Sandra Chipchase, chief executive of Destination NSW, described such partnerships as "vital".

"Destination NSW's level of partnership with travel wholesalers for domestic travel has remained consistent over the past few years," she said. "We intend to maintain this level of partnership into the future as Destination NSW continues to work with all distribution partners."

Chipchase highlighted recent campaigns with Helloworld and Flight Centre as examples of the on-going relationship with

retail groups.

Tourism and Events Queensland also flagged its continuing collaboration with retailers while the South Australian Tourism Commission (SATC) said there remains a need to connect with people who "still like to plan and book their travel through travel agents."

"In the past 12 months we have conducted cooperative marketing campaigns with Helloworld and Flight Centre," an SATC spokeswoman said. "We have also hosted the TravelManagers Conference in Adelaide

**‘There was a view that there was little margin in domestic bookings but that has change’**

which saw over 200 top TravelManagers visit South Australia.

"Part of our role with travel agents is not only our cooperative marketing campaigns but also training of staff through our online training module SA Experts, in-person training, famils, a specially targeted agent e-newsletter and networking roadshows."

Flight Centre, whose in-house wholesaler Infinity Holidays sells domestic packages to a range of destinations, said point to point airfares have indisputably moved online.

"We still do a truckload of domestic bookings and somewhere between 45% to 50% of tickets we sell every day are domestic tickets," spokesman Haydn Long said, adding that Flight Centre and the state and regional tourism organisations continue to collaborate "very proactively".

AccorHotels chief operating officer Simon McGrath backed up Hunter's observations by suggesting consumers are becoming

overawed by digital technologies and beginning to return to agents.

"It's a bit like online and offline media. We are all doing online digital media but there's often just too much to consume so we are now seeing better cut through offline," McGrath said. "If you look at that in the travel agent space, I think there is a swing back to the travel agent because you can sit down and have a chat.

"There is also a greater story to be told by travel agents about a destination. There is no doubt they have a role to play in the future."

He added bricks and mortar agents bring an "activity and animation" to sales that can't be found elsewhere.

While consumers clearly book domestic travel through a variety of channels, some brands continue to rely heavily on the trade. One such operator, AAT Kings, estimated that 80 per cent of its guided holiday domestic sales come through the trade.

Managing director Anthony Hayes told *travelBulletin* he reversed a direct-to-consumer strategy when he took over in a bid to revitalise the brand.

"We have seen millions and millions of dollars of growth over the last three years because of our relationship with the trade," he said. "If you are going on a beach holiday then doing it yourself is probably easy, but if it's something that requires a bit more thought like a guided holiday then people still want to talk to an expert.

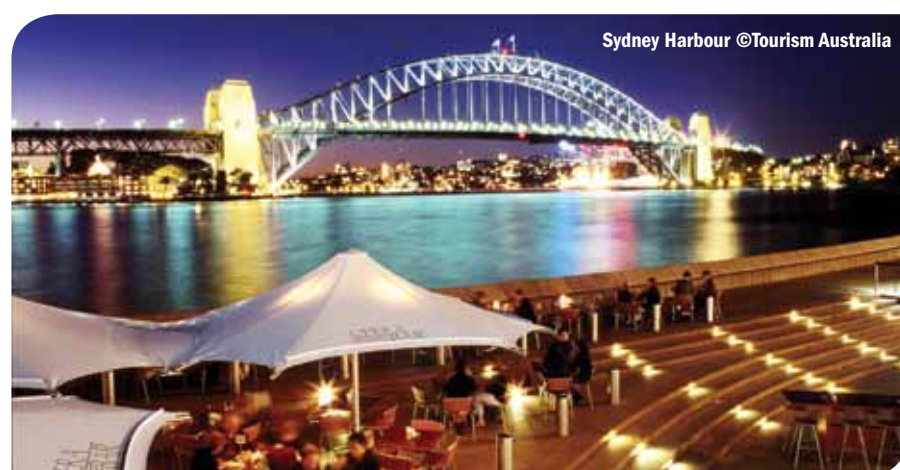
"Consumers will research online but still want that reassurance from an agent. There are also many different types of people out there. The older demographic, those living in regional Australia, not all of them want to book online or find booking online as straightforward as it may seem."

Hayes also identified renewed passion for Australian product, not only among consumers but within the agency community itself.

"The focus over the past few years has been on selling international travel but what is exciting is that it seems to be turning around," he said. "At the recent Flight Centre expos there was a lot of agency focus on domestic travel."

Such a focus by the trade – assuming it is maintained of course – will be music to the ears of tourism leaders in Australia.

If the retail groups can lift their domestic sales even marginally, as the likes of Travellers Choice and TravelManagers have done, it could make the difference between the industry achieving its lower end 2020 targets or going some way beyond.



# AMADEUS HIGHLIGHTS HOTELS SOLUTION

AMADEUS has a vision for the global accommodation industry – to revolutionise the software behind every aspect of hotel operations in the same way it has driven change in the aviation sector. Amadeus' Altéa suite, now used by scores of carriers across the globe such as Qantas, Singapore Airlines, Lufthansa and Finnair, has pioneered the concept of "software as a service" allowing on-demand access to a full suite of options from reservations, ticketing and airport kiosks right through to departure control and revenue management.

Amadeus Hotels, headed up globally by Peter Waters (pictured) is currently developing a full suite of similar products which can be used by hotel managers, with a major launch customer in the form of InterContinental Hotels Group which expects to start a worldwide rollout of its new Amadeus reservation and property management system sometime next year. The next-generation Guest Reservation System (GRS) will utilise the first cloud-based community model for the hotel sector, with IHG working with Amadeus on the design, functionality and evolution of the system which will eventually replace IHG's in-house Holiday proprietary software.

That's on the hotel side, but Amadeus' accommodation aspirations go much further, with the Amadeus Hotels platform already offering a huge variety of content and simplified shopping for travel agents to help them find the right property for their client. The process has the prospect of being significantly more complex than for airlines, with a distinct lack of standards meaning Amadeus has worked hard to develop a platform for room descriptions and other options. In order to facilitate a wide take-up of these new standards Amadeus is providing details to other providers to ensure that the industry all "speak the same language" when it comes to developing interfaces to the open platform.

During a visit to Australia last month Waters expanded on the vision, telling *travelBulletin* about the flexibility of the platform which offers interfaces to a range of accommodation aggregators including Australia's Lido Group, Amadeus aims to provide global distribution for hoteliers, describing the system as the "ultimate hotel marketplace". "It empowers travel sellers by providing access to a world of properties and room options from one integrated shopping



‘It empowers travel sellers by providing access to a world of properties and room options from one integrated shopping window’

window,” Waters said. The standardisation means travel consultants can compare and find clients the best rates for the right hotel no matter what the destination or style of travel, he added.

The fully flexible system can be tailored to reflect a range of business models to manage content in real time at different points of sale, such as commission-based, net rates or contracted pricing depending on who is booking. Waters said Amadeus currently offers more than 420,000 unique properties across the globe, with Lido

alongside other providers including HRS, The Hotel Network, TravelCube, Webjet's Sunhotels, Destinations of the World and more. It's been configured to allow access to a full range of rates too – such as pre-paid, post-paid, promotional, negotiated and private tariffs along with costs for half- and full-board and even childrens' pricing. Because of the standardisation content from all sources can be seamlessly integrated into a single format within the platform, making comparison shopping quick and easy. There's also a range of flexible payment methods and a number of partnerships for commission remittance.

Amadeus Hotels continues the company's vision for the global travel ecosystem, bringing together an ever-growing host of hotel content suppliers from many different providers and channels to provide unbeatable choice and flexibility for both leisure and business travellers. Amadeus simply aims to provide the platform for hotel commerce in whatever form the industry wishes it to take.



## SHOPPING EVOLVES AT TRAVELPORT



TRAVELPORT last month celebrated a milestone, marking three years since the launch of its airline merchandising technology. Since then the system has been adopted by more than 150 airlines around the world, with recent additions including British Airways, Iberia, Scandinavian Airlines and JetBlue. The system offers Aggregated Shopping which integrates low-cost carriers with traditional airlines on a single display to enable easy comparison; Ancillary Services, used by travel consultants to sell the widening array of add-on products such as checked baggage, extra leg room, lounge passes and more; plus Rich Content and Branding which offers the ability for airlines to feature their full range of products via GDS, with detailed product descriptions and imagery and bundled fare families.

The technology firm isn't resting on its laurels, with the suite continuing to develop apace. Recent enhancements have seen Travelport add the capability for airlines to make tailored or personalised offers to both individual travel agencies and/or their corporate clients. Example uses include Air India, which is allowing UK-based travel agents to offer business class clients limousine airport transfers, as well as TAM

Airlines which enables agents to sell economy customers passes to use the British Airways business class lounge at LHR Terminal 3.

Derek Sharp, Travelport Senior Vice President and Managing Director for Air Commerce, said he was thrilled that 150 carriers had already adopted the system, demonstrating the value they see in Travelport's technology as a driver of additional revenues per seat and to detail the differentiated products and services they offer. Sharp said Travelport's airline merchandising technology sees the company "lead the industry by a considerable margin. The new developments that enable personalised, tailored offers to individual corporations and travel agencies illustrate the further execution of our strategy to change our relationship with airlines to deliver higher value".

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# CAREER IN FOCUS

## KAREN HARDIE

Vice President, global sales for  
Rocky Mountaineer

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

I have been with Rocky Mountaineer for over four years, and in my current position as VP, global sales for the past year. Alongside my team, I am responsible for the strategic direction and worldwide sales initiatives of our company. We work with trade partners throughout the world who share our aspiration to deliver incredible experiences to our shared guests.

### 2. How did you start out in your career? Were you always destined to work in the travel industry?

As the daughter of an airline executive, I was born into a travelling family - tourism is in my blood. I started my career in pharmaceutical sales, and transitioned into travel on both the marketing and sales side soon after. My career has taken me to almost every continent; travel is something I've always had a passion for.

### 3. Did you complete formal qualifications, and how have they helped you in your career?

I completed my undergraduate degree in Mass Communications, Public Relations and Media and I think that has helped me develop my hard skills in writing and distilling information into ultimately what consumers need to know. Rocky Mountaineer values growth and development and afforded me the opportunity to take part in the Executive Leadership program at the Sauder School of Business at UBC. I learned a lot during my career through trial and error, but it's wonderful to be able to complement those skills with theory and applied practice.

### 4. What do you love about your job?

I am truly blessed to work with the calibre of people we have at RM. And, our product is truly amazing; it is rare to be able to sell



‘My career has taken me to almost every continent; travel is something I’ve always had a passion for’

something that you are passionate about. Although we have been around for over 25 years, we are still learning and growing. I often say, “Innovation is hard” and it is, but the world is changing so fast, and we need to change faster, just to keep pace.

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

I feel lucky to have worked in so many different countries but that, of course, comes with its difficulties. The nuances of culture can make a big difference in the message and approach you should adopt. I’ve learned that the world is very big, and very small, and that you need to be able to create a “home” with people you love and trust in any location.

### 6. What factors are central to a successful career?

Support is key. I have been so fortunate

to have a supportive family and network throughout my career, which has been really helpful when deciding to take faraway positions or put myself forward for a promotion. But overall, you have to like what you do and work hard at it. Find something that aligns with your passion and stick with it.

### 7. Is having a mentor an essential part of getting ahead in a career? Do you have one?

I have always been inspired by people who are driven to be the very best version of themselves. This can take different forms, and I’ve witnessed it in many people throughout my life. There is a wonderful energy generated by people who know their purpose and strive to make it a reality so I try to surround myself with that kind of relentless commitment and passion. Having someone you can lean on for honest advice - whether a mentor or someone unrelated to your career - has been very important to me.

### 8. How do you achieve a work/life balance?

As I grew up in Australia, and most of my family are there, it’s always been important for me to have time to connect with them. What I find the most helpful is to schedule time to do that - whether it’s a trip back home or a call with my son - I try to put it in my calendar so it can’t be missed. It also helps that Vancouver, like Sydney is such an activity-based city, there’s always a new hike or yoga class to try, which helps inspire getting out of the office! Also, a lovely glass of Shiraz with a movie at home is a great way to unwind after a busy week.

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

Always ask yourself “what can I learn from this?” Once you are in the work place, you often aren’t given formal opportunities to study, so try to soak up as much as you can from colleagues, partners and, inevitably, mistakes. You’re going to be working for the majority of your life, so make sure you continue to learn and challenge yourself. Don’t forget to laugh at yourself along the way.

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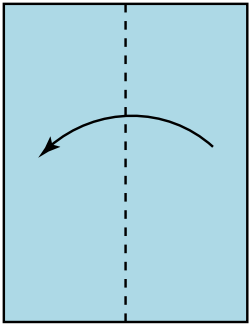
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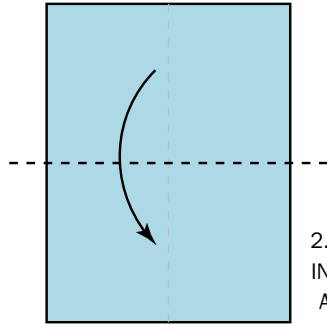
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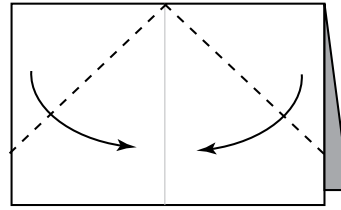
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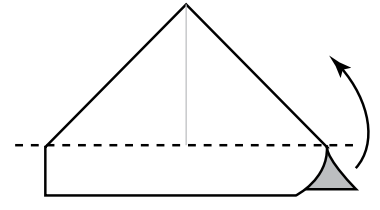
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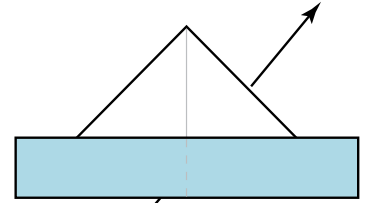
2. FOLD IN HALF AGAIN



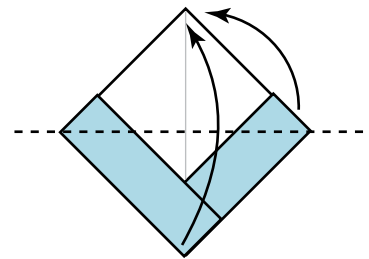
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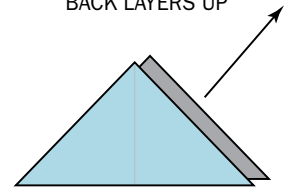
4. FOLD UP EDGES ON BOTH SIDES



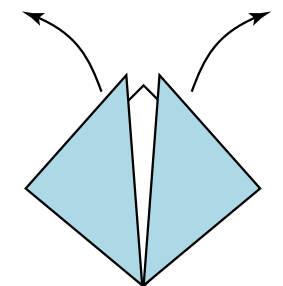
5. PULL OUT THE SIDES AND FLATTEN



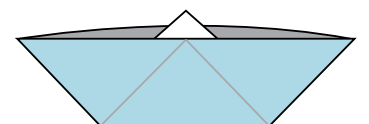
6. FOLD FRONT AND BACK LAYERS UP



7. PULL SIDES APART AND FLATTEN



8. PULL TOP FLAPS OUTWARDS

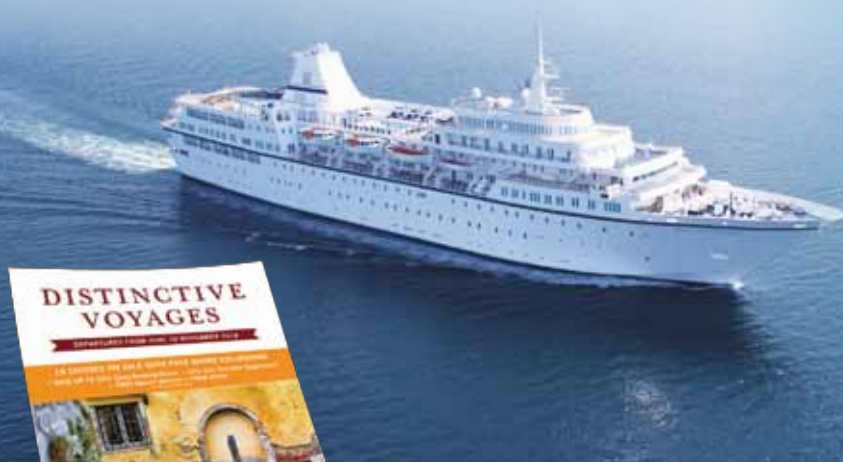
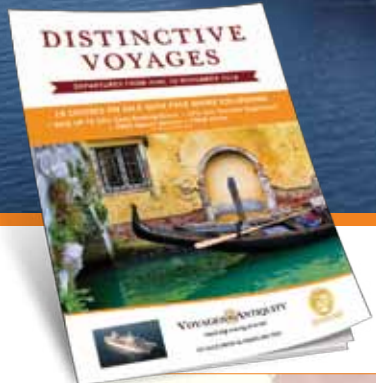


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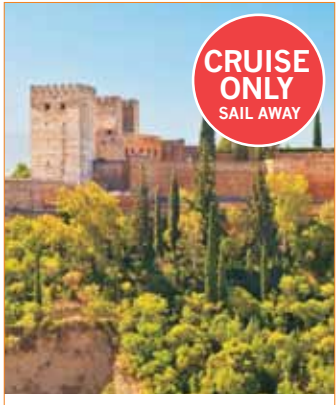
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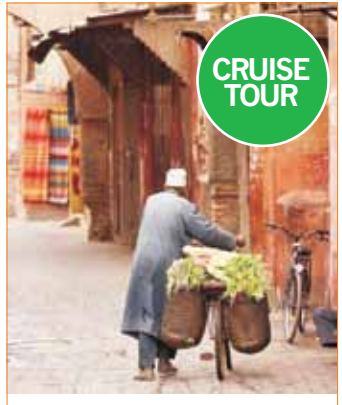
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## 2016 CRUISE AWARDS



OVER 500 guests from across the cruise industry attended the night of nights in February to celebrate the winners of the 15th Annual Cruise Industry Awards. Within a lavish setting at Sydney's Star Event Centre, 19 awards were conferred across nine categories.

Big winners on the night included WA based Bicton Travel who won Gold Agency of the Year, having now scooped this award a total of five times. Cruise Consultant of the Year was won by ecruising.travel's Kara Lane, whilst the Rising Star Award went to Emma Dunn of Ozcruising.

In other awards, Network Promotion

of the Year Australasia went to Phil Hoffman Travel which created and delivered upon an ambitious Cruise Expo in South Australia exceeding projected attendance figures, customer bookings and revenue targets.

It was a big night also for the MTA Mobile Travel Agent group with three of their consultants nominated for Home Based / Mobile Agent of the Year and Tracey Flower taking out the award.

CLIA Australasia Chairman Gavin Smith said the 2015 awards dinner had been the best yet, with finalists and winners being recognised from right around Australia and New





Zealand. "Every year cruising in the Australasian region continues to evolve and it's due to the tireless efforts of many in the industry. These awards are all about celebrating and applauding the hard work, passion and dedication of some of the most important players in the cruise industry – the travel agents who sell our cruises," Smith said.

The evening was also marked by the traditional induction into the Hall of Fame with Glen Moroney, founder and chairman of Scenic honoured for his pioneering work in river cruise.

Guests were entertained by award winning artist Tina Arena with Channel 7's 'AFL Game Day' host Hamish McLachlan returning as master of ceremonies.





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## CUNARD CRUISER MINDSET SHIFT

**Times are changing for Cunard.**  
**GUY DUNDAS** investigates how the company is keeping ahead.

CUNARD is gearing itself towards a greater international market, with increasing numbers of Australian and Japanese passengers biting into the ever dominant UK market. In the past two years, the 176-year-old luxury cruise operator has witnessed a slide in the number of Brits stepping aboard *Queen Mary 2*, *Queen Victoria* and *Queen Elizabeth* – part of a strategy to “recognise global citizenship,” says Cunard International Development Director David Rousham.

Speaking aboard *Queen Victoria* while docked in Sydney at the end of February, the London-based executive said he’d been brought into the company four years ago to drive international business for the brand. And the results are starting to show.

“At that stage, around 55% of our business was Brits. That’s now about 50%,” adding that he’s still got “a little bit more to go” in terms of winding back the figure. “Our whole goal is about a blend of the international audience. I want the best international blend and we feel there are markets we can increase.”

Bookings out of this region have steadily increased since 2012, with Australians now accounting for some 11% of all Cunard reservations (up from 7%), overtaking Germany to be the cruise line’s third largest source, and sitting behind the United States in second.

Aussies are increasingly keen to experience the Cunard product on “loop cruises” – a shorter duration round-trip voyage from a hub such as Sydney – offered as part of Cunard’s World Cruise program.

“Australians have been very strong in terms of supporting our world cruise over the 80 years we’ve been operating World Cruises. During that period, the Australian market has always supported our world cruise. But I think there has been a mindset shift in Australia because of the capacity that’s coming and homeporting out of Australia.”

‘I think there has been a mindset shift in Australia because of the capacity that’s coming and homeporting out of Australia’

David Rousham, International Development director, Cunard

“That’s a really important change I’m seeing, in that there is an expectation of shorter cruises and that is something we can offer as part of a world cruise, in terms of coastal requirements.”

On the 29 February 2016 voyage of *Queen Victoria* from Sydney to Kangaroo Island, there were 1,200 Australians on board the eight-day loop cruise. Rousham said he was hopeful the experience would prompt first time Cunard customers to book a future world cruise, Mediterranean, European or transatlantic sector.

This year, Cunard has seen a 15% year-on-year growth for the Mediterranean, due in part to a drop in the number of Americans who, according to Rousham, have “switched

off consideration” to the region in favour of Alaska or the Caribbean, due to geopolitical issues in the Eastern Mediterranean.

“The Australian is sailing for a slightly shorter period [in Europe]. We have seven-, nine-, 10-, 12-, 14 and 21-night cruises and we are seeing more Australians cruising the shorter lengths this year.”

Last year Cunard celebrated its 175th anniversary with seven specific celebratory voyages including a transatlantic replica cruise of the original *Britannia* voyage in July. Some 800 Aussies made the trip, a “phenomenal” result, Rousham said.

What makes Cunard stand out from the pack in the luxury ocean-liner market is the proposition. Flagging “some big growth” in the small ship luxury sector, Rousham said Cunard’s proposition is making a statement. “We are not small. We are big or large ship luxury – that’s where we position ourselves. You can get all of the benefits of ultra luxury with Grills, but all the benefits of a big ship.”

Other source markets which have shown growth for Cunard include Japan where there are currently around 5,000 bookings annually, and to a lesser extent China. “China is something we’re really interested in,” Rousham told *travelBulletin*, but admitted the region presents challenges.

“Chinese culture and Japanese culture bring a certain demand on ships in terms of catering and language. And that can be quite challenging.

“We want to make sure – and without sounding arrogant – it is an international experience or Cunard experience, so if we change it or localise for the sake of one particular group of people it will alienate another. We want to make sure it’s as standard as possible.”

“You’ll see a lot of other cruise lines saying they are building a Chinese ship or a ship of a specific market. As soon as we do that we think we are alienating others, and we don’t want that. We are stepping slowly into the Asian market”.

Another challenge Cunard is currently facing is yield on its Australian offering. Unfavourable exchange rates with the Australian dollar versus the pound have seen a 20% slump in yield in 2016.

“We’ve got a challenge in Australia in terms of yields and in terms of how we commercially manage our business. Classically, foreign exchange rates and fluctuations over the course of a year does impact [Cunard] and that is something that has changed consistently over the last two years.

“Our view is what goes up, will go down,” Rousham added.

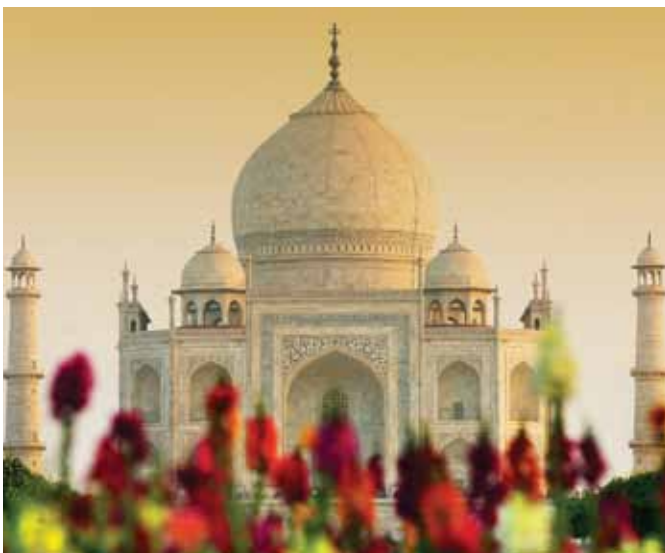


## Gourmet Traveller Journeys by A&K

We're pleased to announce a new collaboration with Australian Gourmet Traveller, Australia's premier food and travel magazine. The partnership delivers a hand-picked collection of small group journeys to a range of exotic destinations. Locally escorted in each destination, the Gourmet Traveller Journeys by A&K focus on destinations with both culinary and cultural appeal.

### Gourmet Traveller India

16 Days | Australia - Delhi - Agra - Jaipur - Udaipur - Mumbai - Goa - Australia



From street food to imperial Mughal cuisine, food in India covers a gamut of flavours, styles and ingredients. From north to south, each state has its own culinary speciality and on this journey with Australian Gourmet Traveller and Abercrombie & Kent you'll be introduced to many of the different foods of this vast and very diverse country.

**Tour dates:**

**9 - 24 September 2016**

**Price**

Twin Share per person From: \$13,795\*

Single Supplement From: \$4,455

### Gourmet Traveller Morocco

16 Days | Australia - Casablanca - Chefchaouen - Volubilis - Erfoud - Erg Chebbi Dunes - Ouarzazate - Marrakech - Australia



This exclusive journey reveals the diverse influences Morocco has absorbed over centuries: witness decorative craft traditions of the Moors in the painted tilework and ceramics across the country; the Arab linguistic and religious influences; the climate shaped by the Mediterranean; French influences on language, the café scene and viticulture plus the Berber influenced agricultural practices, textiles and crafts.

**Tour Dates:**

**24 September - 9 October 2016**

**21 November - 6 December 2016**

**Price**

Twin share per person: \$13,500\*

Single Supplement: \$2,995

**SPECIAL OFFER: Save \$750 per person | Book & Deposit by 31 May 2016**

**Full itineraries can be found at [www.abercrombiekent.com.au/gourmettraveller](http://www.abercrombiekent.com.au/gourmettraveller), or**

**Call 1300 853 427 for more information**

\*Economy airfares are included ex Melbourne and Sydney. Please enquire for other cities.



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# P&O'S PEARL TO SAIL AWAY



P&O CRUISES will continue the evolution of its fleet next year, having announced the departure of its 1,800 passenger *Pacific Pearl* which will join British operator Cruise & Maritime Voyages. P&O Australia president Sture Myrmell described the move as part of an “unprecedented fleet renewal program” for the line, with *Pearl*'s final voyage in the P&O fleet being a 16 day cruise from Auckland to Singapore which departs on 27 March 2017.

P&O recently added *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden* to its fleet, and will also add *Pacific Explorer* next year, while a newbuild will also join the fleet in 2017. Myrmell said *Pearl* had been a “game

changer” during her down under deployment, in particular for New Zealand where she had become the country's first ever superliner.

“Farewilling *Pacific Pearl* is a natural progression in which we are increasing the size of the fleet while redefining modern cruising in this part of the world,” he enthused. Myrmell added that the departure of the ship was part of Carnival's long-term commitment to grow the cruise market.

*Pacific Pearl*, which was launched in 1988 as *Sitmar FairMajesty*, will be renamed *Columbus* and become CMV's new flagship with a 2017 program going on sale this month.



Pask said “for travellers that are new to cruise and unfamiliar with ships, cabin types and the onboard experience, this vision will be a huge asset to their decision making process as they have the ability to get a taste for it virtually before stepping on board in real life.”

Previously prohibitive to the mainstream because of high development and production costs, the technology has only recently advanced to a stage where it's ready to be rolled out to the cruise market in a customer-friendly way. According to Pask “this will be a game changer for the cruise booking process that is already a highly collaborative, interactive process, and we see access to virtual reality vision as a way to enhance the in-store experience for our customers, while ensuring all customers can access the vision via our online channels or their mobile.”

Initially the technology will be available at select Cruiseabout stores in each state with plans to roll it out nationally. The footage is also available via website, mobile and Facebook. There are currently 67 Cruiseabout stores with ambitions to expand this to 100 outlets nationally in the next three years.

All going well, Pask indicated that Cruiseabout plans to develop the virtual reality experience across a range of ships.

**Pictured** are Jarrod Pask, general manager Cruiseabout; Monique van Gelder, national marketing manager Cruiseabout; and Carnival Cruise Lines director of sales Anton Loeb.

NO LONGER reserved for the computer gaming world or Hollywood movies, Virtual Reality is now being used to enhance the selling experience, with specialist retailer Cruiseabout launching new technology in collaboration with Royal Caribbean International and Carnival Cruise Lines.

Heralded as an Australian first, the

in-store Samsung Virtual Reality headsets are programmed to provide customers with a fully-immersive 360 degree narrated guided tour inside the *Voyager of the Seas* and *Carnival Spirit* cruise ships exploring areas such as the dining rooms, cabins, children's play zones and the bars.

General Manager for Cruiseabout Jarrod

# HOW *sweet* IS YOUR SUITE?

Ever wondered which cruise line has the largest rooms? We've filtered through the big cruise ships heading for Australian waters this year to put together this handy guide. We've compared the size and offering of the smallest rooms with a window, because we can't all book onto the upper decks. Be warned – there are a few surprises!

## 1 CARNIVAL SPIRIT



Length: 294m  
Tonnes: 88,550



2.3 passengers per crew member

Crew: 930

Capacity: 2,124 passengers



Cabins: 1,062

Oceanview room size: 17.9m<sup>2</sup>

*Carnival Spirit* has taken out the top spot for room size with an extra square metre of room than *Ovation of the Seas*' comparable accommodation. The vessel has a relatively small capacity for a ship of its size and has the best passenger to crew ratio, with one crew member to every 2.3 passengers. The twin beds convert to a king bed and a sitting area separates the bed and ensuite.

## 2 OVATION OF THE SEAS



Cabins: 2,091

Oceanview room size: 16.9m<sup>2</sup>



Length: 348m  
Tonnes: 168,666



3.3 passengers per crew member

Crew: 1,500

Capacity: 4,905 passengers

When *Ovation of the Seas* sails into Australian waters in December, it will be the biggest ship ever based in Australia at 168,666 tonnes. The ship will have one crew member for every 3.3 passengers, the poorest result out the comparable ships. It will have the largest bed, but only just, with two twin beds converting to a Royal King – a total of 0.1 square metres larger than a standard King.

## =3 CELEBRITY SOLSTICE



Length: 317m  
Tonnes: 122,00



2.5 passengers per crew member

Crew: 1,250

Capacity: 3,145 passengers



Cabins: 1,426

Oceanview room size: 16.5m<sup>2</sup>

*Celebrity Solstice* comes in at equal third for room size at 16.5 square metres, 1.4 square metres smaller than *Carnival Spirit*. The vessel has one crew member tending to every 2.5 passengers and offers twin beds which convert to a king and a sitting area with a sofa.

## =3 PACIFIC JEWEL



Cabins: 834

Oceanview room size: 16.5m<sup>2</sup>



Length: 245m  
Tonnes: 70,310



2.7 passengers per crew member

Crew: 730

Capacity: 1,950 passengers

Despite being the smallest vessel in the list and less than half the tonnage of *Ovation of the Seas*, *Pacific Jewel* comes in at equal third for room size. The cruise line slips when it comes to its crew to cabin ration and bed size, with one crew member for every 2.7 passengers – the second lowest to *Ovation of the Seas* - and twin beds convertible into a queen bed. The ship also only has a single seater lounge chair in the room.

## 5 EMERALD PRINCESS



Length: 290m  
Tonnes: 113,561



2.6 passengers per crew member

Crew: 1,200

Capacity: 3,092 passengers



Cabins: 1,524

Oceanview room size: 16.4m<sup>2</sup>

*Emerald Princess* brings up the rear for cabin size at 16.4 square metres and when the twin beds are joined only has a queen size bed. The cabins also have the notable absence of a couch or sitting area in the cabin. Four metres shorter than *Carnival Spirit*, *Emerald Princess* bundles on an additional 968 passengers and 270 crew, but has additional 25,061 tonne. This vessel sits around the middle for capacity.



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## CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, commercial director  
CLIA Australasia

### CASH IN ON YOUR CREDENTIALS

A RECENT CLIA survey of North American travel agents has brought some good news, with results showing the agents are expecting 'notable growth' in the number of cruises people take in 2016 as well as an increase in passenger spending.

The finding is in line with CLIA Member Cruise Lines expectations of another good year, with 24 million passengers expected to take a cruise in 2016, up from 23 million in 2015.

According to the CLIA survey, 83% of US-based travel agents expect their sales volume to increase in the coming year. The report also showed that both ocean and

river cruising are experiencing a greater increase in bookings than other segments of the travel industry.

Significantly, the survey indicated that more multi-generational families were embarking on cruises - a trend that benefits the cruise industry long term as the cruise habit will become ingrained in younger consumers.

This is all great news for the very mature North American market, and I'm pleased to say we are also seeing similar positive trends from around Australia and New Zealand. The interest that retail agents have in securing their share of the booming cruise market continues to surge.

In order to capture the continued

consumer interest in cruising, travel agents across Australia can cash in by actively promoting their CLIA Accreditation credentials.

Being endorsed by the cruise industry body as a specialist in your field will deliver a significant advantage in your local efforts to capture market share.

Whether you're visiting a hairdresser or using a plumber, we all like to feel that our needs are being taken care of by a qualified professional.

If you are a CLIA Accredited Cruise Expert, you should tell as many people as you can about your skills. Demonstrate that you are endorsed by CLIA using your current certification - you will be

surprised at how powerful this is.

If you are not a CLIA Member and don't have accredited staff, you are unnecessarily giving your own competitors a huge advantage.

CLIA's Online Learning Academy features an extensive range of cruise modules developed by CLIA Training and Development Manager Peter Kollar. Peter spent 10 years at sea and holds a degree in education, so is the perfect person to help agents develop their cruise knowledge.

With CLIA training now available online 24/7 it's easier than ever before to build your cruise knowledge - and build your business. We look forward to welcoming you onboard.

‘Being endorsed by the cruise industry body as a specialist in your field will deliver a significant advantage’

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#### KAREN CHRISTENSEN

General Manager & Director  
Sales/Marketing, Australasia

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Terms & Conditions apply.



## CRUISE WEEKLY

### HEADLINES FEBRUARY & MARCH 2016

- 23 Feb** CLIA award winners named
- 25 Feb** Value of cruising trends up
- 01 Mar** Cunard Aus yield concern
- 01 Mar** Carnival resumes in Fiji
- 03 Mar** *Genting Dream* Nov debut
- 03 Mar** NZ cruise pax uncounted
- 04 Mar** Two ships for Disney Cruise Line

- 04 Mar** *Pacific Pearl* to leave P&O fleet
- 08 Mar** Dalton will head up Uniworld
- 10 Mar** RCI axes two Bali calls
- 15 Mar** Celebrity small-ship buy
- 15 Mar** Crystal orders polar "megayacht"
- 16 Mar** PONANT fleet to double in size
- 17 Mar** CLIA reschedules Cruise360

# VIKING'S NEW PRODUCT FOR 2017



Viking Emerald on the Yangtze

A Viking longship in Durnstein

VIKING Cruises has just christened six new Viking Longships and launched some hot new river itineraries and pre/post packages for 2017. Four of the new Longships will be deployed on Viking's most popular itineraries on the Rhine, Main and Danube Rivers and the remaining two will sail the Seine River on Viking's Paris and the Heart of Normandy itinerary.

Here's a taster of the new itineraries to whet your travel appetite:

**Paris to the Swiss Alps:** This 12-day cruise tour has 10 guided tours venturing from Paris to Zurich. Explore four countries with hotel stays in Paris and Zurich and cruise along the castle and vineyard-lined Rhine and Moselle Rivers. This tour uncovers Trier's Roman past; medieval Cochem, Mainz, Bernkastel and Strasbourg, and discovers tiny Luxembourg. Prices start from \$6,349pp.

**Undiscovered China:** Uncover a surprising side of China on this in-depth, 18 day cruise tour travelling from Shanghai to Beijing. Wander the canal-lined warrens of Lijiang, China's most unique Old Town, and see the magnificent Dazu Rock Carvings. In Chengdu, witness pandas in their natural habitat and see the gold and jade collections at the Sanxingdui Museum. This tour also includes Beijing and the Great Wall, glittering Shanghai and Xian's Terracotta Warriors. At the centre of your journey, enjoy a five-night sojourn along the gorge-lined Yangtze River on the deluxe *Viking Emerald*. Prices from \$8,549pp.

## A SPATE OF SUPERYACHTS

AUSTRALIAN cruise and tour specialist Scenic created a worldwide sensation when founder Glen Moroney announced the construction of *Scenic Eclipse*, the company's super-luxury polar expedition yacht earlier this year. Last month rivals Crystal and Ponant both announced their own newbuilds meaning there will be plenty of choice for passengers keen to experience this sumptuous style of exploration.

First cab off the ranks was Crystal Cruises, which has also recently announced expansion into river cruising, luxury yachting and even air touring with the purchase of its own aircraft to operate Crystal Luxury Air. Crystal's new expedition "megayacht," named *Crystal Endeavour* in honour of the vessel sailed by British explorer James Cook, will carry 200 passengers and is scheduled for delivery in August 2018. Complete with a full complement of "toys," *Endeavour* will feature two helicopters and two seven-person submarines along with jet skis and zodiacs.

Not to be outdone, within 24 hours Ponant also announced a major fleet expansion which will see it add four new expedition vessels, effectively doubling its complement of luxury exploration ships

alongside its sailing yacht *Le Ponant*.

The new Ponant vessels will carry 184 passengers with a crew of 110, with a full Ice Class ranking. The fleet expansion will also see Ponant differentiate its offering with White, Blue and Green expeditions.

The White portfolio will continue expeditions in the polar regions; Blue expeditions will focus on explorations of Oceania; while Green expeditions will take passengers to South America, Papua New Guinea and the Indian Ocean.





# TRUST IS THE NEW BLACK

**W**E'VE all seen them, sports taken to the limit of human endurance, usually requiring some kind of rubber band apparatus with a full medical team on the sideline. Everything taken to extremes captures the imagination of the public because it's hard to believe anyone would put themselves into such situations.

Business is never as extreme unless you are in the gun trade or need to navigate the Boxing Day sales. Yet there are extreme limits for business philosophy, especially in the credibility and trust area of customer dealings. Imagine if your clients believed everything you said, everything you wrote and everything you provided as a service or product? No struggle to reach targets, no effort in making a profit and no travail in keeping clients.

The above is seen as some kind of corporate nirvana, a company without fault, a business with no agenda but to satisfy their clients no matter what they have to go through for the end result. For too long, being reasonably trustworthy seemed good enough for business.

To have never been let down by a business leads to extreme trust and companies are slowly coming to the realisation this level of credibility can be the pinnacle of success. Individually, positions of extreme trust used

to be the domain of medicine, airline pilots and super-heroes but businesses are working towards transparent relationships with their clients that could see some achieve "honesty as a competitive advantage".

Don Peppers in his book *Extreme Trust*, sees honesty as the strongest business

**‘Companies are slowly coming to the realisation this level of credibility can be the pinnacle of success’**

strategy and it's hard to criticise a concept hard-wired into human nature. Yet calling it extreme, makes me think the concept is hard to grasp for a lot of people. Watching out for your clients' interests, even when they aren't, makes you what Peppers calls "proactively trustable". According to Peppers, "Extreme trust like this engages people's natural impulse to show empathy, transcending the commercial domain of monetary incentives and tapping into the social domain of friendship, sharing, and reciprocity".

Face to face trust is where bricks and mortar businesses have some advantage over the online world, where connections are not so easily made. Body language and facial nuances missing in online transactions,

require web businesses to be so transparent that trust is only built via consistently exceeding service and credibility levels. The lack of trust both online and offline sees the social media landscape littered with the bodies of businesses that treated clients badly and sold shoddy products and services.

Travel caught between bricks and bytes has seen disruption erode client loyalty to such an extent that decisions are more often dollar based, not giving consultants the time or benefit of building up trust. Like banks, credit card companies, travel needs to be "proactively trustable" and that can only happen one handshake at a time. The future for travel, online or otherwise, seems transparently obvious, I'll only trust you if you show me you are completely open, honest and want me as a lifetime customer. If you do that, then you have my extreme trust. No bungee cord required.

Oliver Tams is director of strategic partnerships for Think Procurement and has more than 30 years' experience in the travel industry, especially in corporate travel. Ollie has worked with a range of companies from start-ups to established businesses, including GDS Amadeus, and leading the TMC division for Business Select.



# MELBOURNE NOT AFRAID OF ICC

“THERE’S more than enough business to go around”, is the position Melbourne’s events industry is taking on the opening of ICC Sydney.

“I think it’s fair to say that Sydney’s healthy and we’re healthy, there are a lot of opportunities for the both of us,” Melbourne Convention Bureau Chief Executive Karen Bolinger told *travelBulletin* at AIME.

“I think it’ll be competitive for a short period of time but I think that’ll dissipate over time and I think that Australia stands to benefit, [more competition] makes it healthy.”

Peter King, Chief Executive, Melbourne Convention & Exhibition Centre (MCEC) echoed Bolinger’s sentiments, insisting events will naturally rotate through cities such as Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane.

The next couple of years are set to be competitive from an international perspective, with King predicting there will be a differentiation in the market.

“Sydney will attract a lot of Asian-incentive type of business, but we won’t do as much of that,” he told *travelBulletin*.

The MCEC is hardly scrounging for business and seems to be instead bursting at the seams.

“Our biggest challenge on a daily basis is fitting in our business...we just physically can’t do much more than we’re currently doing,” King said.

“The diversity of events we do here is probably much greater than was ever contemplated when the places were

originally built.”

To cater for the volume and diversity of events, the MCEC will soon start construction on a \$210 million dollar renovation which will see the centre’s footprint increase by about 25%.

“[The events industry is] a really vibrant business and I think...the need to meet face-to-face is just getting stronger and stronger and there mightn’t be quite as many big mega-events but there’s a massive amount of events that are generating other events and other meeting usages,” King added.

MCEC is reaping the benefits of a thriving industry and has achieved the highest revenue and best operating profit – for three

years running.

Last year the centre underwent a restructure, bulking up the organisation by 30-odd new staff to reinvigorate the business.

“People question as to why, when you’re at your peak, would you consider altering? But we’ve got a longer-term plan than a three-, four-, five-year horizon that we look toward and we’re determined to be the best in the business, so even though the business is in great shape, we need to continually evolve it.”

As for the future, King is confident.

“We’ve got the next 30 years of revenues planned out and the numbers are very strong and we don’t see any reason to think they’re not going to remain that way at the moment.”



“I think it’ll be competitive for a short period of time but I think that’ll dissipate over time and I think that Australia stands to benefit”

Karen Bolinger, chief executive Melbourne Convention Bureau

## ULURU LIGHTS UP



*TRAVELBULLETIN* was given an exclusive first look the mesmerising Field of Light installation at Uluru before it opened to the public on 1 April.

The artwork which features 50,000 solar powered lights connected via illuminated optical fibre is the brainchild of internationally recognised English artist Bruce Munro.

Pathways created through the glass-frosted lights allow viewers to walk amongst the enormous spectacle spanning an area the size of four football fields.

The awe-inspiring exhibition which can be best appreciated after sunset and before sunrise will remain open to the public for one year until 31 March 2017.

Entry level passes start at \$35 per adult and \$25 per child. The viewing can be tied in with add-ons which includes a three-course bush tucker inspired menu or pre sunset a camel ride finishing with a view of the Field of Light coming to life as darkness falls.



## New registration for MEA

MEETINGS and events Australia (MEA) has announced a new type of registration for its 2016 National Conference from 17-19 April at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The new Company Registration option allows businesses to send different staff members to separate sessions during the conference.

The cost of this new style of registration remains the same but means more staff members can enjoy the MEA conference.

The deal is only open to MEA members.

For more information, delegates should contact Shirley Larkin by email at [shirley@mea.org.au](mailto:shirley@mea.org.au).

## EEAA TAFE free training

The Exhibitions and Events Association of Australia (EEAA) has recently launched a new Excelling in Exhibitions Series in partnership with Sydney TAFE.

The free program, backed by the NSW Government, targets people working in the exhibitions sector who would like to boost their knowledge and skills.

Five separate series will take place with each program delivered in a single weekend workshop plus additional webinar sessions.

EEAA CEO Joyce DiMascio said the pending opening of the International Convention Centre in Sydney was an ideal time to be "skilling up our industry".

The workshops will take place at Sydney TAFE from 30 April until the end of May.



business events news

## Headlines Feb to Mar

- 22 Feb** Accor mindful meetings
- 22 Feb** AIME warm welcome
- 25 Feb** In depth look at NZICC
- 25 Feb** AIME 2016 comes to a close
- 29 Feb** iVvy: 360 tours of venues
- 03 Mar** MCEC plans nearly ready
- 07 Mar** BCD expands tech market
- 07 Mar** MTA's golden conference
- 10 Mar** Roof milestone for ICC
- 14 Mar** NT luxury hotel interest
- 17 Mar** Major Whitsundays sale
- 17 Mar** VR to revolutionise MICE
- 21 Mar** EEAA, TAFE free training
- 24 Mar** Uluru MICE market shines



## VISIBEL VIEW

Simon Relph, managing director  
VisiBel Events

### ACHIEVING TRIPLE BOTTOM LINE RESULTS

"WHAT'S the bottom line?" is an often-asked question when it comes to making decisions to run with a project or an event.

Of course, when it comes to running an exhibition, the host would be foolish not to ask themselves, "What is the bottom line?" But to think of the bottom line in purely financial terms is short-sighted; what's more, to only think of the host's bottom line, is truly myopic. To measure the true success of an exhibition, the host needs to consider the triple bottom line: the host's, the exhibitors' and the visitors'.

This may sound obvious, and undoubtedly most host organisations will give some consideration to needs of the exhibitors and the visitors. However, for an exhibition to be truly successful and have the potential for future growth, the host must do more than give a passing nod to the other stakeholders; rather, they need to understand their value drivers and plan the event in such a way that it provides positive returns to the triple bottom line. So how do you do it?

There are many value drivers - both real and perceived - for each of the stakeholders in an exhibition. The only way that an exhibition will have provided positive returns to the triple bottom line is if the host, the exhibitors and the visitors all walk away feeling that they are better off for having attended the event.

So what are some things to consider?

#### THE VISITOR

When planning the exhibition, it is often best to start by looking at the bottom line demands of the visitor. After all, it is the punters that will make or break your event.

Invariably, all visitors are looking for a return on the time that they have invested in coming to the exhibition. They will have positive bottom line result if they come away from the event better informed and better tooled to do their job. In other words, content is king. If you get this right, you will drive greater and greater numbers to your event.

One very effective way to drive visitors to your exhibition is through a well-researched and thought-out education program

incorporated into the event. If you don't have an in-house Conference Producer, then do what many companies and associations do and outsource this component of the event. A good Conference Producer will research what is trending among your target audience and develop an education program that will attract them to the exhibition.

#### THE EXHIBITOR

Let's face it, the bottom line for an exhibitor is return on investment - both time and money. If an exhibitor feels that they have been given the opportunity to present to a slew of new prospects with a good chance of conversion, then they will have hit their bottom line expectations. Of course, to do this, you need the right number and type of visitors, which is why it is so important to identify your visitors' value drivers when planning the exhibition, and incorporating features into the exhibition that attract the visitors.

#### THE HOST

The challenge for many hosts, both corporates and associations, is when your event starts to outgrow your ability to service it properly. This seriously threatens your ability to deliver a positive triple bottom line.

When you hit this point, most hosts will look to outsource the development and management of the event to continue delivering on the bottom line.

For example, in 2015 ETF wanted to improve the outcomes for their Travel Industry Expo by focussing on the triple bottom line. To do this, they added a seminar program to the event to improve visitor satisfaction. It was a resounding success. Wanting to leverage on that success, this year ETF commissioned VisiBel Events to work with the company and their key stakeholders to research and develop a seminar program that will drive increased engagement from visitors and grow the triple bottom line for their Melbourne and Sydney exhibitions.

In short, if you nail the delivery on the triple bottom line, you can bank on an exhibition that will continue to grow both in size and reputation. That's a win, win, win.

# INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



United Airlines marked thirty years of non-stop service to the Australian market with cupcakes and refreshments at the Sydney International Airport check-in counters last month.



Air Tickets, China Southern Airlines and APT hosted a dinner in celebration of Chinese New Year, with two agents taking home flights to China.



TIME mentors and their mentees were inducted into the program at PARKROYAL Darling Harbour last month. This is the 21st program.



Jason Wolff, Robert Thompson, Alain Campignon and Sally McFadyen were recently snapped at the Islands of Tahiti event in Sydney, which provided the travel industry with the latest updates for the nation.



Sixty of Australia's top travel agents touched down in San Francisco recently for Qantas Holidays' Race Around Northern California fam. The agents were split into four groups, named after famous sporting teams and are pictured here showing off their special team jackets. The groups explored Sacramento, Yosemite, North Lake Tahoe, South Lake Tahoe and Napa.



Sandra Chiles and her team from inPlace Recruitment recently celebrated 35 years of helping employers and employees in recruitment.



AccorHotels' D'Orne Fitzpatrick, Kristian Lindhe, Amanda Balaam and Renee Woodhead were all on hand at the recent opening of the brand new ibis Styles Brisbane Elizabeth St.



These lucky helloworld agents experienced the best of Japan in winter last month on a famil hosted by Japan Airlines and Sno'n'Ski.



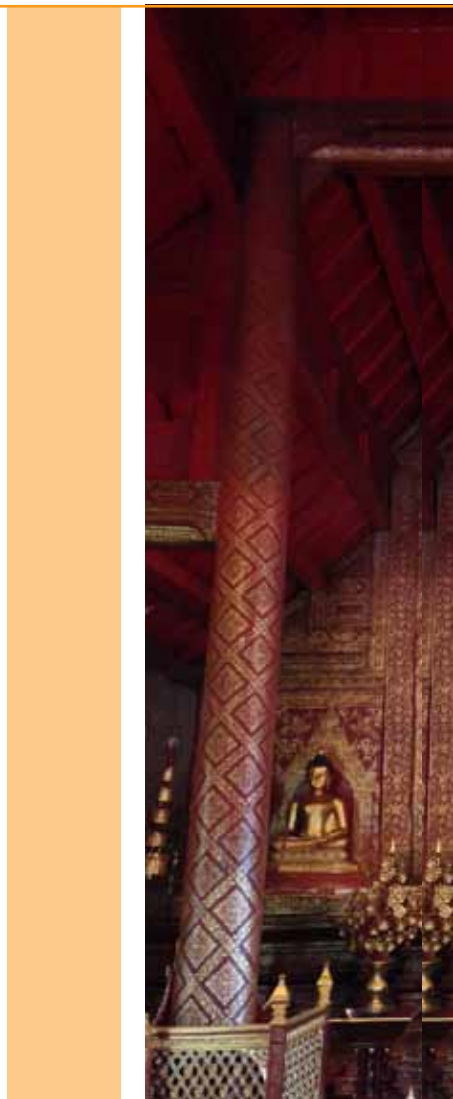
Christian Lukey from Amadeus and Hilary Doling from *The Luxury Travel Bible* pictured at an Amadeus hotels event in Sydney last month.



Tourism Ireland celebrated St. Patrick's Day in style last month at an event Sydney featuring two top Irish touring bands, whiskey tasting and a bodhrán masterclass.



The Africa Safari Co recently took its top eight Travellers Choice agents to Africa, with the fabulous trip taking in Chobe National Park, Hwange National Park and Victoria Falls.



# SECOND TO NONE

Thailand's second largest city, Chiang Mai, offers the best of the Bangkok experiences - the markets, the malls, the fabulous food, the beautiful temples - with an added layer of charm and cultural heritage thanks to its 700-year Lanna history. KRISTIE KELLAHAN gives us the low down on the city that comes second to none.

**C**HIANG Mai is famous for its excellent Thai massage, known as yoga for lazy people, for its restorative powers of stretching and circulation. While it's true Chiang Mai is far from the nearest beach, it is surrounded by lush green mountains and rivers, making this a popular destination for hikers, cyclists and river-rafters.

Many tourists don't make it to Chiang Mai on their first visit to Thailand. Seduced by the skyscrapers of Bangkok and the beach vibes of Phuket, they run out of precious holiday time before heading north to the second largest city in the Land of Smiles. It might take a second or even third visit to

the Kingdom before they hop on the one-hour flight from Bangkok to Chiang Mai's International Airport, but once they do, most return again and again.

In the past decade, Chiang Mai's metamorphosis from a charming, traditional city where the people and pace were gentler than Bangkok, to a booming metropolis of luxe condominium-residences, funky malls and dynamic young entrepreneurs has changed the face of the city. The modernisation and growing popularity has brought with it more and improved shopping and dining options, increased international flights and a spirit of energised creativity. Whether sipping Melbourne-quality lattes at

coffeeholics' fave Ristr8to or enjoying the local noodle soup specialty, khao soy, this is a destination that is sure to excite the spirit and the tastebuds.

Historic charm still lines the banks of the Mae Ping River, where centuries-old buildings and temples remind us of what was once a major trade route. Here you'll find the elegant beauty of Anantara Chiang Mai Resort & Spa; the hotel's dining rooms and seductive bar areas are housed in a heritage building that was once home to the British Consulate. A new concept, The Service 1921 Restaurant & Bar, was recently launched and plays on the imagined history of top-secret dealings within the consulate's walls. Mystery and





intrigue sets the tone, with a spy peephole in the entrance door and a private dining room accessible by a secret book shelf door.

Increasingly, what sets Chiang Mai apart from other Thai cities is its thriving arts scene. In the Nimmanhaemin district, galleries of all sizes have opened to display the works of local artists. Expect to find handmade jewellery, ornate furniture, bold and beautiful paintings, breathtaking photography and delicate works on paper at galleries including Gallery Seescape and Gongdee.

Stylish locals and expats love the trendy cafes and boutiques lining the laneways of Nimman, as it's known. At the end of 2015, Nimman finally got the gorgeous all-suite boutique hotel it deserves, when Akyra Manor Hotel opened its doors. An art-focussed property, the hotel features animal sculptures throughout its public spaces, sells artisanal wares in its curated gift selection and will happily arrange a guided tour of local galleries. The hotel's own walls serve as exhibition space for Chiang Mai artists. For the ambitious or curious novice student of the arts, Akyra Manor's team will organise

private lessons in various styles of arts and crafts. Esteemed academics from nearby universities come to the hotel to share their knowledge in the finer aspects of woodcut printing, sculpture-making and painting with watercolours. A self-made souvenir is a delightful way to remember a holiday.

‘Historic charm still lines the banks of the Mae Ping River, where centuries-old buildings and temples remind us of what was once a major trade route’

A 30-key all-suite luxury hotel, the Akyra Manor Hotel features a rooftop swimming pool and RISE bar, perfect for sunset drinks. The hotel's signature restaurant, Italics, is gaining a fan following for its fusion cuisine and woodfired pizzas. All suites boast lavish bathrooms and a spectacular centerpiece

- an al-fresco marble bathtub, complete with privacy screens.

The hotel is located in the very centre of Nimman, and just a couple of blocks from Maya Lifestyle Shopping Center, a trendy new mall. Lined with fashion boutiques and restaurants, Maya also features an open-air rooftop space where many of the city's most popular bars have opened.

Down the road from Maya, a cluster of art galleries draws on the talent of students from nearby Chiang Mai University (CMU). At the unmissable Sunday Walking Street Market in the old city, CMU art students and craft hobbyists give Etsy a run for its money at a fraction of the price. Hundreds of stalls offer market delights including one-of-a-kind woodblock prints, Buddhist-influenced paintings, handmade lamps and delicately sewn slippers.

Local micro-entrepreneurs have embraced this market, which now sprawls across dozens of blocks, with Thai home cooks serving up family-recipe pad thai, papaya salad and fish cakes for the equivalent of a dollar. Thais love to eat, often and well; a fact that has remained true for centuries.

EDITOR'S CRUISE PICK

G ADVENTURES  
— SAILING THAILAND

Spend seven days island hopping around the Andaman Islands of Thailand with G Adventures' Sailing Thailand trip.

The voyage takes place aboard a 25m sailing catamaran with only a maximum of 14 guests. The vessel is crewed by a fully licensed skipper and a resident cook means dinner every night is the freshest Thai takeaway you've ever had.

Sailing a roundtrip from Phuket, the journey includes highlights such as visiting a sea-gypsy village, snorkelling at beautiful Monkey Bay, and a visit to James Bond island, priced from \$1,574.

Bangkok Airways expansion

BANGKOK Airways will see significant growth in 2016 with two new flight routes, increased trip frequencies and several new aircraft joining its fleet.

This month, starting 02 April, the carrier will start operating daily flights from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son before kicking off four flights a week from Bangkok to Danang on 25 May.

Flight frequencies will be boosted along popular routes with Bangkok to Phnom Penh increasing from five to six flights per day, Bangkok to Chiang Mai going from seven to eight and Chiang Mai to Samui increasing from one to two during high-season.

The airline is expecting to receive three new ATR72-600s and three to four Airbus A319s, increasing the fleet to 36 aircraft for 2016.



THAI TOURISM RESILIENT

RECENT political unrest, rebellious attacks and the threat of terrorism have not stopped the constant influx of international visitors looking to holiday in Thailand's tourist hot spots.

Tourism Authority Thailand (TAT) told *travelBulletin* "life in the capital city and across the country still continues as normal" with business as usual across tourist sites, hotels, restaurants and shopping malls.

Thailand finished 2015 with a record 29.8 million international visitors, up 20% from the 24 million in 2014. The year also saw tourism revenue of 2.21 trillion baht generated and the average length of stay jump from 10 to 12 days.

"This implies that people who travel to Thailand tend to stay longer, spend and explore more," said a spokesperson for TAT.

TAT reveals alerts put out for tourists still had some affect, seen mainly in tourists avoiding certain areas deemed risky by

authorities. They said Australians were even less likely than other nations to be deterred by these warnings.

Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade officially advises Aussie tourists to exercise a "high degree of caution" throughout the kingdom, with a recent warning highlighting the "ongoing transmission" of Zika virus, while a "do not travel" alert is in place for the country's southern tip due to attacks and bombings resulting in deaths or injuries on a scarily regular basis.

"Those who know Thailand well and who have travelled to Thailand recently would know the alerts are only for certain parts of Thailand and not for the main tourist hotspots," TAT explains.

Phuket, Bangkok, Koh Samui, Chiang Mai, Khao Lak and Krabi remain the most popular tourist destinations, TAT confirms.

TAT emphasises that tourist safety remains an "ongoing priority" for Thailand, a country that relies heavily on the tourist dollar. Examples include a Bangkok and Phuket clampdown on illicit taxi operations, Pattaya and Hua Hin beachside walks being cleared of illegal business operations and more surveillance cameras and street lighting being installed in tourist destinations as well as the introduction of tourist police.

Last month Thai authorities put in place measures to tighten law enforcement on traffic rules in hopes of improving road safety. The new regulations cover 10 key traffic rules including driving on the pavement, driving without a license, driving against the traffic, not giving way to pedestrians at crossings and driving while intoxicated.

Providing tourists with positive and lasting memories of the country remains a top priority for TAT.

# amazing THAILAND



TRAINING MODULE

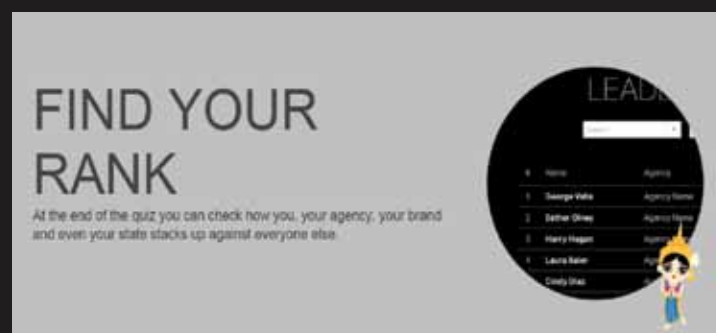
## Online Training

Become a Thailand expert by completing the Tourism Authority of Thailand's brand spanning new online training course.


Designed to educate both beginners and the smartest cookies in the jar, the new dedicated training portal offers fast effective product knowledge.

Fact sheets, quick multiple choice modules and great digital design makes [www.ThailandTraining.com.au](http://www.ThailandTraining.com.au) the best place to learn about one of your top selling destinations.

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Belmond Eastern & Oriental Express

## Belmond partners with Luke Mangan

AUSTRALIAN celebrity chef Luke Mangan – who provides menus for Virgin Australia and operates his Salt Grill restaurants aboard P&O Cruises vessels – has signed a new partnership with upmarket operator Belmond, which will see his cuisine offered aboard the iconic Eastern & Oriental Express. This luxury train takes passengers between Singapore and Bangkok, with Mangan to host his first rail journey on 28th October this year.

Mangan will “showcase his internationally regarded culinary skills” in partnership with Eastern & Oriental Express’ executive chef Yannis Martineau, with the three day two night journey through Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand carrying just 82 fortunate guests in all ensuite air conditioned cabins. There will also be a signing of his new Salt Grill, Fine Dining for the whole family cookbook, with Mangan saying “to now be part of the Eastern & Oriental family is undoubtedly a very exciting period of our business and brand”.

Prices for the journey start at US\$2,280 per person including all table d’hote meals.

## AGENT KNOW-HOW

**Tourism Authority of Thailand lets us in on all the insider knowledge on how to sell this diverse country.**

### How can agents improve their knowledge of Thailand?

Travel agents can build up and update their product knowledge of Thailand by visiting our website at [www.tourismthailand.org/au](http://www.tourismthailand.org/au) as well as our online training workshop [www.thailandtraining.com.au](http://www.thailandtraining.com.au) For updates about the Thailand situation and TAT and tourism industry news releases they can visit [www.tatnews.org](http://www.tatnews.org).

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

Agents can register and complete our online training workshop via [www.thailandtraining.com.au](http://www.thailandtraining.com.au).

### Any recommendations for first time travellers?

Visit Phuket because it has many great value accommodation options and activities, along with established facilities to cater for all tourists’ needs. The destination has a lot to offer to all ages and all types of traveller, from FIT, groups, families, honeymooning couples, leisure travellers and adventurers. There are a variety of beaches that visitors can choose from such as Patong, a busy and fun night life beach or a more relaxing Surin, Kata and Karon Beach.

### What makes Thailand a unique destination?

Thailand is truly a land of dazzling variety. From the glorious ruins of ancient cities to excitement of dynamic modern Bangkok; the lush forested hills of the North to the white sandy beaches and tropical islands of the South, sporting activities to fun-filled entertainment, the kingdom offers a kaleidoscope of sights and scenes. You will always be excited to travel to Thailand.

### And finally, how can agents join a family to Thailand?

The minimum eligibility requirement is that agents must be actively promoting and have the potential to push Thailand sales. We give priority to the top selling agents especially those who we work closely with in running joint promotion or joint advertising campaigns. With this selection criterion we can ensure that the right candidates are given an opportunity to learn and experience more products in Thailand so that they can build up their knowledge and expertise and continue to promote and sell Thailand.

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**Chatuchuk Markets, Bangkok, photo from Tourism Authority of Thailand**

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David Kirkland



# THE SECRETS OF THE SOLOMONS

The Solomon Islands are a slice of paradise largely unknown by the crowds who flock to other South Pacific destinations. LEE MYLNE unlocks some of the secrets of these beautiful islands.

**F**ROM the air, the Solomon Islands are a scattering of emerald jewels in a turquoise sea. There are more than 900 of them, gleaming below in that impossible blue...making getting a window seat a priority. This is a sight not to be missed.

Travelling to and within the Solomon Islands – less than three hours flying time from Brisbane – is part of what makes a visit to this island nation so different.

Travel light, if you can, because much of your time getting around will be on small planes or even smaller boats. From the capital, Honiara, on the island of Guadalcanal, experiencing “the Sollies” is all about getting to other islands and discovering their differences.

It's worth spending at least a couple of days in Honiara, either at the beginning or end of your trip, to get a perspective on the history of the Solomons. During World War II, this peaceful archipelago was the scene of some of the most fierce battles in the Pacific, on land and sea, and in the air.

Iron Bottom Sound, the waters off Honiara, is named for the 42 wrecks that lie there,

aircraft and ships that sank to a watery grave during and after the war. Many relics of war can be seen on guided tours that are well worth taking.

We headed to the Solomon Islands Peace Park Memorial and Guadalcanal American Memorial, on the hill above Honiara, which pays tribute to the Allied Forces soldiers, sailors and airmen who fought seven major naval battles against the Japanese, between August 1942 and February 1943.

Bringing some of the reality of this past home is the Vilu War Museum, an open-air display of a vast collection of aircraft, cannons and other war relics, set in beautiful tropical gardens.

While battlefield tours are a drawback for some, the main attractions of the Solomons are the simple pleasures of island life.

It's easy to fall instantly in love with this place when you arrive at Fatboys Resort on Gizo island. Reception is in a grass-roofed overwater pavilion, where fishing boats pull up in the morning to deliver the night's catch – and if you want lobster for breakfast, lunch or dinner (or all three), you'll never find anywhere that it's fresher!

A long jetty leads to the scattered bungalows, and it's worth getting up early for spectacular sunrises. Two more bungalows are under construction, but it's never going to be crowded here, with only about 20 guests catered for. Hang in a hammock on your private verandah, relax in the bar looking out towards the extinct volcano Kolombangra or snorkel with tropical fish and reef sharks in the clear waters around the jetty.

Kayaks and small inflatable boats are available for guests to rent, and it's worth taking one to head across the lagoon to Kennedy Island. Take a picnic or the makings of a barbecue lunch and explore this tiny tranquil island that is named for the former American president. During World War II, as a naval lieutenant, Jack Kennedy earned hero status for his actions in saving his crew after his patrol boat was run down by a Japanese destroyer. They came ashore on this uninhabited island, which you can walk around in about 15 minutes.

Among the best experiences you can have in the Solomon Islands is a village visit, which can be arranged through your accommodation. We took a short boat trip



from Fatboys to attend Sunday service at the tiny Church of Zion at Babanga and were welcomed warmly. Homestays in self-contained bungalows are also available at this village.

On Rendova Island, Titiru Eco Lodge runs walking tours to the nearby Ugele Village, where lifestyle traditions – weaving, toy making, carving, cooking, music and other traditional practices – are demonstrated. You might even get involved in the dancing!

At Munda, there are more war relics at Barney Paulsen's backyard Peter Joseph World War II Museum. These are smaller and more personal, including a heartbreakingly large collection of dogtags (the museum takes its name from the soldier whose name was on the first dogtag Paulsen found in the bush surrounding his home). He's still finding them...water bottles, uniform buttons, grenades, cutlery, cigarette holders and more...and tracking down as best he can the families of those they belonged to.

From Munda or Lola Island, where Joe Entrikin from Zipolo Habu Resort runs fishing tours, take a trip to Skull Island for a look even further back into the history of the

Solomons. Here lie the remains of the tribal chiefs and warriors, visible to the elements, surrounded by jungle.

Simple pleasures are the key to visiting the Solomons. Snorkelling or diving, kayaking, hiking, and learning about the traditional life of the largely Melanesian population will soon have you in relaxed mode.

Internet access – even in Honiara – is mostly slow and patchy, so this is an ideal destination for a “digital detox”.

Don't expect five-star luxury; comfortable, clean bungalows built in traditional style or motel-style accommodation is the norm, with the emphasis on good, fresh food and outdoor pursuits.

Honiara's best hotel is the Heritage Park Hotel, with all the trappings of city hotels including a pool, restaurant, business centre and souvenir shop.

If you want to name-drop, head to Tavanipupu Private Island Resort, where William and Kate – the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge – stayed during their

Solomon Islands visit in 2012. It's really the only luxury resort in the Solomons and takes a maximum of 18 guests (or you can book the whole place out for greater privacy).

Discovering the secrets of the Solomons – and maybe learning a few words of Pidgin along the way – is a richly rewarding travel experience. It might well be one of those places that you want to keep a secret!

## EDITOR'S CRUISE PICK

### P&O CRUISES – SOLOMON SEA ISLANDS

Experience a taste of the Solomons with P&O Cruises, on their Solomon Seas Islands 10 night cruise. Departing from Cairns, the voyage explores both Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Check out some of the best diving in Gizo, with its crystal clear water and coral. In Honiara there is enough to keep everyone entertained with shopping, nature and history galore. Experience traditional way of life at Kakabona Cultural village. There are two departures this year on *Pacific Eden* – 24 Sep and 25 Oct, from \$899 per person in a interior room quad share.

# TOURISM LOOKING UP FOR SOLOMONS

THE welcome mat is out for Australian travel agents wanting to visit the Solomon Islands.

Twenty agents explored the islands last year, gaining valuable confidence about selling its charms to their clients.

Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau (SIVB) chief executive Josefa 'Jo' Tuamoto said this "exercise in confidence-building" was a key part of the strategy to boost visitor numbers and the tourism industry generally.

"Tourism is a priority for the wellbeing of the country and a key component of the Solomon Islands government's economic blueprint for the future," he said.

"While 2013 proved a good year for us, the April 2014 floods and the lingering ASA (Air Services Agreement) dispute between Fiji Airways and Solomon Airlines had impact on our international visitation numbers last year."

About 25,000 visitors arrive in the Solomons each year, with Australians accounting for between 10,000 and 13,000 – a number expected to grow with the introduction of new direct Solomon Airlines flights from Sydney.

‘Tourism is a priority for the wellbeing of the country and a key component of the Solomon Islands government’s economic blueprint for the future’

Josefa Tuamoto, chief executive  
Solomon Islands Visitor Bureau

Other top markets are New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Fiji and the United States. The average length of stay for visitors is 15 days.

Tuamoto said the decline in visitor numbers was arrested in 2015 with spectacular results in April (15.5% increase), May (14.9% increase), June (9.3% increase) and September (28% increase).

He said while one of the key objectives already in place was to broaden the Solomon Islands' appeal to attract a more diverse range of international visitors, there were also challenges to be met.

Divers, surfers, backpackers and World War II veterans and historical groups already flock here, but SIVB plans to position the Solomon Islands as a multi-faceted destination with wide appeal.

"While currently we may only be a small destination on the world tourism map, we know that delivering the right type of product and catering to the right kind of traveller will play a major part in our aspirations," said Tuamoto.

And although more hotel rooms – at least 150 to 200 in Honiara, he says – are needed,

there's also a realisation that "small is beautiful", with eco lodges and boutique resorts such as Titiru Eco Lodge on Rendova Island in the Western Province providing the blueprint for future expansion on the smaller islands.

"Introducing this type of responsible tourism product that conserves our pristine environment while helping to improve the welfare of the local people is very much the way forward," he said, adding that eco-tourism was a recognised drawcard for an increasing number of environmentally-aware travellers.

However, the five major resorts in Honiara were usually at 70 to 80% occupancy, and more room stock and attracting an international hotel brand would be key to moving forward, he said.

The Solomon Islands' tourism industry may still be in its infancy, but its "last frontier" tag is unlikely to last for long, with major development expected over the next 10 to 15 years. For many travellers, that's a huge incentive to "get there before it changes".



Solomon Islands Markets, Rob Maccoll



A young man with dark skin and curly hair is smiling broadly as he swings on a thick rope. He is shirtless and wearing light-colored shorts. The background shows a tropical beach with palm trees and a blue sky with white clouds. The text "So Solomons, So Different!" is written in a white, brush-stroke font across the middle of the image.

# So Solomons, So Different!



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*solomon islands*

SO SOLOMONS, SO DIFFERENT!



**Passengers on a zodiac from Noble Caledonia's Caledonia Sky**

# SOLOMON ISLANDS CRUISE STRATEGY BEARS FRUIT

BUILDING on its potential as an exciting new destination for the international cruise market, the Solomon Islands will welcome eight cruise visits in 2016, a 100 per cent increase on its 2015 cruise schedule.

Vessels visiting Honiara and cruising within the 992-island archipelago this year include Princess Cruises Lines' *Sea Princess* and *Dawn Princess*, Noble Caledonia's *Caledonia Sky*, Silverseas Cruises' *Silver Discoverer*, P&O's *Pacific Eden* and Seabourn Cruise Lines' *Seabourn Odyssey*.

Solomon Islands Visitors Bureau chief executive Josefa Tuamoto attributed the increase to the efforts of the national tourist office along with government and local private sector support to turn what he described as

a "huge potential into a reality".

Tuamoto also pointed toward a recent visit to Sydney by outgoing Ministry of Culture & Tourism permanent secretary, John Wasi and representatives from the Department of Tourism, the SIVB and the Solomon Islands Port Authority, which he said had played a major role in the outcome.

In Sydney the Solomon Islands delegation met with several key cruise industry players, specialist wholesaler and retailer representatives and media as part of a concerted effort to turn the spotlight on the Solomon Islands' potential as a cruise destination.

"Tourism is fast emerging as a major driver for the country's GDP, and the

government has embarked on a very vigorous process to seize on the opportunity tourism presents," said Tuamoto.

"We were determined to turn this potential into a hard reality and that is exactly what we are seeing in 2016."

That upward trend is likely to continue in 2017, with Paul Gauguin Cruises, operator of the highest-rated and longest continually sailing luxury cruise ship in the South Pacific, *Paul Gauguin*, announcing the Solomon Islands will be part of its program next year.

Its 16-night Fiji to Bali voyage, departing April 29, 2017 from Lautoka, Fiji, will include the island of Guadalcanal in the Solomons on its itinerary (as well as on the return trip, departing Bali on June 7, 2017).

## New Solomon Airlines schedules

NEW flight schedules operational from April 25 have been structured to allow passengers departing on Solomon Airlines' international services from Australia same day connectivity to the carrier's domestic network.

As part of the new timings, passengers flying on the airline's BNE and SYD flights to Honiara have ample time to connect with domestic services.

The same applies to passengers departing from domestic ports within the Solomon Islands, who now can connect directly to Brisbane and Sydney services departing from Honiara.

While Solomon Airlines' domestic services do not link with the Wednesday service ex-Honiara to Brisbane, the return service ex-Brisbane departing at 1015 and arriving in Honiara at 1430 does allow for connection into all Solomon Airlines domestic ports.

The new schedules dovetail with the return of Solomon Airlines' flagship Airbus A320, which will return to full service on April 25, following standard Airbus biannual maintenance in Singapore.



## LIVEBOARD FOR DIVE ADVENTURES

DIVERS heading to the Solomon Islands have a new option, with Dive Adventures' recent acquisition of *Taka*, a 30 metre custom-designed dive liveboard.

Previously operating on the Great Barrier Reef, *Taka* has been relocated to the Solomon Islands, and offers two-, three-, seven- and 10-night charters, for a maximum of 30 guests in 13 cabins.

*Taka* sails around the Florida Islands, Russell Islands, Mary Island and the Western Province's Marovo Lagoon (the latter on 10-night charters only).

Rates include on-board accommodation, all meals and snacks, unlimited diving and return airport transfers in Honiara on embarkation/disembarkation day.

This is the second luxury liveboard dive

operation in the Solomon Islands. *M.V. Bilikiki*, which has been cruising and diving the Solomons since 1989, is the other option. *Bilikiki* accommodates up to 20 guests in 10 cabins and offers 7-, 10-, 11- and 14-night trips with the same inclusions.

Dive Adventures also offers diving and snorkelling packages around Honiara and Guadalcanal island, and from Munda and Gizo in the Western Province.

Dive Adventures' Mandy Whiteman says the combination of activities offered makes the Solomon Islands a memorable destination.

"Divers and snorkellers will be enthralled by the colourful coral reefs and plentiful marine life. There are also WWII shipwrecks, history and culture to be explored and experienced in a unique frontier setting," she said.



Diagonal banded sweetlips, Nazir Amin

## Q&A

**Australians account for nearly half of all international visitors to the Solomon Islands. Omniche Holidays product coordinator for the Solomon Islands, Kristie Hill explains what makes this South Pacific archipelago such a special destination.**



### What makes the Solomon Islands different to other South Pacific destinations?

The untouched nature of the islands – it has a rich culture, a diverse history, natural beauty, and when you experience it for yourself it's almost as if you're the first ones to ever see it – it really is one of the richest experiences you can have in the South Pacific.

### What are your top tips for selling the Solomon Islands?

Qualify your clients – work out why they have chosen the Solomons, where they have travelled before and what experiences they are hoping for. This will make it a lot easier to narrow down where they should stay. And call your wholesale partner for access to wholesale fares and a wealth of information on the destination!

### How can travel agents improve their Solomon Islands product knowledge?

Take the time to familiarise yourself with the different areas in the Solomon Islands utilising the [www.visitsolomons.com.sb](http://www.visitsolomons.com.sb) website. You can also have a look at our new Omniche Holidays website which has destination information and product listings, plus we have a brochure with a

four-page spread on the Solomons, or call us if you have any questions! We're here to help!

### Which destinations or resorts in the Solomons are best suited to couples and honeymooners, families, adventure travellers?

For couples, Seghe. Uepi Island Resort is a great option for those who just want to get away and explore at their own pace, set on a private island covered in rainforest and fringed by beaches and reef. The activities on offer here are incredible, and it's a great place to learn to dive if you haven't tried it before. It's cost effective too as all meals are included in your stay here. For honeymooners, Marau Sound. Tavanipupu is the highest quality resort in the Solomons and is set on a 13 hectare island that used to be a coconut plantation. There are only a small number of bungalows, and none of them have telephones or televisions. It's a place you can disconnect from technology, really connect with each other, all in beautiful surroundings. For families, Gizo. Fatboys Resort in particular is quite a popular place to stay as it offers family bungalow accommodation that can sleep up to five. There are pristine beaches to relax

on, islands for hiking, World War II wrecks and abundant

marine life to dive with, reef breaks to surf just 20 minutes from the resort, and a great overwater restaurant. For adventure travellers, Munda. Zipolo Habu is a great place to base yourself while you explore WWII history, Skull Island, rainforests, go snorkelling, surfing, or fishing – there is something for all adventure lovers!

### What experiences do you recommend as a 'must' in the Solomons?

I would say that exploring the history of the Solomon Islands, particularly it's significance within WWII, is a must do – you can do this on land or underwater with a number of wrecks just a short snorkelling distance offshore. And seeing the gorgeous Marovo Lagoon with your own eyes – the water there is paradise!

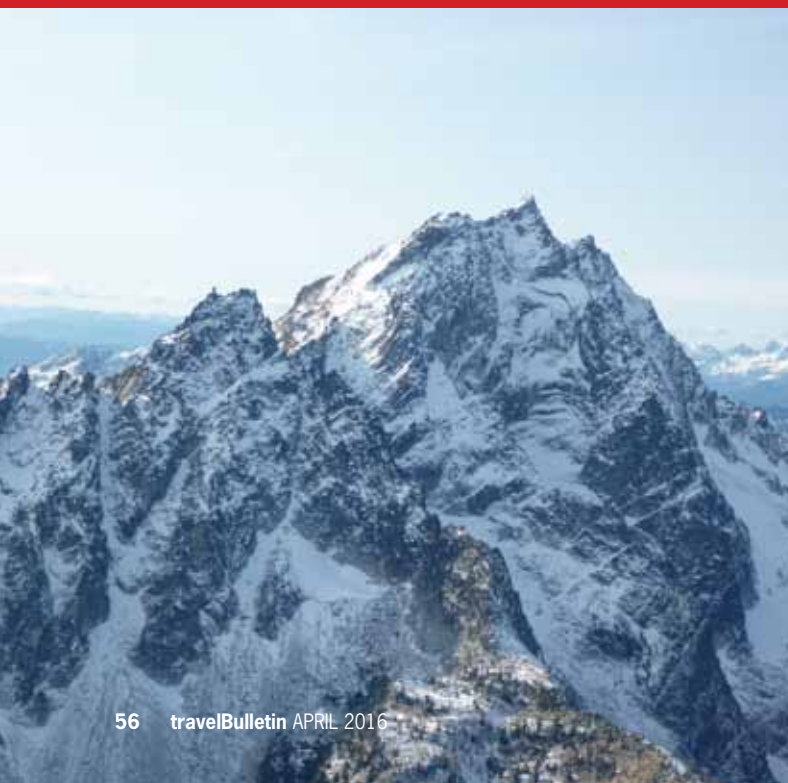
### Are there any challenges to selling the Solomon Islands?

The speed of communication can make things difficult sometimes, but we've got some great relationships in place so if there are any delays we can call right away.



# NEPAL

WHERE NATURAL WONDERS  
AND CULTURES MEET



**From the majesty of the Himalayas, to raging river rapids, elephants roaming in tall grass, to the exotic cuisine, Nepal can offer visitors a diverse and culturally rich experience. EMMA LOVELL shares her insights.**

**K**ATHMANDU is the capital of Nepal and most international flights into the country will arrive into this heavily populated city that rests in a valley amongst the Himalayas.

It must be noted that the earthquake in April 2015 has created large-scale damage around this city and other villages within the region. Tourism is an important income for Nepal so local guides and tour companies will endeavour to show off the best of their culture, but be mindful that some important historic sites have been damaged.

Although being a largely Buddhist culture, Hinduism is also a strong faith in Nepal. It always fascinates and inspires me to see many sects of faith and religion living harmoniously in Kathmandu. My first stops when visiting Nepal are three important religious sites Pashupatinath, Bouddhanath and Swayumbhunath. Pashupatinath is reserved for Hindus, a sacred place for funeral rites, burning of the bodies on ghats by the river, a fascinating ritual to observe. Bouddhanath is the largest Buddha stupa in the world. A magnificent dome of white, shrouded with brightly coloured prayer flags and a gold spire atop with the eyes of Buddha

watching all around. Another Buddhist site, Swayumbhunath, is not to be missed, sitting atop an impossible hill with incredible 360-degree views of surrounding mountains. There are a lot of steps to get to the top, and make sure to watch out for our monkey friends who call the stupas home.

It's a tourist hot spot, but you can't go to Nepal without visiting Thamel. Bars, restaurants and handicraft stores galore. Make sure to pop in to a Nepalese kitchen for some momos, Nepalese dumplings served with a spicy tomato, chilli and garlic chutney. This area is a bustling shopping spot in the day, and an eclectic nightclub for the partygoers.

**‘Spend a few days in Namche Bazaar taking day trips, sampling from the famous bakeries and admiring the incredible structure of a town built into the side of a mountain’**

Everest Base Camp for many is the ultimate in trekking and mountaineering, and a key reason for visiting Nepal. If you're not prepared to take on the 12-day trek, you can enjoy moderate trekking in this region, Namche Bazaar is an amazing destination for you. Three days of trekking to teahouses with hospitable hosts. Friendly and knowledgeable Sherpas providing guidance and education about their mountain home. Spend a few days in Namche Bazaar taking day trips, sampling from the famous bakeries and admiring the incredible structure of a town built into the side of a mountain.

Not everyone will have the time to climb the epic mountains of Nepal. You can still experience the majesty of these incredible peaks on the mountain flight. On my first visit to Kathmandu, I attempted the mountain flight two days in a row but due to bad weather it didn't go and I missed out altogether. To ensure you get to experience a bird's eye view of the world's tallest mountain, book the flight early in your trip.

For the wildlife lovers, Chitwan National Park in the south-central part of Nepal is a must. You can drive from Kathmandu in approximately seven hours, a wonderful

opportunity to see more of the country. Experience the famous cliff hanging roads, which locals navigate with precision. I loved the calm plateau of land surrounded by tall trees with a lazy river running throughout. Awake in your accommodation by the river and help the local elephants take a bath. If you're more of an observer, take a safari through the national park riding on an elephant in a howdah or take a Jeep tour to see elephants, rhinos and possibly some big cats, tigers!

Pokhara is a natural wonder and different pace from Kathmandu, it's just seven hours drive or 1.5 hour flight from the capital. Experience a gateway to the Himalayas and a town of adventure. Trek the Annapurna ranges and choose from a number of trails traversing around the pristine mountains. The town rests by peaceful Lake Phewa, take a boat ride on the calm waters to the Hindu temple resting in the centre of the lake. If it's heights you're after, try paragliding with the vultures, a unique offering in this part of the world. Spend a few days here and enjoy the incredible array of restaurants from around the world and a lively nightlife, all on the lake shore.

Most importantly, when you're in Nepal, take the time to meet the people. They are what make this country great. Speak to the man who is selling the tea at the corner, or the woman stitching a sari or your trekking guide. Nepalese people have a passion for their country that is unrivalled. They'll share their homes, their families and their history with you, if you let them.

**‘Nepalese people have a passion for their country that is unrivalled. They'll share their homes, their families and their history with you, if you let them’**

**Images (clockwise from top left): Bouddhanath, Emma Lovell; trekking to Namche Bazaar, Emma Lovell; people of Nepal, Emma Lovell; Sherpa and Stuart, Laurel F**



Emma Lovell

## NEPAL IS OPEN FOR BUSINESS

**Nepal is up and running again and is eager for tourists to return.**

**JASMINE O'DONOGHUE reports.**

INTERASIA'S director Dan Nebauer says the Nepal has been ready for at least eight months, but tourists have been hesitant to flock back.

"There's so much negative press following the earthquake that it put people off travelling and there hasn't been enough good press about it to say 'hey, it's all okay, the infrastructure's there, the major tourist spots are all active and Kathmandu remains with it's beautiful history and charm,'" Nebauer told *travelBulletin*.

While the 7.8 magnitude earthquake was devastating - killing 8,969 people and damaging or destroying over 887,000 homes - only five of Nepal's 75 districts were strongly affected.

A report commissioned by the Government of Nepal confirmed on 07 August that there was "minimal damage" to the majority of

accommodation and trails in the Everest region, in Nepal's northeast.

Furthermore, a government engineering report in November last year identified "very little damage to the area in north-central Nepal, with the 3% of buildings damaged in the quake all easily repairable".

**‘The infrastructure's there, the major tourist spots are all active and Kathmandu remains with it's beautiful history and charm’**

Outlying villages bore the brunt of the disaster and despite the scale of the event, hotels went largely untouched.

In order to reopen Nepal to tourism

following the devastating earthquake, a lot of roadworks were done, along with some repairs to some key historical sights.

In July, only three out of 35 trekking routes remained affected, but Nebauer says that has since shrunk to one.

In 2014, tourism in Nepal was a US\$348m industry and generated 487,500 jobs (3.5% of total employment).

As a county whose income is largely driven by tourism, the economy is suffering without a healthy income from tourists.

Those who do return have the opportunity to discover a "hidden gem", Nebauer says.

"It has everything, from the backdrop of the Himalayas, down to the jungle-clad flats where one of the world's best national parks is - Chitwan National Park - the cities are full of history, dating back thousands of years, it's just got a lot going for it.

"There is a real welcome waiting for [tourists], some incredible experiences and some great sightseeing," Nebauer says.

## NEED NEPAL INSPIRATION?

A NEW movie in theatres this month could see some of your clients enthralled by Nepal as it showcases the country's stunning landscapes. The award-winning film *Sherpa* was shot in Nepal with "acclaimed high altitude filmmaker and climber Jennifer Peedom," and documents the struggles of the Sherpa people in the trekking industry. Peedom was present when the worst ever Everest disaster occurred in 2014 as a massive block of ice crashed into the climbing route, killing 16 Sherpas and triggering a major rethink of the role of Sherpas in the Everest tourism industry.

This month's cinematic release of the film follows advance screenings undertaken in partnership with Intrepid, which is continuing to support the country's recovery from the 2015 earthquake. Intrepid co-founder Darrell Wade said as Nepal was returning to normal, "we now have to focus on encouraging long-term economic well-being. Nepal wants travellers back – its trails are safe and open and people are as welcoming as ever," he said. "The best way for Australians to help Nepal is to visit".

The trailer of the film, which has achieved critical acclaim at film festivals around the world, can be viewed online at

[www.sherpafilm.com/trailer](http://www.sherpafilm.com/trailer).



## Fuel starts to flow

FLIGHTS into and around Nepal have returned to normal after the country's fuel supplies were hit by a trade dispute with neighbouring India late last year. The country's tourism industry, already reeling from low occupancies following last year's earthquake, took another hit as international airlines halved frequencies, while ground operations were also impacted by the shortages.

However the five month trade blockade was lifted in February, with authorities now looking to China to shore up supplies in the event of further importation difficulties in the landlocked nation. Other developments likely include an agreement for the construction of a new international airport in Pokhara.



**Nepal is ready to welcome you**

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# Destination proposals

IN SEARCH OF 'YES'  
IN FOREIGN LANDS

Camera? Check. Passport? Check. Engagement ring? Check. An increasing number of lovebirds are not just planning destination weddings – but going all out to secure that 'yes' with an international proposal. BONNIE TAI explores some of the world's most romantic spots to pop the question.



## Hawkes Bay, New Zealand

WITH its abundance of vineyards and annual average of 2,200 sunshine hours per year, sunny Hawkes Bay is a beautiful – yet understated – destination for popping the question.

Surrounded by rolling green hills, lush landscapes and panoramic coastal areas, this east coast destination is a favourite among cruise operators Holland America, Princess Cruises and P&O, who all make port-calls to explore this sunny seaside town.

Known as the art deco capital of the world, Napier celebrates its iconic architecture and pays homage to those lost during the devastating 1931 earthquake every February, with a Gatsby-esque themed festival which showcases the strength of the city and its people.

More than 125 events are usually planned per year for the festival, which includes vintage car parades, fashion shows, dining experiences, and outdoor concerts – with the entire city playing its part to transport visitors back to the time of glitz and glamour by embracing 1930's attire when out and about.

## Santorini, Greece

THE island of Santorini is a picture perfect destination for popping that all-important question.

Famed for its white-washed cubic houses, charming terraces, winding lanes and blue-domed churches, Santorini offers alluring panoramic sea views and already serves as a romantic destination popular with honeymooners and celebrities alike.

Trek along the cliffside walkway from Fira to Oia, before enjoying a fresh, authentic meal at Oia's many waterside eateries, then watch the sun sink into the ocean – a sight that attracts visitors from all over the island each evening through the summer months.

Book a stay at any of Oia's chic boutique hotels and enjoy a dip in an infinity pool as a reward for locking down the love of your life.







## Honolulu, Hawaii

AQUA lagoons, picturesque sunsets and white sand beaches; Honolulu Hawaii sets the perfect scene for a romantic destination proposal.

Blending stunning cityscapes with some of the world's most famed beaches, romantic outdoor activities are an abundance on this tropical slice of island paradise.

Enjoy the famed Hawaiian sun by horseback on a relaxing ride along the coast of Oahu's North Shore; or perhaps propose while gazing over crescent-shaped Hanuama Bay whilst soaring through the blue skies of Oahu on a helicopter tour – whichever you choose both will deliver the 'awe-factor' needed to secure that 'yes'.

Luxury accommodation is easy to come by in Honolulu, with the city home to world-class hotels and resorts including Hilton, Outrigger, Sheraton and Hyatt.

## Noosa, Australia

LOCATED just 90 minutes' drive from Brisbane, the laid back, subtropical paradise of Noosa makes for an enticing spot to ask the love of your life for their hand in marriage.

Escape on a Venetian-style gondola to explore Noosa's stunning waterways – complete with your very own gondolier – before toasting the new proposal over champagne and heading over to Hastings Street for a celebratory dinner; or perhaps embark on a hiking adventure through the Noosa National Park to spot koalas in the treetops – both set idyllic scenes before proposing on bended knee.



## Kyoto, Japan

CHERRY blossom season in Kyoto makes for the ultimate spot to take the plunge and propose.

Explore the city's many ancient temples and shrines, and stop at the Jishu-jinja shrine which celebrates the Buddhist god of match-making for a quick blessing.

Couples flock to this iconic location from all around Japan and the world to undertake rituals to ensure eternal love, which includes walking between two love stones with eyes shut before patting the Buddha's belly for that final guarantee.

For those wanting a more intimate outdoor setting, take a trip to the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove and get lost in the midst of the sprawling sight. The Grove is perhaps one of the most photographed sights in the city and makes for a striking destination for 'making it official'.

EDITOR'S CRUISE PICK

## Perfect Wedding at Shangri-La's Fijian Resort

THE recent Fiji Wedding Expo which, was held last month at the Shangri-La's Fijian Resort & Spa Exhibition Centre, is expected to bring in even more customers looking to tie the knot in the beautiful country.

The resort caters for a huge average of 200 weddings a year. The drawcard for many couples is the 40-seater Seaside wedding chapel located in an intimate and secluded setting of the resort, featuring a glass wall and ceiling at the altar with sweeping views of the reef and ocean.

Couples can also get hitched on Takali Beach or in one of Shangri-La's outdoor garden venues.

Shangri-La's acting senior Conference & Events Manager, Milika Taukei says couples from all over the world come to Shangri-La's Fiji to get married.

"Due to the size of our resort we have multiple ceremonial and reception venues to cater for more than one wedding a day... Couples range from Asia Pacific, Europe and the South Pacific," Taukei says.

The resort has a dedicated event management team which assists couples through the wedding and reception, ensuring they have a worry-free day.

## PRINCESS CRUISES

Getting married on a cruise ship can be a great option – combining a wedding in a unique place with a honeymoon. There are any number of sailings of Princess Cruises ships around the world, and all offer "Tie the Knot" wedding packages either at sea, in port aboard the ship or ashore. Prices of the packages range from \$1,800 to \$4,900 and all include the help of a wedding coordinator, a rose bouquet for the bride, boutonniere, champagne, wedding cake and a photographer and a selection of prints. Receptions, photography packages and additional ceremony options are also available for additional cost.

## ZIMBABWE FOR LOVEBIRDS

SINCE the opening of the new and improved Victoria Falls Airport in Zimbabwe, Africa experts Bench International have noticed an increase in demand for travel to Zimbabwe.

To encourage even further sales Bench International are introducing a discounted safari special to Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe's largest National Park.

Save 26% on a 4-star classic safari experience staying at this multi award-winning camp, in Zimbabwe. Enjoy three nights' stay at The Hide, comprising of 10 elegant, canvas en-suite tents, tastefully furnished with solid Zimbabwe teak furniture, all under thatch and all overlooking the waterhole. For the more adventurous you can even request to sleep out in the romantic treetop 'Dove's Nest'. All meals here are included, as well as local drinks, game activities, laundry and return road transfers from Victoria Falls. This wildlife and wilderness experience offers up some of the very best safari-guiding but also the opportunity to get up close and personal with nature without leaving the camp. Concealed hides near the waterholes allow guests the unique experience of viewing game safely from extremely close quarters.

Daily private departures (subject to availability). The price is from \$1,595 per person sharing based on travel between 01 Apr - 30 Jun 16. This special is available for all new bookings. Conditions apply.

Phone: 1300 AFRICA (237 422) and quote "The Hide Safari Camp - Special" or visit [www.benchinternational.com.au](http://www.benchinternational.com.au)



# SAIL AWAY FROM THE CROWDS

HONEYMOONS should not be spent squished into a towering deck, waiting in lines or surrounded by bustling crowds. Float away from group travel and instead step aboard the world of small ship cruising.

Windstar's graceful yacht – *Wind Spirit*, caters to honeymooners by showing fewer than 148 guests around Tahiti with small, handcrafted shore excursions. Boasting staterooms and suites in classic contemporary style, the seven-night Dreams of Tahiti voyage can take newlyweds away from the ordinary, to the pristine waters of French Polynesia.

If a week doesn't hit the spot, explore the less travelled area of the Tuamotu Islands on an 11-day voyage featuring Fakarava, which is a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve known for some of the best diving in the South Pacific. Fakarava is a place that has only recently appeared on the radar of travellers with uninterrupted coral gardens, two tiny villages and rare species. There are no banks or ATMs, no casinos or duty free shops, just clear, shallow water, white sand and *Wind Spirit*. The 11-day Tahiti and the Tuamotu

Islands voyage also takes in the ports of Rangiroa and Takapotu, where pristine atolls and crystal lagoons hold a hidden paradise.

Thousands of people, or tranquillity – which would you prefer?



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or contact your travel agent

## LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

DESTINATION weddings are all the rage right now, with couples opting to escape to an exotic location with a picturesque backdrop and luxury on hand.

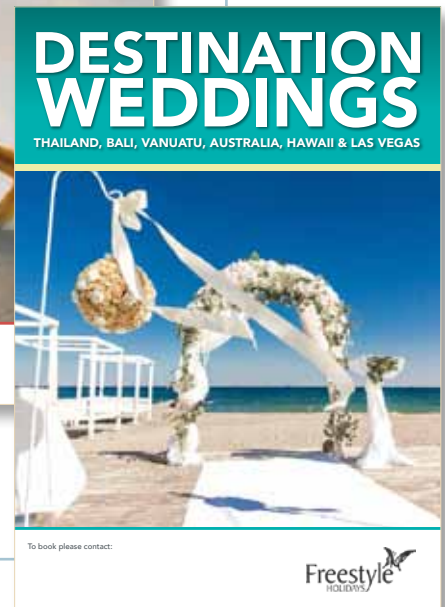
Pinpoint Travel Group has unveiled its two-in-one Destination Weddings Brochure for 2016/17 featuring a Rosie Holidays and Freestyle Holidays section.

The Rosie Holidays section is dedicated to Fiji weddings, with 16 options for couples eyeing off the archipelago. Highlights include Treasure Island Resort, which boasts as being "one of the most romantic destinations in the South Pacific". Also included are Malolo Island Fiji, The Radisson Blu Resort Fiji and The Uprising Beach Resort.

The Freestyle Holidays section packs in information on weddings in Bali, Thailand, Vanuatu, Australia, Las Vegas and the new addition of Hawaii. Each section includes handy tips on the requirements and traditions around marriage on each region, along with packages and their inclusions. Highlights include The Sarojin in Thailand, Mahagiri Villas in Bali, The Havannah in Vanuatu and the cheap and cheerful 'Let's get Hitched Ceremony' in Las Vegas.

Wedding packages vary, with many inclusive of ceremony location, personal wedding coordinator, decorations, florals and more.

■ Order the brochure via [travel\\_brochureorders@mastercard.com](mailto:travel_brochureorders@mastercard.com) or at TIFS.



## *dream of* **TAHITI**

*Cruising Tahiti in a romantic private yacht with fewer than 148 guests.*

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**WINDSTAR**  
CRUISES



INFINITY'S Victoria 2016/17 brochure is packed full of new additions and is broken down to cover the regions of Melbourne, Greater Melbourne, Great Ocean Road, Phillip Island, Mornington Peninsula, Yarra Valley and Regional Victoria. New tours include the Old Melbourne Gaol, Phillip Island Twilight Cruise, the Great Ocean Road Classic Tour + Heli and Phillip Island Twilight Cruise. The program includes 15 new hotels such as the unique Royal Mail Hotel, Brady Hotel, Crowne Plaza and Flinders Hotel.



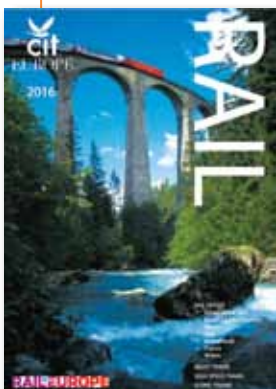
OCEAN cruising has sailed into Travelmarvel's New Zealand 2016/17 brochure with the addition of the 24-day New Zealand Navigator. The itinerary combines a 10-day land journey with a 14-night cruise aboard Holland America Line's *MS Noordam*. The 31-page brochure features five itineraries ranging from eight to 24 days in length. Highlights include the 15-day New Zealand Getaway from Auckland to Christchurch via the Bay of Islands, Rotorua, Wellington, Queenstown and Lake Tekapo.



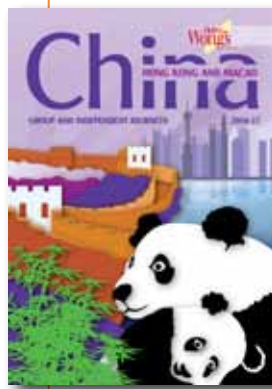
WENDY Wu Tours has released a brochure on the Maldives. Following a positive response from agents when the Maldives was included in the India brochure, Wendy Wu decided to give the destination a dedicated brochure. Over 30 properties are included which are suitable for romance, family escapes, luxury and relaxation, along with stopover options in Singapore. The program ranges from the affordable Kurumba Maldives to the luxurious new Amilla Fushi resort, featuring a Luke Mangan restaurant.



THE 2016 Natural Focus Safaris South America brochure covers Mexico, Central America and Antarctica with a range of tours, cruises, treks and accommodation. In the Galapagos there's *Petrel*, the new 160-passenger catamaran and luxury yacht, the *Origin*. Also new is the double-keeled *M/V Cattleya* offering five-day voyages traversing the Pacaya-Samiria National Reserve. An eight-day exploration of the Yucatan Peninsula in Mexico ventures from Merida to Cancun.



CIT Holidays' new brochure details European rail passes, with the new additions of a 22-day consecutive and five- and seven-day flexi Eurail Global passes. Information is included on rail passes and tickets, night trains, high speed trains and scenic trains across Italy and Europe. A "Good to Know" section answers common rail questions and popular rail routes and travel times with maps are also included. CIT also offers a range of Switzerland scenic journeys and mountain top excursions.



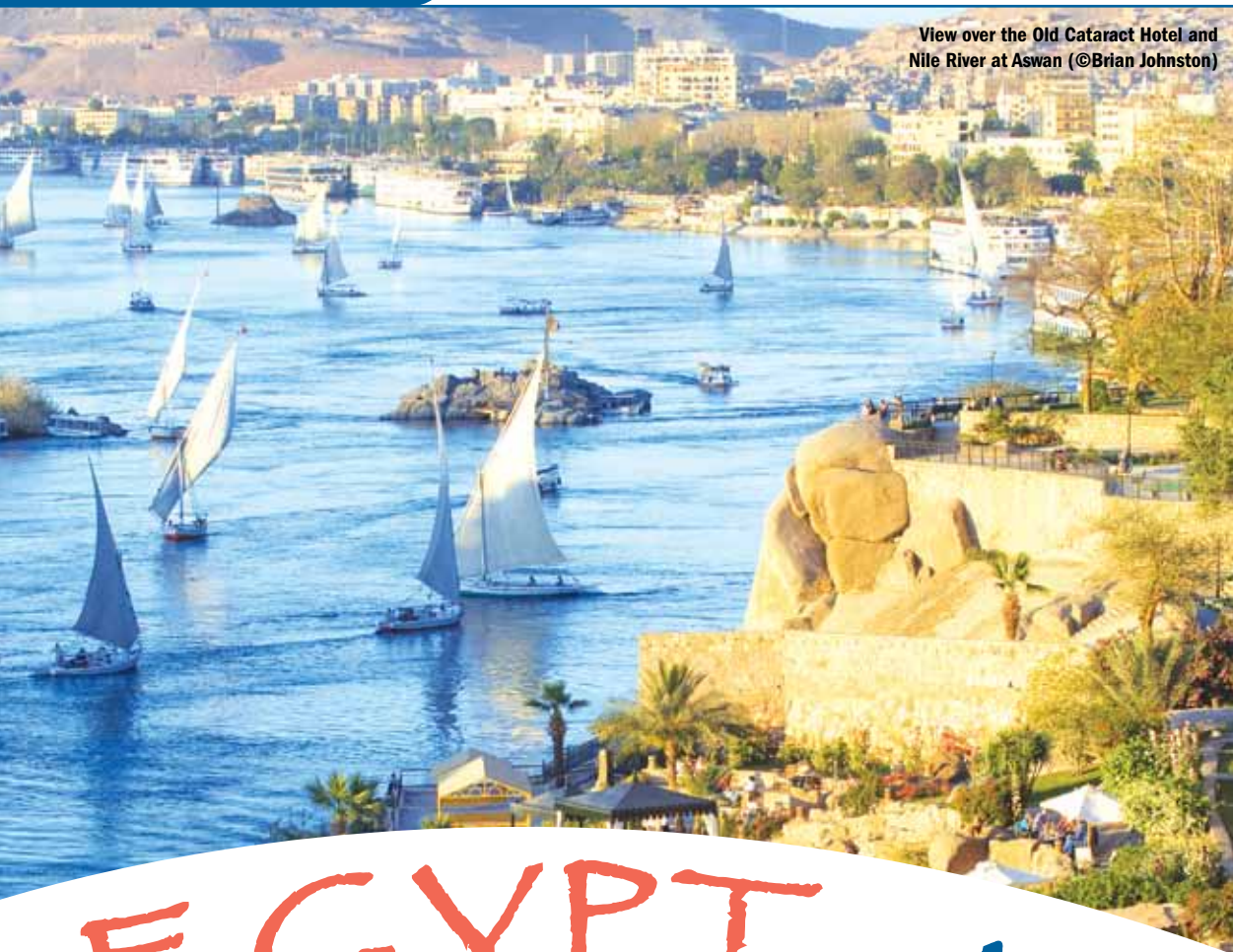
A RANGE of value for money journeys have been added to this year's Helen Wong's China brochure to attract a wider Australian audience. Included are 12 Valued Group Journeys, two Premium Group Tours, Helen Wong's Tours and 23 Private Journeys. Three- to seven-day itineraries for Hong Kong and Macao are also highlighted in the 68-page brochure. QR codes are scattered throughout, which when scanned by a smart phone will bring up a video of the destination.



VENTURE Holidays' new Bali brochure includes a selection of unique options to cater for repeat travellers as well as a larger range of product in Seminyak. Kuta Street Eats, a walking tour introducing some of Kuta's finest street food has been added to the program, along with a Balinese Blessing and Cooking Class; a Jamu Making tour, which examines Indonesian traditional herbal medicines, and the Pod Chocolate Making tour. New hotels in Seminyak also appear in the 2016/17 program.



A REFRESHED Maldives & Mauritius brochure from Asia Escape Holidays is on the market with 27 Mauritius properties, and 15 Maldives resorts, tours and activities. The brochure contains information on each region's climate, language, passport and visa requirements, food, transport options & currency. In Mauritius, there's the option to visit an extinct volcanic crater, learn about the production of vanilla and rum, or walk with the lions. In the Maldives, take a dive to check out the marine life, go island hopping, fishing, or surfing.



View over the Old Cataract Hotel and Nile River at Aswan (©Brian Johnston)



Shopping in the streets of Aswan © Egyptian Tourist Authority



# EGYPT - A RIVER

**The Nile River provides a fabulous journey through splendid desert scenery, an ancient civilisation and the hubbub of contemporary Egypt, writes BRIAN JOHNSTON.**

**M**OST of Egypt is silent desert, blazing sun and rock red as the dawn of time. Then suddenly the Nile River flows, a great pumping artery of water in the barrenness, and on its banks erupts a whole civilisation: ancient temples and glass skyscrapers, fields of rice and feathery date palms, roads, railways and villages of mud brick. This gift in the wilderness is Egypt, with 90 per cent of the country's population packed into just three per cent of its landmass.

For thousands of years the river has been a lifeline – and a lure to travellers. The Nile offers temples and tombs from a dazzling civilisation that owes everything to the river's sluggish majesty. The Nile is both the symbol of ancient Egyptian culture and the heartbeat

of a modern nation, and you'll never tire of its changing river-scapes. Travel its banks by train, float along it on a cruise ship, walk its promenades, and the whole of Egypt unfolds.

The most important stretch of the Nile flows between the cities of Aswan and Luxor in Upper Egypt, where the river is lined with the world's greatest collection of ancient palaces and temples. Luxor is the ancient capital of Thebes, and the Nile River neatly divides its sights in two: the former capital and its grand temples on the east bank, pharaohs' tombs and mortuary temples on the west bank. The contrast is startling. The west bank is imbued with a brooding calm, the desert sands punctuated with worn-down statues and silent gaping tombs, while the east bank's modern town is full of hubbub, street markets and hotels. The riverside promenade known as the Corniche gives you a grandstand view of the Nile and its sailboats and river-cruise ships. Along the promenade's length, horse-drawn carriages clip-clop past, old men perambulate and street-smart hustlers sell felucca tours and statuettes of cats and pharaohs. Luxor is the

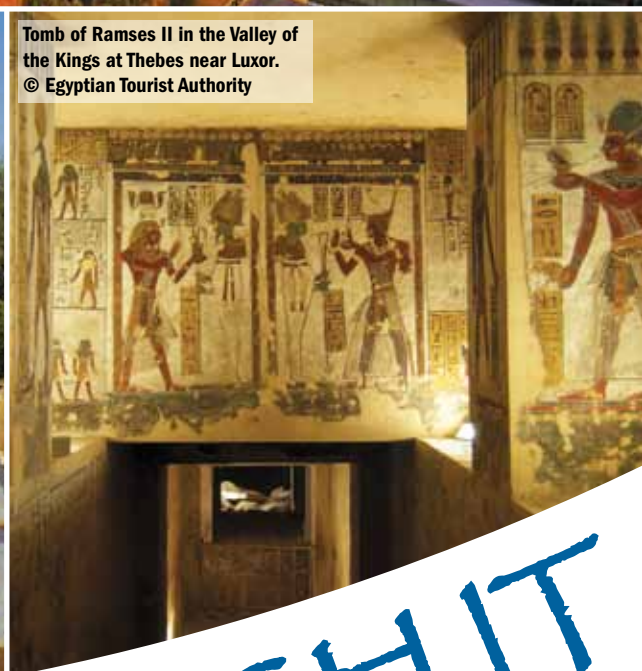
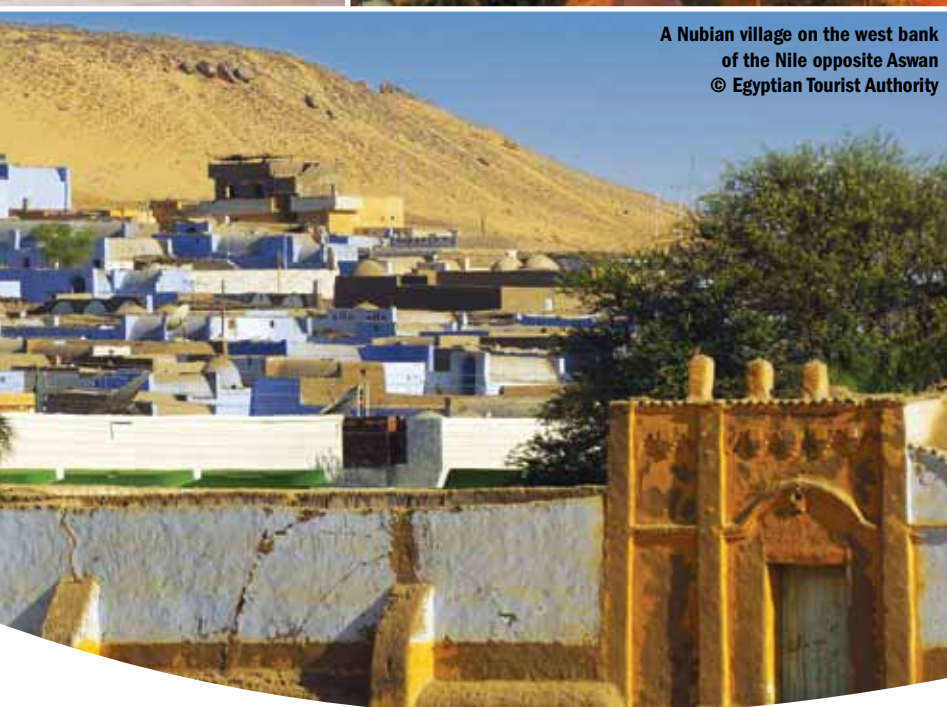
departure point for a Nile cruise to Aswan, which usually takes three days. Ships sail between the red, rocky hills of the desert. Villages and neat farmland slide by, allowing you a glimpse of rural Egypt you mightn't otherwise see. The days fizzle out in sunsets that turn the surrounding desert orange, providing the beautiful moments that travel is all about.

Along the way, grandiose temples loom. At Edfu, the Temple of Horus is one of Egypt's best preserved ancient buildings, guarded by brooding granite falcon statues and covered inside with friezes and hieroglyphics. Further south, another grand temple stands on a bluff above the river at Kom Ombo. Wall inscriptions depict the crocodile-headed god Sobek, and you can inspect the remains of macabre mummified crocodiles in side buildings, a reminder of how the Nile permeated every aspect of ancient Egyptian life. Other gods have the heads of hippo and ibis, and the great sun god Ra was rowed



A Nubian village on the west bank of the Nile opposite Aswan  
© Egyptian Tourist Authority

Tomb of Ramses II in the Valley of the Kings at Thebes near Luxor.  
© Egyptian Tourist Authority



# RUINS THROUGHOUT

across the heavens in a boat.

Whether you travel by road or ship, Aswan is usually the last stop on the river, which narrows here between sand hills and giant granite boulders, marking the southernmost point of the navigable Nile. Cataracts once flowed above the town, now tamed by the Aswan Dam. Aswan's setting is one of the loveliest in Egypt. Climb into a felucca – a sailing boat scarcely changed since the time of the pharaohs – and explore the sluggish river's scattered islands. The Island of Plants has dusty botanical gardens and brilliant views over the sand dunes and tombs of the west bank. Elephantine Island, named because its granite boulders resemble bathing elephants, is home to three

Nubian villages.

You might also want to inspect the nilometre, a series of 90 steps complete with pharaonic markings and inscriptions. In ancient times the nilometre was used to calculate the river's rise between June and September when monsoon rains washed down from Ethiopia. The ancient Egyptian calendar was divided into three based on the river's cycles: akhet or flooding season, peret or growing season, and shemu or harvest season. When the river and fields were flooded farmers were unable to work, leaving a plentiful supply of labour for massive building projects. Even the glorious temples that line its banks are the result of the Nile's bounty, without which all of Egyptian

civilisation would never have happened.

Aswan was known as Swenet in ancient times. The name simply meant 'trade', and trade flowed down the Nile to the Mediterranean in the one direction, and by caravans of camels to Nubia and the rest of Africa in the other. The ruins of Swenet are somewhat uninspiring, and you'll get a better flavour of life in ancient times by heading into the town's street markets a few blocks behind the river. Nubians in long blue robes barter with Bedouin traders and Egyptian middlemen, squabbling over glasses of tea as spices, salted fish, cotton and carpets are sold. It's the Nile alive with trade and chatter as it has been for thousands of years, and eternally fascinating.

## EDITOR'S CRUISE PICK

UNIWORLD –  
SPLENDOURS OF EGYPT  
& THE NILE

There's no better way to see Egypt than cruising the Nile, and while you are taking in the incredible sites of the Egyptian royalty, why not be treated like royalty yourself on Uniworld's Splendours of Egypt & the Nile. Beginning and ending in Cairo, experience this vibrant city and then spend eight days aboard the *River Tosca*, Uniworld's all suite 82 guest ship. Visit the ruins of the Temple of Karnak, the Temple of Luxor, the Valley of the Kings and a ride in a felucca. There are three departures for this year on April 23, May 7 and May 21, priced from \$5,850.

JC Holidays takes agents  
to Egypt

JC HOLIDAYS recently took this lucky group of Aussie agents to explore the wonders of Egypt. After flying Emirates business class to Dubai and then onto Cairo, the luxurious program also included a five-star Nile cruise from Luxor to Aswan visiting Karnak Temple, Luxor Temple and the winter palace hotel. In Aswan highlights included a visit to Phaiala Temple and a stay at the fabulous Old Cataract Hotel.

## GROUPS DRIVE NEW A&amp;K BUSINESS

ABERCROMBIE & Kent staff have noticed a curious trend in recent months – the addition of a number of new postcodes to the luxury operator's customer base.

The company is attributing the growth in its market penetration to the addition of small group tours to the portfolio, which is introducing clients from new segments – who once experiencing the A&K offering are likely to continue to explore the rest of the portfolio.

A case in point is A&K's Egypt product. The company has traditionally taken its upmarket clients to the intriguing destination, and managing director Sujata Raman told *travelBulletin* she is keen to continue supporting the company's ground operators in Egypt who have experienced massive disruption to their lives and incomes due to the Arab Spring revolution. This year A&K has released a week-long private journey, priced from just \$3,970 per person which includes all the highlights of Cairo such as the pyramids, the Sphinx, the Egyptian Museum of Antiquities and the Mummy Room – along with luxury accommodation at Fairmont Nile City Hotel.

But that's not all – a three-night Nile cruise follows aboard the luxury

*Sanctuary Sun Boat IV* from which guests can experience all the splendour of temples and tombs between Aswan and Luxor. Interpretation is provided by an A&K Egyptologist, with Raman saying travellers to Egypt at the moment can "see the country at its friendly best and have the sights to themselves".

The seven-day Treasures of Egypt tour cost also includes internal flights from Cairo to Aswan and from Luxor to Cairo, as well as small group excursions during the cruise.

Along with the group tour offerings A&K is continuing to see demand for its mainstream bespoke tours this year, with the "core product performing extremely well," Raman said.

And for a truly upmarket experience the visit to Australia of the Abercrombie & Kent private jet last year gave an insight into the indulgent touring option which costs about US\$100,000 per person for a three week multi-stop worldwide holiday for up to 50 passengers all in First Class luxury.

Having established a New Zealand office just last year and with the local business also including an extensive portfolio of shore excursion operations on behalf of a variety of cruise lines, Abercrombie & Kent has now been operating in Australia for three decades.



## HOT PRODUCT

Snag a great deal to Egypt with **ON THE GO TOURS** with savings of 20% on their 13 day King Ramses trip, starting and ending in Cairo. The trip includes all the must do's of a visit to Egypt with a visit to the iconic pyramids of Giza, a felucca cruise (which can be upgraded to 5 star Nile Cruise), excursions to the temples of Philae, Abu Simbel, Luxor, Karnak, and the Valley of the Kings. The trip concludes with a few days of sun and sand on the Red Sea Riviera before returning to Cairo.

■ [www.onthegotours.com](http://www.onthegotours.com)

**COLLETTE'S** 12 day Treasures of Egypt tour includes time spent at the pyramids of Giza, a visit to nearby Saqqara and ancient Memphis. Experience a leisurely four night cruise along the Nile and visit the treasures of Luxor including the Valley of the Kings, Temple of Karnak and the temple of famous Egyptian queen Hatshepsut. Also enjoy a special dress up evening with a traditional galabeya party. The 12 day trip starts at \$2,429.

■ [www.gocollette.com](http://www.gocollette.com)

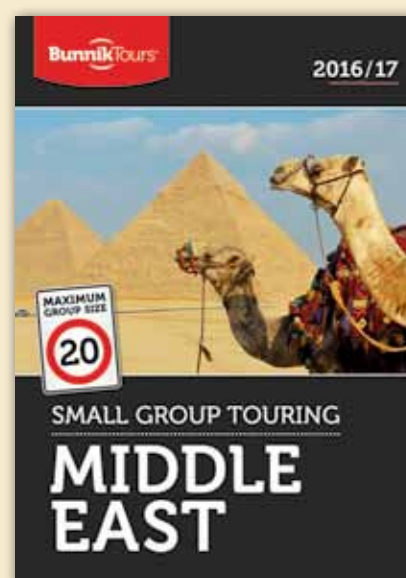
## Egypt into Bunnik Middle East brox

BUNNIK Tours' 2016/17 Middle East program includes Egypt along with other options in Jordan, Oman, Israel and Turkey. The 10 small group tour itineraries are complemented with a variety of extensions and FIT options which managing director Dennis Bunnik says "showcase the very best this region has to offer". The itineraries, which range from 12 to 26 days in length, are featured in a dedicated 44-page brochure.

While other countries feature in the program, Egypt is still a very strong focus for the operator which has run tours in the region for more than a decade. During that time the Bunnik team has managed more than 800 small group Egypt tours showing the wonders of the ancient country to many thousands of Australians.

"Egypt was one of the first countries that we began running tours to, so it's close to our hearts," he said. "We personally visit regularly, in fact there's a Bunnik in Egypt at least two or three times a year".

Like the rest of Bunnik's offerings across the globe the Egypt, Jordan, Oman, Israel and Turkey tours remain "focused on a quality experience," with a guaranteed maximum group size of 20 passengers.



# The 'Very Best of Egypt' Tour at the very best price!

6 Nights  
7 Days  
**\$1,237\***

In Cairo visit the Pyramids, Sphinx, Egyptian Museum and the Khan El Khalili Bazaar. In Luxor visit the Valley of Kings, Valley of Queens, Hatshepsut Temple, Colossi of Memnon, Luxor and Karnak temples. In Edfu visit the Hours Temple. In Kom Ombo visit Double Temples of Sobek and Horus. In Aswan visit the High Dam, Unfinished Obelisk, Philae temple and the Botanical Gardens.

2 nights at Le Meridien Pyramids Hotel (breakfasts included)

4 nights Nile Cruise from Luxor to Awan or VV (all meals included)

\*Price quoted is per person, in a double sharing room for a min. of 2 Pax travelling together

All tours are inclusive of return coach transfers and Qualified Egyptologist

Rates are in Australian Dollars and valid for sale until 31st October, 2016

All entry fees included (except Visa, Int'l & domestic flights, entrance inside the pyramids, the mummies room at the Egyptian museum, Tut Ankh Amon & Nefertari tombs)

For bookings & airfares or further information on this tour or other tours offered by **JCHolidays**, please call our friendly consultants at **1800 524 654** or email [res@jcholidays.com.au](mailto:res@jcholidays.com.au)



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# CELEBRITY SPOTTING



Send your celebrity pics to [celebrity@travelbulletin.com.au](mailto:celebrity@travelbulletin.com.au) and keep your eye out for the next issue of *travelBulletin*

At the age of 16 Jessica Watson became the youngest person to sail solo, non-stop and unassisted around the world. Watson was named the 2011 Young Australian of the Year before being awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia the following year. Now an ambassador for Mobile Travel Agents, Watson spoke to *travelBulletin* while attending the MTA Power of Community conference on the Gold Coast earlier this month.

**What is your favourite holiday spot?**

A lake just inland from Noosa called Lake Cootharaba. It's just gorgeous, with its warm tea-tree water and we go there every year for family Christmas. We normally camp and it's super casual, you don't have to wear shoes for a couple of days and I just have fun lying in the hot lake and having a couple of drinks with my sister.

**Who is one person you wish you could sit next to on a plane?**

I kind of like the pot luck element. I've had the most amazing conversations with people you would never otherwise talk to.

**How would you spend a day at sea aboard a cruise ship?**

The one thing I would love to do any day of the year is sit there on the balcony and read. There's nothing like having the water there, it's so calming.

**What is one of the most exotic destinations you have travelled to?**

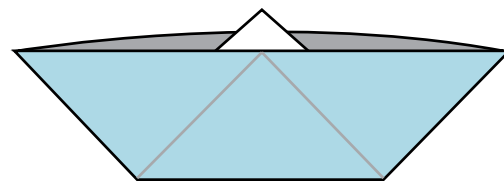
Sailing does take you off the beaten track. One would be the Campbell Islands south of New Zealand. I went there with the New Zealand Met team who were going down to service their equipment there on a small sailing ship as part of the crew. We got to walk and see albatross chicks and huge elephant seals.

**What is one thing you cannot leave home without when you travel?**

I can't leave home without my little travel on suitcase. I basically live out of it as I'm domestic travelling all the time. It's a little Victorinox one with a little flap that opens at the front for your laptop.

**Do you have an embarrassing travel story that you can share with us?**

Yes, it was the first time I went overseas by myself on a sailing trip when I was 14. At the time I was trying to convince my parents to let me sail around the world so I booked all my flights on my own to show I was responsible and grown up and when I got to the airport I realised I'd somehow booked myself as Miss Mooloolaba – the suburb where I was living, instead of Miss Watson. The whole booking was completely wrong but luckily they were able to sort it out. My brother spent the next few years calling me Miss Mooloolaba.



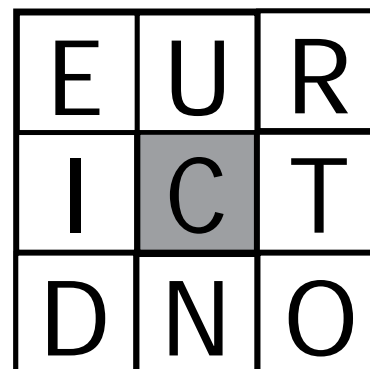
**Need some stress relief? Those clients putting on the pressure? Make some origami! Make sure you check out pages 23 and 24 for the paper and all the instructions for putting your cute little boat together. Then Instagram a picture of your finished boat and tag @etravelBulletin to be in the running to win a double pass to the movies. Get creative and have fun!**



# UNSCRAMBLE

HOW many words can you make out of these nine letters? Every word needs to include an 'C', have four letters or more and not be a proper noun. You can only use each letter once.

- Good - 16 words**
- Very good - 28 words**
- Excellent - 42 words**





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