

Qatar takes CZ 5%

QATAR Airways has confirmed the acquisition of a 5% stake in Guangzhou-based China Southern Airlines.

QR said the purchase was part of an ongoing strategy to “invest in the strongest airlines around the world and continue enhancing operations and network connectivity”.

Qatar Airways Group CEO Akbar Al Baker said the complementary strengths and resources of the carriers created opportunities to work together and build a long-term relationship “in ways that would bring benefits to customers of both airlines.”

“The investment is a clear demonstration of Qatar Airways’ continued commitment to connecting travellers across all corners of the world in a way that is meaningful and convenient”.

Qatar Airways is a member of the oneworld alliance, while China Southern is currently unaligned, having this week formally ended its membership of the SkyTeam alliance (**TD** 16 Nov).

CX pricing glitch

CATHAY Pacific has confirmed it will honour massive discounts on a number of First and Business class tickets which sold earlier this week for flights between North America and Vietnam.

Some of the seats are normally priced at up to \$22,000 but a glitch saw them offered for about \$970 as part of a New Year’s Eve promotion.

Michael James firmly in Bestjet frame

MICHAEL James, the disgraced former owner of Air Australia who presided over the carrier’s \$97 million collapse in 2012, has been heavily implicated in the operations of the failed Bestjet Travel (**TD** 18 Dec), with a preliminary report to the administrators repeatedly citing his involvement with the OTA.

Yesterday the company’s administrators held a meeting of creditors, with about 30 people in attendance including furious consumers and representatives of consolidators, airlines and IATA.

Bestjet’s current owner, Robert McVicker, who placed the company into administration less than six weeks after acquiring the business in early Nov, provided a summary of the situation from his point of view, admitting that he had no access to Bestjet’s accounting package and suggesting the administrators “contact Michael James on 0409



Photo source: News Limited.

355 133 for payroll information”.

A list of creditors also refers repeatedly to “M. James”, with the incomplete schedule detailing debts of more than \$700,000 owed to Skyscanner, \$420,000 to Kayak, \$46,000 to QBE and a \$65,000 claim by David Lanning, former director of Wynyard Travel.

Other major creditors cited include IATA, CVFR and credit card processor Integrapay, but the amounts owing are “still being

calculated,” according to the list.

McVicker’s list of assets owned by the company include a \$3.6m bank account, a credit card in the name of Michael James and software in the company’s Philippines office and the “cloud” valued at about \$600,000.

Debtors listed, based on projected sales for 2018 which “may be disputed depending on contracts,” include \$3.2 million claimed to be owed by Sabre for “sector rebates” as well as sales overrides from a range of carriers including Philippine Airlines, Air India, Finnair, Qatar Airways, China Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Royal Brunei, Vietnam Airlines, Oman Air and Air China.

An estimate of moneys owed by Sabre and CVFR is “based on information provided by Michael James,” the report states.

In 2016 Bestjet undertook a concerted legal campaign against AFTA in an attempt to overturn a decision not to renew the company’s ATAS accreditation based on the “Close Associate” provisions of the ATAS charter.

Bestjet has repeatedly denied Michael James (**pictured**) had any involvement in the firm set up by his wife Rachel James just weeks after the Air Australia collapse.

New Caledonia alert

HEALTH authorities in New Caledonia have declared an epidemic of dengue fever across the entire country, with the majority of confirmed cases in the Noumea metropolitan area.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade has updated its Smartraveller advice for the South Pacific nation, urging Australian travellers to protect themselves from mosquito-borne illnesses.

Blue Train bargain

WINTER bookings aboard South Africa’s iconic “Blue Train” will include a 50% second passenger discount, under a special offer announced today.

The deal is valid for bookings for travel May-Jul, with payment to be made by 28 Feb 2019.

The three-day journey travels between Pretoria and Cape Town.

Quote the “2019 Winter Special” when booking - call Africareps on 03 9001 0624.

Today’s issue of TD

Travel Daily today has three pages of news and photos, plus a full page from:

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Hyatt Hangzhou

THE Grand Hyatt Hangzhou, formerly Hyatt Regency Hangzhou, has officially opened its doors, marking the first Grand Hyatt hotel in Zhejiang province and the 15th in China.

Following an 18-month redesign the 388-room hotel features seven dining venues, a spa and 32,990m² of event space.

“Over the past decade, the hotel has been recognised as the preferred hotel to host major events, heads of state, and high-profile visitors to Hangzhou,” said Dior Lin, Chairlady of the hotel’s owning company, Hangzhou Hua Pu Industrial Co.

Located on the east shore of West Lake, the hotel is walking distance of the Hubin district.

Schwartz invests in Qld

PRIVATE hotel investor Dr Jerry Schwartz has made his first investment in Queensland with the \$70 million purchase of the five-star Hilton Surfers Paradise from the Chinese group, Ja Feng.

The Hilton Surfers Paradise (pictured) includes 169 rooms and 220 apartment-style residences along with four restaurants and bars, a spa, conference and function facilities, four pools, an outdoor deck area and car parking.

“I believe there is enormous potential for growing the hotel’s business,” said Dr Schwartz.

“I have great faith in the Gold Coast as Australia’s premier family, couples and groups market because its beaches, natural attractions, theme parks, events, restaurants and nightlife provide a complete tourism package that is attractive to both the domestic



and international travellers.”

Dr Schwartz added that the destination is ideally positioned to “take advantage of the boom in international travel from Asia and the Pacific”.

“With Gold Coast and Brisbane international airports expanding their range of source markets, I thought it was the ideal time to enter the market,” he said.

The deal is expected to settle in May 2019, with Schwartz’s other properties including the Sofitel Sydney Darling Harbour, the Fairmont Resort in the Blue Mountains, Ibis Sydney King Street Wharf, Rydges World Square, Novotel Newcastle Beach and Crowne Plaza Hunter Valley.

Virgin Voyages rego

VIRGIN Voyages, the fledgling cruise venture backed by human headline Sir Richard Branson, has opened up registrations for travel agents wanting to book pax on its cruises set to debut in 2020.

Travel agent partners will be referred to as “First Mates” and a special website at firstmates.com will feature online training and details of incentives, including an opportunity to have tea with Branson himself.

Bookings for the first *Scarlet Lady* voyages are scheduled to open on 14 Feb - more details in tomorrow’s *Cruise Weekly*.



Window Seat

HOLY mackerel! Who would have thought a humble goldfish could be such an aviation security concern.

But that’s exactly the situation that confronted Lanice Powless when she attempted to board a Southwest Airlines flight with her beloved fish Cassie.

The airline refused her little wet-gilled friend entry because fish are not permitted under its animal policy.

Initially shocked and standing around like a stunned mullet, Lanice then tried to convince other passengers to take her fish on another flight, only to be thwarted by Southwest staff who followed her around after smelling something fishy about her actions.

“Even after I was no longer in possession of the fish, they still continued to have security around us, and follow us through the airport and escorted onto our plane, as if we brought something bad into the airport,” she said.

CA carrier ceases

CALIFORNIA Pacific Airlines, a regional carrier which launched just two months ago, has grounded its flights due to a claimed shortage of pilots.

The carrier operated non-stop from Carlsbad to San Jose, Reno, Las Vegas and Phoenix.

The suspension is only temporary, the airline said, but has not indicated when operations will resume.

New Saudi visa

TRAVELLERS to Saudi Arabia can now access electronic visas for specific sporting events via a new platform known as “Sharek”.

The online system grants a 14-day visa for specific international events - see sharek.sa.



A-LEAGUE

A-LEAGUE WINNER R10

Congratulations

IAN JANE

from *Bentleigh Travel Centre*

Ian is the top tipper for R10 of *Travel Daily’s* A-League footy tipping competition. He’s won a \$250 travel voucher from Keith Prowse Travel.



A-League tipping competition is sponsored by Etihad Airways and Excite Holidays, with the top tipper for the season winning a trip to Manchester to see Manchester City play.



NSW permit LTPS/18/28921 / ACT permit TP 18/01724

HLO NZ expansion

HELLOWORLD has announced the addition of two new member agencies in New Zealand, with HLO NZ Executive GM Simon McKearney saying the expansion adds about NZ\$100m in turnover to the group.

The additions to the Associate Networks ranks include Barlow Travel, operated by Peter Barlow, and Keith Sumner’s Gilpin Travel, both of which were formerly part of the First Travel Group.

“It is great that such businesses will be joining the Helloworld NZ family in the New Year,” McKearney enthused.

He said the value propositions in the varying Helloworld networks were incredibly strong “and now sit as best in market,” adding that many agencies want “surety of their direction and future and hence the attraction of Helloworld”.

Express Travel Group is currently in negotiations regarding a majority investment in First Travel Group NZ (**TD** 19 Dec).

Korean Air helps rebuild lives



KOREAN Air recently sent a volunteer group to Sri Lanka to help underprivileged local communities in Colombo rebuild their homes following flood damage caused in 2017.

The airline's Good Samaritans helped with repair work on damaged homes and also spent time playing traditional Korean games with the local children.

The philanthropic trip was paid for by Korean Air's company fund and member donations

and follows a previous trip undertaken in the typhoon-struck Philippines last year.

Korean Air currently has 25 volunteer groups actively helping with projects and community programs at orphanages, rehabilitation centres for the disabled and senior care centres around the world.

Pictured: Korean Air's volunteer group poses with local residents after performing volunteer work.

Mount Ijen closure

INDONESIA'S Mount Ijen, located in the East Java regencies of Banyuwangi and Bondowoso, will now close every first Fri of the month to make way for infrastructure improvements.

Entry to Mount Ijen will also be ticketed through online travel agents to help facilitate the management of visitor numbers, according to *The Jakarta Post*.

APPOINTMENTS

WELCOME to Industry Appointments, *Travel Daily's* Thursday feature which has the latest job appointments from across the industry. If you have just appointed someone to a new position and would like to update the industry email appointments@traveldaily.com.au.

The **Outrigger Mauritius Beach Resort** has appointed **Asari Tashima** to the role of Group Sales Manager - Asia. She was previously the Events and Catering Manager for the Hilton Hawaiian Village Waikiki Beach Resort. Tashima is also a certified wedding and events planner and is fluent in Japanese.

A range of new appointments have been made by the **Perth Convention Bureau** with **Malcolm Farrell-Mitchell** rejoining the bureau as a Business Development Manager, **Bridget Brown** taking on a Business Development Manager role, and **Hannah Beattie** joining the team as Destination Marketing Coordinator.

Gareth Coakley has made the move from State Sales Manager NSW/ACT at AAT Kings to Business Development Manager National Sales and Cruise for **Journey Beyond**. Before his last post, Coakley spent nine years working as a sales representative in the sports industry in New Zealand and the tourism industry in Australia.

Novotel Haikou

NOVOTEL has announced the opening of the 141-room Novotel Haikou Xibudao in China.

Located on Xibu Island, a newly developed area in the northeast part of Haikou city, the property features multiple dining options, six VIP private business rooms, an 800m² pillar-less ballroom, a fitness centre, tennis courts, a swimming pool and kids' club.

"Novotel's 'Easy Modern Living' philosophy and its up-to-the-minute facilities will make us the perfect choice for a business traveller in search of convenience, or a leisure traveller seeking a peaceful get-away destination," said Novotel Haikou Xibudao GM Jack Lin.

Cunard in fashion

CUNARD has revealed the line up for its fourth annual Transatlantic Fashion Week will take place on board the *Queen Mary 2* from 28 Jul to 04 Aug.

Notable names include royal milliner Stephen Jones, and fashion icons Stuart Weitzman, Colin McDowell, Pat Cleveland, and Rosemarie Bravo.

"I look forward to sharing my insights, tips and future trends... with my fellow shipmates," Stephen Jones said.

The sailing will include runway shows, talks, exhibitions, in-store events and film screenings.

The price for the seven-night voyage from NYC to Southampton starts from \$2,199ppts for a balcony stateroom.

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.

Tucan Travel 55-day

AUSTRALIAN owned South America tour operator Tucan Travel has announced a new 55-day Ultimate South America Tour.

The journey visits popular attractions such as Machu Picchu, the Amazon Jungle, Uyuni Salt Flats, and cities such as Santiago in Chile & Brazil's Rio de Janeiro.

For more info, **CLICK HERE**.

CA shuts Shanghai

AIR China has closed bookings on services between Shanghai and Australia on/after 31 Mar.

The carrier currently operates four times weekly to Melbourne and thrice a week to Sydney, with Air NZ's codeshares on the routes also closed for reservation.

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