

travelBulletin

FEBRUARY 2016

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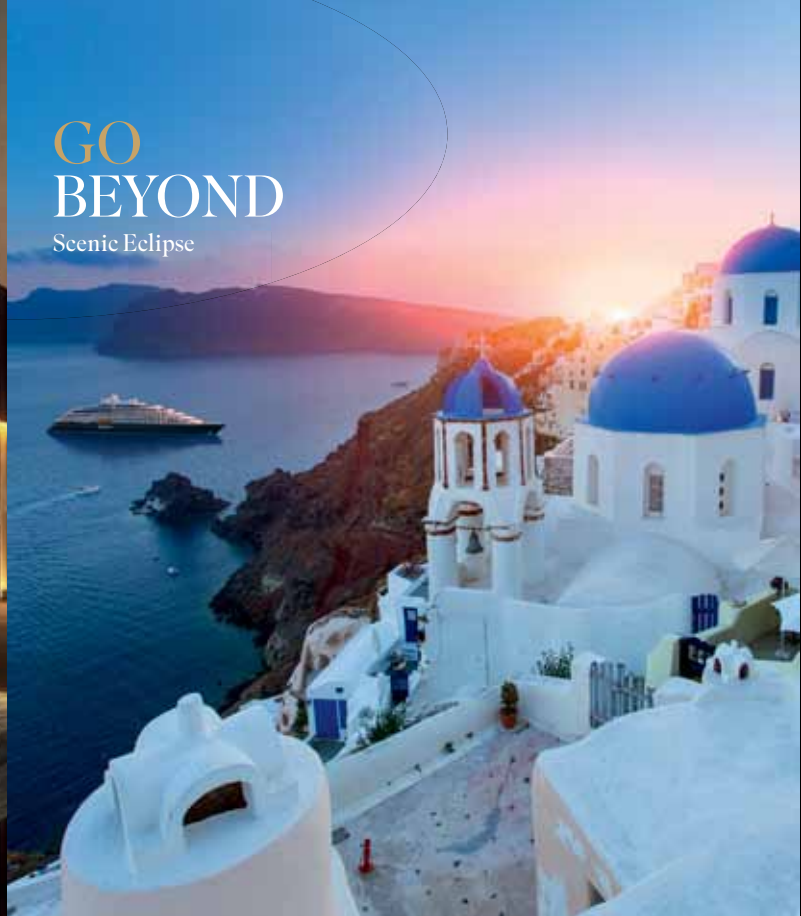
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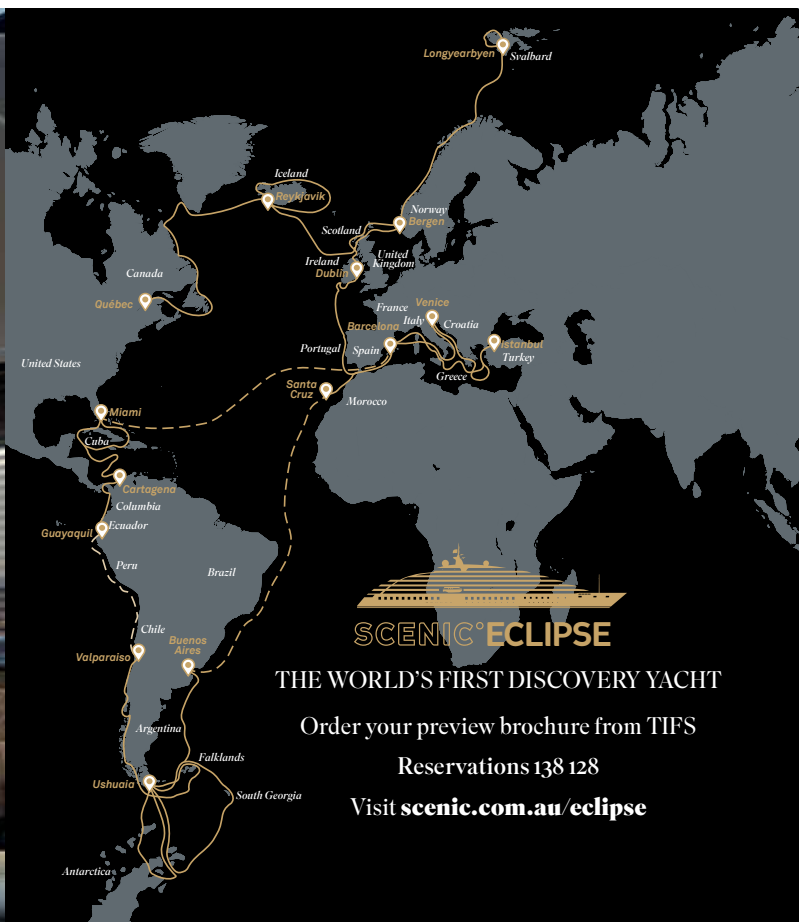
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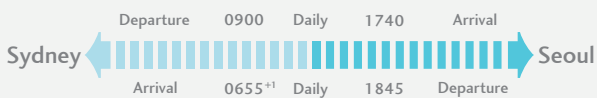
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FEBRUARY 2016

COOK ISLANDS

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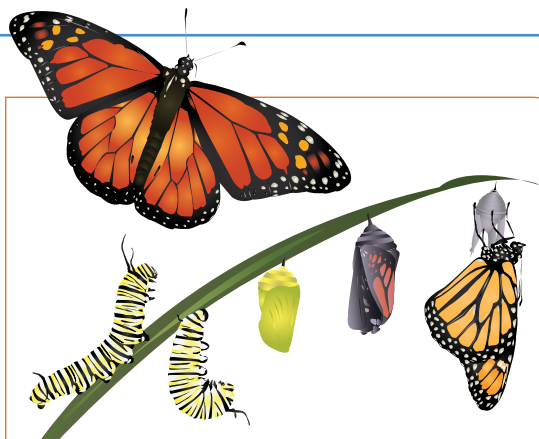
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The industry evolves

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From the managing editor Bruce Piper

AWARDS are the lifeblood of the marketing strategy for many travel industry suppliers, with the Travel Daily Group receiving an unending procession of press releases from hoteliers and airlines breathlessly announcing a win in some scheme or other. We tend to take most of these with a grain of salt – and with good reason, as evidenced by a controversy surrounding the heavily promoted World Travel Awards.

The World Travel Awards touts its credentials as “the Oscars of the travel industry” and claims that more than 600,000 people worldwide are “eligible to vote”. There are hundreds of categories which are announced at a series of regional gala dinners across the globe. However being part of the awards is simply a matter of self-nomination by suppliers, and becoming a finalist or a winner is an opaque process, with no clarity as to how many people actually vote, leading to questions as to whether winning a World Travel Award really means anything at all.

A case in point was the 2015 World Travel Awards which saw ICC Berlin win the title of Europe’s Leading Meetings & Conference Centre – an interesting choice, given that the venue had been closed and inactive for more than twelve months, and is currently under redevelopment as a centre for Syrian refugees. Hawaii-based travel e-newsletter eTurboNews, formerly a sponsor of the awards, highlighted a range of anomalies associated with the program, noting that many of the award winners also happened to purchase promotional packages with the World Travel Awards.

The most recent World Travel Awards ceremony, which took place at the Mazagan Beach & Golf Resort in Morocco, also coincidentally saw Moroccan Minister of Tourism, Dr Lahcen Haddad, recognised for Outstanding Contribution to the Travel & Tourism Industry. And there was little surprise when the Mazagan property hosting the ceremony happened to be named the “World’s Leading Beach & Casino Resort”. eTurboNews has urged suppliers to “be careful before investing money to secure awards... travel awards, when they are legitimate, should not cost a company or organisation money and mandatory marketing fees”.

Travel Daily and *travelBulletin* have a policy of not editorially promoting any award wins unless they are part of a robust framework involving transparent voting and judging. Fortunately the strong processes behind AFTA’s annual National Travel Industry Awards, of which we are proud to be the official media sponsors, mean NTIA accolades are truly meaningful rather than just window-dressing.

This month’s contributors

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Ian McMahon's perspective

KUNG HEI FAT CHOI!

I AM writing this in advance of the 15 days of Chinese New Year celebrations commencing on February 8. So I am uncertain, dear reader, whether you will receive my best wishes to you for the Year of the Monkey as the festivities are beginning or winding down.

Either way, it will be timely to reflect that 2016 is shaping up as a year in which you will need all the guile that the Chinese astrological charts attribute to the monkey – purportedly they are clever, cunning animals – for your business to survive, let alone flourish.

And however much, or little, regard you have for Chinese astrology, it seems to me singularly appropriate to focus on the year ahead at the same time as the Chinese traditionally examine the auspices and portents for their future wellbeing.

This is because the Asian country's fortunes over the coming 12 months will have an enormous impact on the Australian economic environment and, by extension, commercial outcomes for Australia's travel wholesalers and retailers.

The slowing of China's hitherto spectacular economic expansion is already hitting our mining industry and that, along with a global oil glut, is propelling a downward spiral in share prices and a slide in the value of Australia's currency.

With one Australian dollar buying less than \$US0.70 – and declining significantly against other key currencies – overseas holidays are becoming less affordable.

And this is happening as plummeting share prices are eroding the nest eggs of Australia's baby boomers. Yes, those same cashed up boomers who have been spending up big on high-value holidays.

Confidence is reportedly dropping as consumers who don't feel as rich as they used to be are confronted by prices that seem higher than they used to be. Agents will need to display Year of the Monkey cleverness to overcome this.

I note that in this Year of the Monkey, Helloworld is poised to benefit from the injection of the practical, coal-face know-how of two of the country's most canny operators.

With AOT now the company's major shareholder, Andrew and Cinzia Burnes have taken the management reins while the Alysandratos family, owner of Consolidated Travel, once again has a representative on the board in the person of Peter Spathis.

I am not sure how much input they had into the company's latest advertising campaign. But its emphasis on specific product offers, using value-adds rather than price as a hook, seems to me to be a clever approach.

Burnes takes the reins

NOBODY in the industry was surprised when the merger proposal between the AOT Group and Helloworld was overwhelmingly endorsed at an Extraordinary General Meeting which took place late last month.

The deal required ratification from Helloworld shareholders, and while an independent expert's report concluded it was "not fair, but reasonable," it seems to have been the preferred option in the absence of any superior offer.

AOT CEO Andrew Burnes has now become head of the combined businesses, while Cinzia Burnes is an executive director, expanding her former role as AOT's chief operating officer.

Later this month the rubber will hit the road, with interim results for Helloworld to be released on February 24th, along with updated outlook on the combined group - certain to be intriguing reading.

One thing is certain - for long-suffering shareholders, franchisees, suppliers and staff at least they now have some certainty - along with a heavily committed CEO and executive director who have significant skin in the game with a 40% shareholding.

The deal will also see Helloworld's shares consolidated on a 6 to 1 basis.

ATAS review completed

LAST month AFTA released the outcome of a review of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS), conducted by Chris Greiner of Ryan Lawyers. The independent review, which was commissioned after the first year's operation of the scheme, included a request for submissions from the industry, with the feedback incorporated in the final report

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, November 2015

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Oct 15/ Nov 15	Trend Nov 14/ Nov 15
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	109.2	114.1	105.4	+1.2	+6.8
Indonesia	93.7	78.2	70.0	+0.8	+1.2
USA	83.9	81.6	69.0	-0.3	+0.9
Thailand	47.4	47.3	44.8	+0.0	+4.1
India	22.9	23.6	41.6	-0.2	-0.1
China	35.2	35.7	33.4	-0.1	+6.2
Singapore	31.2	30.8	31.9	+0.4	+2.9
Fiji	28.7	29.1	27.4	+0.5	+4.2
UK	52.3	47.5	26.5	+0.6	+14.3
Hong Kong	18.5	20.0	24.7	+2.8	+5.2
All outbound	799.8	784.6	703.0	+0.5	+4.9

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, November 2015

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Oct 15/ Nov 15	Trend Nov 14/ Nov 15
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	109.9	110.9	107.1	-0.1	+5.0
China	95.2	93.7	87.3	+1.9	+27.8
UK	56.8	57.2	66.8	+0.1	+4.4
USA	53.0	52.9	59.4	+1.5	+10.0
Singapore	35.2	35.9	47.0	+1.7	+14.3
Malaysia	29.0	28.4	33.9	-0.2	+7.4
Japan	29.3	29.9	32.5	+1.0	+11.4
South Korea	20.2	21.8	22.6	+3.9	+13.8
India	19.3	19.3	20.3	+0.0	+8.7
Germany	16.1	16.1	17.3	+0.8	+2.3
All inbound	640.3	642.8	668.9	+0.8	+9.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at October 2015

City pair	Passengers YE Oct 14	Passengers YE Oct 15	% change
	(000)	(000)	
Melbourne-Sydney	8,300.5	8,537.8	+2.9
Brisbane-Sydney	4,477.5	4,430.1	-1.1
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,308.2	3,335.9	+0.8
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,593.5	2,601.5	+0.3
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,267.6	2,294.2	+1.2
Melbourne-Perth	2,159.9	2,139.5	-0.9
Adelaide-Sydney	1,804.8	1,820.2	+0.9
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,746.9	1,795.8	+2.8
Perth-Sydney	1,798.6	1,763.5	-1.9
Hobart-Melbourne	1,388.5	1,476.7	+6.4

Source: BITRE

prepared by Greiner who made a total of 11 recommendations.

Nine of these have been adopted by the AFTA board, along with wording changes to make the ATAS code and charter more readable. However a suggestion that a timeline be established for the implementation of mandatory client trust accounts was rejected, with AFTA saying it “does not believe it provides any material benefit to the ongoing operation of the scheme while it is in a voluntary state”.

Webjet commercial under fire

TRAVEL Daily provoked a storm of controversy just after Christmas when it highlighted a new Webjet television ad which was seen as criticising the so-called limited choice of airfares provided through bricks and mortar travel agents. The Webjet Facebook page went into meltdown with comments from outraged agents, colourfully branding the OTA's anti-agent approach as “disgusting”, “disgraceful,” “disappointing” and “stupid”.

Webjet kept its head down through the dramas, and while AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury urged a focus on direct airline sales as a key threat to the industry, the Federation has also written to the ACCC about the Webjet approach claiming it's in breach of trade practices legislation because it has misled consumers about the choice available through travel agents.

P&O Australia's newbuild

RIVALRY in the local cruise market has reached a new level with the announcement last month that P&O Australia will receive a gigantic newbuild vessel in 2019. The

CWT GOES BOEING



UNITED Airlines took this lucky group of Carlson Wagonlit Travel consultants to the USA, where they visited San Francisco, Chicago and Seattle. The trip, which was also hosted courtesy of Marriott Hotels, included an experience on the floor of the Boeing factory, highlighting the fact that Australia is becoming an

all-787 Dreamliner destination for United Airlines. Pictured in front of Boeing's 398th manufactured Dreamliner are, from left: Claudia Stamiris, Salvator La Mantia, Sam Smith, Brian Douglas and Alex Jackson of CWT; Verena Billett from United Airlines; Phoenix Marshall and Sarah Harnett of CWT; and Nils Wissange from Marriott.

move signals the ongoing strength of the Australasian cruise market, which had long been seen as the graveyard for Carnival Corporation ships, which made their way down under after stints with more prominent northern hemisphere brands before ending up on the scrap-heap.

The new vessel will be P&O's seventh

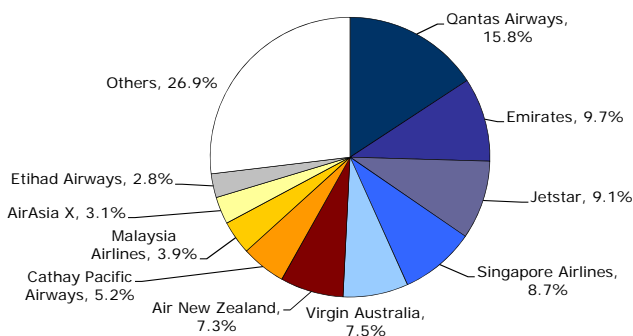
Australian ship, and with 4,200 lower berths will be more than double the size of the line's next largest vessel, the Pacific Explorer which joins the fleet next year. The growth of P&O has also been reflected in the appointment of Sture Myrmell as its local president, with

Continues over page

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended October 2015



Source: BITRE

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – October 2015

	Oct 14	Oct 15	Growth (%)	Yr to Oct 14	Yr to Oct 15	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	5.28m	5.19m	-1.7	57.62m	57.22m	-0.7
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	6.25bn	6.15bn	-1.6	67.97bn	67.52bn	-0.7
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.82bn	7.74bn	-1.0	89.26b	88.40bn	-1.0
Load factor (%)	79.9	79.5	+0.4*	76.2	76.4	+0.2*
Aircraft trips (000)	56.0	55.3	-1.2	636.7	635.7	-0.2

Source: BITRE * Percentage points

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – November 2015

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	4,923	72.5	4,703	69.3	160	2.3
Qantas	7,992	85.4	8,150	87.1	133	1.4
QantasLink	8,340	84.3	8,431	85.2	329	3.2
REX	4,939	82.4	5,166	86.1	23	0.4
Virgin Australia	9,421	87.2	9,618	89.0	136	1.2
All Airlines	39,317	83.1	39,829	84.1	839	1.7

Source: BITRE

Continues from previous page

Carnival Australia CEO Ann Sherry transitioning to the role of executive chairman.

Flight Centre on acquisition trail

IT'S been a busy couple of months for Flight Centre, which has announced the purchase of a 70% stake in Australian online travel agency BYOjet. The move will see the OTA switch from its former affiliation with Helloworld, and vindicates the innovative approach taken by BYOjet founder and CEO Lenny Padowitz who has also pioneered the company's JETMAX white label booking engine.

Flight Centre CEO Graham Turner said BYOjet was a profitable business, "with a low-cost model to deliver cheaper airfares to the public... more than many of its OTA rivals". In December Flight Centre also purchased US-based youth travel specialist Student Universe, with Turner saying the moves reflect the company's strategy to "grow more aggressively in some sectors of the market that haven't previously been priorities".

Cramer definitely on the Ball

AUSTRALIA certainly seems to punch above its weight when it comes to airline executives on the global stage. Etihad chief James Hogan is probably the highest profile example, but there's also Rob Gurney who now heads up Emirates in the USA – not to mention our own Barry Brown who recently returned to EK in Australia after his previous role as senior divisional vice president for the Dubai-based carrier. And former Qantas and Emirates executive Bryan Banston also looks

TENNIS STAR ATTRACTION FOR EK



THERE was plenty of star power at the Australian Open tennis tournament, and Emirates made the most of its sponsorship of the event when it hosted a cocktail function in the lead-up to the blockbuster match between Lleyton Hewitt and James Duckworth during the first week of the competition.

Champagne flowed at the Emirates marquee at Melbourne Park where lucky

industry partners met a stellar line-up of celebrity guests - including Melbourne Cup-winning jockey Michelle Payne and former tennis champion Henri Laconte, who are pictured with EK Victorian state manager Dean Cleaver.

The sporting champions were happy to take part in an intimate Q&A, during which other guests including radio star Andy Lee posed questions about life in the spotlight.

set to take up a senior commercial role with Thai Airways International.

However further afield there's also Cramer Ball, who launched Etihad's online operations in Australia and has gone onto a variety of senior roles within the airline and its affiliates across the globe – including Air Seychelles and Indian carrier Jet Airways.

Ball's most recent ascension, announced just before Christmas, is as CEO-designate for Italian flag carrier Alitalia. He's also a director of the airline, which is 49% owned by Etihad. Alitalia's board cited 48-year-old Ball's "expertise in the air transport industry, managerial skills and change management drive" as key factors in his appointment.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

December 2015

Rank	Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
1	2	Dec 15	Dec to Nov	Nov 15
1	Webjet Australia	15.66	-2.51%	1
2	Wotif.com	9.91	+9.74%	3
3	Expedia Australia	9.33	-5.49%	2
4	Flight Centre	7.50	-0.72%	4
5	Skyscanner Australia	6.90	-0.04%	5
6	Lastminute.com.au	4.38	+22.32%	6
7	Velocity Frequent Flyer	2.41	-21.98%	7
8	Cheap Flights Aus & NZ	1.57	+0.06%	8
9	Luxury Escapes	1.53	+17.27%	*
10	Helloworld	1.42	+1.47%	10

* Not in top 10
Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at October 2015)

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Oct 14	YE Oct 15	total	14/15
Auckland-Sydney	1,470,720	1,528,343	4.4	+3.9
Singapore-Sydney	1,365,229	1,445,596	4.2	+5.9
Singapore-Melbourne	1,142,595	1,185,371	3.4	+3.7
Auckland-Melbourne	1,026,174	1,136,113	3.3	+10.7
Singapore-Perth	1,059,578	1,039,251	3.0	-1.9
Auckland-Brisbane	900,461	961,545	2.8	+6.8
Hong Kong-Sydney	935,843	955,309	2.8	+2.1
Los Angeles-Sydney	894,600	906,833	2.6	+1.4
Denpasar-Perth	901,716	886,892	2.6	-1.6
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	912,063	837,323	2.4	-8.2
Top 10 city pairs	10,608,979	10,882,576	31.6	+2.6
Other city pairs	22,319,949	23,559,317	68.4	+5.6
ALL CITY PAIRS	32,928,928	34,441,893	100.0	+4.6

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at 15 January 2015

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$37.23
Helloworld (HLO)	\$0.385
Webjet (WEB)	\$5.57
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.019
Qantas (QAN)	\$4.04
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.495
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.10
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$2.87
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$5.21
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$5.97
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$12.33
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.995
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.855
Sealink (SLK)	\$3.50

Helloworld plans NZ rollout

PLANS for the New Zealand expansion of the Helloworld brand are well under way, with the NZ operation now led by Simon McKearney who confirmed that there will be 61 fully branded stores to be updated with the Helloworld brand early this year.

Most of those were previously Harvey World Travel outlets, along with a handful from United Travel, with most of the former United members switching to First Travel Group. The change will also see Stella NZ's independent and "broker" network members become part of the Helloworld affiliate model, with McKearney saying this means the brand will present as a "family" of more than 265 businesses across NZ.

"Our industry is no longer a cookie cutter offering, but the trick is in connecting the complete spectrum together within one

‘Our industry is no longer a cookie cutter offering, but the trick is in connecting the complete spectrum together within one brand’

brand," he said, emphasising that there is "safety in numbers". McKearney said Helloworld NZ was re-engineering its business to "recognise the needs of its members and the part they play in a value chain for their clients".

AccorHotels bigger than ever

FRENCH hospitality giant AccorHotels has entrenched its position in the luxury segment,

with the announcement late last year that it would acquire FRHI Holdings limited, the parent company of the Fairmont, Raffles and Swissotel brands.

The massive deal will expand the AccorHotels portfolio by 155 properties, including 40 currently in development, with CEO Sebastien Bazin describing the move as a "great step forward" for the company, offering "robust and global leadership in luxury hotels".

The purchase will see a significant increase in Middle Eastern interests in AccorHotels. Along with a US\$840 million cash payment, new shares in AccorHotels will be issued to the FRHI vendors, seeing the Qatar Investment Authority end up with 10.5% of the company while the Kingdom Holding Authority of Saudi Arabia will hold 5.8%.

NTIA adds People's Choice award

THE 2016 National Travel Industry Awards will have a new consumer-facing element, with the first time introduction of a category where travellers will vote for their favourite travel agent. To be conducted in partnership with the publishers of *International Traveller* and *Australian Traveller* magazines, the new award will be part of their annual People's Choice survey which also nominates readers' favourite resorts, airlines and destinations. ATAS is sponsoring the People's Choice awards, meaning those who vote will again be reminded of the benefits of booking through an accredited travel agent.

State winners in the new "People's Choice – Best Retail Travel Agency" category will be announced in April while the overall winner will be revealed at the 2016 NTIA gala dinner which takes place in Sydney on 16 July.



Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 01 Dec** More Global Explorer Jetstar
- 01 Dec** Burnes HLO ground focus
- 02 Dec** NT agent fraud conviction
- 03 Dec** Biometric visa collection
- 04 Dec** FCM wins NSW government
- 04 Dec** VA/EY pact reauthorised
- 07 Dec** Webjet international growth
- 08 Dec** Creative Holidays closes
- 08 Dec** AA increases base comm
- 09 Dec** Air NZ rejigs sales structure
- 10 Dec** AccorHotels buys Fairmont
- 10 Dec** Star Alliances open to LCCs
- 11 Dec** BARA service framework
- 14 Dec** ANA plotting Perth, Melb
- 14 Dec** Helloworld NZ 2016 rollout
- 15 Dec** QF expects profit takeoff
- 15 Dec** AFTA revamps 2016 NTIA
- 16 Dec** FC targets youth, students
- 17 Dec** Pinpoint adds new tools
- 18 Dec** Helloworld-AOT deal "not fair but reasonable"
- 18 Dec** CTM to purchase LA-based Montrose Travel
- 18 Dec** Helloworld vote on 22 Jan
- 18 Dec** Cramer Ball new AZ CEO
- 21 Dec** FCTG takes BYOjet stake
- 21 Dec** Air Canada BNE upgauge
- 22 Dec** QF/AA plan new products
- 23 Dec** Virtuoso refine showcase
- 24 Dec** Hainan restart SYD route
- 29 Dec** New China-Sydney routes
- 30 Dec** Uber in its Aussie infancy
- 31 Dec** P&O Australia newbuild
- 31 Dec** EY/AB c'share knock back
- 04 Jan** Brazil waiver for Rio
- 04 Jan** 25,000 less Nov Bali visits
- 05 Jan** Webjet mocks travel agts
- 06 Jan** Webjet TVC says what?!
- 06 Jan** QF safest airline, again
- 07 Jan** Flight Centre Tigerair jv
- 07 Jan** Rail Europe buys Rail Plus
- 08 Jan** Nexus to Europe & RTW
- 11 Jan** Excite enters Singapore
- 12 Jan** APTMS buys World Drive
- 13 Jan** Carlson Rezidor setting up
- 13 Jan** Air Asia X relaunching NZ
- 14 Jan** Value World creditors list
- 15 Jan** AFTA responds to review
- 15 Jan** SiteMinder Priceline pact
- 18 Jan** Scenic expedition yacht launch

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

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

Airport	Passengers YE Oct 14	Passengers YE Oct 15	% of total	% change 15/14
Sydney	13,271,280	13,740,472	39.9	+3.5
Melbourne	7,905,959	8,681,407	25.2	+9.8
Brisbane	4,906,108	5,202,701	15.1	+6.0
Perth	4,177,682	4,180,845	12.1	+0.1
Gold Coast	883,560	921,640	2.7	+4.3
Adelaide	967,973	888,207	2.6	-8.2
Cairns	464,031	523,429	1.5	+12.8
Darwin	330,717	268,552	0.8	-18.8
Sunshine Coast	*10,248	12,261	0.0	+19.6
Norfolk Island	11,370	11,677	0.0	+2.7
Townsville^	n/a	6,344	0.0	n/a
Port Hedland~	n/a	4,358	0.0	n/a
All Airports	32,928,928	34,441,893	100.0	+4.6

ACREDITED AGENTS

19 January 2016

New South Wales	1,024
Victoria	745
Queensland	668
Western Australia	327
South Australia	234
Australian Capital Territory	51
Tasmania	40
Northern Territory	23
TOTAL	3,112

Got something to say?

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



Steve Jones' Say

NOT so long ago, the prospect of traditional retailers striking deals with low cost carriers was almost laughable.

Retailers saw no commercial benefit, while the LCCs were not interested in using a channel they regarded as irrelevant.

The incredulous reply at being asked whether they would work with the trade was to pose a question of their own: Why on earth would we need agents when we have our own booking channels?

How times have changed.

Agents today have been left with no option but to offer a product that has become an integral part of the travel landscape.

Airlines meanwhile have had to accept they can no longer rely solely on their own distribution to grow their networks or attract higher-yielding corporate travellers.

It is this market that Flight Centre has identified as an "obvious opportunity" in 2016, with the retailer striking agreements with budget carriers and building API connections to various LCC websites.

Flight Centre MD Graham Turner told me such developments would have been "unthinkable" 10 years ago. That is true of course. Yet these relationships are now forming a central part of a wider Flight Centre growth plan to aggressively target previously uncharted sectors of the industry.

Shortly before the turn of the year, the retailer further underscored this with the acquisition of US-based youth and student specialist StudentUniverse.com.

Within days another deal followed, seeing Flight Centre take controlling interest in Australian online agency BYOjet.com, which also has existing strong LCC relationships.

The common thread linking these developments is that neither is concerned with growing sales through Flight Centre's core shop network but predominantly focused on building its online business.

While virtually peerless in bricks and mortar, Flight Centre has been decidedly less dominant in the transactional online space - despite about half its inquiries in

Australia apparently being generated online.

Commoditised, low margin product such as LCC fares lends itself better to the web than selling it in shops where productivity levels are closely monitored.

The addition of such product will certainly improve Flight Centre's online offering while taking little from its store network.

The BYOjet deal will also bolster Flight Centre Group's online operations. It is a relatively small business compared to the established players such as Webjet, whose TTV climbed to \$1.26 billion in FY2015.

But with a turnover of around \$100m, BYOjet has a solid base from which to grow, particularly if Flight Centre puts some marketing muscle behind it.

Webjet, Wotif and Expedia have for a long while been relatively untroubled by Flight Centre in the online arena.

With flightcentre.com set to benefit from a slew of LCC deals and the acquisition of an online player in the form of BYOjet, that could be about to change.

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CANBERRA AIRPORT PENS HISTORIC DEAL



CANBERRA Airport will soon be able to put the “international” back into its name, having struck a historic deal with Singapore Airlines last month linking the Australian capital with Singapore and Wellington, New Zealand.

Dubbed ‘Capital Express’, Canberra Airport’s first international service will run four times a week and will be operated

utilising a 266-seat retrofitted Boeing 777-200.

“This new service linking Singapore, Canberra and Wellington reflects the close ties between the three countries,” said Singapore Airlines chief executive officer, Goh Choon Phong.

“We are excited about the prospects for

our new ‘Capital Express’ route, which we are confident will appeal to leisure, government and corporate travellers,” he added.

Acting Prime Minister, Warren Truss, described the agreement as a “game changer” for Canberra, saying that it was “high time that Australia’s capital has a regular international air link.

“Canberra Airport has made great progress over recent years but this is a quantum-leap in its development. Singapore Airlines’ new service will create important benefits for more than 900,000 people in the Australian Capital Territory,” he remarked.

Singapore Airlines’ alliance partner and major , Virgin Australia, will codeshare on flights between Canberra and Singapore, as well as provide access to its Canberra Airport lounge to SQ’s business class passengers.

Fares for the new routes have been keenly priced, starting from just \$650 all inclusive return for Canberra-Singapore and \$469 for Canberra-Wellington.

Pictured front left signing the landmark agreement is: Terry Snow, executive director, Canberra Airport; Goh Choon Phong, chief executive officer of Singapore Airlines and ACT Chief Minister, Andrew Barr.

PEUGEOT EARLYBIRD SALE & NEW BROCHURE

THOSE wanting to lease a Peugeot for their next European road trip are invited to take advantage of 2016 earlybird deals, including 10 days free rental on longer trips.

Ten complimentary days hire are on offer when customers rent any model across all ranges for 21 to 175 days.

The earlybird offer also includes 50% off delivery and return fees as well as a further three bonus days for all loyal clients who have leased a Peugeot since 2006 - simply book and pay by 29 February 2016.

Any additional collection and/or return fees can be avoided by clients picking up and dropping off their Peugeot in France. Extra fees apply in other European cities.

DriveAway Holiday’s 2016 brochure contains all the information needed when leasing a Peugeot including delivery and return fees, locations, travel restrictions and accessories.

Australians who qualify for long-term Peugeot leasing must live outside the European Union and not be residing

in the region for more than 185 consecutive days.

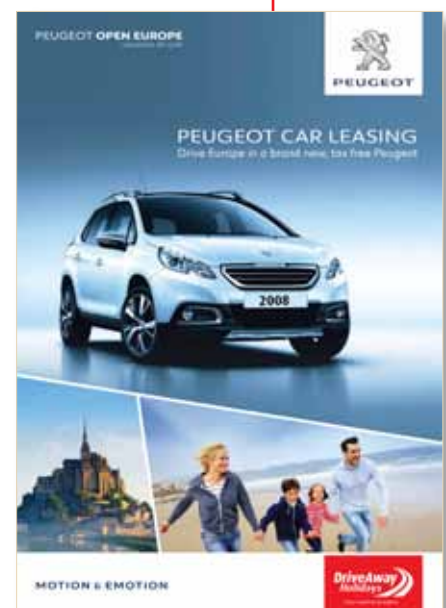
The minimum age for rental is 18 years but Australian provisional drivers licences will not be accepted.

All Peugeot vehicles are left hand drive and equipped with air-conditioning, an anti-lock braking system, electronic stability programming, power steering, cruise control, central locking, MP3 compatible, electronic windows, electronic anti-theft device, Bluetooth, USB & jack plug, and safety jacket and triangle.

With diesel fuel generally cheaper in Europe, Peugeot provides a large range of diesel models in the fleet to choose from.

The leasing includes full vehicle insurance with no vehicle excess, full factory warranty, personal accident insurance, free additional drivers, unlimited kilometres and 24 hour assistance in over 40 countries throughout Europe.

To book, call DriveAway Holidays Peugeot consultants on 1300 729 972.



A LITTLE INSIGHT FROM BOULDING

INSIGHT Vacations CEO John Boulding has downplayed suggestions the tour operator's joint brochure release with sister brand Uniworld River Cruises was a move to compete with the likes of APT & Scenic.

"We do our own thing. We never really look at others and this certainly wasn't a decision based on what they're doing, it's a decision based on what we have," Boulding told *travelBulletin*.

"I guess people will make comparison and they're going to be extremely pleasantly surprised when they do."

Last month the pair released a joint brochure offering eight land and cruise holidays throughout Europe and Egypt, revealing plans to expand the program further to *travelBulletin* the very next day.

"We didn't [launch the program] earlier because we really felt that with the major launch that we do in September, we didn't want to confuse things, Boulding explains, adding "but for 2017 yes, we will be expanding it."

Boulding says the tie-up gives agents the opportunity to potentially double their business in one booking.

"It's a simple sale, right from the word go...and you get full Insight commission on it."

Back-Roads launches 2016-17 winter program

THOSE who have only travelled Europe in the warmer months can fall in love all over again by touring the continent in winter. From picture perfect snow-covered peaks framing ancient villages to the buzzing atmosphere of the Christmas markets, there's plenty to discover.

Brand manager of Back-Roads Touring, Hugh Houston, said the company had expanded its winter tours with demand for bookings in the colder months increasing every year.

"We continue to see high demand for tours throughout Europe and the UK in winter and have increased our offering for 2016 in line with this, with the addition of the Imperial Cities: Prague, Vienna and Budapest and the Christmas Time at Court House Manor and Essence of Iceland tours," he said.

"People love their European Christmas experience so much, they often come back to us within 12 months to book their next winter Back-Roads tour."

Visit www.backroadstouring.com for more information on Back-Road's range of winter tours.



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

ATAS GAIN INVOLVES PAIN

TRAVEL agents know the best place to go, the best way to get there and the best things to do when you arrive. It is a career and an art developed over many years. Websites, random searches and user rating sites just don't have, and will never have, the level of experience that travel agents have gained by being professional people dedicated to just knowing.

But one of the challenges the industry faces is that some see it as a place to rip people off. Since the travel industry was deregulated and the previous compensation scheme was removed, these rogue agents have made headlines. Prior to the changes over 18 months ago, the industry had a cushion to cover up this type of behaviour - meaning the rogues were protected from bad media coverage, and the ability to re-offend was presented to these people.

It presents a moral dilemma. On one hand the former system was a good thing as consumers got their money back. But on the other hand there was little action taken to arrest the criminal behaviour.

The changes have meant that if a travel agent does the wrong thing, the likelihood they will go to jail is far greater than in the past - as clearly demonstrated over the last 18 months.

So now there is no longer a "big brother" in place, it's time for the industry to re-think how to best address the future and weed out these dodgy characters. For 27 years the Travel Compensation Fund failed to do this. Sure it had buckets of money to hush everyone up when an agent failed, but what it did not do was stop the problem.

In the new environment the introduction of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme (ATAS) was designed as a first line defence. The standards and criteria developed by the industry for the industry clearly identify business disciplines that professional agents need to have in order to stand out as trustworthy.

And because the law is now left to work as it should, the message that this sends is, if you want to rip people off you will face the full force of the law. This is why AFTA pushed for the reform to de-regulate. We wanted to increase the standards of the industry and weed out the dodgy players.

Yes, this means some pain as we transition to a more robust industry, but we must have the resolve to stick together to see our sector reform. Rome was not built in a day as they say.

For the new modern travel agency community, the future is bright. Thanks to the reform, innovation, creativity and competitive advantage has been handed to those who know what they are doing and how to succeed and grow.

As the review of ATAS is handed down there are some good lessons that have come from the process, with many of the recommendations set to allow ATAS to continually improve to ensure it remains relevant to both the industry and consumers.

‘We must have the resolve to stick together to see our sector reform.’



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CATO CRISIS MANAGEMENT FORUM

IN THE event of a major incident involving your clients, would you know what to do? What can DFAT do? What is the airline's responsibility? How do you handle the media and how can you protect your clients, business and reputation?

A crisis management forum run by the Council of Australian Tour Operators attempts to answer these serious questions.

Tourism industry and government experts will provide information and details on best practice in the case of a crisis - covering the vital points of who, how and what.

Each participant will be provided with a template for creating their own crisis management plan.

Presenters will include DFAT's director of crisis management and contingency planning department Kirsty McNeill and Sydney Airport's manager of safety and emergency management Michael Harris, as well as Meredith Stalb, chief operating officer of Cover-More Travel Insurance.

Topics will include the role of DFAT, airlines, airports, travel insurance companies and tour operator/travel agents in the event of an incident, managing information flows - including media attention - as well as a panel discussion of real life experiences of CATO members. The event will take place on 15 March in Ultimo. For pricing and to reserve your place please contact Peter Baily at CATO on 0423 261 875 or pahbaily@bigpond.net.au, or visit www.cato.asn.au.

New team for Abu Dhabi



THE Walshe Group has formally taken over the Australian and New Zealand representation for the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority, with Ola Kay appointed as the destination's new Country Manager. Also new to the team is Jamie Bunn, who is the Travel Trade and MICE Executive.

Kay, who has moved to the Walshe Group after a brief stint with the Travel Corporation as marketing manager for Insight Vacations, is enthusiastic about the new role, with a personal background in the Middle East. "Having grown up in the region, I have a passion for its culture, diversity and incredible vibrancy, and I am eager to share these experiences with the local market," she said.

Bunn, who was also previously with Insight Vacations, has experience with the region through a former four year stint with Etihad Airways. The pair are excited to unveil the developing story of Abu Dhabi, which in 2016 will see major activity including the much anticipated opening of the Louvre Abu Dhabi.

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TTF VIEW

Margy Osmond, CEO,
Tourism & Transport Forum Australia

THE HEART OF A STRONGER AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

TOURISM is one of the bright rays of sunshine for the Australian economy in 2016 at a time when the doom and gloom talk of debts and deficits, unemployment and economic growth figures are casting a grey cloud. If any industry embodies the enthusiasm Prime Minister Turnbull has shown for the future of Australia it's the visitor economy. Tourism is a sector that naturally looks forward, embracing innovation and change to create new experiences and attractions for our customers.

And that is backed up by the numbers. International and domestic tourists are forecast to spend a combined \$112 billion over the current financial year – up 4.5 per cent. That is a growth rate nearly twice that of the national economy and we can do even better if we place tourism and other key growth industries at the heart of Australia's economic strategy.

This is a key reason why the Tourism & Transport Forum Australia (TTF) has spearheaded the formation of the Future

‘Tourism is a sector that naturally looks forward, embracing innovation and change...’

Economy Forum with other industry leaders in agribusiness, international education, financial services and IT. Our sectors represent the best opportunities for economic growth and new employment over the coming decades. Taxation,

infrastructure, innovation, sustainability, trade and the workforce are policy areas that we want to engage with government on and have a new dialogue about the future of our industries as well as the actions we need to take to ensure we have the right settings to reach our full potential.

In tourism that means reducing the \$1 billion burden of the Passenger Movement Charge (PMC) on international visitors. It also means reducing the cost of visas and streamlining the red tape for people wanting to visit Australia and spend their hard earned money on our tourist offerings. These tourism taxes are making Australia less competitive in a cutthroat market, particularly when other international destinations are making visitation simple and affordable.

The rapid growth of the sharing economy presents its own unique challenges and opportunities for the industry. The reality is that these new types of shared accommodation and transportation offerings are here to stay but they must be on a level playing field with traditional operators. Competition is good as long as it is fair.

A Federal election year is a great opportunity to engage with the government, opposition and crossbenchers to ensure that an industry that shows so much potential to create the jobs and economic wealth that will maintain and enhance our quality of life, is front and centre of our national policy agenda.

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AGEING GRACEFULLY: UNITED AIRLINES CELEBRATES 30TH ANNIVERSARY

travelBulletin caught up with Alison Espley, United Airlines' director of Australia and New Zealand, to chat about the carrier's big 3-0 milestone, shiny new Dreamliner planes and plans for the year ahead. BONNIE TAI reports.

YOUR 30th birthday is a time honoured occasion, marked usually by a momentary quarter-life crisis followed by a boozy blow-out; but for American-headquartered carrier United the opposite is true, with the airline choosing instead to celebrate the milestone with grace.

Still in the midst of planning, United's Australia and New Zealand director Alison Espley remained tight-lipped on the specifics of the airline's birthday festivities, but hinted at a number of "unique activities" sure to please UA's agency partners and loyal frequent fliers that are scheduled to roll out starting from this month.

"We're looking forward to sharing this occasion with our customers and the Australian market," she says. "We especially want to recognise our agency partners without whom our success would not have been possible".

United first began operations in Australia and the Pacific in 1986, having formerly been mostly a US domestic carrier. Thirty years on, United Airlines and United Express

now operate nearly 5,000 flights a day to 342 airports, across six different continents including Australia.

"We are really excited for the next phase of United in Australia," remarked Espley. "The performance of our Sydney to Los Angeles services continue to meet our expectations and we are confident we will continue to be successful on both routes – especially with the introduction of B787-9 Dreamliner aircraft."

‘We especially want to recognise our agency partners without whom our success would not have been possible.’

From March onwards, Dreamliner planes will operate across all of United's Sydney to San Francisco/Los Angeles routes, and will continue to run on its Melbourne to Los Angeles leg, which in 2014 broke a world record for the longest 787 route to date.

Espley describes the new planes as a "game changer" for the airline, saying they will "revolutionise United's flying experience", offering improved comfort for passengers with bigger windows, improved lighting, larger overhead bins and lower cabin altitude to help reduce the symptoms of jetlag.

"We're delighted that all of our customers will now be able to experience superior inflight comfort and amenities," she said.

The new B787-9 aircraft will feature a total of 252 seats – 48 in its BusinessFirst section – and 204 in United Economy, which includes 63 Economy Plus seats with added legroom. Inflight satellite-based Wi-Fi will also be offered on all flights in and out of Australia, making it easier for passengers to stream video content from their own personal devices.

"While our backseat entertainment is still an essential part of travel, we understand that some of our customers want to use their own device and we need to have this option available," she explained. "We offer more complimentary entertainment streamed to personal devices than any other airline in the world".

On the back of its new daily SYD-LA/SFO services, Espley revealed United will also commence non-stop flights between Auckland and San Francisco from its SFO hub beginning July, utilising the new Dreamliner aircraft.

"United has purposely timed these new flights to connect at San Francisco," explained Espley. "We're thrilled to be able to offer New Zealand passengers convenient, round-trip one-stop services between Auckland and more than 44 US cities".

"2016 is set to be an exciting year for United," she concluded.





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ONLINE TRAVEL PLATFORMS AREN'T ADDRESSING THE REAL ISSUE

WILLEM NIEMEIJER, founder of Southeast Asian operator Khiri Group, tells online travel platforms: consumers don't want volume of choice. They want an experience.

TECHNOLOGY helps us to sift through large amounts of data and present it in a way that makes sense to us. The Internet makes the results available to billions. The travel industry is heading this way too, with the mushrooming of 'travel platforms', all seeking to replace the tour operator or travel agent.

On current evidence this isn't going to happen. Here's why.

Allowing the consumer to be in touch with the service provider is the ultimate goal. But isn't adding value the basis of any successful business? With online travel platforms, offering a lower price is usually the only add-on they can come up with.

We've seen this before with hotel booking platforms, which took the industry by surprise and reduced good hotel sales people to commodity peddlers. According to the platforms, the only differentiating factors between hotels are price, star rating and a bevy of facilities. This may be true for the time-poor business traveller on a specific budget, but not for the leisure traveller. For them it's all about the experience. A choice of 1396 hotels in Bangkok doesn't help the



‘In the travel industry, delivering on promise isn't good enough. It's about exceeding expectations’

Willem Niemeijer, founder
Khiri Group

experience seeker.

It makes little sense then, to take the online platform model and try to force it on to travel experiences that combine hotels, guided tours and recommended 'do-it-yourself' discoveries. It doesn't work because local, authentic encounters and personalized attention are still the measure of a good holiday on the ground.

Travel platforms that have knocked on the doors of Khiri Travel, our destination management company, with offers to replace its traditional clients (tour operators and travel agents) with the 'opportunity' to connect to travellers direct are making an essential mistake. These online platforms do not add value for the customer. They merely offer a tonne of products for them to

choose from. And unlike the hotel booking platforms, it's very hard – or even impossible – for the holidaymaker to see if they even get a price advantage.

Conversion rates are a solid way to test the success of online travel platforms. Dig a bit deeper and you have the answer why nearly all platforms are knocking on everyone's door saying, "Please upload your products. We'll take just a little commission." They are using technology to let dumb volume replace relevance and efficiency. In other words, if you have 10,000 products and a very small percentage of them attract one or two bookings a day, is that being successful or inefficient? And who bears the cost of this inefficiency?

Delivering the perfect travel product to the informed customer needs a radical rethink. It's imperative for tour operators and travel agents to stay on top of local developments in their destinations. Some already do so by shifting their product management to trusted suppliers, leaving them to focus on customer needs.

In the travel industry, delivering on promise isn't good enough. It's about exceeding expectations. That is complicated, as most travel products are used once by clients, then expected again, or a variation of it, in a separate country for next year's holiday. However, successful tour operators and their network of suppliers can and do deliver on this as they have a deep understanding of their clients which is built on trust, experience, and in-depth local knowledge of the local possibilities available.

The challenge is open for technology to improve on the quality and efficiency this DMC network delivers.





AUSSIE AQUATIC ADVENTURES TO STAR

Australia's breathtaking underwater world takes centre stage in Tourism Australia's latest campaign. NATHALIE CRAIG explores what inspired this new vision.

TOURISM Australia has a new focus for its latest \$40 million tourism campaign; the country's oceans and waterways.

The new creative narrated by Australian actor and heart-throb Chris Hemsworth highlights Australia's world-class aquatic and coastal experiences.

Tourism Australia's Managing Director, John O'Sullivan says using a marine marketing strategy for Australia is completely different than what they've used in previous campaigns.

"While Australia is known for world-class natural beauty, the world still doesn't have a full appreciation of the breadth, depth and quality of our aquatic and coastal experiences," he says.

"Our iconic coastline has always been an important part of our destination story but never before has it stolen the show on this scale.

"Already 70% of our international visitors

enjoy an aquatic or coastal experience as part of their trip to Australia, so this is a campaign we know will resonate strongly across all our key markets," O'Sullivan continues.

The campaign, which was officially unveiled at an event in New York on Australia Day eve, features over a dozen distinct experiences representing every Australian state and territory.

Scenes include: a helicopter ride over the 12 Apostles; swimming in Sydney Harbour; snorkeling on the Great Barrier Reef; kayaking through Katherine Gorge; driving on the beach in South Australia; cycling around Lake Burley Griffin; sailing through the sparkling blue waters of Rottnest Island and walking the recently launched Three Capes Track in Tasmania.

Chris Hemsworth's voiceover for the new broadcast ad has been used to provide an "authentic and influential Australian voice to help tell Australia's aquatic and coastal story."

The powerful campaign was created using 40 cameras, eight 360 camera rigs and three drones.

"The world of destination marketing is increasingly competitive. We have to constantly push ourselves to find new ways to gain a competitive edge in a cluttered global

travel market," Tourism Australia's chief marketing officer, Lisa Ronson says.

The campaign was designed to be "incredibly immersive" while accurately capturing "what it feels like to be in Australia and to experience for yourself being on, in or near the water.

"By using virtual reality and 360° technology we hope to inspire prospective travellers considering Australia for their next holiday and get them to take that crucial next step towards making a booking," she explains.

Tourism Australia created the campaign in conjunction with creative agencies Clemenger BBDO Sydney and FINCH as well as production agency Vrse.works, known for its leading work on virtual reality and 360° content creation.

Tourism Australia will be rolling out the new creative - starting in the US with a joint campaign with Virgin Australia - and then across other key international markets, including the UK, China, Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, India, Malaysia and New Zealand.

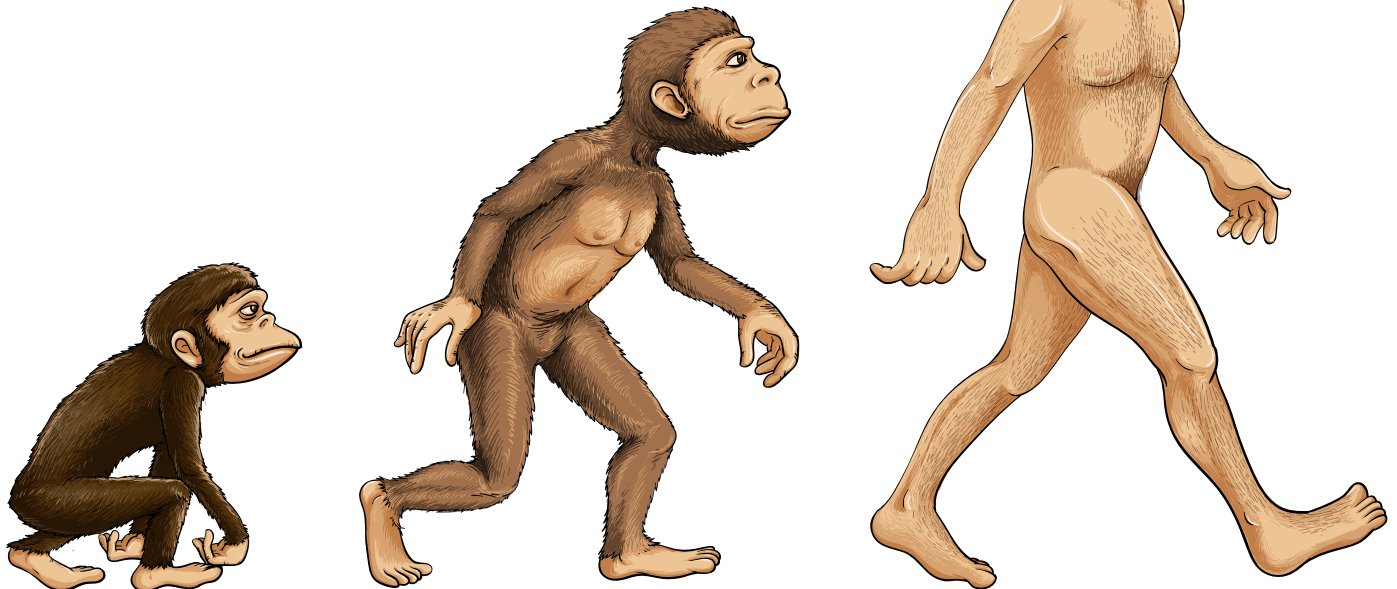
The campaign will sit alongside existing the tourism board's other marketing activities, including its current promotion of food and wine and Indigenous experiences.

THE INDUSTRY

EVOLVES

It's now 18 months since governments across Australia swept away the former licensing regime for travel agents, along with the Travel Compensation Fund. The industry is now regulating itself, and while there's still debate ongoing about the benefits of the new arrangements and the implementation of the AFTA Travel Accreditation Scheme, the removal of red tape has seen several innovations which would not have been possible under the former regime.

BRUCE PIPER looks at how the world has changed.



SOME years ago, setting up a travel business in Australia used to be a rather expensive activity, with hefty fees payable to a range of organisations before you could even open the door. Travel agents operating in jurisdictions other than the Northern Territory required a licence, costing around \$1,100 up front for a corporate registration, along with annual renewal charges of around \$900. You were also required to join the Travel Compensation Fund (TCF), with a one-off cost for a new application of more than \$8,000 – and again there were ongoing costs with the TCF. If you wanted to just expand your existing operation into a new location it was slightly cheaper – but still required a payment to the TCF of about \$5,500 simply to register a branch.

All that has now disappeared – and for some operators this has been a breath of fresh air, allowing them to spread their wings and venture into previously unexplored areas. A case in point is NSW-based

Hunter Travel Group, a Helloworld member with 12 branches across the NSW Hunter region and NSW north coast, along with five RACT Travel outlets in Tasmania. The thriving business, which took home a swag of National Travel Industry Awards last

‘Deregulation has given us flexibility to work with other businesses that see travel as part of their distribution channel.’

year including ‘Best Travel Agency Retail – Multi Location’, has made the most of the deregulated environment – most notably by implementing “pop-up” travel outlets inside major retailer Costco.

In June last year the agency had a presence within Costco’s Sydney flagship store in Auburn for 12 days, followed by

another stint within Costco Casula. Each of the temporary helloworld travel agencies was staffed by three employees and saw thousands of shoppers exposed to the brand. Hunter Travel Group managing director Brett Dann said the pop-ups were a great success. “The customers loved the idea that Costco was interested in the travel space, and showed great interest in helloworld’s services,” he said. “We were very pleased with the high number of quotes, giveaway entries and the sales that were generated from our pop-up store”.

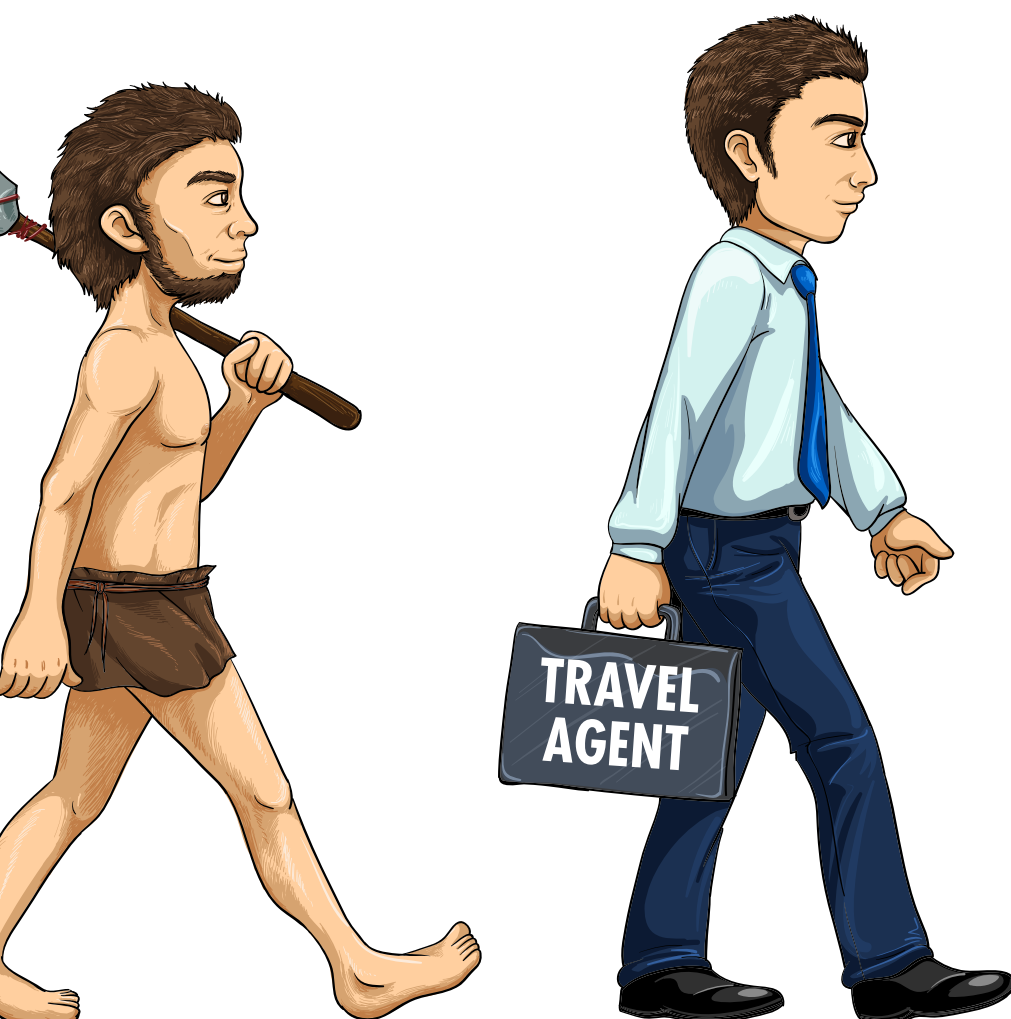
Not resting on his laurels, Dann flagged further plans to expand the initiative to Costco stores in the ACT, Victoria and Queensland as well – something that would have been well-nigh impossible under the TCF regime. “Deregulation has given us flexibility to work with other businesses that see travel as part of their distribution channel. We are talking to Costco on how we can improve the delivery and benefit for both parties, and we will test other methods of delivering product in the next couple of months... stay tuned,” he told *travelBulletin*.

Home-based agencies have also seen changes due to the new world of deregulation. Travel Counsellors, which had long held off establishing a beachhead in Western Australia because of that state’s legislative requirements, was poised to move as soon as the red tape was removed, and has expanded rapidly in the West, with ten agents now operating in the state.

‘More awareness needs to be built around the importance of booking with an accredited, reputable agent.’

Travel Counsellors gm Tracy Parkinson said the group now insists that suppliers are financially protected. She also noted a sharp increase in media coverage of failures. “It’s a shame that some Aussie travellers are being ripped off and left with their holiday dreams in tatters, so more awareness needs to be built around the importance of booking with an accredited, reputable agent. AFTA is doing a great job of this with ATAS,” she said.

TravelManagers has also changed the way



Continues over page

Continues from previous page

it operates in Western Australia, with the new regime allowing it to treat its Personal Travel Managers there as contractors rather than under an employment agreement, bringing WA into line with other jurisdictions.

However Barry Mayo, director of TravelManagers parent company House of Travel, says this is the only material change the company has experienced in its day to day operations. Continuing to question the benefits of the changed environment, he said TravelManagers is also now having to undertake a lot more due diligence on the financial standing of suppliers.

‘In the past if a supplier was a TCF member this provided a degree of financial security that no longer exists...’

“In the past if a supplier was a TCF member this provided a degree of financial security that no longer exists... this increase in financial due diligence of suppliers is taking up significant time and is a hidden increased cost of doing business,” Mayo said.

Flight Centre – ever the travel industry behemoth – has strongly backed the reform of the sector. “We believe it has been a positive and important step,” Flight Centre spokesman Haydn Long told *travelBulletin*. “While we have not made any significant

changes, we have been able to remove some unnecessary bureaucracy and make some savings,” he said. That’s somewhat of an understatement, given that tracking through back issues of *Travel Daily* confirms that Flight Centre was on average opening about 100 new branches every year.

While some of those were relocations, that still amounts to more than \$500,000 saved annually by Flight Centre in TCF branch application fees alone. But that’s not all – the removal of the TCF has also had a big impact on how Flight Centre and other major operators handle client monies, with previous requirements forcing them to maintain large cash balances.

Flight Centre has invested substantially in AFTA and ATAS, with all of its outlets accredited under the new scheme. Long said the new regime gives travel companies flexibility in how they can expand internationally and manage their capital.

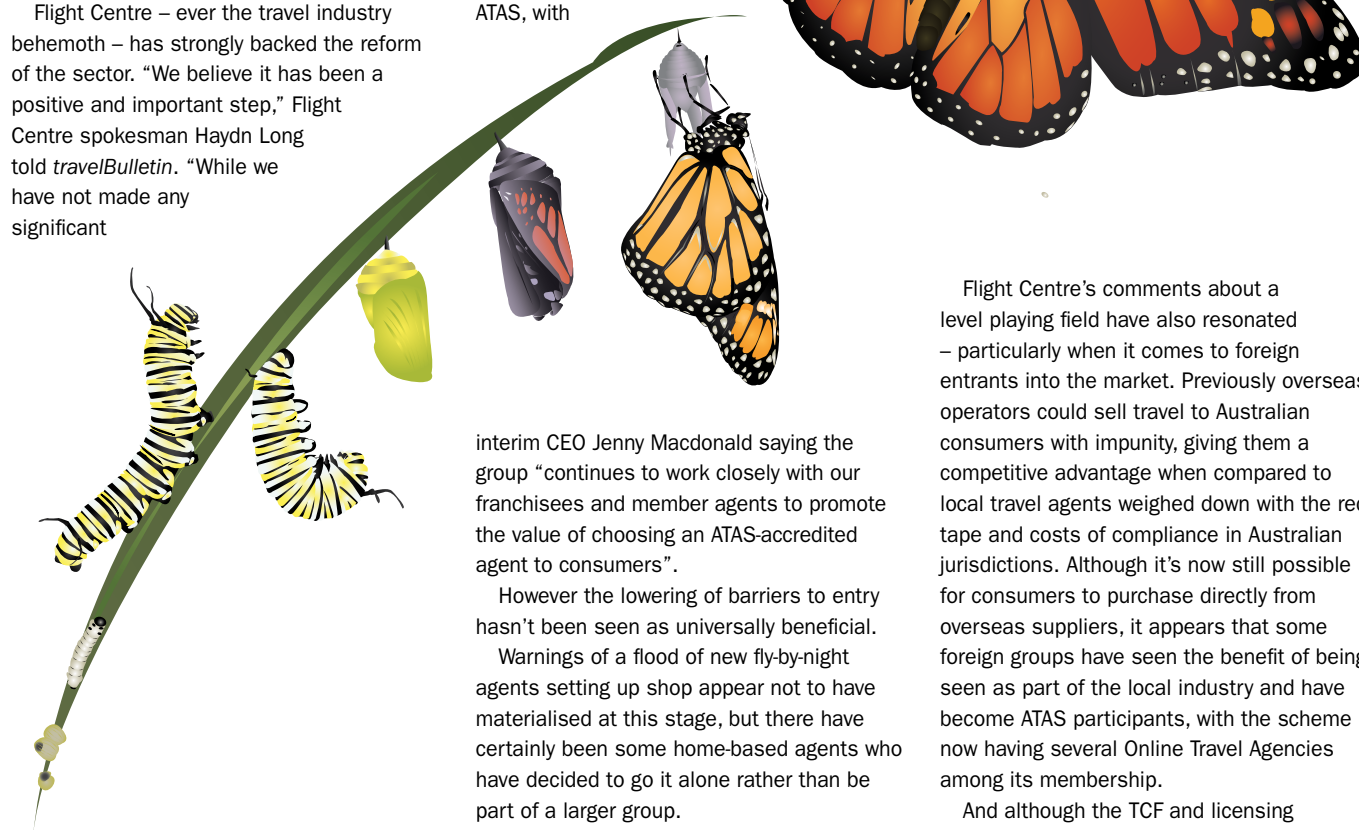
“Importantly, it also puts travel agents on a more level playing field with airlines and other general retailers,” he added.

Helloworld also confirmed its strong support for ATAS, with

Most in this class are top performers with an extensive client base, meaning they are able to establish their own relationships with suppliers. Previously they would

‘Importantly, it also puts travel agents on a more level playing field with airlines and other general retailers’

have probably found it more difficult (and expensive) to run their own businesses, but the deregulated environment has seen them able to flourish on their own, with AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury estimating that there are around 20 “accredited entities” part of the ATAS program which are home-based operators. ATAS itself is also acting in some cases as a barrier to entry, with many suppliers now requiring ATAS accreditation from travel agents before dealing with them – and vice versa.



interim CEO Jenny Macdonald saying the group “continues to work closely with our franchisees and member agents to promote the value of choosing an ATAS-accredited agent to consumers”.

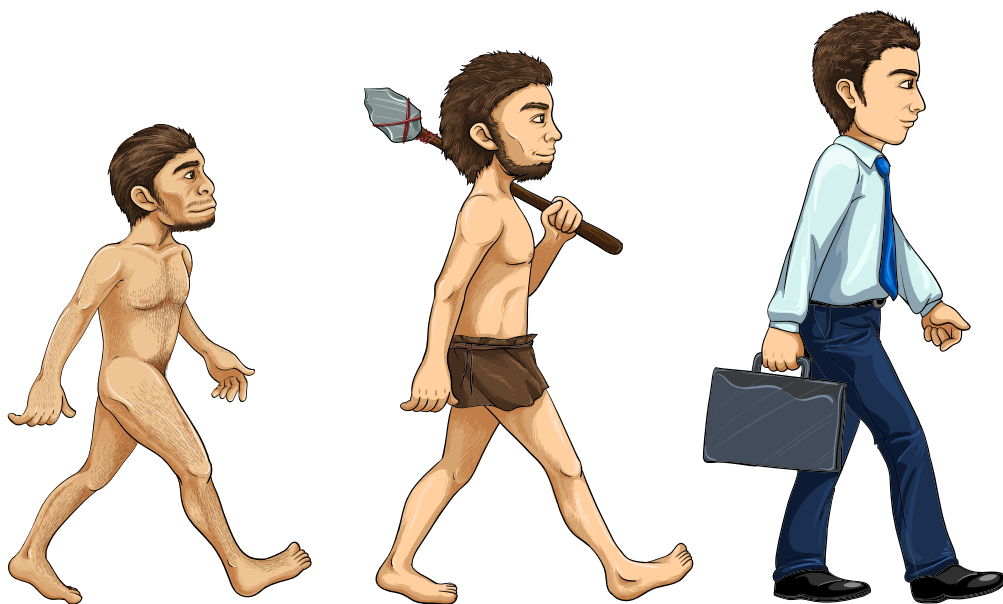
However the lowering of barriers to entry hasn’t been seen as universally beneficial.

Warnings of a flood of new fly-by-night agents setting up shop appear not to have materialised at this stage, but there have certainly been some home-based agents who have decided to go it alone rather than be part of a larger group.

Flight Centre’s comments about a level playing field have also resonated – particularly when it comes to foreign entrants into the market. Previously overseas operators could sell travel to Australian consumers with impunity, giving them a competitive advantage when compared to local travel agents weighed down with the red tape and costs of compliance in Australian jurisdictions. Although it’s now still possible for consumers to purchase directly from overseas suppliers, it appears that some foreign groups have seen the benefit of being seen as part of the local industry and have become ATAS participants, with the scheme now having several Online Travel Agencies among its membership.

And although the TCF and licensing

barriers to entry have been removed, we are yet to see airline tickets being sold through service stations and post offices, as some doomsayers had forecast – although that may change. As AFTA CEO Westbury points out, even though a license is no longer required, a travel agent still needs access to a GDS or consolidator as well as other suppliers – not to mention a credit card merchant facility. Westbury believes these natural checks and balances are serving to put a brake on the rise of dodgy operators. Some in the industry may recall the furore which arose some years ago when Jetstar flagged a new arrangement with Australia Post, which proposed that tickets on the low-cost carrier be made available via Post Shops across the country.



‘And although the TCF and licensing barriers to entry have been removed, we are yet to see airline tickets being sold through service stations and post offices, as some doomsayers forecast...’

The regulations ultimately didn't allow this to go ahead, but the proposal was probably one of the key triggers to get officials thinking about change. Some believe it could still happen, although the rapid evolution of the internet and improvements in online booking technologies mean airlines like Jetstar are now firmly focused on direct sales through their own websites.

One thing is certain – the creation of ATAS has certainly resulted in much more publicity for the benefits of booking through travel agents. Funding obtained by AFTA to set up and manage ATAS has seen significant marketing campaigns undertaken, with targeted digital, print and social media placements targeting specific demographics to influence the way they book travel. That included for the first time ever a TV advertisement touting the travel agency sector. Announced late last year, the Channel 9 Sydney promotion saw the ATAS commercial running on a range of top-rating television programs including TODAY, Mornings, the Ellen De Generes Show and more. And now that the video collateral has been produced it's likely to be shown in other

jurisdictions as further funding is obtained – watch this space.

A sore point for many is the millions of dollars contributed by the industry which is still held by the Travel Compensation Fund. Yet to be finally wound up, the original terms of the TCF trust deed would see this money go to the consolidated revenue of each state. AFTA is continuing to pressure governments for at least some of this money to be used for the benefit of the industry, and it's understood some progress is being made on this front, with further details to become available in the coming months as some hitches to the finalisation of the TCF are overcome. AFTA is likely to use any such monies received to further promote ATAS-accredited agents to consumers.

The industry-led nature of ATAS, rather than having the Australian travel sector overseen by a cumbersome multi-state and territory government bureaucracy, was highlighted last month with the release of an AFTA-commissioned review of the scheme conducted by lawyer Chris Greiner. When ATAS was established it included the formal review mechanism after the first year's operation of the scheme, which saw submissions solicited from across the industry. Greiner gathered the feedback and came up with 11 recommendations – nine of which have been formally adopted by the AFTA board. As well, the review recommended practical changes in wording for the scheme's governance document, which will also be adopted.

Interestingly, in their response to the review AFTA's directors noted that the ATAS scheme had been responsible for some \$60,000 being returned to consumers as a result of complaints made about ATAS

participants, under the scheme's dispute resolution procedures.

“This clearly demonstrates that the systems that are in place are available to consumers and work to get the best outcome to settle disputes,” the Board said. That, along with the fact that just two referrals were made to the AFTA Code

‘One thing is certain – the creation of ATAS has certainly resulted in much more publicity for the benefits of booking through travel agents’

Compliance Monitoring Committee (ACCMC) “would suggest that the current internal processes adopted by participants and the external process available to consumers and participants via ATAS have worked well”.

Although some of the recommendations from the ATAS review were not adopted – most notably a suggestion by Greiner that AFTA establish a timeline for the introduction of mandatory client trust accounts – there is no doubt that the ability to evolve ATAS in response to such feedback demonstrates the increased flexibility that self-regulation has given to the industry. The changes, according to Westbury, have helped ensure that ATAS is well-positioned for the future, “and will continue to play a critical role in helping consumers identify professional, credible and trusted travel professionals in a de-regulated environment”.



SKIN IN THE GAME FOR WEBJET CHIEF

Webjet has been a sharemarket success story, with the company's share price increasing from just 15c in 2004 to more than \$5.50 as this issue of *travelBulletin* goes to print. Putting that in perspective, an investment of \$10,000 in the company ten years ago would now be worth more than \$360,000. So it's no wonder that the company's ceo John Guscic is keen to have a larger piece of the action, as BRUCE PIPER reports.

CLEARLY the Webjet board has confidence in Guscic, who late last year had his contract extended to 30 June 2018. At the same time the company's remuneration committee announced changes to his overall package, including a limited recourse loan of up to \$1.5 million "to assist him in accumulating an equity position in Webjet" by exercising his long term incentive options. Guscic told *travelBulletin* he has strong confidence in the future of the business, both in its traditional flights operation and in the business-to-business hotel division.

In terms of flights, Webjet already dominates the local OTA market for domestic services but Guscic expects the trend to online transactions to be mirrored for international flights. He said that while this part of the market had been more stubborn, Webjet is seeing a definite shift, particularly in terms of trans-Tasman sectors.

"Consumers want choice," he said. "While

traditional travel agents have access to all fares, typically they only present a subset. At Webjet we are able to offer all choices which gives consumers the opportunity to draw their own conclusions."

Webjet has highlighted this fact in its new TV advertising campaign which launched just after the New Year – and which drew the ire of bricks and mortar travel agents from across the country. *Travel Daily* broke the story in early January and provoked a storm of controversy – although, as some commentators have pointed out, consultants have criticised OTAs for years and so it's not a surprise to see Webjet striking back. The reality is that there is definitely a segment of the market which craves the wide variety of options highlighted by Webjet's fare matrix – even if they end up opting for a direct flight on a well-known carrier. "Webjet gives them permission to buy," Guscic told *travelBulletin*.

Webjet is also differentiated from its online

competitors by eschewing online marketing via Google or Facebook advertising as well as participation in meta-search engines such as Skyscanner or Kayak. Most of the company's online traffic is organic, meaning it can direct more funds towards marketing and further developing its loyal client base. Guscic claims Webjet has a "massive repeat purchase rate," and all these factors combine to mean metasearch is actually detrimental. "Why would we give credibility to a third party brand to leverage our fares to the lowest common denominator?" he asked. Webjet clients, he said, value the website's convenience and choice as well as dealing with a trusted brand, whereas "people doing metasearch are just looking for a cheap price". Instead Webjet interacts with consumers in the 'real world,' via TV ads and sports sponsorships which Guscic said give a much better rate of return. "We are focused on customers who come to us by default," he said.

One of the criticisms often levelled at OTAs like Webjet is that of service levels, however this isn't an issue, according to Guscic. Webjet has a 24 hour call centre and benchmarks itself against key competitors including airlines themselves. The formula seems to be working, with Webjet's TTV growing significantly faster than the overall aviation market last year – and Guscic forecasting that this trend will continue over the next five to ten years.

The other key area of potential for Webjet is its B2B hotel operations. The company's Dubai-based Lots of Hotels business as well as European accommodation wholesaler SunHotels, acquired last year, are part of a "major global opportunity," Guscic told *travelBulletin*. Established just two years ago, the hospitality division is already profitable and he believes the overall global market for wholesale hotels is worth as much as \$50 billion annually. Lots of Hotels is ideally situated in the fast-growing Middle East region, while Webjet has also seen strong performance from SunHotels which will "some day be a global player," Guscic said.

“People doing metasearch are just looking for a cheap price...we are focused on customers who come to us by default”

John Guscic, CEO Webjet

Locomote deal

TRAVELPORT-OWNED expense manager Locomote has joined forces with travel insurance business Allianz Global Assistance.

The newly announced partnership means travel insurance services will now feature in Locomote's corporate travel platform.

The agreement will also allow Allianz to offer customers a bespoke travel solution powered by Locomote.

Chief sales officer of Allianz Global Assistance Brad Smith said he was pleased by the extra benefits the partnership would bring the company.

‘The partnership came off the back of a mutual interest in keeping corporate travellers protected’

“We are confident of the value that Locomote brings to companies and the way its solution enhances the efficiency of company travel management,” he said. “Partnering with Locomote is a great opportunity to leverage our competitive edge, offer competitive premiums, and add a differentiating factor to our products.”

Vice Chairman of Locomote Philip Weinman said the partnership came off the back of a mutual interest in keeping corporate travellers protected.

“Our partnership with Allianz Global Assistance gives us the opportunity to strengthen Locomote's duty of care and procurement features with a highly-recognised insurance company,” he said.



CONCUR GROWING STRONGLY

TRAVEL and expense management firm Concur continues to go from strength to strength in the Australian market, with the SAP-owned operation's local workforce growing to around 100 employees over the last twelve months. The company sees itself as a disruptive innovator, harnessing the online “cloud” to simplify business expense reporting via a range of smartphone apps and management tools.

Last month the company was one of the many exhibitors at the annual Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas, showcasing a range of innovations currently under development. One of these is a system which links to a car's odometer to automatically log miles for business claims. There's also a new project which highlights destination-relevant apps to travellers when they are heading to a particular city, as well as a

system which simplifies the management of business expenses which have been charged to personal credit cards.

Other developments which rolled out last year included the “first native mobile air booking experience for business travellers,” with the Concur smartphone app enabling road warriors to make flight reservations which comply with their particular company's travel policies. Concur also unveiled a Locate & Alert service which allows travellers to “check in” when they arrive at their destination, while their companies can also leverage itinerary data to find and communicate with staff where required under their growing duty of care obligations.

The company's Australasian managing director, Matthew Goss, is **pictured above** with marketing manager Silvana Kozlovic and director of business development, Murray Werner.



JAZOODLE'S PREDICTION

TRAVEL business technology consultant Jazoodle predicts 2016 will be the year of consolidation in the industry.

The company, led by former Qantas and Amadeus executive Andrew Paton-Smith launched its eMerge solution in June 2015, as reported in *Travel Daily* (24 Jun 2015).

In the retail leisure space, Jazoodle says consolidation will be driven by pressure on margins, increased volumes, as well as an ageing agency demographic.

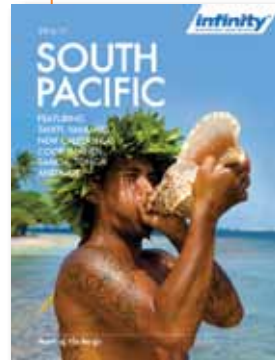
“Consolidation has been seen in other markets, particularly in the USA and UK, and now the forward activity we are seeing in Australia certainly means that the appetite for agency acquisition and conversely divestment is extremely high,” Paton-Smith said.

“We believe that 2016 will bring some eyebrow raising ‘coming togethers’,” he said.

eMerge is available in Australia and New Zealand and is a resource for all businesses looking to grow from acquisition, or owners looking to sell and maximise their business value.



G ADVENTURES has launched its new Earth brochure. Earth trips are designed to deliver a balance of must-see highlights, cultural exchange, insider access, value and spontaneous memorable moments. With diverse transport, character-rich accommodation and regional cuisine, the program includes train adventures across India's sprawling rail system, treks through Nepal and Tibet, active trips through New Zealand's South and North Islands and safaris in Africa.



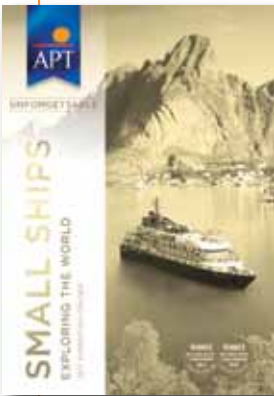
THE new Infinity South Pacific brochure covers Tahiti, Vanuatu, New Caledonia, Cook Islands, Samoa, Tonga and Niue. New product is scattered throughout, including new accommodation at Muri Beach Resort, Rarotonga and Crystal Blue Lagoon Villas, Rarotonga. New to 2016 is a Storytellers Eco Cycle Tour in Rarotonga and a swim with the dolphins experience at Moorea Dolphin Centre. For a list of the top tours and hotels, as well as four packages, see page four.



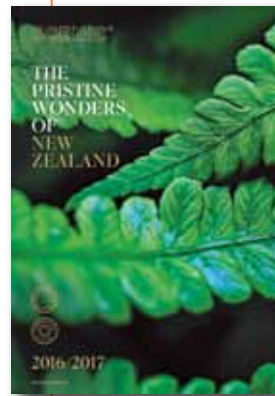
COLOMBIA and Costa Rica have been added to A&K's program this year and the Galapagos offering has been expanded with the addition of new vessels and a luxury land-based lodge experience. New journeys in mainland Ecuador include Mashpi Lodge in the cloud forest, a hacienda stay in Otavalo and an Amazon adventure at Napo Wildlife Centre Eco Lodge. Also new is a hosted small group journey in Peru and Argentina, with the option to extend the experience in Chile.



LINDBLAD Expeditions, in partnership with National Geographic is offering eight itineraries exploring the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions aboard the *National Geographic Explorer* and *National Geographic Orion*. Itineraries range from six to 23 days in length and highlights include a search for polar bears and Arctic wildlife, the chance to witness the midnight sun, exploring remote archaeological sites, volcanic landscapes and the world's youngest island.



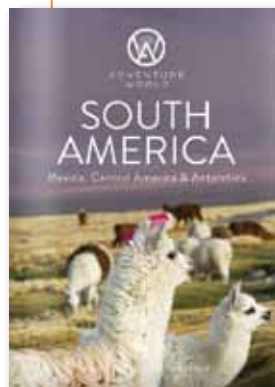
TWO small ship expedition cruise styles and a range of new itineraries are on offer in APT's new brochure. The cruise style of Soft Expedition Cruises has been introduced, where the ships will mainly be docked in port – although Zodiacs still feature and Freedom of Choice options are available. Four Soft Expedition Cruises have been added, exploring Japan, the Mediterranean, Southern Europe and the Baltics. Expedition Cruises to Britain and Ireland, South East Asia and the Kimberley are also included.



SEVEN tours ranging from six to 24 days in length feature in Scenic's New Zealand brochure. A new adapted 10-day tour to the South Island has been added, plus a number of new Enrich experiences and Freechoice activities. The 10-day Southern Delights includes some of the South Island's highlights, including Franz Josef Glacier, Queenstown and Fiordland National Park. There is a new Scenic Freechoice half day fishing tour in the Bay of Islands and new inclusions on the 24-day Ultimate New Zealand trip.



TEMPO Holidays has given Central Europe its own brochure, featuring new product to the lesser known areas in Switzerland such as Rigi Kaltbad, Stoos and Davos. Also new for Switzerland is the Grand Train Tour. In Germany, new wine packages, rail packages and self-drives are available, as well as a special "In the footsteps of Luther" tour, which follows the life of the famous protestant. A dedicated winter section focuses on skiing, private tours, igloo stays, winter self-drives and Christmas markets.



ADVENTURE World's 2016 South America program includes the new destinations of Uruguay and Suriname, a range of multi-country and in-depth itineraries and mix and match product. In Uruguay, there's a number of options including a wine focused experience travelling with a sommelier to top wineries, a comprehensive Montevideo discovery and a classic Uruguay route. In Suriname, travellers will be guided by author and adventurer Richard Bangs.

PLANNING

FOR THE
FUTURE

FOR many small-business owners it's enough to focus on where they will be next month, never mind where they will be 10 years from now. But it's not a bad idea to occasionally think about where you'd like to see yourself in a decade, if only to remind yourself why you went out on your own to build a business.

Entrepreneurs are passionate about learning and they need to learn how to adapt to challenges as they present themselves. Many entrepreneurs don't think about an exit plan, they think only about growing the business.

What separates successful and not-so-successful companies, is a vision. You must have a plan – If you don't have a map you don't know where you are going.

Planning is key to get to where you want to be. I plan for everything, I have one year and three year plans and my annual plans are tracked monthly to see that we are on track.

When you are thinking about 10 year plans then you are really talking about succession planning. You can't plan 10 years ahead for what you want to happen in your business but you can plan for succession or for an exit strategy.

I know for myself, thinking about 10 years' time, my plan is to still be involved in the business as an Executive Chair, work on the helicopter view of the company and sit on a few other boards.

Having been established for 17 years, I

wrote my succession plan over ten years ago. In my experience you are best to start looking at your exit or succession before you are frustrated or tired of the business. Leaving it till you are ready to exit makes it too late – you have lost your enthusiasm and passion and all you want to do is exit quickly. If your plan is to sell, the potential buyers may see the business as neglected and therefore not worth the money that you are asking for. Selling your business is all about the value the buyers see and what they are prepared to pay.

Planning is important no matter how near or far in advance you do it. Businesses that don't plan can often be taken by surprise and find themselves with unnecessary stress and sometimes last-minute expenses while scrambling to pull things together.

It's important to be flexible and adaptable to change or your business won't survive. Businesses also need to be innovative in order to appeal to new and existing customers.

When working in the business as opposed to on the business you can get caught up in the day to day operations leaving no time or energy for the planning process.

My suggestion for planning is always to take yourself away from your office environment. Find a happy place, somewhere with a view or that you feel at peace, with no distractions. Block half a day or a full day to work through your objectives and plan. If you find this difficult contract an advisor to

help you. This could be your accountant, a business coach or a mentor. Come away from that day with a structure that you can work with and refer to regularly. Business plans that are put in the bottom drawer are a waste of time.

Succession planning can take more time than one day; this could involve a key member of your staff if you are thinking of bringing in a shareholder or one of your family. Succession planning also requires your accountant and lawyer and can take months to come up with a final outcome. Once you have your exit or succession plan you have a framework to work towards. This should give you peace of mind as well as enthusiasm knowing that you have a way out of your business if you want to.

Failing to plan is planning to fail and especially in business as there is no magic formula to being successful. It is plain old hard work and disciplined planning.

Penny Spencer has over 20 years' experience in the travel industry, founded her first business in 1998, and is now managing director of multimillion dollar Spencer Group of Companies. She has also written a book called, "Love what you do and never work a day in your life" using her own experience to offer advice to others on business and career progression in any industry.



CAREER IN FOCUS

KERRI ANDERSON

Australian country manager for
Hawaii Tourism Oceania

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

In a nutshell, my job is to get Australians to visit Hawaii! More seriously though, as a destination marketer, it's a job with a huge amount of variety – from trade marketing to consumer marketing, airline partnerships, industry events, PR and social media, and MICE. I started as Australian country manager for Hawaii Tourism Oceania in early January so am new to the role and learning.

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

I did want a career that would enable me to travel but working in travel was not my original goal. Rather, I studied journalism with dreams of becoming a foreign correspondent. After a few years as a newspaper journalist I moved into corporate affairs in a range of industries including health, universities and local government. It was more opportunity than design that led me to the travel industry when I was offered a role in Tourism Queensland's corporate communications team back in 2000. Straight away I loved the industry and since then tourism has been my career home.

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

I completed an arts degree majoring in journalism and economics also did some post-graduate business study – which was an excellent foundation to build my career on.

“As you travel further down your career path, life and work experience become more important”



While I do think formal qualifications (whether it's university, TAFE or other) are important, particularly when you start out, as you travel further down your career path, life and work experience become more important. That said, I think you should never stop learning – whether it's formal or otherwise.

4. What do you love about your job?

I promote Hawaii so what's not to love? Until you've been you don't really understand what the “aloha spirit” is – but Hawaii is a destination that gets under your skin. Sure, it's physically beautiful, but it's the friendliness of the people, their culture, the layers to explore and the multitude of experiences that keep people coming back time and again.

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

Probably one of my biggest career challenges was when I first moved out of journalism and into PR and realised that the two fields are very different – I quickly gained a respect for how broad a skillset you need to be a good PR practitioner. On a specific level, I was working for Tourism and Events Queensland as Corporate Communications Manager when

the Queensland floods hit in January 2011. During the height of the Brisbane floods I was trying to manage our communications from my spare bedroom as our office was closed. The internet and even mobile phone services went down as many mobile towers were inundated so getting messaging out was difficult at the height of the crisis – plus I had friends and colleagues who were personally affected. And then Cyclone Yasi hit North Queensland a month later. This was a very challenging time, both workwise and emotionally, but I worked with some amazing people, both within TEQ and the wider industry, media and government, we had a strong crisis plan in place, and everyone really pulled together.

6. What factors were central to your success?

I think not having a Five Year Plan (I always hate that interview question – “where do you see yourself in five years?”). I'm not impulsive but I've always been open to opportunities as you never know where something may lead you and fortunately I haven't taken a majorly wrong turn yet! I also have two important philosophies in life – “If you don't ask, you don't get” and “Give it a good crack and see what happens!”

7. Did you have a mentor, and if so, how did you find them?

I wouldn't say I had one particular mentor. Throughout my career I've worked with some amazing managers and leaders (and a few not so amazing ones) so I've always tried to learn from both the good and the bad.

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

The biggest piece of advice I can give is to go for opportunities when they come along. You may not succeed every time, and if you don't, work out why and try to increase your skills or knowledge so you'll have a better shot next time. And also, don't be afraid to celebrate your and your team's successes – if you do a good job, let it be known and accept the kudos with grace.

GETTING **IN** WITH THE CROWD

THE New Year brings with it the inevitable questions around career development and whether the time and opportunity is right for you to consider your next move. Ahead of any planned move, you may want to turn some attention towards updating your LinkedIn profile as more employers are seeking insights into who you are and what you can bring to them well before they invite you in for an interview.

Not on LinkedIn yet? It's not for everyone, but if you are serious about managing your career reputation online, developing professional networks and advancing your career prospects then LinkedIn can help you with keeping your finger on the pulse. It's free to join and by spending an hour developing a profile, it's well worth it.

So now that you have a profile up and running, that's it right? Not quite. You do need to work it just like you would by attending any other networking event by making purposeful contacts, thoughtful commentary on topics, and connections.

With that in mind, here are a few pointers to see you on your way.

- 1** You wouldn't introduce yourself to prospective employers with a concealed identity and the same is true with your LinkedIn profile. Use a professional photo. You're more likely to be found, and by putting a face to a name it enhances credibility and promotes trust.
- 2** Always accept an invitation request to connect with a recruitment consultant. You just never know when they'll reach out to you with a great job opportunity or when you'll need their help in securing employment.
- 3** Get noticed – you'll be one of 3.5+ million Australians on LinkedIn, so ensure your profile is complete and up-to-date, that your



relevant work skills are listed and aim for an 'All-Star' profile strength meaning you're putting your best foot forward online.

- 4** Use LinkedIn to research key people at prospective employers, particularly if you have an interview lined up. You'll want to know as much about them as they will about you.

- 5** LinkedIn is not Facebook, so keep updates and posts professional and save the temptation of notifying your network about matters that are purely personal and better suited to other social networks.

With around ten minutes per day spent on LinkedIn reviewing your profile, joining interest groups purposefully and developing your network, you're on your way to enhancing your next career opportunity.



Travel
Managers
As individual
as you are

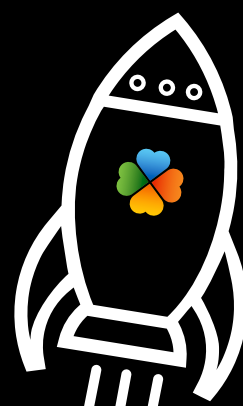
“opportunity”

is one of the words **Karin in SA**
uses to describe TravelManagers

Hear more from Karin and our other
personal travel managers, on screen at
joinus.travelmanagers.com.au

Email join.us@travelmanagers.com.au

Call Graciela on 1800 019 599



Adelaide on a platter

By Jasmine O'Donoghue

ADELAIDE is brimming with potential for the business events industry. The riverbank precinct has recently undergone billions of dollars of worth of renovations and the city has the capacity to host mega-conventions up to 4,000 people.

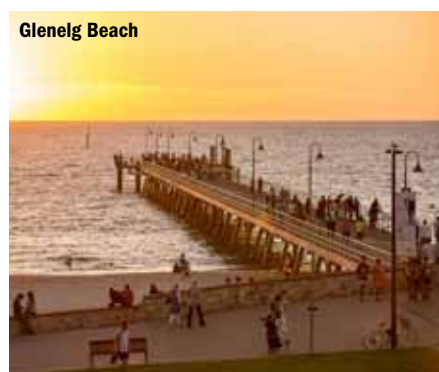
But it's the region's world-class food which gives it a distinct advantage. It's a little-known fact that South Australia produces 70% of the country's wine and has the most restaurants per capita in Australia.

We've curated a collection of fantastic experiences which are little more than a hop-skip-and-a-jump away from the city centre.

THE BAROSSA VALLEY

Located just an hour out of Adelaide, the Barossa Valley presents rolling hills and stunning vineyards – and of course, tantalising wine experiences. Start the day with an exhilarating Hot Air Ballooning joy ride and a champagne breakfast, or for the late sleepers, a round of golf at the Tanuda Pines course.

The Barossa is home to Australia's only winery in a castle, Chateau Tanunda, where guests can indulge in a long table lunch made from local produce or try their hand at croquet. Top off the afternoon by exploring the cellar of the world-renowned Penfolds Barossa Valley Winery, indulging in a sensory experience at Jacob's Creek Winery or tasting a Tawny from the year of your birth as part of the Seppeltsfield centenary tasting.



Glenelg Beach



Fishery Bay (Photo: Maxime Coquard)

GLENELG BEACH

Board a 45ft ex-racing catamaran only 20 minutes from the city at Glenelg for a private charter along the coastline. Swim with friendly dolphins in their natural habitat or simply kick back and take in the views.

ADELAIDE CITY

The Riverbank Precinct includes an expanded Adelaide Convention Centre, redeveloped Adelaide Oval, Festival Centre, Casino, and new integrated health and bio-medical research hub, all interconnected by walkways and a river footbridge.

In 2018, when currently announced projects are complete, over 6,500 rooms will be available to delegates and organisers across Adelaide's CBD.

Adelaide Central Markets is the largest under cover market in the Southern Hemisphere, buzzing with life and colour all year round. The Markets offer a huge range of South Australia's fresh food, along with some of Adelaide's most popular cafés and eateries.

Head down a back street and you might stumble upon one of the city's best eateries. Adelaide's small restaurant and bar industry has boomed in the past couple of years, with many popping up after the government made it easier to start small businesses.

KANGAROO ISLAND

A 30-minute flight from Adelaide airport, Kangaroo Island is Australia's third largest island and the most unspoilt wilderness in the Asia Pacific.

Get up close with endangered Australian Sea-Lions at Seal Bay Conservation Park or take a short transfer to Vivonne Bay, famous for its pure white sand and azure blue sea. Enjoy a gourmet barbeque on the beach or visit the Islander Estate Vineyard for a private tasting. Get in touch with nature in the spectacular Flinders Chase National Park and explore the wind-sculpted Remarkable Rocks and Admirals Arch, sculpted by weathering and erosion from the sea over thousands of years.

Pick up some speed on an eco-friendly boat from Kangaroo Island Marine Adventures and swim with wild dolphins, or ride through the otherwise inaccessible 500 acres of open grassland and pristine native bush on a guided quadbike tour.



Barossa Valley

ADELAIDE HILLS

The picturesque Hahndorf is a small town in the Adelaide Hills and is classified as Australia's oldest surviving German settlement. Wander the arts and crafts shops, soak up the history and indulge in local produce before heading to the Haus Hahndorf for a German style lunch accompanied by a stein or two. Transfer to the Cleland Wildlife Park to cuddle a koala and feed kangaroos, emus, wallabies, potoroos and waterfowl.



Adelaide Central Market



Hahndorf, Adelaide Hills

PORT LINCOLN

Port Lincoln is a 30-minute flight from Adelaide and is known as the "Seafood Capital of Australia". Early risers can overlook the stunning Eyre Peninsula in a remodel of the vintage WACO aircraft or board the Calypso Star to cage dive with great white sharks – the only place in Australia this can be done.

Enjoy a gourmet private lunch at the Marina on the pontoon, or take a transfer to Coffin Bay, home to world famous oysters. Sit back and take in the unspoilt Coffin Bay National Park or taste oysters straight from the water on a Pure Oysters Coffin Bay tour, followed by a banquet lunch at Coffin Bay.

Board the "Tuna Express" to the glistening waters of Boston Bay, the only place in the world where you can swim with Southern Bluefin Tuna. Alternatively, join professional fisherman for a hosted big game fishing experience followed by a seafood BBQ on the beach, with local chefs helping your group prepare the day's catch.



All photos courtesy of Tourism Australia

Sunshine Coast to take off



QUEENSLAND'S Sunshine Coast is gearing up for a major boost in the business events market this year with Qantas starting a new business-oriented flight schedule this month.

The Sunshine Coast is shining as a hot destination, finishing up 2015 with 19% more passenger traffic through the airport, than in December 2014.

Visit Sunshine Coast CEO Simon Ambrose told *travelBulletin* there were clear reasons for this spike in traffic.

"This is thanks to the resumption of services after a 10 year hiatus by Qantas, new summer services from Air New Zealand and increased domestic services during the year by Virgin and Jetstar," he explained.

Another factor launching the Sunshine Coast into a new era is the extension of the Sunshine Coast Airport runway which Ambrose hopes will be approved this year to be underway by 2017.

"This will be a game-changer as it will allow us to welcome larger aircraft with greater capacity," he said.

Other projects set to transform the region over the next decade include the opening of Sunshine Coast University Hospital and Kawana Health Campus, which is expected to be one of the largest medical precincts in the country; the opening of the new Best Western Plus at Kawana Waters; the redevelopment of the Maroochydore City Centre and development of a vast residential area in South Caloundra.

"This evolution will bring new hotels, new tourism infrastructure, more events and more services," he said. "There is a record events schedule in place this year".

In addition to business travel and conferences, the area will also have a record schedule of cruise ships calling into Mooloolaba in 2016.

The Sunshine Coast was only added as a destination on cruise schedules a year ago, but this year the coast will welcome 10 cruise vessels and over 17,000 passengers.



MCB VIEW

Karen Bolinger, chief executive officer
Melbourne Convention Bureau

UNDERSTANDING THE CUSTOMER IS KEY

IN AN increasingly competitive industry for conferences, meetings and incentive events, Melbourne Convention Bureau (MCB) is looking to better understand all of our customers to gain competitive advantage which leads to stronger customer engagement.

How our customers are engaging with us enables us to understand better how our stakeholders can access and communicate with them and more importantly can reflect the real value of the business events sector. This supports our continual focus on improving how we measure the value of business events, because with any business event, the customer is at the core of a successful win, event, legacy and ultimately economic outcome for Victoria.

Last year Melbourne Convention Bureau adopted a new research methodology to gain a deeper understanding of our customer.

The new research reflects an enhancement of our analytical capability, where we have taken what we already knew about delegate expenditure on a daily basis for each international association conference, and added the new data from conference organiser spend, hence providing a more holistic view of economic contribution to the State of Victoria.

The Melbourne Conference Expenditure Study 2015 shows that on average each International Association conference delivers \$4.9m to the Victorian economy, when looking at conference organiser spend alone. It is in addition to the \$5,500 an international conference delegate spends on average per trip.

It was also found that these large international conferences impact the economy positively, well beyond the

traditional tourism and hospitality sectors. Small businesses whose core business is not business events are the primary suppliers of conference services in a wide range of fields. This includes exhibition construction, technology, professional accounting and legal services, printing, transport, graphic design and marketing services, helping to fuel local job creation beyond the obvious.

To build on this further and really dive deeper into "big data" MCB is exploring new methods to gain and analyse customer data, to improve the sales process and increase the yield from high spending delegates. This will drive more informed strategic decisions around business growth opportunities.

‘The customer is at the core of a successful win, event, legacy and ultimately economic outcome for Victoria’

Communicating the city's appeal and qualities as a business events destination is something we do daily however in the current landscape we need to communicate so much more. Bespoke messaging is the key and we're embracing this fully.

I'm really passionate about exploring new customer analytics as it centres on truth. You can't ignore data and if you do you may as well take a giant step backwards, because what you are saying is that the customer's actions are irrelevant.

Wouldn't that be a slap in the face to who we value most, our customer.



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IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME



Scenic's entry into ocean cruising hasn't come overnight. It's been three years of toil to ensure when *Scenic Eclipse* launches in 2018, it delivers the 'wow' factor, in an epic way. GUY DUNDAS explains.

CLOSE to a decade after revealing plans to redefine the burgeoning European river cruise market with its revolutionary 'Space Ships', Australian-owned luxury travel firm Scenic is now taking the challenge to an entirely new market through its development of an ocean cruise line.

"It's a whole new step for our company", Scenic founder and chairman Glen Moroney admits of the company's ultra-luxury mega yacht venture, the 6-star *Scenic Eclipse*.

Destined to enter service on 31 August, 2018, the 228 guest *Scenic Eclipse* is an entirely new beast for the Newcastle-based cruise & tour operator, offering unparalleled levels of comfort, luxury, safety and space.

The 16,500-tonne eight-deck vessel will be constructed by Croatia-based ferry and barge builder Uljank Group, offering 100% verandah suites, ranging from 32sqm to the 233sqm two-bedroom Owner's Suite which includes a 65sqm private terrace with jacuzzi.

In typical Scenic style, no stone has been left unturned in developing a product to be benchmarked by others. *Scenic Eclipse* will boast six on board dining options, including Contemporary French, Pan Asian and Italian restaurants, a 240 seat theatre, a spa sanctuary, pool with retractable roof, library,

beauty salon and gym, with butler service and 24-hr room service available to all guests.

Masterminding *Scenic Eclipse*'s opulent interiors is Moroney's wife and former Harvey World Travel Mildura owner, Karen Moroney, who has derived inspiration from a number of the world's leading luxury hotels.

Glen Moroney says *Scenic Eclipse* has been designed to open up regions of the world previously only accessible to the very wealthy.

‘We've got a firm option for a second ship for delivery in May 2019 and I think it is most likely that it will be built’

The adults-only ship will feature two seven-seat helicopters, one seven-seat submarine certified to dive 200 metres, 12 zodiacs, kayaks, snorkelling and scuba equipment, enabling guests to "go beyond the horizon".

There are 18 initial itineraries planned, with destinations spanning Europe and the Mediterranean, the Americas, as well as the Arctic and Antarctic polar regions.

Scenic's all-inclusive experience, covering all meals on board, unlimited complimentary beverages, shore excursions, local guides, onboard entertainment, all tips, gratuities and portage also come standard, though helicopter, scuba diving and submarine excursions will be an additional cost.

Scenic, which operates (or has under construction) 21 river cruise ships around the globe - including a fleet for sister company Evergreen Tours - has trod cautiously for its entry into the ocean-going market.

During its planning phase, Scenic quietly gauged past passenger feedback via a SurveyMonkey poll in which the company asked "Are you interested in Small Ship Luxury Ocean Cruising (maximum 200 guests)" and also "what destinations would be of interest?"

Moroney says every element of *Scenic Eclipse* has been scrutinised again & again, to ensure Scenic's \$230 million investment blows the competition out of the water.

"We started with something relatively simplistic and ended up with absolutely no compromises," the entrepreneur said.

Moroney told *travelBulletin* Scenic's first ocean-going vessel has been through "a multitude of different designs" since its initial inception. "We kept going back and improving. We actually got really close to contract stage twice, but we weren't happy, so we turned around and went back and did it again. It's been a gradual improvement."

Quizzed if there were more ocean-going vessels planned for the future, Moroney told us, "We've got a firm option for a second ship for delivery in May 2019 and I think it is most likely that it will be built."

And how is he so sure there is a market for a 6-star luxury mega-yacht? Moroney's response was "Well I'm not. I'm just hoping!"

A keel-laying ceremony for *Scenic Eclipse* is scheduled for mid-2016.

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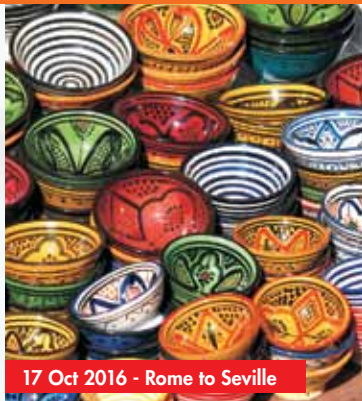


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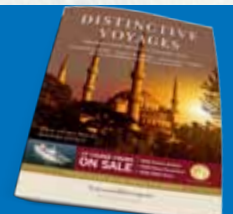


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AZAMARA DOWN UNDER

AZAMARA Club Cruises has debuted Down Under with *Azamara Quest* entering Australian waters for the first time last December.

The 686-passenger ship first arrived in Darwin as part of her 16-night Komodo and Great Barrier Reef sailing between Bali and Cairns over Christmas and New Year. In January she embarked on her 10-night voyage from Cairns to Sydney.

Azamara's regional commercial director Adam Armstrong said he was "delighted to finally welcome Azamara Club Cruises to Australian waters for the very first time."

travelBulletin was invited on board *Azamara Quest* when she docked in Sydney in mid-January where we spoke to the brand's hotel director Philip Herbert about Australia's newest visiting cruise line.

He said Azamara continued to be popular among Australians, with the ship's trip Down Under likely to boost the Australian market even further.

"Australians are our third highest demographic on board Azamara cruises after North Americans and those from the UK," he told us.

"Heading into 2016 I won't be surprised if Australia takes over second spot. On our last voyage more than half of the people on board were from Australia" he said.

Azamara Club Cruises differentiates itself from other lines by having smaller vessels that are able to go to places other cruise ships can't - making destinations the star of the show.

"Our big pillar of difference is destination immersion," Herbert explained to us.

This is achieved through longer stays, more overnight calls and night touring, giving travellers the opportunity to truly experience a destination.

"We take guests to unique ports and they come on board for these destinations - though they usually end up saying how good the cruise is too," he said.

There are two ships under the Azamara brand: *Azamara Quest* and *Azamara Journey*, and Herbert said he was "confident" the fleet would soon grow further.

"The president [Larry Pimentel] said he never joined the company for it to be a two ship operation," he explained.

Before any line expansion can take place the two ships will each undergo identical \$25 million refurbishments. *Azamara Journey* is already undergoing her facelift in the Bahamas while *Azamara Quest* will have hers in Singapore this April.

The two ships offer fine cuisine and boutique wines with special inclusions such as beverages, self-service laundry, English butler service for suite guests and shuttle transport to city centres in ports, where available.

Azamara has confirmed it will deploy a ship Down Under for another two seasons, with *Azamara Journey* coming for the first time in 2017 and *Azamara Quest* returning in 2018.

NEWBUILD FOR P&O AUSTRALIA

P&O Cruises Australia started off the year with a historic announcement - that it would become the first cruise line to build a new ship specifically for the Australian market. At 323 metres in length, with 2,100 guest rooms, the ship will have the capacity to carry 4,200 passengers - nearly double the size of the line's next largest ship, *Pacific Explorer*, which will be joining the fleet next year.

Plans are underway for the new, yet-to-be-named ship, to be launched in 2019 and P&O says the newbuild, which will be the line's seventh Australian vessel, will be a 'game changer' for the Australian cruise industry. Carnival Australia executive chairman Ann Sherry says the "much anticipated" first newbuild cruise ship was a "huge vote of confidence in the Australian cruise market."

And recently appointed president of P&O Cruises Australia, Sture Myrmell, said the news was fitting when considering P&O's achievements. "P&O Cruises is the modern face of Australian cruising and, with such a proud heritage of leadership, it is a natural step to announce that the line will take delivery of its first newbuild ship," he said.

The new order is one of four newbuilds for Carnival Corporation's global fleet under an agreement with Italian shipbuilder, Fincantieri. The four vessels are set to be constructed at shipyards in Monfalcone and Marghera. Two of the ships are set to be deployed in China with Costa Asia while another will join the Princess Cruises fleet.

P&O's new megaliner will further boost capacity in the Australian cruising market, and its planned 2019 arrival is likely to see former predictions about the number of Aussie cruisers by 2020 left in the dust.



CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, commercial director
CLIA Australasia

NEW CHANGES FOR CLIA MEMBERS

2015 was an exciting year for CLIA and we're delighted to say that 2016 is a year of evolution, with the launch of a new look membership program, featuring a range of new benefits for travel agents.

Major changes include:

- 24/7 training access for all agency staff with our highly respected Cruise Industry Training program now moving online. The development means no more expenses to attend classroom training, no more time out of the office and no more fees to access training
- Access to the new and exclusive CLIA Member Benefits Program, providing discounts on a wide range of everyday consumer brands located throughout Australia and New Zealand. The new member benefits program features our very own CLIA app so members can instantly find offers as well as track their use throughout the year
- Eligibility to apply for the new CLIA global ID card with access to travel benefits around the world (coming Q1 - 2016)

Other CLIA member benefits include:

- Exclusive access to the CLIA Accreditation Program, the industry benchmark for consultants wishing to specialise in the cruise sector and demonstrate their knowledge with credibility from CLIA endorsement
- Unlimited access for all staff members to the CLIA Learning Academy, including cruise sector training, destination focused elective modules and comprehensive resource library

- Website listings and internet lead referrals. The CLIA (Australasia) website www.cruising.org.au welcomes thousands of visitors per month. One of the most popular areas is the CLIA (Australasia) 'find a cruise specialist' page which allows consumers to search for their nearest accredited cruise consultants
- Exclusive use of the CLIA logo (cruise industry mark of excellence) identifying you as a cruise specialist in all your marketing material
- Exclusive Members Only access to participate in the CLIA Annual Cruise Week promotion including listing on our specialist cruise agency locator
- Free listing in each quarterly issue of Cruise Passenger magazine subject to accreditation level
- Free supply of each quarterly issue of Cruise Passenger magazine for distribution to your VIP clients
- Priority registration and discounted rates for the Cruise3sixty Australasia conference
- Opportunity to attend global cruise industry events such as Cruise3sixty USA and Europe River Cruise Expo as well as our own Australasian Cruise Industry Awards

As a member of CLIA Australasia you are an active partner in a global organisation representing the fastest growing segment of the travel industry.

For more information on joining CLIA, click on the Membership tab at www.cruising.org.au

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General Manager & Director
Sales/Marketing, Australasia

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CRUISE WEEKLY

HEADLINES DECEMBER & JANUARY 2016

- 01 Dec** Cruise category 'rebuilt'
- 03 Dec** Record cruise growth ahead
- 08 Dec** Creative Cruising "not affected"
- 10 Dec** SuperStar Virgo's maiden call
- 15 Dec** Abu Dhabi cruise launch
- 16 Dec** Myrmell named as President of P&O Cruises Australia
- 17 Dec** CLIA agent benefit boost

- 22 Dec** Silversea fully inclusive
- 24 Dec** Cruise record on track
- 05 Jan** P&O's Aussie newbuild
- 07 Jan** New Paul Gauguin cruises
- 12 Jan** Cruise Holidays surges to 60
- 14 Jan** Kogan launches cruising
- 14 Jan** TravelManagers' cruise focus
- 16 Jan** Scenic launches ocean cruising

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



These top agents and their partners celebrated the historic 250th Transatlantic crossing of *Queen Mary 2* from New York to Southampton with a fam hosted by Qantas and Cunard onboard the flagship vessel.



Travel Alaska recently showed these agents a good time, exploring Anchorage, Seward and even landing on a glacier on the continent's highest mountain, Mt McKinley (Mt Denali).

These agents were sent by Infinity Holidays to scrub up on their knowledge of Azamara in the best way possible - by experiencing the product itself onboard *Azamara Quest*.



Sailing from Phuket to islands like Ko Phi Phi and Railay, and experiencing turquoise waters, sandy beaches and the limestone peaks of Thailand was all on the agenda for this group of Flight Centre agents on Intrepid's Phuket Sailing Adventure fam.



This fam group, hosted by Lufthansa and German National Tourist Office, saw some of the best German Christmas markets in Frankfurt, Cologne, Munich and Berlin, as well as flying high on LH's Premium Economy to Frankfurt.



The 2015 Swiss Travel Pass SuperStars showed their silly side on the Golden Pass Train on their way to visit Father Christmas in Rochers de Naye.



As a reward for all their hard work selling over 200 cruises booked between them, these ecruising travel agents were hosted on a two-night cruise from Sydney to Brisbane on board *Superstar Virgo*, enjoying a private cocktail party on the deck.



Wildlife Safari organised a luxurious journey to Zanzibar for these WA agents, including a stay at Essque Zalu Zanzibar.

These lucky consultants - three from Australia and three from the USA - enjoyed a fantastic famil to Namibia courtesy of Giltedge Travel. They're pictured visiting the Africat Foundation at Etosha Pan.



These lucky agents were treated to the new London Palladium production of *The Sound of Music* playing at the Capitol Theatre in Sydney to mark the new Scenic Enrich experience in Salzburg celebrating the musical.



Victorian travel consultants showcasing Scenic's bumper size launch brochure for the new *Scenic Eclipse*, the world's first discovery yacht. Scenic Sales Development Manager VIC Will Wightman is pictured with Joanne & Nicole of helloworld Sunbury and Natasha & Liesl of Benalla Travel.



Everyone was all smiles (including the dolphins!) on a recent Viva! Holidays famil to Southern California, supported by Gate 7, San Diego Tourism Australia, Fiji Airways and Visit West Hollywood.

The Cook Islands may not be the largest island nation in the Pacific, but its certainly a gem worth uncovering. BONNIE TAI discovers the best kept secret of the Pacific.

PRICES subject to change depending on your attitude, reads the sign. *I think I'm going to like this place.* It's day two of my trip in Rarotonga and I've found myself at a quaint outdoor burger joint named Villi's, just a short walk away from iconic Muri Beach.

The dress code here is casual. Flip-flops, shorts and a tee-shirt. And as a full-time 'smart-casual' kind of gal – I'm sure okay with that.

"Kia orana," said the woman behind the counter, smiling with a kind of genuineness that you wouldn't normally get at a fast-food joint anywhere else in the world. Behind her, a younger girl is busy making patties from scratch – the biggest you've ever seen in fact, and the smell of burgers on the grill stirs my appetite in way that could only be described as primal.

I order their signature Muri Burger, which is a type of cheeseburger complete with home-made 'special sauce'. Upon my first bite I am alive again. Since arriving on this slice of island paradise I have been surrounded only by fresh seafood – great news if you're a lover of ocean cuisine – terrible if you're like me and have a palate refined only to the things that walk and grow on land.

Reinvigorated, we head away to Vaimaanga to explore the ruins of the Sheraton Rarotonga Resort – a failed venture, once tipped to be the islands' most luxurious attraction. Dubbed 'Heart Break Hotel' by islanders, the derelict site has all the elements of a great scandal: mismanaged funds, allegations of mafia corruption and the rumoured contract killing of one of its project managers.

Despite numerous attempts to resurrect the project, the last being in 2007 by Kiwi developers the McEwan Group, the 200-room hotel has celebrated nearly 28 years on the island - all without checking in a single guest.

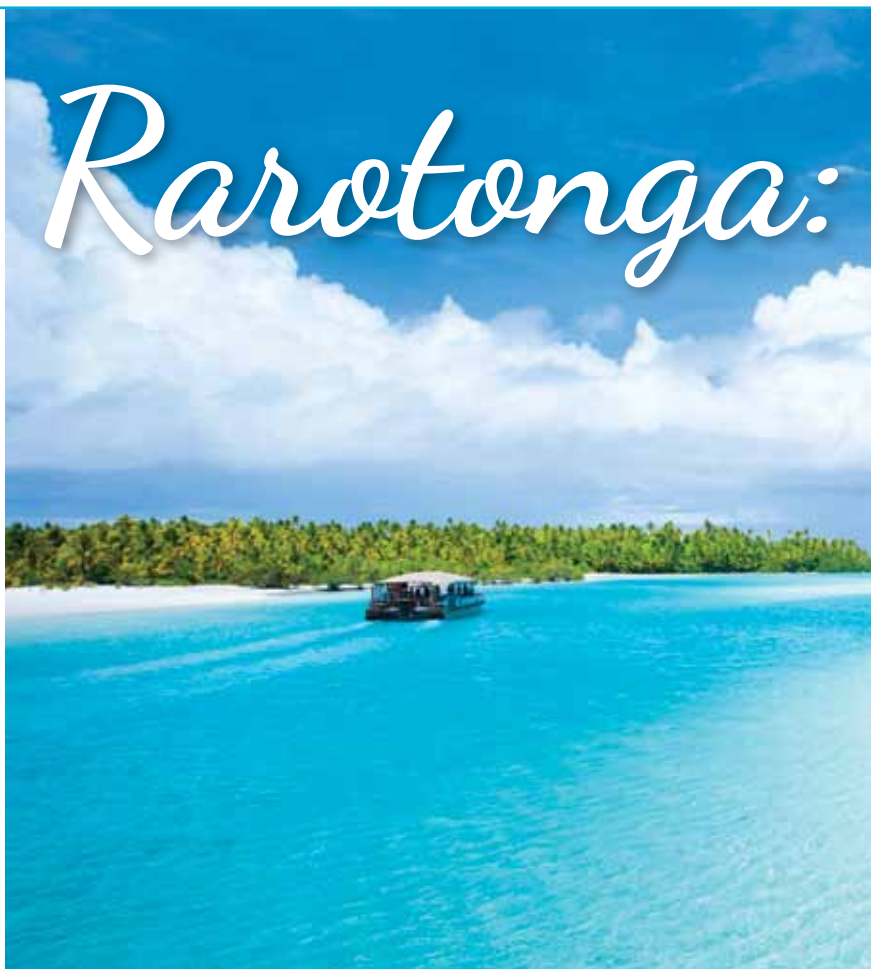
Today, it's as if time has stood still here. Massive copra trees, reminiscent of its former days as a plantation, shade the ill-fated complex; while creeping vegetation slowly reverts what's left of the mammoth structures back to nature.

"It's like we've walked onto the set of Jurassic Park, only 15-years later," exclaimed my friend Steve. And I agree – this place is an urban explorer's dream.

As we enter the foyer of the building, I'm careful not to stand on the glass and frazzled wiring that litter the concrete floors. Peeking into the suites, I can see moulded luxury spa tubs fitted in the bathrooms – complete with rusted silver taps, light switches and fixtures that look ready-to-go, and to my untrained eye it appears the rooms were only moments away from welcoming its first guests.

Surrounding the dilapidated complex are spectacular views of rolling green hills and native foliage. And only a short walk away is a cascading waterfall and a white-sand beach. As I pause to consider all the 'if-onlys', the sight of a lone goat standing watch in a near-finished tower,

Rarotonga:



Images courtesy of Cook Islands Tourism unless otherwise stated



PACIFIC'S BEST KEPT SECRET



Sunset from Akaiami, Robert Young, bit.ly/1K0wC1f



bleating quietly at the cows roaming freely below, sends me back to earth - serving as a stark reminder of the hotel's bleak history.

As the day wears on, we make our way back to our little cottage which backs onto Titikaveka Beach. Armed with towels, a ukulele and hot cups of tea, we step onto the beach through our private entrance to create bad renditions of pop songs and watch the sun disappear into the Pacific. Dusk colours the sky in brilliant hues of gold, orange and purple and it is now that we decide is the perfect time to take our first dip in the aqua lagoon.

Living in central Sydney, I'm used to laying my towel down next to thousands of tanning strangers on Bondi, so standing here practically alone – on what is the most beautiful beach I have ever seen – is the most unreal experience. It is only in the far distance, that if I really squint my eyes, I can see a pinprick silhouette of two people walking a dog along the dunes.

As the final flicker of sunlight disappears, a blanket of stars covers the night sky. And because light pollution doesn't yet exist here, the entirety of the milky way can be observed by the naked eye. In the space of two hours I count eight shooting stars, which is more than the combined total of what I've seen my entire life living in suburbia.

Lying atop a picnic table, I reflect on just how much closer I feel to both nature and people since arriving in Rarotonga. Because it is here that we can truly appreciate the beauty of the night sky, the kindness of strangers and the serenity of the sea.

Kia orana Rarotonga and meitaki maata.

NEED TO KNOW

Spoken languages

There are two official languages for the Cook Islands: English and Cook Island Maori.

Population

13,095 (2011 UN data)

Currency

Both New Zealand dollars and Cook Island dollars are accepted currency.

Travel tips

- The island of Rarotonga is only 32 kilometres circumference around but there is a lot to see, so make sure you rent a car, bike or moped to get around because public transport is scarce
- Hit the Muri Beach night markets on Sunday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 5:30pm to mingle with locals and get a taste of authentic island cuisine.
- Shopping hours are generally from 9am to 4pm, so make sure you get to the store early.



Cook Islands Aussie push

COOK Islands Tourism launched its brand new destination campaign 'Love a little paradise' last month, a new brand strategy aiming to "differentiate the idyllic South Pacific nation from its key competitors". Offering a variety of experiences beyond the confines of a resort, light adventures, as well as authentic interactions with locals, Rarotonga is a destination perfect for the "Soft Explorers" market, says Cook Islands Tourism Corporation general manager, Kerry Cook.

"Unlike other islands, we can't keep adding new resorts indefinitely. Sustainable growth for us has to come by attracting tourists who spend more on-island without alienating our traditional market base," she said.

Despite its paradise status, the Cook Islands is a destination relatively unknown to the Australian market. However, the introduction of Air New Zealand's direct flights from Sydney through to Rarotonga in 2010, has steadily increased the island nation's reputation; with the destination recording 22,033 Aussie visitors in 2014 - up from 18,538 in 2011.

"The Cook Islands' point of difference is we truly deliver on our visitor promise by offering the people, product and place where the rest of the world can experience a moment of freedom," Cook said.

ISLAND ESCAPES

THE allure of a picturesque paradise so close to home should be inspiration enough to attract Aussie visitors to the Cook Islands, but if you need a few more reasons, Island Escapes' national marketing manager Farid Hacene has helped *travelBulletin* compile a quick list of luxury accommodation options to consider checking into.

- Located just 50 minutes flight from Rarotonga, **Aitutaki Lagoon**, offers a great choice of both beachfront and over-water bungalows, popular for honeymooners and couples seeking a private escape. The scenery is stunning and akin to what you'd see on a postcard.
- The **Pacific Resort Rarotonga** is situated right on Muri Beach, a location famous for snorkelling and cruising the lagoon. Enjoy seven nights incl flights, breakfast daily, airport transfers and lots of resort activities from \$1,895.
- Perfect for two couples or a group of friends, **Crystal Blue Lagoon Luxury Villas**, is only steps away from Muri Beach. Available for \$1,995 per person for six nights incl flights.

AGENT KNOW-HOW

Cook Islands Tourism lets us in on some insider knowledge on how to sell these beautiful islands.

How can agents improve their knowledge of the Cook Islands?

Cook Islands Tourism will do whatever it takes to ensure agents feel knowledgeable about our destination. Call us, email us, livechat with us, connect with us socially – we're here for agents! Our trade site – sale.cookislands.travel/trade hosts a range of product updates, creative toolkits and industry deals for agents, so be sure to check back there often.

What training is available to agents to improve their knowledge?

We have a full time Cook Islands ambassador on the road – our very own 'Cookie', Donna Tuara. You can email Donna on info@cookislandstourism.travel or phone (07) 5504 5488. We also host an annual industry blitz event in SYD, MEL and BNE which is a wonderful way to get product knowledge about the destination and our resorts. Watch this space for the launch of our Cook Islands Specialist program early 2016.

Any recommendations for first time travellers?

First time travellers will love the Cook Islands because everything is so easy: it's easy to get to the islands, it's easy to get around them, it's easy to have meaningful intimate experiences in a completely safe and pristine environment. Be sure to try the local dish – *ika mata* (raw fish marinated in lime, coconut and chilli) and definitely get to Aitutaki if only for a day trip.

What makes the Cook Islands a unique destination?

Whatever you want to do in the Cook Islands you can. The Cook Islands offers authenticity, playful and fun-loving locals to connect with, and it's what we call an instant holiday – customs to cocktails in 30 minutes. Every resort is beachfront, no traffic lights, no buildings taller than a coconut tree, no international chain hotels, just beauty and ease everywhere you go.

And finally, how can travel agents join a famil?

Register your interest with us at info@cookislandstourism.travel. We are just about to launch our first ever mega famil to the Cook Islands and we're seeking serious agents who want to become brand ambassadors for our little paradise. If this is you, please contact us so we can register your interest for the March 2016 famil program.



WALK THE BEACH LESS TRAVELLED

UNDER 30 MINS FROM
CUSTOMS TO COCKTAILS



Love a LITTLE PARADISE

The Cook Islands offer an oasis where it's easy to feel free and find more than enough to do. From watersports and adventuring, to eating and nightlife – there are so many ways to enjoy the Cook Islands lifestyle. And the best part – it's so much closer and more affordable than you think. Fly direct from Sydney and find yourself falling in love with our little paradise in a matter of hours.

New Year, New Look

It's a new year, and the perfect time for a fresh new look and feel. 2016 promises to be a year of excitement and change for Cook Islands Tourism, kicking off with the launch of a new destination brand positioned on the tagline 'Love a little paradise'.

The new brand strategy seeks to differentiate the idyllic South Pacific nation from its competitors and raise awareness with a

visitor segment identified as Soft Explorers. These are holidaymakers who want a variety of experiences beyond the confines of a resort and those who seek authentic interactions with the locals.

The campaign will position the little paradise of the Cook Islands – easily reached on a six hour direct flight from Sydney – as an oasis of adventure, with much to experience.

New Creative Identity

An eye catching new logo featuring unique Cook Islands emblems such as the hibiscus flower and bright turquoise and pink colouring has been designed to immediately communicate the Cook Islands and increase awareness of the destination. The tagline was inspired by the islands' incredible natural beauty and the innocent, earthy and playful character of the people of the Cook Islands.

Why a little paradise?

The word 'little' means anything but limited. In the Cook Islands little reflects our small population, the ease of travelling around our islands and having so much to see and do, right at your doorstep.

For more information visit: Cook Islands trade website: sale.cookislands.travel/trade
Cook Islands: sale.cookislands.travel

advertorial



Hawaii Tourism Oceania



STRAIGHT TO THE *heart*

Spiritual Tourism is the latest buzzword that's being bandied around the travel industry but what, exactly, does it entail? CHRISTINE RETSCHLAG dives into the heart of the matter...

WHILE adrenalin-based holidays boasting a “brag factor” were all the rage several years ago, a new trend has emerged in worldwide travel in which the attention has shifted to matters of the heart and soul. The concept of spiritual tourism is nothing new in some quarters of the world – Muslims have been making the pilgrimage to Mecca for centuries – but in only recently relative times has the western world sought out holidays with more meaning.

Hawaii Tourism Big Island Visitors Bureau

Executive Director Ross Birch says the spiritual tourism segment is a ‘natural fit’ for his destination in which ‘mana’ or ‘spirits’ are considered part of the ancient landscape.

“With active volcanoes, we are fortunate to be able to witness earth’s powerful energy force as it creates new land every second. Kilauea volcano, for example, is one of the world’s most near-continually erupting volcanoes. Volcano goddess Pele continues to live in legend, chant and dance,” he says.

“Hawaiians have always had a deep connection with place and nature, and that

connection continues to exist today. That sense of belonging and being a part of the spirit of the place continues to draw travellers from all over the world.”

Tourism Authority of Thailand Australia Director Rujiras Chatchalermkit says ‘spiritual beliefs’ are common among Thais and are celebrated through a number of festivals, which attract both locals and tourists including the nationwide Loi Krathong Festival which pays respect to the river goddess. Thailand is also home to many meditation retreats offered through its Buddhist temples.

“Most people who attend meditation retreats, monk chats or yoga retreats are looking for peace of mind and better health,” she says.



Rabaul Mask Festival, Taro Taylor, <http://bit.ly/1Q1xyZY>

“Although we don’t have specific figures (on growth in the spiritual tourism segment), we believe that interest in that area is growing.”

While some destinations and tourism operators embrace the term “spiritual” others believe “authentic” is a more apt description of the new movement.

Intrepid Travel Managing Director James Thornton says his company has been the leader in authentic and sustainable travel since it was established in 1989.

“We design our trips from the grassroots up, which means each trip will have an experienced local leader, transportation is primarily on local transport and we stay in locally-run accommodation. This way, our customers get a more authentic experience and tourism money stays where it belongs – in local pockets,” he says.

“Homestays are a key feature – staying overnight with a family, experiencing their hospitality and learning more about their lives to gain a greater understanding of their culture on the whole.

“We are also incorporating visits to local tribes/Indigenous people more and more. On our Palawan Island Getaway in the Philippines, the group undertakes a trek to have lunch with members of the local

Batak tribe – one of about 70 Indigenous people of the Philippines. Or you’ll meet local tribes in the Rabaul region of Papua New Guinea during the Mask Festival on our Expeditions trip.

“We also have a focus on visiting less-visited places, taking people off the beaten track to see destinations where tourists rarely tread. This can be seen most clearly in our new range of Expedition trips, which were a big success since launching early last year. Half of the trips were completely booked out which just goes to show that people are constantly searching for these truly authentic experiences.

“We are always looking to incorporate places that are starting to open up to tourism. We started going to Jaffna on our Sensational Sri Lanka trip in 2015, an area that was only recently off limits due to the Civil War but which offers travellers beautiful temples and rich history.”

The concept of authentic tourism also resonates strongly with Outrigger Resorts Vice President Corporate Communications Bitsy Kelly.

“Outrigger is a values-led family-owned company which aims to provide an authentic cultural experience in each of the

destinations we operate which are Hawaii, Guam, Thailand, Fiji, Mauritius and the Maldives. We have an internal values system that we call Ke Ano Waa, which translates into “The Outrigger Way” and is a celebration of all of our cultural values and traditions of hospitality,” she says.

“We find that travellers do want to give something back to the places and people they visit while on vacation. In Fiji we offer direct-action community tourism projects such as building a meeting bure at Conua School in the Sigatoka Valley in which more than 800 guests assisted during a 14-month period. The feedback has been phenomenal and the construction of a kindergarten will commence in early 2016. Community/cultural tourism is also gaining popularity with groups, associations and corporate and we also offer authentic experiences such as attending a local Sunday church service at a neighbouring village or visiting the district hospital.

“Outrigger strives to provide our guests with not just unique experiences, but experiences that are deeply engaging. Connecting to the place and people when visiting another land is what inspires people to travel and what creates those lasting memories.”



365 days of wellness

HEALTH and Fitness Travel is offering an unprecedented year-long, luxury wellness trip spanning across 20 countries. The one-of-a-kind worldwide journey is being marketed to thirty-something executives who are feeling plagued by life's stresses.

Under the guidance of health professionals, guests will learn how to live a healthier lifestyle through health consultations, fitness training, healing spa therapies and nutrition.

Highlights include a kickboxing session with a British gold medallist in Ibiza to a Tai Chi class on the summit of Vietnam's Marble Mountains. There will be yoga in India, medical spa therapies in Spain, paddle boarding in Hawaii and paragliding in Oman and a safari across South Africa.

This action packed itinerary will be complimented by healthy eating programs including a cleansing juice detox and macrobiotic cooking classes.

Prices start at \$340,000 per person with business class flights. If that's blowing the budget, there is six-month version of the trip for those with fewer funds or time to spare.

RELIGION OFFERS DEPTH TO TRAVEL

By **Nathalie Craig**

FAITH-based and spiritual holidays have proved to be a popular niche travel market with 330 million people visiting the world's key religious sites annually. Encompassing more than just religious pilgrimages, spiritual travel incorporates everything from religious heritage tours and festivals, to conventions, mission trips, retreats and even specialised 'schoolies' holidays.

Experiences can be as diverse as following the footsteps of Buddha in India, attending a private healing ceremony with a Shaman at Machu Picchu, exploring Jewish heritage in the Holy Land or hiking the Camino de Santiago trail in Spain. Combined, this type of tourism pumps an estimated \$50 to \$100 billion into the global economy each year.

So what's the appeal of such trips? Meath Conlan of Diverse Journeys says "people want to travel with a purpose". Conlan has been running spiritual journeys to Asia since the 1980s with some of his more recent journeys including a prayer retreat in Bali and meditation and reflection tours in India. This year's Bali prayer retreat was held in the country's spiritual centre, Ubud, at the Vishrama Pure Retreat Centre where guests took part in daily silent prayer for "calming the body and mind", yoga instruction and learnt the art of Ayurvedic massage.

He explains that his bespoke tours are best kept intimate with under 15 participants. "These tours are about self-enquiry and people tend to leave feeling fulfilled, like everything just fits together again,"

General manager of Catholic tour company, The Harvest Group, Peter Calopedos, agrees the appeal of these tours is to have a more profound journey. "Travel is an experience, but for some people the opportunity for

spiritual travel can be a much deeper kind of experience," Calopedos reflects.

Harvest believes the company's clients want to go beyond just visiting a destination as a regular tourist.

Calopedos says the company, which has been running for 30 years, has seen "ebbs and flows, peaks and troughs" during its three decades of operation but there has always been a constant customer base with a few thousand clients a year – unless there is a major religious event causing the numbers to soar. "We took about 3,000 people to the canonisation of Mary MacKillop a few years back in Rome," he says. If the predicted canonisation of Mother Theresa goes ahead there too he predicts another strong demand for travel.

The company's flagship tour is to the Holy Land to experience firsthand the Sea of Galilee, Jerusalem and Bethlehem. Other unique tours for the company include mission or immersion trips in destinations such as outback Australia or Timor and even an alternate schoolies where school leavers can travel to Fiji for island activities mixed in with meeting and assisting villagers.

World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland in July is another event set to cause a surge in this kind of travel. Organised by the Catholic church, WYD sees youth of the world gather together

culminating in a mass conducted by the Pope.

The official Australian tour operator this year's WYD, Cosmos Travel, says it is gearing up for one of the biggest group operations the company has ever mounted with about 3,000 young people set to take the journey.

Globus family of brands (including Cosmos) national marketing manager for Australia, Chris Fundell, says religious travel is a growing niche specialty for Globus and there has been a definite increase in interest since Cosmos began its involvement in WYD.

"The religious travel program allows people to explore Europe and the Holy Lands in more detail than a regular tour, travelling with specialist guides and meeting other travellers with a shared interest," Fundell explains.

Globus and Cosmos religious travel programs offer faith-based tours in Poland, Germany, Greece, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Ireland, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. Popular pilgrimages showing recent growth include a famous pilgrimage visiting towns of Spain, Portugal and France and a journey following the footsteps of Apostle Paul travelling through Turkey and Greece.

For millions of people, faith based and spiritual travel is a catalyst for examining themselves, their faith and pondering the greater questions of existence.



Dome of the Rock and Western Wall, Israel Tourism

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OFFICIAL TOUR OPERATOR FOR WORLD YOUTH DAY KRAKOW 2016 ON BEHALF OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

A HOLIDAY IN RUINS

Wild, isolated and yet with a central role in Greek history, the Peloponnese features gorgeous landscapes, relaxing towns and ruins galore, says BRIAN JOHNSTON.

THE Peloponnese is thick with history. Ancient ruins provide the skeletons of a fabulous past, Byzantine chapels glitter white above blue seas, medieval castles crumble on hilltops, and pastel-pretty mansions of the Venetian era overlook squares lively with café chatter. This southernmost part of mainland Greece, rugged and isolated, produced both the Olympic Games and the nation's first modern capital. Journey here and peel away layers of history, while enjoying splendid scenery, a laid-back lifestyle and an absence of the crowds that swamp some Greek islands. The Peloponnese is old-fashioned Greece, where time seems to have slipped a few decades and the pace is more relaxed.

From Athens, you arrive in the Peloponnese when you cross a narrow neck of land at Corinth that just prevents this peninsula from becoming an island. Modern Corinth is a concrete horror, but ancient Corinth flaunts Greek and Roman mosaics and marbled roads from a time when it traded papyrus, grain and ivory across the eastern Mediterranean. Bold on the hill above is a rambling, little-visited fortress successively added to by Byzantines, Franks, Normans and Venetians, where ramparts and views are equally dramatic.

From here it's a 40-kilometre drive to Mycenae, where pleasant agricultural fields give way to a rocky landscape of oppressive majesty and summer heat. At its height, Mycenae was ruled by the bloodthirsty Atrides dynasty whose involvement in the Trojan Wars and convoluted tale of inter-family rivalry and murder is recounted in Homer's *Iliad*. Although its famous treasure-trove of gold masks, goblets and jewellery is displayed in Athens, Mycenae's Lion Gate and beehive-shaped royal tombs, dug deep into the hillside, make this an archaeological site of brooding atmosphere. Go early to avoid the

heat and crowds, however, as this is one of the few places on the Peloponnese regularly visited by tour coaches.

Head south next, and aim to spend a couple of nights in Nafplion on the winking blue Saronic Gulf. The town was central to Greece's struggle against Ottoman occupation, and became the capital of Greece between 1828 and 1834. Its brief moment of fame resulted in a fine neoclassical town centre of shady, bougainvillea-draped streets, marble-paved café squares and seaside promenades. It's one of Greece's most agreeable towns, topped by a whopping fortress reached by 300-odd steps zigzagging up a cliff face. The ascent is heart-banging, but so is the view over Nafplion's red-tiled rooftops and blue bay.

‘The Peloponnese is old-fashioned Greece, where time seems to have slipped a few decades and the pace is more relaxed’

Nafplion's laidback good looks are reason to linger, but a side trip to Epidaurus will take you back two millennia to the medical centre of the ancient Greeks, reputedly founded by a son of the god Apollo. It has the world's best-preserved Greek theatre, which can still seat 17,000 spectators on 55 tiers and has such good acoustics that anyone speaking from the centre of the stage can be easily heard from any of its seats.

Make your next stop the beautiful island of Momenvassia, connected to the mainland by a causeway. It grew wealthy on trade in the Middle Ages, then sank into a slumber that preserved its chapels, mansions and fortifications from the slow creep of concrete



that blights many Greek towns. Its fabulous old buildings are now slowly being restored, mainly for use as holiday homes and seafood restaurants. But Momenvassia's contemporary trendiness hasn't erased the charm of its past: donkeys are still used to carry goods through narrow streets that seem barely changed in centuries.

For many, this southeast corner of the peninsula is all they see of the Peloponnese, but keep travelling in a clockwise direction and you'll discover fewer and fewer visitors, wilder landscapes, friendlier people and more historical sites. Mani, the central of three mountainous prongs that thrust south into the Aegean Sea, has an austere landscape of barren hills and stonewalled fields where icons gleam from hillside chapels among olive groves. Its coastline is scalloped with fine beaches, particularly at Kardamilli and Githio.

Further into the interior of the Peloponnese, Sparta's ancient ruins lie among olive trees beneath the Taygetos Mountains. Close by, the almost abandoned town of Mystras features Byzantine churches, medieval chapels and houses tumbling down a hillside. Another lovely stopover is Andritsaina, a village in the Arcadian mountains where you're likely to waken to the delightful sound of tinkling sheep's bells.

You could have a final fine encounter with history at the sacred site of the original Olympic Games at Olympia. Toppled columns and crumbling temples, alive with flitting white butterflies, stand among olive and pine trees in a pretty valley that make this one of Greece's most gorgeously sited ruins. You can attempt the 100-metre sprint in the remains of the original Olympic stadium – though perhaps not in the nude, as was the case in ancient times. Two fine museums recount the story of the ancient Games with few of the crowds that dog museums in Athens. Outside, the hillsides are scented with wild oregano and cicadas hum, as if delighted to be here.



A TALE OF THREE CITIES

The Eastern Mediterranean is an area full to the brim with cities boasting fascinating history, rich cultures and delectable foods. It can also be full of tourists experiencing these wonders. Here are three cities that are off the beaten track but will still give your clients an authentic taste of this beautiful region.



Izmir Bay, Joe Taylor

İzmir, Turkey

İZMİR is the third largest city in Turkey. A port city on the Aegean, it's quite distinct from other parts of Turkey with a rich mix of Levantine, Greek, Armenian and Jewish heritage. Check out the lively seafront *kordon* (promenade), whose bars are still open even during Ramadan, making it easy to visit at any time during the year. Make sure to visit the Kemeraltı Market to snag a bargain on leather goods, clothing and jewellery, before reviving with a Turkish coffee and baklava in one of the many cafes at its core.

Nicosia, Cyprus

ALSO known as Lefkosa, Nicosia is one of the last divided cities in the world, with the northern half claimed by Turkey. Despite that fact, the city is very safe (not in the middle of a warzone) and the best spot to experience modern Cyprus mixing with its ancient roots. Explore the ancient city centre on foot and discover traditional restaurants and ancient churches. Make sure you have your passport and cross over into the Turkish side to discover beautiful mosques, cups of Turkish tea and coffee, and traditional Turkish baths.



Lefkosa, Sergey Galyonkon



Kotor, Montenegro

KOTOR is quickly coming onto tourists' radars, and being named as one of the Best in Travel Cities for 2016 by Lonely Planet will certainly speed things up. But it's not hard to see why. Nestled in between high mountains in a spectacular bay, Kotor is a maze of marbled lanes with churches, shops, restaurants and bars. Marvel at the sturdy town walls which have been successively fortified from the 9th to the 18th century, and get lost in the streets to stumble across local restaurants and bars.



Greece still red hot for Contiki

MANY thought the economic challenges that Greece faced in the past year would have deterred travellers. This has not been the case for Contiki, which experienced a 10% increase (from 2014) in holiday bookings for Greece.

Lonegan Research reveals that Greece is very high on holiday wish lists, with one in three Australians aged 18-35 looking to travel to Greece in the next three to four years.

Due to the high demand for Greece in 2016, Contiki has introduced three new

itineraries. There's a 10-day Mediterranean Escape, a 21-day Mediterranean Escape plus Greek Island Hopping and a 14-day Mediterranean Escape plus Greek Island Cruising trip.

For further exploration into the treasures of the Eastern Med, Contiki also offers a 9-day Eastern Mediterranean Cruising package, beginning and ending in Athens with stops in Mykonos, Santorini, Milos, Syos, Samos and Kos as well as Kusadasi and Cesme in Turkey.

Q&A

The Eastern Mediterranean has always been popular with Australians, but with the recent unrest, bookings have slowed down. We asked Halina Kubica from Greece & Mediterranean Travel Centre to give us some of her hot tips for selling this stunning area.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to the Eastern Mediterranean?

Eastern Mediterranean is a region of amazing beauty and historical significance, which means it is a perennial favourite among Aussie travellers.

Which destinations are most popular?

Greece is very popular and reports from hoteliers in Greece indicate that 2016 will be the best year ever. Turkey is also still very popular. We've recently also noticed a significant increase in interest for Jordan, Israel and Egypt.

What should an agent consider when selling the Eastern Mediterranean?

The fact is that the clients have great time when they travel to this region, so agents definitely shouldn't try to discourage clients from travelling. The region still offers great value for money

and an abundance of important historical and traditional sites. It is also paradise for foodies.

What kind of places and activities would you recommend?

For Greece the smaller less discovered islands should top of people's list to visit in 2016. For Turkey, go for the Mediterranean coast and Cappadocia.

What sort of travellers are visiting the Eastern Mediterranean?

In general all sorts of travellers. There is no specific trend in regards to age or gender. The Eastern Mediterranean appeals to all people.

Has all the political unrest and refugee crisis affected bookings?

It is not always about political unrest but usually about the way it is portrayed by the press. That said, the bookings to Egypt have been affected for several years. Both

Jordan and Israel are not doing as well as they should.

Australians looking to book holidays to Greece have also been affected which is a pity because bookings by Europeans are still very strong and any Australians who are waiting, hoping to snap up some last minute deals may find out that there is no availability at all.

What are the must-see attractions in the Eastern Mediterranean?

There are way too many to mention for every country. Some of the highlights would be the Acropolis and the islands in Greece, the pyramids and other famous Egyptian sites, Gallipoli and Cappadocia in Turkey. These places are just a few of the ones that should be on everyone's bucket list.

The Mediterranean Experts

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ROCKY YEAR FOR GREECE



LAST year was far from smooth sailing for the Greek tourism industry with a major economic crisis hitting the country and feelings of politic unrest spreading.

travelBulletin spoke to Halina Kubica of Sydney's Greece and Mediterranean Travel Centre to learn the effects of last year's climate on Australian tourism in the country.

As expected, Kubica said bookings for Greece in 2015 were very strong until the end of June when capital control measures were introduced to limit the flow of money throughout the country. An ATM withdrawal limit of 60 euro per day was put in place for Greek nationals and images of snaking queues at ATM machines and expressions of desperation graced television screens and newspapers here in Australia.

"There was initial confusion about capital control and how it would affect travellers. Tourists were worried that they'd have no access to funds," Kubica explained.

She said after speaking to her clients who

were travelling in the country at the time she learned they were "not affected at all" by the financial crisis and were still enjoying their holiday.

Kubica said the capital controls were only imposed on the Greek people with foreigners facing no restrictions on their bank accounts and withdrawing and spending as much as they wanted.

‘Greece expects the best year ever hence we encourage Australians to book...as soon as possible’

"Unfortunately this was not properly explained or portrayed in the Australian press and media," she reflected.

She believes the Australian public still has

some reservations about travelling to Greece but the general demand for travel to the country is still high with many hotels set to hit a record number of bookings for 2016.

"Greece expects the best year ever hence we encourage Australians to book their planned trip to Greece as soon as possible to achieve the best possible deals," she said.

"Greece is also relatively cheaper than other European destinations hence it is a very attractive destination," she added.

Independent guide to Greece, GreekLandscapes.com, advises people to continue visiting Greece without any fear.

"The beauty of the country has not been affected by the economic crisis. The landscape is just as beautiful as ever, the beaches just as relaxing, the sun just as warm, and the people just as wonderful (albeit a bit more pensive than previous years). All the reasons you could ever think to visit Greece are still there unchanged," it reads.

EASTERN APPEAL

UNIWORLD'S new 12-day Highlights of Eastern Europe and Istanbul all-inclusive luxury cruise is ideal for those looking to take a holiday in destinations less explored. Cruise along the Danube through Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey as you immerse in new cultures and discover the history of the Eastern European region.

Highlights include a bicycle tour around Belgrade, visiting picturesque villages in the hills of Bulgaria, seeing Vlad the Impaler's tomb in the Romanian countryside and exploring exotic Istanbul.



Istanbul, Moya Brennan

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FLOAT YOUR BOAT



Molokai, Hawaii Tourism

The USA's vast, iconic landscapes are an irresistible lure to the adventurous. **BRIAN JOHNSTON** rounds up his favourite American wilderness experiences.

Picking out just a few of America's top adventure experiences is an exercise in frustration, because too many fabulous destinations inevitably must get overlooked.

Just to think of a few, you can air-boat across the swamps of Everglades National Park in Florida, hike among rolling hills beneath the vast skies of North Dakota, dune buggy in the spectacular sand hills of the Oregon coast, and take a ranger-guided walk into California's amazing Death Valley.

You can take a helicopter ride into the remote backcountry around Rocky Mountain ski resorts and be knee-deep in power surrounded by dazzling alpine peaks, with not a soul in sight. Or head to a working ranch in Montana and learn to be a cowboy (or cowgirl) while driving cattle, team penning and horse riding through forest scented with pine resin.

The list is as vast as the country's wide-open skies, but here's a whittled-down pick of top American wilderness experiences for those looking for adventure.

HIKING: GRAND CANYON, ARIZONA

Start with the granddaddy of all wilderness spots, where it's surprisingly easy to escape the viewpoint crowds by heading along the trails that skirt the canyon's edge. Rim Trails are suitable for anyone of reasonable fitness. Ramble through pygmy pine trees and mountain mahogany bushes with long white

flowers that twist up like corkscrews, all the while gaping at staggering views. Hiking into the canyon presents one major drawback: what goes down must come up again. Still, you can always take to a mule if the going gets too hard. Undignified, but you'll feel like an early explorer.

ROCK CLIMBING: ZION NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

Zion has scenic drives for those not into adventure, but look to spend a couple of days on foot to experience Wild West at its best. While many walks start on the forested valley floor where squirrels skip, they soon head up steep, rocky cliff sides exposed to desert heat but well away from day-trippers. And with over 25 designated rock-climbing zones, this is a good place to learn or hone your skills in a valley where cliffs soar to 600 metres and the towering, waterfall-dribbled scenery is among the most dramatic of any US national park.

CHASING SUNSETS: ARCHES NATIONAL PARK, UTAH

The incredible rock formations of Arches are far more glorious than its simple name implies. This is perhaps America's most visually striking national park, where 200-odd splendid rock arches in towering orange and red look like something from a modern art studio. Although isolated, Arches is very visitor-friendly and relatively compact, with

some great walks. Late afternoon is the best time, with Delicate Arch particularly stunning at sunset, when it glows deep red. The nearest town, Moab, is a centre for adventure sports such as white-water rafting and mountain biking, adding variation to your wilderness exploration.

KAYAKING: TALLULAH GORGE, GEORGIA

This Georgian gorge, which plunges 300 metres in places, is one of the deepest in the USA, with beautiful scenery (especially in autumn) and plentiful walking and biking trails. Those looking for an adrenaline rush, however, should head here on weekends between November and April when water is released from dams upstream, turning the gorge into a challenging course for experienced white-water rafters and kayakers. The most infamous section is Oceana, a class V drop where kayakers have been known to break their boats in half: something to out-thrill a US theme-park rollercoaster ride, any day.



Molokai, Hawaii Tourism



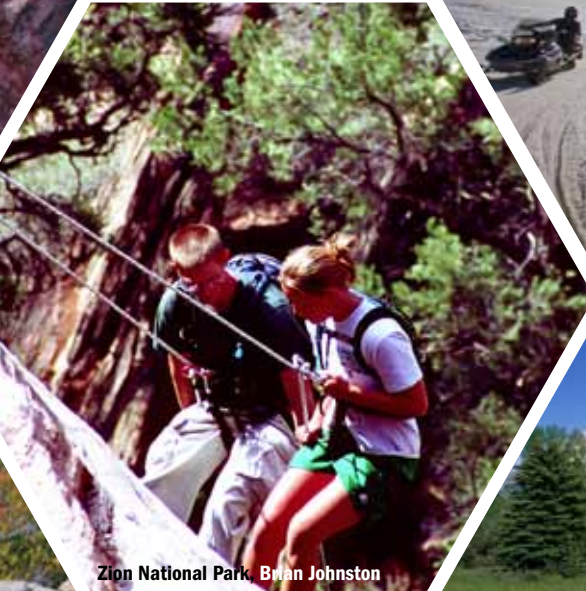
Grand Canyon, US National Parks and Wildlife Service



Maine Office of Tourism



Aspen Ski Company



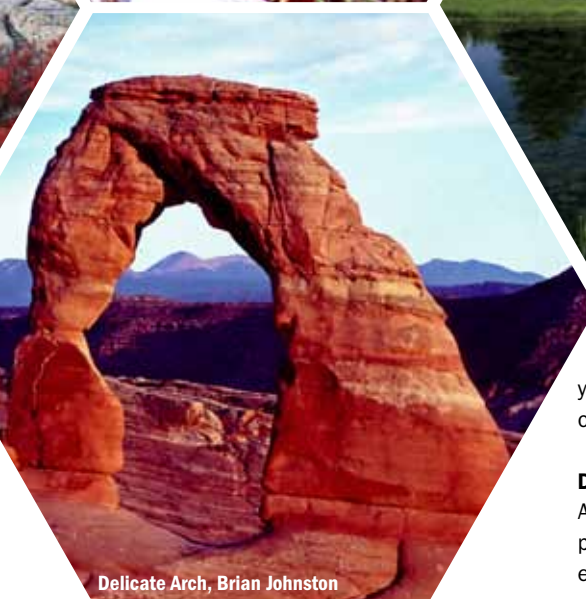
Zion National Park, Brian Johnston



Tallulah Gorge, Georgia
Department of Tourism



Wyoming Tourism



Delicate Arch, Brian Johnston

FLY-FISHING: GRAND TETONS, WYOMING

These splendid peaks are a classic mountaineering destination, but why enjoy the scenery the hard way when you can relax by a river and gaze at the snow peaks all around? The landscape is never short of gobsmacking in this part of the Rocky Mountains just south of Yellowstone. Waterways such as Snake River and well over a hundred alpine lakes offer great trout fishing spots, and some well established, local companies offer guided fishing tours and will rent you equipment. But you can also hike into the wilderness and find

your own spot in places such as Phelps Lake or Solitude Lake.

DRIVING: ACADIA NATIONAL PARK, MAINE

America's eastern seaboard is densely populated but remote areas certainly remain, even if they favour the more sedate. The magnificent coastal drive around Acadia National Park is an outstanding wilderness drive, heading past mountains, islands and jagged bays where the surf booms. In autumn, scarlet and orange coats the trees and fallen leaves rustle along walking tracks. Acadia is easily accessible from delightful, seaside Bar Harbor, a once-grand Victorian resort where dozens of lobster shacks allow you to fill up on Maine mussels and lobster bake, proving you don't have to sacrifice good food for an outdoors experience.

CYCLING: MOLOKAI, HAWAII

Hawaii is better known for surfing than

cycling, but one of the least visited islands, Molokai, is ideal for bicycles, with little traffic, good roads and beautiful scenery. It's about 65 kilometres east to west with no traffic lights and just enough small towns for some R&R along the way. When you get overheated, the sea awaits: Molokai boasts Hawaii's longest white-sand beach among its string of beautiful bathing spots. The eastern part of the island is the most isolated, with a stunning coastline, the island's highest peak and valleys where waterfalls tumble. No better place for a pedal.

SNOWMOBILING: ASPEN, COLORADO

Don't rule out winter as a time for wilderness adventure in the USA. Backcountry and heli-skiing is outstanding, but you have to be experienced. Much easier to take a snowmobile tour into the deep forest, where icicles glint from pine trees. Colorado has nearly 5,000 kilometres of dedicated snowmobile trails across the state (especially in Grand County), and outside Aspen you can head up into the hills towards the dramatic Maroon Bells peaks. Some tours will even have you travelling hut to hut and camping out overnight surrounded by stars and the frozen peaks of the Rockies. Brilliant.



Top National Geographic Journeys

NATIONAL Geographic and G Adventures have introduced 70 trips in the new National Geographic Journeys with G Adventures line. The two have joined forces to offer trips designed for travellers who appreciate having free time and choices, but want the safety and security that comes along with travelling with a group.

A key element of the trips is forging true human connections, with plenty of opportunities to get alongside locals and see how they live. This means activities such as spending time in a family home in Jaipur, India, or sharing a meal with a local author and her storytelling troupe in Botswana. Here's a taste of the top four trips:

1. The 12-day **Explore Southern Africa** trip includes a game drive with a researcher from the Endangered Wildlife Trust's Carnivore Conservation Programme, a visit to Hope Africa Children's Day School and a walk through the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens with a botanist.
2. Travel and **Discover Patagonia** for 14 days with a cruise across the Lago Todos Los Santos aboard a catamaran, a lecture by a local glacier expert in the scenic town of El Calafate and a local tango lesson.
3. Take a scenic train to Machu Picchu on the eight-day **Explore Machu Picchu**. Roam the Sacred Valley and take in the views of the Andes, visit the Sacred Valley Community Restaurant in Huchuy Qosqo and hike the Inca Trail.
4. Track the big five across the Serengeti and Masai Mara, alongside naturalists on the 13-day **Safari in Kenya & Tanzania**. Spot zebra, gazelles, buffaloes, and warthogs on the Ngorongoro Crater Game Drive, have a discussion about poaching and rhino conservation with a representative of the Kenya Wildlife Service and meet some of the women of a Masai village.

A&K SPREADS ITS WINGS

PRIVATELY chartered flights, small groups of no more than 16 guests and five-star accommodation can all be expected on Abercrombie & Kent's newly-introduced 'Wings over the World' journeys.

The three journeys are designed to ensure guests don't waste time, avoiding airport hassles and lengthy waits by travelling aboard an exclusively chartered Gulfstream plane with a dedicated flight crew.

Three trips have been launched across Indochina, India and China. The 16-day Wings Over Indochina departs 07 November to explore seven cities in Southeast Asia and The Wings Over India journeys from 05-19 December to eight of India's most iconic cities. The remaining Wings Over China tour begins in Beijing on 20 April 2017 and spends 12 days discovering Beijing, Xian, Shanghai, Guilin and Hong Kong.



SILVERSEA'S GRAND SOUTH AMERICA VOYAGES

GUESTS will be able to explore the land of stunning extremes – South America – in comfort aboard Silversea Cruises' two Grand Voyages scheduled to circumnavigate the continent in 2017.

Both sail roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale with the first, a 63-day *Silver Spirit* cruise, departing on 16 January, and a 66-day cruise aboard the line's newest ship, *Silver Muse*, departing on 13 October.

Sailing roundtrip from Fort Lauderdale, highlights of the "Circle South America" voyages include crossing the Panama Canal, two days cruising Chile's majestic fjords, a two or three-day stopover in Rio de Janeiro, plus multi-day calls in Buenos

Aires and Callao.

Kristian Anderson, Silversea's senior vice president and general manager for the Americas, said the cruises are "perfectly suited to the traveller who has the time and passion to indulge in travel on a grand scale".

The voyages offer guests ocean-view suites, gourmet cuisine, a butler service, all-inclusive shipboard amenities, including complimentary Champagne, select wines, premium spirits, speciality coffees, bottled water, juices and soft drinks; in-suite bar stocked with guests' preferences; in-suite dining and 24-hour dining service; lecture and enrichment programmes; roundtrip transportation into town (in most ports) and free Wi-Fi.

MAP TO ADVENTURE

Adventure can mean many different things to different people, from soft adventure experiences to extreme adrenaline-inducing activities. Here's a handy guide of how to pick the right tour for the client.

Do they want a cultural or active adventure?

Culture

Active

Explore the familiar or the untouched?

What sort of activity?

Familiar

Untouched

Cycling

Everything

Trekking

Arnhemland & Cobourg Peninsula Tour

Journey off the beaten track and explore one of the gems of the Top End of Australia, Arnhemland with Venture North.

View some of the best Aboriginal rock art, chat to locals and experience Aboriginal culture. Tours are for 6 people, priced at \$2,690 per person for four days.

Lots of animals?

Yes!

Nope

Classic Madagascar

Experience the incredible wildlife and culture that this island has to offer with A&K. See and meet creatures, people and landscapes different from anywhere else on the planet. This 10-day private journey is priced from \$6,040.

Uzbekistan Uncovered

Most people would be hard pressed to even find Uzbekistan on a map, but for centuries this country was smack bang in the middle of the most famous ancient trade route – the Silk Road. Explore the rich heritage of this country with Adventure World from \$2,200 for 11 days.

Bike & Barge Holidays

Outdoor Travel has a huge range of both guided and self-guided bike and barge holidays through Europe. Cycle during the day and meet up with the barge each afternoon. Prices for an all-inclusive 8 day journey are \$1,900 on average.

Turkey – Hike, Bike & Kayak

Get your fill of adventurous activities with Intrepid, hiking the Lycian Way and biking and kayaking past the Mediterranean, as well as exploring ruins and cities in Turkey. Priced from \$1,640 for 12 days.

How challenging?

Easy

Difficult

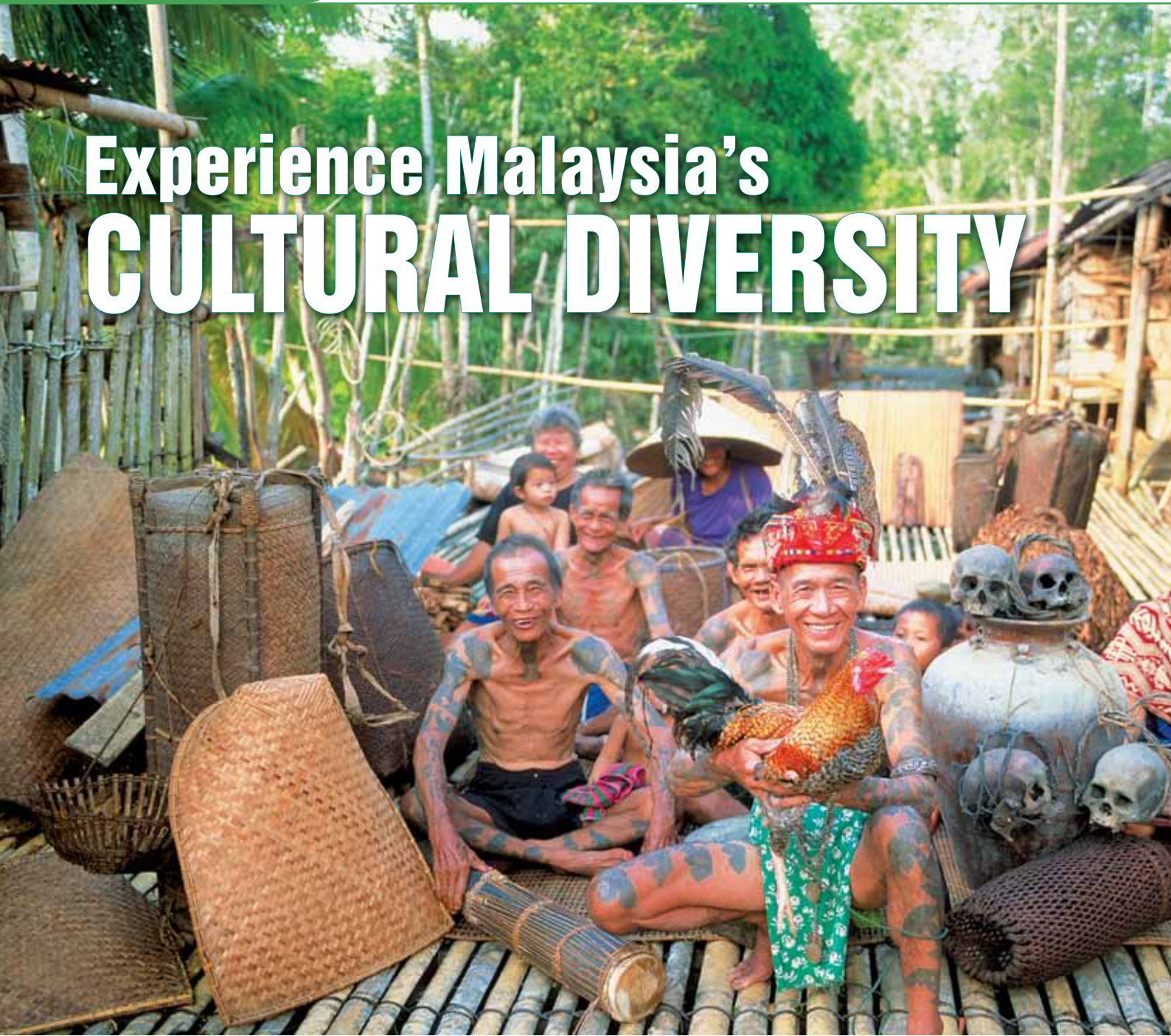
National Parks and Bright Lights

Take some easy hikes in Yosemite, Zion, Bryce Canyon and the Grand Canyon and light up the town in Las Vegas. Enjoy the comfort of hotels each night and the natural beauty of the US with G Adventures over 15 days from \$2,624.

Mera Peak Expedition

Mera Peak is 6,476m high and although it's not Everest, it's probably one of the most challenging mountains you can climb without needing to have any previous experience. Go with World Expeditions for \$5,680 per person for 23 days.

Experience Malaysia's **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**



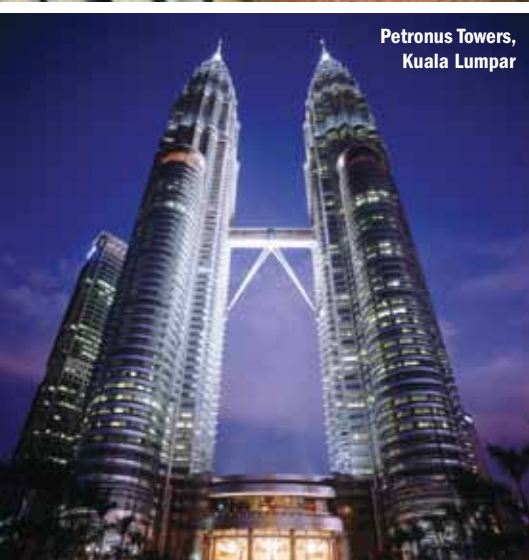
Kuching sunset



Orangutan



Iban Longhouse

Petronas Towers,
Kuala Lumpur

By Lee Mylne

THE jungle gives way to domestic life as we climb the steps to the longhouse, just a few steps from the wide swift river that has carried us here.

Chickens peck around the stairs, piglets squeal and hide, cats stalk past, and half a dozen assorted dogs look up lazily from the sunny spots they've found on what at first appears to be a wide, covered veranda.

Flashing smiles welcome us to the longhouse, home to an entire village. Fourteen doorways line one side of the veranda and from them emerge members of most of the 14 families who live here.

This is Sarawak, one of four states which make up the world's third largest island – Borneo – and once the home of fierce tribes of head-hunters. But modern life has reached even these remote spots, with longhouses now open to visitors either on day trips or in some cases, overnight stays.

We have travelled from Sarawak's capital, Kuching, starting with a four-hour drive along the Pan-Borneo Highway. The largest of Malaysia's 13 states, Sarawak covers 125,000 sq km and is home to more than 25 different ethnic groups, the largest of which is the Iban.

It's a long way from the sleepy vibe of Kuching – and even further from the bustle of the vibrant modern Malaysian capital, Kuala Lumpur – known to all as just KL. These three places alone speak to the diversity of Malaysia, and the reason that so many Australians keep coming back for more.

In KL, ancient traditions and gleaming modern skyscrapers have much to offer tourists and shoppers. To see it all at once, we go for a bird's-eye view of the city, a trip to the 41st floor of the striking steel-and-glass Petronas Twin Towers in the Kuala Lumpur City Centre. While you are not quite half-way up these 88-story towers – once the tallest buildings in the world – you are on a "skybridge" between them at 170 metres. To go further, head for the Observation Deck at 360 metres on the 86th floor!

Back on the ground, I discover the need to brush up on my bargaining skills when I head to the heart of Kuala Lumpur's original Chinatown, Petaling Street, for some serious haggling over the best buys.

The pre-war shophouses are open throughout the day but after 6pm the lanterns are lit and the Pasar Malam (night market) takes over. Here you'll find stalls selling everything from fresh produce to hot snacks and dried food, herbal remedies, clothing, toys, jewellery, and trinkets. Designer knock-offs – handbags, hats, t-shirts and more – abound.

The atmosphere is steamy, noisy and lively. Wind your way through the maze of stalls and be prepared to haggle hard. While you can buy almost anything, half the fun is just in wandering through the melee enjoying the sights, sounds and energy.

For gentler pursuits, take a stroll in KL's Perdana Botanical Garden (also called the Lake Gardens). Created in the 1880s around an artificial lake, the gardens cover 92 hectares and include a number of attractions.

The Orchid Garden showcases 800 species from Malaysia and on weekends becomes a lively bazaar selling plants and flowers. You can also visit the Deer Park, home to the world's smallest hoofed animal, the mousedeer. There is also a children's playground, jogging tracks, rowing boats and a small hibiscus garden.

‘The atmosphere is steamy, noisy and lively. Wind your way through the maze of stalls and be prepared to haggle hard’

Adjacent to the botanical garden is the Kuala Lumpur Butterfly Park, with around 6000 butterflies of more than 120 species in a Malaysian rainforest setting, and Bird Park, the largest in south-east Asia.

Carcosa Seri Negara, a pair of British colonial mansions set in a 16-hectare garden above the Lake Garden, is the perfect spot for a traditional English high tea, served daily in the elegant drawing room or on the verandah overlooking the gardens.

Built in 1896, Carcosa was the official residence for Britain's highest-ranking officials from 1904 to 1941. With the independence of Malaya in 1957, it became the residence of the British High Commissioner and in 1987 it was returned to the Government of Malaysia.

Seri Negara was the guesthouse for Malaysia's most important visitors – including Queen Elizabeth II. Since 1989, both mansions have been run jointly as an exclusive boutique hotel.

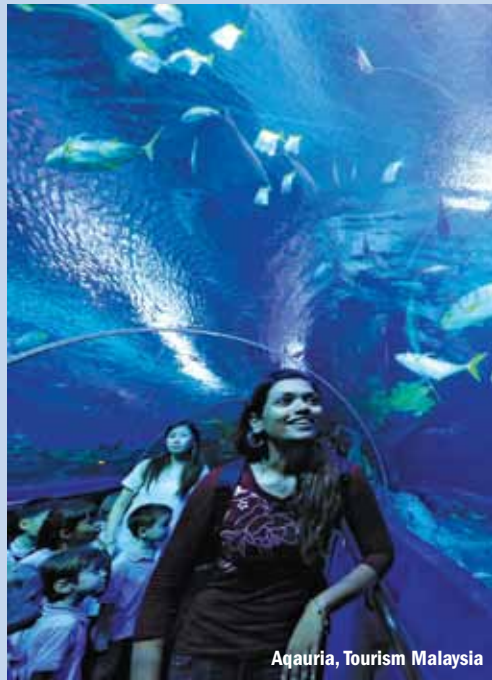
Outside the cities, Malaysia is sometimes called "the Amazon of Asia" for its abundant wildlife, including elephants, rhinos, tigers, Proboscis monkeys and – what everyone wants to see – orangutans.

Malaysia is ideally placed as a stopover for anyone heading from Australia to Europe, the Middle East, or anywhere in Asia, and has a diversity of experiences that keeps Australians coming back.

KL PASS

THE KL PASS, an integrated tourist pass that offers free access to tourism attractions and amenities, and other shopping, dining and entertainment privileges and benefits, is now available to travellers to the Malaysian capital.

The pass is available for one, three, or six days. Among the attractions included in the pass are the KL Tower, Aquaria KLCC, The KL Butterfly Park, Berjaya Times Square Indoor Theme Park, Batek Workshop at Kompleks Kraf, the Craft Museum, MUD The Musical, The KL City Gallery, The KL Hop-On-Hop-Off, the KL Tram, Sunway Lagoon Theme Park, the Telekom Museum, and The Foundry Workshop @ Royal Selangor.



Aqauria, Tourism Malaysia

LEGOLAND MALAYSIA RESORT

LEGOLAND Malaysia Resort in Johor is the first resort of its kind in Asia and the largest in the world.

Ideal for families, the resort boasts a LEGOLAND Park, Water Park and Hotel all in one LEGO-themed location.

“The resort has been specifically designed for families with children aged two to 12 years old, but it really does seem to appeal to adults and kids in equal measure,” says sales and marketing manager Owen Tan.

“We now have over 70 rides, slides, shows and attractions, focusing on adventure, education and fun, so we represent a great option for Aussie families looking for an action-packed day trip or a short break destination as part of a longer Malaysian itinerary.”

Star Cruises call to Malaysia

DISCOVER fascinating ports of call in Malaysia on board Star Cruises’ *SuperStar Gemini*.

Departing weekly from Singapore the ship calls in at Langkawi, Penang and Kuala Lumpur as well as Tioman and Redang; unspoiled Islands on the east of the country.

The voyage provides the best of both worlds, from island hopping in the tropics to visiting the heart of bustling cities.

There will be opportunities to try incredible local culinary delights such as authentic Hawker fare in Penang.

There’s no set itineraries so guests are invited to take the journey at any pace they like.

SuperStar Gemini combines new cabins, restaurants, recreational areas and a huge choice of duty free shopping.

The cruise includes up to six free meals daily from the many dining venues and entertainment will be provided by international artists.

When it’s time to chill out on board there’s detox wellness treatments at the spa as well as a jacuzzi and outdoor swimming pool.

■ For more information head to starcruises.com.

The Majestic, Kuala Lumpur

KUALA Lumpur’s only heritage hotel, The Majestic, is offering an overnight “Leading Romance” package, including accommodation in a colonial suite, flowers and a bottle of champagne on arrival, in-room butler service, a four-course dinner for two, and an indulgent two-hour spa treatment at The Majestic Spa.

Built in 1932, The Majestic has long been the venue for glamorous social

events and historical political meetings. Located in one of the city’s most intriguing neighbourhoods, the hotel stands opposite the grand 1910 railway station, and many of the city’s favourite tourist attractions are close by, including the National Museum, National Mosque, Islamic Arts Museum, Lake Gardens, and Bird and Butterfly Parks. The package is priced at RM1490 (about \$485).



MALAYSIA WELCOMES 6.5M TOURIST ARRIVALS IN 2015

AUSTRALIA has remained among Malaysia's top 10 tourist-generating markets in 2015, with travellers continuing to see it as a popular holiday destination.

Despite a downturn in visitor numbers in the first quarter figures for 2015, compared to the same period during Visit Malaysia Year 2014, tourism arrival figures overall are on a par with 2013, according to Tourism Malaysia.

From January to March 2015, Malaysia recorded a total of almost 6.5 million tourist arrivals, with more than 121,000 visitors from Australia. This was despite substantial flooding affecting some parts of Malaysia early in January.

The figures are reassuring, but unsurprising according to Tourism Malaysia's Sydney Director, Roslan Abdullah.

"Malaysia remains one of the safest, most politically stable and value-for-money destinations in South East Asia right now," he says. "And with unparalleled diversity in terms of our tourism offering, we can accommodate just about every type of traveller, including families, sun-seekers, honeymooners and adventure lovers. Plus we are not much further away than Bali."

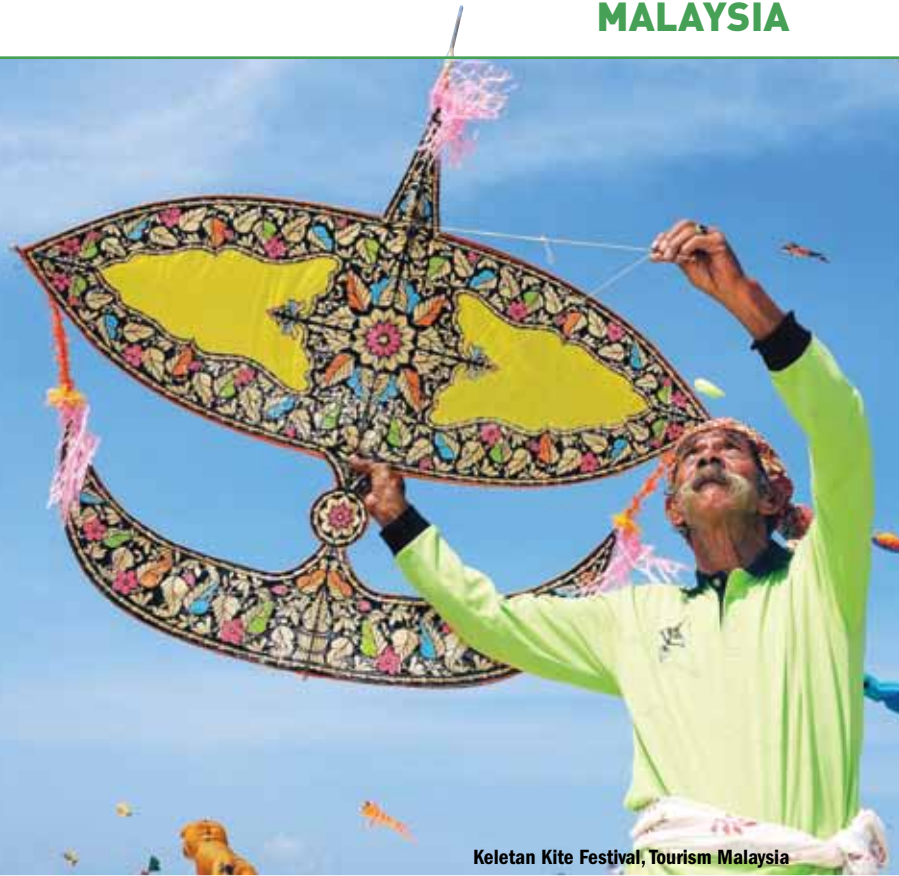
The Malaysian tourism industry's determination to survive and succeed in the

“Malaysia remains one of the safest, most politically stable and value-for-money destinations in South East Asia right now”

face of adversity is borne out by the country's latest tourism and travel statistics.

Tourism Malaysia's aggressive promotional efforts and commitment from industry players in line with the celebration of 2015 Malaysia Year of Festivals have contributed to solid tourism figures despite a challenging year.

The yearlong program known as MyFEST has delivered a diverse mix of 50 festivals and events taking place across the country throughout the year, giving visitors more reasons to make Malaysia part of their holiday plans. MyFEST was a key pillar of



Keletan Kite Festival, Tourism Malaysia

Tourism Malaysia's promotional efforts in the Australian market for 2015, with a central theme, Endless Celebrations, emphasising the depth and breadth festivals celebrated across the year.

Among the most popular events is the MotoGP, held in November at Putrajaya. In 2014, it attracted more than 20,600 international visitors, including 2,242 Australians.



KL Bird Park

After the hustle and bustle of Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya just 30 kilometres away, is Malaysia's federal administrative capital and is also home to the Royal FLORIA Flower and Garden Festival, held each May, which attracts more than a million visitors. Featuring more than 80 landscaped gardens with displays and attractions from around the world, including more than 100,000 bougainvillea plants, it is a must for garden lovers.

Shoppers also flock to Malaysia in November and December for the Year-End Sale, which involves hundreds of shopping outlets all over the country for two months.



Kuching

Q&A

Malaysia's diversity has Australians coming back for more, with fantastic wildlife, shopping bargains and fast cars appealing to a wide range of visitors. Marilyn Milner, of Asia Escape Holidays, in the Perth suburb of Wembley, shares her insights into this popular destination.



What are the main draw cards for Australians travelling to Malaysia?

Diversity and value for money. Whether you want resort, soft adventure, sport or shopping – Malaysia has it all.

What are your top tips for selling the destination to clients?

Malaysia represents excellent value, climate, high standard of accommodation/resorts and great variety of food and culture.

What kinds of clients are heading to Malaysia from Australia?

Families for theme parks and resorts with

great kids' facilities. People interested in Formula 1 and MotoGP or a fly-and-flop resort holiday, and shoppers looking for

bargains due to the weak Australian dollar. Soft adventure in Sabah also holds interest for both adults and children.

‘Malaysia represents excellent value, climate, high standards of accommodation/resorts and a great variety of food and culture’

What experiences do you recommend as a 'must' for your clients?

Food in Penang! Wildlife experiences in Sabah and Sarawak. F1 at Sepang and shopping in KL during the Mega Sales.

Do you have a favourite destination in Malaysia?

Each destination offers something wonderful & different – so no favourite.

Are there any challenges in selling Malaysia as a destination for Australian travellers?

Of course there are always some challenges, one being that Singapore has built a large cruise terminal and Australians are choosing to cruise rather than “resort” at present. Other nearby countries also compete with value deals and great air connectivity, but I believe Malaysia will bounce back because it has so much to offer and such great value.



Thean Hou Temple, KL

MALAYSIA A WINNER FOR ADVENTURE WORLD

IN response to Malaysia's ranking as 9th in the world and 1st in South-East Asia for tourist arrivals, Adventure World has introduced a brand new 11-day Highlights of Malaysia exploration to satisfy increased demand by travellers wanting to experience the cultural diversity, national parks, tropical islands and beaches that the vibrant destination has to offer.

Adventurers on Highlights of Malaysia will experience hiking through tea plantations, discovering jungle waterfalls and strolling through the white-sand beaches of the Perhentian Islands. They will also get the chance to spot wildlife from treetop hideouts in Taman Negara National Park and digest Penang's open air food stall markets. A key aspect of Highlights of Malaysia involves enjoying the cultural melting pot of Chinese, Indian, Dutch, Portuguese and British influences in the World Heritage Listed site of Malacca, 'the historic state'.

Malaysia's appeal as a destination is additionally enhanced as a gateway to the untouched, emerging tourist destination of Borneo, whose unique wildlife, most notably the elusive orangutan, is a huge drawcard for Australian travellers. Adventure World also offers



Long Beach, Perhentian Islands

stunning new wildlife and cultural experiences in Borneo such as the eight-day Borneo Adventure and Handpicked Borneo, where clients can get up close and personal with proboscis monkeys, orangutans and elephants in a sustainable manner.



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Singapore

**Malacca • Penang • Redang
Langkawi • Tioman • Kuala Lumpur
Cruise**

Discovering Vibrant Malaysia



SAVE UP TO 50% WITH EARLYBIRD FARES!!

5 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 10 April – 23 October 2016
Singapore – Penang – Langkawi – Singapore – Malacca – Singapore

INSIDE \$665pp
WINDOW \$790pp
BALCONY \$1130pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$400 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**

5 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 17 April – 16 October 2016
Singapore – Penang – Port Klang – Singapore – Port Klang – Singapore

INSIDE \$670pp
WINDOW \$785pp
BALCONY \$1135pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$400 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**

5 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 3 April – 7 August 2016
Singapore – Pulau Tioman – Pulau Redang – Singapore – Port Klang

INSIDE \$670pp
WINDOW \$795pp
BALCONY \$1135pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$400 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**

3 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 17 April – 16 October 2016
Singapore – Penang – Port Klang – Singapore

INSIDE \$428pp
WINDOW \$509pp
BALCONY \$724pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$300 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**

3 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 3 April – 7 August 2016
Singapore – Pulau Tioman – Pulau Redang – Singapore

INSIDE \$421pp
WINDOW \$501pp
BALCONY \$716pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$300 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**

3 Nights Cruise roundtrip from Singapore

Departing from 10 April – 23 October 2016
Singapore – Penang – Langkawi – Singapore

INSIDE \$421pp
WINDOW \$501pp
BALCONY \$716pp

**BOOK A BALCONY & RECEIVE
SGD \$300 FOOD & BEVERAGE CREDIT**



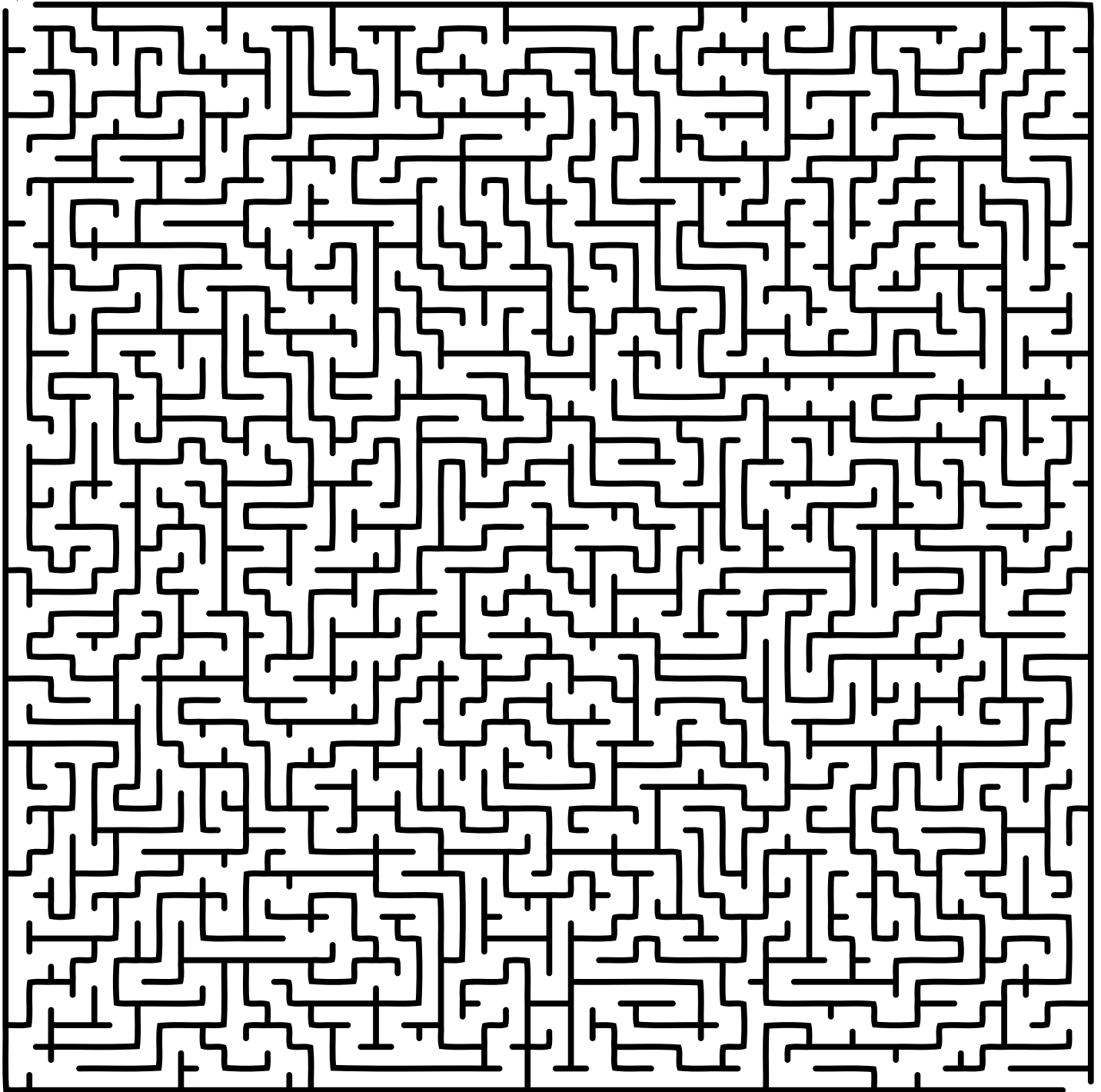
For bookings and further information
contact your preferred Wholesaler or call 1300 658 666

*TERMS & CONDITIONS APPLY. All prices are per person, twin share in AUD. The Early Bird offer is until 28 February 2016, unless withdrawn earlier. Offer is subject to availability and may change at any time without notice. Prices include port handling taxes & fuel surcharges. Price for Inside Cabin is based on DD category, Window Cabin is based on CH category (obstructed), Balcony is based on BA. *2 night cruise prices based on itinerary #1. Single travellers must pay a single supplement of 150% of the twin share fare. Food & Beverage credit is applicable to balcony cabins only & is per cabin. 5 night cruise = SGD400, 3 night cruise = SGD300, 2 night cruise = SGD100. Holiday surcharge is applicable to selected sailing 27 March 2016. Every effort is made to ensure advertisement accuracy, however Star Cruises cannot be held responsible for printing or typographical errors arising from unforeseen circumstances. ^ Inclusive meals are in selected restaurants only.



CRAZY MAZE

Get a load of this mayhem! Can you help the plane fly to its destination?



EXPLORE ANTARCTICA, ASIA, ALASKA AND BEYOND

in all-inclusive luxury



Where would you like to visit in 2016 and 2017?

From the regal wonders of The Hermitage to the Imperial treasures of the Forbidden City, the World's Most Awarded Luxury Cruise Line explores iconic destinations with exceptional all-inclusive Book Now fares. Across the world's great oceans, *Crystal Symphony* and *Crystal Serenity* offer you easy getaways close to home - think Sydney to Bali 10 February 2017 - or intriguing explorations of faraway lands.

Your choices are all but limitless with voyages calling upon nearly every desirable destination. Sailing aboard our luxurious vessels you can orchestrate your own personal experience whilst delighting in an abundance of choice, exceptional service and the finest quality.

THE ALL INCLUSIVE CRYSTAL EXPERIENCE®

Renowned for its ultra-luxe amenities and services, as well as unparalleled value including:

- Select fine wines, champagne and premium spirits in all restaurants and bar service throughout the ship
- Up to eight evening dining options*
- Award-winning entertainment
- All non-alcoholic beverages served throughout the ship
- 24-hour room service
- Pre-paid gratuities for housekeeping, bar and dining staff
- Free WiFi**
- Golf clinics with PGA instructors
- Spacious 360° teak Promenade Deck
- Pilates, yoga and Spinning® classes
- and so much more



SOUTH AMERICA

3 voyages | 13 to 26 days in duration
Departing January to March 2017

Fares from US\$5,385* (Cat. C3)



ASIA

4 voyages | 12 to 14 days in duration
Departing February to March 2016

5 voyages | 11-16 days in duration
Departing February to March 2017

Fares from US\$3,660* (Cat. E2)



ALASKA/CANADA

7 voyages | 7 - 10 days in duration
Departing June to August 2016

7 voyages | 7 - 10 days in duration
Departing June to August 2017

Fares from US\$2,949* (Cat. C3)



EUROPE

18 voyages | 7 - 14 days in duration
Departing April to October 2016

12 voyages | 7-18 days in duration
Departing May - October 2017

Fares from US\$2,545* (Cat. E2)

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FOR BROCHURES AND FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT **WILTRANS INTERNATIONAL** ON

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*Terms and Conditions: Fares listed are in US dollars, per person, double occupancy are subject to availability and include taxes. Europe fare: V6209, 17 Apr 2016, 7-day Venice to Athens voyage aboard *Crystal Symphony*; Asia fare: V7204, 23 Feb 2017, 12-day Bali to Singapore voyage aboard *Crystal Symphony*; Alaska/Canada fare: V7319, 8 Aug 2017, 7-day Vancouver to Anchorage voyage aboard *Crystal Serenity*; South America fare: V7305, 3 Mar 2017, 11-day Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro voyage aboard *Crystal Serenity*. Fares are reviewed on 29 February 2016. All itineraries, fares, programs and policies are subject to change. Other restrictions and terms and conditions apply. Crystal Cruises offers each guest the opportunity to dine at least once on a complimentary basis in Prego and at least once in Silk Road or the Sushi Bar. Additional reservations or visits are subject to a US\$30 per person fee, subject to availability. **Free WiFi minutes vary per stateroom: Deluxe Stateroom, Penthouse (PH) guests - 60mins per person, per day; Penthouse Suite (PS) guests - 90mins per person, per day; Crystal Penthouse (CP) guests - Unlimited free WiFi/Internet Contact Wiltrans International for full terms and conditions. Issue date: 20 January 2016.

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