

travelBulletin

OCTOBER 2016

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and revive



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 **Austrian National
Tourist Office**

Emirates introduces Rail & Fly in Austria

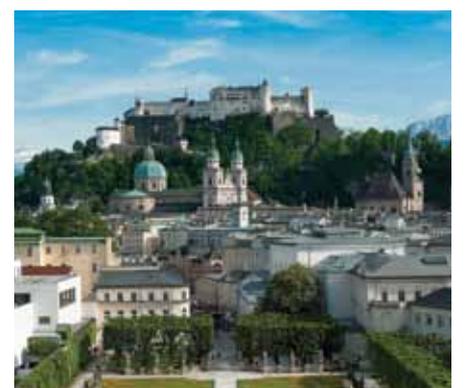
To make travel from Australia even more convenient, Emirates has launched an interline agreement with the Austrian Federal Railways (OEGB) providing Emirates customers with the ability to now seamlessly book Emirates flights and OEGB railway tickets in one booking.

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Emirates Business and First Class passengers also receive complimentary access to the OEGB lounges at all major train stations.

For further information about the new Rail & Fly product, please check austria.info/rail&fly

To experience a journey through Austria and Emirates' new Rail&Fly product first-hand, we invite you to participate in our "Journeys through Austria" competition. More information in this issue!



travelBulletin

OCTOBER 2016

LUXURY TRAVEL
SOUTH AMERICA
SINGAPORE
RAIL
MALAYSIA



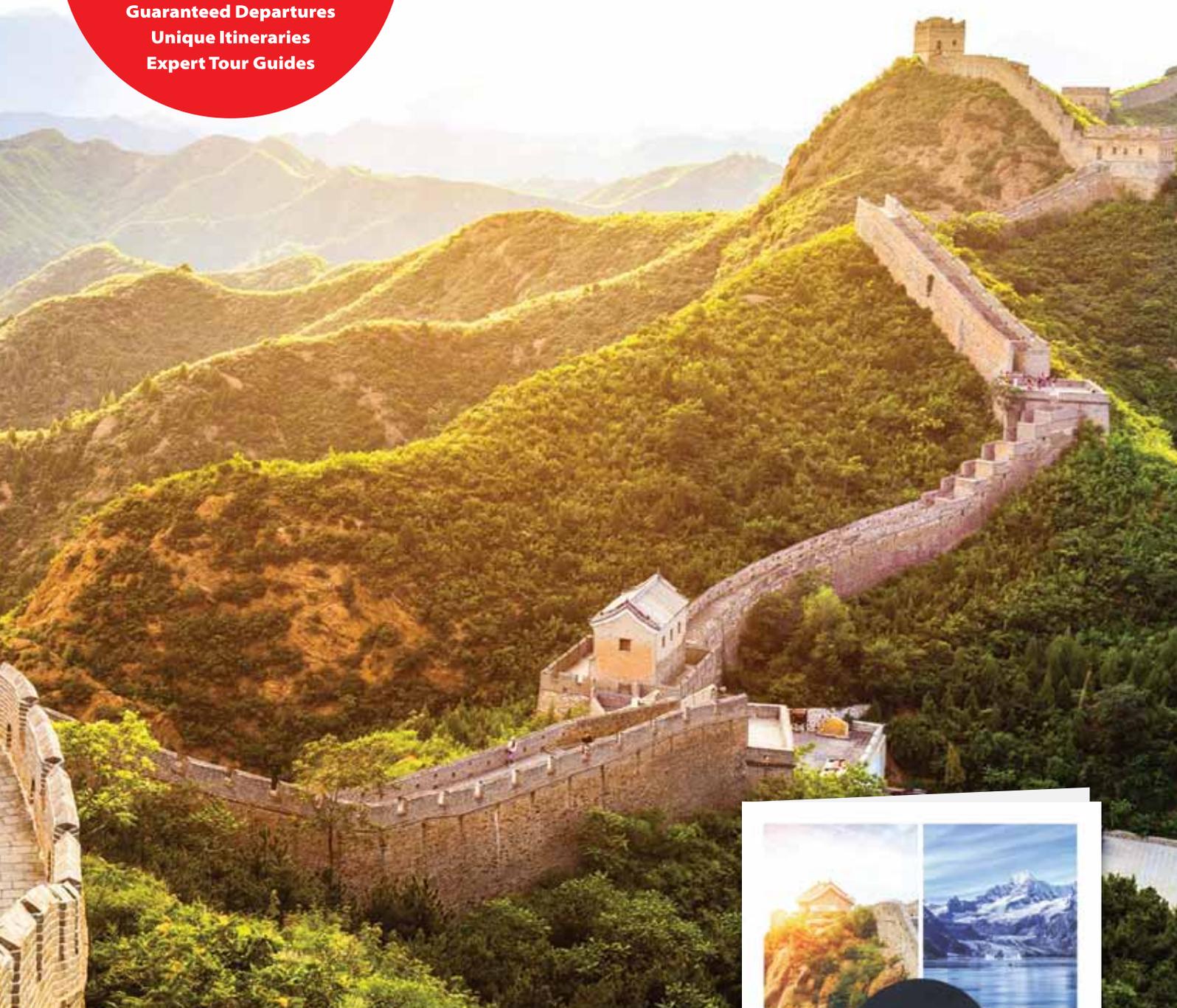
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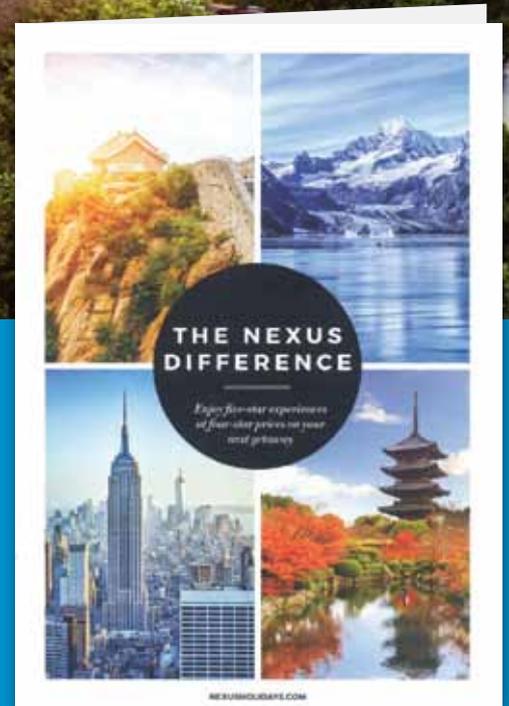
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COVER STORY

Million dollar club

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From the managing editor

Bruce Piper

THE much-anticipated release of the final Travel Compensation Fund report late last month contained a number of intriguing revelations which perhaps give an indication as to why it took such a long time to produce. Given the large amount of money contributed to the now defunct TCF by the industry over the years, it has been of keen interest to travel agents wanting to find out just what happened to it all. While the final outcome indicates that predictably most of the funds - some \$19.5 million - ended up back in the consolidated revenue pockets of the various state governments, the TCF Trustees have also apparently been involved in the investigation of some former senior staff.

The report from chairperson Fiona McLeod covers the period from 1st January 2015 right through to 31st August 2016 - confirming that rather than the original timetable which would have seen the TCF close at the end of last year the Trustees decided to extend the Trust Deed for six months, until 30 June 2016 "to allow for completion of final outstanding legal, insurance and employment matters". That deadline was further extended by another two months, until the end of August this year - and there are still a number of "residual matters" which have now been handed off to the NSW Department of Fair Trading.

Interestingly it also appears the wind-up was overseen not by senior TCF executives but rather by a Trustee management committee, set up after the July 2015 resignation of the former TCF chief executive officer and chief financial officer. Without specifically detailing what happened, it appears there have been significant ructions within the TCF ranks, with the financial report confirming the Fund had "been in dispute with two senior staff over alleged conduct and employment contract breaches".

"Both staff were stood down pending investigations and both resigned in July 2015 and as a result neither were paid redundancies," the report states, with one staff member subsequently lodging an unfair dismissal complaint which was dismissed by the Fair Work Commission.

"The parties have since been in dispute over alleged overpayments made and leave and other payments due to the two now-former staff members," the report continues, with one dispute still outstanding and recorded as a contingent liability in the final TCF accounts.

The outcome is an unfortunate footnote to the work of the TCF, which McLeod noted had for almost 30 years been "an important and successful part of Australia's consumer protection landscape".

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Ian McMahon's perspective

THE latest financial results from Helloworld provide food for thought not just on the public company's results but on challenges facing the wider travel industry, particularly those posed by the internet.

The observation has been made that Helloworld's announced pre-tax profit of \$3.45 million amounts to only 1% of the \$345 million recorded by Flight Centre.

Well, yes. But the two businesses are by no means exactly comparable. Flight Centre owns all but a minuscule portion of its outlets; retailing is its core business. Helloworld's core business is franchising.

To make a fair comparison of the profits of the two organisations' retail operations you would need to know the profits of the individual agent members of Helloworld. In Adelaide, for example, I would guess that Phil Hoffmann Travel, a Helloworld member, outperforms Flight Centre in the relevant localities.

To be accurate, Helloworld is a hybrid organisation. In the High Street retail sphere, it is a franchisor but it owns its consolidation arm and its tour wholesaling arm – operations which were supplemented in the second half of the financial year by the successful and profitable wholesaling operation of AOT following that company's merger with Helloworld.

Despite the injection of AOT, Helloworld's wholesaling operations recorded a net loss of \$4.1 million, the major reason that the franchising division's surplus of \$6.2

million ultimately translated into an overall company result of only \$3.45 million.

This is a reflection of a widespread malaise in tour wholesaling – with some notable exceptions – as wholesalers battle not only with the public turning to the internet to directly source overseas holiday components but with increasing numbers of agents doing the same thing.

In some ways this is a more crucial issue than the current headline-grabbing fracas between bricks and mortar travel agents and online travel agents led by Webjet. If you think about it, the OTA's campaign disparaging bricks and mortar travel agents is really an acknowledgement of its failure to make inroads into the market for complex travel arrangements, dominated by traditional travel agents.

On the other side of the coin, of course, traditional travel agents have yet to truly crack a "clicks and mortar" solution combining online and High Street retailing.

The launch of the Helloworld brand under the company's then CEO, Rob Gurney, was in large part an attempt to achieve this. While success has proved elusive, Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes, delivering the company's results, foreshadowed "an integrated solution giving our customers the best of both worlds".

If he can deliver on this, and also restore his tour wholesaling arm to profitability, Burnes will have taken giant steps to transform Helloworld's fortunes.

Flight Centre to Ignite growth

IT'S been a busy few weeks for Flight Centre which has announced a number of initiatives including the acquisition of a 49% stake in Gold Coast-based Ignite Travel Group – the parent company of myHolidayCentre, Holiday Exclusives and RewardsCorp. The business, which has about 120 staff, is expected to record \$100 million in TTV in the 2016/17 financial year but details of the purchase price and profitability weren't disclosed.

Flight Centre CEO Graham Turner said the investment would "fast-track the business' growth" as well as delivering new distribution opportunities to suppliers. "In particular, we see strong and rapid growth opportunities for the Exclusives voucher business, which operates in a market that is exciting and growing rapidly," he said. Ignite founder Randall Deer will continue to run the business, with provisions in place for FLT to increase its holding subject to "mutual partnership performance requirements". Other Flight Centre announcements in the last month have included a revamp of its FCM Travel Solutions offering, the launch of an in-house technology incubator called Little Argas, the rebranding of My Adventure Store as 'My Adventure Travel' and a multi-year partnership with entertainment company Live Nation.

Helloworld grows in New Zealand

HELLOWORLD has expanded its network across the Tasman, with NZ's World Travellers Group switching its supply agreement from Flight Centre to Helloworld after six years. The deal adds 36 retail and mobile travel businesses across New Zealand's North and

BUSINESS MONITOR

OUTBOUND MARKET

Top 10 destinations, July 2016

Destination	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jun 16/ Jul 16	Trend Jul 15/ Jul 16
	000	000	000	%	%
Indonesia	112.2	108.9	120.0	+1.0	+23.3
New Zealand	107.0	108.4	104.4	+0.0	+0.9
USA	89.0	90.6	90.8	+0.9	+5.6
UK	47.7	47.2	65.6	-0.8	-3.9
Thailand	46.7	45.8	50.3	+0.3	-1.2
Singapore	32.0	32.6	36.3	+1.0	+5.3
Fiji	27.3	28.0	32.7	+0.6	-4.7
China	36.7	36.4	27.2	-0.5	+2.2
Malaysia	21.7	22.1	24.2	+1.0	+7.0
Italy	16.6	16.6	22.3	+2.3	+8.4
All outbound	831.8	836.3	890.6	+0.4	+6.0

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

INBOUND MARKET

Top 10 sources, July 2016

Source	Trend	Seasonally Adjusted	Original	Trend Jun 16/ Jul 16	Trend Jul 15/ Jul 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

South Islands to HLO, with Helloworld CEO Andrew Burnes confirming it was expected to lift the group's top-line annual TTV by more than \$90 million.

The addition will be a welcome fillip to Helloworld which touted a "stabilisation of agent network numbers" in its annual results presentation. The figures revealed that effective June 2016 there were 282 fully branded Helloworld agencies across Australia and New Zealand – a net drop of just three year-on-year. Members under the combined Corporate, Associate and independent My Travel Group banners numbered 1,301 at the end of the financial year, a decline of 107 over the last 12 months. However, the company noted this drop included the departure of 53 United Travel Group agents in New Zealand, as well as the termination of 36 Countrylink Rail offices which recorded total combined sales of just \$100,000 during the year - or an average of just \$2,778 each.

Crystal's big Australian plans

CRYSTAL Cruises will open its new dedicated Australian office in Sydney on 01 January 2017 with an initial staff complement numbering 13 – but with capacity to double that figure over the next few years. The operation will be headed up by Karen Christensen, with Crystal's global CEO Edie Rodriguez effusive about the prospects for the brand in Australasia during a visit down under last month for the Australian Cruise Association conference.

The Sydney office, which takes over from long-time Crystal GSA Wiltrans International, will promote the full range of Crystal product including tour operation Crystal Luxury Air, the on-board Crystal Residences, Crystal River Cruises and Crystal Yacht Cruises. Rodriguez

MAGNIFICENT MONACO!



IT'S been an exceptionally busy few weeks for Atout France, which hosted a number of lavish events in connection with its bi-annual French Travel Workshops. Scores of suppliers flew from France to participate in the showcase which also included several extravaganzas such as a Soiree Monaco, highlighting the luxurious Mediterranean enclave.

The Atout France team is pictured above at the event which was hosted courtesy of Air France and China Southern Airlines at the Sofitel on Collins in Melbourne. A three course gourmet dinner was created and prepared by Michelin star chef Marcel Ravin, naturally complemented by Perrier Jouet Champagne and fine wines.

told *travelBulletin* the appetite for luxury product was unabated, with the brand's major shareholder Genting Hong Kong "extremely supportive" of Crystal's rapid growth plans. She noted that until the end of the year Wiltrans would continue to represent Crystal. "It's business as usual," Rodriguez said, paying tribute to Diane Patrick and her team who have looked after the brand locally for its entire 26 year history.

Record for Travellers Choice

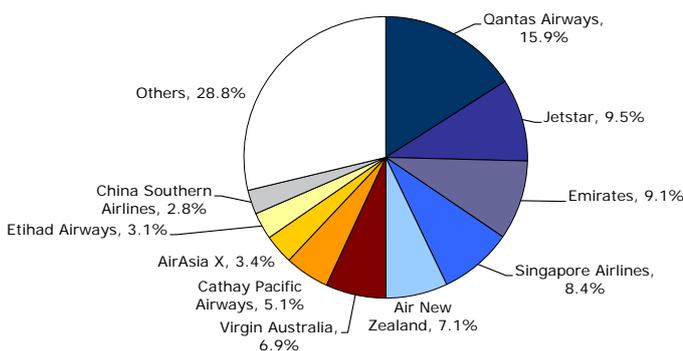
TRAVELLERS Choice members are sharing in the group's success, with the network reporting a record \$2.1 million pre-tax operating profit for the year to 30 June – an increase of 13%. Because of the way the group is structured, 95% of this figure will be

Continues over page

BUSINESS MONITOR

INTERNATIONAL AIR MARKET SHARE

International passengers by major airline – year ended June 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

Continues from previous page

returned directly to Travellers Choice agencies who remain the company's sole shareholders, said managing director Christian Hunter. He said all members would receive a 25c per share dividend, with the remainder of the profit distributed via trading rebates based on sales support for preferred partners.

It was the fourth consecutive record financial result for the company, with Hunter saying it was "underpinned by members' unwavering commitment to maximising the value of preferred agreements" along with strong cost discipline within the Travellers Choice head office in Perth. Income overall was up 17%, with "solid organic growth" complemented by strong contributions from a number of high-calibre new recruits. *TravelBulletin* will be reporting from the Travellers Choice Shareholders' Conference which takes place in Canberra next month.

ACCC acts on OTAs – but is it enough?

THE Australian Competition and Consumer Commission made a big noise last month when it announced the outcome of a review of contracts between Australian hotels and online accommodation giants Expedia and Booking.com. The OTAs had reached an agreement to amend price and availability parity clauses in the contracts, with the ACCC claiming the pact would "remove barriers to price competition" by allowing properties to offer lower rates to clients booking over the phone or as walk-ins, as well as to customer loyalty groups.

However the accommodation sector wasn't pleased with the outcome, saying the agreement did not go far enough to

protect hotels and consumers. In particular, Expedia and Booking.com are still able to prohibit hotels from offering lower rates online – which is clearly a key issue. Tourism Accommodation Australia ceo Carol Giuseppi said "We advised the ACCC it should have insisted that OTAs allow hotels to set their own rates online... smaller hotels in particular feel very vulnerable to the power of the global OTA duopoly".

Gurney's rise and rise

ROB Gurney, former Qantas, Helloworld and Emirates senior executive continued his relentless climb to the lofty heights of the global travel industry last month when he was appointed as the next global CEO of the oneworld airline alliance. Gurney takes over from Bruce Ashby this month, moving from his previous role with Emirates as senior vice-president The Americas, where he has helped successfully rebuff attempts by the big three US incumbents United, Delta and American Airlines who formed the Partnership for Open & Fair Skies to, ultimately unsuccessfully, lobby against the US growth of Emirates, Etihad and Qatar Airways.

Gurney's impeccable political skills will place him in good stead for the new role where he leads oneworld – a coalition which includes rivals American Airlines and Qatar Airways alongside Qantas, British Airways, Malaysian Airlines, Finnair, Japan Airlines and more. "In many ways, this move feels like coming home," he said. It's understood another applicant for the oneworld role was Virgin Australia chief commercial officer Judith Crompton, who was last month appointed to the newly created position of CEO, Travel and Aviation at Cover-More Travel Insurance.

Travel Corporation fly free coup

THE Travel Corporation brought the concept of "Fly Free to Europe" to a new height last month when it announced flights would be included with earlybird bookings of its land touring products for 2017. Previously exclusively the domain of river cruising products which in many cases have higher margins to support such offers, the expansion of Fly Free to Insight, Trafalgar and even Contiki for 2017 is certain to have caused consternation among the Travel Corporation's key competitors.

TTC has partnered with Cathay Pacific, Etihad and Qatar Airways to offer the specials which are valid across the season on longer tours. Fare levels of \$699 apply to mid-length tours (varying according to brand) while the shortest tours can be complemented with \$999 return economy fares. Trafalgar global ceo Gavin Tollman told *travelBulletin* the initiative is an example of the constant innovation within the Travel Corporation, and urged travel agents to seize the opportunity afforded by the offers. "Clients are looking to you for confidence," he said, with the Trafalgar product an "extraordinary way to discover a destination".

Virgin rejigs international routes to meet demand

VIRGIN Australia is making the most of its alliance with Etihad Airways, with the carriers optimising their international networks out of Australia to access new markets. Last month Virgin announced the launch of thrice weekly flights between Perth and Abu Dhabi – the first long haul operations to be flown by the VA fleet of A330 aircraft. At the same time,

BUSINESS MONITOR

MOST POPULAR WEBSITES IN TRAVEL

July 2016, compared with June 2016

Rank	Position	Visits Share	Relative Diff	Rank
Website	Jul 16	Jul to Jun	Jun 16	
Webjet Australia	15.95	+0.00	1	
Expedia Australia	10.45	+8.71	2	
Wotif.com	8.46	+2.63	4	
Skyscanner Australia	7.61	-7.08	3	
Flight Centre	7.28	-0.61	5	
Velocity Frequent Flyer	3.04	-30.71	6	
Lastminute.com.au	2.83	-3.17	7	
Luxury Escapes	2.38	+12.28	8	
Cheap Flight Aus & NZ	1.89	-0.19	9	
FareCompare	1.18	+4.58	*	

Source: Hitwise, a division of Connexity

* denotes not in top 10 previous month

INTERNATIONAL AIR ROUTES

Top 10 city pairs (at June 2016)

City pair	Passengers	Passengers	% of	% change
	YE Jun 15	YE Jun 16	total	15/16
Auckland-Sydney	1,505,357	1,582,520	4.4	+5.1
Singapore-Sydney	1,385,345	1,473,709	4.1	+6.4
Singapore-Melbourne	1,163,293	1,297,679	3.6	+11.6
Auckland-Melbourne	1,097,993	1,168,391	3.2	+6.4
Singapore-Perth	1,005,642	1,128,750	3.1	+12.2
Hong Kong-Sydney	928,850	1,047,600	2.9	+12.8
Auckland-Brisbane	954,546	968,841	2.7	+1.5
Los Angeles-Sydney	898,252	923,325	2.5	+2.8
Denpasar-Perth	916,488	856,676	2.4	-6.5
Kuala Lumpur-Melbourne	861,305	798,248	2.2	-7.3
Top 10 city pairs	10,717,071	11,245,739	31.0	+4.9
Other city pairs	23,147,566	24,983,095	69.0	+7.9
ALL CITY PAIRS	33,864,637	36,228,834	100.0	+7.0

Source: BITRE

SHARE PRICES

at September 21, 2016

Flight Centre (FLT)	\$35.35
Helloworld (HLO)	\$4.65
Webjet (WEB)	\$10.92
Disruptive Investments (DVI)	\$0.13
Qantas (QAN)	\$3.17
Virgin Australia (VAH)	\$0.235
Ardent Leisure (AAD)	\$2.82
Air New Zealand (AIZ)	\$1.82
Auckland International Airport (AIA)	\$7.00
Sydney Airport (SYD)	\$6.85
Corporate Travel Management (CTD)	\$17.55
Cover-More Insurance (CVO)	\$1.395
Regional Express (REX)	\$0.75
Sealink (SLK)	\$4.51

TRAFALGAR CELEBRATES 70



TRAFALGAR last month treated its top performing agents to an exclusive experience in Sydney. The lucky guests were flown in from around the country to attend a VIP performance of Cirque du Soleil, with the occasion hosted by Trafalgar global ceo Gavin Tollman. As well as launching the guided holiday specialist's 2017 Europe/UK program he also highlighted Trafalgar's 70th birthday which is being celebrated next year.

Pictured from left are Trafalgar global ceo Gavin Tollman, Helloworld head of branded networks Julie Primmer, Trafalgar Australia md Matt Cameron-Smith and The Travel Corporation Australia/NZ chief John Veitch.

Travel Daily HEADLINES

- 19 Aug** #RIPtheSticker says AFTA
- 19 Aug** Cover-More profits slide
- 22 Aug** TravelManagers new TVC
- 22 Aug** QFFF to earn at Woolies
- 23 Aug** Air NZ to boost premium
- 23 Aug** Tigerair Canberra launch
- 24 Aug** Record result for Qantas
- 25 Aug** FCTG TTV up, profit down
- 25 Aug** ACCC proposes reauthorising VA/SQ pact for five years
- 25 Aug** HLO reports \$3.45 million annual profit
- 26 Aug** Helloworld blasts OTAs
- 26 Aug** Air NZ's record results
- 26 Aug** CTM earnings up 60%
- 29 Aug** Axis Travel payout climbs
- 30 Aug** VA Econ Space+ launch
- 31 Aug** Inbound tourism up 10%
- 01 Sep** EK, SQ launch earlybirds
- 01 Sep** Gurney to lead oneworld
- 02 Sep** OTAs drop parity clauses
- 02 Sep** Hole leaves Insider Journeys
- 05 Sep** QF execs reap the benefits
- 05 Sep** MU to fly Hangzhou-SYD
- 06 Sep** Travellers Choice record
- 06 Sep** Emirates SYD triple threat
- 07 Sep** Hayes leaving AAT Kings
- 08 Sep** Insight launches fly free
- 08 Sep** Sydney second cruise slot
- 09 Sep** Bali tops outbound stats
- 12 Sep** Crystal set for AU/NZ push
- 13 Sep** LayAway Travel launches
- 14 Sep** Helloworld confirms addition of World Travellers Group
- 14 Sep** Jetstar launches flex fares
- 15 Sep** Magellan rises above all
- 15 Sep** Flight Centre Ignite buy
- 16 Sep** Qantas adds new route from MEL to Japan
- 16 Sep** Trafalgar set for growth
- 16 Sep** CLIA and ACA team up?
- 19 Sep** Crompton appointed to senior role with Cover-More
- 19 Sep** Luxperience comes of age
- 20 Sep** VA adds PER-AUH, MEL-LAX
- 21 Sep** WTAAA blasts IATA plan

Virgin is pulling out of the Sydney-Abu Dhabi market, redirecting the 777s used to operate that route to a new Melbourne-Los Angeles operation. VA's Brisbane-Los Angeles flights will reduce to six weekly, while Etihad will replace VA's thrice weekly SYD-AUH services with its own metal, maintaining the route as a double daily operation.

The move reflects ongoing strong demand

for travel to the USA, enabling VA to offer flights from all three east coast capitals of Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to Los Angeles. At the same time Etihad's existing Perth-Abu Dhabi route will be bolstered by the extra VA frequencies – simultaneously giving additional options for Western Australian passengers to travel to the USA via Abu Dhabi which offers a convenient pre-clearance option.

AUSTRALIAN AIRPORTS

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

Airport	Passengers YE Jun 15	Passengers YE Jun 16	% of total	% change 16/15
Sydney	13,508,656	14,542,194	40.1	+7.7
Melbourne	8,410,941	9,278,994	25.6	+10.3
Brisbane	5,143,336	5,322,121	14.7	+3.5
Perth	4,184,977	4,271,111	11.8	+2.1
Gold Coast	878,957	1,022,479	2.8	+16.3
Adelaide	933,477	857,202	2.4	-8.2
Cairns	488,379	609,790	1.7	+24.9
Darwin	292,218	258,467	0.7	-11.5
Townsville [^]	n/a	30,584	0.1	n/a
Sunshine Coast*	10,228	16,935	0.0	+65.6
Norfolk Island	11,845	10,758	0.0	-9.2
Port Hedland~	1,623	8,199	0.0	405.2
All Airports	33,864,637	36,228,834	100.0	+7.0

^{*} 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 August 2016

New South Wales	995
Victoria	709
Queensland	596
Western Australia	297
South Australia	227
Australian Capital Territory	51
Tasmania	42
Northern Territory	23
TOTAL	2,940

Got something to say?

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

haveyoursay@travelbulletin.com.au



Steve Jones' Say

IT IS often noted how travel is exposed to the vagaries of world events.

Terrorism, economic conditions, political instability, natural disasters and exchange rates all have the ability to dampen demand, and from a shareholders point of view they can also hit the bottom line.

Yet even a cursory analysis of the recent performance of the travel sector shows maybe our hand wringing is misplaced.

There will always be challenges and the issues are real. But what the results have illustrated is not only our almost insatiable desire to travel – we might get spooked for a day or two but the nervousness rarely lingers – but how travel firms have, by and large, coped and adapted during these times of unprecedented uncertainty.

There have been bumps in the road, but most have enjoyed a positive year.

One such bump was encountered, perhaps unexpectedly, by Flight Centre, the industry's money-making machine which reported profit dipping almost 6% to \$345m.

Yet according to MD Graham Turner, that was not so much the result of poor trading conditions, or sales hit by world events, but down to rock bottom airfares.

There is, to put it simply, an oversupply of seats which is putting downward pressure on fares. Great for travellers, not so for margins - although on the flip side cheap deals do stimulate the market.

Over at Helloworld, Andrew and Cinzia Burnes seem to be getting the business into reasonable shape.

One issue addressed by Burnes has been senior level salary with a "realignment of executive remuneration to more appropriate levels" - meaning "pay cut" to you and me.

I thought that was an important statement of intent. You need to pay top dollar for top executive talent, but there's a balance. And in recent years the business lost sight of that by paying exorbitant sums despite the business stumbling along - resulting in disharmony in the ranks.

The industry's other bricks and mortar

retail networks have also fared well.

Magellan continues to prosper, as does Travellers Choice, which reported another record profit. In such a competitive environment, that is no mean feat and testament to the management teams which have instilled a sense of togetherness in their respective networks.

Webjet, every agents' favourite OTA, has continued to grow, and done so – as we all know – while having a dig at its bricks and mortar counterparts.

On that, those TV ads are just appalling. Excruciatingly pompous and unbearably sanctimonious. But, as I've said before, agents have hardly been shy to put the boot in to OTAs over the years, and continue to do so, and they can't have it both ways.

What is clear in the retail sector is that there's room for everyone. It would be wrong to suggest it's all sunshine and roses, and challenging times remain.

But all things considered, the retail landscape is in pretty good shape.

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MAGELLAN CELEBRATES GROWTH AT FIRST-EVER OFFSHORE CONFERENCE

MAGELLAN Travel Group has come a long way since its first inception eight years ago, with chief executive officer Andrew Macfarlane proudly reporting growth in all areas of the business.

“Over the last three years, Magellan has successfully doubled its membership, doubled turnover and tripled profit,” group chief executive officer Andrew Macfarlane told *travelBulletin* at the annual conference which was held in Auckland, New Zealand last month.

In FY16 total transaction value (TTV) climbed from \$860 million in FY14/15 to \$883 million, with total income earned in the year ending in June sitting just over \$10 million.

However, Macfarlane was quick to point out that the final figure would’ve been closer to 15% up on the prior year had suppliers paid on time.

“But it’s still a really strong result,” he said. “And one we’re very proud of”.

The year has seen the group not only grow in profit but also in staff. New to the head office team are David Stafford, Commercial Operations Manager; Scott Darlow, Sydney-based National Manager Corporate and Accountant Jill Keating.

It’s no accident that the group appointed a Sydney-based national manager, said Macfarlane, who explained that part of Scott’s role would be to approach “good

corporate agents to join the group”.

“There was a time that we were happy to be the quiet achievers just ticking away...but we want to be more on the front foot now, stopping short of BDMS knocking on the door and selling you a story.”

And for agents whose three-year contracts are coming to an end with competing networks in the next six months, Macfarlane had but one message: “Our doors are open”.

“Magellan is open for growth and interested in enquiries from agents who think we might be right for them.”

A new marketing and communications manager will also join the head office team later in the year, marking “a significant change in how aggressively [we] will promote Magellan to the travel industry and agents and suppliers alike”.

Around 200 Magellan member agents and preferred suppliers made their way across the ditch last month for the annual event, which was the first-ever offshore conference for the group.

The three-day gathering saw attendees partake in the annual Magellan Masters golf tournament (this year held at The Grange Golf Club), participate in engaging workshops, and celebrate the year’s achievements at the Magellan Gala and Awards Dinner.

Next year’s Magellan conference will be held at the new Crown Towers in Perth.



RAIL EUROPE ABSORBS RAIL PLUS

A SHAKE up of Rail Europe’s presence in Australia and New Zealand has seen the company integrate its wholly-owned offshoot Rail Plus into its global network. In a nod to Rail Plus’ more than two decades of servicing travel agents and trade partners, Rail Europe has taken the identity of the division locally and will trade as Rail Plus in Australia going forward.

The strategy, announced late last month, has big implications for Rail Plus’ existing Chief Executive James Dunne, who has had the boom gates lowered on his career with the firm. Dunne moved across from Singapore Airlines to head up Rail Plus two and a half years ago.

Dunne’s departure, which took effect on

30 September, is part of a consolidation of the business in this region that has also resulted in the doors closing on Rail Europe’s Sydney office. Rail Europe Manager Australasia Ingrid Kocijan will relocate to Melbourne, taking on the newly-created position of Commercial Director.

Kocijan is well versed in the Rail Plus business, having previously been with the company for an eight year term before joining Rail Europe two and a half years ago.

Reporting directly to Rail Europe Chief Executive Fabrice Morel, Kocijan’s expanded capacity will see her responsible for sales development and support across Oceania, working closely with trade partners and Australasia’s major retail groups and

Rail Europe’s general sales agents.

Morel paid homage to Dunne, acknowledging his “outstanding service” and for successfully transforming Rail Plus “in a challenging business environment”.

The local consolidation also sees Joe Fekete step down from the Rail Plus Board after more than five years. Taking Fekete’s place on the Board is Rail Plus Chief Financial Officer, Lachlan McCallum.

The Rail Europe boss added that the integration of Rail Plus into its global network will deliver a more efficient operation, “better positioned than ever before to meet the needs of travel agents and all trade partners across Australia and New Zealand”.



EMIRATES customers can travel through Austria with more ease than ever before after touching down at Vienna International Airport thanks to a new Rail & Fly deal.

The new offering allows passengers flying with the Dubai-based carrier to seamlessly book both flights and Austrian Railway Company tickets in one transaction.

The trains travel to seven main cities across Austria, including Bregenz, Graz, Innsbruck, Klagenfurt, Linz, Salzburg and St. Pölten. Emirates Business and First Class passengers also receive complimentary access to the rail lounges at all major train stations (Wien Hauptbahnhof, Wien Westbahnhof, Wien Meidling, Linz Hauptbahnhof, Salzburg Hauptbahnhof, Innsbruck Hauptbahnhof, Graz Hauptbahnhof, Klagenfurt Hauptbahnhof) in conjunction with their First Class rail ticket.

Not only is the Fly & Rail a convenient way to get around but Emirates guarantees the connections. If any train delay occurs Emirates will honour the passenger's flight ticket, rebook the passenger and also offer hotel accommodation if needed.

Australia Director for the Austrian National Tourist Office, Astrid Mulholland-Licht, said the Fly & Rail deal was a great travel solution for Emirates customers wanting to explore Austria.

"Our theme for this year and next year is journeys – our focus is about travelling through Austria connecting various places of interest and doing that by rail is a fantastic way to do it because our rail system is really efficient and well run," Mulholland-Licht told *travelBulletin*.

Mulholland-Licht said the upcoming Austria Show and Travel Industry Workshops this month would be an ideal time for Aussie travel agents to refresh their understanding not only of the new deal but Austria's tourism offerings overall.

"This is the perfect opportunity for people to update their knowledge on Austria while we actually come through their city," she said.

The show will take place from 6pm to 9pm on 24 October at The Edge, State Library of Queensland in Brisbane, 26 October at Cell Block Theatre in Sydney and lastly on 27 October at The Pavilion Arts Centre in Melbourne.

Twenty-one destination and product experts from both Austria and Australia will be exhibiting during the roadshow. Some of the key Austrian partners attending are Sacher Hotels Vienna and Salzburg, Swarovski Crystal Worlds and the Vienna Tourist Board, while Aussie suppliers featuring Austrian produce include APT, Beyond Travel, Emirates, Insight Vacations, Rail Europe and Viking.

The "entertaining and informative" evenings about all things Austria will be filled with food, wine, musical performances and stand-up comedy. Admission is free and there will be a host of prizes to be won.

■ For any questions about the event or to confirm your attendance, email info@antosyd.org.au.



AFTA VIEW

Jayson Westbury, chief executive AFTA

CREDIT CARD CONFUSION

THERE is no question that the transitional arrangements which the federal government has introduced for credit card surcharging are having an impact on the travel industry. The new transparency arrangements that came into effect from the 1st September 2016 for large businesses have seen a change to the credit surcharge rates that are being applied.

Importantly, these new rules do not only apply to the travel industry, they apply across the entire economy. However, the majority of travel agencies in Australia do not fall into the large business category and as such have not been forced to make the necessary changes as yet. In fact, in many cases these travel agencies would not yet have all the information they need to be able to comply with these changes.

So the problem is how we ensure consumers have the right information to avoid potentially awkward questions at the point of sale when the credit card surcharge rate is being applied.

AFTA has produced considerable information packs and awareness guides which can all be found at

www.afta.com.au/afta/afta-at-work/electronic-payments.

In addition, we continue to do as much as we can to ensure that everyone in the industry has the necessary information available to them to ensure that they know what they should be doing and by when.

This is a complex issue and one that is very important to the travel industry as credit card surcharges are an important component to the sales transactions and revenue mix.

If your business is not deemed to be a large one, you have until the 1st September 2017 to comply with the new rules.

But regardless of this, now is the time to start to plan for the change and to consider how it will be possible for the business to comply with the new rules.

In simple terms the new rules state that the business must only charge the consumer what it "costs" to accept the particular type of credit card being used. This means the rate that the bank is charging the business plus those costs which are deemed to be "allowable".

Allowable elements include; the merchant fee, terminal rental and servicing costs, gateway services, fraud prevention and the cost of third party charge backs which is known as forward delivery risk (FDR).

FDR has been a big deal for the travel industry as far back as the collapse of Ansett and AFTA remains committed to exploring workable solutions to this challenge over the year ahead. As I have said, this is a complex issue and these new regulations for credit card surcharging are worth getting your head around very soon as mistakes could be very costly to your business.

‘Now is the time to start to plan for the change and to consider how it will be possible for the business to comply...’



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TRAVELMANAGERS GOING FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

ONE of the most striking aspects of last month's TravelManagers annual conference in Bangkok was the energy and enthusiasm of the agents in attendance. More than one supplier remarked during the event that they particularly enjoy the TravelManagers conferences because the members, who are effectively home-based small businesspeople, are so clearly engaged with their businesses. That means they are genuinely interested in supplier offerings because in most cases as soon as they're told about a particular product they have a client already in mind who will be interested.

The scale of the conference was also a surprise, with the event supported by seemingly scores of head office employees from TravelManagers' National Partnership Office – also known as the NPO. Indeed three-letter acronyms (TLAs) abound in the TravelManagers terminology, with individual members known as PTMs (personal travel managers) – or cruise specialist PCMs (personal cruise managers), all of whom are looked after by state-based BPMs (business partnership managers).

During the conference general manager Michael Gazal confirmed the group had reached a 500-member milestone this year, making it "Australia's leading and largest personal travel manager network". The company also highlighted the extensive experience of its members, who have on average more than 20 years in the travel industry. Despite continuing to recruit, this figure is not expected to change, with industry experience a key determinant of whether a new member will be accepted into the organisation.

The Bangkok conference had the overarching theme 'Adding Value,' and marked the culmination of a big year during which several key developments were implemented including a network-wide upgrade to the Tramada NextGen back office system, a new in-house SPLASH 'aggregator of aggregators' accommodation search and booking system fully integrated with TravelManagers customer profiles, and

the launch of the TravelManagers smartphone app. Delegates were also thrilled to be given a sneak preview of a new TravelManagers website which will launch shortly – in conjunction with a new "love-themed" video commercial which can be customised with a call to action for each individual member. Members can manage their own online profiles, with the site including a neat map-based feature allowing them to showcase their personal travels. Marketing manager

Jodie Banbury said the campaign would "position TravelManagers to consumers as the most experienced travel network in Australia".

The conference wasn't all business, however. Members enjoyed several fun networking events including an opening night candle ceremony at the Renaissance Bangkok hotel venue, and were also able to make a contribution to Bangkok's needy through a visit to one of the city's biggest slums. This activity was coordinated by charity organisation Hands Across the Water, with the group's inspirational Aussie founder Peter Baines addressing the conference prior to the visit. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as he described the

inspiration for the charity which was born from his involvement as a forensic expert with the Australian Federal Police identifying bodies in the aftermath of the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami.

Heading into the slum the TravelManagers delegates were broken into five groups, each of which undertook different activities such as painting a pre-school, gardening, making toys and repairing tricycles used by disabled people who live in the slum. As well as helping with the day-to-day needs of residents, the visit certainly raised awareness of the poverty and squalor in which the locals live and also included a practical donation from TravelManagers to cover the cost of all the materials used.

The conference wrapped up with a gala dinner where top performers were showcased, while GM Michael Gazal also announced that the 2017 TravelManagers conference would take place in Darwin.

‘The company also highlighted the extensive experience of its members, who have on average more than 20 years in the travel industry’





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SCENIC® METAMORPHOSIS

1986 ● 'Warrambol Scenic Tours' commences Great Ocean Road touring.

1988 ● Rebrands as 'Australian Scenic Tours'

1989 ● Purchases first coach



1993 ● Becomes first touring company to introduce double doors on entire fleet, designed & manufactured by Scenic

1998 ● Rebrands as 'Scenic Tours'

1999 ● Tours to Canada, Alaska & USA introduced; Evergreen Tours purchased



2004 ● First Channel Nine broadcast of Canada's West Coast

2006 ● Scenic Tours begins chartering ships in Europe

2008 ● Scenic 'Space Ships' *Scenic Sapphire* and *Scenic Emerald* debut in Europe



2012 ● *Scenic Tsar*, the first small ship, debuts in Russia

2014 ● Emerald Waterways begins operation

2015 ● Scenic Tours rebrands to 'Scenic'

2016 ● *Scenic Eclipse* revealed; new ships launched on the Duoro and Irrawaddy



Visionaries of the world's first "Discovery Yacht" have come a long way in 30 years. This month, luxury cruise and tour operator Scenic marks three decades in the business. Guy Dundas tells the story so far.

From humble beginnings: coach touring the Great Ocean Road based from Warrambol (above) and package tours to the Melbourne production of *The Phantom of the Opera* back in the day.



FOUNDED in Newcastle by Glen Moroney, Scenic started in 1986 with coach tours operating throughout Australia. In the early 1990s the company expanded to New Zealand, followed by Norfolk Island and Southern Africa in 1998. By the end of the decade Scenic started hosting tours to Canada and Alaska, quickly establishing itself as the leading touring company in the region.

Throughout the early 2000s new destinations across Europe and Russia, throughout Asia and South and Central America became part of Scenic's touring itineraries.

A new and historic chapter commenced in 2008 as Scenic took on the burgeoning world of ship-building. Exclusive, all-inclusive Scenic 'Space-Ships' were launched on Europe's waterways; more akin to floating hotels and it wasn't long before guests were flocking to experience private balconies, world-class dining and butler service.

Over the next seven years Scenic continued to expand its Space Ship fleet as well as

upgrading existing vessels, aspiring to bring the ultimate in luxury to all river cruise guests. This year, Scenic has a grand total of 20 ships sailing across Europe rivers including the Main, Rhine and Danube as well as on the Volga River in Russia. In France alone, Scenic now has ships on the Seine, Bordeaux, Saone and Rhone rivers and this year began sailing through Portugal on the Douro.

This year also marked the debut of Scenic's first foray into Southeast Asia river cruising with vessels on both the Mekong and Irrawaddy rivers.

In 2015, in preparation for yet another chapter of development, Scenic Tours transitioned through a significant rebrand to be identified wholly as 'Scenic' and focused on the sense of wonder guests experience.

And wonder was certainly high on the agenda when Scenic unveiled plans in January for its most ambitious move to date,

SCENIC STAFF SAY

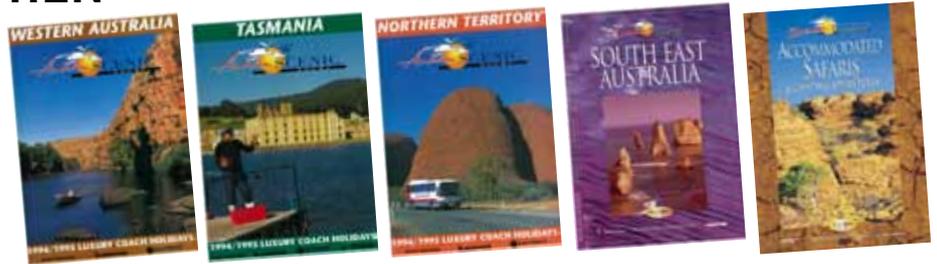
"I've really enjoyed watching the company evolve from a small coach touring business running three-day tours to Phantom of the Opera in Melbourne, into a world-wide

cruising and touring company. I love the product and I love that we focus so hard on providing amazing experiences for our guests. There are always new destinations

coming on board and new ventures like *Scenic Eclipse* to keep the company fresh and dynamic. Having been here since almost the beginning, it's pretty special to me and I'm



THEN



NOW



Scenic Eclipse. The world's first "Discovery Yacht" will set new standards for ocean cruising, taking guests to places previously thought inaccessible. *Scenic Eclipse* is equipped with two on-board helicopters and a seven-seat submarine.

Still completely and proudly Australian-owned, today Scenic has offices around the globe, two sister companies - Evergreen Tours and Emerald Waterways - and at the grand old age of 30, is looking towards an exciting future.

Validating its strength, capabilities and international presence, Scenic is a member of CLIA (Cruise Lines International Association Australasia), IATA (International Air Transport Association) and is ATAP Accredited (Australian Tourism Accreditation Program). Scenic has been the recipient of national and international accolades from the industry and its partners, as well recognised within the industry for its exemplary product and operations.

This year, Glen Moroney was welcomed into the Cruise Lines International Association Hall of Fame for his pioneering work in the rapidly growing river cruise sector.

After 30 years in the business, Scenic is still as passionate about travel and committed to guest satisfaction as it was in 1986. Scenic goes to the Nth degree to ensure its guests have the holiday of a lifetime.

proud of where we have come."

**Sandra Oliver, Operations Co-ordinator,
Europe and Europe River Cruising
(22 years)**

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INTERVIEW

With Scenic founder, Glen Moroney



Why did you start the business, and what was your previous background?

After leaving school I went to university to do a commerce degree and after a break working at Newcastle steelworks to pay for the degree I left in year three without completing the course. My father at that time was involved in property development and after assisting with the redevelopment of Belmont Caravan Park & the Sundowner Hotel near Ipswich I was asked to "see what could be done" at the Riverside Gardens Motel in Warrnambool. The hotel was empty at the time and a previous entertainer that had worked there advised they used to have many coach groups staying for extended periods. As our hotel was well out of town off the main road and didn't have a liquor licence it seemed like the only opportunity so I packaged a tour that stayed six nights at the hotel touring the local sights and then sold it to a number of senior citizen and Probus groups initially in the Newcastle central

coast region and then afterwards to Sydney and beyond.

Can you name some of the biggest decisions you've made in the business?

Certainly signing contracts for our first four river cruise ships for well over AU\$100m was one that stands out. I had no finance at the time but knew the opportunity wouldn't last forever so had to make a tough one. Of course it's worked out well but during the GFC we had our moments.

Did you think 30 years ago the business would be this big?

I don't think we're that big. I'd say in another 30 years we could be a substantial company.

What's a career highlight?

When we launch *Scenic Eclipse*. It'll be truly special. As will a few after that...

All smiles for Tok Tok 2016

THE happiest place in the South Pacific welcomed buyers, suppliers and media for Vanuatu's thirteenth annual Tok Tok travel trade show at Iririki Island Resort & Spa in late August.

Industry partners from Australia, New Caledonia, Fiji, China, the US and Italy attended the event to refresh their knowledge on the destination, exchange ideas and learn about recent developments and upcoming opportunities.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Trade, Tourism, Commerce and Industry, Joe Natuman opened Tok Tok by reiterating the importance of tourism to the island nation; particularly in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Pam which left a path of devastation when it smashed into the islands in March last year.

"This year's Tok Tok is testimony to Vanuatu fully recovering from Tropical Cyclone Pam and pushing ahead to recover the lost business," he said during his opening speech.

"Tourism is the main driver of our economy so thank you everyone for coming here as a testament to growing our economy," he continued.

Speaking exclusively to *travelBulletin* during the expo, Vanuatu Tourism Office's general manager Linda Kalpoi said she was confident the nation's tourism numbers would continue to build after the hit taken by the natural disaster.

Another thorn in the side for the island nation is the poor condition of Port Vila's runway which has led to Air New Zealand and Virgin Australia pulling out of flights on several occasions due to safety concerns.

"If we did not have the issues with the airport's runway we would definitely be making the numbers again. I know for sure we would," Kapoli said.

With plans for a full repair of the runway to be carried out by the end of the year and the rebuilding from the Cyclone a success, Kapoli's outlook is a firmly positive one.

"We have had good feedback from wholesalers that are getting back to 2014 levels," Kalpoi said.

Tok Tok 2016 was drawn to a close with traditional performances, a huge buffet dinner and fireworks.



TOURISM AUS VIEW

John O'Sullivan, managing director Tourism Australia

PARTNERSHIPS KEY TO SUCCESS

THE continued growth of Australian tourism plays an increasingly important role in the economic wellbeing of our country. As a sector, Tourism is now growing faster than the Australian Economy as a whole – it is no longer a potential super industry, its time is now.

Almost 8 million international visitors came to Australia over the last year. Of course inbound tourism growth and aviation capacity go hand in hand. In recent times, we've seen significant annual increases in capacity in some of our key markets, including Japan (19 per cent), China (26 per cent), and the USA (11 per cent).

Increasing aviation capacity in a sustainable way is key to achieving our industry's Tourism 2020 goals, which is why Tourism Australia works so closely with airports and airlines as well as our state and territory tourism partners to ensure supply increases with demand.

This 'Team Australia' approach to aviation development focuses around long term strategic agreements, co-operative marketing partnerships and supporting the development of new routes.

It's an approach that's been critical to the success we've enjoyed in recent years and, I'm proud to say, something we've been recognised for internationally. Tourism Australia recently secured the 'Best Destination Marketing' award for the fourth year running at Routes Asia, the world's leading conference on route development opportunities.

To be considered the best in this field is a great honour, one we share equally with our partners, and for us these accolades are acknowledgment that the 'Team Australia' approach to securing new routes and additional aviation capacity is successful and considered 'best practice'.

In the past 12 months we've generated close to \$80 million in revenue from industry partners, with more over 30% of this delivered through significant aviation agreements. This includes international airlines such as Air New Zealand, Air China, China Eastern, China Southern, Etihad Airways and Singapore Airways. And, closer to home, Qantas and Virgin Australia. It's great to be working with

Australia's two leading airlines once again. Both carriers are critical to the overall success of the Australian Tourism industry, both domestically and internationally. What's exciting about these agreements is our focus on data sharing which will allow us to target consumers with the right message at the right time, supported by a great aviation offer.

Tourism Australia now enjoys co-operative marketing relationships with most of the largest international carriers serving Australia from its key tourism markets. In fact, last year saw Tourism

‘Increasing aviation capacity in a sustainable way is key to achieving our industry's Tourism 2020 goals...’

Australia work with 20 airlines, resulting in more than A\$40 million dollars being collectively invested in long term strategic agreements for joint marketing campaigns.

Our aviation partnerships are supported by Tourism Australia's work with the international travel trade. We now have more than 22,000 agents worldwide become qualified 'Aussie Specialists', utilising our newly relaunched platform. In Asia we have established a Key Distribution Partner network across China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and India. We maintain a strong Australian presence at key travel events such as ITB, WTM and Corroboree events, and have launched important partnerships with OTAs such as Expedia, Alitrip and Make My Trip. Last year alone, Tourism Australia and our KDP partners jointly spend over \$30 million in promoting Australia.

Partnership agreements of this scale secure significant funds towards our international marketing and distribution activities. It means we have more money to do what we do best – promote our country through our global 'There's Nothing Like Australia' marketing campaign.



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* Pictures shown are Premium Economy Class on Air Canada's B787 Dreamliner.

The last month has seen Australia's publicly listed travel companies release their annual reports, providing a glimpse into the details of their operations – including the sometimes lofty salary packages of their key management personnel. In *travelBulletin's* annual Million Dollar Club wrap-up, Bruce Piper has combed through the fine print to bring you the details of the big industry earners for 2015/16.

The Million



THE 2016 MILLION DOLLAR CLUB

Graham Turner	Flight Centre	\$23,846,620	
Alan Joyce	Qantas	\$13,169,089	
David Seargeant	Event Hospitality	\$5,613,743	
Christopher Luxon	Air New Zealand	\$5,470,238	
Jamie Pherous	Corporate Travel Mgt	\$4,793,647	
Gareth Evans	Qantas	\$4,386,534	
Jayne Hrdlicka	Qantas	\$4,322,039	
Lesley Grant	Qantas	\$2,871,896	
John Borghetti	Virgin Australia	\$2,857,747	
Tino La Spina	Qantas	\$2,401,420	
Andrew David	Qantas	\$2,373,314	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$2,210,000	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,890,000	
John Guscic	Webjet	\$1,696,480	

dollar club

Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,670,000	
Jeff Ellison	SeaLink	\$1,457,024	
Bob East	Mantra Group	\$1,429,983	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,410,000	
Chris Galanty	Flight Centre	\$1,378,522	
Melanie Waters-Ryan	Flight Centre	\$1,327,511	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,320,000	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,280,000	
Dean Smith	Flight Centre	\$1,238,825	
Robert Sharp	Tigerair	\$1,060,759	
Merren McArthur	Virgin Australia	\$1,041,258	
Unnamed	Air New Zealand	\$1,040,000	
Gary Hammes	Virgin Australia	\$1,024,974	
Laura Ruffles	Corporate Travel Mgt	\$1,021,826	

NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS

Andrew Burnes	Helloworld	\$655,457	
Cinzia Burnes	Helloworld	\$651,444	
Judith Crompton	Virgin Australia	\$900,000	

NOTE

To make it easier to compare the salaries of the top execs, we worked out how many \$500,000 sports cars each could buy with their 2015/16 earnings.

SKIN In the game appears to be the theme for this year's travel industry Million Dollar Club. While a seven figure base salary might be nice, not one of the travel agent members of the club reached the magic million-dollar milestone on their regular income alone. In fact a key trademark of all the big earners for 2015/16 was that they took home a significant chunk of their pay packets in the form of dividends.

This year we have analysed the figures based on industry sector. Given the variety of operators in the industry and what they do we thought it was probably better to group suppliers such as airlines and hoteliers separately to those occupying other parts of the distribution chain, such as travel agents.

TRAVEL AGENTS

Across all sectors the overwhelming leader of the pack this year was Flight Centre founder and managing director Graham 'Skroo' Turner. His total remuneration amounted to a whopping \$23.8 million – easily eclipsing all the other players including the highly paid Qantas chief Alan Joyce and his rival at Virgin, John Borghetti, not to mention Air New Zealand CEO Christopher Luxon.

Interestingly, however, looking at just regular monthly income, Turner's base salary of \$380,000 was the lowest of everyone in the Million Dollar Club this year. He did receive a \$294,000 bonus which lifted his salary to \$675,000 – but that was mere pocket change considering the \$1.52 per share in dividends declared by Flight Centre during the year. Turner holds more than 15 million Flight Centre shares, meaning his dividend cheques amounted to \$23.1 million – a very tidy sum in anyone's terms. Flight Centre chief operating officer Melanie

Waters-Ryan made a return to 'The Club' this year, with a share-based bonus worth more than half a million dollars, while her personal 85,725 share stake in the company boosted her income by over \$130,000 meaning her total income was more than \$1.3 million for the year. Other Flight Centre staffers in the 2016 Million Dollar Club include Chris Galanty, executive general manager Europe and South Africa on \$1.38 million and executive GM The Americas Dean Smith, whose income was \$1.24 million.

On the topic of skin in the game, much has been made of the Helloworld merger with Andrew and Cinzia Burnes' AOT group which took effect from February this year. The massive deal saw the Burnes' definitely put their money where their mouth is, with the pair now holding 40% of Helloworld. That gives them a strong incentive to produce share price growth and dividends – and had an immediate back pocket effect on other senior staff. As the Helloworld annual report delicately put it, the Board has implemented changes to remuneration strategy. "One key factor has been to right size the level of executive remuneration for an organisation of our size," the report said. That was reflected in lower pay for Andrew Burnes as CEO and Cinzia Burnes as executive director, with both receiving just over \$210,000 each since assuming their new roles in February. Helloworld also paid its first dividend in some years, with a 2c per share payment boosting the Burnes' combined total income by almost \$900,000 based on their 43 million shares. However given they were only running Helloworld for five months, that still wasn't enough to put the pair into the Million Dollar Club this year.

Helloworld's new executive remuneration structure looks to have particularly impacted the future base salary of the company's head

of Air Tickets and QBT, Russell Carstensen who this year took home \$786,000 including a base salary of \$550,000.

The HLO annual report notes that "Russell Carstensen's base salary has been recalibrated... and will be \$450,000 per annum from 1 September 2016". Somewhat easing the pain would have been a \$233,000 bonus he received for 2015/16 – a short term incentive awarded in 2015 but only paid

‘Russell Carstensen's base salary has been recalibrated... and will be \$450,000 per annum...’

last year. Carstensen's 84,000 share stake in Helloworld did boost his total package this year – but only by \$1,685.

Other big earners at Helloworld in 2015/16 included former CEO Elizabeth Gaines who took home \$537,000 including a \$187,000 bonus relating to the successful completion of the merger with AOT. Jenny Macdonald, Helloworld's former chief financial officer was paid \$693,000 including bonuses totalling \$168,000. The company noted its executive remuneration expenses are "anticipated to be substantially reduced from 2016" both as the result of a smaller senior management team and the salary realignment.

Corporate Travel Management founder and CEO Jamie Pherous was another big earner this year, coming in behind Graham Turner in second place in the travel agency Million Dollar Club. Pherous, who has presided over massive growth at CTM, had a base salary of \$459,000 plus a \$250,000 bonus giving him a take-home salary of just over \$700,000. But again Pherous has a significant stake

TRAVEL AGENT TOP EARNERS

Name	Company	Base salary	Other payments	Share incentives	Total salary	Dividends	Total income
Graham Turner	Flight Centre MD	\$380,692	\$294,308		\$675,000	\$23,171,620	\$23,846,620
Jamie Pherous	Corporate Travel Management MD	\$459,302	\$249,345		\$708,647	\$4,085,000	\$4,793,647
John Guscic	Webjet MD	\$815,000	\$602,500	\$118,150	\$1,535,650	\$160,830	\$1,696,480
Chris Galanty	Flight Centre EGM Europe & Sth Africa	\$407,786	\$217,117	\$750,576	\$1,375,479	\$3,043	\$1,378,522
Melanie Waters-Ryan	Flight Centre chief operating officer	\$380,705	\$295,295	\$521,209	\$1,197,209	\$130,302	\$1,327,511
Dean Smith	Flight Centre EGM The Americas	\$549,279	\$381,861	\$304,861	\$1,236,001	\$2,824	\$1,238,825
Laura Ruffles	Corporate Travel Mgt COO	\$516,404	\$388,881	\$92,426	\$997,711	\$24,115	\$1,021,826
Russell Carstensen	Helloworld gp GM Air Tickets & QBT	\$549,541	\$237,300		\$786,841	\$1,685	\$788,526
Andrew Burnes	Helloworld CEO	\$202,873	\$11,210		\$214,083	\$441,374	\$655,457
Cinzia Burnes	Helloworld executive director	\$202,873	\$11,210		\$214,083	\$437,361	\$651,444

AIRLINE TOP EARNERS

Name	Company	Base salary	Other payments	Share incentives	Total salary	Dividends	Total income
Alan Joyce	Qantas CEO	\$2,106,000	\$3,264,000	\$7,590,000	\$12,960,000	\$209,089	\$13,169,089
Christopher Luxon	Air New Zealand CEO	\$1,470,000	\$1,737,400	\$1,508,500	\$4,715,900	\$754,338	\$5,470,238
Gareth Evans	Qantas International CEO	\$981,000	\$1,024,000	\$2,363,000	\$4,368,000	\$18,534	\$4,386,534
Jayne Hrdlicka	Jetstar CEO	\$981,000	\$939,000	\$2,395,000	\$4,315,000	\$7,039	\$4,322,039
Lesley Grant	Qantas Loyalty CEO	\$824,000	\$834,000	\$1,210,000	\$2,868,000	\$3,896	\$2,871,896
John Borghetti	Virgin Australia CEO	\$1,950,000	\$1,263,497		\$2,857,747		\$2,857,747
Tino La Spina	Qantas CFO	\$831,000	\$834,000	\$717,000	\$2,382,000	\$19,420	\$2,401,420
Andrew David	Qantas domestic CEO	\$831,000	\$798,000	\$703,000	\$2,332,000	\$41,314	\$2,373,314
Air NZ executives - Unclear who earns what here, but these figures possibly relate to the airline's senior executive team - listed on Air New Zealand website as Cam Wallace, chief commercial officer, chief financial officer Rob McDonald, chief operations officer Bruce Parton, chief flight operations and safety officer Captain David Morgan, chief marketing and customer officer Mike Tod and Stephen Jones, chief strategy, networks and alliances officer.					\$2,210,000		\$2,210,000
					\$1,890,000		\$1,890,000
					\$1,670,000		\$1,670,000
					\$1,410,000		\$1,410,000
					\$1,320,000		\$1,320,000
					\$1,280,000		\$1,280,000
					\$1,040,000		\$1,040,000
Robert Sharp	Tigerair Australia CEO	\$615,000	\$445,759		\$1,060,759		\$1,060,759
Merren McArthur	Virgin Aust GP exec regional	\$565,000	\$476,258		\$1,041,258		\$1,041,258
Gary Hammes	VA chief operating officer	\$644,046	\$380,928		\$1,024,974		\$1,024,974
Judith Crompton	VA chief commercial officer	\$580,000	\$320,767		\$900,767		\$900,767

in CTM – 21.5 million shares in fact, and the company paid total dividends of 19c per share meaning he topped up his income by a cool \$4.08 million, giving him a total package of almost \$4.8 million. The company's global chief operating officer Laura Ruffles also just scraped into the Club this year with a base salary of \$516,000 a \$300,000 bonus and other extras taking her package to \$997,000 – while her 127,000 shares earned another \$24,000 on top meaning her total income was \$1.02 million.

The other major Australian listed travel agency is Webjet, and CEO John Guscic was well and truly in the Million Dollar Club this year. Guscic had the highest base salary among all of his listed travel agency CEO peers, with a figure of \$815,000. During the year he was also paid bonuses

and other add-ons which brought his total package to \$1.56 million. But again he also has more than 1.1 million shares which received a 14.5c dividend in total, adding another \$160,000 to his income for the year and taking it to just under \$1.7 million. Expect that to change significantly next year, after the Webjet board implemented an arrangement whereby the company has provided Guscic with a \$1.5 million non-recourse loan to allow him to exercise previously granted options. "The loan was for the specific purpose of assisting the Managing Director to build and retain a progressive equity interest in the Company and therefore provide a vital component of long term retention and an alignment of long term shareholder values," the Webjet annual report confirms.

AIRLINES

Much has been made in mainstream media of Alan Joyce's pay packet, which this year soared to more than \$13 million. Much of the increase can be attributed to the carrier's transformation which has in turn boosted the Qantas share price and saw it pay a dividend for the first time in many years. Qantas also shared the spoils with many of its employees and it seems somewhat churlish to begrudge Joyce the fruits of his labour. He was the highest paid airline executive in the Million Dollar Club, with a base salary of \$2.1 million, a very healthy \$3.26 million bonus based on achieving key performance indicators, and share-based payments amounting to a further \$7.6 million giving

Continues over page

OTHER LISTED TRAVEL COMPANIES TOP EARNERS

Name	Company	Base salary	Other payments	Share incentives	Total salary	Dividends	Total
David Seargeant	Event Hospitality MD	\$1,950,692	\$2,004,273	\$1,419,338	\$5,374,303	\$239,440	\$5,613,743
Jeff Ellison	SeaLink CEO	\$469,702	\$317,529	\$6,822	\$794,053	\$662,971	\$1,457,024
Bob East	Mantra CEO	\$612,516	\$564,933	\$150,970	\$1,328,419	\$101,564	\$1,429,983
Peter Edwards	Cover-More group CEO	\$739,130	\$207,399		\$946,529	\$35,191	\$981,720
Norman Arundel	Rydges Hotels and Resorts MD	\$468,692	\$282,346	\$157,073	\$908,111	\$30,488	\$938,599

Continues from previous page

him a total package of \$12.96 million. Again, Joyce has a not inconsiderable shareholding in Qantas of 2.9 million shares, meaning the 7c per share dividend netted him a further \$209,000 bringing the CEO's total income from Qantas to \$13.2 million.

Other Qantas executives also did well, with chief financial officer Tino La Spina, head of domestic Andrew David, head of International Gareth Evans, Loyalty CEO Lesley Grant and Jetstar chief Jayne Hrdlicka also all ending up firmly in the Million Dollar Club this year. Gareth Evans and Jayne Hrdlicka were the leaders of this pack with \$4.3 million packages, both significantly fattened by performance-based bonuses and incentives. Grant took home a total of \$2.8 million, followed by La Spina on \$2.4 million and David on \$2.37 million for the year. Again all these executives have shareholdings in the company meaning the Qantas dividend saw them top up their incomes by amounts varying from \$7,000 (Hrdlicka) through to \$40,000 (David).

Air New Zealand is listed both in Australia and New Zealand, where the rules about disclosure of executive remuneration are slightly different. CEO Christopher Luxon received a base salary of NZ\$1.47 million plus a further \$1.6 million bonus and other payments which took his package to NZ\$4.7 million for the year. Again he has a considerable Air New Zealand stake amounting to almost 1.7 million shares meaning the carrier's healthy 45c per share saw this boosted by a further \$754,000 taking his

income to NZ\$5.47 million for the year.

Luxon is the only senior Air NZ executive to have his payments specifically identified, with the Air NZ report instead tabulating the other top earners anonymously. Within the carrier there are seven New Zealand-based senior executives in the Million Dollar Club, with payments ranging from NZ\$2.2 million down to \$1.04 million. It is not possible to identify who these are, but we can speculate - the Air NZ corporate website identifies the most senior roles as being held by chief sales and commercial officer Cam Wallace, chief financial officer Rob McDonald, chief operations officer Bruce Parton, chief flight operations and safety officer Captain David Morgan, chief marketing and customer officer Mike Tod and Stephen Jones, chief strategy, networks and alliances officer.

Finally the other listed airline with executives in the Million Dollar Club is of course Virgin Australia. The carrier's annual report, released just before this issue of *travelBulletin* went to print, indicates CEO John Borghetti took home a healthy \$2.86 million. It's been a big year for Borghetti, and he well and truly earned every penny of it as he managed a board in transition, significant new shareholders and the carrier's capital restructure - but with Virgin Australia not declaring a dividend last year he didn't get any additional income from his 1.9 million share stake in the airline. There have also been significant changes in Virgin Australia's senior ranks in recent weeks with the departure of Judith Crompton who took home \$900,000 last year. Other Virgin Australia Million Dollar Club members include Merren

McArthur, Group Executive regional and cargo whose package was worth \$1.04 million, chief operating officer Gary Hammes (also departing) who earned \$1.02 million and Tigerair Australia chief Robert Sharp who took home \$1.06 million.

OTHER LISTED TRAVEL COMPANIES

The rest of our travel Million Dollar Club members come from a mixed bag of industry suppliers, including hoteliers, insurance companies, transport operators and attractions. Top of the list was Jeff Ellison, CEO of SeaLink Travel Group who presides over the company's portfolio of Kangaroo Island tour operations, Captain Cook Cruises on Sydney Harbour and other ferry services around the country. Ellison had a base salary of \$469,000 topped up with bonuses and other payments meaning his salary package amount to \$794,000 for the year. However he also holds more than five million SeaLink shares which each attracted a 12c dividend in 2015/16, boosting his income to \$1.46 million for the year.

Mantra Group CEO Bob East was also in The Club, with a base salary of \$612,000 and other payments which took his package to \$1.3 million. On top of this his 1 million plus shareholding netted a further \$101,000 in dividends so he came in with a total of \$1.43 million. Event Hospitality, parent company of Rydges Hotels and Resorts and NSW ski resort Thredbo, changed its name from Amalgamated Holdings during the year, with CEO David Seargeant taking home \$5.6 million for the year as he oversaw the group's diverse portfolio. Rydges MD Norman Arundel was just outside the Million Dollar Club with a total income of \$938,000 for the year.

Former Cover-More Travel Insurance CEO Peter Edwards, who stepped aside in July, also just missed out on being in 'The Club' with a total package including share dividends of \$981,000. Next year it will be intriguing to see whether Judith Crompton, who will next month join Cover-More to head up its Travel and Aviation division, will once again end up in the Million Dollar Club in 2017.

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INDIGO AGREEMENT A GAME-CHANGER

FAST-GROWING Indian low cost carrier IndiGo has signed its first ever GDS agreement, with Travelport to offer the airline's full range of fares and ancillary products to customers worldwide.

Speaking to *travelBulletin* during a visit to Australia late last month, Travelport global CEO Gordon Wilson said he was particularly excited that Travelport had been chosen as the carrier's key distribution partner.

"We're the only GDS that IndiGo is planning to participate in," he said, with the airline selecting Travelport because of the ability to interface via a comprehensive XML Application Programming Interface.

"Effectively this is full-on NDC," Wilson said, "It's not just a list of base fares and availability - we are reaching into their system live to access everything - even the quirky ways they name their meals".

IndiGo is seen as a key addition to Travelport's Rich Content and Branding solutions, with the carrier having around 400 aircraft and an extensive domestic network within the rapidly expanding Indian market - as well as aspirations for international short haul expansion via its A320 fleet.

India is already the third biggest market for GDS in the world, Wilson said, just trailing Germany and the US, "and it won't be long before it's bigger than Germany" he said.

The IndiGo deal, which goes live this month, complements other LCC arrangements that Travelport has in place, including pacts with Easyjet, Ryanair, AirAsia and more.

Travelport's Rich Content and Branding solutions are now used by around 180



airlines including the recent addition of Emirates which now offers its full range of fare families and ancillaries via the system.

Wilson also highlighted other recent developments for Travelport, including the establishment of a new Travelport Digital division which encompasses acquisitions such as mobile app developer MTT and Melbourne-based corporate travel platform Locomote.

Locomote, which is now 95% owned by Travelport, has a new management team and a global vision which is set to see the business rapidly expand both locally and internationally in the coming years.

The operation has now formally rebranded as Travelport Locomote, and offers all of Travelport's content including richly branded

airfares and ancillaries and over 650,000 hotels, allowing travellers to make their own bookings in compliance with company policy.

Locomote has flagged plans to open an office in the UK, while Wilson said the operation will target large TMCs in Australia and New Zealand, and is also working on interfaces to mid office systems with a view to a "full bore launch in January 2017".

On other fronts Wilson said Travelport was "doing very well in the online space," with online continuing to outperform offline by a factor of three to five times.

He said a number of Travelport's major overseas OTA customers were looking to expand their operations into Australia.

"They have a borderless approach," he said.

tramada GDS integration push

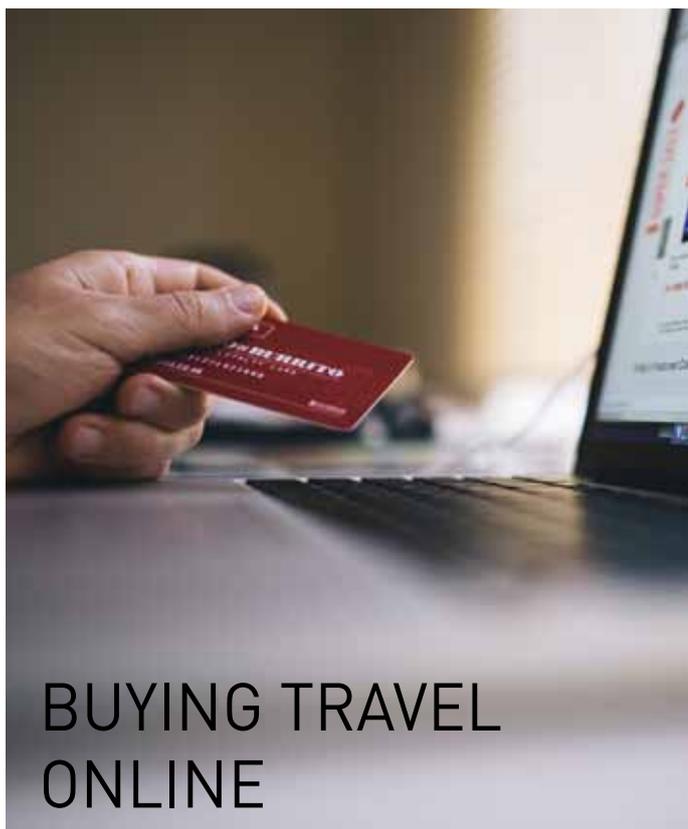
AS TECHNOLOGY requirements continue to evolve and increase in complexity, tightly integrated best-of-breed technology is critical for travel businesses, says technology firm tramada.

Designed to make management of the travel booking process simple, efficient and accurate for companies, tramada has added significant features to better accommodate GDS integration, including Transfer Segments, GDS Profile Integration and Ticketing in GDS.

Agencies connected to Sabre and Galileo can automatically download passive transfer segments into tramada, while Serko Online users can book transfers at the same time as hotels and flights through its partnership with Get Picked Up (GPU) in Australia and Air New Zealand Taxis in New Zealand. Amadeus-connected agencies will also have access to the same tech in a future release.

The newly announced Sabre Profiled Integration adds further value to tramada's automation strategy, with profile and client information automatically imported into the PNR and pushed into the GDS, along with Offline Automation remarks, lessening the need for consultants to toggle between tramada and the GDS.

Improvements in automation in the GDS have also resulted following the integration between Concur Compleat and tramada. As soon as an agent has booked a trip and placed the PNR on a GDS queue, Concur Compleat fulfils ticketing, risk management requirements, passport checks, rental car ID checks, commission values for airlines and private fare code functions and more on the GDS by leveraging data stored within tramada.



BUYING TRAVEL ONLINE

TRAVEL products, including flights and hotels, are the most popular purchases for Australian consumers online, according to insights captured by the Sensis eBusiness Report.

The recently released report is based on the responses of 1,000 small and medium businesses and 800 Australian consumers who were quizzed on their experiences with technology and the way they have adopted it into their lives.

Sixty-two percent of Aussies said they had bought airline tickets online this year, up from 51% last year while hotel reservations also remained one of the most in-demand internet transactions, sitting at 53% in 2016, rising 5% from 48% in 2015.

Airbnb reservations also registered as a prevalent online transaction with 15% of consumers using the disruptive accommodation rental site to secure themselves a place to stay.

Overall, more than seven in 10 Australians participated in online shopping this year, jumping 10 percentage points from last year. These consumers reported that their average spend over the twelve month period was just over \$3,300. Twenty-three percent of these purchases were reported to come from overseas businesses rising on the reported 21% in 2015.

The survey also found that people in regional areas are much less likely to have made online purchases.

Despite the continued rise in e-purchases, Aussies admitted that they were not completely at ease about online transactions. Eighty-five percent said they worried about their private information being stolen or misused and the same number said they held concerns about their credit card details being nabbed.

Sensis commercial director Rob Tolliday said that from a business perspective e-commerce is constantly becoming an increasingly important avenue for purchases, especially in the travel sphere.

"Fewer shops have a physical store front and those that do have to battle with major overseas retailers who have landed in the key shopping strips," he said.

GTA buys MTS globe

TRAVEL content giant GTA has announced the acquisition of European independent inbound supplier MTS Globe, meaning travel agents in Australia and NZ will have access to an expanded range of hotels and resorts in countries such as Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Spain and Mexico.

GTA's local operations include wholesale travel booking site TravelCube, and the new MTS Globe deal significantly boosts the company's presence and offering in sun and beach destinations.

MTS Globe last year generated gross sales of €500 million and is the preferred partner for many European tour operators, offering 12,000 hotels along with a range of customised destination services.

"With this transaction GTA takes an important step towards fulfilling its vision to be the world's easiest travel distribution partner to do business with," said GTA CEO Ivan Walter. "MTS Globe's large portfolio in the Mediterranean beach destinations ideally complements GTA's global accommodation and destination services offering...GTA will become a one stop shop for city and beach products worldwide and the increased portfolio will mean our customers can offer greater choice to travellers."

Walter said MTS Globe as well as its OTS Globe hotel trading division will continue to operate under their own brands and management, with the combined GTA and MTS networks giving suppliers access to new markets.

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LUXPERIENCE 2016 RUNDOWN

THE fifth edition of Luxperience last month was deemed “the most successful yet”, with the luxury travel expo welcoming more than 1,100 visitors through the doors this year.

Luxperience founder Helen Logas told *travelBulletin* that the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

“So many delegates sought me out to tell me this is the best show they have ever been to,” said Logas. “And already initial survey results are showing high satisfaction ratings and high return visits expected for Luxperience 2017; a vast and marked improvement from previous events.”

Around 300 exhibitors from around the world displayed this year, amounting to an impressive 19% increase on floor space from the prior corresponding period.

The event also saw a whopping 52% surge in new exhibitors, giving over 450 travel buyers from Australia and key global markets the opportunity to build new connections and business partners.

In terms of overall buyer registrations this year, the event enjoyed a 20% uptick on the year prior – with 60% of these participants attending Luxperience for the first time.

The MICE-focused Events by Luxperience, now in its second year, “is gaining strength and recognition” remarked Logas, with the program recording an overall increase of 20% in business event specialists and corporate buyers.

The three-day, jam-packed program saw delegates partake in a series of business seminars, hosted by industry experts Samantha Foster of Healing Hotels of the World; Henry Weinreich Roth, a styling & personal brand consultant, and Annabelle Smith from

Social Playground.

“The sessions provided fresh and new perspectives on the topics for the delegates,” said Logas. “Everyone was buzzing and feeling totally inspired after the seminars.”

A glittering gala dinner was held at the Four Points by Sheraton in Sydney on day two of the event, which saw some of the industry’s very best suit-up and don their finest frocks to celebrate their many achievements.

Buyers and Exhibitors were recognised across several categories relating to Luxperience’s themes and values: “inspiring, meaningful, connections”.

This year’s buyer winners included Zanadu, China; Down Under Endeavours, USA and Melbourne-based travel agency FBI Travel.

In the exhibitor category, Alkina Lodge, Great Ocean Road Australia took home an accolade alongside Aqua Expeditions and India’s Orange County Hotels & Resorts.

Tourism New Zealand enjoyed their second consecutive win of the Luxperience Tourism Destination Award, whilst also taking home the Exhibitor Award Best Custom Space above 19m².

On the closing day of the experiential expo, it was announced that next year’s theme would be ‘transformational’, which will be reflected in Luxperience’s positioning for 2017: Through A New Lens.

When asked what attendees can expect next year, Logas replied: “More exhibitors from amazing destinations, more buyers and more MICE – in essence it’s going to be bigger and better”.

Luxperience 2017 will be held next year at Carriageworks from 17-20 September.

‘Already initial survey results are showing high satisfaction ratings and high return visits expected for Luxperience 2017’



AIME targets associations

NEXT year's Asia-Pacific Incentives and Meetings Expo will include a tailored program designed around association planners who will be offered a hosted program for the first time in AIME's 25 year history.

Dubbed 'My Association | My Club' the initiative will give participants a flexible schedule to allow them to explore the show floor, a personalised diary of pre-scheduled appointments with exhibitors, exclusive association networking events and a range of hosting options including complimentary flights, accommodation and transfers.

AIME event director Ian Wainwright said "by tailoring a program to meet the specific needs of association event buyers we are looking to grow this important segment's attendance at AIME 2017".

Prospective association buyer delegates can find out more and register their interest at aime.com.au/associations.

UTS researching business events intangibles

SYDNEY'S University of Technology is leading a global project to measure the "longer term intangible benefits of business events".

The study has been commissioned by the Joint Meetings Industry Council, the global umbrella organisation of meetings sector associations which is calling on its members to nominate case studies for inclusion.

JMIC executive director Rod Cameron said the project would "answer the whole question of how to develop tools that are going to help governments make decisions around investment and policy as it relates to the industry...you need to be able to point to a whole range of outcomes that are going to be of benefit to the community".

As well as the value of business transactions arising from the event legacies could even include medical or technology advancements.

TA supports EEAA stars

TOURISM Australia has signed a new partnership with the Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia, with the tourism marketing body becoming the inaugural Platinum Partner for the EEAA Young Stars program which supports up and coming talent in the business events sector.

Penny Lion, Tourism Australia Executive Manager of Events, said the sector was an important driver of the economy. "We need the industry to be in good hands both now and in the future," she said.



EEAA VIEW

Joyce DiMascio, chief executive
Exhibition and Event Association of Australasia

THE Business Events sector is an important driver of the national economy and I have spent many years spearheading the engagement with Government about the importance of our sector. A lot of what I do on behalf of our industry is to communicate to a broad range of stakeholders why it is important to have a vibrant Business Events sector.

In the Federal Government environment, it's a case of steady and slow wins the race as no Government or Opposition appears to be in favour of pouring money into programs that specifically support our sectors.

We must keep up the engagement, continually making the business case for why it is important to create a business and policy environment that allows our sector to prosper.

It's been more than five years since I joined EEAA and in that time we have made tremendous strides forward advocating for the whole Business Events industry. It's been a steady path focussed on building the profile of our industry, our members and of course our Association.

We've reached an important milestone at EEAA – we are in sound financial shape, we are focussed and highly respected in the most senior levels of Government and business.

Today, we are well on our way to be the strongest member-based voice for the Business Events sector.

Next month, I will be on stage at the 2016 Australian Chamber Business Leaders Summit in Canberra along with leaders from political and business life. This signals another major breakthrough for our industry.

In the greatest circles of influence, we have made our way from the periphery to the centre – from one-way messages and communications, to dialogue and

relationship building.

Through our advocacy campaigns, we have achieved the highest levels of Government, business and industry engagement.

For example, the EEAA has been supported by state and federal governments in each of its events and initiatives held this year, as well as first-ever involvement from business leaders, such as the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's CEOs, James Pearson and Kate Carnell before him.

Earlier this month we welcomed Tourism Australia to our Young Stars Program as the inaugural Platinum Partner, and in June former Senator Richard Colbeck and NSW Parliamentary Secretary Jonathan O'Dea joined our Leaders Forum and the first worldwide Global Exhibitions Day effort, to name a few.

As proud as we are of our achievements we also know that our job is not done. We have an ambitious agenda ahead of us.

In the coming year, EEAA hopes to mirror the success it has had in promoting the Power of Exhibitions to drive the economy in a new phase of the campaign, which will promote the Power of Exhibitions as a valuable and powerful marketing channel. It's a new audience and a big challenge.

Meanwhile, we have a full plate over the next couple of months as we near year's end. We are revamping our online shopfront and member portal, have made our call for submissions for our annual Awards for Excellence and are headlong into planning for our annual conference at the end of the year.

Certainly, our job is not done because complacency is not in our DNA. We will continue to work hard to ensure the Business Events sector has a strong Association that is effective and focussed.

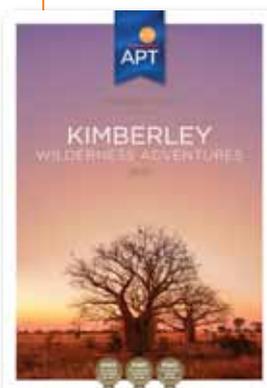
headlines August to September business events news

22 Aug Vic Govt pens ABS deal
25 Aug The Event Show kicks off
29 Aug AIME gearing up for Feb

01 Sep EEAA partners with Tourism Aus
01 Sep DG Global enters merger
05 Sep UTS: the value of business events
05 Sep LUX seeks Aussie expansion
08 Sep EEAA to offer safety workshops
12 Sep Introducing Noosa DMC
15 Sep AIME debuts new initiative
19 Sep Luxperience kicks off in Syd
19 Sep Grant creativity project debut



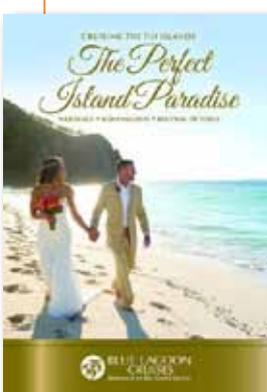
SEE Bears! – that’s what most visitors to Canada and Alaska want to do, and with the publication of Natural Focus Safaris 2017 Canada & Alaska brochure ample opportunities abound. View grizzly or black bears in rugged wildernesses where NFS offers a fantastic selection of properties. Or encounter polar bears in custom designed Tundra Buggies in the sub-arctic landscape in autumn and early winter. For the ultimate experience awaken to polar bears outside your window at the Tundra Buggy Lodge.



HOT off the press is APT’s 2017 Kimberley Wilderness Adventures program, featuring 15 itineraries : eight 4WD adventures, four Cruise Adventures and three Land & Cruise Adventures. For a limited time agents can offer clients a ‘Fly Free’ superdeal valid on the 15-day Kimberley Complete tour for all September departures which is priced from \$9,695 per person. APT is also including all meals across every departure in the 2017 brochure.



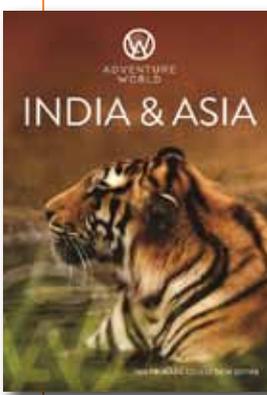
THE 2017 Europe brochure from Contiki is out now with four new Adriatic trips available. The new additions for the 2017 seasons are based around the Ionian and Adriatic seas with tours following Contiki’s ‘In-Depth Explorer’ pace which allows more time to explore destinations, more local cuisine and dinners included. There are two 15-day odysseys with the flexibility to start or finish in Rome or Split. 10% discount is available for bookings prior to 15 December 2016.



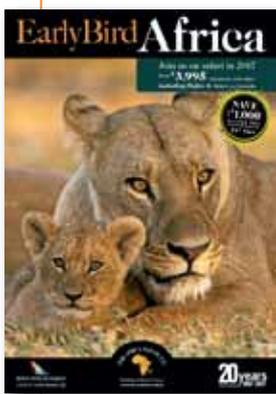
FIJI’S Blue Lagoon Cruises has launched its first ever standalone romance brochure. The new program offers fully inclusive Wedding, Renewal of Vows and Honeymoon packages as well as group discounts. Ceremonies can be held on the ship or the operator’s private island beach on Nanuya Lailai. The *Fiji Princess* can also be chartered for groups up to 68, while for groups of 20 or more the bride and groom cruise for free.



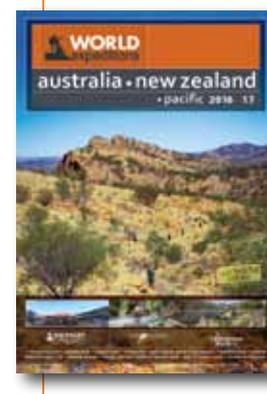
FEATURING over 40 itineraries the AAT Kings Australia 2017/2018 brochure is now on agency shelves, featuring an array of guided holidays, short breaks and day tours as well as new tours, such as the 13-day ‘Inspiring Australia’ journey. A key feature of the company’s programs is spending time with and learning from the locals. To help agents grow their domestic business AAT Kings is offering a 10% early payment discount for guests who book and pay by 28 November 2016.



FOR ethical wildlife experiences look no further than Adventure World’s new India & Asia 2017/18 brochure available now. The company has a commitment to not providing any product incorporating elephant rides or shows in itineraries to address the problem of ill-treatment of animals. Also on offer are more boutique safari lodges to see the elusive tiger in India’s National Parks, plus the chance to see leopards, elephants and water buffalo on the ‘Undiscovered Ski Lanka’ program.



THE Africa Safari Company has released its 2017 Earlybird Africa brochure, with tours starting from \$3,995 per person twin share including flights and taxes. There is an array of itineraries through South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, Mauritius and more, with travellers able to see the annual wildebeest migration on the The Game Parks of Africa program which departs 8th September 2017, or travel on the Blue Train and see the Big 5 as part of the Luxury South Africa tour.



WORLD Expeditions has just unveiled its latest 2016-17 Australia, New Zealand & Pacific brochure featuring unique new itineraries that will tick the bucket list for travellers who love wilderness experiences. One of the new offerings is the Larapinta Goddess Walk specially tailored for women. The 3-day program combines morning yoga and meditation sessions with walks to breathtaking points of the Larapinta Trail in the Red Centre. The all-female departures are from April to June 2017 priced from \$1,495pp.

SYDNEY IN FOR CHANGE

SYDNEY'S cruise industry needs to "change the way we do business" to work through the current challenges of capacity, John McKenna General Manager of Cruise at Port Authority of New South Wales told delegates at the 2016 Australian Cruise Association Conference in Sydney.

"We need to do things a little bit harder and smarter in the coming period because there is no short term build here, it's going to take time," McKenna said, referring to the potential for another terminal east of the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

Admitting there is currently no infrastructure solution "staring us in the face", McKenna encouraged the industry to address the present situation.

"The current reality means changing the way we do business and the way we do business is based around providing opportunity for all segments of the market, not just the homeport markets."

McKenna suggested the solution to Sydney's challenges will mean a shift in behaviour of homeported cruise lines.

"If it creates capacity in the current market and allows more international visitation, then we believe that's a positive," he said.

One option thrown around was the plan to introduce two time slots at the Overseas

Passenger Terminal within a 24 hour period.

Introducing the concept at the conference, Philip Holliday, Chief Operating Officer and Harbour Master of the Port Authority of NSW said that due to limited infrastructure

‘The current reality means changing the way we do business and the way we do business is based around providing opportunity for all segments of the market...’

there's a need to try and get more out of the existing facilities.

"Traditionally, a cruise ship will arrive around 6am and sail at 6pm, we're looking at the potential at moving that arrival time slightly earlier which then means it departs slightly earlier and gives us the opportunity to get another ship in immediately afterwards," Holliday explains.

Admitting there are "whole heap of challenges" associated with the plan and noting the exact timing and viability of the

plan would depend on the size of the ship, Holliday says there's a possibility the first double turnaround will happen early in the New Year.

Reluctant to name cruise lines, he hinted "The ones that are most positive are the smaller ships because it's not as time-critical for them and they have more flexibility".

Edie Rodriguez, president and CEO of Crystal Cruises reinforced the need to have "the right infrastructure" to grow the market.

"You have to set up the right infrastructure to promise a lot and deliver more and surprise and delight those guests who come here from around the world," she says.

Rodriguez singled out New Zealand as one country which does a "wonderful job" with their infrastructure.

"Australia already do a great job, but it's about perpetual evolution, we always want to better our game," she says.

James Coughlan, Shore Excursions Manager at InterCruises Shoreside and Port Services said the industry needs to also focus on, what is to him, the most important thing - the guest experience.

"Port infrastructure is very important, we need that space to get the ships in, but we have to develop the best experience for all the passengers coming off these ships because from that, we will all benefit," he said.



Eastern Promise

© Crystal Cruises

Asia has long been an overlooked cruise destination, but more itineraries are launching on its rivers and oceans than ever before, bringing ever more possibilities for cruising, writes Brian Johnston.

FROM the energetic buzz of Ho Chi Minh City to the craggy gorges of central China, the raucous trading port of Busan in South Korea to the tropical islands of Thailand, cruising in Asia offers a fabulous variety of landscapes, neon-lit cities and vibrant cultures. There are few better cruise moments than sailing into Hong Kong Harbour, surrounded by the flashing of futuristic skyscrapers or – in total contrast – sailing into the forested bay of Nagasaki in Japan, dotted with misty islands.

Yet curiously, Asia has never been seen as a core cruise destination. That is now rapidly changing, however, as cruise passengers seek out new destinations and Asians themselves start to set sail on the high seas in ever increasing numbers. Over a million

Asians will soon be cruising annually, with the Chinese cruise market in particular tipped to explode. The number of Australians cruising in Asia is booming too. Last year, 95,000 of us sailed in Asia, compared to just 55,000 the previous year: an increase of 71.5 per cent, according to Cruise Lines International Association (CLIA) Australasia.

Asian ports, better known for cargo than cruise ships, are finally waking up to the economic potential of cruise tourists. China, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, South Korea and Vietnam have all been investing in cruise-port infrastructure. Ships are following. Big player Royal Caribbean International certainly thinks it has a future in Asia. *Quantum of the Seas* is home-ported in Shanghai and *Ovation of the Seas*, officially launched in June, will be based in Tianjin near Beijing; it has Chinese

actress Fan Bingbing as its godmother.

MSC Cruises' *Lirica* will also sail out of Shanghai. Norwegian Cruise Lines returns to Asia this year for the first time in 15 years, while Crystal Cruises has added significantly more Asian itineraries. Carnival Cruise Line and Costa Cruises are among other companies showing a strong interest in Asia. And Dream Cruises, which lays claim to being Asia's first luxury cruise line, began marketing in Australia following the launch of its ship *Genting Dream* last November. It offers regular seven-night cruises along the Vietnam coast, round trip from Hong Kong.

Princess Cruises too has its eyes firmly turned to the Far East. *Sapphire Princess* spends part of each year home-ported in Shanghai, and *Majestic Princess*, which launches next year, will be based there



Clockwise from top left: View over Nagasaki harbour in Japan, © Visit Nagasaki; Night view over Hong Kong harbour, © Hong Kong Tourism Board; Dream Cruises' new ship *Genting Dream*, © Dream Cruises; Cabin on Travelmarvel's *Princess Panhwar* on the Ganges River in India, © Travelmarvel



permanently and dedicated to the Chinese market. Australian passengers are being courted as well. *Diamond Princess* and *Golden Princess* are offering new Asian itineraries, and will also sail between Australia and both Singapore and Japan in the 2017-18 season, with Australian currency used on board. In all, Princess will sail to 17 countries and 73 ports in the Asia-Pacific, including Taiwan, Korea, Southeast Asia and Japan.

Small-ship companies are also finding plenty of allure in eastern promise. APT has introduced small-ship cruising in Japan, and Coral Expeditions launches a series of new itineraries in southeast Asia from November, starting with an adventurous, wildlife-oriented itinerary from Kalimantan to Singapore. Its *Coral Discoverer* will then undergo an overhaul before sailing the coasts of Myanmar, Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. And Star Clippers sails into Asian waters for the first time in

December, with seven-night windjammer sailings around Thai and Malaysian islands. By mid-2017, *Star Clipper* will sail in Indonesia, both round-trip from Bali and between Bali and Singapore.

Just as impressive is the surge of interest in river cruising. Ten years or so ago, China's Yangtze River and its fabled gorges was the only significant river-cruise destination. Since then, the frontiers have been rolled back, with the Mekong and Irrawaddy Rivers now almost mainstream – though still seeing growth. For example, Travelmarvel has upped their *Princess Panhwar* departures on the Irrawaddy to 16 following a first-season sell-out, while Scenic's 44-passenger *Scenic Aura* glides down the slipway this month, offering 10-night cruises between Mandalay and Pyay.

On the Mekong, APT's *AmaLotus* has been joined by *AmaDara* on eight-day journeys through Vietnam and Cambodia, and Scenic launched *Scenic Spirit* at the beginning of this year. Avalon Waterways' new Siem Reap

offered something the others could not: a shallow-draft ship that could sail from both Ho Chi Minh City and Siem Reap, avoiding the usual lengthy road transfers onto the river. Recently, boutique company Pandaw River Expeditions started sailing into new stretches of the river on a cruise between Chiang Saen in Thailand into Laos, Myanmar and across the Chinese border to Jinghong.

India's Ganges River is the latest hot destination, with the likes of Travelmarvel, APT and Uniworld now operating on the river. There's also a fascinating range of more obscure rivers that now have established river-cruise itineraries, including Sanctuary Cruises on Myanmar's Chindwin River; Assam-Bengal Navigation Company on India's Brahmaputra River; and Pandaw on the Red River in Vietnam, for a sail amid the dramatic rock formations and rice paddies of the northern highlands. Just another of the fabulous offerings that is finally – and firmly – putting Asia on the world's cruise charts.

LET'S TALK TERRORISM

THE topic of international terrorism has pervaded the travel sphere, but it's a one which isn't getting the cruising heavyweights down.

"I think statistically speaking we can say that cruising and indeed travel has never been safer as an activity," Adam Armstrong, Managing Director of Royal Caribbean Cruises, Australia and New Zealand told delegates at the CLIA Australasia Cruise360 conference last month.

"How many other accommodation venues do you have to have photo ID to get you on board? You show your passport to get on a plane but if you walk into a resort...there isn't that level of security and you can walk in and out of a resort very freely, whereas a cruise ship is a very closed environment," he said.

Highlighting the "CCTV-heavy" environment, Armstrong noted there are hundreds, sometimes thousands of cameras covering every passenger area.

"It's a very safe holiday, it's a very safe experience."



A number of cruise lines pulled out of Turkey following the airport bombing in June this year.

Weighing in on the topic, Jennifer Vandekreeke, Vice President, Carnival Cruise Line reassured safety and security of guests and crew is the number one priority.

"If something goes wrong, it damages the entire industry and it damages your business, which is the last thing that we want to do," she said.

"I can't begin to tell you how large the security force is on our ships, we have a global security team in Miami that's looking after the Carnival Corporation fleet and they take their job very seriously."

Highlighting the nimble nature of the cruise industry, Sarina Bratton, Chairman Asia-Pacific, Ponant brought attention to the option to simply move ships away.

"If you've got a hotel, you don't have

that flexibility."

Despite seeing "quite a bit of fall off" in Europe and the Mediterranean, Bratton believes guests will come back.

"What people are doing is cruising closer to home because they feel safer, they feel more secure, but they'll come back to the Med in the same numbers that they did, once the geopolitical situations tend to quieten down."

Potential terrorists aren't the only unwanted guests the cruise industry has their eye on.

Bratton admits she gets "a giggle" out of the fact when embarking guests onto zodiacs, crew have to make sure polar bears aren't trying to climb on board the platform to make their way to the restaurant.

EDIE'S "NEW NORMAL"

WHEN Edie Rodriguez, CEO of Crystal Cruises and the only female CEO of a luxury cruise line steps up to a podium, everyone listens.

This was the scene at the Australian Cruise Association's Conference in Sydney, where Rodriguez let delegates in on what she sees as "the new normal around the world".

"What I call the new normal is this three-character acronym I've called ECO and it stands for Exclusivity, Customisation and Options," she said.

"That is what today's global luxury consumer, cruise traveller or just generic traveller is looking for."

At the luxury end of the spectrum, "all of those three components have to be part of that authentic experience or they will not be happy," she explained.

Rodriguez went on to urge the industry to look at how it can perpetually evolve. "What today's global luxury consumer is looking for is vastly different than what that luxury global consumer was looking for even five years ago and certainly ten or 20 years ago when your organisation started," she said.

"As you develop your infrastructure and your ports, in order to deliver that authentic experience, respective to each of your geographic territories, make sure you are creating an exclusive, customised option as part of that portfolio of experiences."

7 tips to success

ON HER first trip down under, Cindy D'Aoust, President and CEO of CLIA left Cruise360 Australasia delegates with seven strategies for success:

- 1. STAYING CONNECTED:** The most exciting thing that your passengers and your clients will do on their vacation is post their experience. Be part of the conversation, you need to be engaged and show up in that community.
- 2. BE ONE STEP AHEAD:** Don't wait and be the person that's only available to clients and thinking of them when they call you because they want to book a trip. Get to know your clients, what their life milestones are and suggest trips for future events.
- 3. CREATE AN ITINERARY FOR YOURSELF:** Understand where your business is today and where do you want it to be in five years and then create the plan to get there.
- 4. BUILD YOUR BRAND:** There is no industry that is better at building their brands than the cruise industry. In addition to the research that shows that if you invest in yourself, you earn more, we also have research that shows if you specialise, you will earn more.
- 5. PERSONALISE:** A cruise can be personalised down to a single individual and what they want to do day-by-day. Match what they're looking for in their experience with the product that is the cruise.
- 6. NARROWING THE SEARCH:** We know that there are thousands of ports, many different itineraries, destinations and amenities. That does not help when you talk to a client. It just overwhelms them. Know them, know what they're looking for, use that personalisation.
- 7. LEARN TO EARN:** Invest in yourself. Whether it's being a member of CLIA, participating in communities, continuing to take training or accreditation. The more you know, the more value you bring for your customers.

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- 2 night hotel stay in Athens
- 21 included tours in 6 countries
- Beer, wine & soft drinks onboard with dinner
- Expert Guest Speakers
- Included gratuities & port fees

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UP TO
\$800*pp

SAVINGS [^]	CABIN	PRICE FROM
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CRUISING IN STYLE

Ever wondered how the other half live? Jasmine O'Donoghue has sussed out the top-of-the-range rooms on a range of vessels which are cruising from Sydney in 2017/18.

Royal Caribbean's *Ovation of the Seas* – Royal Loft Suite with Balcony

THE Royal Loft Suite with Balcony is spread across two levels in a loft-style layout. The stateroom boasts a main-level balcony more than double the size of some of the lower deck cabins and is equipped with a whirlpool and dining area. RCI also threw in another 13m² main-level side balcony and 8.27m² balcony on the upper-level. There is a separate media room with a sofa, along with a full bathroom. Upstairs, the master bedroom has two twin beds, a private bathroom with a soaking tub, shower, two sinks and bidet and a separate dressing area.

Loft Suite guests receive their own personal Royal Genie to help craft experiences, from a date night to an on-land adventure. The Royal Genies will also assist with any other needs - from laundry, pressing and shoe-shining, to luggage handling and unpacking or in-suite cocktails. Other perks include complimentary internet; specialty dining and an ultimate beverage package.

Size: 209.31m²

OR the equivalent of 13.6 Interior Staterooms

Bedrooms: 1

Sleeps: 6



Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* – Penthouse Suite

Size: 156.08m²

OR the equivalent of 9.5

Ocean View Staterooms

Bedrooms: 1

Sleeps: 4

CELEBRITY Solstice's Penthouse Suite offers a 36.14m² veranda with a whirlpool and lounge seating. Aspiring pianists have a baby grand piano in their suite placed between the living and dining room. The master bedroom is fitted with a king bed, a marble bath with a whirlpool tub and separate shower. The suite also includes a dressing room with a vanity, butler's pantry, foyer, two audio/visual entertainment systems with TVs and a powder room with an extra shower.

Penthouse suite guests will receive their own personal butler and access to suite class restaurant, Luminae, and private lounge, Michael's Club. A bottle of Perrier-Jouët champagne will be waiting on embarkation day and "Delectable Delights" will be delivered daily. All guests will receive a Premium Beverage Package. Unlimited specialty dining is also on offer, along with unlimited internet and laundry service twice per cruise.

Norwegian Cruise Lines' *Norwegian Jewel* – Three-Bedroom Garden Villas

NORWEGIAN Jewel's three-bedroom Garden Villas are located in The Haven, where the most luxurious, accommodations are situated. These multi-room villas offer panoramic views of the ocean, each with a massive roof terrace and private garden with open-air dining, a whirlpool and relaxation areas. The villas feature a living room with a piano and an entertainment centre with multiple TVs throughout the suite.

Guests staying in The Haven have a 24-hour butler and concierge, along with access to a private concierge lounge and The Haven Courtyard, featuring a private pool, hot tub and sundeck.

Size: 454.39m²

OR the equivalent of 35.44 inside staterooms

Bedrooms: 3

Sleeps: 8



Princess Cruises' *Emerald Princess* – Owner's Suite

EMERALD Princess' Owner's Suite offers up to 86.59m² of space and a large balcony furnished with two loungers, a table and two chairs. The room has a separate seating area with a sofa bed and two floor-to-ceiling sliding glass windows. There's two 42" flat-panel satellite TVs, a private bathroom with a tub and a separate shower and a walk-in closet.

Suite passengers receive a range of VIP perks, including priority embarkation and disembarkation at the beginning and end of a cruise and at tender ports. The VIP experience extends to on board reservations for shore excursions, the guest services desk, specialty dining reservations and access to the Exclusive Elite Lounge with complimentary hors d'oeuvres. A private portrait sitting with the on board photographer is included, along with same-day laundry, shoe polishing and Lotus Spa Thermal Suite access. Suite-stayers will be greeted with "welcome goodies" on their embarkation day and a specialty dining meal in the evening. A complimentary specialty dining mimosa breakfast is served daily, or there's Exclusive Club Class Dining in the main dining room for dinner every day as well as breakfast and lunch on sea days. In-suite afternoon tea service is also offered, and guests can choose from an upgraded room service menu.

Size: 86.59m²

OR the equivalent of 5.8 Interior Staterooms

Bedrooms: 1

Sleeps: 4



Carnival Cruise Line's *Carnival Spirit* – Vista Suite

VISTA Suites are located at the back of *Carnival Spirit*, offering great views from the room's wrap-around balcony. There are separate bedroom and lounge areas equipped with two flat-screen TVs, a sofa, armchair and coffee table. Guests can get ready for the day at their light up vanity area and walk-in closet, or relax in the whirlpool bath or shower. The suites can be available as triple share or with interconnecting cabins for children. Vista Suite guests are given priority when it comes to getting on and off the ship and receive exclusive amenities.

Size: 43.2m²

OR the equivalent of 2.5 Interior rooms

Bedrooms: 1

Sleeps: 4



P&O Cruises' *Pacific Aria/Eden* – The Penthouse

SISTER ships *Pacific Aria* and *Pacific Eden* are the only P&O vessels currently offering the Penthouse. The room features a private balcony, living area, dining area and kitchenette, all looking out through floor-to-ceiling windows. The bathroom has a large spa bath and shower and there's a walk-in wardrobe and dressing area.

Guests will receive priority embarkation and disembarkation and when they arrive in their room will be greeted by a welcome aboard letter from the Hotel Director and a glass of sparkling wine. The VIP experience extends to priority tenders, dining and spa reservations, bookings for shore tours, turndown and shoe shine services. There is also complimentary afternoon tea and optional breakfast served in the suite. On cruises over five nights, guests will receive an invitation to the Senior Officer's private cocktail party.

Size: 100m²

OR the equivalent of 7.7 Interior rooms

Bedrooms: 1

Sleeps: 4



Lifou calls slashed

THE pristine waters of New Caledonia's Lifou Island will have two less mega-cruise ships dotted on the horizon this season.

Delayed upgrades at Lifou have prompted Royal Caribbean to determine the pier there is unable to safely receive a total of 26 calls from their larger ships, *Explorer of the Seas* or *Voyager of the Seas* this season.

Marc Miller, Director Itinerary Planning, RCI, said the cruise line is partnering with local authorities to develop and invest in infrastructure, but "unfortunately it is taking a little bit longer for that to be completed.

"We do anticipate being able to call into Lifou in the following season, but we definitely regret that we had to make some of those last-minute itinerary changes," he said.

Miller explained as the larger ships are put into the market, there "are only so many places that these ships can call upon," so Royal Caribbean is working with the destinations to make the appropriate changes.

On twenty of the affected sailings, Lifou will be replaced with an alternative South Pacific island port such as Mare, Isle of Pines or Noumea and two cruises will swap out Lifou with a call to Port Kembla in Wollongong.

The remaining four cruises will have an additional day at sea and guests will receive complimentary on board credit, as there is no availability at other South Pacific ports.

Calls on the smaller ships, *Radiance of the Seas*, *Legend of the Seas* and sister brand Celebrity Cruises' *Celebrity Solstice* remain unchanged.



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INTO THE WILD



CLIA VIEW

Brett Jardine, commercial director
CLIA Australasia

COMPLEXITY OF SELLING CRUISES

TWO decades ago selling cruises was a lot easier for retail agents than it is today. There were fewer ships to know about, only a handful of itineraries and the pricing was relatively straightforward.

Today, much of this has changed, making the job of cruise agents a lot more complicated which only highlights the value for consumers when dealing with CLIA Accredited agents.

From CLIA's USA version of Cruise360 held in Vancouver recently, many senior cruise industry executives commented that they didn't envy the job of cruise retailers today.

Royal Caribbean International President and COO, Adam Goldstein, said "Agents are in the information management business as there's way too many choices for a customer to understand".

Rick Sasso, chairman of MSC Cruises North America, said to the agents in attendance, "You guys have the tougher job than even we do. I only have to know everything there is to know about MSC but you have to know about some 20 other brands and all the details and who's got what and for whom they are most suited."

Former CLIA President & CEO, Christine Duffy, now president of Carnival Cruise Line, said the lines are counting on agents who sell its cruises to be product experts. "Given the number of cruise brands that are out there, the number of options even within brands based on different classes of ships, different itineraries, I think we've all

said that a travel agent is the best resource to really help people navigate to make sure that they get on the right cruise."

For those that were not even born pre 1990 and now working in the front line of retail travel, when Carnival Cruise Line acquired Holland America Line (HAL) in 1989, HAL had just four ships and Carnival had seven. Today, Carnival has 25 with a 26th on the way, and HAL just took delivery of its 14th ship, the *Koningsdam*.

In 1990, all CLIA member lines combined offered around 100 ships but today, the number is close to 450, with many more on order. Unlike the aviation industry, the variety of ships is within each brand is diverse – again adding to your value if you are CLIA Accredited and actively promoting your worth.

A major change in more recent years is the focus on cuisine on board. With brands constantly looking for an edge in attracting new to cruise passengers, not only has the variety of food offering increased, so too has the number of dining venues on board just about all modern vessels.

Today guest wants to know who is the chef, what their background is and what alternatives there are to the main dining.

From restaurant menus to spas and water slides to entertainment delivered, the more knowledge you have, the more you will shine in the cruise retail space. With this in mind, training has to be high on the agenda for any retailer – for your front line staff as well as for your own credibility.

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CRUISE WEEKLY

- 18 Aug** Cruise Republic going well
- 18 Aug** Lindblad newbies in 2017
- 19 Aug** CLIA appoints new MD
- 23 Aug** Spirit's first SE Asia calls
- 25 Aug** RCL senior team complete
- 25 Aug** Hurtigruten's new GSA
- 30 Aug** CLIA Plan a Cruise Month

HEADLINES AUGUST TO SEPTEMBER 2016

- 01 Sep** Fred Olsen Aussie pact
- 06 Sep** Aqua opens Aussie office
- 08 Sep** Cruise numbers swell
- 13 Sep** Crystal Sydney rendezvous
- 13 Sep** Qld cruising at full speed
- 15 Sep** New *American Duchess*
- 20 Sep** *Solstice* \$11m makeover

INDUSTRY IN FOCUS

Steve Garside from Azamara made a recent appearance at Sydney's Sylvania Travel & Cruise client function at the Royal Motor Yacht Club in Port Hacking. He's pictured with the team from Sylvania.



Crooked Compass took this group of TravelManagers to experience the wonders of Nepal recently. They snapped this picture overlooking the Annapurnas and Fishtail Mountain just after sunrise.



Some of the team from CRC were showing off their product at the recent SKAL Melbourne Expo, attended by 50 Skalleagues and guests.



This Travel Counsellors team took home a bottle of champagne each for winning the Etihad Trivia competition held in Melbourne last month.



Matt Norton, Your Margaret River Region and Stephen Rivera, InterCruises had a laugh at the Australian Cruise Association Conference last month.



Royal Caribbean treated these lucky agents to the musical *We Will Rock You* in Melbourne recently. The musical also plays on *Anthem of the Seas*.



Helen Wong and Benjamin Zaubzer from Macao Government Tourism Office got their sneakers on for the recent Blackmores Sydney Running Festival, flying the flag for the enclave.



These top sellers were treated to a weekend in Melbourne at the Cox & Kings Super Agent Conference. As well as business, the group also saw *We Will Rock You* and enjoyed dinner on the classic Melbourne Tramcar.



TravelManagers and some of their clients were at the Sofitel Girls' Day Out VIP function celebrating spring racing's return to Flemington racecourse in Melbourne.



A visit to the summit of Table Mountain and celebrity spotting at Camps Bay with Gary Mehigan from *Masterchef Australia* were just some of the highlights of this recent South Africa famil for PCOs and event organisers.



Karyn Gruenberg, Christopher Thompson, Jo Palmer, and Tahnee Dobson, all Brand USA enjoyed the debut of *America Wild* in IMAX, showcasing the United States National Parks.



Brian Conway and Isabelle Chu of Bonaventure Travel in Perth added another notch to their inaugural flights belt with the touchdown of the first Singapore to Canberra service.

LUXURY



NYC LUXE

Everything is bigger and better in New York City, and that's good news for those who seek the luxury life, writes Kristie Kellahan.

IT MIGHT come as a surprise that the priciest part of the Golden Cristal Donut, sold for a hundred dollars at Brooklyn's Manila Social Club, is not in fact the 24-karat pure gold dust it is covered in. What jacks up the price, says the Club's executive chef and co-owner, Bjorn de la Cruz, is the Cristal champagne used to glaze and fill the donut. (A bottle of the 2005 vintage goes for US\$675, plus tax and tip, at Jean-Georges, an upscale Columbus Circle NYC restaurant).

De la Cruz works hard to fill orders for the donuts, handmade in his Williamsburg restaurant, which he says are the ultimate celebration of love for people with expensive taste.

People with money to spend on luxury items and experiences are no rarity in New York City. In the city that never sleeps, it might seem an extravagance to spend US\$25,000 per night on the Champagne

Suite at the Lotte New York Palace Hotel, and yet most of the time it is occupied. Compared to the penthouse at The Mark Hotel, which rents for US\$75,000 per night, it almost seems a steal. Spa-goers at Mandarin Oriental New York happily splurge close to US\$600 on a two-hour massage, while a Couples Escape in the Spa Suite will set you back US\$1,760 (plus tax and tip) for four hours of pampering; drinks are not included.

Manhattan was made for those who love toasting the good life. From the glittering bar at the Baccarat Hotel, where luscious cocktails are served in Baccarat crystal glasses, to the fabulous views from SixtyFive at Rainbow Room, where artisanal small plates and fine wines are served Monday through Friday, and Sunday brunch is an epic affair, NYC is the place to celebrate anything in fabulous style. Rooftop bars are stocked with expensive wines and

serve caviar and lobster sliders along with the neon-lit views.

Prix fixe menus can run to many hundreds of dollars at New York's finest restaurants, so take this tip from those in the know: lunchtime is when you'll bag a bargain. Same chef, same kitchen, same white tablecloths, at a fraction of the price. From Nougatine at Columbus Circle, to Mario Batali's Del Posto and the historic 21 Club, three-course lunch menus can be savoured for less than fifty bucks.

If you're planning to impress your crush with the hottest Broadway tickets - read, Hamilton - be prepared to fork out many hundreds of dollars per ticket. That is, if you can find a ticket for sale. For junior luxury lovers, the greater thrill might come from going backstage at the New Amsterdam Theatre, home to Disney shows like Aladdin and The Lion King. On this exclusive tour, participants enjoy a hands-on experience of



dressing up in official Disney costumes and playing in the props studio.

When Four Seasons New York Downtown opened last month, it joined a growing list of luxury properties reinventing the high-end appeal of lower Manhattan. Conrad New York, a downtown luxe hotel with a popular rooftop watering hole, the Loopy Doopy Bar, already attracts super-wealthy clientele from nearby Wall Street firms and international business headquarters.

Brookfield Place is the luxury shopping

‘Manhattan was made for those who love toasting the good life. From the glittering bar at the Baccarat Hotel... to the fabulous views from SixtyFive at Rainbow Room... NYC is the place to celebrate anything in fabulous style’

and dining destination the downtown crowd had been waiting for: a new Saks Fifth Avenue store will open there later this month,

drawing even more shoppers to a buzzy precinct that boasts stores by Bottega Veneta, Burberry, Gucci and Hermes. Brookfield's Le District, a mouthwatering Gallic marketplace filled with

boulangeries, fromageries, wine and dinner provisions, has been called the French Eatery. That emporium of Italian delicacies has also opened a downtown location, after its phenomenal

success selling US\$45 balsamic vinegar and US\$100 summer truffles at its Flatiron District store.

Perhaps the ultimate luxury isn't signified by price, but exclusivity. In other words, when you have everything that money can buy, what you most want is to enjoy experiences privately, far from the madding crowd. At the Museum of Modern Art, private before- and after-hours tours are led by professional art historians, so you can enjoy the world's largest collection of modern art and sculpture without the need to elbow a dozen selfie-stick-wielding tourists out of the way.

If you'd prefer to be outdoors, Classic Harbor Line's yachts are available for private charter through the waters surrounding NYC. A private sunset sail by the Statue of Liberty aboard the Twenties-style teak-decked yacht, *Manhattan*, is the kind of champagne luxury that features heavily in wish-lists and daydreams from Melbourne to Milan.

NEW LUXURY IN MACAO



VISITORS to Macao, in particular the Asian city's neon-lit Cotai Strip, can indulge in some additional pampering thanks to the opening of two new resorts.

The recent openings of the highly anticipated and lavishly presented resort precincts – the Wynn Palace Cotai and The Parisian Macao – have brought about an increase in the number of romantic dining and day spa options.

Step inside the plush Wynn Palace Cotai, which opened its doors to guests in mid-August, and you are sure to be impressed by the large scale – and colourful – floral sculptures of a carousel and Ferris wheel, custom-designed for the hotel by Preston Bailey who created the same tributes for the Wynn Palace in Las Vegas.

The new hotel's modern art gallery is also an appealing addition, so too, the fanciful dragon lifts or Skycabs (gondolas) which whisk guests above the resort's Performance Lake.

Fine dining centres on a quintet of restaurants, including Andrea's which offers a blending of Chinese dishes and cocktails, and the SW Steakhouse, where the steaks and seafood are served along with a surprising theatrical experience every 30 minutes.

As is the case at the original Wynn Macau, located on the Macao peninsula, guests will be able to dine on exquisite Cantonese cuisine at the Wing Lei Palace within an imperial-inspired setting.

Visit The Parisian Macao, which opened in mid-September and is a mere 10-minute

walk from the Wynn Palace, and the first eye-catching feature is the replica of the Eiffel Tower which not only offers a bird's eye view of Macao but, on the sixth floor, houses La Chine, a Chinese restaurant with an emphasis on offering mouth-watering dishes in a romantic Paris-like setting.

Other dining options to greet visitors include the signature Lotus Palace, the Brasserie with its authentic French flavours, and Le Buffet's appealing European themed marketplace.

Combining the best of French skincare with the art of luxury massage is The Parisian's Le SPA'tique, a tranquil spot to unwind after a day exploring what is an ever-changing Macao.

New aircraft for PG

BANGKOK Airways welcomed its seventh brand-new ATR 72-600 to its fleet in August at Suvarnabhumi Airport, Thailand.

The new-generation plane manufactured by ATR in France is equipped with a state of the art full-glass cockpit monitoring and control systems plus comfortable seating for 70 passengers with large overhead bins.

The freshly delivered aircraft was added to the services on the airlines Samui, Sukhothai, Trat, Lampang, Luang Prabang, Yangon, Mandalay and Siem Reap routes.

Bangkok Airways' fleet is currently made up of 35 aircraft; 8 ATR72-500s, 7 ATR72-600s, 8 A320s, and 12 A319s.



NINETY-FIVE percent of travel agents within the Virtuoso network have reported on a sales increase within active adventure travel within the past 12-months, according to the company's latest trend survey.

Iceland was voted as the top emerging adventure destination followed by Galapagos/ Ecuador, Costa Rica & Chile, New Zealand, Peru, Cuba, Antarctica, Arctic/North Pole, South Africa and Australia.

When looking at adventure related activities; hiking, biking and kayaking were the top three most preferred by specialty travellers.

These were followed by small-ship expedition cruising, food and wine, wildlife viewing, walking, photography and scuba diving.

The survey took place between February and April and received input from 125 advisors and partners.

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NEW LUXURY OPENINGS

Every year there are more and more exclusive and unique luxury resorts being opened, offering guests the ultimate in bespoke experiences. Sarah Piper gives some picks for new hotels to put on your bucket list.

Il Sereno Lago di Como

ITALY'S iconic Lake Como has a new addition in the Il Sereno. The all-suite hotel features 30 rooms, ranging from 60m² to 200m² in size. All rooms have outdoor terraces with lounge furniture and lake views, king sized beds and are designed by the renowned Patricia Urquiola. The hotel features a full service spa, private beach, a freshwater infinity pool suspended over the lake and a dock where guests can arrive in one of the custom Riva limousine boats. The hotel's restaurant is led by Michelin star chef Andrea Berton.



Six Senses Zighy Bay Resort

OMAN'S Six Senses Zighy Bay Resort, with dramatic mountains on one side and the sandy beach of Zighy Bay is unique luxury. The accommodation is in indigenous village style villas and suites, each with their own pool, sand garden and outdoor patio. There are six different dining options and a host of traditional and modern attractions including paragliding, snorkelling, hiking and mountain biking. The resort also features a spa and wellness centre continuing Six Senses' philosophy of wellness.



St. Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort

LOCATED on its own island in the beautiful island nation of the Maldives, the St Regis Maldives Vommuli Resort is the next level of luxury. The 77 rooms are a mix of overwater and beach front villas, in one and two bedroom configurations allowing for families. The resort offers a number of different dining options, catering for a range of tastes and cuisines. There's a spa, infinity pool, fitness and diving centre, as well as private pools in most of the villas. The ultimate in luxury, all rooms come with the services of a personal St. Regis butler. The resort will be open from November 1 this year.

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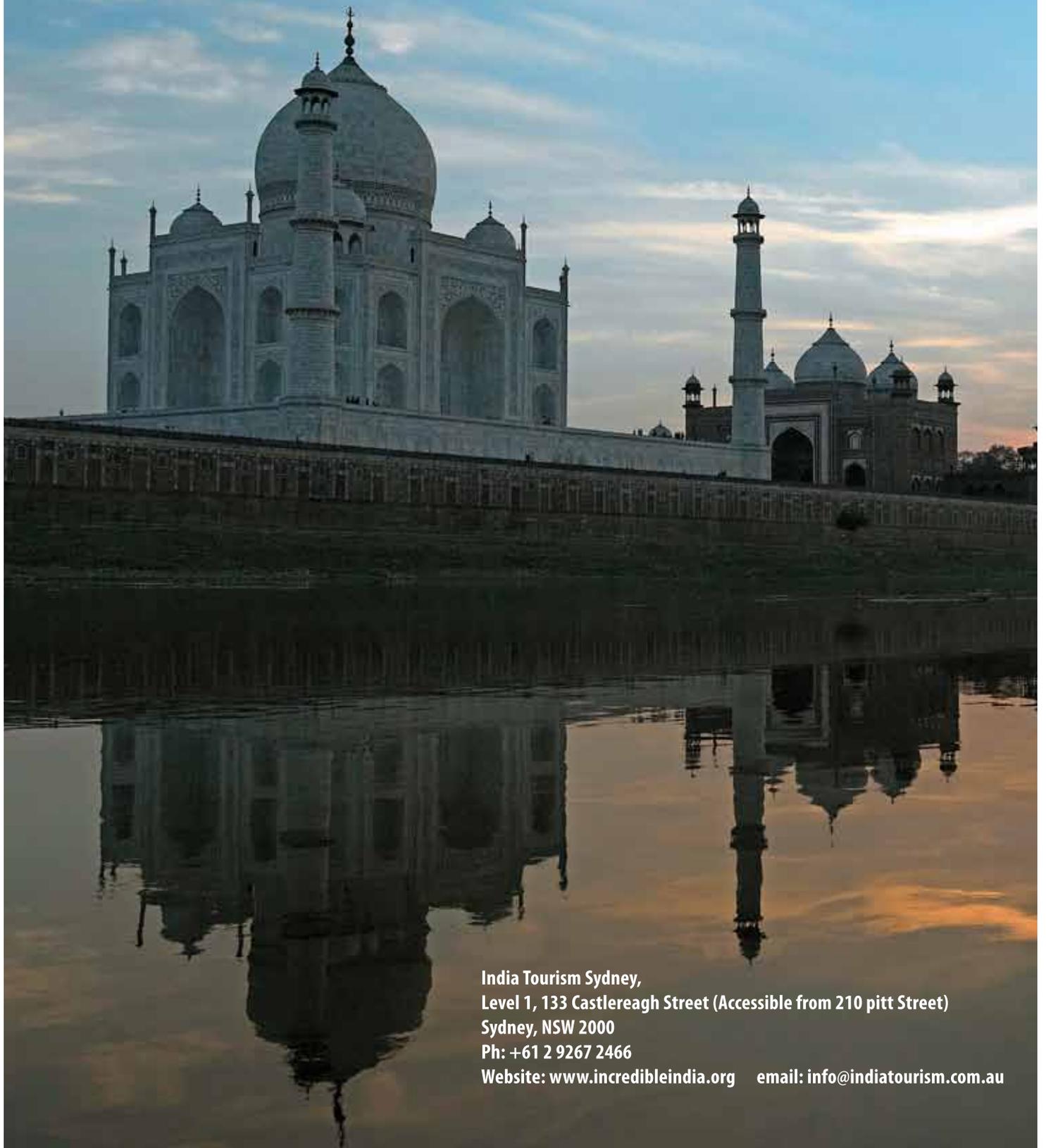
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BEYOND RIO

From lush wetlands teeming with wildlife to historic, UNESCO-protected gold rush towns, much of Brazil's true beauty lies beyond the Olympic city, writes Dilvin Yasa.



SITTING atop a horse, covered with millions of mosquitoes across my chest so that I'm left looking like a sweaty and shirtless Tom Selleck look-alike, I'm contemplating our first activity – a sunset horse ride through the jungles of Pantanal, the world's largest tropical wetland just south of the Amazon. Not having been on a horse before, I am nervous, but as the guide tells me, if you're going to ride a horse anywhere, it's in Pantanal, Brazil.

From first glance at my surrounds, she appears to be correct, but it also needs to be noted that it's taken me a long time to get to this point. I have endured four flights, plus a 2.5 hour road journey from Cuiaba's Marechal Rondon International Airport to get to Pousada do rio Mutum, the ecological lodge located on the banks of the Mutum River (north side of Pantanal) from which our ride has departed. Perhaps it's testament to the region's beauty, but I'm far from alone in my endeavours. Tourism to the Pantanal wetlands has been increasing steadily over recent years as people abandon the Amazon in search of more varied and easier-to-spot wildlife in the wetlands a little further downstream, and people will go to extraordinary lengths to get here.

As horsey and I begin to travel the dense green, I discover that not only do I appear to have the most docile equine in the country

(albeit one who clearly views hitting every single branch as a personal goal), but that there truly is no better place to ride. Everywhere we look, bright pops of colour, by way of a flapping scarlet macaw or swallow tanager, swoosh above us, as lightning in the distance bathes everything in a spectacular purple glow. It's even far more magical than it sounds.

With dawn, comes a whole new activity – a five-hour cruise along Pantanal's waterways. As my guide ushers me into The World's Tiniest Dinghy (hardly a buffer from the assortment of wildlife such as piranha and anaconda teeming in the waters below, methinks), she swears that that they will not hurt us and that all will be fine. And you know what? It is and more.

Over the next five hours, we meander through endless canals, lakes and rivers, watching as families of otters and capybara (the world's largest rodent) frolic alongside us, while monkeys jump from tree to tree and scores of colourful birds such as Zigzag Herron and Jabiru sweep across the waterways. Back on shore, we fish for piranha, stopping to eat them in a tasty soup for dinner and for the first time in a long time in what often feels like a world gone mad, I go to bed thinking how beautiful life can be.

Two more waterway tours and another horse-riding session later (it's all about nature-based activities here), and I'm on my

way to Ouro Preto (Black Gold), a cobble-lined, UNESCO World Heritage-listed town in the state of Minas Gerais. Again, it's must be noted that you don't end up here by accident; flying to Belo Horizonte involves a two-hour stopover in Brasilia, plus a 100km transfer from the airport, but the silver lining? The luxurious Hotel Solar do Rosario, which is to be my base throughout my stay.

Formerly the site of the nation's gold rush, by the early 1700s, it was one of the world's biggest, and most populous cities, her glorious golden finds funding the construction of 13 churches and eight chapels that line her narrow, winding streets today. Protected by UNESCO's strict rules to retain the town's character, homes can only be painted in accents of vivid red, yellow, blue, green or brown, and thus treat travellers to a kaleidoscope of colour as they navigate the steep hills on which they sit.

Each one of Ouro Preto's churches, I'm told, is not to be missed, but everyone's got their limits. I draw my line at three, visiting Nossa Senhora do Pilar (a decadent building which features over 500kg of gold leaf), Nossa Senhora do Carmo, and Sao Francisco de Assis, before sitting down to refuel at Restaurante Contos de Reis, an underground restaurant which at one point used to house slaves. Standing in line at the buffet to get my fill of local dishes such as chicken cooked in its own blood, and beans with cassava flour (you can either pay by the kilo, or buy the all-you-can-eat package), it's hard not to notice the chains still shackled to the walls, and the ceiling's low, exposed beams, but

before a sad malaise can fall over the table, I'm calling, 'bill please!'

The gold rush may be long gone, but Ouro Preto's mines are still rich in pretty minerals such as hematite, tourmaline, topaz, and imperial topaz (a stone that is only found here), and the town's stores do a roaring trade in selling gems cheaply. I'd heard the rumours you can get a ring designed and made with the gemstone of your choice within three hours for next to nix, but before I get my hopes up, I spend some time wandering Bobadela, a picturesque strip filled with quaint cafes, quirky boutiques, ice cream parlours, and yes, many a jeweller. In the end I buckle and I purchase earrings and two large, loose stones for my daughters. They are beautiful and I will enjoy looking at them for a lifetime, but they're not a patch on the memories of my time here. They're the truest gem of all.



EDITOR'S LUXURY PICK

SCENIC - ULTIMATE SOUTH AMERICA

The Scenic Ultimate South America tour spends a whopping 41 days venturing from Lima to Santiago.

Guests will marvel at the Panama Canal, cruise the streets of Havana in a 1950s vintage car and search for the 'big 15' on the Galapagos Islands. In Peru, three-nights in the Sacred Valley is followed by a train journey to the World Heritage-listed Machu Picchu. The tour continues on to the picture-perfect Iguazu Falls, and then plunges into the heart of Rio de Janeiro, followed by Buenos Aires, Bariloche, El Calafate and Torres del Paine National Park.



CUBAN CURIOSITY DRAWS BOOKINGS



Havana, Cuba

THE loosening of travel restrictions to Cuba in recent years has resulted in an influx of bookings to the Caribbean island nation. Travellers are itching to experience the socialist outpost before it changes for good and they can no longer experience the 'real' Cuba.

Tour operators have witnessed this eagerness firsthand.

"Cuba has been one of the strongest holiday destinations of 2016," managing

director of Contours Travel Ted Dziadkiewicz told *travelBulletin*.

"There has been a notable increase in bookings that has maintained itself for the first half of 2016," he continues.

Head of marketing, sales and product at Travel the World, Deb Corbett agreed, saying "Interest in Cuba as a destination has increased dramatically over the last couple of years".

Both Dziadkiewicz and Corbett believe one of the key reasons for the hype around Cuba is media focus that has been on the destination.

"With the amount of media coverage around Cuba and the US normalising their relationship, people are under the impression that Cuba will change overnight and they want to get there and see it before it does," Dziadkiewicz explains.

"However, we cannot stress enough that these changes occur over time and that they still have time to see the 'original' Cuba".

This year, for the first time, tour operator Tauck, which is represented in Australia by Travel the World, has offered two Cuban itineraries. Due to their incredible popularity both the journeys will be offered again in 2017 with an increased number of departure dates for both the seven and 13-day itineraries.

"Many of the dates are already sold out," says Corbett.

Contours offers ten Cuban journeys from adventure trips to Havana stopovers. Dziadkiewicz predicts the direct flights from the USA starting up later this year will see Cuba continue its fast paced growth in popularity and demand.

QR ups South America capacity

QATAR Airways will deploy Extended Range Boeing 777-300 aircraft on routes to South America from 01 December. The move will bolster seat capacity to Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires by 40% (or 99 seats per day) from QR's Doha hub in the Middle East.

The **oneworld** carrier launched flights to Buenos Aires, via Sao Paulo, in June 2010.

"The region is a strong contributor to our route network and these additional seats will enable leisure and business segments to flourish," Qatar Airways VP of The Americas, Gunther Saurwein said.

QR's Boeing 777-300ERs are configured with 42 Business class and 316 Economy class seats.

GLOBUS' BIG LATIN AMERICA

GLOBUS has unveiled its biggest-ever selection of holidays in Latin America, including new tours in Brazil designed to capture the spirit of Rio following this year's Olympic Games.

The Globus 2017 South & Central America brochure features 12 itineraries throughout Latin America plus eight tours from sister brand Cosmos.

New itineraries for Globus include the Brazilian Getaway, a seven-day tour combining Rio de Janeiro and Iguassu Falls, Vineyards of South American an 11-day journey among the great wine regions of Argentina and Chile and

Wonders of Mexico's Yucatán, an eight-day focus on the peninsula's famous Mayan wonders and colonial towns.

Cosmos is offering the Best of Brazil an 11-day adventure combining Rio de Janeiro with the city of Salvador and the Amazon Jungle as well as a Costa Rica Escape journeying in an eight-day circuit from San José visiting remarkable jungles, mountains, volcanoes and hot springs.

Other tours take in the most spectacular sights and colourful cities of Latin America, across Peru, Ecuador, Chile, Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, Costa Rica, Guatemala and Mexico.



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SINGAPORE

Your training wheels for Asia



Sweltering heat, tantalising street food and a bustling cityscape – Singapore has it all. No longer just a stopover between here and there, the island city-state has reinvented itself as a must-visit destination, as Bonnie Tai discovers.

SINGAPORE is a world of contrasts: old meets new, rich meets poor, East meets West. And whilst standing on the outskirts of China Town looking over the city, the architecture here echoes this sentiment.

Nestled between British colonial buildings and quaint Chinese shop houses are towering futuristic-looking skyscrapers; whilst on the roads, run-down taxis weave effortlessly through a bevy of luxury sports cars.

Although in other places, it's the differences that divide; in Singapore it seems that diversity is the glue which holds the country together and helps it to flourish. Immigrants from China, India and Malaysia make up the cultural fabric of this vibrant destination, contributing to the city exotic foods and ancient traditions.

Singapore offers a smorgasbord of Asian experiences. And it's really no wonder that it earned itself the nickname 'Asia for Beginners'. Here, it is possible to walk

the streets of Mumbai, immerse yourself in Chinese culture and get a taste of the enticing cuisine of Malaysia all in one place.

We begin our mini Asia escape in China Town, where little old ladies selling their wares announce the day's bargains first in Cantonese, then in Mandarin, followed by English; switching with ease between the three languages.

"These would look great on your girlfriend," a street vendor tells my partner, holding up strings of costume jewellery. We politely decline and instead make our way to Nanyang Old Coffee, a traditional-style café right in the heart of China Town.

Here, we indulge in Chinese pork buns and a local favourite – kaya toast – which is bread filled with butter and a type of jam made from eggs, sugar, coconut milk and pandan leaves.

Another must-try while you're in town is Kopi, a dark and full-bodied brew often served with condensed milk – and if you're game, you



Photos courtesy of Singapore Tourism Board



EDITOR'S LUXURY PICK

SOFITEL SINGAPORE
SENTOSA RESORT AND SPA

Sentosa Island is a 5km island mostly covered in rainforest. There are 15 luxurious hotels on the island, including the 215-room Sofitel Singapore Sentosa Resort and Spa, which lies on the cliff-top above Tanjong Beach. The five-star hotel boasts three restaurants and a bar, each with sea views. The Sofitel Singapore Sentosa So SPA is housed on 6,000m² and is set within a former military barracks complex which has undergone major restoration. The spa boasts an outdoor spa garden with a lap pool, mud pools and meditative labyrinths.

can attempt to order it in the local vernacular.

For a hot black coffee with sugar ask for a 'kopi-oh' or for a coffee without sugar and condensed milk it's a 'kopi O Kosong' that you're after. There are about 12 different ways to order a cuppa in Singapore – so don't stress if it all sounds a little complicated. With some practice and a bit of luck, the right drink will arrive at your table.

The next day we arrive at the MRT station, Singapore's rail transit network, which spans the entire city-state to get to Little India, our next destination.

As we enter the depot, we notice a rather distinct warning sign plastered at the entry of the station. "No Smoking, No eating and Drinking, No flammable goods and No Durians on the train," it read.

For those not in the know, durians are a notoriously pungent fruit which are aplenty here. And you'll smell them before you see them. The overpowering sensation has often been described as a cross between rotting

onions, turpentine and raw sewage. But if you can get past the intense odour, the flesh within is akin to rich custard and it is – in fact – incredibly sweet and delicious.

While carrying drinks, foods or flammables on board the train can elicit you on-the-spot fines of between SG\$500 and SG\$5,000 – getting caught with one of these spikey babies will only get you a slap on the wrist and a warning to either dispose or consume it before entering the station. But the sign, never-the-less, is amusing and unlike anything you'd see at home in Australia.

As we exit the station at Little India and walk onto Buffalo Road – one of the district's main drags – a myriad of exotic aromas greets us. Wafting through the air is the smell of ground spices, curries and fragrant flowers, and in our immediate vicinity a distinct sound of humming catches our attention.

To our right, a woman adorned in traditional Indian garb is calmly stringing together brightly coloured flower garlands

as thousands of bees buzz around her. But neither she nor the queue of customers seemed to mind the stingers that much, as we watched her happily interacting with everyone – her face a hive of activity.

When lunchtime arrives, we find ourselves at a hole-in-the-wall restaurant packed with patrons chatting loudly to one another. What I love about this place is that the curries are served on top of banana leaves – authentic Indian style – and the use of any cutlery is entirely optional. It takes only one bite to realise that the food here is the real-deal, and not something watered down to suit Western palates (a far cry from butter chicken).

As I finish my meal and lick the last remnants of food off my fingers, I can't help but draw a comparison between this little eatery and the over-arching culture of Singapore. Because here, it's not weird to share your meal with strangers. In fact, it doesn't matter where you're from, there's always a place at the table.

SINGAPORE NON-STOP FROM CANBERRA

SINGAPORE Airlines made history last months with the highly anticipated debut of its new 'Capital Express' service, linking Singapore to Canberra and Wellington.

Despite inclement weather on arrival, Canberra Airport added to the precipitation with a water cannon celebration to mark the arrival of the aircraft marking the first time Australia's and New Zealand's capital cities had ever been connected.

Singapore Airlines executive vice president commercial, Mr Mak Swee Wah, said the inaugural was a key milestone in the airline's long history in Australia - complementing its already extensive network linking Australian cities to Singapore which includes flights from Adelaide, Brisbane, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney - along with SilkAir services from Cairns and Darwin and Scoot, which serves the Gold Coast, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney.

The new route provides an intriguing option for travellers from the buoyant ACT leisure market as well as a convenient new option for public servants, politicians and lobbyists to access the globe via SQ's Singapore hub.

Singapore Airlines has confirmed that premium passengers travelling from Canberra to either Wellington or Singapore on the four times weekly 777-200 flights will have



access to the Virgin Australia lounge at CBR.

It's the first international flight to serve Canberra since a brief foray by Fiji Airways offering non-stop flights to Nadi in 2004.

Singapore Airlines senior vice president of sales and marketing, Campbell Wilson, said flights to the Australian capital were a logical expansion of the SQ network given

the development of Canberra airport and the maturity of the local market. If the route proves successful Singapore Airlines hopes to lift frequencies to daily, he added.

Meanwhile Canberra Airport owner Terry Snow said the flights would help locals avoid the "dysfunctional travel" they normally put up with via Sydney.

Scout Europe routes

LOW cost carrier Scoot has confirmed Greece as its first destination in Europe with flights from its Singapore hub to Athens set to start from 20 June next year. The launch will mark the longest flight operated by a low-cost carrier, travelling more than 10,000 kilometres.

Singapore Airlines said debuting Scoot services to Europe is part of the overall SIA Group's "strategic move to stimulate passenger traffic between Asia Pacific and Europe," as well as boosting connectivity via its Singapore hub.

The four-times weekly route will be serviced by a Boeing 787-8 aircraft with a total of 329 seats including 18 in the ScootBiz cabin. Launch economy fares from Perth to Athens lead in at just \$369, while flights to Athens from Sydney, Melbourne and the Gold Coast start off at \$419. Extra charges will apply for baggage, food and in-flight wi-fi.

DEEPAVALI SINGAPORE

SINGAPORE will be lit up this month for the Deepavali Festival on 29 October, a worldwide Hindu celebration marking the triumph of good over evil, light over darkness. Singapore's Little India is the place to be during the festivities with the area transformed into a wonderland of colourful arches and lights complete with flower garlands and bazaars. The fun stretches from Selegie Road all the way through Serangoon Road. Food is also a major part of Deepavali celebrations and Singapore, you can expect to see dishes on offer such as deep-fried dough covered in syrup, rice-flour pancakes, lentil cakes, yogurts, and sweets.



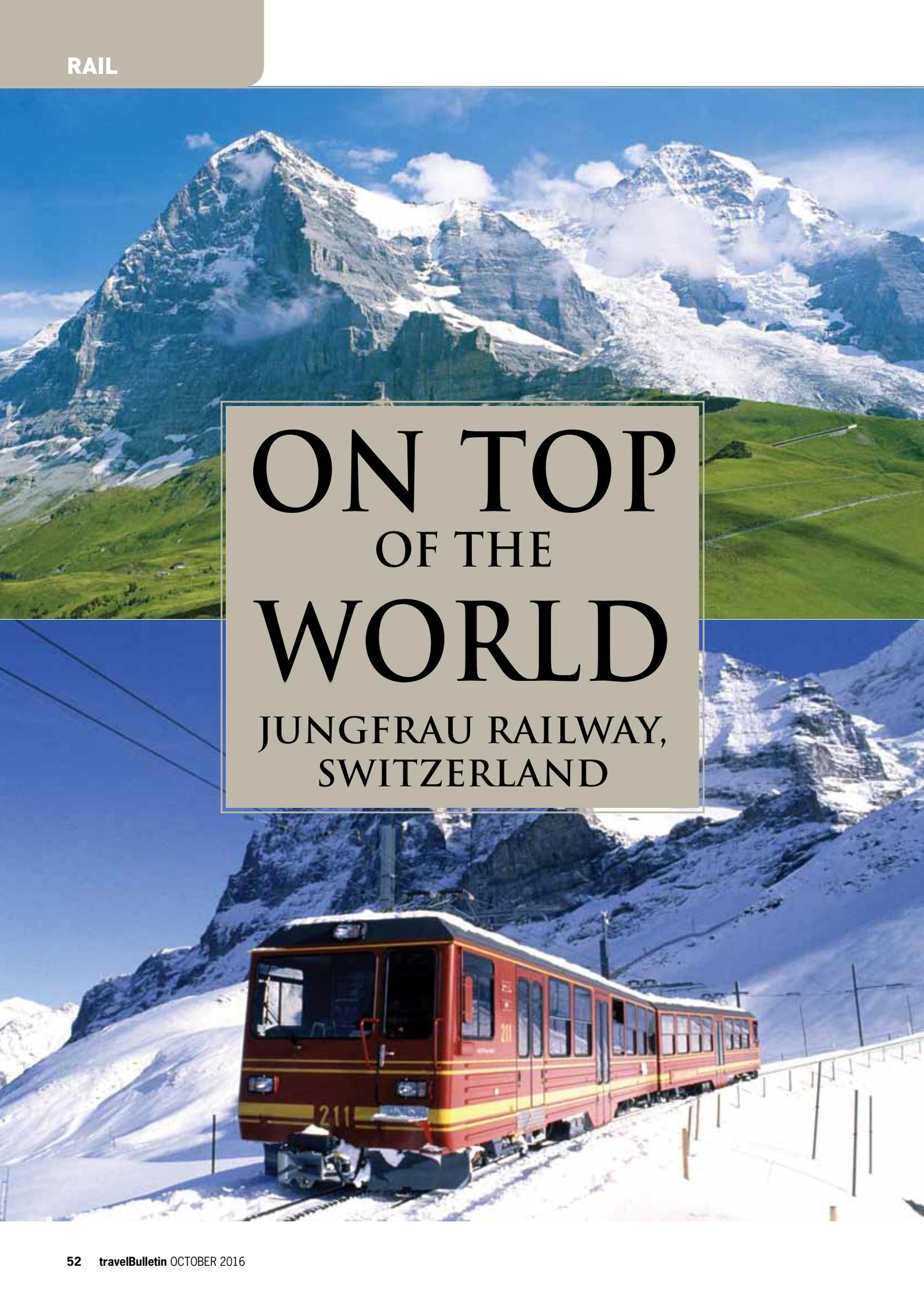


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ON TOP OF THE WORLD

JUNGFRAU RAILWAY,
SWITZERLAND

The rack-railway ride to the top of the Jungfrau mountain in the Swiss Alps is one of the world's most dramatic train journeys, as Brian Johnston discovers.

IN EARLY morning Interlaken, stars still linger above the church steeple as light creeps over the rim of the mountains, turning the sky pale blue. Blearily-eyed tourists, lugging knapsacks and cameras, stumble into the train station. It's not yet 6:30am, and we're waiting for a little red train to take us to a mountaintop in the heart of the Swiss Alps.

The train lurches off with the punctuality of – well, of a Swiss train. In moments it leaves the town behind and is chugging along towards the mouth of the Lauterbrunnen Valley, whose plunging rock faces frame snowy mountains. Soon we're pressed against seatbacks as the train climbs past darkened chalets and grazing cows. The train's cogwheels click and grind as we're pulled around dizzying loops. Now the sun is catching the peaks, and the scenery changes angles, giving ever-new vistas of farms, summer chalets and grand Victorian-era hotels. We stop briefly in the fashionable resort of Wengen. Then it's onwards, up to the Kleine Scheidegg, perched on a ledge that separates the two valleys of Lauterbrunnen and Grindelwald, where we have to change trains.

Kleine Scheidegg is a huddle of barns, a hotel, a couple of restaurants catering to train passengers and hikers. Local men in traditional attire are blowing alpine horns, a medieval Swiss instrument said to soothe cattle. There's not much time to stand and listen, since we have to scramble onto the connecting service that takes passengers even further upwards to the mighty bulk of the Jungfrau.

Kleine Scheidegg is linked to the Jungfrau's summit by just 10 kilometres of railway track, mostly in tunnels. The journey takes 40 minutes. It took 16 years to construct this line, and when it opened in 1912 was the marvel of the world. It still is. The train hauls its way past the jumbled ice blocks and rocks of the Eiger Glacier before entering a tunnel that bores through the Eiger itself. The train stops for five minutes deep in the mountain to let passengers hurry through tunnels to enormous windows cut in the rock. Unnervingly, we're peering out of the north face of the Eiger, the notoriously dangerous challenge for mountain climbers.

Then it's on, inching up to the highest station in Europe. Here a lift rockets us

upwards through the mountain to emerge in a glass-and-metal bubble atop a hump of rock. We're now standing at 3,454 metres between the summits of the Mönch and Jungfrau. The air is crystal-clear all the way to the Vosges in France and the Black Forest in Germany. Lakes look like puddles, towns are tiny toy-towns. In the other direction the Aletsch, largest glacier in the Alps, snakes between snow peaks.

Back inside the mountain, an audio-visual presentation in music and lights showcases the construction of the extraordinary railway and the technological triumph of the Jungfrau complex. Half the peak is tunnelled out, one side faced with restaurant windows and souvenir shops. You can play the Lotto here, post a letter, dine on grilled New Zealand lamb with French beans as you gaze out on Alps cut through by rivers of ice.

There's ice too in the Ice Palace, a gallery that leads from the complex into the glacier, where sculptures have been carved in blue-white beauty. Outside at the back of the mountain visitors can follow a track through the snow, picking their way across the glacier between safety ropes. A husky-dog team takes kids on an exhilarating spin across the snowfields. The brave can hike an hour with a guide to adjacent peak the Mönch, which has a hotel and restaurant at 3,650 metres above sea level.

It's several hours before most visitors exhaust the marvels of the Jungfrau and clamber back onto the little red train. The downward passing scenery looks different in the strong light of early afternoon, the colours now as bright as calendar photos. The mountains and chalets look too picturesque to be real, and the elderly man turning hay with a wooden pitchfork at the side of the tracks has surely been planted by the tourist office. The train passes charming huddles of houses fronted by tidy vegetable patches. They lean slightly, wood almost black with age and weathering. Orange splotches of lichen grow across slate roofs. In winter, the snow here is so deep the chalets are buried up to their eaves, yet the train keeps running through a magical, snowy landscape.

Back down at Interlaken you can walk along the Höheweg, Interlaken's famous promenade of parks and flowerbeds, lined by the Belle-Époque turrets



The Jungfrau train at Kleine Scheidegg below the Eiger



and gables of luxury hotels, their facades studded with ornate balconies and the flags of tourist nations. In the town centre, shops are cluttered with chocolates, soft St Bernard dogs, cow-shaped clocks and Swiss army knives. Look up and the snowy mountains are majestic in the background, and you marvel that you've actually been there, on the mighty roof of Europe.

EDITOR'S LUXURY PICK

BELMOND'S GRAND HIBERNIAN

The Belmond Grand Hibernian is Ireland's first luxury sleeper train operated its first journey on 06 September. It will offer two-, four- and six-night journeys, all beginning and ending in Dublin and venturing through the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. It accommodates just 40 guests in 16 twin and four double cabins. Breakfast, lunch and dinner is served in two dining cars and guests can soak in the views in the observation car. Prices start from: \$11,393 per person.

RAIL PLUS EXPANDING WITH BELMOND

BELMOND'S growing collection is at the heart of Rail Plus' new Great Train Journeys 2017 brochure with eight pages dedicated to the product suite. Belmond's Andean Explorer, South America's first luxury sleeper train, is featured for the first time with four itineraries, including a full-day journeys from Cuzco across the high plains of the Andes and on to the shores of Lake Titicaca.

As part of a major catalogue redesign, Rail Plus is now grouping journeys geographically with each page featuring product overview with simple icons pointing to the key features and inclusions.

Inside the fresh brochure agents will find Canada's celebrated Rocky Mountaineer and VIA Rail journeys, with an added focus on the company's increasingly popular trans-Canada packages. Custom designed by the company's Great Train Journeys specialists.

Flick through to find profiles on a range of iconic rail trips, from the Golden Eagle Trans-Siberian in Russia and El Transcantabrico in Spain to The Blue Train and Rovos Rail Africa, Eastern & Oriental Express in Asia, Palace on Wheels India and



Australia's The Ghan and Indian Pacific.

Rail Plus operates a dedicated phone line for Great Train Journeys allowing travel

consultants to connect directly with the company's experts. The new brochure can be downloaded at www.railplus.com.au.

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EURAIL ITALY APP

A NEW seating reservation function has been introduced for the Trenitalia high speed Le Freccie trains via the free Rail Planner App. The new e-reservation function allows customers to book, pay, and receive their seat reservation through their smartphone. The tickets can be printed or displayed on the passenger's mobile phone screen.

"This latest innovation is part of our continued efforts to ensure all our customers can maximise their unique European experience," Eurail Group sales and marketing manager Silvia Gorlach said.

The Rail Planner App has already reached over one million users with Italy being a top year-round destination for Eurail travellers.

New APT rail departures to meet demands

A STRONG increase in the popularity of rail travel among Australian travellers has prompted APT to introduce two new rail itineraries to next year's departures.

The new 14-day Treasures of Eastern Europe takes guests aboard the Golden

Eagle Danube Express from Venice to Budapest via Gdynia in Poland. Highlights include a private organ recital in at Oliwa Cathedral in Gdansk and a raft ride on the Dunajec River.

Also new is the 12-day Arctic Explorer

on the Golden Eagle Luxury Train from St Petersburg to Moscow including Kirkenes, Norway. As well as the chance to see the Northern Lights, guests also enjoy a snowmobile-drawn sleigh ride across the frozen fjords amongst other experiences.

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Dive into Malaysia

By Lee Mylne

MALAYSIA is developing a reputation as one of the best spots in Asia for scuba divers, with an estimated 40% of all international visitors nominating diving as their reason to visit. With some spectacular reefs and shipwrecks to explore, Malaysia attracted almost 400,000 divers last year, according to the Department of Marine Parks Malaysia, many of them from Australia. More than 822,000 people visited the nation's marine parks in total. The triangle between Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines is considered one of the most bio-diverse marine habitats in the world, with a plethora of dive spots and marine life that keeps divers coming back. The most

popular destination is Sipadan Island, off Sabah's east coast. Rising 700m from the sea floor and at only 12 hectares, Malaysia's sole oceanic island takes only 25 minutes to walk around. Renowned oceanographer Jacques Cousteau once described the waters around Sipadan as "an untouched piece of art", helping establish its fame. Divers can expect to see turtles, manta rays, schools of sharks, barracuda, and coral walls dropping more than 2,000 metres to the ocean floor. Its famed Barrier Reef is the largest in south-east Asia and is regularly voted by divers as one of the world's top dive destinations. The jump-off point for all Sipadan Island explorations is the town of Semporna, a one-hour drive from Kota Kinabalu, followed by a 30-minute speedboat to Mabul. Among the most popular resorts are Sipadan's Reef

Dive Resort and Sipadan Kapalia Dive Resort, along with Mabul Island's Sipadan Mabul Resort and Mabul Water Bungalows. Earlier this year, Malaysia officially established the biggest Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the country – and one of the largest in south-east Asia. The Tun Mustapha Park occupies 1.6 million hectares of seascape, including 50 islands, off the northern tip of Sabah in east Malaysia, and has the country's second largest concentration of coral reefs.

Tun Mustapha and Malaysia's two other major MPAs, Tun Sakaran and Tunku Abdul Rahman will also become shark sanctuaries. Shark species are vital to the diving business, which generates about RM380 million (US\$9.4 million) per year," says Malaysia's Minister for Tourism, Culture and Environment, Datuk Seri Masisi. "We will lose the shark



Perhentian Island



Tioman Island

population in 10 year's time if stakeholders continue serving shark fin soup."

The park, which includes areas for strict protection, artisanal fishing and commercial fishing among others, is expected to be a major draw card for tourists.

Other top dive sites in Malaysia include:

Layang-Layang Island

Home to some of Malaysia's most pristine diving, this remote spot is a marine-based resort, located on a sand bank just below sea level and largely unspoiled by people. Layang-Layang has an extraordinary mix of coral reefs and forests and large schools of fish and other sea life.

Lang Tengah Island

Located between the popular islands of Redang and Perhentian, the modest island of Lang Tengah offers great opportunities for divers of all abilities, who can expect to see a large array of sea life including turtles, schools of fish and coral. The best time to visit Lang Tengah between April and September (peak season).

Tioman Island

With light currents and an abundance of sea life, the island of Tioman offers excellent diving and snorkeling, as well as kayaking. With picturesque beaches, Tioman is one of the most popular islands in Malaysia. It is only accessible by a chartered flight from Kuala Lumpur to Tioman operated by Berjaya Air, but is worth the effort.

Perhentian Island

Conditions off Perhentian are perfect for novice divers and with many different diving spots to explore, it is a favourite with locals and tourists alike. There is abundant marine life, shallow reefs and clear water along the coastline. The top resorts on the island are Coral View Island Resort and Perhentian Tuna Bay Island Resort.

Santubong

Santubong, near Kuching, is one of the best places to explore the dramatic Japanese World War II shipwrecks, which act as shelters and artificial habitats for marine life. At 22 metres, they are also easily accessible

to divers and suitable for beginners.

Miri

Miri has more than 30 dive sites, with five shipwrecks, including the artificial reefs created by the Kenyalang Wreck, a joint development by Shell and Petronas scuttled in the mid 2000s. With visibility ranging from 10m to 30m, diving is possible all year round, but the best time to visit is March to September. Other areas worth exploring include the Anemone Garden, Siwa Reef and Hawa Reef.

Pulau Payar Marine Park

Just 30km south of Langkawi Island and 45 minutes from Kuah Jetty by catamaran or speedboat, Pulau Payar Marine Park has some of Langkawi's best snorkelling and diving, including the colourful Coral Garden. Divers need a permit, usually included on organised tours. Next year, it will be even easier to get to Langkawi from the mainland when Malaysia's first high-speed ferry service starts operating from Kuala Kedah ferry terminal to Langkawi from July.

EDITOR'S LUXURY PICK

SEABOURN'S HOLIDAY MYANMAR & MALAYSIA

The 16-day Holiday Myanmar & Malaysia makes five calls into Malaysian cities and pays a visit to India, Myanmar and Thailand. Departing from Singapore, the cruise's first call is into the "Garden City" of Kuala Lumpur. Passengers then take in Penang before stopping by Port Blair in India and spending four days in Myanmar's Yangon. Two days in Phuket in Thailand will be followed by the unspoiled islands of Langkawi in Malaysia. Lumut and Malacca are the final stops before the cruise returns to Singapore.



Perhentian Island



Diving tour on Perhentian Island

G HOTEL FACELIFT PENANG

THE luxury G Hotel Gurney in Penang overlooking the Malacca Strait has undergone a RM35 million facelift. The makeover ranges from a new look lobby to contemporary rooms and new food and beverage outlets.

The glass lobby has been fitted out with Italian designer furniture while the 312-rooms have been given new work chairs, 55-inch Smart TVs and fast wi-fi.

Hotel Gurney's restaurants and bars have been refreshed with all-day restaurant Taste Café now featuring a special lava stone barbecue grill imported from Indonesia.

The pool bar boasts new lounge chairs, large umbrellas, and a retractable roof, while the alfresco Tree Bar, a guest favourite, sits snug under an 80-year-old 'Albizia Saman' rain tree.

Five new function rooms were added during the renovation, bringing the total number of conference spaces to nine, including two ballrooms.

The hotel sits between the Gurney Plaza and Gurney Paragon shopping centres and is just a moment's walk away from the famous Gurney drive hawker eateries.

"Our convenient location is the perfect point of departure for discovering Penang's



numerous tourist attractions, UNESCO World Heritage sites and beaches," the property's general manager Michael Hanratty said.

"We look forward to welcoming corporate and leisure guests to the hotel so they may

experience the new level of comfort and sophistication. The hotel is the ideal choice for travellers who enjoy top notch hospitality in a modern, stylish and contemporary settings," he continued.



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Asia family appeal

FAMILY travel is on the increase across Asia with many families approaching InterAsia about taking the kids to the region.

Linh Nguyen, a director of InterAsia Tours, believes Malaysia appeals to Aussies because of the low airfares, well priced hotels and diverse experiences topped off by the sincere warmth from locals.

Nguyen says families are discovering the charms of Sabah State in the north of Borneo which has a host of family-friendly activities available. Trek in the jungles, go white water rafting, visit turtle and orangutan sanctuaries, go snorkelling or stay in a nature lodge.

A good starting point for planning a family holiday to the Malay Peninsula and/or Borneo is InterAsia's Sabah Explorer, Borneo Adventure and Singapore & Malay Peninsula independent tours.



Danum Valley, Sabah (Jollence Lee)



MALAYSIA AIRLINES Q2 PROGRESS

MALAYSIA Airlines has recorded continued progress over the second quarter of 2016 with a promising outlook moving into the third quarter.

As expected, the second quarter was weaker due to seasonality with revenue down, a result of the soft demand during Ramadan. Whilst overall load factor was softer, domestic travel loads improved. The group expects to record a loss for the whole fiscal year of 2016 but a significantly smaller one than initially budgeted for at the beginning of the year, and ahead of the turnaround plan for the airline to be sustainably profitable by 2018.

The carrier's punctuality remained stable during the period, reaching a year-to-date level of 82% for punctuality. The on-time performance ratio was, however, mainly affected by external factors, such as delays in immigration processing and infrastructure constraints at KLIA.

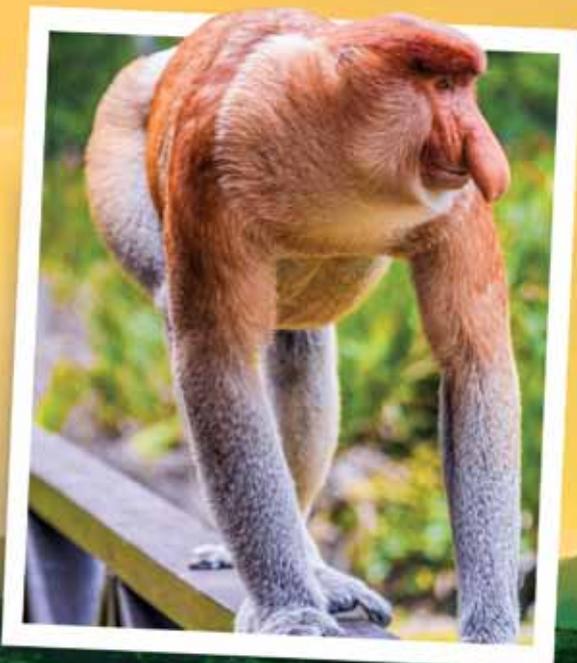
Particularly pleasing for the airline was the increase in overall customer satisfaction as a result of product enhancements. These included the newly revamped mobile app and the new "dine anytime" service, enabling First and Business class customers to enjoy their meals at their convenience.

Upgrades to the airline's Economy

class were also well received with the introduction of larger protein portions for in-flight meals.

When looking at fleet enhancements a further two Airbus A350-900 were leased in the quarter for delivery in 2018 and construction started in June at Airbus in Toulouse of the first of six new Airbus A350-900 aircraft, to be delivered in October 2017.

Malaysia Airlines has a new revenue management plan in place to intensify its sales and marketing efforts in the second half of the year. The airline will also be engaging with travel agents, a key target audience in Malaysia.



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MALAYSIA 5 THINGS

Petronas Twin Towers

These 88-storey twin towers are the crown jewel of Kuala Lumpur and are a must see attraction when visiting Malaysia's capital. The view from the ground looking up at these uniquely shaped skyscrapers is impressive but it's all about the expansive panoramic views from the double-decker sky bridge that joins the 41st and 42nd floors.



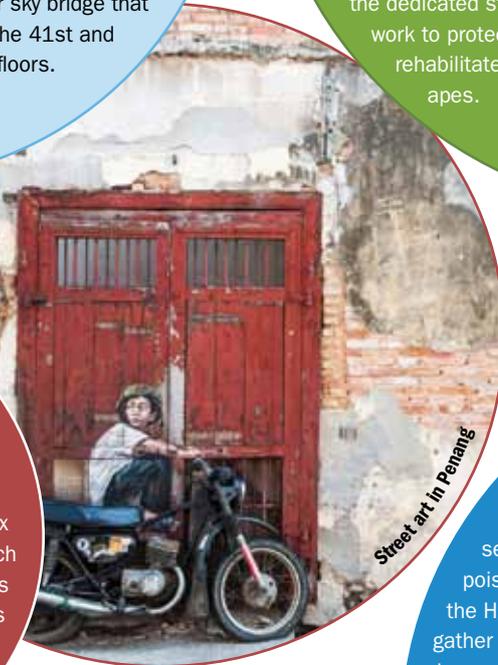
Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Centre

Engage in a rare experience near the town of Sandakan to get up close and personal with Orangutans. The centre welcomes orphaned and injured orangutans for rehabilitation before returning them to the wild. An observation deck allows visitors to spot the orangutans coming out from the rainforest to be fed by the rangers. You can also get the lowdown on how the dedicated staff work to protect and rehabilitate the apes.



A visit to Penang

This vibrant island offers tropical beaches, colourful heritage and is the unofficial foodie capital of Malaysia. The Island's capital George Town is a UNESCO World Heritage site and one of the best drawcards of the island. Architecturally unique, it is a mix of British colonial style and Asian heritage. Each street is a world of its own and keep your eyes peeled for some of the quirky street art. If it's sandy beaches and luxurious hotels you're after, take a visit to Batu Ferringhi on the Penang's North Coast.



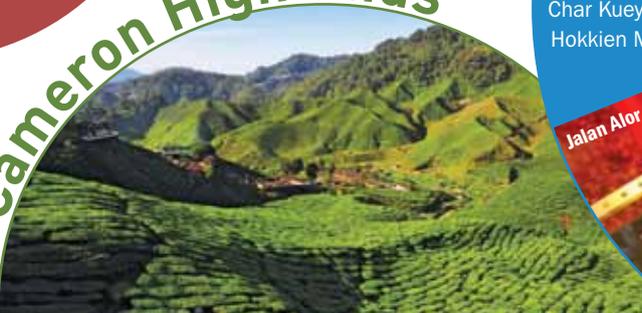
Hawker Stalls

If you want to get straight to the heart of Malaysian cuisine head to a one of the many local hawker stalls. You can find them by the roadside or inside purpose built hawker centres. Authentic and delicious, local meals will only set you back a couple of dollars, and relax your food poisoning fears: these stalls are regulated by the Health Department. Rich and poor alike gather together to feast in these bustling places. Try some flaky roti canai bread, nasi lemak, slippery Char Kuey Teow or Hokkien Mee.



See Cameron Highlands

Just 200 kilometres from the city's bustling capital you find peace and some cool mountain air relief at Malaysia's largest hill-station. The narrow, green elevations are a sight to behold, stretching 712 square kilometres. Developed in the 1930s, the tableland is one of the oldest tourist spots in the country and is home to tea estates, farmlands, rivers, lakes and orchards.



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EMIRATES MEMORIES MAKE A WINNER



CONGRATULATIONS to Sue Ritter from Travel Plus Australia, who took out the Emirates competition which ran in *travelBulletin* across June and July this year.

Contestants had to share their favourite memory of Emirates, to commemorate the airline's 20 years of flying to Australia.

Sue, as the winner, has been given two Business class tickets to her choice of 39 European destinations serviced by Emirates via the airline's Dubai hub.

Her entry is pictured left, with the caption "From my clients on Sunday 03rd July 2016- another satisfied customer: The A380 is a triumph of engineering, spacious, comfortable and quiet. Can we indulge with a photo on the A380 flight from Dubai to LHR".

FUNNY FESTIVALS: CALLING ALL CHARMERS



WORMS, like snakes, can be charmed, or at least that's the premise of a festival in Southeast England.

The Blackawton International Festival of Worm Charming invites participants to "charm" as many worms as possible to the surface of a one metre plot of land in 15 minutes.

Each team can have three members – a Charmerer, a Pickerer and a Counterer – and the competition gets off to a start with five minutes of "Worming Up"

During this time, the teams can do whatever they need to do in order to lure the

worms to the surface, except dig or fork.

The champions have a surprisingly high success rate, with the world record set in 1986 and standing at 149 worms.

In 2011, a team of three and four year olds caught more worms than the highest scoring adult category, at 38, and the same thing happened the following year, with a total of 102 worms.

The competition is complete with officials. There is the Worm Master who oversees the festival, the Official Cheat who tempts entrants with additional worms, Old Father Worm who offers advice

and the International Judge who has the final say in all worm charming disputes.

Anyone caught cheating will be "publicly humiliated and almost certainly disqualified" and the official rules state "all worms must be returned unharmed to the ground after the competition".

The competition first began in 1984 and has grown considerably since then. These days the festival also includes a fancy dress competition, dog show and plenty of food and refreshments.

The worm charming festival was voted "Europe's Most Unmissable Festival" in 2014.



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To get an overview of eligible destinations and hotels, please visit austria.info/journeys-competition



Email your entry to austria_comp@travelbulletin.com.au by Monday, 31 October 2016

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