

travelBulletin

NOVEMBER 2016

2017 HOT SPOTS POLAR REGIONS INDONESIA ITALY NEW ZEALAND

A red carpet scene with spotlights and stanchions. The scene is set against a black background. Four spotlights are positioned at the top, casting beams of light that converge towards the center. The beams are filled with a gradient of colors from purple to white and contain small, sparkling light effects. In the foreground, a red carpet runs from the bottom center towards the spotlights. The carpet is flanked by gold stanchions connected by red ropes. The overall atmosphere is one of glamour and high-profile events.

STAR POWER

What's a celebrity endorsement worth?

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30
years
in Australia



COVER STORY 14

Star power

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From the publisher

Bruce Piper

HELLOWORLD'S \$14 million acquisition of a 50% stake in its associate member MTA Travel sees a significant expansion of the company's aspirations, giving it a foothold in the burgeoning home-based agency sector. Figures from the announcement of the deal gave a rare insight into the operations of MTA Travel, which was founded in 1991 by Roy and Karen Merricks. The pioneering pair have built the business into a powerhouse which last year turned over almost \$170 million through its network of about 350 members across the country.

The Merricks should be thrilled at the deal, which sees them sell the stake at a very respectable multiple of 7.3 times the company's earnings - along with an option to sell the rest in five years time. "We feel this is a very positive thing for everyone in the company, both our members and staff, and with this partnership we have the opportunity to grow MTA in a very positive way," they said.

CEO Don Beattie will remain in control of the company's day to day business alongside the Merricks family, while Helloworld's board noted the deal gives the company a "significant footprint in a sector that is experiencing accelerated growth, both in Australia and globally".

Helloworld also looks set to further expand its bricks-and-mortar strategy, announcing plans for a two year 'co-investment' program in which it will purchase up to 25% of selected franchisees. Payment will be in the form of Helloworld shares, and the company promised it would "leave the franchisees to run their business," without taking a board or management role. The proposal could be compelling for members who are looking to their longer term exit options, while at the same time ensures participating members remain in the Helloworld fold.

The value of the prospective acquisition will be assessed based on the franchisee business's results over the last three financial years, the quality of its client list, longevity of consultants in the business and sales of Helloworld preferred products. Any future sale of the remaining 75% of the franchisee business to a third party will be subject to "unanimous shareholder approval" which will not be unreasonably withheld.

It will be intriguing to watch the take-up of this new option, which CEO Andrew Burnes said would roll out over the next two years. It has the potential to move Helloworld closer to the Flight Centre model of owning its own stores, with Burnes saying it's "part of Helloworld's strategy to align the interests of Helloworld Limited and our retail agency network".

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Ian McMahon's perspective

SHOCK! COALITION MP SPEAKS AGAINST PMC

TREASURER Scott Morrison claims the latest \$5 increase in the Passenger Movement Charge (departure tax) is needed to cover the revenue lost by scaling back the planned backpacker tax.

"The backpacker industry is \$5 billion a year or thereabouts for the tourism industry," he said. "I mean these backpackers are spending this money on the tourism industry in regions all across the country. So they (the tourism industry) are the principal beneficiaries of these measures (to reduce the planned backpacker tax)."

Fortunately there is at least one Coalition MP willing to speak out against increasing the departure tax.

"This tax is a pernicious impost on our aviation and tourism sectors which are already under pressure," he thundered.

"Tax increases are designed to discourage consumption and so placing a tax on travel is designed to discourage, I assume therefore, business activity in the travel sector."

The name of this outspoken MP? Well, Scott Morrison actually. He was addressing Federal Parliament from the Opposition benches in 2008 on the fiscal obtuseness of the Rudd Government. And they wonder why the electorate is so disillusioned.

Once again, the travel and tourism

industry has been conned by a version of the pea and thimble trick.

Right now there is no backpacker tax and Australia attracts to its shores hundreds of thousands of working holidaymakers who perform a double service to the country – they undertake rural jobs for which farmers and growers cannot find local workers and they spend money (\$5 billion did you say, Scott?) that helps to keep regional economies ticking over.

Enter politicians with a harebrained scheme to kill the goose that laid the golden egg with a 32.5% backpacker tax. In the resultant uproar it emerges that the prospect of such a tax will see a dramatic drying-up of visiting backpacker numbers.

An election generates a flood of weasel words conveying the impression of a retreat from the backpacker tax if the Government is returned.

But we still get a backpacker tax (albeit a lower rate should do much less harm to incoming numbers) plus a few sweeteners. And then the Government slaps on a 9% departure tax hike to cover a revenue shortfall that was never there in the first place.

As Tourism and Transport Forum chief executive Margy Osmond put it: "They are now expecting us to pay for them making a decision that was bad in the first place."

Qantas to Beijing

QANTAS will have set the cat among the pigeons with its announcement of new daily Sydney-Beijing flights which debut in just two months. The route, exclusively revealed by *Travel Daily* two days before its official announcement, will be operated from 25 January using QF's existing A330 product. Qantas CEO Alan Joyce flagged a strong focus on the booming inbound Chinese market, with the flights from Beijing to Sydney timed for easy connections with the Qantas domestic network across Australia.

Tourism Australia will market the new services heavily, alongside a Qantas pitch that "if you want to experience the best of Australia, your trip should start with the national carrier". The expansion of QF's presence in China comes along with more codeshares with China Eastern including routes from Sydney to Kunming and Hangzhou as well as Brisbane-Shanghai.

Flight Centre ups India

FLIGHT Centre's acquisition last month of Bengaluru-based Travel Tours Group (TTG) sees a significant expansion in the company's exposure to the fast-growing Indian travel market. Previously heavily slanted towards corporate travel, the deal gives Flight Centre a bigger presence in the leisure sector as well as MICE and wholesale operations.

TTG employs 380 people across five brands including a full service travel and tour company called Travel Tours, Travel Air which operates leisure travel stores in Bengaluru, a GSA division called Travel Air Representations, inbound charter operator Splendour Holidays, and Go Avenues, an inbound MICE-focussed destination

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, August 2016

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jul 16/ Aug 16	Trend Aug 15/ Aug 16
	000	000	000	%	%
Indonesia	109.1	104.6	109.3	-0.2	+19.7
New Zealand	109.2	110.4	102.1	+0.7	+2.8
USA	88.9	87.7	87.2	+0.6	+4.5
UK	47.5	48.1	64.4	-0.5	-6.5
Thailand	46.4	46.3	40.1	+0.1	-2.1
Fiji	27.6	27.4	29.4	+1.0	-4.3
China	36.9	37.5	29.2	-0.1	+3.6
Singapore	32.2	31.8	27.8	+0.7	+4.8
Italy	16.2	15.9	23.8	-0.5	+4.7
Canada	13.3	12.8	19.2	+1.4	+22.0
All outbound	834.3	828.2	808.4	+0.6	+5.7

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, August 2016

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jul 16/ Aug 16	Trend Aug 15/ Aug 16
	000	000	000	%	%
New Zealand	114.2	115.0	131.0	+1.2	+4.0
China	103.4	103.1	118.4	+1.3	+19.5
USA	59.3	59.5	56.7	+0.8	+18.7
UK	59.6	60.3	43.1	+0.5	+4.7
Malaysia	32.7	33.8	36.7	+1.6	+11.7
Japan	33.9	33.0	34.4	-0.7	+21.7
Singapore	38.6	37.0	30.8	+0.1	+16.7
Indonesia	14.6	13.3	27.1	+2.2	+23.0
Hong Kong	20.6	20.4	23.3	+1.0	+9.0
South Korea	23.6	23.8	21.2	+0.4	+33.1
All inbound	694.5	692.8	716.0	+0.8	+12.5

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

MAIN DOMESTIC ROUTES

Top 10 domestic city pairs at July 2016

City pair	Passengers YE Jul 15 (000)	Passengers YE Jul 16 (000)	% change
Melbourne-Sydney	8,507.4	8,797.4	+3.4
Brisbane-Sydney	4,421.8	4,622.1	+4.5
Brisbane-Melbourne	3,332.6	3,444.5	+3.4
Gold Coast-Sydney	2,588.4	2,711.7	+4.8
Adelaide-Melbourne	2,289.0	2,375.8	+3.8
Melbourne-Perth	2,144.1	2,100.7	-2.0
Gold Coast-Melbourne	1,771.1	1,908.1	+7.7
Adelaide-Sydney	1,821.2	1,867.2	+2.5
Perth-Sydney	1,778.3	1,756.8	-1.2
Hobart-Melbourne	1,456.6	1,529.8	+5.0

Source: BITRE

management company. The company's owner, Shравan Gupta, will remain with the business and report to Flight Centre's leader in India, Rakshit Desai.

Freestyle Holidays sold

SI TRAVEL Group, a new company established by Tui Eruera, has purchased Freestyle Holidays from Pinpoint Travel Group, with the deal including the license to operate Fiji's Rosie Holidays in Australia. Eruera is one of the founders of Livn Group, the online B2B exchange which aggregates activities and tours content for major travel clients such as Flight Centre.

Eruera said the acquisition was part of a strategy to seek growth opportunities in the travel and tourism sector. "We have an appetite for businesses that can be improved through technology, and we see Freestyle Holidays as an opportunity to invest and incorporate new technology platforms to accelerate growth," he said.

Freestyle will move from its current Rozelle, Sydney office to nearby Balmain.

Qantas seals Airbnb deal

A NEW agreement between Qantas Frequent Flyer and accommodation disruptor Airbnb attracted lots of attention when it was announced early last month. Under the partnership the 11-plus million members of the QF loyalty program will earn one Qantas Point for every dollar they spend on Airbnb bookings – via the Qantas website – at any of its 2.5 million listings in 191 countries. It's the first time Airbnb has worked with an airline in this way, with Qantas CEO Alan Joyce saying it was a "natural fit for two global brands with a track record of wanting

A NEW SIDE TO DUBAI



DUBAI Tourism swept Australia recently with a packed week of industry events, reaching more than 800 agents, executives and product managers in the process.

The events were held in collaboration with Emirates and included VIP lunches and evening workshops, updating the Australian market on the destination's new and evolving attractions under the theme "A New Dubai Every Time".

Celebrity MCs included Sunrise presenters and correspondents Matt Tinny, Michelle Tapper and Edwina Bartholomew, as well as the AFL Footy Show's Rebecca Maddern and The Morning Show's Kylie Gillies. Among new attractions showcased to the industry were the world's largest indoor theme park, IMG Worlds of Adventure, and the 2000-seat Dubai Opera, both of which opened in August.

Pictured at the Melbourne event are Emirates regional manager Victoria Dean Cleaver; MC Rebecca Maddern (third from right); Dubai Tourism Asia-Pacific director Julie King (second from right), and Fiona Stewart, Jodie Collins and Sheree Pekovich, also Dubai Tourism.

customers to feel at home when they travel, as well as using technology to create great experiences for their customers".

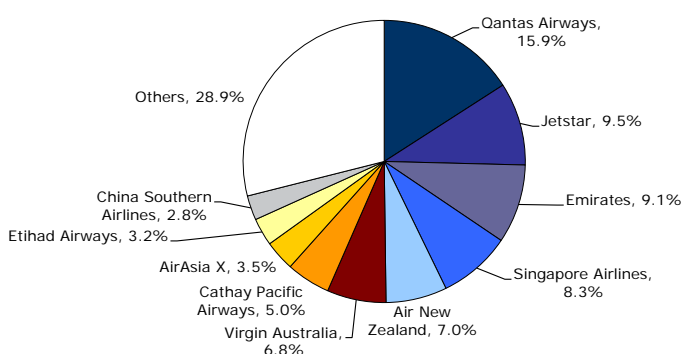
The deal was not welcomed by traditional hospitality suppliers, with Tourism Accommodation Australia slamming it as a "slap in the face" to the airline's long-time

hotel partners. TAA CEO Carol Giuseppe said "while we respect the right of airlines to make commercial agreements with various organisations, Qantas should understand the importance of working with partners who fully support and contribute to the tourism industry and meet all their regulatory

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended July 2016



Source: BITRE

DOMESTIC AIR MARKET – July 2016

	Jul 15	Jul 16	Growth (%)	Yr to Jul 15	Yr to Jul 16	Growth (%)
Total pax carried	5.15m	5.19m	+0.7	57.33m	58.44m	+1.9
Revenue pax kms (RPK)	6.22bn	6.22bn	+0.0	67.59bn	68.84bn	+1.8
Avail seat kms (ASK)	7.84bn	7.72bn	-1.4	88.34bn	88.77bn	+0.5
Load factor (%)	79.4	80.6	+1.2*	76.5	77.5	+1.0*
Aircraft trips (000)	55.6	54.6	-1.7	633.5	636.1	+0.4

Source: BITRE * Percentage points difference

DOMESTIC ON TIME PERFORMANCE – July 2016

	Arrivals on Time		Departures on Time		Cancellations	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Jetstar	5,596	83.6	5,379	80.4	95	1.4
Qantas	8,508	89.2	8,609	90.3	103	1.1
QantasLink	9,346	87.8	9,433	88.6	183	1.7
REX	5,960	86.6	6,154	89.4	37	0.5
Virgin Australia	11,224	89.4	11,417	90.9	315	2.4
All Airlines	43,015	87.5	43,449	88.4	741	1.5

Source: BITRE

Ignite Escape deals

IT TOOK hardly any time at all for Flight Centre's 49% acquisition of Gold Coast-based Ignite Holiday Group to gain traction, with the launch of a new 'Get Luxe' product range already in store at Escape Travel outlets. The packages allow travellers to access package deals – in the vein of coupon-based sellers such as Luxury Escapes and Scoopon Travel – but with the support of their local travel agent. Ignite managing director Randall Deer told *travelBulletin* another significant difference is that travellers don't have to check availability directly with suppliers, with the fulfilment all managed through the Ignite Travel operation.

Get Luxe offers "high end all-inclusive" product, packaged with value adds to make it unique and not easily comparable through other channels. While it's initially only available through Escape Travel, Deer flagged the expanded rollout of the offering across the Flight Centre network. The product is also being sold through a dedicated website which highlights the fact that Get Luxe is an "Australian owned ATAS accredited travel agency that makes booking your holiday easy".

Bicton Travel joins Express

THE Express Travel Group continues to gather momentum, with the high profile addition of Perth's Bicton Travel announced just as this issue of *travelBulletin* goes to print. Bicton Travel director Carole Smethurst said the decision to move away from the agency's long-time associate membership of Helloworld followed "extensive due diligence across all available groups".

Bicton will become part of Express' Independent Travel Group brand, with ITG

general manager Jonathan Nelson saying the move is "further endorsement of the great opportunity that many agents around Australia have before them through partnering with Express Travel Group in either the ITG or italktravel brands".

Smethurst said joining ITG was "a clear choice for us based on the high level of transparency, common values and superior commercial terms coupled with a strong value added model," she said. Bicton is one of Australia's top performing agencies, having won a swathe of awards including being named Best Retail Travel Agency in the National Travel Industry Awards for the last three years. She is expected to be among several hundred Independent Travel Group members who will gather this month in San Francisco for the group's annual conference.

DFAT insurance shock

A NEW survey from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has found 8% of Australian international travellers don't take out travel insurance before heading overseas – in the mistaken belief that the government will bail

‘Australians should be fully prepared for overseas travel and take responsibility for individual travel decisions’

them out if they get into trouble. According to Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, that means 850,000 visits by Australians overseas without insurance. "Australians should be fully prepared for overseas travel and take

responsibility for individual travel decisions," she said, adding this included obtaining comprehensive insurance and being aware of insurance policy conditions.

Bishop also released a new *Consular State of Play 2015-16* document, which provides an enlightening statistical snapshot of recent consular cases. The report found that DFAT provided assistance to more than 1,500 Australians arrested overseas, as well as a further 1,700 who were hospitalised while abroad. "Designed for use by travel agents, the insurance industry, the media and the general public, the *State of Play* lays out the data we need to optimise our consular operations," she said.

Coles, Virgin loyalty deal

VIRGIN Australia's Velocity loyalty program has partnered with the FlyBuys scheme operated by supermarket giant Coles, going head to head with the rival alliance between Qantas and Woolworths Everyday Rewards. Virgin is offering similar points earning rates for Coles shoppers, and in an Australian industry first is also offering status credits – meaning frequent flyers can help maintain their coveted tier status by shopping.

While this is a compelling addition, the fine print reveals it's capped at just 10 status credits per month – about the same as a single domestic sector. Velocity CEO Karl Schuster also touted VA's "unrivalled reward seat availability" as a key feature.

Ensemble+TravelManagers

TRAVELMANAGERS is the first high profile travel network in Australia to align with the Ensemble Travel Group, with a new partner supplier agreement announced

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNET AGENCY MARKET SHARES

September 2016, compared with August 2016

Rank Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Websites	Sep 16	Sep to Aug	Aug 16
Webjet Australia	16.59	+1.40	1
Expedia Australia	9.85	-6.17	2
Wotif.com	9.83	+16.01	3
Flight Centre	7.21	4.46	5
Skyscanner Australia	6.50	-16.40	4
Lastminute.com.au	3.34	+28.52	7
Velocity Frequent Flyer	2.45	-22.58	6
CheapOair	1.56	+73.57	*
Cheap Flights Aus & NZ	1.41	-29.51	9
Helloworld	1.33	+84.03	*

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at July 2016)

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Jul 15	YE Jul 16	total	15/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,511,552	1,590,136	4.4	+5.2
Singapore-Sydney	1,399,811	1,474,775	4.0	+5.4
Singapore-Melbourne	1,167,068	1,318,309	3.6	+13.0
Auckland-Melbourne	1,109,181	1,170,388	3.2	+5.5
Singapore-Perth	1,003,551	1,132,338	3.1	+12.8
Hong Kong-Sydney	933,970	1,058,924	2.9	+13.4
Auckland-Brisbane	956,569	966,329	2.6	+1.0
Los Angeles-Sydney	903,120	922,560	2.5	+2.2
Denpasar-Perth	906,806	865,452	2.4	-4.6
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	857,935	797,791	2.2	-7.0
Top 10 city pairs	10,749,263	11,297,002	30.9	+5.1
Other city pairs	23,247,573	25,250,158	69.1	+8.6
ALL CITY PAIRS	33,996,836	36,547,160	100.0	+7.5

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at 19 October 2016

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$35.38
Helloworld (HLO)	\$4.69
Webjet (WEB)	\$11.92
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.13
Qantas (QAN)	\$3.21
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.235
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.67
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$1.71
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$6.18
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.53
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$17.85
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.39
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.82
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.31

VELOCITY GOES LIVE



VIRGIN Australia has unveiled a new partnership with Ticketek owner TEG Live, creating an online hub for exclusive event offers and live experiences for Velocity members. The program was launched by Aussie singing superstar Keith Urban, whose upcoming Ripcord tour of Australia is one of the first events to be showcased on the site. Urban is pictured above with Velocity Rewards ceo Karl Schuster, who said “Velocity Frequent Flyer is all about making our members’ dreams come true, and what better way to do that than combine travel with some of life’s other great passions such as music, sport and theatre”.

late last month. Ensemble was launched in Australia two years ago by former American Express Travel executive Trish Shepherd, with the aim of targeting “top agency groups and independent owners...who are forward thinkers”. The new pact will see TravelManagers enhance its current high end and unique product offerings, according to the group’s chief operating officer Grant

Campbell, giving members the ability to offer “expertly designed and bespoke holiday experiences that cater to our clients’ individual requirements”.

Products include an increased range of luxury cruising, accommodation, on-location destination management companies and “unique specialty programs” around the world, Campbell said.

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 22 Sep** QF mulls CDG, FCO direct
- 22 Sep** Locomote going global
- 23 Sep** IATA pledges flexibility
- 23 Sep** Boxall leaves HLO Mackay
- 23 Sep** ACCC authorises VA/SQ alliance for 5 years
- 26 Sep** TCF report finally released
- 26 Sep** Backpacker review blast
- 27 Sep** FC to sell Ignite packages
- 27 Sep** FLT expands Euro footprint
- 28 Sep** Luxury Escapes \$200m TTV
- 28 Sep** Bestjet “sky-high” returns
- 29 Sep** AFTA PMC increase fury
- 29 Sep** BA/QR joint business tie
- 29 Sep** VA launches new Velocity events partnership
- 30 Sep** VA stake cost Air NZ \$86m
- 30 Sep** Govt back VA, Alliance jv
- 04 Oct** Qantas, Airbnb FF p’ship
- 04 Oct** HLO taps former QF exec
- 05 Oct** TAA blasts QF/Airbnb pact
- 05 Oct** Virgin anti QF/PX c’share
- 06 Oct** FLT feathers Indian nest
- 06 Oct** New Air NZ campaign targets Aussies to Americas
- 06 Oct** Voyages profit leaps 35%
- 07 Oct** Air NZ to roll out internet
- 07 Oct** SA blown away by cruising
- 10 Oct** ACCC urges QF/PX study
- 10 Oct** US arrivals increase 24%
- 11 Oct** Qantas to restart Beijing
- 11 Oct** BYOjet to launch into UK
- 12 Oct** CATO continues to grow
- 12 Oct** EK plot Aus A380 upgauge
- 13 Oct** Alliances key for Air NZ
- 13 Oct** QF confirms daily Beijing flights
- 13 Oct** QF pilot push for China
- 14 Oct** LA local advertising push
- 14 Oct** Tigerair BNE expansion
- 17 Oct** Quest adding hotel arm
- 17 Oct** Flight Centre Xmas cover
- 18 Oct** Tourism Aus/Air NZ push
- 18 Oct** QF BNE Intl lounge reveal
- 19 Oct** Global Achievers shelved
- 19 Oct** New owner for Freestyle Hols
- 19 Oct** TM ink Ensemble alliance
- 20 Oct** Govt travel insurance push
- 20 Oct** FlyBuys, Velocity p’ship

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

International passenger through Australia’s major international airports – July 2016

Airport	Passengers YE Jul 15	Passengers YE Jul 16	% of total	% change 16/15
Sydney	13,577,543	14,678,326	40.2	+8.1
Melbourne	8,464,577	9,375,853	25.7	+10.8
Brisbane	5,150,667	5,350,408	14.6	+3.9
Perth	4,186,692	4,287,997	11.7	+2.4
Gold Coast	891,633	1,039,365	2.8	+16.6
Adelaide	915,055	870,697	2.4	-4.8
Cairns	498,155	612,359	1.7	+22.9
Darwin	288,323	260,712	0.7	-9.6
Townsville [^]	n/a	34,476	0.1	n/a
Sunshine Coast*	10,669	17,329	0.0	+62.4
Norfolk Island	11,638	10,897	0.0	-6.4
Port Hedland~	1,884	8,741	0.0	364.0
All Airports	33,996,386	36,547,160	100.0	+7.5

[^] 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

19 Oct 2016

New South Wales	993
Victoria	705
Queensland	593
Western Australia	299
South Australia	228
Australian Capital Territory	51
Tasmania	41
Northern Territory	22
TOTAL	2,932

Got something to say?

We’re all ears, so share your thoughts at:

haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au



Steve Jones' Say

REMEMBER Kodak? Of course you do. The camera firm that was just too big and iconic to fail. The public thought so, as did the company itself. But fail it did, blinded by its failure to believe digital technology was a threat to its business.

Kodak crossed my mind when I saw the reaction of Tourism Accommodation Australia to Qantas's new pact with Airbnb which enables people to book Airbnb properties and earn frequent flyer points through the airline's website.

Now the link between the two may not be immediately apparent – TAA is not going out of business or guilty of staggering short-sightedness as Kodak was – but what it signalled to me was a similar refusal to accept what is happening in the marketplace.

Airbnb is not going anywhere. It is part and parcel of the travel landscape. You might, as a hotelier, curse the sharing economy and the growth of the online up-start. But guess what. It's not all

about you. It's about consumers.

Qantas is partnering with Airbnb for the simple but fundamental reason that travellers are using the portal to book accommodation in their droves.

That being the case, why wouldn't Qantas seek to work with Airbnb?

‘Why wouldn't Qantas seek to work with Airbnb?’

TAA points out that Airbnb operates outside the regulatory framework which hoteliers have to adhere to. That may be so, but how is that Qantas's concern?

As the airline said, in response to TAA's criticisms, "Airbnb is something a lot of our customers like using and we think it's important to give them the choice."

And that is the crux of the issue. Customers have more options than they have ever had before. Qantas, to my mind,

is just responding to that reality. It is looking at where consumers are active and what they are using, just as any good forward-looking business should do.

Speaking of forward-looking, many businesses believe they have taken that approach when it comes to mobiles.

There is no question we spend copious amounts of time on our phone, but some interesting stats emerged from Abu Dhabi where the UK's travel industry was staging its annual shindig.

The figures appeared to cast doubt over the much heralded 'mobile first' approach, with the number of bookings via mobiles declining from 16% to 13%.

It was a reversal which surprised many.

We buy pretty much everything online.

But I can't help wondering if the 'mobile first' phenomenon has been somewhat overplayed.

The figures emanating from the UK would appear to bear that out.

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AIR CANADA ON THE UP AND UP

There's no stalling Air Canada's growth in Asia Pacific & beyond. Guy Dundas chats with PK Lee about the carrier's next phase of growth.

IT'S a matter of when, not if, non-stop flights between Vancouver and Melbourne will be launched by Air Canada. The route has been touted for years, but was effectively shut down 15 months ago in favour of the introduction of Brisbane flights, due to aircraft availability. But the Victorian capital certainly remains on the radar, Director Asia & Pacific, Lee Poh Kait (PK) explained to *travelBulletin* in an exclusive interview.

The second half of 2016 has been hectic for Air Canada. New routes have been launched from its Canadian gateways to destinations including Warsaw, Glasgow, Dublin, Casablanca and of course, Brisbane in June. Multiple other new routes will come online later this and next year.

"Asia Pacific is one region Air Canada would like to grow more and the aircraft are coming in at the right time. Most of the countries in Asia are emerging markets, both economically and the desire to travel," the Hong Kong-based Air Canada executive said while in Sydney recently.

Flights from Montreal to Shanghai will fire up in mid-February and Air Canada will add competition between Taipei and Vancouver, already served by EVA Air and China Airlines, when it relaunches the route in June. In the same month, the airline's leisure offshoot, Air Canada rouge, will introduce seasonal flights from Vancouver to Nagoya in Japan.

"All these are confirmed announcements," PK said. "In the pipeline, there are more cities we intend to fly into. This is growth by design."

China, Asia and the South Pacific are



“There’s always this discussion about where else we can operate in the South Pacific. It’s constantly being discussed, and when we have the right aircraft type, it is something we will definitely consider”

Lee Poh Kait (PK)
Director Asia & Pacific, Air Canada

pivotal areas for Air Canada as it plots the future direction of its international network. Secondary cities in China, where the population ranges from 7 million to 10 million people, also represent a “huge opportunity for us”, PK said.

Hardware - namely Air Canada's fleet of Boeing 787 Dreamliners - has been the catalyst for growth. The 787 is often deemed a “game changer” by its operators, and the Canadian carrier falls into that pool. With a mix of -800 and -900 Dreamliner aircraft already in its fleet, and a dozen or so more to come, AC has the ability to shuffle the fuel-efficient carbon-fibre composite jet as demand warrants.

“For the last five years we’ve had a global expansion plan and today we are reaping the benefit,” PK concluded.

In our backyard, Melbourne is the next logical choice.

“There’s always this discussion about

where else we can operate in the South Pacific. It's constantly being discussed, and when we have the right aircraft type, it is something we will definitely consider.”

Like Air Canada's long running Vancouver-Sydney route, the Boeing 777 would be the “right aircraft” for Melbourne, Lee said. “Once we undergo a review of our network and can find some time with the 777, then it will definitely be that option. It's always going to be Melbourne first, then probably some other cities in Australia. It's just a matter of time.”

Lee said Air Canada's “ambitious” Brisbane strategy – moving from thrice weekly to daily within two weeks of launching – had “defied all logic”.

“Today we are happy with it. It is profitable. Margins are good and I think with the aircraft, it's a game-changer and cost efficient. The Dreamliner is the right tool to enable us to be sustainable.”

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QUEST TO ENTER HOTEL SECTOR

Stewart has been recruited 'to develop and launch Quest's new hotel concept'



Cameron Stewart

THE evolution of Quest Apartment Hotels is set to continue with the Australian company revealing it is set to make a play at the hotel sector. Until mid-last year, the business operated as Quest Serviced Apartments, specialising wholly in the "home and office away from home" sector. The repositioning and inclusion of 'Hotels' in the title was a giveaway of the future strategy.

Chief executive officer Zed Sanjana confirmed the move last month in a media release when welcoming Cameron Stewart to the position of Director Group Operations.

Stewart has fine pedigree in the hotel division. The executive has been managing director, Australia and New Zealand for SilverNeedle Hospitality Group since December last year. Before which he was vice president – Hotel Operations for four years and director of operations for more than three years when the business was known as Constellation Hotel Group until 2011.

At SilverNeedle, Stewart was in charge of leadership, management, and growth of seven brands, spanning regionally based franchised models to full service hotels at 40+ locations.

Quest was tight-lipped on specific details of the new hotel venture at *travelBulletin's* time of print, only stating that Stewart has been recruited "to develop and launch its new hotel concept, which will fill a gap in the hotel marketplace between the traditional no frills 'select service' category and the emerging 'millennial' hotels category".

On paper Stewart fits the bill to a tee. His LinkedIn profile boasts his achievements including "the re-development and subsequent launch of arguably Australia's most technologically advanced full service, 304 room, 4.5 star NEXT Hotel Brisbane". He was also a key contributor in the roll out of the Sage Hotels brand which has four locations in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth and Wollongong.

"We are extremely fortunate to have someone with Cameron's background and industry experience to guide the development of the new hotel concept," Sanjana said.

"Cameron will be an invaluable addition to the team and I can't wait to show the industry what we've been working on, an announcement which will be made later in 2016."



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

PMC FURY CONTINUES

AS THIS issue of *travelBulletin* goes to press, the debate with the Federal Government over increasing the Passenger Movement Charge (PMC) by \$5 to \$60 per person continues. AFTA, along with IATA, BARA, TTF and other bodies, continues to make the case that this proposed increase is unjustified.

There has been a significant campaign raging in Canberra over this issue and this has included a Senate inquiry in which several associations including AFTA appeared before the Senate Economics Committee to talk about why the increase to the PMC is inappropriate. How the travel industry ended up in the middle of an attempt by the Federal Government to introduce a new tax on backpackers which is meant to raise some \$220 million in additional tax revenue is the \$64 million question.

The Treasurer made it clear that the new backpacker tax package had to "wash its own face" – or meet the revenue target that he set. While that may be the case it is not reasonable that the government has looked to the PMC to supplement its tax package due to its questionable economic modelling. The travel and tourism industry fully expects to pay its way, and does. But for many years it has been seriously overcharged.

Taxes and charges levied on travellers far exceed what the Government spends to support travel and tourism. The numbers speak volumes. The current \$55 PMC collects \$1.03 billion per annum and it is expected that the collections will grow 5% per annum based on inbound and outbound growth forecasts.

This year, the cost of providing border management and passenger facilitation at international gateways is around \$237 million. The big question is what does the difference go towards? Definitely not passenger facilitation. So where does it all go? Well, consolidated revenue, and whatever else the government decides to do with it. It's hardly a passenger movement charge when most of it goes to unrelated government expenses.

For all these reasons we continue to make the point to the Government, Opposition and the Senate that the PMC should not be increased under any circumstances as there has not been adequate justification made for the increase proposed.

What AFTA and the other associations are saying is that the Senate should not pass the increase to the PMC and in fact evoke a freeze on the charge for the next five years.

The Senate should instead approve other bills including superannuation changes in which the Government would retain 95% of super contributions due to working holidaymakers from other countries and move on so we can have some certainty.

This entire thing is a mess and has been handled poorly by the government. I hope that a reasonable outcome can be found and, perhaps by the time you read this, the outcome may be known.

‘Taxes and charges levied on travellers far exceed what the Government spends to support travel and tourism’



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EPIC PASS NOW COVERS WHISTLER

VAIL Resorts continued its relentless global expansion last month when it finalised the acquisition of the massive Whistler Blackcomb ski resort in Canada. Significantly for Australian skiers, the move means season passes purchased for Perisher in the NSW skifields can also now be used at Whistler, with a “sneak preview” five days of access provided for holders of the 2016 Epic Australia pass. This could be a key opportunity for travel agents, because with Whistler one of the most popular international snowsports destination for Aussies the ability to ski free could definitely put a Canadian ski holiday on the agenda for the upcoming northern winter.

As well as splashing the cash on the Whistler deal, Vail Resorts ceo Rob Katz and his wife Elaana also last month reached into their own pockets to make a US\$2 million personal contribution to local community non-profit groups operating in the areas where Vail has resorts. The largesse extended to Cooma in NSW, where they provided A\$100,000 to the Monaro Early Intervention Service, which helps children in the region who have a disability of developmental delay. “The success of our local communities brings a number of unique challenges that require our focus and attention – none more important than helping kids and families who are most vulnerable. Elana and I feel fortunate to be able to provide this support to these outstanding non-profits to allow them to continue their great work,” Katz said.

Express/ Wendy Wu Pact

EXPRESS Travel group (ETG) inked a deal with Wendy Wu Tours in October which sees the Asian holiday specialist become ETG’s preferred supplier for Asia.

Wendy Wu Tours’ general manager Andrew Mulholland said with both companies looking to grow their market share in China, Indochina, India and Japan, the partnership was an ideal fit.

“We look forward to working with this rapidly growing group of retail professionals,” Mulholland said.

Mulholland noted that he was particularly impressed with ETG’s business model, quality of agents and “aggressive stance” towards owning Asia as a core market. ETG executive general manager Ari Magoutis echoed these sentiments.

“While our network continues to grow, we want to ensure we are partnering with market leaders and the feedback we have received from our members about Wendy Wu Tours is of the highest standard,” Magoutis said. “It is this member feedback that drives our supplier relationships and ultimately creates successful partnerships”.



TTF VIEW

Margy Osmond, CEO,
Tourism & Transport Forum Australia

GOVERNMENT’S CASH GRABBING HOLIDAY TAX

NO SOONER has the Federal Government finished picking one fight with the tourism industry over the backpacker tax that it’s now opened a new front by announcing it will hike its holiday tax – the Passenger Movement Charge – to \$60 from 1 July 2017.

The tourism industry is absolutely outraged that the Federal Government wants to hike its holiday tax in what is a blatant cash grab. There was no warning, no discussion before this was announced as part of the Government’s review of the backpacker tax.

The latest overseas arrivals figures from the ABS confirm that nearly eight million international visitors came to Australia in the 12 months to August 2016. That is up 10.9% on the previous

‘We should be reducing the cost of travel, not adding to it...’

year. A great result but one we put at risk by making Australia a less competitive destination in the Asia-Pacific by making travel more expensive.

The approach to taxes and fees on the tourism sector is like the proverbial frog in the cold bucket of water that is

slowly boiled alive by the ratchet up of these costs – an extra \$5 to the Passenger Movement Charge here, an extra \$10 to a visa there. It all adds up to more costly holidays and a disincentive to travel to Australia.

We should be reducing the cost of travel, not adding to it if we want tourism to take its rightful place as a super growth industry for the Australian economy.

As the Prime Minister said during the election campaign, ‘If you want less of something, tax it more’, and that is exactly what the Government’s current policy of viewing tourism as a ‘cash cow’ is going to deliver.

The holiday tax is already raising \$1 billion a year on travellers. There is absolutely no justification for it to be increased to \$60. The Prime Minister and Treasurer talk about being a lower taxing Government but the tourism sector is squarely in the Government’s crosshairs for tax hikes and fee increases.

The Federal Government would like to brush off its tourism tax hike as ‘just a cup of coffee’ but the reality is that the holiday tax on a family of four is now a \$240 cash grab from the family holiday budget that could pay for an extra day’s accommodation, a theme park excursion or a couple of days’ car hire.

If the Government is serious about supporting a strong future economy then it should be embracing policies that back our economic strengths which includes our growing visitor economy.

The Government can demonstrate its support for the tourism sector by immediately scrapping its plan to hike the holiday tax to \$60 from 1 July 2017 and work with the industry to attract more international visitors to Australia by making the sector more competitive.



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AIRLINES AND AGENTS = FRENEMIES

There has long been a love-hate relationship between airlines and those who sell their tickets, and the latest *travelBulletin* Australian travel industry survey certainly bears that out. Bruce Piper breaks down the results of the biggest ever study into the distribution of flights in Australia.

“I love you, but I hate you”. No, it’s not a line from the Bachelorette, but a common theme from respondents to the *Travel Daily/travelBulletin* airline survey which was undertaken last month. Australian travel agents deal with airlines on a regular basis and remain overwhelmingly the largest sales channel for airfares – and while airlines readily admit they would like to boost the proportion of tickets they sell directly to travellers, the reality is that they rely heavily on the distribution system, particularly in the current environment of strong competition and overcapacity. That has the effect of making airlines and agents the “best of frenemies”.

The *Travel Daily/travelBulletin* airline survey, conducted on our behalf by Stollznow Research, garnered more than 600 responses from both travel consultants and airline staff. The majority came from travel

agents, with about half of those from Flight Centre and the remainder from Helloworld, Magellan, Travellers Choice, Express Travel Group and CT Partners members. We asked participants to answer a range of questions about which airlines they sell, including which ones clients regularly ask for by name, the training and support provided by the various carriers and agent perceptions of airline products – and the results are intriguing.

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

The key airlines sold by travel agent respondents correlated closely to their respective market shares, with Emirates, Etihad, Air New Zealand, Garuda and Virgin Australia making up the top five – followed by South African Airways, Singapore Airlines, Finnair, Qatar Airways and Cathay Pacific. The results are fascinating given that Qantas didn’t even appear in the top ten, despite ranking well in other areas of the poll.

In terms of training and development for agents Air New Zealand led the pack, followed by Qantas, Emirates, Etihad, Lufthansa and Singapore Airlines. A number of respondents commented on how much they liked the new Qantas Groups system, while Hainan Airlines, Qantas, Emirates, Virgin Australia and Singapore Airlines ranked highest when it came to solving customer problems.

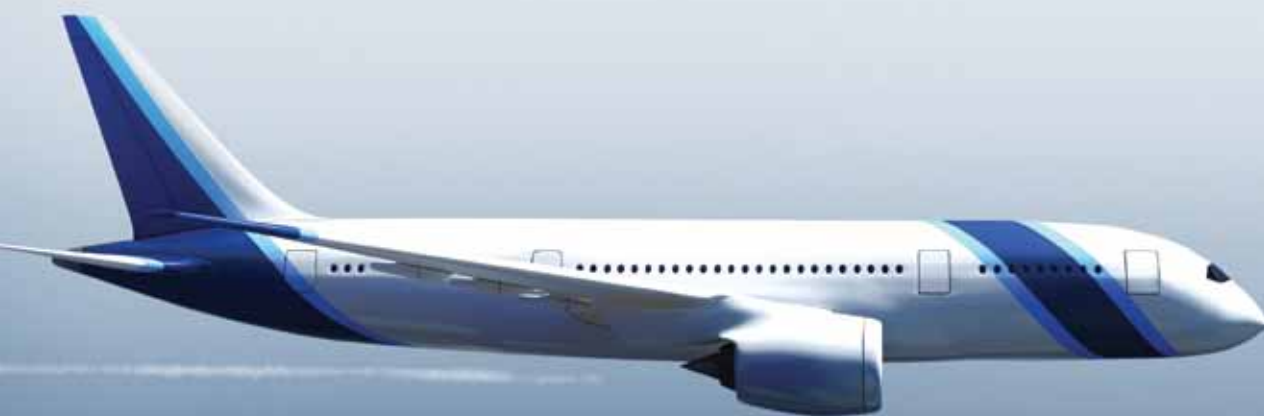
Agents were asked which airlines

were perceived as offering competitive commissions, with Etihad leading the way here, followed by Emirates, Qatar Airways, THAI and Malaysia Airlines. In terms of how they handle corporate travellers, agents rated Qantas as the best followed by Emirates,

‘Asked which airlines were perceived as offering competitive commissions, Etihad led the way, followed by Emirates, THAI and Malaysia Airlines...’

Singapore Airlines, Etihad, Virgin Australia and Cathay Pacific. Respondents rated Emirates’ premium cabins best, followed by Etihad, Singapore Airlines and Qatar Airways, with Qantas coming in fifth spot, just ahead of Air New Zealand, Cathay Pacific, Virgin Australia and Finnair.

According to the survey the best airfare specials are offered by Etihad, followed by Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Malaysia Airlines and AirAsia. Qantas was the international airline most regularly asked for by name, followed by Emirates, Singapore Airlines, Virgin Australia, Etihad and Air New Zealand. Other carriers with



strong brand recognition from travel agency customers included Cathay Pacific, Hawaiian Airlines, Qatar Airways, THAI Airways, Garuda and Air Canada.

DOMESTIC TOPPED BY VIRGIN AUSTRALIA

Travel agent respondents to the survey showed a preference for Virgin Australia when it came to the domestic airlines they regularly sell. Virgin also topped the domestic poll for solving customer problems and offering “competitive commissions,” although on the domestic commission front the clear winner was “none of the above”. Qantas domestic was rated as best for corporate and group travel, and agents ranked the QF domestic business class more highly than that of Virgin.

ALLIANCES

More than four out of five respondents to the survey – or 83% – said they regularly sold airfare products offered by the various airline alliances. Given that Qantas is a member of the **oneworld** alliance, it’s not particularly surprising that a significant majority of respondents to the survey said they regularly sold **oneworld** fares. 78% of the travel agents said they sold **oneworld** – ahead of Star Alliance, which still recorded a very strong 60% ranking.

Despite the expansion of SkyTeam which now boasts Garuda, China Airlines, China Eastern, China Southern, Delta, Korean Air, Vietnam Airlines and Xiamen Airlines as online carriers into Australia, only 7% of respondents said they regularly sold SkyTeam fare products.

COMMENTS

While the statistical results are fascinating, even more revealing were the comments made by travel agents about the airlines, revealing the highly emotive nature of the relationship. While many predictably bemoaned declining levels of service, commissions and visits by airline representatives, others were more regretful about how the landscape has changed over the years. Several highlighted the key role of travel agents in the event of disruptions. “When an emergency happens airlines cannot cope with passengers telephoning them... agents save airlines money, and when a problem occurs they solve it for their clients,” one consultant responded.

A key issue was wait times at airline call centres, with agents saying they actively try not to sell carriers which keep them on hold for extended periods. One respondent even blamed the poor service from airlines for driving consultants out of the travel industry. “Hotels and tour operators are fine, but

the airlines’ disrespect for travel agents is astounding. The airline call centres appear to be filled with barely trained staff, who are

“I don’t think any other industry gives such appalling service to the professionals selling for them...”

anxious to end your call... I don’t think any other industry gives such appalling service to the professionals selling them,” the agent commented.

Another said “they do not get that we are an important part of the selling chain and a cheap source of customer service”. The bottom line, according to a further respondent, is that the relationship feels very one-sided. “The attitude from the airlines is as if they want to cut out the agent and don’t require our input or expertise... it’s a great shame, as it could be a fantastic symbiotic relationship to such mutual benefit”.

■ The full *Travel Daily/travelBulletin* airline survey report is available for purchase – contact research@travelbulletin.com.au for more information.



STAR POWER

In today's world, celebrities hold an enormous amount of sway. A dress worn by Kate Middleton is sold out in a matter of seconds, as happened to the £159 Reiss 'Nanette' dress that she wore for her official engagement picture back in 2011, and anything spruiked by a Kardashian tends to rocket that product to the top of many wishlists. But what about travel? What is the value of celebrity endorsements? Steve Jones investigates.

WHETHER it was Paul Hogan firing up the barbie for American tourists in the 80s, Steve Liebmann extolling the virtues of river cruising for Avalon Waterways or, more recently, Nicole Kidman enjoying the comforts of first class air travel with Etihad, they all shared one simple objective: to sell more products.

More accurately of course, that responsibility fell to the brands they were advertising. The celebrities themselves, well, it's fair to say they were probably not quite as worried about the sales trajectory.

The practice of employing household names to sell and represent brands and products has formed part of the marketer's tool box for decades, at least for those with a reasonable budget.

And there has never been a shortage of celebrities willing to associate themselves with travel brands.

As Australian actor Bryan Brown told an audience in Sydney after being unveiled as the voice of Dave the goose – a migrating bird

who prefers to fly Air NZ than make his own way across the Pacific – an offer to extend his remit was not hard to accept.

"Originally I was just going to be the voice of Dave then Air NZ said 'what about coming over to Los Angeles and you stand at the bar' [in the TV commercial]. I said yeah, sounds alright".

It's nice work if you can get it, as Brown tacitly acknowledged.

Air NZ is just one of several airlines to have paid for celebrity endorsement or recruited brand ambassadors to promote their brands to the masses.

The latest, AirAsia X, has just named singer and X Factor judge Guy Sebastian as its new brand ambassador for Australia.

Lower profile partnerships in travel have seen Avalon Waterways hire Steve Liebmann and latterly Deborah Hutton, Scenic has Catriona Rowntree to spruik its wares and Tripadeal has employed Shelley Craft to convince consumers of its quality. The scale and reach may be different from that of Nicole Kidman promoting Etihad but the approach is identical; they are all harnessing the power of celebrity to engage and appeal to consumers.



Air NZ chief executive Christopher Luxon said choosing an iconic Australian to be the voice of Dave the goose was an important element of a campaign which aims to lift awareness of the airline's international network among Australian travellers.

"Everyone will come to know that Bryan is the voice of Dave, and be able to put a face to the voice," he said. "I think that is really important. To have someone like Bryan involved is pretty cool and it will force Australians to take notice, pay attention and re-appraise their perceptions of Air NZ."

"But you do have to find someone who is consistent with your values and who the public feel attached to."

Brown, he said, was a "fabulous, thoughtful Australian" who ticks those boxes.

Air NZ's general manager of global brand and content marketing, Jodi Williams, added that engaging a well-known voice such as

Brown added "flavour" to the creative idea.

"It brings the character of Dave to life and the icing on the cake is if the celebrity resonates and has extra cut-through that helps elevate awareness of the campaign," she said.

Williams warned however that brand ambassadors or celebrity endorsement could come with risk.

"Sometimes you have to be a little careful that the person you work with doesn't overtake your brand or the job you are trying to do," she said. "I think we use celebrities in the right way in that we use them to add to the creativity."

On the global stage, Emirates and Etihad pitted A-list actors against each other, with the former going for Jennifer Aniston – paying her a reported US\$5m – while Etihad went with our very own Nicole.

Boutros Boutros, Emirates divisional senior

vice president corporate communications, marketing and brand, claimed it had been "overwhelmed" at the "social phenomenon" created by Aniston's debut TV ads last year.

He suggested the commercials enabled the actress to showcase her "impeccable comedic timing".

"Jennifer Aniston's appeal and effortless connection with a global audience makes her the perfect choice for our campaign," Boutros said. "The humour resonated around the world and the ad was viewed by millions of people, generating thousands of conversations."

"We were overrun with requests to see Jennifer again. She has an enduring, universal appeal that is at once sophisticated but also down to earth – a great match for our brand."

Etihad's choice of Kidman was also based on attributes the airline said it shared with the Australian actress.

Not only was she the "perfect voice and face for our story", Etihad chief commercial officer Peter Baumgartner announced at the time, but she "embodies worldly sophistication, intelligence, originality and elegance – values which form the foundations of the Etihad brand".

Yet there is a school of thought – maybe a growing one in an age where we are all, apparently, seeking "authenticity" – that such high profile glitz and glamour leaves us





cold and just a bit weary. Don't handsomely-rewarded brand ambassadors turn up at trade and consumer events with painted smiles, trot out a few bland niceties about the product, pose for a few snaps and then disappear into the night to somewhere they actually want to be?

Trafalgar has worked with TV personality Kerri-Anne Kennerley and has also announced plans to partner with Patricia Schultz, the American author of best-selling travel book *1000 Places to See Before You Die*.

Managing director Matthew Cameron-Smith acknowledged that paying for celebrities to endorse products could be viewed as "cash for comments" if there is little tangible connection between the individual and the product.

Both Kennerley and Schultz have that connection, he said.

"There is skepticism around brand ambassadors, and it's reasonable to have that doubt, because people do wonder whether the celebrity actually uses the product they are representing," he told *travelBulletin*. "We did not want that. We wanted people who were connected to travel and could talk from the heart."

Kennerley and Schultz both fit the bill, he said, and both experienced a Trafalgar guided tour before putting their name to the product.

While accepting brand ambassadors are contractually obliged to attend events and mingle with consumers and trade alike, Cameron-Smith said Kennerley exudes genuine passion and interest.

"Kerri-Anne brings an audience with her, she is credible and doesn't polarise our audience," he said. "You also need someone who is going to engage with your guests and at our trade and consumer events she stays to the very end talking about holidays and travel."

"You need a personality who has some

connection to what you do and someone who has similar values."

Schultz, too, who is due in Australia early next year, epitomises the passion for travel which is shared by Trafalgar, Cameron-Smith said, adding that her predilection for independent travel was of particular value.

“You need a personality who has some connection to what you do and someone who has similar values”

"It's good for our brand if someone like Patricia, who is an intrepid traveller, is happy to work with us and put her name against the brand," he explained. "I understand ambassadors get paid to say 'this is a good product' but she writes about travel, and is a travel photographer so people can see the link and see that she brings credibility."

"Patricia also commands a lot of respect and she would not compromise her own brand and credibility if she did not believe in the Trafalgar product."

In much the same way that Kennerley is described as a "much loved" figure, so too is TV presenter Catriona Rowntree, the veteran host of Channel Nine's *Getaway*, and long-time brand champion for *Scenic*.

"When our guests meet her at events, women want to go shopping with her and men want to date her or treat her like their daughter," observed *Scenic* national marketing manager Liz Glover. "Catriona is accessible. She's the Aussie girl next door. She has travelled many times with us and

it gives people the confidence to go to the same places. They think 'if Catriona can go to South America then so can I'."

Also in a similar vein to Kennerley, Rowntree brings "credibility" with her, Glover added, with her long career with *Getaway* creating an obvious link with Rowntree's association with a travel brand.

"If people are cynical then they don't know the integrity she has. But because she is synonymous with travel, and the brand fits, I believe there are fewer cynics to convince," Glover said. "She takes her mum on *Scenic* trips and you don't take your mum if you don't like the product."

One of the key reasons – probably the key reason for seeking celebrity advocacy – is to generate "cut through", that most sought-after objective of marketers who must get their brand voice heard above a cacophony of advertising noise.

Tourism Australia launched its global coastal and aquatic campaign at the start of the year, with Australian Hollywood star Chris Hemsworth adding his voice to the promotional drive.

Marketing director Lisa Ronson said the addition of Hemsworth added considerable kudos to the campaign, with the passion for his country lending an "authentic and influential" voice.

"In the increasingly competitive world of destination marketing where it is harder than ever to reach and emotionally engage with consumers, having a recognisable and credible brand ambassador that aligns with your brand personality and values can be very powerful in providing cut through," she told *travelBulletin*. "That is needed to reach our target customers, amplify our messages and ultimately motivate them to travel here."

But such a relationship with an advocate



must go “beyond a financial transaction”, Ronson said, which is why TA carefully picks advocates who have “shared values”.

“We look for people who are genuinely passionate about Australia and keen to share their love of their country with others around the world,” she added. “These advocates we call ‘friends of Australia’... and it has given us many genuine powerful advocates for our country. When they talk about Australia it comes from the heart.”

Hemsworth’s attendance in New York for the campaign launch in January helped generate more than 2000 stories worth \$54 million in publicity, Ronson said, while images shared on social media by Hemsworth and his wife during a trip to Uluru, Hayman Island and The Kimberley in June reached an audience of 40 million.

While ‘traditional’ celebrities from the world of TV, film, music and sport – former tennis star Pat Rafter represented Mantra for several years – remain in demand, some brands are increasingly turning to a new wave of celebrity “influencers” from the world of social media.

One operator, Contiki, said working with influencers – some of whom have huge audiences and global fan bases - resonates more with its target millennial audience.

Head of marketing Vanessa Stavrou said: “We are looking for content creators, people who have passion and who tell their own stories, so it is less about slapping a celebrity against our brand but more finding a foodie who can tell a story while in Malaysia.

“We love the relevancy we get from partnering with influencers because that’s what keeps us relevant with millennials. But we search for those who have meaning behind what they do.”

Stavrou said research has shown YouTube

and Instagrammers have more loyal followers than celebrities, particular among younger demographics. They also crave experiences and transparency, something not always apparent through celebrity endorsement.

“We love the relevancy we get from partnering with influencers because that’s what keeps us relevant with millennials”

“Seeing a celebrity against a brand just isn’t going to cut it,” she said. “They want to engage with the content and see the story behind it.”

Asked who Contiki would approach if it had unlimited budget, Stavrou said: “I wouldn’t go for a celebrity. I just don’t think they’re going to buy into it if Beyoncé was the face of Contiki.”

But according to AirAsia X chief executive Benjamin Ismail, who welcomed Guy Sebastian as its local brand ambassador last month, we still look up to, and are influenced by, the rich and famous.

“A high proportion of people still star gaze, and follow them on social media,” he said. “Guy has around 300,000 Instagram followers [and 423,000 twitter followers] and we are very social media driven. When he starts promoting destinations, people will notice and start thinking ‘that would be a nice place to visit’.”

However, cynicism will surface among consumers if they don’t believe the match between personality and brand is right, Ismail added. “I think if we had someone

considered upmarket representing AirAsia X that could come across as fake,” he said.

“When Guy won Australian Idol it showed how dreams can come true and that matches the dream we offer at AirAsia.

“We are an airline that gives people the opportunity to fly for the first time. Guy Sebastian fits our culture and we want to grow with him.”

AirAsia, like every brand asked the same question, declined to reveal how much the singer is being paid, with Ismail only saying it was “not much” with payment largely in travel “perks” for Sebastian and his family.

Yet for people who question the value of celebrities and claim they don’t fall for the charms a famous face can offer to a brand, maybe the only people they are kidding are themselves.

As Paul Fishlock, founder of advertising agency Behaviour Change Partners, said, no one wants to admit being influenced by a celebrity who is paid a mint to promote a product. “People don’t consciously say to themselves ‘Nicole Kidman flies Etihad, book me a ticket’,” he said. “If you ask them they will look you in the eye and say ‘it doesn’t affect me. I know they’re being paid to say that’.

“But it does affect them. We are hard-wired to trust people we know and like.

“The best endorsements will always be from a close, trusted, actual friend who we will see again after we have taken their recommendation. They will be accountable for their advice.

“But celebrity endorsements from people with whom we have no recourse can be a very effective proxy.”

And that, when all is said and done, is why celebrities will never be short of brands to endorse. As long as the price is right, of course.



AGENTS BATTLE WITH IATA

LAST month saw one of the most significant evolutions in the travel technology landscape in many years, with the adoption by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) of new resolutions which govern the development of the New Generation of IATA Settlement Systems – also known as ‘NewGen ISS’. The IATA Billing and Settlement Plan (BSP) has formed the financial backbone of the air transport industry for the last 45 years, and has successfully facilitated the distribution and settlement of funds between travel agents and airlines – an amount worth over US\$230 billion last year. However it now looks set for a makeover.

Technology providers will already be working on changes to their systems to support NewGen ISS, which includes the introduction of IATA EasyPay – a voluntary, pay-as-you-go e-wallet payment solution for issuance of airline tickets. NewGenISS includes a range of new travel agent accreditation models, rather than the “one size fits all” system introduced in 1971, as well as Global Default Insurance – an optional financial security alternative to bank guarantees for travel agents.

There’s also a controversial new “risk management framework” to mitigate losses from travel agent default in the BSP. Potentially this could see the implementation of credit limits for agencies – a move which was staunchly opposed at the recent IATA Passenger Agency Conference by AFTA CEO Jayson Westbury, in his role as outgoing chairman of the World Travel Agents Associations Alliance.

Westbury pulled no punches, blasting some of the changes as “window dressing that are not really going to provide the industry with an appropriate program that is fit for purpose”. Key issues include the ability for the system to support “modern payment choices” – notably the use of virtual credit cards which are in many cases stymied by an IATA resolution which prohibits agents from paying for tickets using store credit cards. Westbury urged IATA to rethink elements of the program, pointing out that many of the issues of potential travel agent

default and credit limits would be much better solved by the more timely availability of sales data, which is often delayed by as much as 48 hours. “The key is real time sales reporting into IATA, and in true partnership we all need to work together with the GDS to make this a reality,” he told the conference.

He described the IATA plans for credit limits – also known as the Remittance Holding Capacity (RHC) - as potentially using a “sledge hammer to kill a butterfly”. He said while this might possibly help airlines shut down an agent in the process of absconding with their funds, it will definitely significantly penalise an honest agent who is “simply having a good week and is selling well”.

Following Westbury’s speech IATA issued a statement backing away from the RHC, saying a joint travel agent and airline group had been established to define a proposal by early next year, for possible adoption at next year’s IATA passenger conference. “We are taking a working-

together approach to this important pillar of NewGen ISS in order to respond to travel agent requirements for flexibility, while creating a structure that enables safer selling and greater protection of ticket funds,” said IATA senior vice president for financial and distribution services, Aleks Popovich.

On other fronts IATA is also continuing to progress the development of its New Distribution Capability (NDC) and at the IATA World Passenger Symposium in Dubai last month unveiled a business case developed in partnership with SITA which proposes the global deployment of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to accurately track passengers’ baggage in real time. The RFID system is estimated to be able to reduce the number of mishandled bags globally by up to 25% over the next seven years, saving airlines more than US\$3 billion.

‘The key is real time sales reporting into IATA, and in true partnership we all need to work together with the GDS to make this a reality’

Jayson Westbury
chief executive office, AFTA

TECH ROLE IN FLIGHT DISRUPTION BREAKTHROUGH

AIRLINES are on the verge of a technological breakthrough in the quest to reduce flight disruptions, estimated to cost as much as \$60 billion annually according to a new report commissioned by Amadeus.

The study, *Shaping the Future of Airline Disruption Management*, was prepared by airline IT consultancy T2RL and says the disruption caused by bad weather, natural disasters and strike action costs the travel industry up to 8% of its global revenues.

Compounding the problem, the report says disruptions “spread virally throughout the travel ecosystem” as the knock-on effect of late planes and crews creates further cancellations and delays, often from a relatively minor initial problem.

The report’s author, T2RL principal consultant Ira Gershkoff, said airlines were heading for a breakthrough thanks to technological developments and increased investment in tackling disruption management.

“There is every reason to believe the historic challenge of re-routing planes, crew and passengers during disruption will finally be addressed over the next several years,” Gershkoff said.

“After a period of limited investment, the will has once again returned across airline boardrooms, driven in large part by the need to deliver reliably on ancillary product sales,” he said.

“What’s important is that service providers across the entire industry are collaborating to mitigate the impact on the traveller.”

The report says IT companies are actively developing solution prototypes and attempting to place them with airlines interested in being launch customers. Others are improving the productivity of

airline flight controllers and field managers.

“During the research of this paper, everyone we talked to expressed some degree of excitement that this longstanding problem for airlines and travellers is finally being addressed,” Gershkoff said.



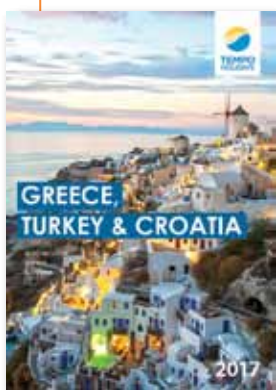
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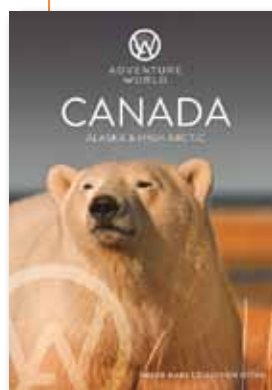


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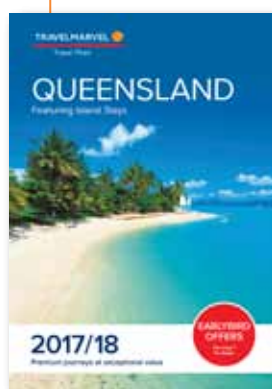
ISLAND hopping to 11 new islands features in the Greece, Turkey and Croatia 2017 brochure out now from Tempo Holidays. Some of the new destinations include Tinos, known for its sacred Greek Orthodox pilgrimage site, and Syros with its medieval architecture. There are also new self-drives in Crete and Greece, and the debut of six new cruises in emerging Croatia. Itineraries in Turkey visiting ancient ruins and the azure waters along the Turkish coast also feature.



ADVENTURE World (AW) has unveiled their latest 2017/18 Canada, Alaska & High Arctic brochure. With Canada now a hot destination for Australian travellers, AW has increased their number of active adventures in the collection including more cycling, trekking, kayaking, heli-hiking and all new heli-fishing. A range of self-drive programs are on offer in Alaska allowing visitors to explore five National Parks, and other exciting adventures include rafting through the Bald Eagle Preserve.



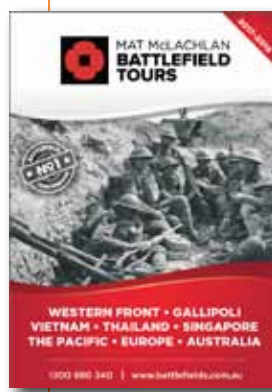
HOT off the press is Freestyle Holidays all new look brochure – Maldives 2017/2018. The program features a unique selection of properties from the over 60 resorts in the Freestyle portfolio and two brand new properties. To celebrate the launch of the mini brochure, Freestyle is offering a range of reduced rates, free nights, transfers, breakfasts, free dinners and more. Five night resort packages start from \$2329 per person, twin share.



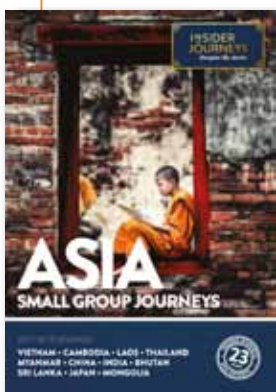
TRAVELMARVEL has released its Queensland 2017/18 brochure. With itineraries updated, tours have been extended and travel time cut, allowing more time to relax. Queensland tours operate from September to May each year, with the leisurely paced tours allowing two nights stays at many destinations, including Kingfisher Bay Resort on Fraser Island. Great savings through an earlybird offer are available on certain tours for guests who book before 31 March and pay a deposit within seven days.



ON TRAVEL agents' shelves now is the latest Abercrombie & Kent 2017 India & the Orient brochure. Included are a range of private and small group journeys across 15 different countries, with exciting new destinations. These include a hosted small group journey in Ladakh, India, the Kerala backwaters cruising in a private houseboat, Uzbekistan, Maldives and China's Silk Road. Also new are tours of Northern Thailand and Japan's Ise-Shima Peninsular.



WITH important WW1 centenary anniversaries coming up in 2017 and 2018, Mat McLachlan Battlefield Tours will run a number of tours to commemorate these, as highlighted in the just-released 2017-18 brochure. In 2017, 75th Anniversary tours of the WW2 battles of Guadalcanal and the Bombing of Darwin are available giving clients a chance to walk in the footsteps of those who fought in these campaigns. Also on offer are customised battlefield tours for those who want a unique itinerary.



THE latest offering from Insider Journeys, for small group journeys in Asia is showcased in their new brochure. There are three exciting new itineraries – 14-day Essence of Vietnam and Cambodia, a 23-day Japan Experience and the 16-day Trails of Rajasthan. A number of trips have price savings over 2016 pricing and new Insider Experiences have also been introduced, including a Taiko drumming lesson on the secrets of Japan tour.



WILD Earth Travel have unleashed their latest collection of small ship and expedition cruising voyages for 2017-2018. From Antarctica to the Baltic, Alaskan glaciers to Galapagos wildlife and expedition cruising to luxurious, all-inclusive small ships, the brochure samples the company's portfolio of over 1,600 cruises to all seven continents. New to the program are cruise packages for the Galapagos and Amazon, Iceland, Alaska, the Seychelles, Indonesia, Singapore and Myanmar.

Discover Thailand

KNOWN for its tropical beaches, ornate temples and its lavish palaces, the Kingdom of Thailand makes for a uniquely appealing MICE destination.

The country offers an exotic gastronomy scene, a pumping nightlife and a thriving calendar of festivals and events which are guaranteed to leave a good impression on international delegates.

No matter if you're looking to host an intimate meeting or a large-scale function, Thailand offers both the infrastructure and the venues to support your event.

Experience Thailand's legendary hospitality at any of our top-pick destinations below.

BANGKOK

A premium choice for MICE travellers from all around the world, the Thai capital features two international airports that welcome approximately 1,000 scheduled flights from over 70 different carriers from around the world.

Known as the City of Angels, the bustling metropolis offers a whopping 65 convention centres, nine exhibition halls, 33 unique venues and 416 hotels amounting to 93,000 individual rooms.

Choose from spacious award-winning

venues such as the IMPACT Arena which features over 150,000m² of indoor space or the Bangkok International Trade & Exhibition Centre (BITEC) with more than 50,000m² of meeting capacity to host large scale events; or for a more intimate, cultural experience, venues such as the Royal Thai Navy Hall and the Grand Postal Building come highly recommended.

During downtime, a visit to tourist hot spots such as the Temple of the Emerald Buddha, the Chatuchak Market or Siam Square are must dos.

CHIANG MAI

Dubbed the country's 'Rose of the North', the calming city of Chiang Mai is a popular destination for both leisure and business travellers alike wanting to escape the hustle and bustle.

With over 39,000 premium hotel rooms on offer, alongside an array of modern business facilities, Chiang Mai is a city that is well-equipped to handle a high-volume of MICE and business visitors and promises a truly memorable experience.

Popular venues in the city include the opulent Rajaphruek Garden Convention Hall and the recently opened Chiang Mai International Convention & Exhibition Centre which is capable of hosting up to 10,000 delegates.

Easily accessible, Chiang Mai is a cultural hub with plenty of things to see and do. Tourist hot spots that are worth exploring include Doi Inthanon National Park, the Chiang Mai Night Safari and Nimmanhaemin Road.

PATTAYA

Situated approximately 147km southeast of Bangkok, the seaside resort town of Pattaya is all about sand, surf and sun.

However once night settles in, this tropical paradise transforms itself into a haven for some to give in to their hedonistic desires.

Don't let its party reputation fool you though, as Pattaya is home to 22 convention centres, 45 unique venues and 395 hotels designed with the country's distinct culture in mind.

For larger events the Ambassador City Jomtien Hotel & Convention Centre, Eastern National Sports Centre and Pattaya Exhibition and Convention Hall can be combined into a single fully-functional business events space, amounting to over 6,500m² in size.

Group activities which delegates can engage in when meeting in Pattaya include hot air balloon riding, squid fishing and diving.

PHUKET

The tropical island of Phuket is famous for its warm hospitality, palm-lined beaches and stunning panoramas.

There's something for everybody here, which is why the 'Pearl of the Andaman Sea' is such a popular destination among both leisure and business visitors.

According to Business Events Thailand, Phuket welcomes an average of 50,000 delegates attending almost 1,000 MICE events each year. It is also home to 17 major convention centres, 68 venues and around 510 hotels, making it a prime destination for hosting MICE events.



SECRET ESCAPES FOR SUCCESSFUL EVENTS

Whether you are wanting to motivate your team or thank them for their success, it makes sense to take them somewhere that will inspire them towards even greater achievements. At Centara Hotels & Resorts, we have professional-standard meeting and event venues of all sizes, set amidst vibrant cities, exotic hideaways and tropical beachfronts. Visit our new dedicated Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) website to find out more about how we can turn your event into an experience that matches the best performances of your team.

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FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT US ON

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BANGKOK

PATTAYA

HUAHIN

PHUKET

SAMUI

KRABI



Centara properties on a high in Bangkok

BANGKOK'S Centara Grand at CentralWorld joined the city's high-altitude club at the end of last year with the opening of its rooftop UNO MAS restaurant, 54 floors above the streets of the Thai capital.

The Spanish-Mediterranean restaurant and tapas bar became the latest addition to Bangkok's modern tradition of high-rise dining and nightlife, one of a string of rooftop venues capitalising on the night-time cityscape.

This year the hotel is still on a high after the Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre was named among the 'Top 25 Conference Hotels' in Asia by online magazine Smart Travel in its August awards.

The property is among the largest conference venues in Bangkok, with a World Ballroom for up to 1,000 people seated theatre-style and a Convention Hall accommodating up to 7,000 for a cocktail reception.

It also offers a series of 17 Lotus Suites for between 10 and 400 people and high-rise corporate venue M23 on the 23rd floor.

Also in Bangkok, sister property Centara Grand at Central Plaza Ladprao Bangkok offers alternative venues in the Ladprao business district.

Located near the famous markets of Chatuchak, the hotel's Bangkok Convention Centre Hall accommodates up to 3,800 people for a cocktail reception, while its Vibhavadee Ballroom has capacity for 2,000 guests for a reception and is divisible into three pillarless venues.

Both properties are key events venues within Thailand's Centara group, which now comprises six hotel brands - four under the Centara name, as well as Centra and COSI, and spa brands Spa Cenvaree and Cense by Cenvaree.



ICC VIEW

Geoff Donaghy, CEO
International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney)

WHAT ICC SYDNEY MEANS

SYDNEY is a magnificent city that international travellers dream of visiting for both business and leisure. It provides a truly unique offering of golden beaches, iconic attractions, and a burgeoning knowledge economy through its esteemed research, scientific and technology communities.

I'm pleased to report that Sydney's global magnetism is set to intensify even further from December, thanks to the opening of International Convention Centre Sydney (ICC Sydney), Australia's premier convention, exhibition and entertainment precinct.

ICC Sydney is the \$1.5 billion centrepiece of an AU\$3.4 billion transformation of Darling Harbour. It is expected to provide at least \$5 billion dollars in economic benefit to New South Wales over the next 25 years, and will play a pivotal role in increasing the city and country's market-share of the business events industry.

Some of the most coveted events in the world have already chosen ICC Sydney as their future host, including the likes of Sibos, Reed Gift Fairs and Amway China. During Sibos alone, more than 8,000 international delegates are expected to visit Sydney, injecting up to \$50 million into the local economy.

Business events are a major economic driver for our nation across the board, as tens of millions of national and international delegates attend business events across Australia every year, and generate billions in direct expenditure.

This positive financial impact is not limited to any one venue. Local hotels

receive a huge boost in secured bookings while the rest of the city enjoys increased patronage to restaurants, shops, theatres, and other tourist attractions from visiting delegates. In even better news, these particular visitors traditionally spend more than six times that of their traditional leisure counterparts.

Convention centres play an important role as the interface between tourism and knowledge economies, and ICC Sydney has been built from the ground up to help underpin Sydney's prime position on the international stage.

Catering to events big and small, the integrated offering includes five star convention and exhibition centres, 8,000m² of meeting room space, the largest purpose-built Grand Ballroom in the region, a 5,000m² open air event deck, and three individual theatre spaces, including the 8,000 seat ICC Sydney Theatre, which houses Australia's biggest stage area.

Alongside state-of-the-art facilities, ICC Sydney will provide service excellence across the board, including a superior dining and bespoke event designs that will ensure more and more visitors grace our shores for decades to come.

We are seeing this confidence reflected through increasing levels of support and business enquiries. In fact, over 400 events have already been secured to date.

It is without doubt one of the most exciting projects to take place in our city for a long time and I am very much looking forward to formally welcoming you to the new face of Sydney at the end of the year.

headlines business events news

- 26 Sep Gold Coast biz events wins
- 26 Sep TA showcases Canberra to China
- 29 Sep Beware conference scams
- 29 Sep AIME enhancements
- 06 Oct Applications for WA res funding open

- 06 Oct ICC Syd launches menu
- 10 Oct Sydney Olympic Park vision
- 10 Oct New TAA leadership
- 13 Oct 'Stay ahead' by going to ICESAP
- 13 Oct Meet SC's event briefcase
- 17 Oct World's 50 best venue unveiled
- 17 Oct ICC Syd test events
- 20 Oct 42K delegates bound for Syd in '17
- 20 Oct AMEX: Top 10 MICE cities revealed

CAREER IN FOCUS

MURRAY WARNER

Director, Business Development
Asia Pacific, Concur



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

While I have been with Concur since 1999, I have been in my current role as director, Business Development, Asia Pacific for seven years. I am responsible for building meaningful partnerships that create additional value for customers of Concur's travel and expense management systems in Asia Pacific.

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

I started my career at a technology start-up in Silicon Valley. When Concur acquired that company and added a travel aspect, I took my first steps into the travel industry. I now work with Concur's travel partners, including suppliers and travel agencies, to keep driving value for our customers.

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

I completed a marketing degree in the US, but found my time spent at university had more of an impact on me than the qualifications themselves. The people I met at university came from all around the globe and gave me a broader perspective and insight into the different ways people approach situations. This is something I've taken with me into the workforce and my life.

4. What do you love about your job?

One of the most exciting aspects of my job in Australia as a market is that it's small enough that we can road-test new ideas in market. In the US, for example, it is harder to see the opportunity, then just go ahead and develop a strategy and implement it due to the size and scale of the country. As a country, Australia is highly adoptive of

‘I would recommend that people in the travel industry seek out variation in their careers to gain broader experiences outside the same industry’

technology and change relative to many other markets. The great thing about Australia is that we have the chance to spot these opportunities and implement them, then pass on these ideas to bigger markets. It means we drive the innovation of the global team.

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

We have opened up new markets from scratch as we grew as a company in the Asia Pacific. That meant I needed to learn the nuances of lots of different cultures to understand how to deliver the best services possible to customers and grow the business. The challenge when entering a new country is to quickly understand the service expectations, and how customers perceive value.

6. What factors were central to your success?

I have been fortunate to join a company with a flexible, supportive, and non-hierarchical culture at Concur. The organisational culture has meant that if I've seen an opportunity, I've had the support of the company behind me, and they've been there too when I've made mistakes. This 'in it together' mentality has helped myself and the team to learn quickly and grow.

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

Barry Padgett, president of the SAP Business One, SAP Anywhere and SAP Business ByDesign, has been a mentor to me since we began working together at Concur. Barry taught me to be professional and humble when interacting with others, and that it is okay to make mistakes. Through his mentorship he has shown me that being hardworking, loyal, and to work together as a team is critical to good business. At the end of the day, it's not the product you sell, it's how you do it, and so being accountable and transparent is key to success.

8. What are the keys to good business?

In every situation it is important to think about what the customer wants and if they are getting the most value possible. Never lose sight of the customer's perspective.

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

I've been lucky to have had a lot of variety in my career by doing a range of different roles at Concur and in a lot of different countries. This has pushed me out of my comfort zone many times and has helped me to learn quickly. I would recommend that people in the travel industry seek out variation in their careers to gain broader experiences outside of the same industry. I also think it's important to consider how technology can shape your business. Technology is constantly changing the travel industry and can help open up businesses to new opportunities.

TAKING A CAREER BREAK

IT'S probably safe to say that many people dream of taking an extended period of time off from their career but in reality few people do. Is it because it's deemed as potential career suicide? Or, is it just simply impractical from an employer perspective? Perhaps it's a little of both, but whatever the case may be, there's some evidence to suggest that nowadays some employers are embracing the idea that career breaks can be a good thing and are willing to contemplate such requests.

A word of caution however before you approach your employer and announce bon voyage and still expect to have a job upon your return, consider the motivations and merit to your request for a career break and some of the unintended consequences.

Volunteer work, a popular career break option, typically leads to new perspectives on life which is a good thing for you but how does all this translate to a benefit for your employer? Why should they give you the time off for this? It's difficult to see why, however the answer may be down to setting



expectations up front.

You'll need to convince your employer that time away means you'll be back and able to share your experiences whilst away in some meaningful way that will generate value. What

new skills will be added to your toolbox that you can bring back to your role?

Translating your career break into a business benefit will fundamentally influence the decision making to support your request.



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CURTIS STONE'S BIG REVEAL

CELEBRITY Chef Curtis Stone has officially opened SHARE by Curtis Stone on board Princess Cruises' Sun Princess in an event in Sydney last month.

"What I wanted SHARE to be was a place you could linger, share dishes with someone you care about," Stone told attendees.

The specialty restaurant serves up sharable small plates of charcuterie, salads, handmade pastas, premium meats and decadent desserts in a friendly atmosphere.

"I wanted it to feel pretty homely and contemporary," he explained, pointing out certain elements from his home have been incorporated into the design.

"When I walk around to the bookshelf, there's the exact same books that I have at home and some of the knick-knacks are

identical to the ones I have in my house."

Noting the changing culinary landscape of cruise ships, Stone said cruising has changed in a similar way that Las Vegas has.

“What I wanted SHARE to be was a place you could linger, share dishes with someone you care about”

"Las Vegas used to be the home of a \$4 buffet or all you can eat and now there's Michelin-starred restaurants and amazing things happening out there and likewise with cruise ships, in the past it was all about big

buffets and the more the better, but now people who are going on cruises have a very different level of expectation and certain cruise lines, like Princess, really appreciate great food," he said.

The restaurant has been fitted to *Sun Princess* and *Emerald Princess*, which are in Australian waters this month and *Ruby Princess*, which sails in the northern hemisphere.

"The menu for *Sun Princess* alone took about two months to finalise – I wanted to get the look and feel just right for the Aussie market, so I've developed a menu unique to the ship," Stone said.

Popular items on *Sun Princess*' SHARE menu include roast chicken with bacon slab and charred onion slaw, and warm bread pudding with toffee sauce.

NORWEGIAN BLISS A BOOST FOR SEATTLE

SEATTLE'S rivalry with Vancouver as an Alaskan cruise gateway will receive a boost in June 2018 when Norwegian Cruise Lines introduces its recently announced ship *Norwegian Bliss*. The 4,000-passenger ship will be the third in Norwegian's Breakaway-Plus class and has been touted as a first, being custom-built for Alaskan waters by German shipyards Meyer Werft.

Bliss will sail weekly seven-day itineraries calling at the Alaskan ports of Ketchikan, Juneau and Skagway, in addition to Victoria in British Columbia and scenic glacier cruising.

Its announcement comes as Norwegian's parent company, Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings, enters a 15-year agreement with the Port of Seattle to contribute to a US\$30 million upgrade of its Pier 66 cruise ship facilities.



NEW HORIZONS FOR SILVERSEA

LAST month Silversea's new general manager for Asia-Pacific, Amber Wilson, was introduced to the travel industry at an event which highlighted the much anticipated debut of *Silver Muse*.

Sydney-based Wilson joined Silversea in August this year, with responsibility for the revenue, sales and marketing management across the region, overseeing teams in both Australia and Singapore. She was most recently general manager of sales and marketing at Cruiseco, and has also worked at Star Cruises and Norwegian Cruise Line.

Silver Muse is scheduled to launch in 2017, and will further raise the bar of luxury cruising – both in terms of her on-board facilities and the exotic itineraries the new ship will undertake. She will be the ninth vessel in the Silversea fleet, with all-suite accommodation for 596 guests.

Muse offers a number of unique features – not least an array of eight on-board restaurants meaning cruisers

will be very much spoilt for choice. As if that's not enough there's also 24/7 butler service and the option of in-suite dining.

Such is the excitement around the debut of *Muse* that Silversea has launched a dedicated brochure for the ship, which launches in Monte Carlo and in her first year will cruise the Mediterranean before crossing the Atlantic to voyage in North and South America.

Silversea has also announced details of its 2018 itineraries for both its "classic" and "expedition" fleets. The expedition offering will be boosted by the previously announced makeover of *Silver Cloud*, which will go into dry dock in 12 months' time to emerge in November 2017 as the "most prestigious expedition ship at sea" with new soft furnishings, redesigned suites and public spaces, a Deck 9 observation lounge and a fleet of 18 on-board Zodiacs for up-close explorations.

"The reimagined *Silver Cloud* will be a place you can call home, even at the ends of the earth," Wilson said.

Greener power for new ships

ROYAL Caribbean Cruises has chosen liquefied natural gas (LNG) and new fuel cell technology to power its next generation of ships, signalling what it says will be a new era of shipbuilding that will dramatically reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Under the project name "Icon", two new LNG vessels will be built by Meyer Turku and delivered in the second quarters of 2022 and 2024.

The line will also test fuel cell technology on an existing Oasis-class ship in 2017 and says it will run progressively larger fuel cell projects on new Quantum-class vessels to be built over coming years.

"With Icon class, we move further in the journey to take the smoke out of our smokestacks," Royal Caribbean Cruises chairman and CEO Richard Fain said.

Fast-track for New Zealand cruisers

CRUISE passengers can look forward to faster disembarkation times at New Zealand ports from this month if a trial of new biosecurity measures is successful.

The New Zealand government has announced a new accreditation scheme in which cruise lines must demonstrate systems to reduce biosecurity risks, allowing New Zealand Border Clearance Services to reduce their inspections and speed up movement of passengers.

The move has been welcomed by Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia, which worked closely on developing the trial.

Most member cruise lines visiting New Zealand were expected to seek accreditation under the trial, CLIA said.

Amras becomes Amadeus River Cruises

EUROPEAN river cruise operator Amras has rebranded as Amadeus River Cruises, with a stated aim to provide luxury voyages at reduced prices.

Its Australian wholesaler McLachlan Tours is offering a 15% earlybird discount on bookings made by November 30, 2016 to celebrate the launch of the new identity.

McLachlan Travel Group chief executive officer Gil McLachlan said Amadeus River Cruises was distinct from many of its competitors in allowing guests to choose whether to purchase an all-inclusive package, or to explore ports by themselves.

Crystal unveils itineraries for new ships

CRYSTAL River Cruises has announced itineraries for its two newest ships, *Crystal Debussy* and *Crystal Ravel*, to be introduced on the Rhine and Danube rivers next year. They include new seven-day sailings and at least two overnight stays on most departures, beginning with *Debussy's* launch in April and *Ravel's* in May.

Crystal Debussy will offer a choice of seven and 10-day itineraries, cruising along the Rhine and Moselle rivers between Amsterdam and Basel.

Crystal Ravel will offer seven and 14-day itineraries along the Rhine, Moselle, Main and Danube Rivers, embarking from Vienna, Budapest and Basel.

The new vessels will join existing ships *Crystal Mozart*, *Crystal Bach* and *Crystal Mahler*.



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29 Oct 17	Seville to Malaga	12 Days
1 Sep 17	Lisbon to Rome	17 Days
1 Sep 17	Lisbon to Venice	27 Days

*TERMS & CONDITIONS: All fares shown are Australian Dollars, per person, based on twin occupancy and including all bonus saving discount. Fares include pre and/or post hotel stays as detailed for each itinerary, gratuities & port taxes (correct as of 4 Oct 2016). Valid for new bookings only. Existing bookings can not transfer to the new offer. Cancelled bookings are subject to cancellation penalties as per the terms and conditions. All Cruise Tour & Fly Free offers are capacity controlled and can be withdrawn or modified at any time without notice. *FLY FREE offer is subject to availability. Airfare is economy class and based on specific airlines, routing and class. *Valid for flights to/from Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane & Adelaide. *Savings are per person, twin share and are included on the package fare shown and based on specific sailings and cabin categories. Sole occupancy cabins are not available on these offers. Pre & post hotel accommodation & transfers from airport/ port/hotel offered on dates specified on itinerary only, ask for details. Travel agent service fees not included. Voyages to Antiquity reserve the right to change, correct errors, withdraw from sale any or all fares, itineraries, excursions & fees. For full terms & conditions visit www.voyagestoantiquity.com.au or visit your local preferred Travel Agent.

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CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, general manager
CLIA Australasia

ANOTHER RECORD CRUISE SEASON

ANYONE wanting evidence of the continuing rapid growth of the cruise industry in Australia just needs to look at the horizon this summer – there is going to be a constant procession of ships visiting our ports in coastal towns and cities.

There will be a record 41 vessels from CLIA member cruise lines based in Australasia or visiting local waters between October 1, 2016, and April 30, 2017, compared to 38 ships over the same period last year. Between them, these ships will make more than 900 calls to ports around Australia over this period (up 25% on last year's port call numbers) and with more than half the ships (23) offering return cruises from our shores, agents and their clients will be able to take advantage of almost 400 round trip itineraries from local ports, a 20% rise on last summer's offerings.

Some highlights of the peak summer cruise period worth keeping an eye on include:

- The inaugural visit of the largest ship to ever call here, Royal Caribbean's *Ovation of the Seas*;
- The largest Princess ship (*Emerald Princess*) to sail from Australia over an extended season;
- The ultra-luxury *Seabourn Encore* arriving in January and making nine maiden port calls;
- The first Australian visit of the luxury *Azamara Journey*;
- The debut of the 92,000-tonne *Norwegian Star*;
- The maiden Australian visit of Hapag-Lloyd Cruises *Europa 2*, a perennial top achiever in the Berlitz cruising guide;
- The inaugural visit of Oceania Cruises' *Sirena* which will arrive in Sydney on

March 6; and

- Another Royal Rendezvous of two Cunard vessels – the remastered flagship *Queen Mary 2* and her younger sister *Queen Elizabeth* in Sydney on February 25.

CRUISE360 WRAP

CLIA's September 2016 Cruise360 conference was a resounding success with close to 480 participants in attendance as the cruise industry focused on "Navigating the Future".

MC & moderator for the day, Ross Greenwood delivered an energy to the day that was evident from his opening comments! Ross is well known for his enthusiasm and very astute business acumen and it has to be said that for someone that is not involved in the cruise industry on a daily basis, his level of knowledge, understanding and insight into the cruise scene was remarkable.

Our theme of "Navigating the Future" was addressed in all panels and included discussion on technology and ship design through to the relevance of retail agents as we continue to evolve.

For me, one of the highlights of the day came from our keynote speaker, Michael McQueen. He is an award-winning speaker, social researcher and best-selling author. He has his finger on the pulse when it comes to emerging trends shaping business and culture and he certainly left our C360 audience with some great ideas.

One of Michael's closing quotes which is so appropriate for retailers today... "Go big, Go Boutique or Go Broke!"

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CRUISE WEEKLY

- 22 Sep** Odysseus turns to Aus
- 27 Sep** Newcastle's \$12.7m port
- 27 Sep** Carnival China commitment
- 29 Sep** PD to double capacity
- 29 Sep** Taste of Italy Down Under
- 04 Oct** Amras' Amadeus rebrand

HEADLINES SEPTEMBER TO OCTOBER 2016

- 04 Oct** Gizo welcomes biggest ship
- 06 Oct** Scenic Irrawaddy luxury
- 11 Oct** RCI orders two Icon class
- 11 Oct** Broome's cruise boom
- 13 Oct** Biosecurity trial for NZ
- 13 Oct** Crystal ramps up Europe

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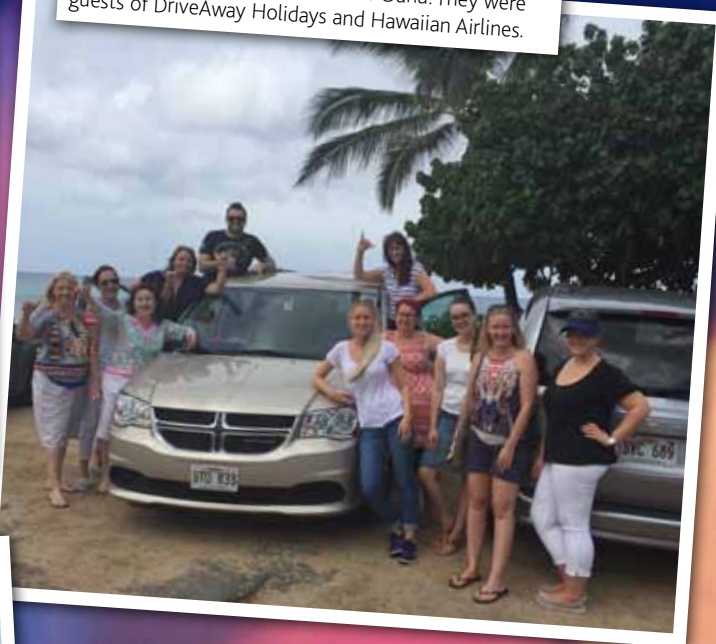


INDUSTRY IN FOCUS



The team from Travelport, dressed in their gladrags, were beaming when they received Best Technology Supplier at the Travel Agents Association of New Zealand's NTIAs.

These Helloworld agents enjoyed an unusual self drive tour around the Hawaiian island of Oahu. They were guests of DriveAway Holidays and Hawaiian Airlines.



Coral Expeditions showed a group of Australian domestic travel agents, managers and business owners around the Great Barrier Reef on a three-night educational sailing from Cairns recently.

The Youth Australian Tourism Export Council held a networking event at Pegasus Apart'Hotel recently to meet and hear from new Visit Victoria CEO Peter Bingeman.



These itravel agents teamed up with Royal Caribbean, Celebrity Cruises and Azamara Club Cruises and hit the streets of Sydney and Newcastle to promote Plan a Cruise Month.



These Virtuoso travel advisors took part in the inaugural Virtuoso Deep Dive seminar, a one-day session focussed on understanding high-end clientele and their needs.





These top selling agents for Scenic were rewarded by an incredible nine-day famil to Central and South America, including visits to Santiago, Panama City, Havana and Lima.



This all Flight Centre team took out the top spot at the recent AVIS and Emirates golf day, battling unseasonably warm conditions to win.

Eclipse Travel, PromPeru and hotel Explora Valle Sagrado hosted a travel agent engagement evening recently, with the chance to win a place on an 11-day famil to Peru.



Tamanu on the Beach in Vanuatu is nearly ready for its new opening, and these South Pacific product managers got a sneak peak as part of Tok Tok held recently.

Francois Delahaye and Parris Fotias from the Dorchester Collection were snapped at a recent meeting with key industry partners.



DriveAway Holidays has presented its Gold Supporter award to Travel By Wyndham with a selection of VISA gift cards to thank them for their support throughout the year.

Where to travel?

If 2016 was the year the world partied in Rio, then 2017 is a time to ease back the pace and explore lands further afield. Jon Murrie lists *travelBulletin's* hot tips for travel in 2017.



Bran Castle

ROMANIA

Few European countries conjure the dark mystery that cloaks Romania, a nation rooted in folklore as the domain of wolves, vampires and despots.

ONE word – Transylvania – evokes more imagery for Romania than any number of travel brochures.

Its myriad castles, medieval towns, Roman ruins and ancient Saxon citadels make it one of the most fascinating places in Europe, yet it's the vivid imagery of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* that first comes to mind when anyone mentions Romania's most famous region.

Bordered by the jagged Carpathian Mountains and graced with spectacular natural landscapes, Transylvania is just one of several Romanian districts earning new levels of interest.

Having seemingly missed much of the attention won by other eastern European countries in the post-Communist era,

Romania has slowly come to earn a place in world tourism beyond its Black Sea resorts.

The boom in river cruising has brought travellers down the Danube from the west, exploring sections from the stunning Iron Gates gorge to the expansive wetlands and rich biodiversity of the Danube delta.

At the same time, coach tours weave their way from neighbouring countries like Serbia and Bulgaria to visit landmarks like the dramatic Peles Castle.

Even the once unloved capital of Bucharest – long overlooked against counterparts like Prague and Budapest – is earning attention for its grand boulevards and belle époque architecture, instead of its notorious past

as the seat of despotic Communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu.

For lovers of wildlife, Romania offers perhaps the richest natural environment in Europe, with its mountainous interior hosting species of wolves, brown bears and lynx, long lost in other parts of the continent.

More recently, herds of European bison have been seen grazing in forest clearings after their reintroduction to the southern Carpathians.

But at the heart of the country there's a landmark that will always hold an allure like none other in Romania - the fearsome Bran Castle, loosely associated with 15th century Prince Vlad "the impaler" Tepes, said to have inspired Stoker's chilling vampire tale.

ICELAND

The frozen remoteness that once kept Iceland out of mind has become its chief asset. The land of fire and ice is now impossible to overlook.

WHEN the Eyjafjallajökull volcano erupted in 2010 and threw European airways into chaos, it was clear Iceland was a land unwilling to be ignored.

Its thunderous waterfalls, vast glaciers and ill-tempered volcanoes were always well-known to the outside world, but somehow this icy outpost seemed too remote or expensive to access.

All that has changed and Iceland's international visitors have surged from a few hundred thousand just a decade ago to well over 1.3 million already this year.

Icelandic icons like the thermal waters of the Blue Lagoon and the steaming fountains of Geysir and Stokkur are featured prominently in the brochures of the major tour operators, while the simple practice of hiring a car is now a routine form of sub-Arctic exploration.

The country's heart and gateway is the small capital of Reykjavik, nestled on a peninsula on the craggy coast of the west.

Its brightly coloured houses are heated by thermal energy and overlook sweeping bays to snow-capped mountains beyond, while a small harbour shelters fishing boats and the occasional icebreaker.

From here, boat expeditions take visitors to sea in search of whales, or in summer make the short journey to islands like Akurey or Lundy where thousands of puffins and other seabirds maintain their seasonal nests.

Close to Reykjavik are highlights like the mighty Gullfoss waterfall, the Geysir and Stokkur geysers and the volcanic rift at Thingvellir where the tectonic plates of Europe and North America are drawing slowly apart. All can be seen in a day following the 'Golden Circle' route.

Further afield are spectacular sub-Arctic landscapes including black volcanic beaches, giant glaciers, soaring mountains and sheltered inlets harbouring icebergs – not to mention dozens of barely resting volcanoes like Eyjafjallajökull.



Reykjavik

CHILE

More than just a gateway to other parts of South America, Chile deserves a close look in its own right.

TAKE off heading east and it would be easy to over-shoot Chile on a journey to South America.

Barely 175km wide on average, this narrow ribbon of a nation is home to the key airline gateway of Santiago, yet is often skipped by travellers heading further to higher-profile destinations like Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires.

Yet what Chile lacks in longitude it more than makes up for in latitude, giving it a striking diversity in cultures and landscapes.

Spanning more than 4000km, it stretches from the wild and icy islands of Tierra del Fuego in the south to the mysterious deserts bordering Peru in the north.

As its energetic capital, Santiago is more than just a stopover city and offers colourful markets, lively bars and restaurants, serene parks and interesting museums. In a country defined by the Andes, it is spectacularly located against a backdrop of snow-capped peaks, close to popular ski fields like Valle Nevado.

Further north, the world's driest desert, Atacama, is home to strange lunar landscapes, vast salt flats and active geysers. The world's oldest-known mummies stem from the ancient Chinchorro culture of this region and are up to 2000 years older than the preserved pharaohs of Egypt.

In the south, the pristine wilderness of Patagonia is rightly renowned as one of the great natural treasures of the planet, rich with spectacular mountains, fjords, glaciers and forests.

Extraordinary landscapes like the serrated peaks of the Torres del Paine National Park have made it an iconic adventure destination, often packaged with expedition cruises and Antarctic voyages.

But perhaps the most intriguing Chilean destination is beyond the mainland ribbon in the south-eastern Pacific, where Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, draws tens of thousands of visitors each year to see its mysterious moai statues.



RODRIGUES

Its location will challenge even the most dedicated geography nut, but this tiny isle in the Indian Ocean is worth hunting for.

WHEN Prince William first set foot on Rodrigues for his gap-year visit in 2000, he sent Paparazzi scrambling for their atlases.

Far across the Indian Ocean almost 600km from Mauritius, Rodrigues is a challenge to spot on the map and the closest African terrain to Australia.

William first landed here while working on a conservation project for the Royal Geographic Society, then returned four years later with friends for a holiday.

Yet despite its brush with royalty, Rodrigues still flies under the radar compared to better-known Indian Ocean destinations, and its sleepy isolation is world away from the upmarket resorts of the

Maldives or Seychelles.

An autonomous territory of Mauritius, the island is just 18km long and home to about 40,000 people with a mix of African and French decent.

Its food, traditions and music all reflect a centuries-old blend of African and European traits, and its people maintain a proudly independent mindset with a determination to uphold the island's easy-paced lifestyle.

Among its highlights are white beaches and secluded bays, mostly free of the beach clubs, hawkers and sun lounges of other island destinations.

Its lagoon shelters some 20 coral islets with evocative names like Gombrani,

L'Hermitage and Ile aux Chats. Some, like Ile aux Cocos, are sanctuaries for thousands of seabirds and make popular destinations for boat excursions.

Inland, the tropical Rodriguan landscape is home to several conservation parks and reforestation projects, including the François Leguat Reserve where more than 1000 giant tortoises roam freely under a captive breeding program aiming to replace reptiles wiped out in the 1700s.

Other natural attractions include the island's colonies of bats, networks of caves decorated with stalactites and stalagmites, and extensive areas of coral reef ideal for diving and snorkelling.



SRI LANKA

No longer dismissed as “India Lite”, Sri Lanka has emerged to claim its place among the highlights of South Asia.

IF THERE'S one problem with exploring Sri Lanka, it's finding a place to start.

This compact island barely rivals Ireland in size, yet somehow seems to cram as much as the rest of South Asia into its small but verdant backyard.

It's a land of aromatic and vividly spiced foods, ancient Buddhist and Hindu temples, colonial history from the Dutch, Portuguese and British, and jungle wildlife from leopards and monkeys to elephants.

It's a place of surf shacks and yoga retreats, luxury resorts and Ayurvedha spas, railway journeys and tea plantations, and elaborate traditions and festivals played out with colour and pageantry.

Now stable after the civil war that plagued its north and the tsunami that devastated its east, Sri Lanka is enjoying a visitor revival.

From its capital Colombo, most visitors disperse along Sri Lanka's west coast where the majority of its beaches and resorts are found, from simple seaside shacks to exclusive five star retreats.

The south-west is home to the old Dutch city of Galle, perhaps the prettiest of Sri Lanka's coastal centres with a rich legacy of old colonial buildings.

Inland, Sri Lanka's true romance comes to the fore. Hill towns and tea plantations flourish in the cooler altitudes of the mountain interior, edged by lush tropical forests.

Here the city of Kandy serves as the cultural heart of the nation, famous for its Temple of the Tooth where a sacred tooth of Buddha is secured. The city is also the site of one of Asia's most spectacular festivals, Esala Perahera, in which processions of dancers and decorated elephants are held during July and August.

Further north, the imposing Sigiriya Rock Fortress is one of the country's great landmarks - an ancient Buddhist monastery and a fortress, perched upon a monolithic rock outcrop.

Elsewhere wildlife lovers can explore national parks including Yala, with the island's largest population of leopards.



Giorgio Minguzzi

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HOT NEW CRUISE DESTINATIONS FOR 2016/17

This cruise season a number of cruise lines will add new ports of call to quench their travellers' thirst for new product. TravelBulletin dives into the new ports for four cruise lines.

SEABOURN

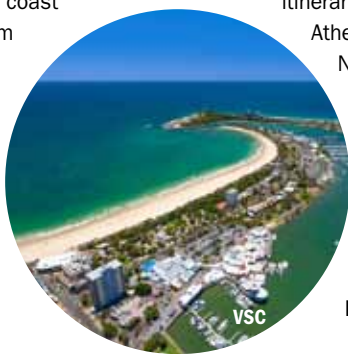
Seabourn *Encore* will be the first for the luxury cruise line to stop by Mooloolaba on Queensland's Sunshine Coast and Victoria's Phillip Island on separate itineraries in 2017. Mooloolaba is a fast growing cruise destination.

HOT

Seabourn's maiden call to Mooloolaba on 31 January is part of the 16-day Great Barrier Reef & Queensland coast itinerary, sailing from Bali to Sydney.

Prices lead in at \$13,499pp on a Veranda Suite.

■ seabourn.com



CUNARD

Cunard's 2017 European Program includes four new ports for the fleet: Souda Bay (for tours to Chania) in Greece; Sibenik in Croatia; Brindisi in Italy and Praia da Vitoria in Portugal.

Aussies can visit the new ports on *Queen Victoria's* Mediterranean itineraries, departing from Rome, Venice, Athens or Barcelona between July and November and ranging from seven to 21 nights.

HOT

Stop by Italy's "Gateway to the East", Brindisi, on the 14-night Rome, Croatia and Trieste. Balcony Staterooms lead in at \$2,999pp.

■ www.cunardline.com.au



ROYAL CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL

Tonga will this year welcome a Royal Caribbean vessel for the first time. *Radiance of the Seas* will grace the ports of Vava'u on 12 December and Nuku'alofa on 13 December. Guests will be able to explore the coral gardens and sparkling lagoons of Vava'u or step ashore in Nuku'alofa, the home to the only royal family in the pacific islands.

HOT

The two new destinations will be part of a 13-night South Pacific, Fiji and Tonga journey departing Sydney on 3 December. Book an Outside Stateroom from \$1,357pp.

■ www.royalcaribbean.com.au



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SILVERSEA

Silversea's 2017 schedule has a long list of new ports, including Sassnitz, Germany; Galway, Ireland; Bodø, Norway; Geraldton, Australia; Ilhabela, Brazil; Fredericia, Denmark; Gisborne, New Zealand; Punta Cana, Dominican Republic; and Sir Bani Yas Island, U.A.E.

HOT

Silver Whisper's 13-day Melbourne to Bali voyage will call at the Western Australian coastal city of Geraldton. Fares lead in at \$9,250 per guest.

■ www.silversea.com



NEW WEEK IN PORTUGAL

TOUR operator Tauck is expecting Portugal to be a hot destination for 2017, with travellers eager to experience the Iberian Peninsula's "vibrant culture, history and natural beauty".

Tauck has added the new itinerary A Week in Portugal to next year's departures to feed this demand.

Highlights of the journey include visits to seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites, two nights at the Freixo Palace Hotel, a restored 18th-century palace in Porto, wine tastings in the Douro Valley and a wine cellar in Gaia and olive oil tasting at one of Portugal's top olive oil farms.

The trip will also include a fado music performance at the Palace Hotel Monte Real and a visit to the National Tile Museum.

The seven-night journey leads in at \$4,490 per person including return airport transfers, 18 meals, all private guided excursions and a bonus night at Freixo Palace Hotel, Porto, before the tour or at the InterContinental Lisbon to enjoy after the tour.



Jane Goodall Collection

G ADVENTURES has partnered with renowned primatologist Dr Jane Goodall to present a selection of 20 new wildlife-focussed tours.

The itineraries promise to take travellers to the shores of the Galapagos Islands, the jungles of Uganda and to the banks of the Amazon, with Dr Goodall herself giving the new program her seal of approval.

Highlights of the collection include the nine-day Galapagos Island Hopping adventure which features guided walks to observe birds and wildlife and the eight-day Kenya Safari Experience, which has been described as the "ideal introduction to safari life".

"My vision is that one day people can live in harmony with nature," commented Dr Goodall.

"Travel can be a powerful way to learn about the natural world and our relationship with it."

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- A wedding-style lunch at Roca, the House of Dalmatian Smoked Ham
- 27 meals, service charges, gratuities to local guides, admission fees, taxes and portage

FREE hotel night*

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INCLUDED private excursions*



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*Price is per person twin share in AUD based on 30 Mar and 27 Apr '17 departures and is correct as at 6 Oct '16. Price is subject to availability, seasonal surcharges apply. Other departure dates available from May - Oct '17, prices will vary. Bonus Hotel Night is subject to availability and is not guaranteed, maximum 1 room per booking and valid for bookings made prior to 28 Feb '17. International airfares not included. Other conditions apply. Lic 2TA003774.



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ARCTIC ADVENTURE WONDERLAND

By Caroline Gladstone

IT'S 2.30am on the last day of a cruise that has taken me and 200 others from Canada to Greenland, through fiords whose granite walls tower above our expedition vessel and past icebergs and old Viking settlements.

I have to finish packing but it's difficult when I can still see light through my cabin window. So barefoot and wearing just a light dress I go out on deck, camera in hand, and take my last shot of the sky – streaked pink and grey – just before it fades to black.

Moored in Kangerlussuaq Fiord, one of the longest in Greenland and located just a few degrees inside the Arctic Circle, we experience almost 24 hours of daylight. And as it's summer in the north, the days can be quite mild. It's another story in the ice-strewn water, and I speak from experience.

One of the thrills and traditions of Arctic cruising, though completely optional of course, is to take the polar plunge – that is to jump into glacier-fed water and then get out as soon as you can.

I'm travelling with family-owned cruise company Adventure Canada whose CEO, Cedar Swan, is on board with her husband and children and both her siblings and their families. The daughter of the company's founder Matthew Swan, Cedar urges each and every one of us to leave our fears behind, take a leap of faith and jump into the fiord from our ship. In return the company will donate \$50 per plunger to an Inuit charity.

Despite much anxiety I follow 50 others down to the lowest deck, throw off my snugly

bath robe and wait in line for my turn. It's easier to jump in than to think about it any further, so in I plunge and once I bob up, swim the fastest 10 metres of my life and clamber up the ladder, I finally feel the cold. But once I skull a vodka shot and re-robe, all is well with the world again and I feel like a million dollars!

From there the day just keeps getting better, with a visit to the small community of Kangaamiut, a real picture-postcard village where each wooden house is painted a vibrant colour – be it red, yellow, green, blue and even purple. One needs as much colour as one can get in Greenland, for while we passengers are lucky to have some magical sunny days in mid-July, much of the year is enveloped in darkness and temperatures plummet seriously below zero.

With only two scheduled international flights – one from Copenhagen and the other from Reykjavik – getting to Greenland is far from easy. Travelling by ship is the most convenient, comfortable and convivial way to go.

We start our 12-day 'Greenland and Wild Labrador' cruise in St John's, capital of Newfoundland and Labrador province, and the most easterly city in North America. A pre-cruise tour takes in the highlights including Signal Hill, where Cabot Tower presides over the city honouring John Cabot who explored the region in 1497 and where Marconi received the first transatlantic radio signal, sent from England in 1901.

As we cruise to the tip of Newfoundland we learn that Vikings led by Leif Erikson were in the area 500 years before Cabot and we visit their long-abandoned base camp at a

place now called L'Anse Aux Meadows.

Crossing the narrow channel to Labrador we continue north spotting humpback whales and beautiful blue-tinged icebergs as we go. Our days on board are filled with talks on history, culture and geography, and everyone is required to attend the lecture on polar bear safety.

Once in Labrador we're in bear country and all shore excursions, such as the seven-kilometre hike I do to a waterfall and various ambles along deserted beaches, are accompanied by trained guides carrying high-powered rifles and other bear deterrents. We do spot polar bears, but from a safe distance from either our ship, the *Ocean Endeavour*, or the Zodiac landing craft.

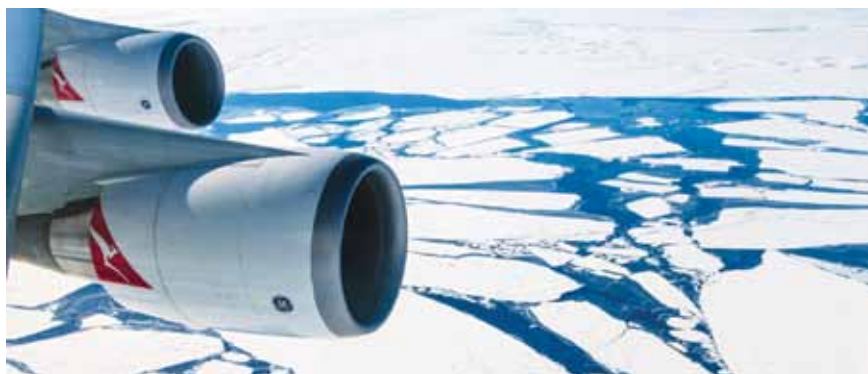
It is also Inuit country, the land of the indigenous people who have inhabited Canada's polar regions for 5000 years. In 2005 some 72,520 square km of Labrador was handed back to the original owners to form Nunatsiavut, a self-governing region, whose name means 'our beautiful land'.

We visit its capital Hopedale with a legislative building shaped like an igloo and the stunning Torngat National Park, a sacred land of jagged mountains and breathtaking fiords.

From the tip of Labrador, we cross the Davis Strait to Greenland, arriving in the capital Nuuk, a city of just 16,000 and the world's most northern capital. With just three days we scarcely skim the surface of Greenland, but with a polar plunge and a walk on the massive ice sheet (the second largest in the world after Antarctica), it's a thrilling adventure none the less.



© Greenland Tourism



50 Degrees North expands with new sales staff

BOUTIQUE Nordic tour operator 50 Degrees North is expanding with new representative offices to open in Vancouver and Canada.

Extra destination specialists are also being hired in both the Australian and Norway offices.

Owner and CEO of 50 Degrees North Tietse Stelma said even with the expansion, their aim is still to remain a “relatively small and boutique tour operator”.

“We want focus more exclusively on those products we believe are the best, rather than trying to sell everything to anyone,” she said.

All 12 sales staff at the independently owned tour company are Nordic nationals offering unique in-depth knowledge of the region.

DAY TRIP TO THE ANTARCTIC

FANCY taking a day trip to Antarctica? Antarctica Flights can offer this experience in what is arguably the world’s most unique day tour. The one-day sight-seeing flights on board a privately chartered Qantas 747 depart from Australia every summer. Flying at 10,000 feet, passengers can take in the vastness of Antarctica, the icebergs, glaciers, mountains and research stations. Two meals and full bar service will be offered throughout the trip while Antarctic experts will be on board to talk about the polar environment.

Four flights will be on offer next season, two departing from Melbourne, one from Perth and another from Sydney. The 12-hour round-trip, takes off early morning and returns in the evening while a special New Year’s Eve Flight from Melbourne, departing at 6pm takes in Antarctica in broad daylight at midnight.

■ Prices lead in at \$1,199 per person in centre economy, see www.antarcticaflights.com.au

ON THE GO ANTARCTICA



ON THE GO tours has launched a selection of cruising expeditions to Antarctica. The company is offering four itineraries to the frozen continent, ranging from nine to 20 days. Prices for the excursions lead in at NZ\$12,860 per person.

The nine-day Antarctica Taster journey navigates the Gerlache Strait, the Neumayer Channel, and the narrow passages of the Lemaire Channel. Daily shore landings include Paradise Bay, the Melchior Island group and, if ice conditions permit, Petermann Island – home to the Gentoo penguins.

The 11-day Classic Antarctica follows a similar itinerary, introducing explorers to the South Shetland Islands and the Antarctic Peninsula. The 12-day Polar Circle Quest continues the

journey further south to cross the Antarctic Circle. On this trip there will be an opportunity to visit the Vernadsky Research Base where Ukraine carries out meteorology research and the rugged archipelago of Yalour Islands.

Those wanting to have a full immersive experience can get on board the 20-day Classic South Georgia tour which heads out east visiting the Western Falklands Islands, Eastern Falkland Islands, South Georgia, Elephant Island, the Antarctic Peninsula, the South Shetland Islands and Drake Passage. Shore excursions will range from spotting elephant seals and Magellanic and Gentoo penguins on Carcass Island to visiting the mysterious Elephant Island.

■ For more information or to book, see www.onthegotours.com.

Q&A

Antarctica and the Arctic are some of the most fascinating regions in our world but they also can come with a big price tag. *travelBulletin* spoke to Aaron Russ, GM and founder of Wild Earth Travel, who spent his childhood travelling on small ships to the Subantarctic Islands and NZ to get his inside tips.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to polar regions?

Yes there is great interest from Australians, there has always been a strong connection with the Antarctic dating back to the days of Mawson and the other early expeditions. The Antarctic remains consistently popular with many Aussies heading south each summer. Interestingly we are noticing a significant increase in demand for the Arctic with Greenland, Iceland and the Canadian Arctic leading the charge.

Which destinations are most popular?

Of all our Polar programs we still see the greatest numbers exploring the Antarctic Peninsula but appreciation for some of our more specialised voyages like the Ross Sea Region continues to increase. I have led a number of expeditions through the NW Passage in the Canadian Arctic and have been finding more Australians drawn by this iconic journey.

What sort of travellers are visiting?

We are still seeing consistent strong sales from the traditional expedition travel clients, adventurous outdoor types who have long dreamed of experiencing the polar regions. But there is a more recent breed of traveller, those that prefer more of the cruise style amenities that are available on the modern luxury expedition vessels, clients who just a few years ago would not have considered the Antarctic a destination for them!

What are the biggest challenges for agents in selling holidays to polar regions?

Many agents are held back only by themselves, as a destination and style of travel they aren't necessarily familiar with I think it is something they are reticent about giving advice on and being proactive with giving clients recommendations on options. With the support of an experienced wholesaler like Wild Earth Travel the

options are clearly explained and presented to the agents so that they can have confidence in what they are presenting and selling.

What should an agent consider when selling polar regions?

There are now a lot of options in the market and while I know that all the ships and operators offer a good product, not all of the ships and expeditions are going to be right for everybody. It is important to qualify your clients, understand what it is that they are looking for in their polar experience and then be sure to match clients with ships and expeditions correctly! Oh and there are no polar bears in Antarctica or penguins in the Arctic. The Antarctic has the wow factor in spades, the Arctic has its wow moments but it's destination that will creep up on you more subtly.



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G Adventures



IN SEARCH OF THE NORTHERN LIGHTS

THOSE lucky enough to catch a glimpse of the elusive Aurora Borealis will never forget the allure of its celestial glow. Often described as the 'greatest light show on Earth', the Northern Lights are a naturally occurring wonder produced when electrically-charged particles from the sun collide with the Earth's atmosphere, reacting with oxygen and nitrogen atoms. What results is an emblazoned sky streaked in hues of pink, green, yellow, blue and violet.

The fleeting spectacle can be tricky to spot though, so *travelBulletin* has come up with a few tips to help you tick this one off the bucket list.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Aurora spotting will become a little harder after this year, scientists predict, with the 11-year solar cycle now in its declining stage. This, however does not mean that the bright lights will disappear completely from the skies, only that the chances of seeing them will dip.

NASA highlights the equinox months of

September and March as a fantastic time for aurora hunting, with frequent outbursts of auroral sub-storms, or plumes of light, commonly sighted.

Complete darkness and clear skies are needed when attempting to chase the celestial display, but make sure you rug up warm as the best time to view it is often between the hours of 10pm and 2am local time.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

There is no single place where the Northern Lights shine the brightest, so it's important to choose a destination that you're truly interested in exploring and consider the possibility of aurora-spotting as an added bonus.

But in saying that, there are some well-documented spots that are known for frequent sightings of the heavenly display.

Known for its rugged terrain, Svalbard in Norway is a fantastic choice for those interested

in immersing themselves in a polar region. During the polar winter, the entire area is cloaked in darkness for 24-hours across 28 days, meaning the lights can even be seen during the daytime. Many travellers also visit Reykjavik in Iceland for the light show. In fact, just earlier this year the Reykjavik Council announced its decision to switch off street lights in selected parts of the Icelandic capital just so those in the city could enjoy the swirling parade.

In the US, Alaska's Fairbanks city is another hot spot to see the Northern Lights. Whilst in some places we'd recommend you rug up warm, in Fairbanks the method of choice for aurora spotting is to strip down and soak up the glory in naturally formed hot springs.

MONITOR THE SITUATION

A plethora of apps and websites that monitor aurora activity are available online for free. Download one before you depart on your trip to find the best places to witness aurora activity.

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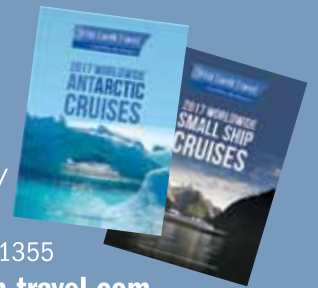


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Email info@wildearth-travel.com to order our carefully curated Polar and Small Ship Cruises brochure, featuring a selection of small ship cruises to the most interesting parts of the planet including the Arctic, Antarctica, Croatia, Cuba, the Galápagos Islands, Alaska, Iceland and more.

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Explore INDONESIA'S ISLANDS



Seraya Flores



Lombok



Seraya Flores

By Nina Karnikowski

IF YOU could take a peek at the average holidaymaker's mental world-map, Indonesia would most likely consist of Bali and not much else. The island has so captured our hearts with its wild surf beaches, floral temple offerings, chilled-out vibes and gentle, welcoming locals, that we often forget all about the rest of the country. But there are a stupefying 17,000-odd islands in Indonesia. And as my recent travels – spent exploring the tropical idylls of Lombok and Flores as well as Bali's less-trodden paths – to this beguiling country proved, the more islands you explore, the richer your Indonesian adventure will become.

LAZY LOMBOK

Our Lombok journey begins at Gili Meno, just a 30-minute boat ride from the mainland. Said to be the most relaxed and romantic of the trio of Gili Islands (which also includes party island Gili Trawangan and Gili Air), we dive off our boat and snorkel around coral reefs filled with iridescent clouds of tiny silver fish, fat sea slugs, turtles and more.

After a lunch of curried fish wrapped in banana leaves at Mahamaya, a chic boutique hotel and restaurant set on the talc-fine white sand, we're ready to explore. We hail a cidomo (a traditional horse cart, Meno's only form of transport) and after just five bumpy minutes we arrive on the other side of the island. There, we paddle in translucent waters and laze in the palm-thatched huts lining the beach until it's time to float back to the mainland.

The following morning we drive for two hours through jungle and verdant rice paddies into the rugged highlands to the 40-metre Senaru waterfalls. Accessed via a half-hour jungle hike, we stand knee-deep in the frothy waters letting the spray cover our faces and the mighty roar engulf us. If we had an extra two days we'd spend them summiting Mount Rinjani, an active volcano and one of Indonesia's highest mountains. Today, however, it's time to head off to our next Indonesian idyll.

NATURE FROTH IN FLORES

Our aim in Flores, like most travellers', is to track down the island's terrifying komodo dragons, the largest species of lizard in the world that have lived on the Komodo Islands for millions of years. We hire a wooden boat with

three crew members for 24 hours and set sail.

Soon we arrive on Rinca Island, one of Komodo National Park's three main islands where about 2,000 dragons are said to live. Just 10 minutes into our 90-minute walk we spot five of the two-metre dragons. They have more than 50 strains of bacteria in their saliva, says our guide, and within 24 hours of being bitten their prey usually dies of blood poisoning. We decide to keep our distance and swiftly move on along the jungle paths, then back to the boat for a much-needed afternoon siesta.

At sunset we find ourselves off the coast of Kalong Island, or Fruit Bat Island. There, as the sky morphs from orange to pink to lavender, hundreds of flying foxes rush and chatter overhead as they leave their home in the mangrove forests in search of dinner.

From here, the awe-inspiring nature moments just keep on coming.

There's a sunrise dip at Pink Beach, where we drift over the red coral reef that turns the beach sand pink. There's a swim with endangered manta rays at Manta Point, where dozens of the huge, playful creatures glide around below us. The piece de resistance, however, is a night on Seraya Island, where we relax in our whitewashed wooden beach bungalow just metres from the shore, swim in the beachfront saltwater pool, and watch the orange sun drop into the ocean from the top of the island's 40-metre cliffs.

BALINESE BLISS

Yes there's more to Indonesia than Bali, but we felt it would be almost sacrilegious not to pop in on our way home.

Our first stop is the island's latest hippie hotspot Canggu where we squeeze in yoga, surfing, massages, delicious health food at cafes including Bungalow and Betelnut, and boutique shopping in nearby Seminyak. When we've had enough of the buzz we drive 90 minutes to Uluwatu, one of the best surf breaks in Bali, for a swim and sunset margaritas at clifftop bar Single Fin.

The next day is our last in Indonesia and we spend it at the neighbouring cliffside beach town of Bingin, enjoying what this Indonesian paradise does best. The balmy breeze, the bath-warm ocean, the sumptuous treatments at Esthetic Day Spa. The day ends at Kelly's Warung with a bonfire and live music by the sea, where we clink our Bintangos to how lucky we are that this magical Southeast Asian jewel is right on our doorstep.



Uluwatu

Uluwatu

INTERCONTINENTAL BALI REVAMP



AS IF Australians needed another excuse for a luxury holiday in Bali, the InterContinental Resort at Jimbaran Bay will shortly debut stunning new rooms, just in time for the upcoming holiday season. To be unveiled early December, the renovation will see the launch of ‘rooms with a soul,’ with regional general manager Michel Chertouh saying it “sets new standards for luxury accommodation in Bali”.

As well as featuring hand-painted batik

prints and intricate traditional wood carvings, the new rooms incorporate state-of-the-art technology, including a 43 inch IPTV system offering access to thousands of digital TV and radio stations as well as movies and TV on demand and live streaming. Of course there’s high speed internet access, and intelligent electrical control of room devices including an energy management system to reduce the resort’s environmental footprint.

Also new at the InterContinental Bali Resort is the Sayana Lounge, which is offered free of charge to guests after they check out of their rooms.

Ideal for Australians departing on late night flights, the 24 hour lounge has entertainment, lockers, showers, water, tea and coffee plus an open-air terrace. The stunning resort features 417 guest rooms, six swimming pools and a variety of dining areas.

EXPLORE! SUMATRA

ADVENTURE travel specialist Explore! Worldwide has introduced a new small-group Highlights of Sumatra itinerary, designed to uncover the ‘real’ Indonesia. Operating roundtrip from Medan, the eight-day Cultural Discovery itinerary explores the jungles of Bohorok in Northern Sumatra and the villages dotted around Lake Toba (from Samosir), to learn about the unique customs and rituals of the locals.

Participants have the chance to spot Thomas Leaf Monkeys, long-tail macaques, slow loris, snakes, Sumatran peacock, flying squirrels and mouse deer.

Highlights include a morning rainforest walk to spot wild Orangutans in Bukit Lawang and a drive to the hill station of Berastagi. Optional activities include a sunrise climb up the active Sibayak volcano or the rice fields.

The tour operate between March-April and July-October 2017. Prices lead in at \$1,214 per person (land only), which includes seven nights hotel accommodation on a bed & breakfast basis, transport, driver and local guides.

■ www.exploreworldwide.com.au



AUSSIES CONTINUE TO POUR INTO BALI

VISITORS are continuing to flock to Bali, with the latest visitor numbers from the Bali Government Tourism Office showing 28,067 more Australians arrived in the holiday hotspot in July 2016 than the same period last year.

Totalling at 108,963 Aussies for the month, the island has seen a steady increase since February, when Australian visitor numbers for the month took a dive to 68,269.

As per usual, Australia was the largest market for arrivals, but the Chinese market is tailing not too far behind, coming in at 100,524 arrivals in Bali for the month of July, up from 77,906 in June. The first seven months of 2016 has seen a total of 645,730 Australians step onto Balinese soil, up from 566,980 for the same period last year.

Overall, foreign arrivals in 2016 have increased 19.92% compared to that of 2015.

Meanwhile, Garuda Indonesia's Commercial Director A. Toni Soetirto said the opening of additional routes to Australia, such as Adelaide and Brisbane, is on the horizon.

The airline previously scrapped its Denpasar to Brisbane route due to low passenger loads.

"If the demand is good, we can reopen the route," Soetirto said.



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AN APPETITE FOR

Italy is timeless: a country steeped in history, with striking scenery and some of the best food on earth. Italy is also a land of contrasts, made up of 20 different regions, each with its own distinctive culture, history and culinary delights. Nathalie Craig shares some of her favourite experiences from the boot-shaped country.

TUSCANY

On entering the Tuscany region in Central Italy I want nothing more than to soak up La Dolce Vita. Our home base is the restored Agriturismo B&B, Tenuta Scacciavolpe, in the rolling hills of Livorno.

Like a scene from Under the Tuscan Sun, the eighteenth-century farmhouse is set on 180 hectares of fertile land where

organic grapes are grown for Sangiovese and Trebbiano wines along with olives for extra virgin olive oil.

Each morning we enjoy a feast of freshly brewed coffee, artisan breads, pastries and freshly-laid eggs from the farm. Some days we lounge by the pool with antipasto and local wine, while others we venture to the surrounding towns and villages. In the medieval hill town of San Gimignano we spend the day climbing the famous stone towers, built as symbols of wealth and power by the patrician families who once controlled the town. In Lucca we hire bikes and take a leisurely cycle around the city's well-preserved Renaissance walls.

One sleepy afternoon we seek out a late lunch in the nearby town of Vicarello. In a backstreet restaurant, we're welcomed by a small, spirited Italian woman offering us warm, salty focaccia pulled straight from a wood fired oven. The menu has no English translation. We speak almost no Italian, the

woman almost no English. In an effort to help us understand the menu, she brings out dried pasta shapes, holding them up and matching them to each menu item as we bond over the universal language of food.

In the evenings we return to the farmhouse for an organic, homemade meal. The vintage tables are set outside, with a pristine view of the sun setting over the bales of hay and vine covered hillsides.

VENICE

The floating city of Venice is built on more than 100 small islands in Northern Italy. Cars are banned, meaning the only traffic you'll encounter are the boats vying for space in the narrow canals.

We start the day exploring the city's largest square, Piazza San Marco with its impressive centrepiece, the ornate St Mark's Basilica, tiled with gold, and Byzantine mosaics. Another highlight of the square is



Venice



Manarola

TIMELESS ITALY

the 100-metre tall San Marco Campanile bell tower. We ride a lift to the top where a whole new perspective of the city is revealed as we look down on the snaking canals weaving through the red rooftops.

‘Next, we’re itching to take to the canals, because no trip to Venice is complete without a gondola ride’

Next, we’re itching to take to the canals, because no trip to Venice is complete without a gondola ride. Our ebullient gondolier is dressed in a navy and white striped shirt, red neckerchief and woven broadbrim hat. He speaks dramatically of the city’s history. The gondoliers have a sense of camaraderie among them, calling out to each other as they ferry tourists under the mazes of marble bridges.

Back on dry land it’s time to explore some of the other aspects Venice is famous for, including glass blowing. We take a visit to a glass blowing factory where we watch a skilled artisan effortlessly transform a lump of molten glass into a dainty horse in a matter of minutes.

And finally, the shopping. It would be sacrilegious to leave Venice without a traditional Venetian mask, hand decorated with fabrics, jewels and striking coloured feathers.

LIGURIA

Navigating the trails of the Cinque Terre is bucket list material. The 12-kilometre hike along the northwest coast of Italy weaves between the five medieval fishing villages of Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore. Along the way we’re rewarded with spectacular vistas of brightly coloured terrace houses perched on the rugged cliffs that rise from the turquoise ocean.

The pastel-coloured town of Manarola is one of my favourites along the walk. There are plenty of rocky outcrops for sunbaking, or for diving off into the impossibly blue Mediterranean.

Another beautiful town along the way is Vernazza, which has been described as the region’s ‘dramatic cover girl’. It is set around a cosy harbour dotted with a rainbow-coloured assortment of fishing boats. The cobblestoned main street is lined with a patchwork of small shops, cafés and houses.

Continuing along the walk we’re met with small farm houses with abundant produce growing in their terraced gardens: vibrant lemons and oranges, grape vines and plump tomatoes. Midway through the hike we refuel with some al dente spaghetti tossed with local seafood before hitting the next leg.

Instead of braving the return hike we opt to finish off our trip by ferry, not just to rest our aching legs, but to take in the staggering panorama of the steep Ligurian coastline.



Positano, Italy

SOUTHERN ITALY BOOM

COLLETTE'S Southern Italy and Sicily tour has seen an incredible 42% year-on-year spike for 2017 bookings. The tour company believes the strong growth is "primarily due to the value for money" that the itinerary offers.

"While all of Italy is doing well for us, this is above the average growth we are seeing," Collette's Australia business manager Alison Mead said.

Mead noted another major drawcard of the 11-day tour priced from \$294 per day is the way it showcases the local life and culture.

"A great example is the street food tasting included in Palermo. We

visit a market and afterwards guests have a taste of the food that has made Palermo one of the best places to eat street food in the world," she explains.

The journey takes in the historic hilltop town of Taormina before making a stop at a local winery for an agriturismo experience, complete with wine tasting and a dinner featuring regional specialties. The journey also includes stop offs at Alberobello, Mt. Etna Volcano National Park, Amalfi Coast, Sorrento and Pompeii.

"It's a perfect itinerary for those who have perhaps visited the north and are looking to explore further in Italy".

Italy's emerging southern gems

ITALY'S southern reaches are emerging as fresh alternatives to the well-known cities of the north, according to Globus.

The tour operator has released a new online brochure featuring its 2017 Italian tours, including options exploring southern highlights like Sorrento and Sicily.

Globus will offer 14 different Italian itineraries including the 14-day tour Highlights of

Southern Italy and Sicily which begins in Rome before heading to Naples, Pompeii, Sorrento and Capri. It then explores lesser known regions in Italy's rustic south before crossing by ferry to Sicily.

Globus is offering savings of 10% off tours booked by November 29, 2016, or 5% off tours booked by April 25, 2017.



ROME'S NEW TERMINAL

GETTING in and out of Roma Cruise Terminal is about to get easier with a shiny new, €20 million passenger terminal on its way. The 10,000m² terminal will have capacity for 4,500 passengers and storage of up to 9,000 pieces of luggage. It will be equipped with two retractable passenger fingers for disembarkation and embarkation, along with people and luggage scanners.

The building is expected to be completed in 2018. Project 12 B North is one of two Roma Cruise Terminal has in the works, with another, smaller terminal planned for Terminal 12. Rome Cruise Terminal is the main terminal for cruise lines at Civitavecchia Port of Rome and is the departure point for many Mediterranean cruises.



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It's foodie heaven

Wind-swept Wellington spends an inordinate amount of time making excuses for its changeable weather. It needn't. The capital city's reputation for downpours and occasional howling winds shouldn't deter you from exploring the inspired food and wine scene bursting the compact metropolis' seams, as Donna Demaio discovered.



Breakfast



SAN FRANCISCO'S cuisine has emboldened Simon Pepping (pictured), the owner of Egmont Street Eatery. He recently returned from an insightful trip to California with a grab bag of ideas to introduce at his tucked-away laneway restaurant.

The chic eatery is known for a fine breakfast or you can indulge in the cheese, beets and meat burger that took home the top 'Burger Welly' prize at Wellington On A Plate (the annual two week food festival) last year.

And even Mr Pepping can't fully explain why the smoked potato hash, pork fennel sausage, slow egg and chili dish is so popular. He figures, "because it tastes great."

"One of our main objectives is to be different. You won't find eggs Benedict on our breakfast menu. And our pigs' ears are going down well at the moment," he says.

■ 15-21 Dixon St, Wellington. www.egmontstreet.co.nz

WHERE ELSE

Field and Green: European soul-food style cuisine

■ 262 Wakefield St, Wellington www.fieldandgreen.co.nz

Floriditas: Seasonal food and baked goods served in a smart, spacious café. ■ 161 Cuba St, Wellington www.floriditas.co.nz



Lunch

THE quest for a great pizza can be arduous, often leading to disappointment. With help from an extended stay in New York, Tom Kirton has returned with the finest dough-making skills. Coupled with quality ingredients and an upbeat attitude, Tommy Millions (at two take-away outlets in the heart of the city) is a fun place to grab a slice. Favorites include the "pepperoni" and the "porker".

■ 105 Courtney Place, Te Aro, Wellington and 142 Featherston Street, Te Aro, Wellington. www.tommymillions.co.nz

WHERE ELSE

Slim Davey's Friendly Neighbourhood Saloon: new kid on the block. Laid back, eclectic décor with great burgers and excellent wine bar. ■ 18 Majoribanks St, Mount Victoria, Wellington.

Olive: Outdoor grill, garden dining and new bar. Known for its gnocchi.

■ 170 Cuba St, Te Aro, Wellington. www.oliverestaurant.co.nz

Coffee



"THE more you learn about coffee, the more there is to know – so that's why we've created The Beanery," says Mojo founder and managing director Steve Gianoutsos. At the waterfront café, you can try out new (ish) brewing methods such as Steampunk (there's bubbles, suction and pumping involved), enjoy free tasting sessions or attend a barista training course.

According to Mr Gianoutsos, Wellington has more cafés per capita than New York – "so it's a dense playground for discovering coffee."

To accompany your coffee, classic Kiwi fare includes cheese scones or caramel slices. Or you can experiment with the emerging trend of savoury paired with caffeine. Perhaps a smoked fish and beer caviar open sandwich while sipping the Ruvuma AA Tanzanian soft brew coffee?

■ 180 Lambton Quay, Wellington. www.mojocoffee.co.nz



WHERE ELSE

Prefab: Eatery, coffee roaster and community hub. Specialty is baked goods served warm. 14 Jessie Street, Wellington www.pre-fab.co.nz

Fidel's cafe: Street cool. Great coffee. 234 Cuba Street, Wellington. www.fidelscafe.com

Dinner



A HOTEL restaurant meal may not immediately appeal and yet you can dine with confidence at Chameleon at The InterContinental. The seasonal dishes are portioned between starter and main sizes by Chef Paul Limacher and for this reason, two plates make up a meal. There's New Zealand scallops, celeriac purée, black pudding, apple, parsley and truffle oil salad. And the duck confit, carrot purée, walnut soil, mache, orange caviar and Moi Moi chips has proven popular. It's a stylish menu in upscale surrounds.

■ 2 Grey St, Wellington. www.intercontinental.com/wellington

WHERE ELSE

Charley Noble Eatery and Bar: possibly the best steak in the city. Watch chefs work the fire pits.

■ 1 Post Office Square, Wellington www.charleynoble.co.nz

Hillside Kitchen: New Nordic Kitchen inspired cuisine. Deli by day, prix fixe eatery by night.

■ 241 Tinakori Rd, Thorndon, Wellington.

www.hillsidekitchen.co.nz

Ortega Fish Shack and Bar: Upscale restaurant known for excellent seafood, including fresh Kaipara Pacific oysters.

■ 16 Majoribanks St, Mount Victoria, Wellington.

www.ortega.co.nz



Drink



GARAGE Street Project has always been ahead of the pack when it comes to craft beer. In 2011, it was the first craft beer brewery in the city. Now there are loads – competing for any adventurous palate.

Garage project co-founder Pete Gillespie says he's not a fan of stunt beers which are designed to shock. And yet, there are eight new beers on their way, with ingredients such as pineapple sage, dried breadfruit or plantain.

■ 68 Aro St, Aro Valley, Wellington. www.garageproject.co.nz

WHERE ELSE

The Hawthorn Lounge: The bartenders speak with tenderness of the craft of cocktail making. Gorgeous leather lounges in a dimly lit, intimate setting.

■ Upstairs 82 Tory St, Wellington. www.hawthornlounge.co.nz

The Library: Tucked away bar with a fine dessert menu.

■ Level 1, 53 Courtney Place, Wellington. www.thelibrary.co.nz



Dig your own private hot spring

LOCATED in Mercury Bay on the east coast of the Coromandel Peninsula, Hot Water Beach is a Kiwi treasure just waiting to be uncovered.

What makes this slice of paradise so unique is a hidden underground volcanic reservoir containing super-heated water, allowing visitors to very literally dig their very own hot spring.

Just pack a towel and your beach gear and make your way to the beach one hour either side of low tide to gain access to your own private thermal spa.



© Tourism NZ

TAKE A GANDER AT AIR NZ

AIR New Zealand has taken the odd approach of enlisting a migratory bird to help promote the merits of flying via Auckland to North and South America.

The “ground breaking” campaign aspires to sway the minds of Australian travellers that breaking up the journey when flying to the Americas with Air New Zealand is a “better way to fly”.

CEO Christopher Luxon said an Auckland layover “makes great sense” for Aussies, particularly for customers coming off a domestic connection.

“We’re well established as the preferred airline for Australians travelling to New Zealand and one of Australia’s most respected brands, however, many Australian travellers still think of us as a trans-Tasman carrier and that’s a perception we’re determined to change,” Luxon said in Sydney when launching the campaign in Sydney last month.

The advertising campaign stars Australian actor Bryan Brown as the voice of ‘Dave’ the Goose who pitches the benefits of flying with the Kiwi carrier, “rather than sticking with the flock,” Air New Zealand Chief Revenue Officer Cam Wallace said.

For travellers who don’t have access to Air NZ’s stylish airport lounge, in one of the commercials Dave spruiks Auckland Airport as being a “great place to relax, grab a bite to eat or do some shopping”.

Air New Zealand operates services from Auckland to Los Angeles, San Francisco, Houston, Buenos Aires and Honolulu.



Q&A

New Zealand is only across the ditch and it’s proximity makes it high on the list of many Australians’ bucket lists. We sat down with Personal Travel Manager Helen Rolton, who is passionate about this diverse country, to give us the inside scoop on selling NZ.



Is there much interest among Australians for travel to New Zealand?

The wonderful thing about New Zealand is that it’s an active holiday destination – wherever you stay there’ll be opportunities for walking, cycling, kayaking, sailing, fishing, wine or craft beer trails, art trails, learning about Maori Culture, or just taking in the sights. As a Personal Travel Manager, this gives me so many options to tailor make my client’s adventures.

Which destinations are most popular?

The South Island ‘loop’ from Christchurch across the Southern Alps to the West Coast, south via the Glaciers, over Haast Pass to Queenstown then on to Dunedin and up the east coast to fly out, is always popular. Plus, any of the national parks are ideal for walking holidays. Depending on my clients’ interests, I’ll recommend ‘alternative’ itineraries like the Hawkes Bay or Northland or the ‘Top of the South’ which takes in Marlborough, Nelson and Buller.

What are the must see highlights for first time travellers?

The scenery is what people think of when they think of NZ. Here’s my suggestions:

- Queenstown – the gondola for the iconic photo of Lake Wakatipu (but also a cruise on the lake will provide great photo opportunities)
- Cruise on the Milford Sound
- Walk or helicopter to Franz Josef Glacier
- Drive the Great West Coast Road
- Kiwi Scenic Rail offer three great train journeys to give people the opportunity to sit back and soak in the scenery
- There are some excellent cruises I recommend for first timers that stop at up to 10 ports in NZ and do day trips from each. These are a ‘tease’ as inevitably people want to go back.

What sort of travellers are visiting New Zealand?

Anyone that doesn’t want a flop’n’drop holiday. New Zealand’s an outdoor, active destination.

What are the biggest challenges for agents in selling holidays to New Zealand?

Product knowledge – I went on the NZ Mega Famil in 2015 and was surprised that many of the agents had never been to NZ. Tourism NZ has a specialist program and run regular webinars to learn about the destination. Also consumers think it’s easier to find out everything they need and book online, they can find out organise it themselves online. But a Personal Travel Manager can recommend where to stop, what to do, the best photo stops and tailor their holiday depending on their brief.

What should an agent consider when selling New Zealand?

Really understanding your client’s interests and the type of holiday experience they are after, then tailor making an itinerary to suit. There’s absolutely so much to see and do in NZ so don’t rush your itinerary. There are photo opportunities around every corner.

LEAP OFF THE SKY TOWER IN AUCKLAND

RATED a must-do adventure activity by many visitors on travel review site TripAdvisor, the SkyJump offers a similar experience to BASE-jumping. Dare devils at the peak are dropped 192 metres from the Sky Tower (the country's highest building) at a speed of approximately 85kph for around 11 seconds, before coming to a smooth landing in the plaza below.

After you've braved the drop, you'll be rewarded with a spiffy certificate in recognition of your efforts. To round off your Sky Tower experience, a walk along the edge is also highly recommended.



© Tourism NZ

RIDE YOUR WAY TO GLORY WITH SKYLINE LUGE ROTORUA

Situated in the heart of the country's scenic volcanic region, the part go-cart, part toboggan thrill-ride is suitable for the whole family. The Redwood forest serves as the picturesque backdrop for the fast-paced experience, with the purpose built gravity-fuelled carts easily controlled by the rider. There are over four kilometres of luge tracks at Skyline Rotorua, with each one tapered to all skill levels.

Once at the bottom, simply take the scenic chairlift back to the top of the track and begin your adventure all over again.



© Skyline Rotorua

GET YOUR HEART RACING

Known as the Adventure Capital of the World, New Zealand boasts an impressive smorgasbord of adrenaline-inducing activities that are sure to get your blood pumping and your palms sweating. Whether you're keen to don a bungy cord and throw yourself off a cliff or take a dive off a landmark – New Zealand will deliver the thrills you so desire and so much more. **travelBulletin** explores some of the country's most epic activities.

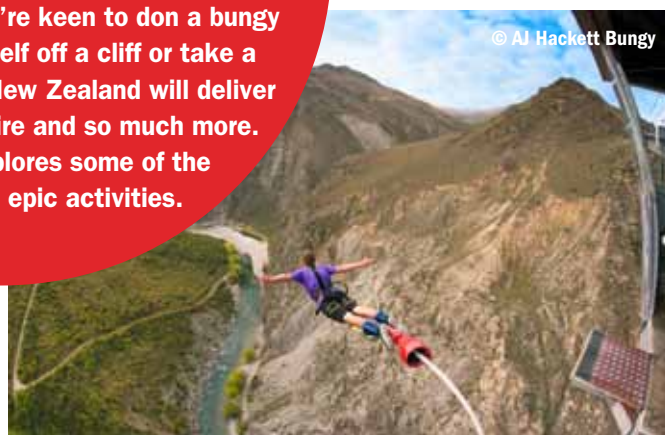


© Adrenalin Forest

SCALE THE TREETOPS OF THE ADRENALIN FOREST, WELLINGTON

Located in the country's capital, the Adrenalin Forest is sure to make your stomach churn. Here, you will be strapped into a safety line and harness as you manoeuvre your way through seven death-defying obstacle courses – each more challenging than the last. The tree-top challenges range from a metre to 31 metres in height and include an array of barrels, swings and flying foxes to conquer.

The park is located north of Wellington in Porirua, which is a 20-minute drive from the town centre.



© AJ Hackett Bungy

PROPEL YOURSELF FROM THE NEVIS BUNGY

The 134-metre Nevis Bungy in Queenstown is the highest in New Zealand – and it is not for the faint of heart. Towering over the wild Nevis River, the drop features 8.5 seconds of free-fall.

Jumpers will be exposed to speeds of 128 kilometres per hour as they are catapulted through space and once complete a souvenir t-shirt commemorating your bravery will be awarded to you.

If you're game, tack on the Nevis Swing experience, where you are strapped into a swing and released 160 metres above the canyon floor. Bonus points for those who try it upside down.



Nadia Wahab

Where in the world?

Do you know where this intriguing sculpture is located?

The tall, steel sculpture is perched on top of a hill somewhere in the world.

If you have an idea, send your answer to comps@travelbulletin.com.au.

The winner will take home a double movie pass to Event Cinemas.

FUNNY FESTIVALS: OHAKUNE CARROT CARNIVAL

ONCE a year the small, sleepy ski resort town of Ohakune, New Zealand holds a massive street party in honour of its favourite vegetable – the carrot.

The Ohakune Carrot Carnival is one of the main events on the town's social calendar and sees adults and children alike take to the streets dressed head-to-toe in carrot costumes in celebration of their agricultural 'roots'.

To make way for rides, stalls and attractions, the city's main drag is closed off to vehicles.

There are vegetable-themed games on the day such as sprout 'n spoon races, while home-baking aficionados vie for bragging rights in the Carrot Cake of the Year competition.

Festival-goers are treated to free – you guessed it – carrots, and prizes are handed out for the most creative carrot costume.

Ohakune is situated 215 kilometres north of Wellington and 292 kilometres south of Auckland. Visitors know they're going in the right direction when they're greeted by the massive carrot monument at the town's entrance.

The Ohakune Carrot Carnival will be held next year on 4 June 2017.



Nathan



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