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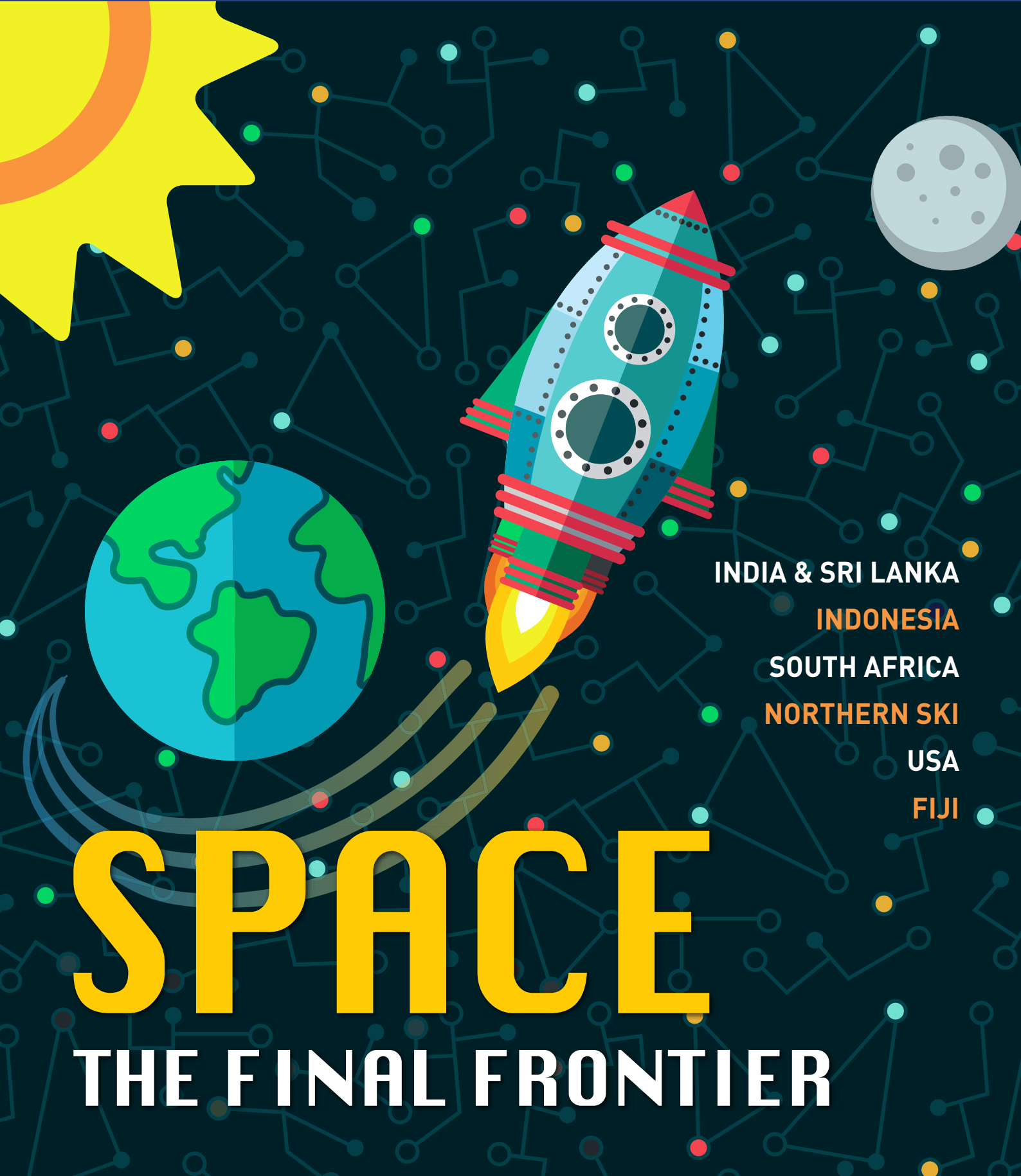
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JULY 2016



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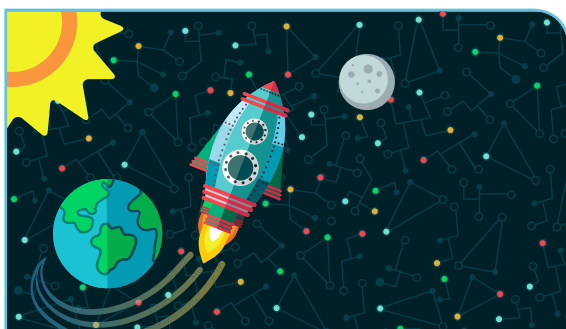


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From the managing editor Bruce Piper

BRITAIN'S shock vote to leave the European Union late last month is likely to have significant ramifications for the Australian travel industry. With our strong historical ties to the UK it has for many years been one of our top destinations and that is unlikely to change – but the devaluation of the pound sterling in the wake of the knife-edge vote will make it even more expensive. Aside from exchange rates, the decision is also predicted to see increased costs imposed on passengers by UK authorities as they revamp security and immigration procedures to implement their new border with the Continent.

And it may not stop there. While a grand tour to England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland is on the bucket list of many travellers, this could become more difficult as the ramifications of the vote roll out. Scotland, which overwhelmingly chose to 'Remain' in the EU, is likely to continue agitations about leaving the not-so-United Kingdom, while there are also rumblings about the move igniting hopes for a united Ireland, which would reintroduce internal borders which have been defunct for centuries.

That's not to mention the massive impact on travel suppliers. Airlines, trains, tour operators, car rental firms and hoteliers will need to re-evaluate their cost structures – all of which will flow onto Australian wholesalers and agents organising British holiday packages. If the predictions of the doomsayers prove correct, the cost of doing business in the UK will soar, flowing into the pricing of everything in the British economy including travel and tourism.

However every cloud has a silver lining. It may not be all bad news for travel agents, because for some clients the increased complexity will mean their consultant's expertise and advice is more valuable than ever.

MEANWHILE every month seems busy in the Australian travel industry, but July is set to be particularly frenetic with a number of major events taking place. We look forward to seeing everyone at the Travel Industry Exhibition taking place in Melbourne and Sydney – each of which will include the Travel Daily Christmas in July networking night. The trade shows take place either side of the highly anticipated 2016 National Travel Industry Awards gala dinner at Sydney's Darling Harbour, while there's also the excitement of the Flight Centre Global Ball in Singapore. Here's to the celebrations, which I'm sure will as always show the industry knows how to have a good time no matter what the circumstances.

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Ian McMahon's perspective

CHINESE BALM FOR VIRGIN AUSTRALIA

TWO months after I wrote about simmering tensions in the Virgin Australia board room, two Chinese investors have entered the picture. In rapid succession have come announcements that China's fourth biggest airline group, Hainan, will stump up \$159 million for a 13% stake in the carrier while Chinese conglomerate, Nanshan Group, will buy most of Air New Zealand's Virgin Australia shareholding.

The Chinese investors bring with them some potential strategic benefits and will enable balm to be applied to recent board room scars. But underlying problems remain and in the longer term there is the very real possibility that tensions may be exacerbated.

The Hainan deal will provide a partial short term fix to Virgin's capital needs and deliver substantial strategic opportunities in the massive and fast-growing China market.

Virgin Australia has moved quickly to exploit these opportunities, applying for daily flights to Beijing and Hong Kong from June next year. Subject to regulatory approval, the planned flights will originate from an as yet unspecified Australian port and will utilise Virgin's 275-seat A330-200 aircraft hitherto deployed almost exclusively on east coast-Perth trans-continental services.

The Nanshan-Air New Zealand transaction, which sees the Chinese group acquiring a 19.9% stake in Virgin Australia

(leaving the Kiwi carrier with 2.6%), eases the most acute immediate source of board room tension.

Air New Zealand, hitherto the largest shareholder in Virgin Australia, had been a lightning rod for board room discontent. It had made its dissatisfaction with the Australian-based carrier's direction very public, with its chief executive, Christopher Luxon, quitting the board and the airline putting its shareholding on the market.

It was clearly eager to sell. While Hainan was prepared to pay 33 cents a share for its stake, Air New Zealand accepted 30 cents from Nanshan, representing a very substantial loss on the reported price it originally paid for those shares.

However any immediate relief that flows from the entry of the Chinese giants to the Virgin Australia share register can't disguise the fact that the airline still faces considerable longer term challenges.

The Hainan "coup" – as Virgin boss John Borghetti described it – is by no means a total solution to the airline's capital requirements, with the company needing to raise at least another \$600 million according to analysts.

And while Air NZ will no longer be stoking board room discontent, what new volatility might the Chinese shareholders bring to decision-making?

Webjet stakes its cruise claim

LAST month's acquisition by Webjet of New Zealand-based Online Republic is further evidence of the key role cruise is playing in the growth of the travel industry. The companies have had a close relationship for some time, with Cruise Republic powering the white-labelled Webjet Cruise offering, and clearly Webjet CEO John Guscic believes it's worth deepening the partnership. However the move has come at what seems to be a steep price, with Webjet paying about A\$80 million for the company which generated net profit of around \$11 million last year – a multiple of more than seven times earnings.

However it's not just about cruise, with Online Republic also having operations in the motorhome and car rental segments. Guscic says he expects bringing the business under the broader Webjet banner will "provide the opportunity to accelerate the growth of the brands globally". Online Republic also has a strong presence as an online cruise seller in its own right, with the Cruise Sale Finder brand claiming to have booked more than 220,000 passengers. It will be intriguing to watch how the businesses are integrated, with Webjet saying its scale, marketing and branding expertise will "drive market share gains across Online Republic's respective segments".

Burnes the builders

HELLOWORLD chiefs Andrew and Cinzia Burnes clearly have their fingers in a number of pies, including a major proposed property development in South Melbourne. AOT's World Headquarters was relocated to the site at 179 Normanby Road after it was purchased by the couple in 2012 for about \$7 million.

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, April 2016

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Mar 16/ Apr 16	Trend Apr 15/ Apr 16
	000	000	000	%	%
Indonesia	105.5	105.5	99.0	+1.1	+12.5
New Zealand	106.4	99.4	97.9	-1.1	+1.1
USA	87.2	88.1	92.3	+0.1	+6.5
Thailand	44.7	44.4	48.8	+0.8	-3.9
UK	50.2	48.7	43.0	-1.1	+8.5
China	38.2	36.9	42.5	+0.6	+5.7
Japan	29.9	30.5	33.6	+0.8	+25.5
Singapore	31.1	31.4	33.5	+0.7	+4.1
Fiji	27.2	26.4	25.7	-2.7	-5.0
Hong Kong	18.8	21.1	24.0	+1.1	+4.3
All outbound	811.1	799.5	791.4	-0.2	+3.8

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, April 2016

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Mar 16/ Apr 16	Trend Apr 15/ Apr 16
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	107.7	110.3	114.2	-0.4	-1.3
China	98.3	100.9	97.2	+0.3	+19.4
USA	57.3	58.2	50.2	+0.8	+17.4
UK	58.9	58.4	47.3	-0.1	+2.5
Singapore	38.0	41.3	32.8	+3.1	+19.7
Malaysia	31.0	31.3	27.2	+2.4	+12.8
Japan	35.4	36.2	25.3	+2.6	+32.9
India	20.5	20.6	22.1	+1.4	+7.1
South Korea	24.1	23.5	21.1	+0.9	+32.4
Hong Kong	19.5	18.9	15.6	-0.4	+8.8
All inbound	670.4	678.4	610.8	+0.7	+10.2

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at April 2016

City pair	Passengers YE Apr 15 (000)	Passengers YE Apr 16 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,417.7	8,739.5	+3.8
Brisbane-Sydney	4,422.4	4,567.5	+3.3
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,318.9	3,401.8	+2.5
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,576.1	2,689.4	+4.4
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,285.4	2,341.7	+2.5
Melbourne-Perth	2,137.6	2,129.6	-0.4
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,760.2	1,872.4	+6.4
Adelaide-Sydney	1,819.5	1,859.1	+2.2
Perth-Sydney	1,776.6	1,759.9	-0.9
Hobart-Melbourne	1,441.7	1,507.2	+4.5

Source: BITRE

Now a Burnes-controlled company has lodged a development application for a 40-storey tower on the block which will include 318 apartments, retail outlets and more than 4,000 square metres of office space.

The existing historic Laconia Woollen Mills buildings on the site would be retained according to the plans, which value the project at about \$115 million. There's some controversy about the block, which is part of a precinct which was rezoned to allow CBD-style development the same year as the Burnes acquisition. The project has also fanned speculation by some about Helloworld's head office eventually relocating from Sydney to Melbourne given that a majority of the company's shareholders – notably the Burnes' and the Alysandratos family – are now based in Victoria.

Travelport set to lose Flight Centre

RUMOURS about the relationship between Flight Centre and its long-time GDS provider Travelport have been swirling for months, and it now appears speculation has proved correct with confirmation that the Flight Centre GDS contract with Travelport for Australia and New Zealand will not be renewed when it expires in about 12 months time. The massive contract – estimated at its height to involve more than 20 million flight segments annually – has seen Travelport hold a strong position in the local market for more than 25 years. Travelport staff were last month informed of the move, which is certain to see a significant restructure in the company's local operations which are headed up by former Helloworld executive Kaylene Shuttlewood.

The story was first broken by *Travel Trends*, which speculated that Flight Centre's

VANUATU ROADSHOWS A SUCCESS



VANUATU Tourism Office recently wrapped up a series of roadshows in Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney. Agents came together with industry partners to compete in Vanuatu trivia, making for relaxed and informative evenings. Nine major prizes were on offer with Mervi Rautiainen from Dive Adventures winning the grand trivia prize in Sydney of a trip to Vanuatu including flights with Air Vanuatu, four nights at Iririki Island Resort, two nights at Holiday Inn Resort Vanuatu and two nights at White Grass Ocean Resort. **Pictured** above are some of the Vanuatu Tourism industry members in Sydney for the roadshow.

appointment of Amadeus in Europe and Sabre in North America has allowed it to evaluate the various technology options available. Amadeus and Sabre are expected to now battle it out for the account, with Flight Centre no doubt making the most of the fierce rivalry between the technology firms to extract the maximum benefit from the account which is estimated to be worth as much as \$100 million annually. Travelport hasn't commented on the matter except to note it signed a new multi-year

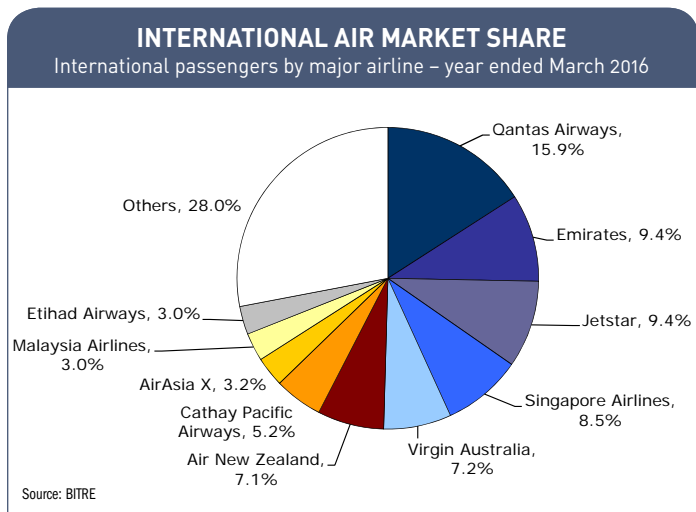
agreement with Flight Centre as one of its global GDS providers, while Flight Centre has also declined to comment on the basis of commercial confidentiality.

Virgin's Chinese evolution

VIRGIN Australia continues to attract deep-pocketed shareholders, with two new major Chinese airline investors announced as

Continues over page

BUSINESS MONITOR



DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – April 2016

	Apr 15	Apr 16	Growth (%)	Yr to Apr 15	Yr to Apr 16	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	4.76m	4.84m	+1.8	57.30m	58.12m	+1.4
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	5.64bn	5.67bn	+0.6	67.49bn	68.54bn	+1.6
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.40bn	7.36bn	-0.6	88.43bn	89.32bn	+1.0
Load factor (%)	76.1	77.1	+1.0*	76.3	76.7	+0.4*
Aircraft trips (000)	52.6	52.9	+0.6	633.3	638.4	+0.8

Source: BITRE * Percentage points

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – May 2016

	Departures on Time		Arrivals on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	4,989	82.6	4,792	79.3	77	1.3
Qantas	7,940	89.0	8,072	90.5	117	1.3
QantasLink	9,099	88.0	9,141	88.4	167	1.6
REX	5,781	87.0	5,948	89.5	18	0.3
Virgin Australia	11,144	90.1	11,264	91.1	185	1.5
All Airlines	41,140	87.8	41,459	88.4	582	1.2

Source: BITRE

Continues from previous page

joining its registry last month. First off the block was tourism and aviation giant HNA Group, which is injecting \$159 million into VAH via a new share issue which will see it become a 13% shareholder in the company. That was followed by confirmation that Air New Zealand had sold most of its stake in Virgin to another privately owned Chinese conglomerate, Nanshan Group, which is the owner of Qingdao Airlines.

Both of the new Chinese shareholders – along with Singapore Airlines and Air New Zealand – have pledged to support Virgin’s capital review which has also now been finalised as a proposed fully underwritten \$852 million equity raising. More significantly, the HNA deal has also seen Virgin lodge applications for flight capacity from Australia to both Hong Kong and Beijing, with daily A330-200 services to both destinations planned from 1 June 2017.

Interestingly Virgin Australia’s other major airline shareholder, Etihad Airways, hasn’t yet committed to taking up its entitlements under the capital review, saying it continues to review its options and “will announce our decision at the appropriate time”.

CATO continues to build profile

THE leadership of Council of Australian Tour Operators chairman Dennis Bunnik and his executive team on the CATO board over the last 12 months or so has seen a new lease of life breathed into the organisation. A range of initiatives including an awareness campaign, a soon-to-launch new agent-focused website and the introduction of unique identifying numbers for each member has reportedly seen a significant increase

in engagement from the industry – and at the same time boosted the relevance of CATO membership. CATO GM Peter Baily told *travelBulletin* “in this era of deregulation we are providing members with the accreditation and quality required by travel agents to feel much more secure in their bookings”.

Other initiatives flagged at the CATO AGM last month include a seminar focusing on business insurance coverage as well as a membership drive. While the push to boost awareness of Australian wholesalers is working, CATO has seen a decline in membership by tourism destination offices and associate members, which became part of its remit after the demise of the former ANTOR (Association of National Tourism Office Representatives).

Bunnik said the year ahead will see CATO aim to increase the professionalism of its members, represent their interests and minimise the risks of doing business – at the same time “building the profile and value of being a CATO member”.

Norwegian’s down under deployment

THE opening of Norwegian Cruise Line’s new Australian office last year has already borne fruit for the local cruise industry, with the announcement of the deployment of *Norwegian Jewel* in the Asia Pacific region during the 2017/18 summer season. The program includes seven round-trip voyages from Sydney, which will serve the dual purpose of meeting burgeoning demand for cruise holidays from Australian passengers as well as introducing mainstream Aussie passengers to the Norwegian “Freestyle cruising” concept. The Australian *Jewel* departures will see guests offered local produce including beef,

lamb, seafood, wine and beer.

The bold move by NCL will see the company compete against the established P&O and Princess offerings as well as Royal Caribbean’s blockbuster *Ovation of the Seas* deployment out of Sydney. Norwegian’s group senior vice president, Steve Odell, said the *Jewel* offering is “unlike anything available on the market today... something a little more boutique and unique”. The new Norwegian Cruise Line Asia-Pacific season is now open for bookings, along with a dedicated brochure for the Australian market.

HelloWorld seals Jetstar deal

THE new Qantas Group agreement signed by HelloWorld late last month was notable for the addition of Jetstar in the pact, with JQ signing its first ever commercial arrangement with a travel distributor. Confirming a new deal with the carriers was said to have been a “top priority” for new HLO CEO Andrew Burnes, while Qantas chief Alan Joyce said he was pleased to strengthen the airline’s relationship with HelloWorld as its “number one airline supplier”.

And while this is Jetstar’s first such deal it is most unlikely to be its last. Given the noise around the announcement it’s expected that Jetstar will also become part of any future Flight Centre agreement with the Qantas Group. Flight Centre has repeatedly said it wants to broaden its low-cost carrier offering, and is already well advanced with this strategy, having signed a three year partnership with Virgin Australia offshoot Tigerair in January this year. Flight Centre also has a supplier agreement with AirAsia, and its BYOJet offshoot, which is ironically a former HelloWorld affiliate, has API links with a number of LCCs.

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

May 2016, compared with April 2016

Rank Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Websites	May 16	May to Apr	Apr 16
Webjet Australia	15.81	-1.58	1
Expedia Australia	9.94	-3.81	2
Skyscanner Australia	8.71	+5.32	4
Wotif.com	7.77	-8.40	3
Flight Centre	7.65	+0.58	5
Velocity Frequent Flyer	2.87	+8.50	6
Lastminute.com.au	2.65	+0.69	7
Luxury Escapes	2.28	+27.51	8
Cheap Flight Aus & NZ	1.86	+10.31	9
STA Travel Australia	1.51	+10.41	10

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs [at March 2016]

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Mar 15	YE Mar 16	total	15/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,501,069	1,563,566	4.4	+4.2
Singapore-Sydney	1,373,861	1,469,824	4.1	+7.0
Singapore-Melbourne	1,159,112	1,254,436	3.5	+8.2
Auckland-Melbourne	1,066,166	1,165,397	3.3	+9.3
Singapore-Perth	1,021,888	1,098,087	3.1	+7.5
Hong Kong-Sydney	920,665	1,027,180	2.9	+11.6
Auckland-Brisbane	935,923	974,884	2.7	+4.2
Los Angeles-Sydney	904,533	926,967	2.6	+2.5
Denpasar-Perth	919,462	851,893	2.4	-7.3
Singapore-Brisbane	805,036	801,215	2.2	-0.5
Top 10 city pairs	10,607,715	11,133,449	31.3	+5.0
Other city pairs	23,038,336	24,489,576	68.7	+6.3
ALL CITY PAIRS	33,646,051	35,623,025	100.0	+5.9

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at 23 June, 2016

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$32.26
HelloWorld (HLO)	\$3.02
Webjet (WEB)	\$7.00
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.15
Qantas (QAN)	\$2.945
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.237
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.03
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$2.03
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.09
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$7.205
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$14.52
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.21
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.77
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.26

PULLMAN SYD AIRPORT DEBUT



THE 229-key Pullman Sydney Airport opened last month. The hotel is aimed at business and leisure guests who want to stay away from the hustle and bustle of the airport with the convenience of still being close by. **Pictured** from left are Carl Herve; Cheyenne Scroggy; Inga Prancute; Rebecca Lee, financial controller; Bernie Boller, gm; Barbara Liu; Julio Cesar Gomez, hotel accountant; Ernesto Faundez and Adam Leonardi. In the back row are Daniel Simpson, executive chef and Marco Warren, director of sales and marketing.

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 19 May** Qantas rejigs USA tariffs
- 19 May** SIA no-frills holding unit
- 20 May** ETG launches Select TVC
- 23 May** Flight Centre flags 2015/16 profit dip
- 23 May** ETG reports record year
- 24 May** Another Chinese carrier
- 24 May** Flight Centre online push
- 25 May** Lido signs deal with HRS
- 25 May** Royal Caribbean confirms ext of 2018 *Ovation* season
- 25 May** SA RTW agency shut down
- 26 May** Cruise industry swells 15%
- 27 May** Air NZ launches major new incentive
- 27 May** Excessive CC fees banned
- 27 May** AU/NZ key for Travelport
- 30 May** myholidaysclub.com scam
- 31 May** VA adds Chinese partner
- 31 May** Chargeback insurance OK
- 01 Jun** VA requests allocation for daily HK & Beijing flts
- 01 Jun** VA, SQ seek re-authorisation
- 01 Jun** Oz tourism's record year
- 02 Jun** RCL cancels 5 BNE voyages due to sale of *Legend of the Seas*
- 02 Jun** Etihad ramps up AU ops
- 03 Jun** AC launch BNE, plot MEL
- 03 Jun** AirAsia X cancels Bali flights
- 06 Jun** Webjet Cruise Republic deal
- 07 Jun** Burnes Melb tower plan
- 07 Jun** *Jewel* to homeport in Syd
- 08 Jun** Solomon Air resume flights
- 09 Jun** EK axes KUL-MEL service
- 09 Jun** 4th hotel for Disneyland
- 10 Jun** Air NZ offload VA shares to China
- 10 Jun** Hyatt Regency to Sydney
- 14 Jun** Best Restaurants to Aus
- 15 Jun** Virgin capital restructure
- 15 Jun** Four Points back in Syd
- 16 Jun** CATO agent interaction
- 16 Jun** Helloworld nab FCM exec
- 17 Jun** QF enhance web check-in
- 17 Jun** Hotels.com Uber button
- 20 Jun** Salary, employment survey
- 20 Jun** 'Hidden hols tax' blasted
- 21 Jun** ATAS renewal rate soars
- 21 Jun** Bleaching out tourism
- 22 Jun** Helloworld ink QF, JQ deal

New Westin for Sunshine Coast

STARWOOD Hotels and Resorts has announced the entry of its Westin Resorts brand into Australia, with an agreement to plan and operate the newbuild Westin Coolum Resort & Spa on Queensland's Sunshine Coast, north of Brisbane. It's huge news for the region which has been lacking an upmarket accommodation and conferencing offering since the closure in March 2015 of Clive Palmer's nearby property, which was formerly managed by Hyatt before its

acquisition by the controversial billionaire.

When the new Westin Resort opens in 2021 it will be the first newbuild five-star hotel for the Sunshine Coast in 27 years, featuring 220 rooms, large conference and event spaces as well as retail outlets and luxury apartments. The development, which is being undertaken by Japanese builder Sekisui House, is about 15km from Noosa and a five minute drive from Sunshine Coast Airport, which has also received planning approval for a new international runway which is scheduled for completion by 2020.

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passenger through Australia's major international airports – March 2016

Airport	Passengers YE Mar 15	Passengers YE Mar 16	% of total	% change 16/15
Sydney	13,456,757	14,270,643	40.1	+6.0
Melbourne	8,285,046	9,091,571	25.5	+9.7
Brisbane	5,090,379	5,298,753	14.9	+4.1
Perth	4,192,386	4,239,062	11.9	+1.1
Gold Coast	868,085	973,069	2.7	+12.1
Adelaide	961,914	856,046	2.4	-11.0
Cairns	468,342	579,972	1.6	+23.8
Darwin	301,254	257,527	0.7	-14.5
Townsville ^A	n/a	20,238	0.1	n/a
Sunshine Coast*	10,248	17,376	0.0	+69.6
Norfolk Island	11,640	11,235	0.0	-3.5
Port Hedland~	n/a	7,533	0.0	n/a
All Airports	33,646,051	35,623,025	100.0	+5.9

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

ATAS ACCREDITED LOCATIONS

at 24 June, 2016

New South Wales	991
Victoria	704
Queensland	597
Western Australia	298
South Australia	226
Australian Capital Territory	52
Tasmania	42
Northern Territory	24
TOTAL	2,934

Got something to say?

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



Steve Jones' Say

INCENTIVES: PART AND PARCEL OF THE INDUSTRY FOR EVER

BE it a \$20 Coles voucher, a place on a New York famil or tickets to the cinema, inducements have long been standard practice for suppliers looking to cosy up to front line consultants.

It's a simple strategy: overlook our competitors, send a few extra punters our way and we'll look after you. You scratch our backs, we'll scratch yours.

It has rarely – if ever – been called into question. Yet it's a practice I've long regarded as being on the cusp of unethical.

Are you, as a supplier, winning sales based on the quality of the product, or on the promise of rewards? And as an agent, are you genuinely recommending and selling a holiday you believe is right for the customer or are you being swayed with gifts?

In fairness, the dangling carrot is usually of relatively low value. Consultants, it is fair to assume, will hardly be motivated to

switch sell from one company to another when a \$20 Coles voucher is up for grabs. And that's meant as no offence to Coles.

But what of higher value items designed to encourage, attract or reward support?

For the past six months, The Travel Corporation has been running an incentive which has dished out \$1 million. It concluded last month with the award of an extraordinary \$50,000 to its top selling agent.

It goes without saying that it has been a very generous reward scheme, albeit from a family – the Tollmans – who aren't short of a bob or two. They are likely to repeat the initiative. But it just doesn't sit well. Not with me at any rate. Travel agents are duty bound to provide impartial guidance, to give their expert advice and recommendations to a customer. Will the allure of thousands of dollars risk that impartiality?

It's a question worth posing. Some

professions must disclose any gifts they receive to ensure transparency. I can't imagine many travel agents have told their customers of the lucrative Travel Corp incentive.

Many brands, those owned by The Travel Corporation among them, put significant resources into product development, training and brochure production and there is enormous frustration when that investment leads to an insufficient return.

But seducing agents with cash, and large amounts of it? The Travel Corporation has the means to reward support with sizeable amounts of money in a way its smaller competitors are simply unable to do.

Larger firms in any industry have the power and resources to dominate. We all know that. Opening a very large cheque book, however, to encourage, incentivise or reward – to increase sales in other words – just seems a little grubby.

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Le Lyrial Prestige Deck 4 cabin
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Aboard: Ponant Le Soléal
18 Days | 12 - 29 June 2017

Prices

Le Soléal Prestige Deck 4 cabin
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Single Supplement: from \$6,295

Full itineraries can be found at www.abercrombiekent.com.au/exclusivecruisetours

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AVIS SCHOLARSHIP TURNS 20

THE Australian travel industry owes the team behind the long-running Avis Travel Agent Scholarship of Excellence a significant vote of thanks. He's unlikely to accept the credit, but the commitment and drive of Avis Travel Industry Manager for Australia, Russell Butler, has been key to the longevity of the program which has helped launch some stellar travel careers as well as helping the industry keep a firm focus on customer service.

At an event last month to celebrate the launch of the 2016 scholarship, which is now in its 20th year, Avis Budget managing director for Australia George Proos was effusive in his praise for the program. He also highlighted

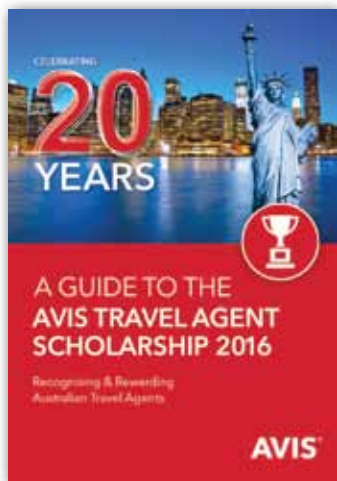
the key role played by the Avis Travel Agents Advisory Board, which was formed in 1996 to help the car rental giant better understand the needs of the Australian distribution sector by taking input from a group of travel agents. One of the Board's suggestions was the creation of the annual prize, which was won for the first time ever in 1997 by Robyn Sinfield who now runs Tasmania's Home Travel Company. Other former winners include

Spencer Travel founder Penny Spencer, Phil Hoffmann Travel general manager Michelle Ashcroft and Adrienne Witteman, owner of Sydney's Trendsetter Travel.

Entries are now open for the 2016 scholarship, with a host of information and advice available to prospective applicants at www.avisscholarship.com. Written applications must be lodged by 29th August, with the winner selected from among the finalists on a judging day prior to the prestigious annual Scholarship Dinner which takes place in Sydney on 8th November this year.

The coveted scholarship prize is valued at around \$40,000 and includes return business class flights to New York for two courtesy of Qantas, luxury Manhattan accommodation, Avis car rental and a visit to Avis World Headquarters in New Jersey, a scholarship to support study at Southern Cross University, CLIA membership, attendance at AFTA's National Travel Industry Awards and personal coaching from Polonius Resources.

But the benefits of the scholarship go much deeper and have had an ongoing impact on the whole industry, with its strong focus on encouraging customer service excellence. Participants have also hailed the application and judging process as instrumental in their career development. As Butler told *travelBulletin*, "just by taking part hundreds of travel agents across Australia have gained a deeper appreciation of customer service excellence and enjoyed a greater confidence in their own abilities".



UNDERSTANDING SURCHARGING

IT is a little hard to keep up with 2016 given that we are in July and awash with NTIA fever. To all of the finalists for this year a very big congratulations and no doubt there will be plenty of winners on the night.

In fact, this year we have 37 categories, our biggest ever program, and this includes what will be the inaugural "People's Choice" travel agency award, so keep a keen eye out for the results. The "People's Choice" winner will have something new to be very proud of as a lengthy voting process in conjunction with the *International Traveller* magazine has yielded an overwhelming result across the country and has provided an exceptional connection between ATAS accredited travel agents and consumers.

It will be the last year NTIA is held at the Dockside Pavilion in Sydney as next year in 2017 the event will move to the new Sydney International Convention Centre (ICC) which has a much larger capacity and given the number of attendees this year, I suspect we will need every seat they have for the 2017 event.

With the year now firmly half over, it is time to look to the months ahead and to what the industry will be facing as our next challenge. As challenges go, I think that the issue of credit card surcharging and how to understand and prepare for the "new" arrangements

‘Unfortunately, it [credit card surcharging] is not easy to understand and I wish that was not the case’

is one that everyone needs to get across. Unfortunately, it is not easy to understand and I wish that was not the case.

There are all sorts of messages in the media which not only can confuse those in the travel industry, but no doubt will also confuse the consumer. What is critical for everyone to understand is that surcharging is allowed and the new regulations clearly state that merchants can surcharge credit card fees on top of the price of a goods or service fee to a consumer. In the main, what has been regulated is what the banks charge each other when a particular credit or debit card is used.

From that point the banks will have to be more open with merchants as to what they are charging the merchant which in turn is what the merchant can then charge the consumer. However, there are factors to be considered by merchants when calculating the rate that they will surcharge. The cost of running the merchant services such as terminal costs or online payment gateways, fraud prevention and insurance costs that some merchants may purchase are all additional costs that can be factored into the level of surcharge levied by a merchant.

AFTA has attempted to provide as much detail about this as we can and updated fact sheets and FAQs are available on www.afta.com.au to help demystify the new surcharging arrangements. Importantly, for large travel businesses with a turnover of more than \$25 million the new arrangements come into effect from the 1 September 2016 and for all other travel businesses these new arrangements start from 1 September 2017.

While that might seem like a while away, given the complexity of this process, now is a good time to start to understand and plan for the future of credit card surcharging. Stay warm over the winter as I suspect we will be on a sprint to the end of the year as people start to re consider their desire to travel, well that is what I am wishing for.

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SELECT CONFERENCE IN VIETNAM A HIT

VIETNAM'S capital Ho Chi Minh City was the destination for the 2016 Select Travel Group (STG) conference with over 140 members and suppliers converging on the five-star Intercontinental Asiana Saigon hotel mid-May.

The conference opened with CEO of the Express Travel Group Tom Manwaring highlighting the conference theme of 'Learn, Engage, Succeed' as the essence that drives the group forward which is now firmly established as the largest independent group in Australia with over 624 agents across three brands with more than half represented by STG.

Achieving this mantle has not been easy with Manwaring reaffirming the decision to undertake a significant rebrand of the group not entirely being supported by all members to begin with but that positive outcomes have already been seen. "Fourteen months ago we changed the brand from Orient Express Travel to Express Travel Group. We believe that by rebranding the business into Express Travel Group explains more what the three brands in our business is all about. The brands are starting to really resonate within the market", Manwaring said. In addition to STG, the other brands in the collection include Independent Travel Group and franchise model italktravel that has grown significantly in the last 20 months to 35 stores becoming a strong alternative to other franchise models.

In fact growth was a reoccurring theme with Manwaring pointing to a number of very healthy outcomes across the group including total transaction value up by 15% for the 2016 financial year with passenger sales up 16% and whilst yield was down 1% owing largely to "a reflection of what's going on with airfares", this was offset by a greater uptake of preferred product sales with "cruise bookings, coach bookings, and insurance bookings all up, sometimes 40, 50, 60% off pretty good bases".

The conference then swung to updates on marketing which included a new brand film that highlights the social and family elements of travel which are important factors in the decision making process for STG's customer base – largely people from South East Asia and the Indian Sub-continent. The film has been recorded in multiple languages and is being rolled out across cable television, cinemas screens in Chinatown areas as well as at major concerts in Australian capital cities featuring talent from across South East Asia where STG has identified a ripe source of prospective customers.

Other initiatives touted included the group's commitment to protecting against insolvency via the Book Safe insurance policy and the Express Academy providing a one stop learning hub to build product knowledge and sales skills available at no financial cost on the member platform.

STG's suppliers were given the opportunity to engage and connect



Pauline Nguyen with Quynh Giang and Tom Manwaring of ETG

with members courtesy of the breakout sessions and the product market, the latter of which occupied several hundred square meters within the hotel's ballroom where stalls were set up and staff showcased all the latest product, news and opportunities to generate business.

Guest speaker at the conference was AFTA's CEO Jayson Westbury who highlighted the uptake of ATAS accreditation among STG's members urging more to join and take advantage of the marketing benefits. And special keynote speaker was Pauline Nguyen owner and co-founder of Red Lantern restaurant in Sydney and one of Australia's most successful entrepreneurs and bestselling authors. Pauline recounted the harrowing journey her parents and brother, Luke (of celebrity chef fame), made by boat as Vietnamese refugees and the opportunities they worked hard for in order to prosper in Australia.

Officialdom was matched with social time to unwind and provide attendees the chance to meet new acquaintances or reaffirm old ones with a city sightseeing tour by bicycle, a cruise on the Mekong Delta and an exploration of the Cu Chi tunnels on offer. The traditional gala awards dinner rounded out the conference with a number of members receiving awards across a range of categories, and taking out the top award for Agent of the Year – National was the team from Best & Less Travel in NSW.

The 2017 STG conference is earmarked for Japan, Hawaii or Macao with guests left waiting in anticipation.



STG's suppliers at the product market

Select Travel Group Conference 2016

Ho Chi Minh

May 2016

Congratulations to all the Select Travel Group Agencies that picked up an award at the recent STG Conference.





Travelport delegates get into the spirit of Macao with one of the magician performers (left)



Benjamin Stokoe, Travel Beyond Group; Mark Reddy, Travel Beyond Group; Ryan Davis, Travelport; Tim Lane, Travel Beyond Group

TRAVELPORT BRINGS OUT THE BIG GUNS

By Jasmine O'Donoghue

THE Travelport Live APAC Customer Conference 2016 dialled it up a notch, with a turn out of over 360 delegates from 23 countries and 40 speakers.

Hosted at the glitzy Studio City in Macao, attendees participated in thought-provoking talks punctuated with panels, breakout sessions and networking.

In true Macao-style, delegates donned their glamorous dresses and suave suits for “A night at the Oscars” at the largest nightclub in town, Pacha Macao.

Speaking with *travelBulletin* at the conference, Travelport’s general manager of Pacific, Kaylene Shuttlewood highlighted the importance of the Australian and New Zealand markets. Australia is a “top ten market” for the company globally and had a stable performance last year.

“We had a very strong year in 2015 across the whole Asia-Pacific region and Australia was a large component of that with the volume we’ve got there,” Shuttlewood said.

But 2015 was New Zealand’s time to shine, with the travel commerce platform seeing the biggest growth in the market in a decade.

“New Zealand is a real early adopter market for technology, they always have

been... and NZ also has a very high portion of home based travel agents so we’ve got deals with a number of those large groups and it works very well,” Shuttlewood explained.

Echoing Shuttlewood’s comments, Mark Meehan, managing director Asia-Pacific, Travelport said Australia and NZ are always going to be key markets for the company.

‘From an airline point of view, I hate commission’

Ian Heywood, Global Head of Product and Marketing, Air Commerce, Travelport

“Australia and New Zealand are more mature [markets], they are more stable but the opportunities are still there... and the need is still there for us to provide that travel commerce platform to our customers to enable them to do what they need to do.”

Last November, the platform made a leap in the New Zealand market, signing up Air New Zealand to their Rich Content and Branding solution, which communicates all fares, ancillaries and brand proposition to agents.

“Certainly in the last year we’ve gained good share position [in New Zealand] and I think for instance deals like the Air NZ deal are going to also make some fundamental

changes in the market for us,” Meehan said.

Particularly for carriers like Air New Zealand, Meehan said Rich Content and Branding has met the needs of both communities – presenting the airline’s value proposition in the indirect channel and giving agents a tool to make themselves more relevant and allow them to focus on being the expert.

Speaking at the conference, Travelport’s Global Head of Product and Marketing, Air Commerce, Ian Heywood put in his two cents on airlines paying commission.

Well known for scrapping British Airways’ travel agent commission a decade ago while he was the airline’s Head of Sales, it was no surprise when Heywood declared “From an airline point of view, I hate commission”.

“But I do believe that agents should be paid for the value that they bring,” he continued.

Heywood went on to say he was in favour of agents having multiple revenue streams and being paid by airlines with incentives – which he found to be more effective.

“The agents are working on behalf of the customer as well, they’re not just working on behalf of the airline and so that payment needs to come from outside. The customer needs to pay the travel agent for the value of that job that they’re doing for them but also airlines should pay up as well.”

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2017 BACK-ROADS TOURING BROCHURE

BACK-ROADS Touring has launched its 2017 UK & Europe brochure with an exciting new look and feel, plus some impressive new itineraries.

Brand manager, Hugh Houston, says the new brochure has taken the brand to another level, and this will enable the business to capitalise on an incredibly successful 2016 and provide a springboard to the 2017 selling season. Due to the amazing growth, departures have also been increased across the program, providing greater options to clients.

"The new creative looks stunning, and the changes to copy and layout, plus insider tips from our tour leaders, change the entire dynamic of the brochure," Houston said.

New tours for 2017 include The Lakes & Mountains of Italy and Switzerland, Scandinavia and the Baltics, Impressions of Russia and as a result of an extremely successful first season of the French

Waterways program a third tour "Champagne: A Cruise along le Canal de la Marne au Rhin" has been included.

Changes to several itineraries have been made including the 10-day Spanish Inspiration tour which is now 11 days and has been renamed Iberian Inspiration as the tour finishes in Lisbon.

"These changes are a result of customer feedback and ongoing research. It is critical that we listen to our customers feedback, and act accordingly," Houston said.

An Early Booking offer of a 10% per person discount on all tours booked and paid in full by the 31st August is available.



Globus Supertour honours agents

GLOBUS continued its annual Supertour rewarding top selling agents this year with a trip through Spain and Portugal.

Running for over ten years, the annual incentive for agents across Australia and New Zealand rewards those who sell the most Globus, Cosmos, Monograms and Avalon Waterways product.

The 2016 Supertour itinerary was an 11-day trip through Barcelona, Madrid, Toledo, Seville, Setubal and Lisbon, based on the Globus Iberian Tapestry tour, one of the many in the 2016 Europe program.

The trip included a special surprise, when the agents were taken to a football game between Barcelona and RCD Espanyol. The group also got to wear personalised jerseys specially made for them. The agents are pictured above outside the 17th Century Alcazar, in Seville, Spain.



ACCI VIEW

Steve Whan, manager, Australian Chamber National Tourism Council

BOOSTING AUSSIE TOURISM

THE visitor economy is a key driver of Australia's future jobs and living standards so it rightfully had a high profile in this year's election campaign. The visitor economy is a shining light in difficult economic times.

That's why the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry placed making visas cheaper and more accessible as one of our Top 10 in 10 – an election agenda for a more competitive Australia. Australia is enjoying strong growth in tourists from China but we cannot take that growth for granted. Our tourist visa offering

is still complicated and expensive; countries that have simplified entry requirements are racing ahead in a very competitive market.

“Our tourist visa offering is still complicated and expensive”

Currently Australia ranks 49th on the visa requirements section of the Global Competitiveness Index, well behind our regional competitors. Our \$55 Passenger

Movement Charge means we rank a disappointing 127th for ticket taxes and airport charges.

Thailand experienced a 70% increase in Chinese visitors after it offered them a low-cost visa on arrival. Australia is in a very competitive market so we have advocated a full roll-out of online applications in Mandarin to advance on the commitment earlier this year to a trial later in 2016. We also called on both major parties to lower the cost of the 10-year multi-entry visa so it is competitive with that offered by the United States and Canada.

The Australian Chamber is Australia's largest and most representative business network. The establishment of the Australian Chamber National Tourism Council gives us a very firm focus on policies that will help Australian businesses deliver the product that will keep the visitor economy booming.

During the election campaign we highlighted the need to not increase the Passenger Movement Charge beyond the current \$55 per head. Even frozen the tax will generate \$225 million in government revenue over the next three years.

Before the election the Australian Chamber National Tourism Council released a policy manifesto that included:

- Calling for a national strategy for training and retention of Australian staff;
- Scrapping the so-called "backpacker tax" and extending the visa and second-year extension for working holidaymakers;
- Ensuring the path through our international airports is quick and effective through proper staffing and more e-gates;
- Reforming the Tourist Refund Scheme;
- Ensuring Tourism Australia can keep up with the competition by increasing its funding for promotion; and
- Continuing to support capital grants programs for locally based infrastructure to boost tourism demand.

The 270,000 small businesses driving our fabulous tourism product can grow and deliver more jobs if we take these simple and cost effective steps make Australia even more competitive as an international tourism destination.

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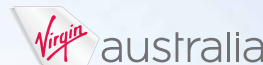
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COVER



SPACE

THE FINAL FRONTIER

By Steve Jones

IN APRIL 1961, Russian pilot and cosmonaut Yuri Alekseyevich Gagarin became the first person to experience that ultimate of birds' eye views.

On board the spacecraft *Vostok 1*, he peered down on planet Earth from the dark void of space.

Gagarin's 108-minute flight, during which he travelled at 27,400km an hour, was a breakthrough in space exploration.

Yet since then, only 550 people – a surprisingly low number – have ventured beyond the earth's atmosphere and witnessed the wonders first described by Gagarin 55 years ago.

Depending on your levels of scepticism – and how much credence you give Richard Branson – that number could rocket over the next few years.

If Branson has his way, and if his assumptions are correct, "millions" of people will, in time, be queuing up to emulate Gagarin and those who followed the Russian trailblazer.

And the Virgin entrepreneur is not alone in his quest to open up new frontiers of travel.

Paypal and Tesla Motors mastermind Elon Musk has set his lofty sights on inhabiting other planets, while Amazon founder Jeff Bezos is also plotting a business based on giving the masses – albeit extremely wealthy masses – a space adventure.

Bezos and his Blue Origin operation has yet to release pricing but with Virgin Galactic, if you can stump up \$250,000, you've got yourself a ticket. Another operator, Xcor Space Expeditions, could be regarded as the budget carrier. It has tickets on sale for a mere \$150,000.

While there is no official boundary between our atmosphere and space, the commonly accepted view is that it begins 100km above the earth's surface, at what is known as the Kármán line.

Named after 19th Century Hungarian engineer and physicist Theodore Von Kármán, it has been accepted as the virtual boundary by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, a world air sport body and international standard-setting organisation for aeronautics.

To put that into some sort of perspective, travel eight times beyond the 43,000ft cruising altitude of an Emirates A380 and you won't be too far off astronaut status.

Branson's Virgin Galactic has, of course, been the most high profile of the space projects and initially hoped to launch passenger flights in 2007.

It was an ambitious target and, as it transpired, hopelessly optimistic.

Despite the endless delays, he remained – at least publicly – unshakeable in his resolve.

That was until October 2014 when Branson's dream appeared to lay strewn across California's Mojave Desert following the crash of the *VSS Enterprise*, and the death of its co-pilot, Michael Alsbury.

Aside from the tragic loss of life – chief pilot Peter Siebold miraculously survived after ejecting from the stricken *Enterprise* and parachuting 10 miles to earth – it was a devastating set-back for a program already years behind schedule.

But after a year-long probe, investigators concluded the crash was the result of pilot error on the part of Alsbury, rather than any fundamental flaw with the *Enterprise* itself.

Branson was back in business.

“If we can make it environmentally friendly, if we can make it affordable and if we can make it safe, then in time your children and my grandchildren will all have the chance to go to space”

Virgin Galactic failed to respond to *travelBulletin* emails to discuss the progress of the operation, but at an event in April to unveil its new *SpaceShipTwo* craft, *VSS Unity*, Branson told UK media he would be “astounded” if the first flight does not take place within two years.

Furthermore, Branson believes his venture has the backing of “millions and millions of people who would love to become astronauts”.

“If we can make it environmentally friendly, if we can make it affordable and if we can make it safe, then in time your children and my grandchildren will all have the chance to go to space,” he told *The Guardian* newspaper.

To date, Virgin Galactic has taken around 700 bookings. According to its Australian accredited space agents, not all have come from wealthy individuals, however counter-intuitive that may seem given the exorbitant price tag.

Gil McLachlan Travel Group said it has



Continues from previous page

two paid-up passengers and “15 maybes of varying degrees of enthusiasm”.

“Most are in wait and see mode but I would expect action as soon as the routine commercial flights commence,” chief executive Gil McLachlan told *travelbulletin*. “It has appealed to a very broad group and not all are wealthy. They run from young trendy rich folk who I suspect are just doing it as it will be a good dinner conversation, to solid business people who can manage the cost, to people who have borrowed the money.

“People in their 80s have made bookings and they are definitely fit enough. I think that’s important as in the past the only people in space were as fit as Olympians.”

Penny Spencer, founder of Spencer Travel in Sydney, said its four bookings, and general interest in the space program, have come from “all walks of life”.

“We have an orthodontist, an ex-Qantas steward, an adrenaline junkie and a husband buying it for his wife’s 50th birthday,” she said.

‘We have an orthodontist, an ex-Qantas steward, an adrenaline junkie and a husband buying it for his wife’s 50th birthday’

So, apart from the “I’ve been to space” brag, what exactly do you get for your \$250,000?

The core package is three-days accommodation, training at the purpose-built Spaceport America facility in New Mexico and, of course, the flight itself.

The training is designed to mentally and

physically prepare customers so they can “savor every second of the spaceflight”, with basic emergency response training also a critical part of the pre-flight preparation.

As for the flight, Virgin Galactic’s dual-fuselage WhiteKnightTwo jet aircraft climbs to an altitude of 50,000ft before the attached SpaceShipTwo spacecraft is released.

‘These people are well informed and in this case understand the crash was pilot error, not a problem with the craft’

The rocket motor then clicks into gear, with the craft accelerating to more than 1,000 metres per second, or three and a half times the speed of sound.

After 60-seconds of this mach three speed, the motor shuts down and the spacecraft “coasts into space where astronauts will leave their seats and experience true, unencumbered weightlessness” while viewing the earth through 12 cabin windows.

This centre-piece of the trip lasts for “several minutes”, Virgin Galactic states on its website, after which the spacecraft returns to earth.

Spencer said the art of selling such a unique product requires “patience and persistence”.

“This is a big ticket item so people do want a lot of information, reassurance, help and confidence in the product,” she said.

That confidence took a battering after the 2014 crash, with Branson himself wondering if it signaled the end.

Globally, around 25 would-be space tourists withdrew from the program, but Spencer said they saw no cancellations. Unlike Branson, “it didn’t shake our confidence,” she insisted, adding that while no launch date has been set, “it is going to happen”.

“I think everyone dreams of going to space

and what Richard has created is curiosity. My kids will probably go to space. Once this takes off I think we will be surprised how many people will want to do it.”

Worryingly for agents however, Spencer said Virgin Galactic has adopted a more direct, reactive and application-based sales process since the accident, although Spencer Travel remains an accredited space agent.

Spencer’s prediction that demand will increase was supported by McLachlan, who also voiced confidence in the project and suggested the demise of the Enterprise would not have unnerved too many prospective space travellers.

“These people are well informed and in this case understand the crash was pilot error, not a problem with the craft,” he said. “I also understand that the ability of the pilots to make the error [that led to the crash] has been addressed.

“I think space tourism will become mega popular once the price drops to that of a car.”

‘I think space tourism will become mega popular once the price drops to that of a car’

Prices will fall to \$40,000, McLachlan estimated, which raises the very legitimate question of why pay \$250,000 now if you’ll be able to pick up a space mission for the fraction of the cost further down the track?

“I just say that someone has to fund the beginning and that someone is them,” he said. “They always accept this.

“But one of the biggest barriers is a concern that other family members will object, in part because of the cost, so the price can be factor. It’s not that the prospective astronaut thinks it expensive but because the family think the money is better spent elsewhere. Some passengers have not told anyone they have booked a space flight.”

Nor are customers expressing much frustration at the delays, said McLachlan. “They understand the reasons. As we like to

say, 'it's a safe race, not a space race'."

But in effect, a space race is exactly what it is. While hardly on the scale of the US-USSR rivalry during the second half of the 20th Century, Branson faces competition from Jeff Bezos, and others, in his bid to create a space tourism industry.

That said, there is an argument to say Branson and Bezos have been beaten to it. US-based Space Adventures has already sent eight civilians to the International Space Station (ISS) over the past 15 years.

After protracted negotiations amid a refusal by the US to sanction his eight-day visit, American engineer and multimillionaire Dennis Tito went down in history as the first space tourist when, with help from the Russians, he blasted off in 2001.

"I think Richard Branson and Jeff Bezos... wouldn't be in this industry if it wasn't for what Dennis originally did," Space Adventures president Tom Shelley has said.

These trips to the ISS are, however, on a different scale to the product being spruiked by Virgin Galactic, Blue Origin and Xcor Space Expeditions.

As with Branson, passengers who choose the Amazon founder's company will receive intensive training before boarding the New Shepard spacecraft, a more conventionally designed rocket that departs in more conventional rocket fashion – from a launch pad.

A capsule with a maximum of six astronauts then separates from the rocket after a vertical journey of 150 seconds and glides into space, offering spectacular views from 43-inch windows.

The reusable mother ship returns to earth, followed later by the capsule which descends with parachutes and thrusters.

Bezos, who until recently kept his plans remarkably low profile, hopes to operate the first piloted test flights next year, with ticketed passengers travelling into space by 2018. For the time being however, reservations remain closed and ticket prices remain under wraps. Equally unclear is whether Blue Origin will adopt a similar approach to Virgin Galactic and hand pick a few travel agents to sell the product.

"I wanted to start a space company from when I was a little kid, but I never expected to have the resources to do so," Bezos told *The Washington Post* – a newspaper he owns – on a tour of Blue Origin's facility in Kent, Washington. "Then I won this lottery ticket called amazon.com. And so when Amazon became a successful company I realised, 'Hey, I can fulfil my childhood dreams of

'I would expect the commercialisation of space travel is currently in the hands of Branson, but once it starts to commence regular flights it will be like breaking the four minute mile and lots of others will step in'

starting a space company', and that's what I did."

McLachlan recognised the emergence of Blue Origin describing it as "credible".

"But that's not to comment on success," he said. "It depends how determined they are and how deep their pockets are.

"I would expect the commercialisation of space travel is currently in the hands of Branson, but once it starts to commence regular flights it will be like breaking the four minute mile and lots of others will step in.

"The commission is token, but if we were in it for the money we would never have bothered. You don't get a lot of products that are this interesting and gratifying to sell and the Galactic model is important to the industry because it represents proof of feasibility."

Spencer also foreshadowed new entrants. "Watch this space," she said.

Xcor Space Expeditions, meanwhile, was formed by career rocket scientist Jeff Greason in 1999, the year Branson registered Virgin Galactic.

The US firm has several products on sale. These include a Pioneer program, where passengers will travel 60km above the surface of the earth on the two-seater Lynx Mark 1, and the sold out Founder Astronaut program, which is reserved for the first 100 astronauts, of which Bob Geldof is one. This involves a journey above the Kármán line on a spacecraft called *Lynx Mark II*, also designed for just the pilot and one paying passenger.

"You are in the best seat, up front with the action, watching every moment of the spaceflight unfold," Xcor says on its website, while flagging the near 360-degree view from the cockpit canopy.

"We know you did not travel this far to look at the earth through a tiny airline window," it adds.

In similar vein to its competitors, the spacecraft rapidly accelerates to supersonic speed within one minute and mach three in three minutes, before gliding above the virtual space boundary for several minutes of weightlessness.

Xcor has a number of other options including an Advanced Astronaut program for \$185,000, with "an array of training mission and events", and the \$235,000 Iconic program where the space traveller appears in a "personalised documentary".

Those not on the founding astronaut program can sign on as a Future Astronaut, again at a cost of \$150,000.

Xcor has not specified a launch date but, if and when flights begin, it anticipates each of its two spacecrafts will operate four flights per day.

Beware however, the Lynx crafts are not designed to take people taller than 6ft 9 or heavier than 113kg.

As for Elon Musk and SpaceX, a venture which started two years before Blue Origin, in 2002, it has steered clear from pure space tourism.

While its extraordinary long term goal is to "enable people to live on other planets",

'You are in the seat, up front with the action, watching every moment of the space-flight unfold'

SpaceX is predominantly focused on supply cargo missions to the ISS.

While companies are clearly making progress with their technology, space travel has been on the agenda for years, and several launch dates have come and gone.

It is tempting, therefore, to suggest it may never happen. That would be the pessimists' viewpoint.

But those behind the various operators are anything but pessimistic, Branson in particular who, unsurprisingly, suggests it will become big business.

"I think it would be very sad for anybody to not want to go to space," he says. "If you are inquisitive about life and inquisitive about the world around us, to be able to look back at our fragile earth from space and see the beauty of it, I am sure every single one of us would love to do it if given the opportunity."

It remains to be seen if he will be the first to provide such an opportunity.

SABRE UNVEILS SNEAK PEEK OF NEW PLATFORM

TRAVEL technology leader Sabre Corporation has unveiled a sneak peek at its game-changing Sabre Red Workspace. The software solution will harness the changes in the industry and provide both retailers and suppliers with a content rich marketplace, intelligent decision support tools and predictive data insights that enable agents and suppliers to more easily create personalised experiences for travellers.

The company will begin upgrading travel agency customers to the new solution in early 2017, after a limited pilot later this year.

“Data, analytics, personalisation and mobile have been ‘trending’ in the marketplace for some time and offer exciting opportunities for buyers and suppliers to meet changing



traveller needs,” said Sean Menke, president of Sabre Travel Network. “Travellers want more than an itinerary; they want to feel confident about their purchases and expect a trip built around choice. That’s why in addition to a superior user experience, our new Sabre Red Workspace provides travel consultants with data insights, relevant offers and price transparency. Our travel insight engine will help drive decision-making, revenue optimisation and true personalisation.”

The combination of data-driven booking trend information with intuitive design and a consumer-grade user interface, smart product differentiation for air extras and Branded Fares, and inspirational shopping are among the many new features.

GUEST COMMENT

With managing director of Amadeus IT Pacific
Tony Carter



EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

IN RECENT years there have been significant changes to Duty of Care legislation in some Australian states and in New Zealand. These changes have seen the definition of ‘workplace’ now encompassing anywhere employees are carrying out their work duties, therefore extending corporate Duty of Care obligations to those employees travelling for work.

The legislative changes present major challenges for TMC’s and corporations, particularly as to how to address the risk management and travel safety of their travellers. In light of the increased liability of employers, businesses need to demonstrate that they’re looking after the wellbeing of their travelling employees to meet the Duty of Care obligations.

There are many new travel challenges arising from devastating natural and man-made crises, recently even in destinations previously considered low risk. Corporations should have effective measures in place that can be quickly implemented to ensure the health, safety and security of the traveller.

With the growing trend towards ‘bleisure’ travel and new sharing economy travel options there are more temptations to book out-of-policy options than ever before. Leakage from corporate policy are common and risk associated with business travel increases. Some of the ways to mitigate the impact include:

- Enforcing corporate travel policy to travellers.
- Educating the employees to understand their own responsibly and benefits in adhering to policy.
- Driving the adoption of any self-booking tool to minimise leakage, bringing efficiencies and ensuring better visibility over traveller movements.

CREATING THE FOUNDATION OF A STRONG TRAVEL POLICY

To help prepare for the unexpected corporations should establish a strong travel policy. Key considerations can include:

- Use of vendors that have been selected on specific criteria such as reputation and location.
- Analysing the risk in the travel destinations to help to determine the best Duty of Care solution.
- Educating travellers on selected vendors, policy, procedure and measures that are in place to track travellers and communicate in the case of an emergency.

HOW AMADEUS CAN HELP?

Technology has a crucial role to play in helping to meet today’s Duty of Care obligations. The best practice Duty of Care solutions enable you to locate, communicate with, and assist travelling employees. Features such as interactive mapping and GPS locators will assist to identify at-risk travellers, locate them and allow two-way communication via a smartphone app, email or SMS. The best solutions also bring in ‘offline’ booking information, so it is accounted for at the itinerary.

Amadeus has a range of solutions to suit different business types and sizes that can assist companies meet their Duty of Care requirements, simply and effectively.

- Amadeus Mobile Messenger is a complete Duty of Care solution, enabling you to locate, communicate with, and assist travellers 24/7.
- Amadeus Oneclick enables you to keep track of your travellers arrangements, proactively notify them of any travel alerts or disruptions, as well as communicate via SMS or email.
- Amadeus Travel Alerts Notifier is a simple tool that effectively keeps your travellers up-to-date on flight changes and status updates.

If you would like to know more about how to make Duty of Care simpler and more effective for your corporate customers please download our discussion paper from www.amadeus.com or speak to your Amadeus Account Manager.

A woman with blonde hair is shown in profile, looking down at a smartphone she is holding in her hands. The background is a blurred outdoor setting, possibly a city street. The overall tone is professional and focused on technology and user experience.

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www.sabre.com/anz

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UBER INTRODUCES SCHEDULING

UBER has introduced Scheduled Rides in Seattle, with the company revealing plans for a “global rollout”.

Scheduled Rides allow uberX users to request a pickup up from 30 mins to 30 days in advance and are priced exactly like a normal uberX ride, meaning they are subject to surge pricing.

The service is being made available first to business travellers and Uber has promised “other top business travel cities” will follow Seattle’s introduction, but has confirmed there are no “current plans to launch Scheduled Rides in Australia”.

Despite the changes, Niklas Andreen, Senior Vice President and Managing Director of Hospitality, Car and Digital Marketing at Travelport believes if, when or how the new addition will impact on the travel and car rental industry remain to be seen, “as it’s only available to a very select group at this point”.

Andreen says there will still be a level of uncertainty as to if there will be any cars available, as Uber is taking the responsibility of sending out the ride request to drivers in a particular area close to the requested time.

“Business travellers are generally time poor - they need a guarantee that a car will be there to pick them up from point A to point B,” Andreen says.

“If Uber gets this right then the pre-booked car with driver (supplement to taxis in many markets) will have a fight on their hands.”

Due to surge pricing still applying and a guaranteed rate not being made available, Andreen says it will be hard for travel agents to book with the ride-sharing company.

“Travel agents will not want to bear the responsibility of additional surge pricing incurred for the traveller, thus

pre-booked car with driver companies (limo services, etc) will still hold a competitive advantage of their centrally negotiated rates,” he adds.

“Uber will not be a replacement for pre-booked cars just yet, even with the Scheduled Rides offering, it’s still very much complementary rather than a replacement for rental cars.”



TECH SPOTLIGHT

WHEN YOUR CUSTOMERS WANT MORE THAN A SEAT

EVERY day airline offers get more complex and travellers depend on travel agents to provide guidance on the best available deals.

When an airline unbundles its product it can sometimes be confusing to work out what is the best package for your customer. Travelport Smartpoint with Rich Content & Branding helps you to understand the airlines’ latest offers, shows you what ancillaries are included and what’s available for a little more.

Travelport Rich Content & Branding enables airlines to display their full service offering to travel agents by displaying their branded fares and ancillaries on travel agents’ screens, using rich and graphical product descriptions, just as they would on their own websites. For travel agents, this means that you can keep up with the latest airline offers without continually having to check the airlines’ websites.

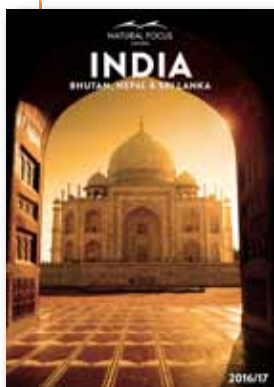
Delivered via Travelport Smartpoint desktop, you can instantly compare fares, and see images of the cabins and seats in a single window. This means you’ll be able to suggest to your customers options they may not have previously considered and offer the best deal for them.

More than 160 airlines globally are now live

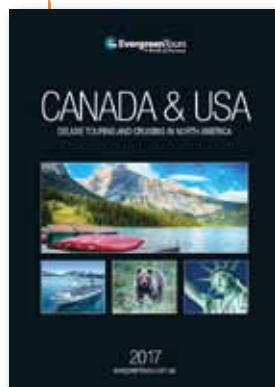
with Travelport’s Rich Content & Branding capability, including key carriers in the Asia-Pacific region such as Virgin Australia, Air New Zealand, Singapore Airlines, Cathay Pacific, China Southern, China Eastern, and Air China.

■ Please contact your Travelport representative or visit www.travelport.com/solutions/merchandising to find out more.





NATURAL Focus Safaris have released a brochure detailing their 2016/17 India offering. New to the stable this year are a collection of hideaways in the neighbouring gem of Sri Lanka. There are also a huge range of hotels across the India subcontinent, as well as group tours such as the wildly popular Taj, Temples & Tigers itinerary which takes in 14 guided tiger safaris plus Delhi, Khajuaoh and Jaipur. Small ship cruising and wildlife destinations feature as well.



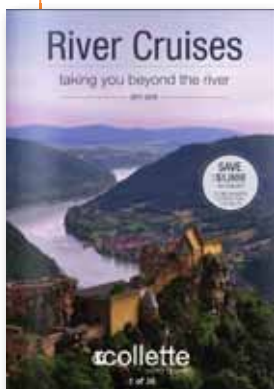
THE 2017 Canada & USA brochure from Evergreen Tours has recently hit agency shelves. The 162 page program details all of the company's offerings. Best selling combinations of the Rockies and Alaska are back, plus a new four night Yukon experience has been added to make the 31-day Rockies, Alaska and Yukon Adventure the trip of a lifetime. "You're invited" experiences, included complimentary in each tour, are also detailed, such as lunch at a family-run sugar shack in Quebec.



2017's Great Rail Journeys from TravelMarvel has been extended to cover rail itineraries in not only Europe but now also USA, India, China, Japan and New Zealand. There are 31 trips to choose from including the Across the Roof of the World journey which spends 14 days exploring China and Tibet, travelling on both high speed and overnight heritage sleeper trains, from \$6,495ppts. A range of earlybird specials have been released with the brochure.



PONANT has released details of its Latin America and Caribbean season, from October 2017 to April 2018 in their new brochure. The cruises are aboard *Le Soleal* or the company's classic sailing yacht *Le Ponant*. Highlights include a New Year's Eve cruise on *Le Ponant*, which features on 32 staterooms, visiting a new idyllic island each day. Some excursions on the itineraries are included while others are optional meaning guests have the flexibility to choose.



COLLETTE has released its 2017/18 River Cruise brochure which includes cruises in Europe as well as on the Yangtze in China, and the Egyptian Nile. Collette utilises smaller vessels and all the tours include the services of a professional Tour Manager. The cruises include all meals and optional excursions are available on all itineraries, as well as local guided walking tours in each port.



SIX new itineraries plus a number of new Freechoice activities have made their way in to Scenic's 2017 China and Japan brochure. The comprehensive 24-day Journey to Shangri-La travels from Shanghai to Kunming, visiting all the must-see highlights and cities in China including Beijing, and a Yangtze river cruise, as well as Hangzhou, a new city for Scenic, made famous by Marco Polo and known for its beautiful classical gardens.



CHIVA-SOM International Health Resorts has unveiled their program of retreats for 2016. The brochure features specialised and oriented programs towards the individual goals of guests. Thirteen retreats are now available, including five brand new retreats which require a 10 night minimum stay: Cell Vitality Retreat; Cranial Relief Retreat; Emotional Wellbeing; Tension Release and Sustainable Slimming.



APT's Kimberley and Outback Wilderness Adventures have continued their popularity and the company has capitalised on that with their 2017 prerelease brochure featuring the six most sought after itineraries. The trips are available at 2016 prices for a limited time, and air credits of up to \$1,300 per couple on the first 100 bookings of each tour are up for grabs.

CAREER IN FOCUS

PATRICK BENHAMOU

Director of Atout France, Australia

Patrick Benhamou has worked all over the globe promoting his homeland of France. Now based in Australia, he is the director of Atout France, the agency responsible for the development of tourism in France.

Benhamou was born in the medieval village of Provins. The town is UNESCO World Heritage listed for being built in the 10th century, and boasts an elegantly designed hotel called 'Le Cesar'.

Patrick began his travel industry career in Los Angeles, working to promote the best wines of France.

After working as a Gentil Organisateur, another name for staff, at Club Med, he moved back to France and lived in Paris, continuing to work for Club Med but now in their advertising department.

In 1980, Benhamou was hired to open the French Tourism Bureau in Sydney. He has remained with the organisation since that time, representing France in Amsterdam, Montreal and Sydney.

The brilliant visitor numbers that France enjoys from Australia is regarded by Benhamou as one of the highlights of his career. Over 1 million Australians are travelling to France every year.

With over two decades of experience promoting France, *travelBulletin* asked Benhamou to share with our readers some of his favourite things in France.



FAVOURITE HOTEL

THERE are just so many wonderful hotels in France that it is impossible for me to narrow it down to just one. I love Terre Blanche in Provence for its rows and rows of lavender, the olive scented air, the 300 hectare estate and 18 hole golf course. Les Sources de Caudalie near Bordeaux is another must see, heralded by many as the inventors of vinotherapy with their wine inspired spa, as well as the chic country hotel itself. Finally, Le Phebus in the Luberon is built entirely in dry stone and its rooms are steeped in history. The formidable talent of the chef Xavier Mathieu is the icing on the cake. He breathes new life into ancient provincial recipes making food that is to die for.

FAVOURITE FRENCH BISTRO

L'AMI Louis, in Paris is my favourite for its old world decor, cheeky service and unbelievable food, completely worth the slightly steeper price tag. It is true Gallic triumph in my eyes, a once in a lifetime experience.



BEST GOURMET EXPERIENCE

THE three Michelin starred Alain Ducasse restaurant, Le Jules Verne, which is embedded in the Eiffel Tower elevates fine dining to a new pinnacle.

CHANGE IS AS GOOD AS A HOLIDAY

HOW many times have you been bailed up by a colleague at the office water fountain or the equivalent congregation spot to hear their sob story when it comes to hating their job or chosen career path? You know the story, they're 40, have 20+ years of experience, are at the crossroads and don't know what to do. Here are some tell-tale signs your colleague is burning out and it might be time to suggest to them a change.

1 They're continually exhausted – most of us spend the majority of our waking hours working and if your colleague is prone to burning the candle at both ends and is suffering the consequences, perhaps a career shift is needed.

2 Salary is no compensation – sure your colleague might be on a good wicket, but they're bored and feel empty and it's the money that is keeping them at their employer. Tell them to rethink their priorities and their eyes may just open up to change.

3 When making the right choice is wrong – perhaps all the right choices they believed they were making were based around appeasing others. Time to have them focus more on pleasing themselves rather than others.

If they're prepared to listen to your sage advice and are willing to embrace change, they'll be dusting off their CV in next to no time and embarking upon fresh, new opportunities.

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MEET IN THE WEST

By Nathalie Craig

PERTH is a vibrant yet relaxed city, seamlessly weaving development and natural beauty. The Western Australian capital is thriving with events, delicious dining options and modern convention space while still maintaining its incredible sense of space and calm.

The Perth Convention and Exhibition Centre is situated along the Swan River and has 23 rooms designed to cater for meetings and seminars. Private boardrooms are available for up to 16 people, River View Rooms for 540, and the Riverside Theatre, Perth's largest tiered theatre for up to 2,500 seated delegates.

The fact Perth is in the same time zone as 60% of the world's population, including Singapore, China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Taiwan and the Philippines is another driving factor making the city an ideal business events destination.

Just outside its CBD, Perth has ideal places to inspire delegates – think picturesque beaches, winery vistas in the Swan Valley or hanging with the Quokkas on the unspoilt Rottneest Island. Here's our top picks on what will impress:

ROTTNEEST ISLAND

JUMP on board a 45-minute express ferry to be transported to this pristine nature reserve. The car-free island is home to some of Australia's most idyllic swimming and snorkelling spots with more than 135 species of vibrant tropical fish and 20 species of coral. Hire bikes to cycle through



Rottneest Quokka



Sandalford Winery

©PCBP Paul Parin

the awe-inspiring natural environment with no need to worry about vying for space with cars. A great drawcard for the island is its native Quokkas – also known as the world's friendliest marsupials. A Quokka selfie is a must – these creatures are definitely not camera shy.

CRUISE THE SWAN RIVER

A CRUISE on the Swan River is one of the finest ways to experience the surrounds of Perth. On departing the city centre passengers have front row seats to riverfront attractions like the Bell Tower and King's Park before reaching reach Fremantle where the river meets the Indian Ocean. Fremantle is known for its maritime history, buzzing markets and super fresh seafood. Cruise operators such as Captain Cook offer buffets and live entertainment on board.

SWAN VALLEY REGION

FOLLOW the state's 32km food and wine trail just half an hour's drive from Perth city CBD. The region has an ever-growing list of restaurants and cafés, wineries, breweries and artisan wares. Iconic vineyards dotted throughout the valley include Sandalford, Houghtons and Mandoon Estate. Gourmet goods on offer span from extra virgin olive oils, cheeses, olives, pickles and preserves to handmade chocolate, fudge, truffles, nuts and nougat. Get involved with a master class or a tour of the vineyards.

KINGS PARK AND BOTANIC GARDEN

ONE of the largest inner-city parks in the world, Kings Park and Botanic Garden encompasses 400 hectares of bushland and sculpted gardens. It provides some of the best views of Perth's skyline and the Swan River. The park also houses the State War Memorial and State Botanic Garden. Picnic in the park, enjoy a coffee at one of the cafes, or dinner in the fine dining restaurant.



Kings Park - Perth

THE SHOALWATER ISLANDS MARINE PARK

LOCATED just 50 km South of Perth, the protected marine park has the largest colony of the smallest species of penguin in the world. Join Rockingham Wild Encounters to cruise or swim alongside wild bottlenose dolphins, sea lions and seabirds. Adventure cruises and sea kayak tours to see the incredible marine wildlife and spectacular islands depart daily.

SEGWAY TOUR

FOR a unique way to get delegates exploring the city and surrounds, Perth has super popular guided Segway tours. Guides will share engaging stories about the city as guests cruise along on their own Segway. No prior Segway experience is needed to get rolling with these tours because training is included as part of the fun.



Sydney edges ahead

THE perennial rivalry between Sydney and Melbourne seems to be at an end with the release of US cloud-based enterprise event management firm Cvent's annual list of top cities for the sector. Sydney was named second most popular city for events between 01 Jan and 31 Dec 2015, behind Singapore which took out the top spot. Much to the disappointment of our southern cousins, Melbourne was ranked further down the list, coming in seventh. The Gold Coast, Brisbane and Perth also made the top 25, coming in at 13th, 14th and 23rd respectively.

The rankings were based on meeting and event booking activity in the Cvent Supplier Network, as well as the number of meeting and event venues in the area.

Future bright for SA

THE \$397 million investment in the redevelopment of the Adelaide Convention Centre (ACC) is paying off, with the ACC securing three major conventions for the state over the next few years. Combined, the events alone will bring in approximately 2,800 delegates to the city between 2017 and 2021.

SA Premier Jay Weatherill commended the improvements to the ACC, noting that since the work begun, \$340 million worth in contracts have been awarded to local businesses, boosting the local economy. "The new and improved Adelaide Convention Centre is a key reason why South Australia has continued to move towards the top of the competitive global business tourism industry, bringing fresh energy and life to our city in the process," he said.

NZ supports education

CONVENTIONS & Incentives New Zealand (CINZ) has reaffirmed its commitment to professional education with the unveiling of a new diploma at the opening of MEETINGS last month. The NZ Diploma in Tourism and Conventions and Incentives (level 5) is designed to recognise the expertise of people with more than five years' experience managing conventions and incentives projects, as well as looking at a portfolio of evidence taken from real projects to demonstrate the individual's level of skill.

CEO of CINZ Sue Sullivan told *travelBulletin* that they see it as essential that "New Zealand invests in human infrastructure as well as physical infrastructure to grow our country's conventions and incentives business".



BEA VIEW

Penny Lion, head of Business Events Australia, Tourism Australia

WHAT A YEAR FOR BEA

THE end of the financial year provides a time for reflection and 2015/16 was a big year for Tourism Australia's Business Events Australia (BEA) team. In the past 12 months we have generated over 290 leads for the Australian industry through our international trade and marketing activity. In addition, we have increased our commitment in the association market, developed new marketing and content assets and delivered our bi-annual event, Dreamtime.

'In the past 12 months we have generated over 290 leads for the Australian industry...'

During the year, the BEA team attended five key international trade shows with Australian industry and delivered two Tourism Australia owned events, Business Events Australia Greater China Showcase and Dreamtime. Thirty Australian sellers had the opportunity to meet and do business with 120 buyers and media, secured by the BEA, at the Business Events Australia Greater China Showcase, as part of Australia Week in China (AWIC). This resulted in more than 80 leads for industry. Tourism Australia's signature incentive showcase, Dreamtime, which was hosted in Adelaide in December 2015, also generated over 80 leads, 12 confirmed pieces of business, and more than 140 pieces of media coverage.

As part of our trade activity, BEA also delivered one association and nine incentive

educational, all in partnership with Australian industry. The educational program provided international buyers and planners with new and inspiring ideas, as well as increasing their knowledge of Australian destinations and products.

To increase consideration for Australia as a business events destination, BEA produced a range of collateral to distribute at trade shows, to international media and through BEA's channels. For the association sector, BEA produced *Australia Innovates*, a new bi-annual publication using selected content created by Austrade and repurposed to focus on talented Australians making an impact in research and development to attract business events. The 32 Extraordinary Australian Food and Wine Experiences was created to provide planners and corporates with a taste of Australia's fantastic food and wine offering.

BEA also produced a range of short films including the Dreamtime 2015 case study, which was filmed from the perspective of international buyers who attended the event. Australia's exceptional event capabilities, delicious food, diverse destinations and activities were shared. They were also shared with industry to inspire potential business decision makers and distributed through BEA's channels.

Increasing awareness around Australia's unique destinations and experiences as well as our world-class business events offering, has delivered business for Australia. We look forward to collaborating again with the Australian business events industry in the upcoming year to showcase internationally why there's nothing like Australia for business events.

headlines business events news

- 19 May LA's plethora of activities
- 23 May Sydney trumps Melbourne
- 23 May ICC Sydney to host '17 ATE
- 26 May SC to host Event Awards

- 30 May More space for MCEC
- 30 May Tourism Portfolio/IMS pact
- 02 Jun SA secures new MICE biz
- 02 Jun Darwin takes centre stage
- 06 Jun EOI open for TA program
- 09 Jun ICC Sydney's China vision
- 16 Jun CINZ launches new diploma
- 16 Jun NZICC to compete with Oz

NORWEGIAN JEWEL TO CALL AUSTRALIA HOME



NORWEGIAN Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH) has announced the Alaska-based *Norwegian Jewel* will homeport year-round in Sydney from November next year, kicking off her season with an initial schedule of 15 sailings through to March 2018.

“With Australasia home to some of the world’s fastest growing cruise markets – including Australia, which grew by a further 15% in 2015 to deliver a new record of 100,060 passengers, making it the world’s fourth largest passenger market equal to China – NCLH is making a major commitment to the region across all of its three brands, kick-starting with the regional deployment of *Norwegian Jewel*,” commented Harry Sommer, executive vice president of international business development for NCLH at the Sydney breakfast launch.

“We’re delighted that Australians will now be able to experience premium-contemporary freestyle cruising much closer to home, with

some additional flair,” said Sommer.

A five-day Tasmania sampler cruise – which NCLH APAC senior vice president Steve Odell describes as a gateway sailing for first-time cruisers – will inaugurate the Australian season in November, taking guests on an adventure exploring Burnie and Hobart before returning to its new home in Sydney.

Norwegian Jewel’s other seven 10-16 day roundtrip itineraries will traverse Australia and NZ between November and February, where she will explore scenic coastlines and cruise through picturesque spots such as Milford Sound and the Bay of Islands.

In a nod to *Norwegian Jewel*’s newly adopted home port, guests on board will be treated to fine local Australian produce including regional beef, lamb, seafood, fine wines and ales on all her voyages from Sydney. Additionally, guests will also be able to enjoy award-winning Aussie entertainment with home-grown ballroom show *Burn the Floor* confirmed as part of *Jewel*’s on-board entertainment.

The vessel will offer a wide range of accommodation choices ranging from inside and oceanview staterooms to family suites and expansive, luxurious suites with 24-hour butler service in The Haven.

NCLH had originally thought to base its 2,348-passenger ship *Norwegian Star* in Australia, however Odell said the demand for its luxury Haven product drove them to send *Jewel* instead.

“Having *Jewel* is better for us because it has the Haven product which is very attractive to extended families,” commented Odell. “We see in sales there’s already a demand for Haven because you have that level of exclusivity but you can also go out and enjoy the big town – it has a big appeal.”

The vessel will feature 16 dining options ranging from Teppanyaki to Brazilian Churrascaria with no set dining times or pre-assigned seating, which goes hand-in-hand with the cruiseliner’s flexible “freestyle” approach to life on board. “It’s a very different style of cruising to what Australians are experiencing today,” said Odell.

Odell remained tight lipped when questioned as to the exact price points of what each voyage would cost, however he hinted “we are a premium product in our category; we give more so therefore we charge more”.

Following her Australian season, *Norwegian Jewel* will undertake a range of exotic Asian itineraries visiting Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, Korea and more, giving Australian travellers the opportunity to explore some of the best Asia has to offer on a 40-night combination voyage from Sydney through to Yokohama.

Bookings for *Norwegian Jewel*’s inaugural Australasian itineraries opened on 29 June.



Harry Sommer, executive VP international business development, NCL; Nicole Constantin, VP sales, NCL and Steve Odell, SVP and MD, NCL at the announcement.

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- 10 night cruise onboard Aegean Odyssey
- 2 night hotel stay in Athens
- 2 included tours in 2 countries

13 days from **\$4,030*** per person twin share

SILVERSEA 2018 WORLD CRUISE



SILVERSEA Cruises has opened reservations for its World Cruise 2018 – a 121-day global odyssey which will see *Silver Whisper* cruise from Los Angeles to Rome. Titled “La Grande Bellezza,” the voyage will visit 60

destinations in 21 countries, including 17 overnight calls and 13 late-night departures meaning guests will have plenty of time to take in the local culture.

“World Cruise 2018 is an enriching

epic adventure designed for experienced travellers,” said Silversea director of sales and marketing Australasia, Karen Christensen. The extensive array of destinations will be complemented by a strong onboard enrichment program featuring a host of experts including academics, journalists, diplomats and other specialists. The voyage will also include local entertainment, cooking demonstrations, regional specialties and wine tastings.

Guests sailing the complete World Cruise will receive a range of bonuses including US\$4,000 onboard spending credit per suite, complimentary laundry and dry cleaning, special gifts and unlimited on-board wi-fi. Fares start at A\$76,250 per person twin share – more details on 1300 306 872.

Aqua expanding in Peru

AQUA Expeditions, headed up by the charismatic Francesco Galli Zugaro, has announced its third vessel for South America, which will take the name of *Aqua Amazon* when it launches at the end of next year. Zugaro, who has personally overseen the construction of the line’s fleet including its *Aqua Mekong* which sails in Indochina, said the new Peruvian addition will be an all-suite vessel with large rooms, a spa, gym, pool and on-board fleet of four boats for daily explorations.

Zugaro said *Aqua Amazon* was being developed in response to “extraordinary demand demonstrated by our past guests and trade partners,” and will help meet the need for luxury cruising experiences on the Amazon river.



RCI SELLS LEGEND OF THE SEAS

ROYAL Caribbean has significantly rejigged its Australian cruise season for next year, after announcing the sale of *Legend of the Seas* to UK-based Thompson Cruises in March 2017. The move has seen the cancellation of five previously scheduled Brisbane roundtrip voyages, with the ship to reposition from the Queensland capital to Asia in its final Australian sailing on 20 February 2017. Onward voyages are also impacted, including *Legend’s* 2017 Mediterranean summer season which will be operated by RCI’s former Aussie favourite *Rhapsody of the Seas*. In turn, *Rhapsody’s* season from Cape Liberty, New York over the same period has been cancelled.

The cruise line is helping affected passengers secure alternative Royal Caribbean departures as well as discussing hotel and flight arrangements where required. Those who choose not to cruise will receive full refunds of any deposits paid. “We are truly sorry to disrupt our guests’ holidays and sincerely apologise for the inconvenience caused,” the company said in a statement.

“It’s with great sadness that we bid a fond farewell to *Legend of the Seas* from Australian waters in February 2017”.

Even before the sale was announced Royal Caribbean had previously confirmed that *Legend’s* 2017/18 Brisbane season would be her last out of the northern capital prior to redeployment in Europe. Despite not homeporting from Brisbane, the company was also keen to reiterate its commitment to the Queensland market.

“*Voyager of the Seas*, *Explorer of the Seas* and *Radiance of the Seas* will all make multiple calls to Brisbane, Cairns and the Whitsundays this season,” the company said, adding that the newbuild *Ovation of the Seas* will also make her maiden QLD call in February. Managing director Adam Armstrong earlier this year welcomed the proposal for a new cruise terminal at the mouth of the Brisbane River which will be large enough for Quantum and Voyager class vessels. “We fully expect to return to home-porting in Queensland in the future,” he promised.

Viking farewells Fors

LONG-TIME head of Viking Cruises in Australia, Teresia Fors, has announced her departure from the company to take up a senior role with automotive firm Volvo Group Australia. Fors established Viking’s Australasian office in 2008, and has grown the business to now have 35 staff with a “solid market position in the river and ocean cruise sectors,” the company said.

Ian Bennett, who has been externally supporting Viking’s strategic direction and marketing activity for almost two years, has stepped in as a caretaker managing director and board member, with a recruitment process for a permanent replacement now under way.

FLAVOUR OF THE TROPICS



CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, general manager
CLIA Australasia

GLOBAL CRUISE PASSENGERS

THE USA version of Cruise360 was held from 1st to 5th June at the Vancouver Convention Centre (directly adjacent to the cruise ship berths at Canada Place), where CLIA revealed to a 1,500+ audience that the global cruise sector was maintaining a steady growth rate, exceeding projections that were set for 2015.

Excellent news for all of us that now have cruising firmly entrenched in our daily life and even better, was the news that passenger numbers for 2016 are on track to surpass this year's projections. From supplier's right through to retailers this will impact all of us in some way.

The global industry reported a total of 23.2 million passengers on ocean cruises globally in 2015, up from a projection of 23 million, and a 4% increase over 2014. As a result of steady year-over-year increases, CLIA has modified 2016 expectations and is now predicting that 24.2 million travellers will set sail on ocean cruises around the world. As reported in the recent CLIA Australasia source market report, much of the industry's growth can be attributed to emerging regions of the world – such as Australia and Asia, so give yourself a pat on the back!

CRUISE360 AUSTRALASIA

CRUISE360 Australasia will be held in Sydney on Friday 16th September featuring an inspiring line-up of local and international presenters as well as an extensive B2B trade show showcasing major suppliers and the latest developments in the fast-growing cruise industry. We're expecting a

cross-section of cruise focused professionals from Australia and NZ including front line travel consultants, owners, managers and CLIA Executive Partners. Cruise360 is without a doubt the best opportunity of the year to meet face-to-face with your peers in the cruise industry as we navigate a prosperous course for the future.

Tickets are on sale and the official Cruise360 Australasia program can be viewed at www.cruising.org.au

PLAN A CRUISE MONTH

CLIA recently announced the expansion of our annual Cruise Week promotion with the launch of a new month-long cruise campaign this October. The move is part of a global roll out of CLIA's "Plan a Cruise Month", which will see CLIA offices around the world synchronise their cruise promotion for the first time.

As the cruise industry continues to boom in Australia and around the world, a week is no longer enough time to promote cruising so it's a natural progression to follow our colleagues in North America in expanding our annual cruise campaign to a full month.

Similar to Cruise Week, the primary goal of "Plan a Cruise Month" will be to raise consumer awareness of cruising while also highlighting the expertise of CLIA certified travel agents as the best port of call for holidaymakers wanting to take a sea holiday.

This is the perfect platform for travel agents, cruise lines and industry partners to showcase the many attributes of a cruise holiday and underline that there is a cruise for everyone. But remember, for the platform to be useful you have to take a pro-active approach.

THE SPICE OF LIFE IN ALL-INCLUSIVE LUXURY

Complementing several of the Caribbean's most amazing beaches, the Island of Spice, the Paris of the Tropics, and deep explorations into the Amazon jungle's rare wildlife, this voyage aboard *Silver Spirit* promises to be filled with a delightful array of subtle flavours.

Savour daily coffee tastings by Illy's Università del Caffè, single origin chocolate presentations from Domori accompanied by coffee and chocolate presentations pairing tastings of local Neapolitan cakes, desserts and gelatos.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

- 19 May** Legend to homeport in Vic
- 24 May** Another NZ cruise record
- 24 May** Dream Cruises now on sale
- 26 May** One million ocean cruisers
- 31 May** Aussies cruise momentum
- 02 Jun** CHOICE spotlights cruise
- 07 Jun** Jewel's new Aussie home

HEADLINES MAY & JUNE 2016

- 09 Jun** Silversea's world cruise
- 09 Jun** Spirit and Legend crack 500k
- 14 Jun** 10 new Viking itineraries
- 14 Jun** Adventure's \$61m refit
- 16 Jun** Aqua to build new ship
- 16 Jun** AmaStella and AmaViola christened
- 21 Jun** Pacific Dawn bus crash

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



These Magellan agents enjoyed the luxury of the *American Queen* steamboat on a recent famil sailing into New Orleans.



Scenic took this group of agents to experience Indochina, sailing the Mekong on *Scenic Spirit*. Pictured here at the Tra Su Bird Sanctuary in Vietnam, the group also travelled through Cambodia.



The Carnival Cruise Line sales team were part of a famil last month taking agents to the line's newest port, Moreton Island. Here they are enjoying a Desert Safari shore tour.



Air Serbia hosted these agents on a famil recently highlighting Abu Dhabi as a stopover destination on their Belgrade and Beyond fares.



These corporate travel managers experienced a taste of Japan over three days on a famil hosted by ANA and Starwood Hotels & Resorts.



The boutique luxury vessel *Island Passage* played host to these agents sailing through French Polynesia on a recent taster trip from Raiatea to Bora Bora with Island Escape Cruises.



CMV hosted their inaugural Australia famil on board the *Magellan* last month with these agents flying to London and boarding the ship for a cruise around Norway.



Hong Kong Tourism Board and Cathay Pacific recently hosted these Flight Centre agents on a famil to Hong Kong. The group experienced all the highlights and hidden sights of the city.

This group of itravel agents experienced a taster cruise with P&O from Sydney to Brisbane, to give them an idea of the product they are selling.



This group of QLD, WA, SA, UK and NZ agents experienced New Zealand with GPT recently. They found out what coach touring is like first hand and are pictured here on their visit to Zealong Tea Estate near Hamilton.



These colourful Excite Holidays staff enjoyed the desert with Arabian Adventures during their Global Sales Conference hosted at the Oberoi Hotel in Dubai.



Pictured with the famous statues of Easter island, these agents explored the wonders of Santiago and Patagonia with South America Tourism Office last month.

ALL THINGS SPICE AND NICE

Think Sri Lanka and it's tempting to talk about the tea plantations for which this country is renowned, but increasingly, Australians are flocking to this tiny island in the middle of the Indian Ocean as the next frontier for an authentic travel experience. **CHRISTINE RETSCHLAG** reports.

S EVEN years ago, one of the last destinations on the minds of Australian travellers was Sri Lanka, mired, as it was, in the midst of its Civil War. Sure, there was the odd antipodean hippie surfer hanging around some of the best surf breaks in the world, but the average Aussie traveller looking for a beach and beer on a budget was still lounging in Bali or Thailand.

Fast forward to 2016, and Australians

have Sri Lanka well and truly on their radar. Named after Sri, which means splendour or splendid, and Lanka, which means island, this Indian Ocean gem is welcoming Australians with open arms. In May this year, a delegation of 50 Sri Lankan tourism representatives hosted a three-city roadshow extravaganza in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, in a bid to highlight what was so special about their country.

Sri Lanka Tourism Director of Marketing

Madubhani Perera says they are "excited" to increase their promotional efforts in Australia and to demonstrate the "wonders" of the nation.

"We have World Heritage sites, rich biodiversity, tropical beaches, adventurous experiences & world-class hotels," Perera says.

And Aussies, it appears, are listening. Australian tourism arrivals into Sri Lanka highlighted a growth rate of 9% last year. First quarter arrivals suggest the Tourism Board



is on target to achieve its goal of 70,000 Australian arrivals in 2016.

Intrepid Travel offers a variety of tours into Sri Lanka, including a 12-day Real Food Adventure which starts in Negombo and finishes in Colombo from \$1,695. On this journey, travellers experience an early morning visit to the Negombo Fish Market; a cycling trip to the World Heritage temple town of Anuradhapura; dinner and cooking classes at the homes of local families, street food and even slum cuisine; food and vegetable markets which run 24 hours; colourful Kandy; the tea country of Haputale; coastal Mirissa; and the Dutch fortress town of Galle before finishing at the capital of Colombo.

Intrepid Group's Product Manager Ryan Turner says they are up 21 per cent on last year's bookings and continue to develop new trips to the destination, this year launching a Sensational Sri Lanka trip to Jaffna in the north, which is a first for the group since the end of the 25-year civil war in 2009.

"Sri Lanka is still an emerging tourism destination so even the main sites don't feel too touristy," Turner says.

"It's also relatively small land easy to get around, but packs a punch with a huge variety – the culture of Kandy, hiking and village homestays in the jungle highlands,

safaris in Yala National Park, the southern beaches around Unawatuna, or the northern town of Jaffna."

Flight Centre Head of Leisure Travel Tom Walley says the quintessential Sri Lankan experiences for which travellers are looking centre around pursuits of nature whether it be surfing, visiting deserted beaches, wildlife spotting and exploring a number of national parks.

‘Sri Lanka has so far been overlooked by mainstream tourists, which is exactly what attracts intrepid travellers to its shores...’

"Sri Lanka has so far been overlooked by mainstream tourists, which is exactly what attracts intrepid travellers to its shores as they seek unique experiences in this off-the-beaten-track destination," Walley says.

"While political instability has kept many people away until now, our data shows a healthy increase in bookings to Sri Lanka in

2015 that grew by 3.4 per cent, indicating that tourism to the country is on the rise."

Flight Centre data reveals the average age of travellers to Sri Lanka is 47, however there has been a 21 per cent rise in younger travellers (aged between 20 and 24) in 2015 on the previous year. Visitors tend to travel in groups, stay an average of 20 days, and purchase on average \$3,760 in land and air arrangements.

"The country is for travellers looking to get off the grid and as much of Sri Lanka's coastline is quiet, that's an achievable feat, especially in the south that is less populated and boasts beautiful beaches," Walley says.

"A wildlife safari through Yala National Park is also a must as the area is regarded as one of the best game parks outside of Africa and you are all but guaranteed to spot a leopard alongside herds of wild elephants, sloths and other exotic creatures."

While there is not doubt that Australians will continue their long love affair with their south-east Asian neighbours such as Thailand and Bali, increasingly they will accept that extra four-hour flight to Sri Lanka. As long as there's cold and cheap beer, budget accommodation and unspoiled beaches, the Aussies are coming. And Sri Lanka, it appears, is ready.





BEYOND THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

INDIA has always captured the imagination of Australian travellers, but our awareness is spreading beyond the Golden Triangle (formed by the tourist route between Delhi, Agra and Jaipur) to more rural destinations across the subcontinent. At least, that's the trend Tempo Holidays' India Sri Lanka and Maldives product manager Lindsay Cowan is noticing among his clients.

"People are starting to look towards places like Kerala in the south and the Coromandel Coast," Cowan told *travelBulletin*.

He said people now feel more comfortable travelling across India with the knowledge that there's such a high quality of accommodation and services available.

"All our trips can be tailored to suit exactly what our clients need," he said.

Meditation, yoga and healing journeys are another strong growth market in India, an observation noted by both Cowan and India's Ministry of Tourism.

"The popularity of these retreats is definitely a market that's growing," a spokesperson for the India's Ministry of Tourism confirmed.

In response to this demand Cowan has expanded the company's

India and Sri Lanka wellness packages in Tempo's latest Indian and the Subcontinent brochure.

"We've been offering these retreats in one or two locations for a few years but this year we've really expanded it," he explained.

One such addition is a six-day stay at the luxury Ananda Himalaya spa in the northern Himalayas overlooking the holy Ganges River. Ananda integrates traditional yoga practices with wellness experiences including fitness and healthy organic cuisine to restore balance and harmonise energy.

"People are seeking these experiences more and more," Cowan said.

Australia is now India's seventh strongest market with 263,101 Aussie nationals arriving in India last year, making up 2.38% of the subcontinent's visitor market. This is up on 2014 where Australia was ranked ninth on this list.

India's Ministry of Tourism attributes the growth in the Aussie market to the introduction of an e-tourist visa process for citizens down under in October 2013.

"This made travelling to Indian more convenient and appealing for Australians," they said.

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GET TO KNOW SRI LANKA

UNCOVER ANURADHAPURA

Anuradhapura's ruins are among the most stunning in South Asia. The site features a huge collection of archaeological and architectural sights including dagobas, high brick towers, ancient pools and temples, some of which remain in use today.

EXPLORE JAFFNA

Fair warning, the scars of the recent civil war are still very evident. Yet this historic town is opening up again and is definitely worth a visit. Jaffna will please those looking for insight into Tamil culture as well as Hindu tradition and art. It also makes a great base for exploring the idyllic islands to the west.

SURF ARUGUM BAY

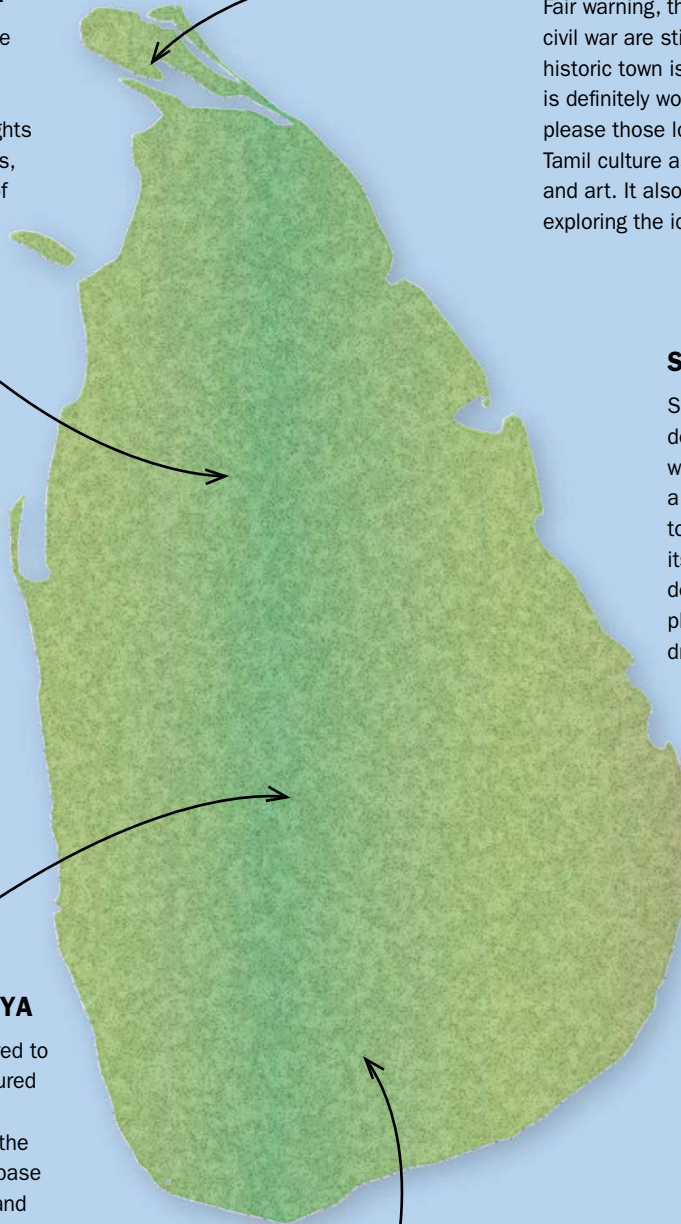
Sri Lanka is not generally the first destination you think of for great waves, but Arugum Bay serves up a number of brilliant point breaks to keep surfers happy. The Bay itself has a good local surf scene, despite its tiny size. There are also plenty of quiet places to flop and drop if surfing isn't your thing.

SIP TEA IN NUWARA ELIYA

Nuwara Eliya, sometimes referred to as Little England, was the favoured escape of English and Scottish pioneers of the tea industry in the days of old. Today it is a great base to explore the tea plantations and factories of Sri Lanka, with several large ones such as Mackwoods Labookellie factory quite close to the centre of town.

UDA WALAWE NATIONAL PARK

This national park is full to the brim with wildlife. There are ample and easy opportunities to spot elephants, sambar deer and leopards in the park's light vegetation. A park guide is included in the cost of admission and their hawk-eyes are worth their weight in gold (though a tip is expected).





Ceylon Lounge



Rendering aerial view of resort

NEW LUXURY RESORT FOR SRI LANKA

SHANGRI-LA'S five-star, beachfront Hambantota Resort & Spa opened last month on the southern coastline of Sri Lanka on a former coconut plantation.

The luxury resort spans 53 hectares, making it the largest resort in the country with 300 spacious rooms, including 21 suites, all surrounded by tropical gardens.

The guestrooms feature handwoven rugs and spacious bathrooms with stone-clad bathtubs and rain showers while the suites

offer butler service, a balcony and oversized rattan furniture to lounge in.

Shangri-La's signature CHI, The Spa has indulgent Chinese and Ayurvedic treatments, a health club, a 30-metre sunset pool and a free-form lagoon pool.

There are several dining destinations throughout including Bojunhala which serves local food along Sera, inspired by the famous hawker stalls of Southeast Asia.

As well as a main ballroom, the resort

boasts five conference rooms ideal for conventions and meetings.

The resort is family-friendly with The Cool Zone Kids Club open every day with plenty of other activities to keep younger guests happy with a trapeze, drone flying area, outdoor water park, pool and childcare facilities.

The resort is also home to an 18-hole golf course and an artisan village celebrating local arts and crafts.



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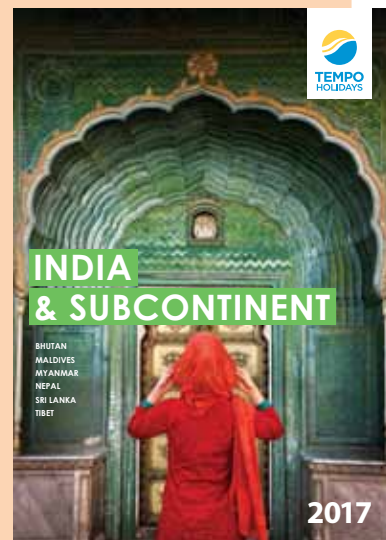
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Tempo Holidays India & Subcontinent 2017 brochure

TEMPO Holiday's newly released India & Subcontinent 2017 brochure branches out into new areas including Bhutan, Tibet, Myanmar and Nepal along with highlights from India and Sri Lanka.

Experiences featured inside include being paddled across Kashmir's Lake Dahl to visit the floating markets, a downhill off-road joyride in the Himalayas, fishing for supper in Sri Lanka and joining a traditional Burmese Boxing workout with the locals of Myanmar. There is also a selection of wellness retreats across Sri Lanka and India detailed inside.

A 12-day Sri Lanka for Foodies journey taking in the exciting culinary delights of the nation starts from \$2,855 per person twin share or step on board the Bhutan Explorer from \$6,037 per person twin share, where striking mountains and monasteries will captivate you on a 13-day journey.



INDIA
& SUBCONTINENT

BHUTAN
MALDIVES
MYANMAR
NEPAL
SRI LANKA
TIBET

2017

MW TOURS TO INDIA

MANDARIN World Tours has recently launched a series of exciting packages to India. The offerings cover a wide range of interests, from luxury river cruising to festivals such as the famous Holi in March next year and the great camel fair in November and Dewali in October.

The company is also offering small group touring to India, with the trips covering a major part of the country in a group of six on average. The trips include stays in four star or higher accommodation, airfare and taxes, tipping for guides and drivers and most meals. The Incredible India 17-day itinerary starts at \$6,895 and visits all the major highlights of the country including Delhi, Varanasi, the Taj Mahal, the "pink city" of Jaipur, Amber Fort, Udaipur and a taste of Bollywood in Mumbai.

■ Visit mwtravel.com.au for more information



Holi festival



InterAsia's price crash

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Indulge in a 21-day private journey, inclusive of Singapore Airlines flights ex Australia, roaming around palaces and resorts for the discounted price of \$12,033. See the sights in a Mercedes Benz, stay at Taj Lake Palace Hotel in Udaipur, Rambagh Palace in Jaipur and Nadesar Palace in Varanasi.

Also available is the 20-day North India for \$5,342pp, 36-day Grand India for \$10,164pp and 16-day Royalty & Tigers tour for \$6,546pp. The specials exclude airport and airline taxes and fuel surcharges of approximately \$860pp and are valid for travel through until March 2017.

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JAKARTA ON MY MIND

Often a secondary thought on the way to Bali, Jakarta is becoming a destination in its own right. From the charming Jakarta Old Town to traditional theatre and culture, there's plenty on offer for visitors, writes VANESSA MULQUINEY.



“JAKARTA?” asks my friend, screwing up her nose. “Why don’t you go to Singapore? Or Bali. Or anywhere else.” She looks bewildered, even disconcerted, about the news of my upcoming trip to Indonesia’s buzzing capital. And she isn’t alone. My mention of Jakarta as a travel destination was met with pity, confusion and a list of more desirable alternative destinations – usually in that order. “Why not Jakarta?” I responded. It wasn’t so much a rebuttal as a quip but if the informal poll among my friends was any indication, they already expected me to be in a deep depression, muttering Hail Mary’s to ensure a safe arrival.

Instead, I was actually thankful it wasn’t Singapore or Bali or anywhere else. Having spent most of my twenties in Beijing, I’ve had a soft spot for frantic, challenging cities and after a visit to Jakarta back in 2007, I was once again ready to breathe the city’s madness.

Admittedly, Jakarta doesn’t conjure thoughts of orderly roads, endless blue skies and frozen tropical drinks like some of its more developed neighbours (I’m looking at you, Singapore). It is unapologetically loud and messy, more famous for nabbing the top spot for the worst gridlocked traffic in the world (33,240 stop-starts per year according to the Castrol Magnatec Stop-Start index) than making the list of the world’s cleanest cities. But therein lies its charm. It is both a pulsing metropolis and developing city, as rich as it is poor, as comforting as it can be confronting. Because Jakarta, if nothing else is raw and honest.

After landing at Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, I enjoyed an incident-free car journey (thanks to the Hail Mary’s, no doubt) to the gloriously plush Raffles Jakarta. As I watched the city glide past my window

(with the knowledge that this could well be a four-hour taxi ride according to the naysayers at home) I was quietly relieved. Nine years after my first visit, Jakarta – with its trademark motorcycles (2,946 new motorbikes join the traffic chaos each day), bajaj (tuk-tuks) and industrious street vendors – had warmly welcomed me back into its fold.

The juxtaposition on every street corner was as palpable today as it was when I first braved the chaos: high rise buildings tower over decades-old colonial buildings, neon-lit fast food chains and one-man food carts share customers, and amid the hustle of locals, travellers much like myself, surrender themselves to a city that is truly alive.

FIRST STOP, A VISIT TO THE PAST

FOLLOWING a restful sleep and hearty local breakfast of bubur ayam, the Indonesia version of congee with shredded chicken, chopped celery, fried scallion and shallots, we set off for the National Museum of Indonesia (affectionately known as The Elephant Building due to the bronze elephant statue in the front yard, a gift from Siam). Built in 1868 and located on the west side of the largest square in the world, Merdeka Square, the museum – which tells the story of Indonesia – is a logical introduction to the city.

At the door, we’re greeted by Natali, our cheerful guide who leads the way through the museum’s collections which include the country’s largest collection of stone sculptures from Java, Bali, Sumatra, and Borneo as well as more than 100,000 prehistoric relics.

We continue through to the central atrium and are immediately struck by the museum’s centerpiece, Adityavarman, King of Malayapura and ‘Lord of the Golden Earth.’

At 4-metres-high, Adityavarman is the largest statue here, and is no doubt the pride of the Hindu-Buddhist collection. We continue on and are greeted by well-behaved primary school children who are here on an excursion. In place of school uniforms, the children wear batik, Indonesia’s traditional cloth. Natali says Fridays are known country-wide as “batik day,” a government-encouraged initiative to commemorate UNESCO recognising the importance of batik in 2009. It is yet another of Jakarta’s quirks, that amid the frantic city’s perpetual development, culture and tradition continues to be wholeheartedly embraced even if it cannot be lived day-to-day.

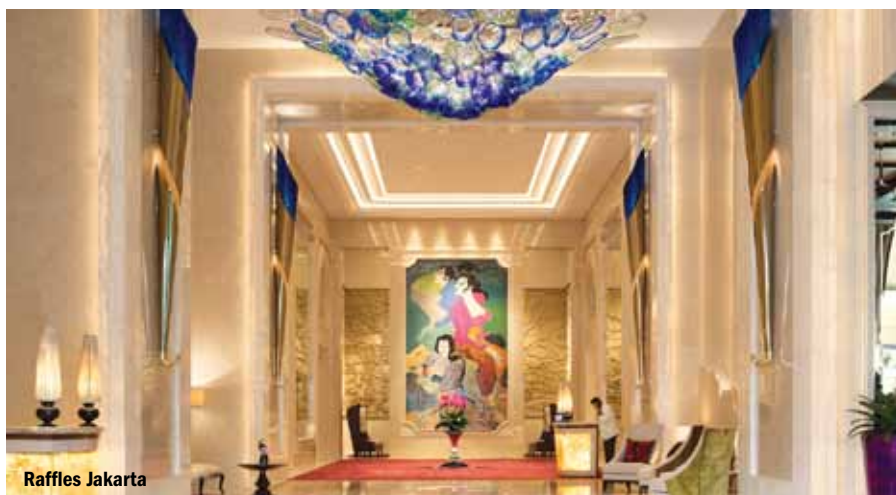
AN AFTERNOON AT THE THEATRE

AT THE front of the Rumah Wayang Puppet Theatre a 5km drive from the museum, we are greeted by the jovial Aldy Sanjaya, a fourth generation puppeteer and puppet maker. In 2003, UNESCO recognised wayang kulit or shadow puppet theatre as part of the Indonesia’s cultural heritage, encouraging Indonesians to preserve its centuries-old tradition. Aldy, through his work at Rumah Wayang, does just this.

He leads the way to his workshop which doubles as a school for puppeteer apprentices. It is a hive of activity as Aldy’s elderly father teaches promising apprentices how to flatten buffalo skin which in a week’s time will become a puppet in the show. For now, Aldy introduces us to some of his 460 memorised characters, the norm for one puppeteer. Every month, Aldy recites the names of his characters – goodies and baddies – in an effort to remember them all.

“There are over one thousand characters in a puppet show with each show lasting about nine hours,” he says as we step into his studio for a performance. Inside, I look at the plastic chairs, hoping they are more comfortable than they look. “But don’t worry,” he continues with a chuckle, “today I will perform the 15-minute show, not the nine-hour show.”

Four days later, on an Australia-bound Garuda Indonesia flight, Jakarta sprawls out below me in a final goodbye or, at least for now, a see you later. From this height, the city’s tangle of high rise buildings, museums, grid-lock traffic and puppeteers retreat under the cover of an inky sky. But like the schoolchildren in batik, like Aldy’s father passing on his puppet making skills, like Aldy himself and his 460 characters, Jakarta is aglow, shimmering with the optimism that the past and present will continue to collide.



Raffles Jakarta



Kebumen, Indonesia

BALI VISA FREE

AUSTRALIANS no longer have to fork out a \$46 visa fee when travelling to Indonesia with the government introducing a 30-day visa-free for short visits earlier this year.

The decision was a big win for Aussie travellers with Australia previously included among the countries to be granted visa-free entry, only for officials to go back on their decision at the last minute.

Indonesia's President Joko Widodo signed an official decree in March officially granting free short-term entry to an extra 79 countries, including Australia, taking the list of visa-free countries to 169. The catalyst behind the new rules is to boost the number of foreign visitors to the South East Asian nation and to help create new job opportunities.

The waiver ties in with the government's goal to attract at least 20 million foreign tourists to the country over the next five years.

Indonesia reportedly recorded a 19% spike in tourists from countries that received visa-free access last year. The 30-day visa-free day period is not extendable.

Garuda orders 14 new Airbus'

GARUDA Indonesia has confirmed an order with Airbus for 14 A330-900neos, the new re-engined version of the best-selling A330 wide body airliner, to be delivered in 2019.

The airline plans to use the A330neo to develop its medium and long-haul network. The order replaces and extends an existing order for seven A330-300 aircraft.

Garuda CEO, Arif Wibowo, said the A330neo represents a more-efficient future for Garuda Indonesia. "This order restructuring is believed to support our continued commitment to deliver the most modern, comfortable and excellent air travel service to all customers as well as to strengthen the sustained positive growth and business expansion of the company."

The A330neo incorporates latest generation Rolls-Royce Trent 7000 engines, aerodynamic enhancements and new cabin features. Benefitting from the unbeatable economics, versatility and high reliability of the A330, the A330neo reduces fuel consumption by 14% per seat, making it the most cost efficient, long range wide body aircraft on the market.



Raffles 1915 Gin developed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Singapore Sling at the hotel



PASSIONATE pioneers of London's handcrafted gin renaissance, Sipsmith, and leading luxury international hotel brand, Raffles Hotels & Resorts have come together to create a bespoke Raffles 1915 Gin.

Handcrafted at the Sipsmith Distillery in London, exclusively for Raffles Hotels & Resorts, the recipe is a sensational balance of Asian botanicals – jasmine flowers, fresh pomelo peel, lemongrass, Kaffir lime leaf, nutmeg and cardamom – distilled alongside some of the classic gin botanicals found in the award-winning Sipsmith London Dry Gin. The resulting taste is a smooth and full-bodied spirit, with the warmth

of sweet orange spice coupled with an elegant, bright, balanced finish.

"We were looking for a partner who embodied much of the same beliefs and standards that we hold true to our brand," said Peter French, president, Raffles Hotels & Resorts.

"Sipsmith has an integral authenticity, are master craftsman at what they do in a business that is steeped in tradition. And when we found out that Sam was directly descended from Sir Stamford Raffles, that sealed the deal. We are delighted to create such an evocative gin that simultaneously celebrates the past whilst inspiring future generations to explore and create."

Q&A

Indonesia has always been a favourite for Aussies. Travel Counsellor's resident Indonesia expert Kirsty Love stopped to give *travelBulletin* her top tips on selling this diverse destination.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to Indonesia?

Yes there is a lot of interest among Australians for travel to Indonesia for both the budget conscious travellers as well as those seeking a high level of luxury and pampering, largely due to how close it is to Australia, with plenty of direct flights and a huge range of resort and villa accommodation options.

Which destinations are most popular?

The most popular destinations are generally areas in Bali. Family-friendly Nusa Dua with lots of resorts to choose from. Trendy Seminyak for its great food/nightlife, stunning sunsets and offering a great mix of resorts and villa style accommodation. Ubud for those with a love of nature and culture seeking a spiritual or tranquil holiday experience. The Island of Lombok is also popular with beautiful beaches, great surfing and it's natural surrounds.

What kind of places and activities would you recommend?

For families, especially those with young children I would recommend going to The Mara River Safari Lodge & Marine Park for a day or overnight visit. Waterbom park is also a huge hit and a really fun day out for young and old. A visit to Ubud to see the Monkey Forest, Arts market and Tegalalang rice terrace would also be on the top of the list along with a visit to the Tanah Lot and Uluwatu Temples at sunset. A BBQ sunset dinner on the beach at Jimbaran Bay is a highlight. For those seeking out water sports there are lots of great surfing schools, PADI scuba dive courses and snorkelling tours.

What sort of travellers are visiting Indonesia?

Indonesia is popular with a very broad range of travellers due to the variety that it offers. Travellers are going to Indonesia for destination weddings as well as

honeymoons.

Indonesia is also a popular choice for surfers, families with both young and older children as well as travellers between the age of 50-70 travelling without children. Villas in Bali are becoming increasingly popular for groups travelling with their families and also for girls or guys getaways without the kids.

What should an agent consider when selling Indonesia?

When selling Indonesia you need to be sure that this is the right destination for your clients as Asia isn't the destination for everyone. For those who haven't travelled to Asia before it's really important that clients are aware of the cultural differences as well as the different standards of living, especially in relation to clean drinking water.



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SOUTH AFRICA'S

liquid gold

By Catherine Marshall

IN SUMMER, the sweetest of fruits smother the hillsides that sweep down from the Cape's majestic Hottentot Hollands mountain range. They ripen beneath a warm sky until their skins have tightened and they're ready to burst. The harvesters gather in the vineyards, row upon row of soldier ants lacing through the groves, plucking the orbs before they fall to the ground in a hot, sticky mess.

In winter, when snow dusts the peaks of the range, the vines lie fallow, naked against the damp coastal air. The workers kneel on the frigid earth, pruning back the stems so that next year's harvest will be as plump and juicy as the last.

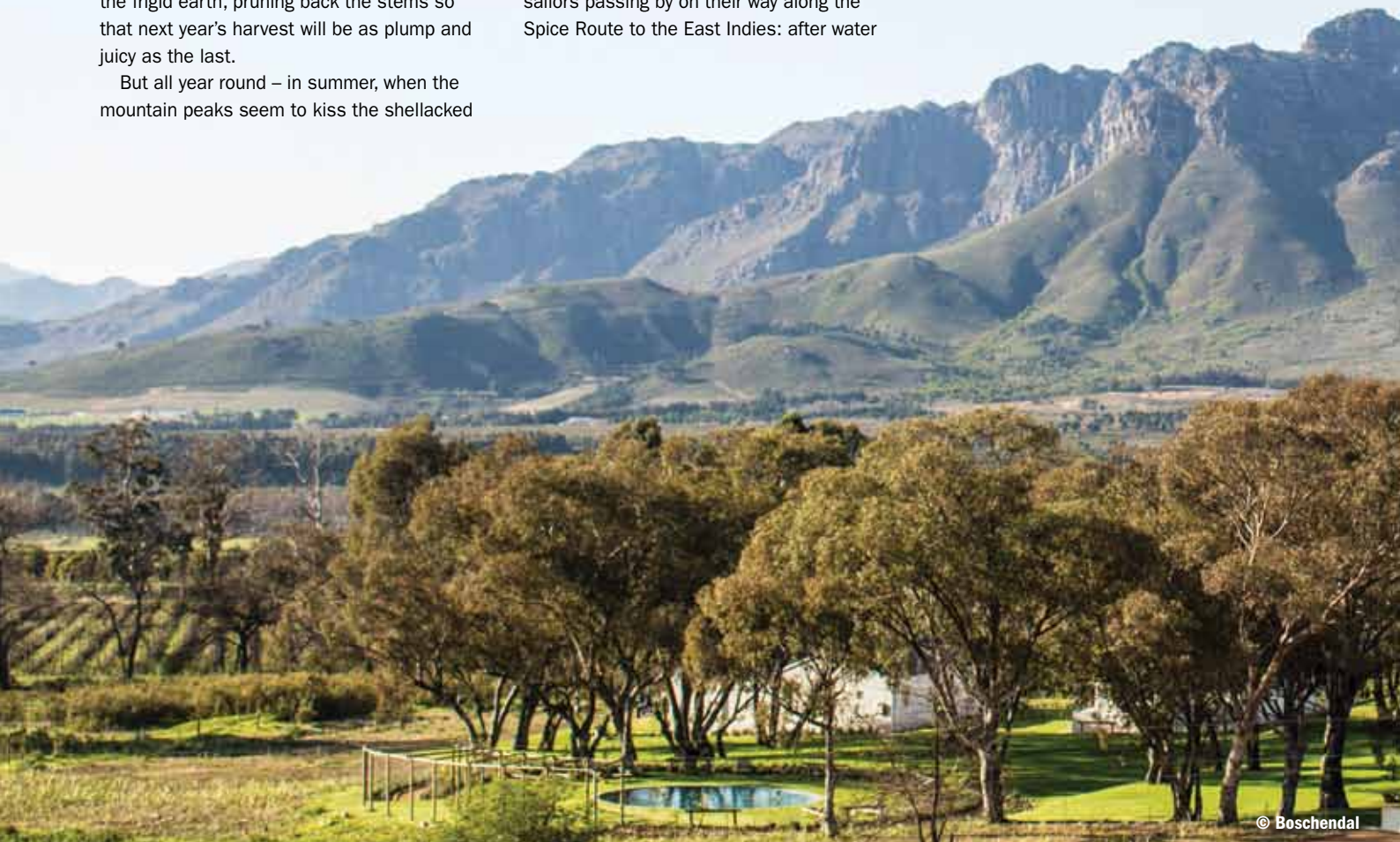
But all year round – in summer, when the mountain peaks seem to kiss the shellacked

blue sky; in autumn, when the trees blush pink and red and orange; in winter, when the ground is coated in a layer of hard frost; in spring, when baby-soft leaves emerge from hiding – you'll find the fruit of these vines ready for the tasting.

Drops are poured at cellar doors across the valleys of the Cape Winelands, where the old, established estates of the 17th and 18th Centuries still stand in all their enduring, Cape Dutch glory. And even today, this nectar still serves some of the purpose originally intended, after Dutch explorer Jan van Riebeeck arrived in the Cape in 1652 and established it as a refuelling station for sailors passing by on their way along the Spice Route to the East Indies: after water

and fresh food, wine was the most important resource, for it provided scurvy-susceptible sailors with Vitamin C, and helped to keep up their often flagging morale.

Morale is sky high in the *werf* (courtyard) of Boschendal, one of the Cape's oldest and best-loved estates. We've gathered beneath the oak trees and wine advisor Phumlisa Pikini is pouring a Sauvignon Blanc from the estate's 1685 range – named for the year Boschendal was founded. We pair it with a white lime and apricot chocolate, which enhances those same flavours in the wine. The Chardonnay evokes the chocolate's lemon cream scent as it dissolves on the



© Boschendal

tongue, while the ripe melon and pineapple and raw honey infusing the botrytis-infected Vin d' Or ("wine of gold") are the perfect foil for the marmalade-flavoured milk chocolate.

As we taste wine and chocolate, Pikini tells us the story of these victuals, and the much longer history of the estate itself. Boschendal was named Bos-en-Dal by its French Huguenot founder, Jean le Long, who'd been granted land in the Cape of Good Hope after fleeing religious persecution in Europe in the 17th Century. After phylloxera came to the Cape in the late 1800s, destroying vines, the colony's former Prime Minister, Cecil John Rhodes, transformed many of the region's vineyards into fruit farms. Bos-en-Dal was now merged with a second farm and renamed Boschendal.

While some of the original fruit orchards have been preserved, the vines used to produce today's wine were only planted

in 1975. Just 200 hectares of this vast property are under vines; the rest of it is being returned to its natural bush state. And so only a small proportion of the grapes for Boschendal's premier wines come from this estate; more than 60 other farms in the district make up the shortfall.

So famous were the Cape's wines in the early development of the colony, Napoleon famously requested a glass of sweet Constantia wine on his deathbed. But though wine has shaped the history and growth of the Cape, the country's wines weren't always so well known internationally. The Renaissance only occurred after the end of Apartheid in the early 1990s, explains wine advisor Kyle Hanekom, when the world started to take an interest in the country's wines. Today, it's one of the largest producers in the world.

"South African wines are consistently better than average European wines," Hanekom says,

"but when they have a sensational vintage, the results are stratospheric."

And so they are: at Boschendal I discover the best Chardonnay I've ever tasted (and I've tried a good few), in the exquisite 2011 Elgin Chardonnay. We take a bottle back with us to our abode for the night, Rhodes Cottage, built on this estate for Rhodes himself in 1795. It's only recently that the farm's historic buildings – labourers' houses, cottages – have been transformed into beautifully-appointed, luxury accommodations, so that once visitors have sampled the farm's bounty they can settle down for the night in a dwelling imbued with a deep sense of its history.

And so we eat from a dinner basket catered by the farm's deli – roast chicken, farm-baked bread, an assortment of tiny cakes for dessert – and sip that sweetest of fruits, now turned to liquid gold in our glasses.

■ **More information:** boschendal.com; country.southafrica.net



Snap up a great deal on SAA

SOUTH African Airways (SAA) has recently released some fantastic fares on their flights from Australia's East Coast, flying business class. The fares are on sale until 14 August, for travel until June 30 2017, meaning now is a great time for your clients to take advantage of the optimum months for wildlife viewing in September and May.

SAA country manager for Australasia, Tim Clyde-Smith, urged people to take advantage of the low fares. "These are excellent value fares compared to currently available fares and offer Australians some great value business class travel options".

The return airfares on sale include the Sydney to Johannesburg route, from \$4,870, Melbourne to Cape Town from \$4,955, Brisbane to Durban from \$4,690 and Adelaide to Maputo from \$4,950. Other destinations in Africa are also on sale including the popular island nation of Mauritius. South Africa Airways operates daily direct flights from Perth to Johannesburg and offers connections from all major Australian cities through its codeshare partner network.



SAA Business Class

SOUTH AFRICA'S CHILD VISA POLICY



THE South Africa child visa policy was introduced to combat child trafficking but has copped some criticism since being brought in June last year. *travelBulletin* got the low-down from South African Tourism.

The new requirements are based on the principle that all minors require the consent of their parents when travelling into or out of the Republic.

Under the legislation, children travelling with both parents must travel with their birth certificates containing parental details. If one parent is travelling with the child, they must also provide an affidavit from the other parent authorising him or her to enter into or depart from the Republic with the child; or a court order granting full parental responsibilities and rights or legal guardianship; or where applicable, a death certificate of the other parent.

When a person is travelling with a child who is not their biological child, in addition to the birth certificate, they must have an affidavit from the parents or legal guardian of the child confirming that he or she has permission to travel with the child; copies of the identity documents or passports of the

parents or legal guardian of the child and their contact details.

Any unaccompanied minor will need proof of consent from one of or both his or her parents or legal guardian, a letter from the person who is to receive the child in the Republic, a copy of the identity document or valid passport and visa or permanent residence permit of the person who is to receive the child in the Republic; and the contact details of the parents or legal guardian of the child.

Yana Shvarts, Marketing and Communications Manager and Acting Country Manager, South African Tourism Australasia says the office is confident in the ongoing appeal of South Africa as a preferred travel destination for Aussie travellers, despite the policy.

"This is evident in the arrival figures achieved over the past quarter – which saw an increase of 6.5% in Australian travellers arriving in South Africa from January to March, compared to the same period in 2015," she adds.

■ **For more information see the South African High Commission website: www.sahc.org.au.**

FOCUS ON WILDLIFE AT LONDLOZI

LONDLOZI, located on the Sand River in Sabi Sand Game Reserve of Kruger National Park has introduced a photography studio to complement their innovative safari offerings.

The lodge offers guests the opportunity to rent professional level cameras, lenses and accessories. There are also special photographic safari vehicles for game drives, and photographic safari packages which include a private vehicle, ranger and photographer who is there to teach you all the skills you need to capture the perfect wildlife shot.

In addition to that, guests can now visit the new onsite Photographic Studio, where they will receive one-on-one post production tuition and have the opportunity to print their own images on wide-format canvas from A4 to a huge A0.



Q&A

South Africa offers once in a life-time experiences with spectacular scenery, wildlife, adventure, food and wine that suit all budgets. Gus Cheng, the operations/product coordinator for World Expeditions, Australia, shares her insights into this popular destination.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to South Africa?

Most definitely! We've had plenty of interest in South Africa this season from the Australian market and there are plenty of Afrophiles (return customers to the continent) always planning their next adventure to the continent. The local currency, the Rand, has devalued in comparison to the Australian Dollar, which means Aussies are getting excellent value for their money.

Which destinations are most popular?

Kruger National Park and the Drakensberg Mountains in South Africa's north east is a region blessed with dramatic mountains and world class game – making them two of our most popular destinations.

Cape Town is one of the most picturesque and vibrant cities in the world. The majestic Table Mountain is a major draw card for many travellers along with the beautiful

beaches, the Boulders Penguin Colony, Robben Island and the V&A Waterfront. It has some of the best food in the world and is a great base to explore the Cape of Good Hope and the Cape Winelands Region.

What kind of places and activities would you recommend?

A safari adventure in Kruger National Park searching for the "Big Five" is the ultimate South African experience. We suggest an adventure that combines walking and driving safaris with experienced game rangers staying in private safari lodges and/or permanent bush camps.

What types of travellers are visiting South Africa?

The travellers going to South Africa are as diverse as the country itself. They include families, couples, honeymooners, wildlife & culture enthusiasts, hikers, wine buffs, and people who simply have it on their 'bucket list'.

What are the must see attractions?

I'd be looking at an itinerary that encompasses Cape Town, the Garden Route, Kruger National Park, the Drakensberg Mountains, the Kingdom of Swaziland and Zululand.

Are FIT holidays more popular than all – inclusive packaged options?

For the traveller short on time who wants to pack in as much as possible, the all-inclusive packaged options are very popular and good value for money.

World Expeditions' trips that combine South Africa with other African countries such as Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe & Mozambique (eg. Cape Town to Victoria Falls) are extremely popular, as are the South Africa itineraries from Johannesburg to Cape Town including Kruger National Park and the Drakensbergs.

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I'm going to Jackson and you should



All photos courtesy of Jackson Hole Mountain Resort

too

By Rachael Oakes-Ashe

JACKSON Hole is akin to the Holy Grail for skiers and snowboarders on a boasting rights pilgrimage. Once considered a mountain for only the extreme, adventurous and foolhardy, Jackson Hole Mountain Resort has become a well rounded mountain town experience for all levels. It is all thanks to some thoughtfully placed chairlifts to access all terrain, big name hotels settling on the valley floor and some progressive future thinking.

Fly into Jackson Hole's swanky refurbished airport and marvel at the Tetons, the mountain range that lines the horizon with peaks and troughs just begging to be conquered. A short drive away, past the elk wilderness refuge, you'll find the town of Jackson. To get your bearings remember that Jackson town is 20 minutes drive from Teton Village where the chairlifts and gondola to the region's best skiing reside.

Those looking for a cowboy may pull themselves up at the Cowboy Bar downtown and wait for a Stetson and heeled boots to walk through the door. But Jackson is so much more than just a cowboy tourist town with the odd under the radar celebrity.

Harrison Ford has a place here and I did bump into Sandra Bullock while shopping for vintage cowboy boots at the local retro fashion store. She didn't recognise me.

Expect a thriving food scene that has hipsters salivating and an environmental conscious community mingling with the world's best climbers, skiers and snowboarders who choose Jackson as home.

Gavin Fine and Roger Freedman's Fine Dining Restaurant Group count some of the region's best dining destinations as their own. Hit up BIN22 downtown for Italian providores fused with bistro fare, ski in to their Osteria restaurant for a hearty mid ski day lunch or book in for an American Asian fusion dinner at Kitchen and thank us later.

Fine and Freedman are also the names behind Bodega, the gourmet grocer, bottle shop, butcher and snack bar that took over the old gas station at the base of Teton Village. Imbibe an 'adult sloshie' cocktail and then 'gift' one to a stranger on the blackboard menu for later.

The Persephone Baker is worth a visit for the style and design alone with home baked fare your grandmother use to make reworked for a contemporary instagram friendly café. If bagels are your thing then hit up Pearl Street Bagelry and say hi to

all the locals who also hit it up daily.

Round the corner you'll find Vertical Harvest, an amazing feat of organic vertical farming in a giant greenhouse from locals Penny McBride and Nona Yehia who have created a garden that provides five acres of traditional agriculture from a tenth of an acre infill. Here you can purchase fresh produce from their on site store.

Most ski visitors bed down at Teton Village for first lifts choosing from big brand names like the always immaculate Four Seasons or small boutique hotels such as the quirky cool Hotel Terra. If you prefer downtown then look out for Hotel Jackson, a new last season boutique hotel dedicated to both design and service or you could head for the hills halfway between Teton and Jackson and languish in Aman Resorts intuitive luxury at Amangani.

But what of the skiing you say? Two mountains make up the resort of Jackson Hole. Apres Vous and Rendezvous mountains with the upper terrain now joined by a new lift that opened this season just gone. Expect 2,500 acres of in bound skiable terrain and an open backcountry gate system (do not go without avalanche gear and a guide) that accesses another 3,000 acres of off piste powder.

The vertical drop is 1,261 metres with half of the resort dedicated to advanced expert terrain and 40% to intermediate. The famous red aerial tram takes you to the good stuff if you are in the advanced status though it is de rigueur to stop at Corbet's Cabin for hot waffles when you get to the top before hitting up the mountain.

If you're insane or young or both then you can test your mettle on Corbet's Couloir. The couloir looks intimidating and so therefore is but it's really the entry into the couloir that causes the most fear with quite the drop in depending on season. Once in it's a few steep turns down and you're back out into the wide open space.

For some, a multi-day camp may be the best way to make use of your time and the mountain with dedicated ski instructors and guides that take guests through steep and deep programs, backcountry camps, womens camps and more.

Don't be surprised if you find yourself sharing the gondola with big ski names like Everest ski mountaineer Kit Des Lauriers or snowboard champion Travis Rice, both who consider Jackson their home mountain.

Did we mention that Jackson received over 400 inches of fresh snow last season? That's over ten metres. Shhh, don't tell anyone.

■ www.jacksonhole.com



WHERE TO SKI

The Northern Hemisphere has such a plethora of options for skiers and boarders, it can be almost impossible to make a choice. Each one has a unique offering, but to help you sell a ski holiday to your clients, we've singled out some of the best resorts for each ability.

BEGINNER

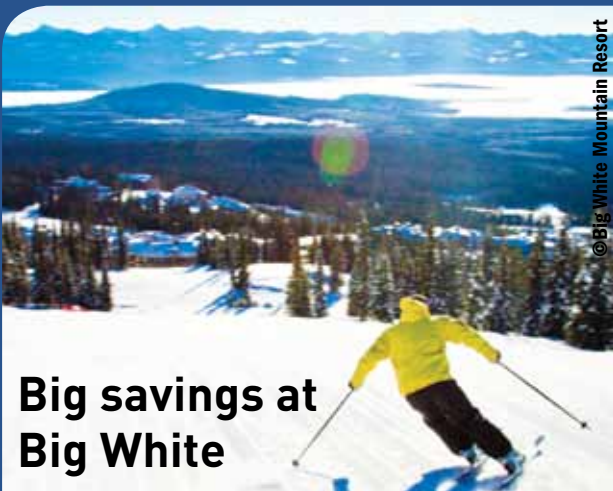
If you're clients are complete newbies to skiing then why not try Lech in Austria. 40% of its 182km of terrain is for beginners, and there are plenty of wide slopes and practice lifts to help build your confidence. And once they get tired of skiing, there's so much to see in the traditional Austrian resort, as well as hours of entertainment people watching the rich and famous of Europe.

INTERMEDIATE

These skiers and boarders feel pretty confident on most slopes and are happy to dip their toes in some easy black runs and there is no better place for them than Grand Targhee in Wyoming, USA. 70% of the on-piste terrain is intermediate and it's a great place to learn to ski powder with many of the areas not too steep. It's also nice and quiet, meaning you won't have too many people watching you if you make a fool of yourself taking on that big stack of powder.

ADVANCED

These powder hounds want a challenge, and Kicking Horse in Canada is ready to give it to them. A shocking 45% of the mountain is black runs, and 15% is double black. There are tonnes of bowls and ridges creating over 128 unnamed runs to explore, and very few crowds to get your clients' way.



Big savings at Big White

SNO 'n' Ski Holidays is offering some big early bird savings on lift tickets for popular Canadian ski resort, Big White. The offer is available to clients planning a longer stay at the resort, and must be booked by 16 October.

The lift tickets start and end on arrival and departure dates into the resort and to avail the offer it must be booked in conjunction with Big White wholesale accommodation.

Not only does the deal offer one additional day for free when purchasing lift tickets for 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9 days, for those looking to really settle in and find their ski feet, if you purchase a lift ticket for 10 or more days, you'll receive two extra days for free.

The lift tickets also include benefits such as complimentary ice skating, 21% off tubing tickets, free night skiing, food and beverage discounts and 50% off group lessons.

■ For details see snonski.com.au

NEW AND IMPROVED CLUB MED IN ALPS

CLUB Med is expanding their portfolio in France and Italy with the addition of new mountain resorts and revitalisation and expansion of Pragalato Vialattea in Italy.

The first opening will be of the Semoens-Morillion Resort in France, scheduled for the end of next year. The four-trident resort will be dedicated to families. It will be followed up by a further two in Grand Massif, planned to be open by 2020. The company is also eyeing off a second resort in Italy, building on the success of Pragalato Vialattea. The new build is planned for the Piedmont region in San Sicario, located at the site of the former bobsleigh track for the 2006 Winter Olympics.

Despite a general drop in tourism to the French Alps, Club Med has seen an increase in visitor numbers to its ski resorts by 3% and an occupancy rate of 90%.



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Astronaut suiting up in NASA's Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory



HOUSTON, WE HAVE A PROBLEM!

These are the immortal words, uttered by Jim Lovell, one of the astronauts on the stricken Apollo 13 almost half a century ago, which have permanently branded this Texas city into the world's collective consciousness. In fact there's no problem at all with Houston, which is increasingly accessible and now offers some fantastic experiences for travellers, as BRUCE PIPER reports.

ONE of my earliest childhood memories is of a day in June 1969, not long after I had started school. Our excited teachers gathered us around the classroom's highly advanced technology - a large black-and-white TV set - and we watched as Neil Armstrong took that "one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" in fuzzy pictures relayed from the first ever moon landing. My mother is still horrified that after the event the school was

closed and all of us five-year-olds were just told to walk home alone!

So you can imagine my excitement on a recent trip to the USA when I was treated to a behind-the-scenes look at the Johnson Space Center in Houston. The NASA space program has been a mainstay of the Houston economy for many years, and Johnson continues an active role in research, operations and management of the International Space Station and future missions to Mars.

A visit to NASA is a must-do for anyone

travelling through Houston. I was lucky enough to do the exclusive "Level Nine Tour" which is available to a maximum of just twelve people each day. The US\$99 ticket price is well worth it, with our small group personally escorted by a guide and a driver in a deluxe minivan to several locations across the NASA campus - including the "Neutral Buoyancy Laboratory" - effectively a gigantic swimming pool with a full scale model of the International Space Station submerged in it. We watched as astronauts, surrounded by



scuba divers, were lifted out of the water after doing training exercises in conditions aimed at simulating the weightlessness of space. It was like stepping into a science fiction story, with the behind-the-scenes tour also including a visit to NASA's robotics laboratory where we watched scientists working on space habitats and C3PO-like humanoids designed to undertake activities too dangerous for humans. I found it fascinating that these robots have electronic fingers to allow them to undertake the finest of operations. Even better, they don't talk back (yet).

The Level Nine tour included lunch at a NASA cafeteria, where we dined alongside real life rocket scientists and astronauts – with no space food sticks in sight. Then it was off to one of the highlights of the visit – the Mission Control building. Every visitor to NASA gets to see “Historic Mission Control,” the now defunct room used during the Gemini, Apollo and SpaceLab missions which ran on a primitive computer with less memory than a typical refrigerator or washing machine has today. Our group's Level Nine access meant we were able to step back in time and sit at the antiquated consoles, and then also view the much more modern current mission

control room coordinating operations at the International Space Station.

There's lots more to Houston than just NASA. The city has some excellent shopping, particularly in the Galleria district which has been developed around one of America's largest malls. Designer labels, department stores and even a “Tesla Gallery” promoting electric cars are here, and the mall is surrounded by hotels and nightlife making this area a great one in which to stay. Like most large American cities there are plenty of sporting options, and my visit also included a Houston Astros baseball game held at the downtown stadium built atop a former railway station, with all the razzamatazz you would expect.

Culture buffs will enjoy the museum district, where parklands surround the Houston Museum of Natural History which has a great display of dinosaur artefacts, while the nearby Houston Art Gallery also has an excellent collection. For something different try a visit to the Buffalo Soldiers Museum, celebrating African-American military involvement. For families there's the Kemah Boardwalk theme park on the Galveston shoreline, with the exhilarating Boardwalk Bullet roller coaster

and other rides as well as fish feeding, sideshows and entertainment.

Restaurants abound, and a highlight for me was a visit to Caracol in the Galleria district which offers “Mexican Coastal Cuisine” – a Gulf Coast take on traditional Tex-Mex food which I can highly recommend. And for a unique culinary experience it's worth lining up in the morning at The Breakfast Klub. You never know, you might even see pop megastar Beyoncé and her rapper husband Jay-Z here - along with their entourage of course. Beyoncé grew up in Houston, and she's said to be a regular visitor whenever she gets a hankering for the eatery's traditional Southern American fare which includes “Catfish and Grits” as well as “Wings and Waffles” - basically KFC for breakfast!

HOW TO GET HERE: Air New Zealand flies from ports across Australia via Auckland non-stop to Houston.

For more info check out:

- Johnson Space Center - www.spacecenter.org
- The Breakfast Klub - www.breakfastklub.com

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GLOBUS AND COSMOS UNVEIL NEW EXPERIENCES ACROSS THE AMERICAS

PREMIUM tour specialist, Globus, has unveiled a series of new experiences in its all-new 2017 Americas Program which feature 40 different tours spanning the USA and Canada, plus a larger-than-ever selection of Latin American getaways.

The Globus brochure has been released in tandem with that of sister brand Cosmos, which has introduced new top-value tours across its very own 2017 USA and Canada program.

Both Globus and Cosmos programs feature the return of top-selling favourites including itineraries centred around the Rocky Mountaineer railway and cruises to Alaska. Together they offer dozens of different holidays across the length and breadth of North America, plus exotic adventures in Latin Countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Peru and Chile.

New additions and experiences within the Globus 2017 USA and Canada program include the 10-day Oregon's Coast Cascades and Craft Beers itinerary; the Mackinac Island and the Great Lakes tour as well as the 11-day Vineyards of South America experience.

The Cosmos brochure has new journeys traversing the great National Parks of the north-west such as the Geysers to Glaciers tour and the 14-day Historic Trails and Blue Ridge Mountains itinerary among others.

In celebration of the new offerings, Globus is offering \$100 worth of air credit per person for any bookings made before 13 September from either the Globus or Cosmos brochures. Terms and conditions apply.



Yellowstone National Park, which the Cosmos Geysers to Glaciers tour visits.

USA to crack 100 million visitors

THE goal of achieving 100 million visitors to the United States in a single year is within reach according to Brand USA's CEO Christopher Thompson and may be achieved as soon as 2021.

His confidence comes on the back of a recent study released by Oxford Economics that showed more than three million incremental visitors arrived in the USA over the past three years, injecting some \$9.5 billion into the economy. Much of this success can be attributed to Brand USA's marketing initiatives including expanding their efforts within Australia, seen as a core source market.

"Our direct-to-consumer marketing continues to expand and is now playing globally through valuable media partnerships. Our cooperative marketing opportunities are adding value and creating all-new platforms to showcase US destinations and experiences to the world", said Thompson.

NEW HOTEL FOR DISNEYLAND

PLANS have been unveiled for a new 700-room luxury hotel to be built at the Disneyland entertainment park located in Anaheim, California.

Designed by Walt Disney Engineering, the team behind the parks' attractions, the construction is expected to begin in 2018 and is forecast to be completed by 2021 occupying approximately 10 acres of parking space but adding approximately 20% more hotel room inventory.

Suzi Brown, spokesperson for Disneyland

said "we are excited about our proposal to build the first Disneyland Resort hotel in nearly 20 years. This new flagship hotel would create thousands of jobs and benefit Anaheim with more than \$750 million in additional tax revenue over the next four decades, while helping the city reach its stated goal of attracting more high-end visitors."

The hotel would be four-diamond standard complementing the parks' two other four-diamond rated hotels the Disneyland Hotel and the Grand Californian Hotel and Spa. The parks' other hotel Paradise Pier is rated a three-diamond hotel by the AAA, an independent hotel rating service.

A theme for the hotel has yet to be announced, but amenities will include a rooftop terrace, a rooftop restaurant, two pools and a water play area. It is understood rates will begin at US\$450 per room per night, the equivalent of AU\$600.



EXPLORE LONE STAR STATE WITH TRAFALGAR

TRAFALGAR has revealed its USA & Canada 2017 program showcasing an abundance of new Insider Experiences and three brand new guided holidays including a 10-day itinerary dedicated to Adventures of the Lone Star State, Texas.

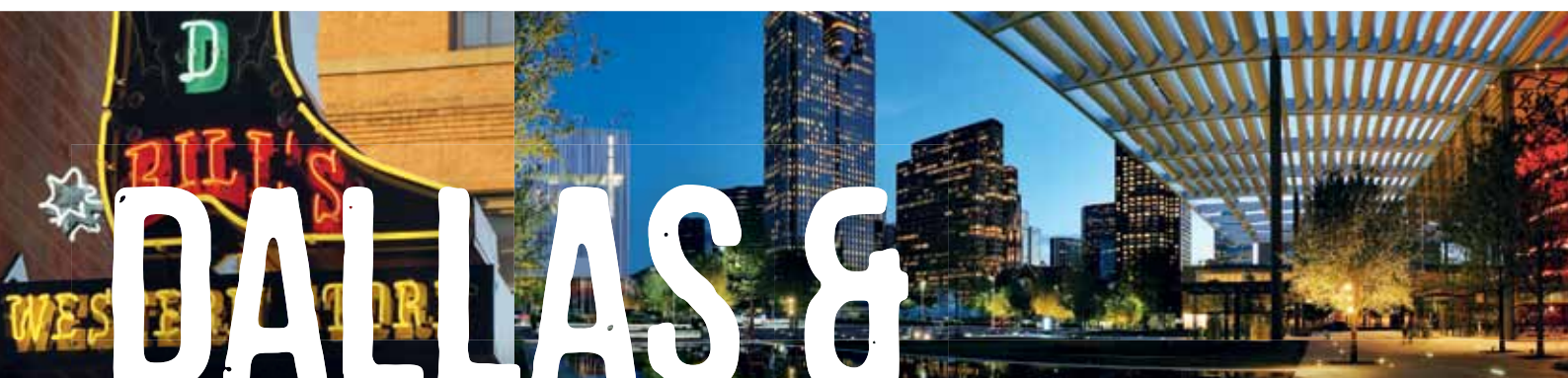
Being one of the largest states in the US, Texas is the perfect destination to enjoy an all-American adventure. This new guided holiday from Trafalgar provides clients with Insider Moments such as experiencing true Texan hospitality at a typical barbecue feast hosted by pit master Wayne Muller featuring award winning ribs and brisket, as well as learning how to dance the Texan two-step and the Cotton Eye Joe on an authentic Texan ranch.

Matthew Cameron-Smith, Managing Director of Trafalgar Australia, commented: "The sheer size and diversity of Texas makes it feel more like a country than a state and our new in-depth exploration of the Lone Star State aims to showcase the very best of Texas. From exploring the cool city of Austin with a Local Specialist to discovering the historic heart of Dallas

and the cowboy culture of Fort Worth to the banks of the San Antonio River, this new itinerary is an exciting discovery, steeped in history and heritage, and brings Texan traditions to life through Trafalgar's

unrivalled Insider Experiences."

Prices start from \$3,925 per person-twin share (land only), clients can save up to \$425 per person when they book and pay in full by 27 October 2016.



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DALLAS AND FORT WORTH PREPARE FOR MORE VISITORS WITH EXTRA ROOMS

DALLAS is set to receive an extra 2,500 rooms over the next five years as the city's hotel development market continues its rapid growth, with more than a dozen new projects in the works.

"Dallas is in high demand," remarked Phillip Jones, President and CEO of the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau to *travelBulletin*.

"And that demand has created an ideal economic environment for hotel brands to seize the opportunity."

Some of the properties to emerge in

burgeoning Dallas include Statler Hilton Hotel, Virgin Hotels, Dream Hotel & the Hall Arts Hotel.

Slated to open in the US spring of 2017, the city's historic Statler Hilton Hotel will first undergo a US\$175 million restoration. Once complete, the 59-year-old landmark will pay homage to the city's musical roots and Conrad Hilton's original vision for the property.

The new Virgin Hotels property will be welcomed into the fold in 2018. Situated in Dallas' hip Design District, the 200-room property is the fourth planned Virgin-branded hotel in the US and will offer multiple dining

and drinking options and a rooftop terrace with a pool.

Another hot property opening its doors in 2018 is the city's first Dream Hotel. The upscale, boutique lodging is poised to serve as a local hangout, featuring indulgent restaurants and bars, as well as exquisite lounges built right in.

"All of this hotel development is just one more example of the big tourism business happening in Dallas. We're thrilled to have an exciting, growing inventory of hotel rooms to feature," said Jones.

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Bula as usual

Fiji was hit by tropical Cyclone Winston in May, wiping out schools, houses, crops, churches and roads in the island nation. But as the recovery efforts continue, it is 'bula' as usual for much of the resilient country.

By Sheridan Rhodes

AUSTRALIANS are encouraged to make Fiji part of their travel plans in a bid to help the country get back on its feet following Cyclone Winston.

Fiji is ready to welcome Aussie travellers with more than 90% of resorts open for business, says Damend Gounder, chairman of Fiji's Tourism Advisory Group (TAG). "Australians have always shown great affection for the Fijian people, and are the country's biggest source market. Their extended family in Fiji looks forward to welcoming them."

Outrigger Fiji Beach Resort general manager Peter Hopgood agreed. Tourism provides more than 35% of Fiji's gross domestic product (GDP) and is also the country's biggest employer, he said. "We need our resorts to be busy so that we can employ more Fijians."

On Fiji's Coral Coast all resorts are operating at 100% capacity, while day-tours and activities are fully operational, says Hopgood. "At Outrigger it is actually even better than prior to Cyclone Winston as we have just opened a newly refurbished resort swimming pool. The refurbishment cost the resort \$500,000 and it looks amazing."

Some Australian travellers nonetheless were forced to postpone or cancel planned stays at resorts hard hit by the cyclone.

Several major resorts including Vomo Island Resort (reopening 1 September), Laucala (reopening 1 July), Mana Island Resort (reopening 28 July) and Jean Michel Cousteau Fiji Island Resort (reopening 1 September) remain closed while damage is assessed and repairs carried out.

Where possible though Aussie travellers are going ahead with travel plans says Kate Stevens from Fiji for Families. "All the resorts are helping each other out and many are offering fantastic recovery deals to drive business."

‘The locals rely on tourism and they need people travelling, so they can keep their jobs in the resorts’

Stevens said the only way to get Fiji back on its feet is to book a holiday. "The locals rely on tourism and they need people travelling, so they can keep their jobs in the resorts. They are such amazing and resilient people and have kept smiling throughout."

For Australian travellers there has never been a cheaper time to travel to Fiji. Fiji Airways, Jetstar and Virgin Australia have released sales fares to encourage Australians to travel to Fiji in the wake of the

cyclone. Resorts too are offering competitive deals with free nights and bonus offers.

Andrew Stanbury, Fiji Airway's regional general manager, said they're pleased to see Australian travellers booking Fiji again. "We hope that people will continue to take advantage of the competitive prices we are offering on flights from both Australia and the domestic flights that connect them to these islands."

Hopgood said fares were the cheapest he'd seen in the past four years. There are also some terrific bargains for resort accommodation, he said, particularly through Hoot Holidays, Ignite Holidays, Fusion Holidays and Flight Centre.

"The Fijians are jumping out of their skins to welcome guests back to our resorts. While they've always been super friendly they are really appreciative of guests coming back to Fiji after the cyclone. The "Bula" spirit is definitely bigger and better."

Altruistic reasons aside however is now a good time to go?

"Absolutely," says Andrew Stanbury, Fiji Airway's regional general manager, Australia. "The sun is shining, the beer is cold and the water warm."

For updates on Fiji following Cyclone Winston see twitter.com/TourismFiji; <http://fijiforamilies.com.au/latest-fiji-resorts-status-after-tropical-cyclone-wilson/>

Reef Endeavour's makeover

CAPTAIN Cook Cruises' MV *Reef Endeavour* has jazzed up its suites, staterooms and cabins as part of a \$2 million refurbishment. Over three months, the renovations saw the rooms fitted out with new pillow-top mattresses, blinds, mirrors, cushions, linen, fresh paint, wall art by marine photographic artist Wendy Morris and Pure Fiji Coconut amenities. All staterooms and suites on A deck now feature a new ensuite, while C Deck has new public bathrooms. On the sundeck, guests can lounge in a new Jacuzzi and windbreak glass has been installed to protect the alfresco dining area.

The cruise line's Managing Director, Jackie Charlton, said the vessel "looks the best she has ever looked".



SIX SENSES FIJI EXPANDING



WELLNESS and sustainability resort operator Six Senses Hotels Resorts Spas is expanding its portfolio into Fiji, taking over the resort development previously known as Vunabaka.

Six Senses Fiji will be located in a magnificent secluded bay on Malolo, the largest of the Mamanuca Islands. The property will offer 26 pool bures, each with their own private plunge pool, as well as 60 luxury residences ranging from 3- to 5-bedroom configurations.

The resort will include a range of culinary and beverage offerings, focused on locally inspired and sustainably sourced ingredients grown onsite and from local farmers, markets and fishermen.

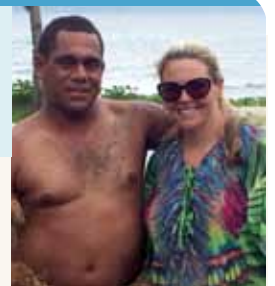
Six Senses Fiji will be 100% solar powered and features the first micro grid in the world to use Tesla batteries.

The spa located within the development continues Six Senses' passion for wellness. The resort will feature the Six Senses Integrated Wellness program which provides a tailored program including spa treatments, exercise, yoga, meditation, sleep tips and guidance.

The resort is slated to open in late 2017.

Q&A

Fiji remains one of Australian holidaymakers' favourite destinations. *TravelBulletin* spoke to personal travel manager Belinda Hackett to get her tips on selling this fabulous destination.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to Fiji?

Yes most definitely. It is one of the most popular international destinations for Australian holidaymakers to travel to.

Which areas are most popular?

The Coral Coast, Denarau and the Mamanuca Islands.

What sort of travellers are visiting Fiji?

Couples, honeymooners, families, singles, elderly, special interest groups like yoga enthusiasts, wedding parties, conference and team building organisers and then those interested in a sport like diving, fishing, surfing and school excursions.

What should an agent consider when selling Fiji?

Identifying what area is best suited for their clients. Fiji offers so much from a flop and drop type holiday to an adventure holiday.

From Cultural experiences to some of the world's best diving sights. Work out what your clients budget is, what they want to achieve or experience from their holiday and then sell them the holiday that best meets their desires and budget.

What resorts would you recommend for families, couples and adventure seekers?

Families – I personally love the Islands so places like Vomo Island, Castaway Island and Malolo Island are my three fave spots. But I also think that the Coral Coast resorts and some of the Denarau Resorts can suit some families better.

Couples – If I was travelling to Fiji as a couple, I would choose to stay at one of the adult only resorts like Yasawa Island, Likuliku Island, Royal Davuii or Lomani.

Adventure Seekers – I would probably send them off to Pacific Harbour for white water rafting, zip lining or a Jet Ski safari, staying at the Warwick resort on the Coral Coast or

looking at the Pearl Resort at Pacific Harbour.

Have you seen much of an effect on bookings from the cyclone?

Yes... I had a number of clients who had to cancel and change destinations. I had clients who had to defer their travel due to the resorts being closed with cyclone damage, I also had clients who couldn't stay where they first wanted to and had to choose to spend their time in Fiji somewhere else. I did travel to Fiji myself in May and I could see some effects caused by Cyclone Winston, but I am happy to report that the Fijians were still the same beautiful people. Repairing roads and resorts with smiles on their faces. Winston may have destroyed villages and damaged resorts but it didn't damage or destroy the Fiji people and their spirits.

FOUR NATURAL WONDERS TO TAKE-IN WHILE IN FIJI

Made up of more than 300 islands, Fiji boasts a host of scenic natural wonders just waiting to be explored and experienced. Here are our top four picks to check out when visiting the tropical South Pacific archipelago.



MAMANUCA ISLANDS

KNOWN for its pristine beauty, the secluded Mamanuca Islands are well worth a day trip. Popular among couples, families and single travellers alike this popular Fijian hot-spot features crystalline waters and colourful coral reefs teeming with native sealife – perfect to explore whilst snorkelling, kayaking or on a glass-bottom boat.

Image: Paul Asman

TAVORO WATERFALLS

SITUATED within the Bouma National Heritage Park, the Tavoro Waterfalls are a collective of three spectacular waterfalls separated by a rugged hike between. Framed by thick, luscious jungle, each waterfall offers a natural swimming pool. The first waterfall is located just a brief 10 minute walk away from the visitors centre, but as you journey through the jungle, you'll soon discover that the best is saved for last. For thrill seekers and adrenaline junkies, there are a few spots available where it's safe to jump off the waterfalls and into the pools.

Image: Ed Bierman



SABETO HOT SPRINGS AND MUD POOL

REGARDED as one of Fiji's hidden gems, the Sabeto Hot Springs provides a fantastic opportunity to unwind and relax in the warmth of the geothermal springs – a naturally occurring phenomena. The three pools vary in temperature (the hottest reaching temperatures of up to 60 degrees celsius), and the sulphur within is believed by locals to have healing properties.



LAVENA COASTAL WALK

BEGINNING at Lavena Village, a guided walk along Taveuni's rugged south eastern coastline is a must-do. The five kilometre stretch follows the forest edge along picturesque Lavena Beach, past tranquil villages, before arriving at a cascading waterfall. Pack a picnic lunch and keep an eye out for exotic birds and sealife. The walk takes approximately an hour and a half each way, so bring comfy walking shoes and swimmers so that you can cool off with a dip at the end of your journey.

Image: Steve L Martin

WIN WITH EMIRATES



Ivona Siniarska from Flight Centre Business Travel in an Emirates A380 cockpit.



Andy Holsden from Sean Simmons Travel got to make a cocktail onboard the A380 at the Business Class bar.

Mandy Finalayson from WOW! Travel & Cruise at the Emirates Bird Cage function at the Melbourne Cup.



DURING June and July, *travelBulletin* and Emirates are celebrating 20 years of Emirates flying to Australia. Up for grabs are return Business Class flights to Europe (see the **opposite page** for details). If you haven't entered there's still plenty of time. To inspire you, here are just some of the great entries we've received so far. Keep them coming in to comp@travelbulletin.com.au



Where in the world?

WOW, where on earth is this colourful building? If you think you can tell us, send your answer in to comp@travelbulletin.com.au. The first five people to answer correctly will win themselves a family pass to the Australian National Maritime Museum. Good luck!

CONGRATULATIONS are in order for our winners of the Where in the World competitions over the past two months. They will take home a double movie pass each to HOYTS.

Vanessa Chen from Flight Centre MET Centre identified Hallgrímskirkja in Reykjavík, Iceland from the May edition.

Well done to Nadine New from Travel Counsellors for picking that June's picture was of the NEMO building in Amsterdam, Netherlands.

CONGRATULATIONS



CELEBRATE

20 YEARS OF EMIRATES FLYING TO AUSTRALIA FOR THE CHANCE TO WIN 2 BUSINESS CLASS FLIGHTS TO EUROPE

To celebrate 20 years since Emirates first began flying to Australia, travelBulletin and Emirates are giving one lucky reader the chance to win two Business Class tickets to their choice of one of 39 European destinations on the Emirates network via their hub in Dubai.

To enter, simply share a photo of your best experience or memory working with Emirates over the last 20 years or a photo showcasing why you love working with Emirates, with 50 words or less describing the photo.

This could be anything from a fantastic trade famil with Emirates, working with the Emirates team, going to Emirates sponsored events such as the Emirates Melbourne Cup or Emirates Australian Open, or simply why you love Emirates.

Email your entry to comp@travelbulletin.com.au

Emirates first launched in Australia in June 1996, with four flights a week from Melbourne to Dubai. Today, the airline operates 105 flights a week from Australia. This includes 77 flights to Dubai per week from five capital cities – Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth and Adelaide, and four daily flights to New Zealand. www.emirates.com/au



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CULINAIRE

An exclusive new culinary experience will be available on our 2017 Bordeaux and Rhône River Cruises. Scenic Culinaire will allow guests to participate in a series of on board cooking classes, taught by experts. The dedicated space will feature cooking stations, a cheese and wine cellar and fresh ingredients sourced from local markets. Our cooking instructors will introduce guests to regional recipes based on the regions they're cruising through.

ENRICH

Our signature Enrich experiences will take guests behind the scenes for special encounters inaccessible to the ordinary traveller. New for 2017, is our stage spectacular, Scenic Rouge - inspired by the finest French cabaret traditions and featuring classics such as the can-can, it's held under the big top, on the banks of the Rhône River in Lyon. Guest can also enjoy an exclusive four-course dining experience with matched vintages at the acclaimed Mumm Champagne house in Riems.

bookings.scenicglobal.com

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*Conditions apply. Prices based on per person twin share in AUD and subject to availability, until sold out. Prices are cruise only (including port charges and taxes) and includes early payment discount of \$300pp where full cruise payment must be received within 7 days of booking; airfare and air taxes are not included and are additional. For new bookings only. Cruise only offer is not combinable with any other offers including Earlybird offers. Pricing correct as of 8 June 2016 and based on FRAC091017 in a category E suite (no balcony). For full terms and conditions refer to Europe Luxury River Cruises 2017 brochure and scenic.com.au/terms. SNTRD344